

Choosing Romantic Relationships

By John D. Wilsey

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Genesis 24:1–14 and Proverbs 18:22. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What do these passages communicate about the blessings and warnings concerning romantic relationships?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What similarities and differences are there between dating and marriage?

Assignment Three

Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are ways to hold a friend accountable to godliness and obedience without being overbearing or alienating?

Scripture to Memorize

I say this for your own benefit; not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7:35

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand some basic blessings, warnings, and guidelines as they pertain to choosing and pursuing a dating relationship.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Imagine that you become interested in someone of the opposite gender, beyond just being friends. How do you react to that interest? Do you just jump in, head over heels? Or do you seek the counsel of Scripture?

Abraham Trusts God to Provide His Son a Wife

Read Genesis 24:1–14 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. LORD had blessed Abraham. Abraham had been faithful to the Lord, and the Lord had been faithful to him. While Abraham was not a perfect man by any stretch of the imagination, Abraham had heeded God's voice and followed Him in the most critical times of his life. Abraham fully trusted the Lord.

Verses 3–4. not take a wife . . . take a wife. Abraham understood that being in a romantic relationship is a powerful influence on a person's walk with God. Thus, he made his servant promise that he would find a wife for his son Isaac from among his own people. He knew that a Canaanite woman would draw Isaac away from the Lord.

Verse 7. He will send His angel before you. Abraham did not know who Isaac's wife would be, nor did he know how everything would transpire, but he did know that God would be faithful to fulfill his promise to Abraham. He knew that finding a wife for Isaac was not his responsibility. It was God's responsibility, and God could be fully trusted to work out the details.

Verse 12. please grant me success today. The servant committed the situation fully to God, just as he had seen Abraham do. Once he trusted the Lord, he acted on faith and went forward.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What do Genesis 24:1–14 and Proverbs 18:22 communicate about the blessings and warnings concerning romantic relationships?

Discussion Question

Where do submission to God's will and faithfulness fit into the question of choosing a romantic relationship?

On Your Own

In the space below, list ways God has demonstrated His faithfulness to you through answered prayers. When you are finished, compare how God has demonstrated His faithfulness to you with others in your group.

Facing the Choice of Pursuing a Romantic Relationship

Read 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 32. free from anxieties. No direct parallel exists in Scripture for a dating relationship like most young people experience in America today. Nevertheless, many principles apply.

For example, being romantically unattached does offer simplicity—that is, being “single” offers the ability to focus on a relationship to Christ in an undistracted way. That is one great benefit of choosing not to pursue a romantic relationship. As Paul says, being romantically attached is not necessarily sinful or impractical, it just means the simplicity of being unattached is lost.

Verse 34. his interests are divided. Being in a romantic relationship requires a high level of spiritual maturity. One must be able to prioritize relationships: Christ first and the romantic relationship second. A lot of people have a hard time with these priorities. Many have good intentions at the beginning, but it is so tempting to reverse these two priorities.

Verse 35. not to lay any restraint upon you. Being in a romantic relationship is not sinful on its own, but being in a romantic relationship means you will have more choices in terms of time, loyalty, thoughts and resources. Much prayer and devotion to Jesus are required for a romantic relationship to truly be a blessing rather than an obstacle to godliness.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share the differences between marriage and dating or singlehood from 1 Corinthians 7:32–35.

Blessing and Warnings from Scripture

Read Proverbs 18:22 and 2 Corinthians 6:14 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Proverbs 18:22. finds a good thing. Finding a romantic partner is good. It is a blessing from the Lord, a token of His favor. It is a sign of His grace and faithfulness. We see a reflection of His tender care and devotion to us in our romantic relationships.

2 Corinthians 6:14. Do not be unequally yoked. Finding a romantic partnership is governed by boundaries. One of those boundaries is this: believers are not to be in romantic relationships with nonbelievers. Believers who choose to disobey that boundary cannot expect God’s blessings on the relationship. Instead, they can expect pain, chaos and other signs of God’s disapproval.

We see other boundaries in Genesis 24 and 1 Corinthians 7. Choosing a mate in God’s way, in His timing, and consistent with His Word is central to godliness.

Being in a wrong romantic relationship makes it extremely difficult to adore Christ, to become transformed into His likeness and to represent His kingdom well on earth. In other words, being in a wrong relationship can cause a disciple to miss the reason that disciple is on the earth.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are ways to hold a friend accountable to godliness and obedience without being overbearing or alienating?

On Your Own

What do you see as some of the joys of running hard after Christ with someone you are in love with? What do you see as some of the sorrows of trying to run hard after Christ alone, while the one you love has no interest in doing so? Write some of your thoughts in the space below.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: “In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . .”

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Finding a romantic partnership can be good and can be a result of God's grace and faithfulness. We can also see reflected in a godly romantic relationship God's love and devotion to us as we sacrifice our own interests for those of the other person.

However, not every potential romantic interest is beneficial or spiritually uplifting. As with most things, God's gifts are given to us along with wisdom in the Scriptures as to how to properly steward those gifts.

Being in a wrong romantic relationship makes it extremely difficult to worship Christ, to become transformed into His likeness, and to represent His kingdom well on earth. In other words, being in a wrong relationship can lead a disciple to miss the reason that disciple is on the earth.

To summarize, we see that:

- Romantic relationships can be good.
- We must trust God's timing and wisdom, looking to the Scriptures and to past experiences of His faithfulness for encouragement and confirmation of our faith.
- We pursue romantic relationships realizing that we sacrifice the simplicity of being unattached with the more complicated condition of being romantically attached. In other words, we pursue a romantic interest realistically.
- We pursue romantic relationships in the way that pleases God (i.e., in the way God has instructed us in His Word). He knows what is best for us, and we submit to His standards, trusting in His care and goodness.
- We pursue romantic relationships that lead to the joy of running hard after Christ, in dating or marriage, for the glory of Jesus.

Follow up Question

What principles of Scripture will guide you as you consider possible romantic relationships?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.