

Experiencing Romantic Relationships

By John D. Wilsey

Pre-Session Assignments

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

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Psalm 119:9 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Romans 12:1–3. Paul was talking to the leaders of the Roman church and describing the essence of godliness. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What imagery did Paul use to describe the denial of self that is necessary to be a follower of Christ?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Psalm 119:13 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Revelation 2:1–5. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does this passage communicate about where you place your heart's chief desire?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Psalm 119:16 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Matthew 6:21. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does Jesus' teaching here clarify the meaning of Psalm 119:16?

Scripture to Memorize

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word. Psalm 119:9

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 concepts regarding keeping priorities straight in the midst of a romantic relationship.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

For a few months you have been interested in someone beyond friendship. After the first few dates, it's looking like you're in a romantic relationship for sure. And let's face it—you're pretty excited. At the same time your faith is important to you. So, how do you stay faithful to Jesus while experiencing a romantic relationship?

Read Psalm 119:9–16 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 9. How can a young man keep his way pure? This verse is asking the question about how to be sanctified, how to be conformed to the mind of Christ. How can a person be kept unstained by the world? It's a great question and one that everyone, regardless of age, must grapple with every single day. The answer is profoundly simple: **By guarding it according to Your Word.** We study the Word of God to gain wisdom, to know the truth, and to commune with our Maker and Savior.

Verse 10. I seek You. Fellowship with Christ and obedience to His commands are our priorities as Christians. Wandering away from Him can be unintentional, or it can be intentional. Regardless of the motivation, wandering from Christ can lead to the tragic results of sin and destruction.

Verse 11. I have stored up Your Word in my heart. God, in Christ, is our first love and must have our first devotion no matter how deeply we feel about our romantic relationships. Concerted will and determination are required to keep your priorities straight, but this can be done by heeding the Word of God.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What imagery did Paul use to describe the denial of self that is necessary to be a follower of Christ?

Discussion Questions

What does a passage like this have to do with experiencing romantic relationships? In other words, what does the pursuit of fellowship with Christ have to do with dating?

On Your Own

The heart (referenced in Psalm 119:11) is the seat of the affections. In the space below, list those things and people upon which you set your heart. What competes with God in terms of your love and loyalty? Ask someone you trust to hold you accountable.

Studying the Passage

Verse 12. Teach me Your statutes. The Bible is unlike any other book. You do not submit yourself under any other book but the Bible. Submission to the Word of God is equal to submission to God Himself, and being in submission to Jesus is what makes you His disciple.

Verse 13. lips . . . mouth. Words proceed from the heart. When Christ is our desire, we seek to please Him, spread His gospel, and speak of our love for Him. In a romantic relationship, Jesus and His Word should be prominent topics of conversation. If speaking of Jesus is awkward, that should be a clear sign the relationship is not wise.

Verse 14. I delight. Christ and His Word bring joy to those who love Him. When He is your first love and the first love of someone you care about, the joy He brings to both of you is compounded.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What does Revelation 2:1–5 communicate about where you place your heart's chief desire?

Discussion Question

Apart from a romantic relationship, what are some things that keep us from reading God's Word? Does the fear of what God will call us to do keep us away sometimes? Where does that fear come from?

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. I will meditate. This repeats the instruction to think and to dwell on God—His character, will and excellencies—as we submit ourselves to Him in trust and love.

Verse 16. I will not forget. It isn't difficult to remember what you value, but it is difficult to remember that which you view as cheap. One of sin's greatest powers over us is that we forget God and place our affections on other things or people.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:21 clarify the meaning of Psalm 119:16?

Discussion Question

Do you value Jesus because of what He does for you? Or do you value Him because He is glorious and valuable within Himself? Do you value your romantic partner because of what your partner does for you? Or do you value your partner because your partner was designed and created by God in His image?

On Your Own

One of the great temptations that come with romantic relationships is the temptation to pursue another person in place of pursuing God. In the space below, list what might be some early signs that a person has started in that direction.

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

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

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

Being in a relationship means you concern yourself with another person's interests. It also means making their well-being your own well-being. Doing these things is a joy and not a burden, but in the thrill of that pursuit, you can so set your heart on that person that you are drawn away from Christ. As you are drawn away, you draw the other person away from Christ as well.

This is part of what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 7. He said it was easier to be single and, thus, undistracted. However, losing one's focus on Christ is not inevitable. The key is to give yourself fully to Him as He draws you to Himself through His Word. Christ is the best discipler for you, and He will reveal His deep secrets to you if you will but allow Him.

When you have an intentional and focused pursuit of Christ in the midst of a romantic relationship, the other person will also be drawn to Him. You will both benefit, and the strength of your bond will grow appropriately as you both become more and more devoted to Christ.

Follow up Question

If you or someone you care about begins to sense that a romantic relationship is distracting from a first-love relationship with Christ, how do you plan to respond?

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.