

God's Truth About Alliances: Dating

by Russell Kelfer

Russell Kelfer discusses the importance of spiritual agreement in dating and relationships, emphasizing the dangers of unholy alliances.

Duration: 44:05

Topics: "Dating"

Description

In this sermon, Russell Kelfer discusses the importance of guiding young people in developing right relationships. He emphasizes the need for parents to take responsibility in training their children according to God's ways. Kelfer also highlights the role of the church in supporting and praying for young people to live their lives from God's perspective. He introduces eight principles that will be discussed in the lesson, including the principle of parental responsibility. The sermon focuses on the topic of alliances or relationships and distinguishes between pure relationships and those that involve Christians and non-Christians.

Transcript

The lesson you're about to hear is designed to help you in your spiritual pilgrimage. We pray that this will be a blessing in your life. Our teacher is Russell Kelfer of the Into His Likeness radio broadcast.

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We also invite you to visit us anytime on the World Wide Web. Our Internet address is simply www.dtm.org. We pray God's richest blessing may be yours as He continues to live His life in you. This morning we do continue with the series on Satan's Lies and God's Truth about the basic issues of life.

This is the third lesson dealing with the last topic, and the last topic is Satan's Lies and God's Truth about alliances or relationships. The title you may recall is, How Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed? There are three kinds of relationships that Christians and non-Christians have with each other. The first are peer relationships.

These are relationships such as you would have with your classmates at school, or with those where you work, or with your neighbors. The goals of this kind of a relationship are many. The goals may be to develop communication.

The goal may be evangelism. You may be placed in a place next to those who need and need to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Sometimes our peers are put into our lives as heavenly sandpaper to bring character into our lives.

Sometimes they are put into our lives to develop our testimony. And then there is an authority relationship. This is a situation where two or more people are linked together in a system of order, where one is over the other.

And in this case, it is a totally different scriptural set of guidelines than with either a peer relationship or an alliance relationship. An authority relationship, for instance, would be your boss and your employee relationship. It would be the citizen and the government relationship.

It would be a child-parent relationship. But the third area where we will spend and have been spending most of our time these three weeks is the alliance relationship. This is where two people or more gather together and join together in union with shared authority and shared responsibility.

They have common objectives, there is assumed harmony, and there is a mutual commitment along with a common bond and purpose. Marriage is the perfect illustration of an alliance relationship. Another is dating.

Another is a business partnership. Another is a church alliance or group. And still another would be nations entering into treaties with one another.

An unholy alliance, then, by this definition would be where two attempt to walk together without being spiritually agreed. That is an unholy alliance. The purpose of this study has been to closely examine Satan's lies in this area, and particularly where the last group, alliance relationships, are concerned.

Now here are some of the principles on which these lessons have been built. I gave you eleven of them. We're only going to talk about three.

The first one is that our God is a jealous God, where relationships are concerned. We read extensively the last two Sundays from Exodus chapter 34, from Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 5, Deuteronomy 6, and what we learned is that our God is a jealous God. By jealous we mean that He guards and protects His children in their relationships with the world, and in particular with unbelievers, with a jealous kind of love, a parental kind of jealousy.

The second principle was that God in Scripture demands that believers make no alliances with unbelievers. Now you remember what an alliance relationship is. We learned in Deuteronomy chapter 7, last Sunday, that there are detailed warnings about what God's children must and must not do where unbelievers are concerned.

And you'll remember in Amos chapter 3, verse 3, the question was asked, How can two walk together except they be agreed? And the answer was given in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 14 through 17. The answer is they can't, that there is no basis for believers and unbelievers to be unequally yoked together. And Paul said this is the reason.

And is there any way, Paul said, you can take light and merge it with darkness? No, you can't do it. He said is there any way that you can take perfect righteousness and perfect lawlessness and bring them together? You can't do it. It would be like trying to wed the mafia with the church.

Is there any way, Paul said, that you can take the holy temple of God and put idols in it and not contaminate its holiness? And Paul said there's no way. And he went on to say, don't you know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that He lives within you? You're not your own. You've been bought with a price.

And so by means of that, he said anytime your body, your life, your soul comes into contact in an alliance type of relationship with an unbeliever, then you are taking and joining the temple of God with idols. But he goes one step further and that's the final blow. Paul says, how could you have a wedding ceremony and have Jesus Christ and Satan get married? And you say, well, that isn't a very... that we don't even like to think about that thought.

And Paul said that's the basis on which God demands that the believer make no unholy relationships with unbelievers. The third principle is the last that we'll remind you of this morning. And that is not only does God demand that, but He gives a list of clear consequences if the principle is violated.

And young people, you might want to make note of these consequences because they are real. The first one is, he says it will affect your spiritual growth. In Joshua chapter 23, you'll recall Joshua was giving his farewell address.

And as he said goodbye, he said, you're going to enter into the land where all the heathen are. Be careful because we know what you're going to do. And he said, if you intermarry with them, it will be three things to you.

It will be a snare and a trap. In other words, it will affect your walk with God. It will be a pain in your side, he said.

It will affect your joy. And it will be like thorns in your eyes. It will affect your perspective over your vision.

The second thing we learned is that it affects your ability to have power over the enemy. The enemy comes down the mountain. The children of God who had intermarried with the heathen and begun to worship their gods, the enemy came down the mountain and they said, hey, God, deliver us.

And they heard nothing. The third thing is it will affect God's umbrella of protection over you. And we studied last week the incident of Pharaoh and the children of Israel and how God protected them with an umbrella of protection as the enemy were destroyed by plague after plague after plague.

And then fourthly, it will affect your children either now or in the years to come. Genesis 19, 12 through 14. And then lastly, it will affect your ability to have communication.

Now, I'm hurrying through these illustrations because they are reviewed to most of you. But I do want those who are here this morning for the first time to understand. The greatest single misconception in dating relationships is that a Christian can get involved with a non-Christian as a tool for evangelism.

And I believe that that is not a scriptural principle. And this is the reason why. People say, you know, I began going with so-and-so and I was a really strong Christian.

I was really doing fine. But, you know, all of a sudden I looked around a few weeks later and down the hill I'd gone. And I don't understand it because the scripture says, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

And these are the two reasons that I don't believe that principle applies. It is true, greater is he that is in you. But it is also true that you yourself at any given time are not necessarily greater than he that is in the world.

Now listen, the first illustration reminds us that in the will of God there is power. And the Christian in the will of God has the power to withstand the enemy. But you must remember that when you enter into an alliance relationship, you become unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

You step out of the will of God because you ignore the known Word of God and you lose your power. The second illustration is two people, one is a Christian and one is not. The Christian is drawn magnetically to the Word in his spirit, magnetically to the world in the flesh.

The unbeliever whom he is holding hands with is drawn magnetically to the world in the flesh, period. Now I don't know how your arithmetic is, but simple arithmetic will tell us there are two forces drawing or pulling against one. And when you yoke those two together, the results are not usually good.

That unequal yoking creates the problem of no communication in the spirit realm. The illustration you see is that station WORD is broadcasting truth. And this signal is being broadcast to whoever can hear it.

Now what you see in the first house is Susie Smith. Susie is a Christian. She has received the Holy Spirit and she can receive truth.

She has made the Calvary connection. It unscrambles the signal and she can receive that spiritual truth. In the other house you see Jimmy Jones.

He is not a Christian. All he gets when he receives spiritual things is a scrambled, jargled picture. He doesn't understand it.

The Scripture says, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither indeed can he discern them, because they are spiritually discerned. Now the third house you see is Susie Smith and Jimmy Jones after they get married. Now they are living together hand in hand and the two have become one.

And problems arise and they need to resolve their problems. They need God's perspective. The problem is Susie has an antenna and Jimmy doesn't.

And the result is confusion, disharmony, and compromise. Last Sunday we applied these principles on a national level. We talked about our relationship to the nations who defy God, about arming ourselves naturally, about spies, about entering into treaties with our enemies, and about depending on God's enemies for our strength.

But this morning now we are going to take a more practical look at the personal aspects of these principles, particularly where dating, marriage, and parent-child relationships are concerned. I must admit this is a really tough lesson to teach. I have a lot of enemies already.

And no, seriously, it's tough because we want to see it from a parent's perspective and then we want to see it from a young person's perspective. So what we have to do is look at it from God's perspective

because then there will be no conflict between the two. Now, let me begin by making this comment.

God has told us everything you'll ever need to know about dating, everything you'll ever need to know about marriage, and everything you'll ever need to know about friendships in the Scripture. You say, well, my Bible doesn't say a thing about dating. I looked into the concordance under D, and then I looked under B for boyfriends because I wanted one, and nothing there.

It's true, God doesn't give you a printed list of do's and don'ts. You can look under C's and you won't find a thing about curfews. You can look under R's and there's nothing about R-rated movies.

These are cultural applications of Scriptural principles, but all of the principles necessary to make all of the decisions necessary that we'll ever need to make about curfews, about R-rated movies, and about everything else we have to deal with are found in the Word of God. Now, what do we mean by principles? A principle is the heart of God as revealed through the Word of God, thus giving the Christian the mind of God. Principles are general concepts that are designed when understood to allow the Christian to make specific choices.

So the Scripture does not need to get into cultural situations, and the Scripture does not need to tell us what time our children ought to be in. It would be easy if it says, Thou shalt have Thy Son in at 1125. All our problems would be solved.

We'd wave the Bible at our son and say, Come in at 1125. It's not quite that simple. But through parables, through proverbs, through the way God deals with Israel, through the illustrations of Scripture, but always through repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition, you find the principles of Scripture emerge and give us clear-cut vision of the mind of God.

So there's no doubt about what God wants us to do about dating and marriage. Now I'm going to give you eight principles that we're going to be dealing with in this lesson and others. Number one, the principle of parental responsibility.

Parents are responsible to train up a child God's way in every detail of his life. It's from one end of Scripture to the other. The principle of unequal yoking.

We've dealt with it for three weeks, that there is a believer and an unbeliever can make no alliance together without dire consequences. The principle of testing God. A Christian has no right to put God in a corner by going as far as he can and then saying, Help, Lord.

Satan tried to do that, you remember, with Jesus in the wilderness. He said, Why don't you jump off that building over there and let's just see what God can do. And Jesus answered, It is written, Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test.

And the principle of the sovereignty of God. The principle of the roles of men and women. The principles of preparation.

The principles of moral purity. The principles of spiritual priority. That if you seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, God will provide for your needs.

Even your dates. Even your children's needs. If you apply what you know of these principles through this lesson, you will know the will of God where dating, marriage, partnerships, and so forth are concerned.

Now, we learned two weeks ago that God saw a progression of behavior in the children of Israel each time they were brought into close contact with the heathen. Number one, first the children of God would make friends of the heathen and enjoy their fellowship and enjoy their standards and enjoy their culture. Secondly, the children of God would begin to date the unbelievers.

And the Scripture says the parents were allowing it. They were encouraging the guys to take their girls and the girls to take their guys. And then there would be intermarriage naturally between God's children and those who were not God's children, invoking the wrath of God.

And then fourthly, the children of God would begin to yield to the idolatry of their unbelieving mates. And the gods of the world became the gods of God's children. And then lastly, the nation always came under the judgment of God.

So the process began in the area of friendships. Now, the principle of parental responsibility says that parenthood is a God-given gift. Aren't you glad, parents? But that it carries with it God-given responsibilities and accountabilities.

And oh, how we know it. It is popular today, and the world encourages this, to throw up your hands and say, What can I do? They have to live their own lives. And oh, the pressures are so great.

Granted, the pressures are greater than they ever have been, and that's all the more reason. That is a wrong premise. Parents are to teach their children God's perspective of life in every facet of the child's development, especially where relationships are concerned.

The Scripture says, line upon line. That means every word emphasized over and over and over. Precept against precept.

It means principle over principle over principle, applied and applied and applied. It says when they rise up in the morning, when they go to bed at night. It even includes when they go to bed at night.

When they sit in the house. When they're walking by the way. Visual reminders to punctuate the principles on the doorposts, on the gates, like frontlets between their eyes.

And a good place to begin is with their friendships. Here's nine things that every parent can do to help his children build the right kind of friendships. Number one, and this part at least applies to those of you with very small children.

You thought we'd never get to you, and we won't again this morning. Number one, set yourself from the beginning as God's authority where friendships are concerned. It is not a right your children give you to control their friendships.

It is a responsibility God gave you. Little children in the neighborhood that are unfavorable influences on your child, for instance, as a little tot, have to be dealt with. They become bad influences.

We must not reject the child, but we must reject the child's behavior. Number two, teach your children to discern character. It's not this that little Johnny had a temper tantrum.

It is that little Johnny has an impatient spirit. What's the source of an impatient spirit? What's the solution to an impatient spirit? In other words, teach character. The third thing is, teach them to pray for right friendships.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth a whole bunch, is the literal translation. And the key is that if we ask, we receive. If we seek, we find.

And so often our children are put in positions, if they have to stand alone, that they don't have the kind of friendships they need. This gives God an opportunity to meet their needs in answer to prayer. Fourthly, teach them what makes a good friend.

Scripture is full of instances of what makes a good friend. A good friend is one who keeps his confidences, keeps his mouth shut. Proverbs 11, 13.

A good friend is one who overlooks mistakes. Proverbs 17, 9. A good friend is one who stands by you when you're in trouble. Proverbs 17, 17.

A good friend is not short-tempered. Proverbs 22, 24. A good friend is honest with you, tells it like it is.

Proverbs 27, 6. A good friend helps you when you're down. Ecclesiastes 4, 9, and 10. A good friend is one who's in harmony with you spiritually.

Amos 3, 3. And then number five, show them by your friendships how it's supposed to work. They're going to watch you anyhow. They're going to pay more attention to what you do than what you say.

So what kind of friends do you have and how faithful are you to your friendships? Then number six, as they mature, turn loose gradually and relinquish control, but only relative to discernment. The parable of the good steward. If you can handle a little, you give them more.

If they can't handle a little, you take away the responsibility they have until they can handle the little. You don't dump the whole nine yards on them. Responsibility, young people.

Do you know what it is? Responsibility is a reward for the ability to respond correctly. That's what responsibility is. And it's a gift.

It is a gift in answer to your right responses. But it's not right. Number seven, make your home a center for your children's activities so you can have input in their friendships.

And lastly, consider Christian educational alternatives. This is not for everyone, but for many it is. And remember, it's the parent's choice, not the child's.

The ninth thing a parent can do is to become a clearinghouse for his children's dates. Now here's where we're going to lose some people. Let's use the daughter as our example, and we're going to ask nine questions about every date she has.

Maybe she's only had one, so it won't take long. Remember, by principle, the Bible answers every question about dating. Now parent, every date your daughter has, you ought to meet first.

And young person, every date is a family affair. And God plans to use your parents, Christians or not, as a screen to protect you from dangers and to give you insight. Now we need to preface this portion of the study with two quick statements.

Number one, based on Scripture, it is never the perfect will of God for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. Now be careful. Don't misunderstand that.

By the perfect will of God, we mean that to choose beforehand to yoke a believer with an unbeliever is to unite the body of Christ in adultery with the body of Satan, and it is never God's first choice. It doesn't mean the person is not God's first choice, but it cannot be God's first choice until they become a Christian. If you're already married and one becomes a Christian, or you have violated this principle, either knowingly or unknowingly, you are to remain together by love serving one another for the rest of your lives, and a God of grace is designed to work all things together for His glory and for your good.

That's a promise. It is now the permissible will of God, but the consequence remains. If you're widowed even, Paul says you are free to remarry, but only if you remarry a Christian.

Repeat, it is never the perfect will of God for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. Principle number two. Dating is basically a means to an end.

The end is marriage. By dating we mean one male, one female agreeing together to accompany each other for a prescribed period of time for fellowship. That's a long way.

You know what I mean. Dating can best be understood in the light of God's courting the church. How does God court the church? Well, first of all, His goal in courting the church is not to tease us.

His goal is to bring us to Himself, to take a bride for Himself. That's His goal. His second goal is that He initiate the relationship.

You have not chosen me, He said, but I have chosen you. Thirdly, His goal is to create a permanent relationship. He said, I will never leave you and I will never forsake you.

And lastly, if they reject His Father God, He rejects them. This doesn't mean you marry each girl or each guy you date, but it does mean your standards for dating will ultimately be your standards for marriage. Now, the positions we're taking here are based on a study of all the principles we've talked about and have been confirmed by personal experience through counseling again and again and again, as many of you have, with teenagers, with young people, with young marrieds, with parents both perplexed and pleased.

And the message is really very clear. There are certain scriptural principles which, when obeyed, unbelievable blessings resolve. And when compromised, unbelievable problems resolve.

And the pattern doesn't deviate. Well, parents, it's your responsibility, like it or not, to control who your children date. And young people, it's their responsibility and your responsibility to submit to their leadership.

Now, here are nine questions you ought to ask, a dad ought to ask himself and his daughter, about this young fellow that's coming to take her out. Number one, most important, is he a Christian? Has he personally received Jesus Christ? What fellowship does light have with darkness? Either he is or he isn't. If he isn't, there's no basis for a date.

Number two, is he growing spiritually? 2 Corinthians 3.18 says, "...in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another." That's the purpose of the Christian life. If he isn't a growing Christian, then he has nothing to offer her. And sometimes, there are as many dangers in dating a carnal Christian, or one who is not in the Scriptures and not growing, than there is almost in dating an unbeliever.

Do they have common spiritual objectives, even as Christians? Can you discern an impure spirit? Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. That's what the Scripture says. But it also tells us in 1 John, that the more we see him, the more like him we become.

Look at the way he dresses, the conversation, the habits. Do you discern an impure spirit? Is he more mature than she is? Ephesians chapter 5 tells us it is the man's role in marriage to lead the wife spiritually. And dating is to prepare for marriage.

Does he show both you and her parents the proper respect? I can just see these kids scratching these names off. Children, obey your parents that it may be well with you that you may prosper in the land, that you may have success. Does he show proper respect to you and to his own parents? Will he guard her against evil influences? What are his tastes in music and entertainment? Where his treasure is, there will his heart be also.

He may talk spiritual, but what is he drawn to? And lastly, it may be a bit premature in some cases, but can you visualize him someday as a son-in-law? That's a tough one for most fathers. Now, how do you interview a prospective date? Let's just suppose your daughter, Greta Goodshoes, wants to go out with Bobby Bashful. And she says, you've got to meet my daddy.

And he says, you've got to what? He says, you've got to meet my daddy. And he said, Jerry Goodshoes. And he says, not on your life, so scratch Bobby.

But let's suppose Bobby does show up, shaking in his boots. The only thing he doesn't know is daddy's shaking harder. And I've been there.

Number one, these are the things you do. First of all, establish your purpose. Your purpose is to get better acquainted.

Bobby, we wanted you to come over before you went out with Greta so that we could get better acquainted. Then establish your authority. You see, Bobby, we wanted to get better acquainted because my daughter is very special to us, and as you must be to your parents.

So we assume the responsibility of guiding her in establishing certain relationships. And then thirdly, establish God's authority. Bobby, because of the importance God puts on right boy-girl relationships, we wanted to get to know you.

And then establish some basic information. Where he lived, how many brothers and sisters he might have, put him at ease as much as possible, and ask him how he enjoys school. You can learn a lot from that.

If you have to spell it to him, you're in trouble. Go on to me. Then number five, lead up to establishing his condition.

One question you might ask is, Bobby, I'm anxious to know something. How did God first become real in your life? And he may say, well, I've always gone to church. And you may say, that's really neat, Bobby, but how did God first become real in your life? And he may say, well, you know, my parents are Christians.

And you might say, you know, mine are too. But how did God first become real in your life? If you can't get a clear answer there, you might say, well, Bobby, when did God first become real in your life? And try to really discern the one thing in life that matters. Maybe God brought him into your home and into your life

so that you could introduce him to the one real friend he needs for all eternity.

There are some other questions you might ask after that when you revive him. Like what steps are you taking to get to know God better? A young man that's not in the Word is really not a very strong candidate. And do you have some ideas that will help my daughter to grow as a Christian? Unless he's a real loser, let him go out once.

Because many times he's come to your home for the first date to be interviewed. But even then, establish your rules concerning movies, drinking, curfews, or anything else. And daughters, you ought to be proud if your daddy does this for you.

Because for at least three reasons, number one, it expresses love. If your parents are willing to face the music and listen to all of your complaining and handle their own bashful spirit, it means they love you very much. Secondly, it relieves you of the pressure of responsibility in a subjective area where your emotions often take over.

So often in boy-girl relationships, when the heart goes out, the mind goes on vacation. And thirdly, it confirms God's principles of protection under authority. Well, the question is often asked, but my parents are not Christians.

What do I do? And I just want you young people, I'd like for you to share these principles very quickly with you. Number one, remember that a parental-child relationship is not a yoking relationship. You're under their control.

So God's over them, and He's responsible for what they do. You're only responsible to submit to their leadership. Children, obey your parents, even if they're unjust.

And this is the situation you must remember. Number two, they're yours by divine design. God knit you together, the Scripture says, in your mother's womb.

He chose your mother. He selected her. He selected you, and He knit you together in your mother's womb.

Number three, they are an important part of your life message. Number four, your witness may well be submission to them. 1 Peter chapters 2 and 3 teach us that as with a wife to her husband, sometimes the strongest testimony you give is the graciousness with which you respond.

Principle number five, never condescend. Let each esteem other better than themselves. Don't come on as Johnny Spiritual.

Number six, don't use spiritual language. That's what Paul meant, I believe, when he said, to the Jews I'm a Jew, to the Greeks I'm a Greek. He didn't mean he compromised his convictions.

He meant he reshaped his communication. Don't go home waving all of your new spiritual lingo at your parents and then wondering why they don't have confidence in your submission. Don't argue theology.

Elevate the Lord Jesus Christ. The natural man can't receive the things of the Spirit. Your responsibility is to do what Jesus said to do.

If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. Remember that your parents desire two things from you, love and respect, and you can give them both. Remember, number nine, that you're God's reward to your parents.

You say, wow, they got a loser. No, they didn't. The Scripture says children are an heritage of the Lord.

They are His reward, and they will view God's favor of their life through your response to them. Number ten, if necessary, be willing to allow others to verbalize the message while you live the life. And number eleven, your prayers may well be the key to their salvation.

Parents and young people, this may be the most important facet of this lesson. Establish the principle of prayer in dating relationships. I believe that every parent and child ought to pray together before their children go on a date.

The parents better pray the whole time they're gone. How many of you young people here pray on every date? Can I see your hands? Okay. Number two, when you go out on a date, young people, at the beginning of each date, make it a practice to begin in prayer.

Give the date and your relationship to the Lord. And it isn't up to the girl to tell the guy, we're going to pray tonight. It's up to the dad to tell the guy, we'd like you to pray together for God's blessings before you go.

And then when temptation comes, when you may be tempted to violate some moral principle or to go somewhere you shouldn't go or to violate a curfew or to do something like that, the Scripture says there's no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But the Scripture also says we must not test God. And so you need to stop at that point and say, Lord, would you give us the victory? Would you give us the vision, the discernment to know what to do? The same thing is true when decisions come.

Should we continue to see each other? You seek your parents' counsel and you pray together. And then at the end of each date, can you pray, Lord, bless what we did, bless where we went, and bless what we thought? You say, well, I'm not sure God can bless where we went and bless what we thought. That's the purpose.

Now you get it. In other words, prayer ought to have an important part in your dating relationships. Here are some additional but important questions to ask.

Number one, is a premarital physical relationship ever acceptable to God? Answer, never. We spent a week on this several weeks ago, but remember that the male-female relationship is a picture of God's relationship to the church. And the physical relationship without the commitment of marriage says that you can have intimacy with God without the commitment of a relationship to Jesus Christ.

And it's a lie. Secondly, is a homosexual relationship ever acceptable to God? Answer, no. Thirdly, is marriage designed to be a permanent relationship? Answer, yes.

As permanent as salvation was designed to be eternal, it is a picture of the eternal security of the believer, the oneness, the completeness, the finished result of our relationship with Christ. When is a child old enough to date? When they are old enough to understand marriage from God's perspective. And when he or she has demonstrated faithfulness in tested areas of responsibility.

You say, well, my little girl may be twenty before she's able to date then. Whatever it takes. Question, should dating ever become the dominant theme in a Christian's life? Answer, no.

The dominant theme in the Christian's life should be the will of God. Matthew 6.33 Dating is a means to an end in finding the will of God in one area of a Christian experience. If that's all you think about, you may be trying to satisfy an insecure spirit the wrong way.

And my suggestion is stop dating altogether until you get it together. Question, is it necessary to date many and date often to find God's choice for your life? Answer, no. If it is, all the great marriages of Scripture miss the mark.

Some of the strongest marriages I have encountered have been between two Christians who dated little, grew strong in the Lord, and waited for God's choice to come. Some of the worst marriages I've seen have been the most popular kids in town with too many pressures and too much experience and too much focus on themselves and getting rather than giving. Remember, the least handled gems often become the most polished jewels.

I think it's terribly important to remember parents are a big part of the problem. We're always saying, well, aren't you going out? Don't you have a date? And putting our kids in second-class citizenship. Sometimes we seem to ask with the inference, if you don't date often, something's wrong.

The reverse might be true. If they don't date often, maybe something's right. It all depends on the person.

So often peer pressure causes a girl to go with a guy she doesn't like to a place she doesn't want to go, to do things she doesn't want to do, so she can go home and tell her friends what a neat time she had. And your dating life is a very short part of your total existence. And it's almost an infinitesimal part when you look at it in the light of eternity.

Well, here's where we've come to our conclusions. Number one, the parent's responsibility regarding your children's dating is to know and to approve who they date, where they go, who they go with, what they do, when they come home, and how often they date. And the child's responsibility is to agree with it.

Now, young people, I just want to caution you as we close that the crossroads between conviction and compromise are the teen years. This is when so often you begin to be given independence and begin to relate where real temptation and compromise is readily available. And you have two choices.

You can take the road of establishing convictions, and you will end up knowing Christ in all of His fullness. Or you can get off on the access road of compromise and find yourself taking all sorts of detours, wrong standards of friendship, wrong dating relationships, moral impurity, ultimately ending up in wrong marriages. Parents, your children need a plan.

They need a road map. They need stop signs. They need green lights.

Young people look, and there are a lot of flashing lights and a lot of glitter and a lot of apparent excitement down that detour. But it's a dead end. You see, there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

These are the issues, and these are the principles. As parents, we are accountable to lead our children in the developing of right relationships. And as young people, you are accountable to submit to God's leading

through your parents.

As a church, we are accountable and responsible to pray for our young people, to encourage our young people, and to expect of them to see life and to live life from God's perspective. Now, I want to challenge some of you young people this morning. You consider that you may need to go home today and get alone with God.

Take a piece of paper and a pencil and write a letter to God about your friendships, about your dating relationships, and about God's will for marriage as you see it. Once and for all, date it, sign it, and tell God that no matter the cost, you're going to follow His convictions because you know the consequences, and you know that He has a plan for your life that's richer and better than man could ever conceive of. And then I would encourage you that you sign it and keep it somewhere that you can look at it again when the storms of life begin to test you.

Number two, I would encourage you to approach your parents, in humility, and ask their forgiveness for any rebellious spirit where relationships are concerned. Place yourself by an act of your choosing more perfectly under their direction. Seek their wisdom and abide by it where people are concerned, where places are concerned, where practices are concerned, where pressures are concerned, and ask them to help you begin a character quality study on the things that you need in your life to keep you rightly related in these areas.

And parents, some of us need to go home today and get together with our children and just talk it out. Maybe we've abdicated our responsibility. We need to ask their forgiveness.

But in love, start over. We need to talk out the ground rules and discuss the reasons and pray together that God would work new miracles in our homes. As devastatingly clear as the issues are, there are some underlying spiritual issues that are even clearer that we'll take up next week.

But I do believe that our goals are clear. God has called us to avoid the wrong friendships, to establish godly dating patterns, to prepare for a godly marriage so that we might fulfill your life's message, create your life's ministry, and bring glory to God in every phase of your life. Because when it gets right down to it, how can two walk together except they be agreed? That's the will of God.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you've not left us in doubt where relationships are concerned. We thank you, Father, that you very clearly taught us in your Word that believers and unbelievers have a very specific set of standards concerning their relationships.

And Father, we pray for these young people here this morning who may be wrestling with dating the wrong people, doing the wrong things, may be in rebellion to their parents' leadership and direction in this crucial area of their lives. And Father, we just pray that this morning you would open their eyes as never before, that what lies ahead down the road, the direction they may be going, is a long way.

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