

Text: I Corinthians 7:1-9

Title: "The Dating Game"

Introduction: Over the past few weeks we have been talking about relationships and how God has a way the He wants us to be in relationship with Him and with God's kids (other people). I argue that our lives revolve around relationships, whether it is a family (sibling, parent-child, spousal, etc.) relationship, a work relationship, a friendship or a romantic relationship; our lives revolve around relationships.

Let's not go any further before we make sure we are clear on something. This was all God's idea! Human beings being created and invited to be in relationship with God and with each other was all God's idea. Also, God knows how each of these relationships is supposed to work. God holds the back-of-the-book answer key!

"You want answers? Do you want answers?..." If we want answers, we've got 'em! Any relationship answers you want, they are findable in our Bibles...

So, let's get right at it. If you would please, take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today and on the other an outline so that you can follow along with where we are at. Notice the blanks supplied for you to fill in. Please fill them in! Take this sheet home and hang it up ... especially if you are dating or trying to date right now. You might need these. If you are listening on line or IPODing, welcome; and you too, may download the program off of our website and fill in blanks.

Today, we are talking about singleness and dating... I would like to suggest that the whole "single/dating/courtship/let's just be friends" scene is more complex and complicated than at any other time in history. The dating scene is so complex that we now have to have websites to match you up with someone like you... It used to be that you would just marry the local guy or girl you got along with the best. Now, people can date and marry women and men from around the world! Really cool, but complex!

With the complexity of the dating scene today, it's really easy to lose traction in those relationships ... easy to slip up and have multiple relationships disappear.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to date these days is that our thinking about dating and love and romance have been twisted by our society, our culture, our media presence to the point that we are not really sure what is right and what is not.

If I may, please allow me to share a couple of problems with our thinking around the subject of dating in 2010. Problems with our thinking about singleness and dating... again, we need to listen to what God has to say about being single and dating or we are going to experience some pretty messy stuff in this life.

**I. Problem #1: Believing that Being Married is Normal**

A. We live in a society that says that being "Married is Normal". That means that if you are NOT married, you are ... "ABNORMAL".

Anyone ever feel like that?

1. It's like you are your own separate entity ... please stay in your sector if you would ... lepers over here, singles over there... and all the normal (married) people can stay in this room.

2. I know this happens in this community and we have unintentionally done that here at this church at times, so if you have ever felt excluded here because you are not married, we are sorry. We will take time to address marriage relationships the next couple of weeks ... we have to deal with those people too!
  3. Especially in a small town ... singles are singled out, whether you are young and dating or still dating or you have lost a spouse and are dating again or you are single again through divorce, there is this weird stigma about single people.
  4. It's like single people should live on college campuses and in apartments in cities somewhere... quarantined.
  5. But, guess what?? The Bible talks highly, not only of marriage, but of singleness as well. Did you know that!?
- B. In our scripture for today, the Apostle Paul is writing a letter to a Church that he started in a city called, "CORINTH".
1. Corinth is really relevant to our situation today. See, Corinth was one of the main port towns for the Mediterranean Sea. That means that there were a bunch of sailors and merchants, etc. coming through town.
  2. In turn, Corinth became like the "Las Vegas" of the Mediterranean. "What happens in Corinth; stays in Corinth".
  3. Corinth had plenty of prostitutes and sexual temptation ... and Paul decided to start a church there.
  4. Well, then Paul had to address what to do with all the temptations the people were dealing with every day as they attempted to follow God ... sounds like this might speak to us, huh!?
  5. If you have your Bible with you, we are in I Corinthians (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Corinthians) chapter 7 ... 1<sup>st</sup> verse.
- PRAY 1<sup>ST</sup> ... READ I CORINTHIANS 7:1-9 NOW!**
- C. Did you all catch what it said in verse 7? "But God gives to some ... the gift of singleness." It's a gift? Can we take it back? Is there a receipt?
1. But, that's what Paul is saying here ... it's good to be single!
  2. If you have a choice and you can handle it ... stay single!
  3. Why? Why would Paul push people to stay single if they could?
  4. Maybe Paul can't get a decent date and now he's pretending that it's on purpose ... "Yeah, I could have a date if I wanted, but, I'm choosing to fly solo right now!"
  5. Actually, Paul had a bigger idea in mind...
- D. Okay ... before we go any further, let me ask you a "church question" (that means you know the right answer): The two most central people in the New Testament are Paul and ... \_\_\_\_\_ (Jesus). Right!

1. So, for Paul, he wants to center his life on Jesus ... he wants to be as much like Jesus as he possibly can (and Paul writes this).
  2. Okay, another question: What is one character quality that Paul and Jesus share?? Right! They are both SINGLE!
  3. We cannot forget that Jesus was SINGLE!
- E. Bigger Question ... a world-view question (probably don't think about it very often, but it drives a lot of what we do): What does humanity look like at its very best? Aren't we all, consciously or sub-consciously working our way toward what we think is the best way to live this life? How can we get the most out of life?
1. Most people just fall back on whatever our culture is saying "full life" looks like ... right clothes, right car, right body-type, right experiences, right beer, etc. If you have these things that our media advertises, you will experience a full life!
  2. I hope most of us have figured that one out ... they are just human sales people trying to get you to buy stuff so they can get richer...
  3. Okay, another church question: What does humanity look like at its most complete or "fullness"? Answer: Jesus!
  4. The Church has had the same answer for 2,000 years ... full life means that we are as much like Jesus as we can possibly be ... Christianity! Followers of Christ.
  5. Jesus life rises above all other lives and Jesus' stories have been put in the Bible so that we can strive to live life like Him!
- F. Don't miss this: Jesus life is humanity at its best. Jesus' life is what we, as Christians are striving for. And Jesus was SINGLE ... and CELIBATE!
- G. I know some people who are single who think that they are missing out on life ... it's like not really living ... and won't get to live life fully until they are married. Don't buy it! That is a LIE! It's a myth!
1. You are in a position to be in the same league as Jesus and Paul and experience a very full life!
  2. Some of you have the "gift of singleness". Take advantage of it and serve the Kingdom of God from who you are and where you are at!
  3. Paul never had to ask his wife if it was okay if he went on another mission trip to start churches and be gone for a few years!!!
  4. BUT, some of you do not have the "gift of singleness" but you are still single. That means that you are attempting to date! Now, we have another problem that comes with singles and courtship / dating ... here it is:

## II. **Problem #2: Accepting the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) in the ADS (American Dating System)**

Okay, how many of you love PIZZA? ICE CREAM? How many of you love your MOM? How many of you love a certain FOOTBALL TEAM (Green and Gold)? How many of you love your SPOUSE?

Are all of those the same kind of love? I hope you do not love PIZZA and GRANDMA the same way!

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called “The Four Loves” that explains the different kinds of love that the Greek language (New Testament language) used:

### A. Four Loves

1. Eros – sexual attraction, “Erotic”
2. Storge – Affection, warm feelings, a sense of belonging, might be an object or a song that makes you feel good or like everything will be okay. Romance and sentimentality.
3. Phileo – Philadelphia is the “City of Brotherly Love”. This is the “I love you, man” feeling. A friendship with someone with similar interests and ideas in life ... a real connection.
4. Agape – Unconditional Love ... you can’t lose it or earn it by what you do. This love says, “I will put your needs and interests as a higher priority than my own.” It doesn’t matter how I “FEEL”, I am committed to loving you no matter what happens...
5. Interesting history on this word “AGAPE”... Before Jesus, this word was a very generic meaning of LOVE, but after Jesus, the New Testament writers used the existing word to describe this new kind of LOVE that Jesus showed ... unconditional, sacrificial, “It’s not about Me!” kind of LOVE. People had never seen the kind of love that Jesus showed them and they needed a word to describe this incredible, unconditional, AGAPE LOVE.
6. Do you know what this is? This is the kind of love that God shows us no matter what we do or what we think or how we act. This AGAPE love is what God does for us when God sends His Son to die on a cross for our sins while at the same time we flipping God off with our words and actions.
7. Guess what? There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less. You, today, are stuck with God loving you. The only choice to make now is: will you love God back? Or, will you continue to turn your back on God or give God the finger?

### B. Get the Order Right

1. So we have 4 LOVES and here is how the SOP of the ADS utilizes these 4 LOVES: Let’s say a girl walks into a room where there are a couple of guys. What happens? The radar goes up ... are there any prospects here?!? Right?

2. Then, what does the girl use to decide which guy to talk to? What is the filtering mechanism? Can we be honest here? It's some sort of combination of "Storge" and "Eros" ... who's the hottie and who's the nottie? Right?
  3. Starting point is: is he cute enough? Then, you go after "Storge" ... talk a little, flirt a little ... are there sparks flying? Any emotional excitement?
  4. Then, based on "Eros" and "Storge", you decide if there is something worth pursuing.
  5. And in the SOP of the ADS, most try to find out by the use of Storge and Eros, if they are compatible. Based on physical attraction and physical experimenting (let's call this UPI = Unlimited Physical Interaction ... there are kids in the room), we make a decision if we want to pursue the relationship further...
  6. So, if enough is happening in Storge and Eros, then we decide to have a "RELATIONSHIP" ... start to pursue the friendship part of it (Phileo). Now, we are getting serious.
  7. In the ADS, often times people are UPI before they have even worked on the friendship.
  8. In the ADS, very seldom does AGAPE even show up on the radar screen! Why? Because in the ADS the individuals are trying to find out if this relationship is going to meet their own needs and wants and desires. The idea is that if I give out what they need, I'd better get back what I need!
  9. And everyone has out their clipboard to keep score of who has done what and is it even ... is it fair? If it's not fair or the individual is not getting what they think they deserve, then we give up on the relationship! In the ADS, AGAPE is not even considered.
  10. If you are single today, maybe you are thinking that this ADS thing is not working for you ... guess what?!? God offers us another option!
- C. God's way ... Shift the 4 LOVES around.
1. Eros, which is the ADS 1<sup>st</sup> consideration, shifts to a safe place; the last place. You kind of knew that was coming didn't you?!? That doesn't mean that Eros disappears altogether. There is still physical attraction, etc...
  2. But, there is a reason for that ... it's because the Christian view of UPI is a different view than the ADS. The Christian view of UPI is very high ... it's not a recreational sport / it's not dirty or nasty. That is all a low view of UPI. As Christians, it is an amazing gift from God that God (when God invented / created it) intended to solidify / cement / gorilla glue a relationship together...

3. UPI is intended to happen within “Emotional Union”, “Intellectual Union”, “Relational Union”, “Spiritual Union” and “Legal Union”. UPI is not ONENESS in just a physical way ... that’s low view UPI. Sex is a multi-dimensional experience that wraps us up emotionally, intellectually, relationally, spiritually and legally.
4. UPI is intended to happen within something called...

### III. **TLC = Total Life Commitment**

- A. The Bible word for this is “COVENANT”. It’s a marriage COVENANT (an agreement in front of God)! UPI was not intended as a stand-alone experience. It was meant to be COVENANT CEMENT.
- B. It allows us to cement this life-long commitment on so many levels and fuses us to another person. That’s what God intended it to be ... the ADS has cheapened what God intended.
- C. God intended UPI to be gorilla glue ... that’s why it hurts so badly if you have been with someone that you are not married to and that relationship ends. “Oh, that didn’t hurt ... good riddance!” Right. Convince yourself.
- D. UPI is supposed to cement us to someone else for a lifetime! That’s what God intended it to be. It hurts if we use it the wrong way!
- E. So, where do Christians start? Genesis 2:18 = “It is not good for man to be alone.” God made a woman and Adam started writing poetry, “At last! This one is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh...”
  1. God’s talking about Oneness.
  2. As Christians we start with Phileo. We have to come together as friends... Marrieds = if your spouse is not your best friend, your ‘check engine’ light should have just come on. Get to work ... more next week!
  3. God wants you to have someone that you can face the world with. Someone who will be a reminder to you that you are never alone and that God was good enough to bless you with that person... designed to be your spouse!
  4. Friendship (Phileo) is the backbone to the Christian Dating System. That seldom happens in the SOP of the ADS.
  5. When you walk into a room, the question you need to be asking is, “Which one of these could potentially be a life-long friend?” You can’t answer that in the first few minutes. It takes time to find out shared interests, viewpoints and goals...
- F. Okay, let’s finish this ... Start with Phileo and build a friendship. From there you can find out if that Storge develops (affection ... I want to hang around that person more ... we have similar interests, I sense some chemistry and feel romantic even).
- G. After Phileo and Storge grow stronger, you find that you really love that person and you would do anything for that person.

- H. That's the AGAPE love kicking in ... get married and make that commitment to them in front of God. THEN... cement the relationship!!!!
- I. Please understand that this is not a rigid step-by-step program. You do not map out ... "Phileo has started, so in about a month we will start in with Storge and then on July 10<sup>th</sup> is AGAPE DAY! Oh, which means by Christmas EROS can go CRAZY!!
- J. That leads us to another potential problem... BELIEVING THAT MARRIAGE WILL BE MY ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT! If I can just find the right person... my life will be complete ("You complete me..." "You had me at 'hello'!").
- K. Remember a couple of weeks ago we talked about letting our friends off the hook because they would never be perfect? Sometimes we think that our spouse is the one that will complete us and bring us pure joy and happiness. Only Jesus can save us. Stop expecting your spouse to do it! Often we go into marriage thinking that other person will make up for all that's been missing in life...

#### IV. Home Life vs. Love Life

- A. Now, my understanding is that there are certain things that we need during our years growing up in our home. Studies show that in order to be a well-balanced human being, we need consistent and ongoing:
  1. Respect, encouragement, comfort, support, unconditional acceptance, approval, attention, security and well-modeled conflict resolution ... I'm sure we all walked out of our homes with all that, right?!?
  2. Most of us go into adulthood still looking for these things and when we are falling in love we wonder if that person is going to give us all those things ... respect, encouragement, comfort, approval, support, or are you just pretty?!?
- B. That's why some of our marriages feel like a stranglehold. Our spouses are trying to get out of us what they needed growing up. Once we marry, then we often think that's what we DESERVE! "You owe me all these things I need!"
- C. More about this the next few weeks...

#### V. What I Look Like at My Best = Jesus

- A. I had a sociology professor in college that taught me about marriage. Professor Gould said something pretty profound ... "Instead of looking for the right person to marry, we need to be working on becoming the right person to marry."
- B. What do I look like at my best? Like Jesus. Whether that is single or dating or married, I need to continue to build my relationship with Jesus Christ!
- C. Wherever you are at today, be encouraged. God wants what is best for you... You were designed for a purpose!

*Next Week: An overview of what I think is the main problem in many marriages today and how to solve it! It's probably not what you think.*

Let's Pray!