**Singleness and Dating for Women**

As disciples of Jesus, we want to honor Him in every part of our lives, including our dating relationships. God’s word gives us design and wisdom on how dating can be done in a God-glorifying way. Countless people have experienced the heartache and pain of dating relationships gone wrong. Typically, pain comes when we go away from God’s design for dating, ending up in a relationship with the wrong person, or taking the relationship to a place God has not ordained. Let’s look at some biblical wisdom on dating.

**The Art of Courtship** (adapted from Tommy Nelson Song of Solomon series)
God’s word shows us how to date in a way that honors Him and dating that prepares us for a lifelong, intimate marriage. The art of courtship is about connecting to someone emotionally, without crossing physical barriers that God has ordained.

**Read Song of Solomon 2:1-4**

Special Treatment

v. 1-2 “I am the rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among maidens.” - When in a courting relationship, a man should strive to make a woman feel special and unique. With his words and actions he should help her feel secure, as though she were the only one he gives his attention to. A man should never speak down to a woman with insults or belittlement. Ask yourself, “Does this man treat me as though I am special?” A woman should carry herself like she believes she is a special and unique person. For example, she should have standards in the way she speaks, what kinds of entertainment she enjoys, what she wears, and what she is willing to do with a man who is not her husband. She should find self-worth in her identity as a child of God, and not from the attention of men. Ask yourself, “Do I carry myself as though I am special?”

v. 3 “Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” – Taking delight and rest in someone’s shade is a sense of protection. You should feel secure when in a courtship with a man. A woman should never fear physical or verbal abuse from a man. You should never feel forced to do something physically that would contradict your morality or the word of God. Ask yourself, “Do I feel secure with this man?”

\*In the same thought, a woman should strive to give a man security by not seeking the attention of other men, as well as affording him trust and respect.

v. 4 “He has brought me to his banquet hall, And his banner over me is love.” – A banquet hall is a public place, and a banner is a proud display of commitment and devotion. When in a courting relationship, a man should make a woman feel shown off in public. In other words, he is not ashamed to let everyone know he is committed to her. There should be concerns if a man is not willing to introduce you to his friends or family or if he is not willing to commit to you publicly.

\*Discuss: What are some things that make you feel secure in a relationship? How can you strive to respect yourself and believe that you are special?

**Read Song of Solomon 2:5-7; 2:16-3:5**Healthy physical boundaries

V. 5-6 “Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick. Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand embrace me.” – These comments are made by someone who has been aroused sexually. Sexual attraction is a good thing that has been given to us by God. God designed sex, and He designed it to be enjoyable and desired. However it should be controlled and only enjoyed at the proper time (a marriage union).

v. 7 “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you do not arouse or awaken my love until it pleases.” – Do not awaken my love until it pleases is a way of saying we will not have a sexual relationship until marriage. When in a courting relationship, a woman should do all she can to keep from leading her man into sexual sin. Men naturally have a higher sex drive than women, so even flirting with the idea will lead him to temptation. You should strive to make it very clear that the relationship is committed to sexual purity, and abstain from any erotic touching. (1 Cor. 6:18-20) Consider boundaries like, “We won’t spend the night with each other,” “We won’t live together before marriage,” “We won’t spend significant amounts of alone time in vulnerable situations.”

\*Discuss: Sexual boundaries are counter to our culture, but in line with the kingdom of Christ. How would you communicate sexual purity if asked by someone who doesn’t understand your views?

**Read Song of Solomon 2:8-15**

Romance and Levels of Communication

v. 11-12a “For behold the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have already appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning the vines,…” – This verse describes the time of spring, where things are fresh and lively. When in a courting relationship, there should be a sense of romantic liveliness. Both men and women should strive to have some spontaneity and fresh creative ways to show interest in each other. Good courtship has ever changing romance. Be creative in ways that you spend time together, be spontaneous in ways that lets each other know you are thinking of them.

\*Discuss: What is the most spontaneous thing a man has done to show interest in you?

v. 14 “ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway, let me see your form, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” – In this verse the man is calling a shy reserved person to step into depth of conversation and connection. Courtship is the time to begin learning how to communicate with one another in ways that will lead to intimacy even into marriage.

Level 1 Communication - **Cliché**  “What’s up?”...”not much”
Level 2 Communication - I**nformation** “What’s up?”... “Studying for an important test I have on Friday”
Level 3 Communication- F**eelings** “What’s up?”... “Well I’m feeling really stressed about this test I’ve been studying for, I am anxious because I really need to do better than last time.”… “Yea I understand, I will pray that God will help you focus, and your anxiety leaves you.”

* Level 3 communication leads to deep connection. When you become a good question asker and good listener, you will be good at this level of communication.

**Personal application**:

What would it require for you to take the lead on setting sexual boundaries in your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What level communicator are you? How could you grow deeper in connection? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_