

Shepherding A Child's Heart

Week 19: Teens and Dating

Review

- The teen years are an age of opportunity, tailor-made for shepherding.
- Teens face many struggles, including adult temptations and adult problems (but for the first time in their lives)
- Parents need to use biblical communication to apply God's word to all of life, to help their teens internalize the gospel, and to emphasize the Fear of the Lord (living in reference to God).
- A parent's job is to restore them when they sin and fail (Gal 6:1-2)
- A Parent's job is, in large part, to prepare them to leave and be independent.

Warm-Up:

1. When do people typically start dating?
2. Why do people typically start dating?
3. Why might Christian parents be apprehensive about allowing their teens to date?
4. Why might Christian parents want their teens to experience dating?

Main Idea:

The rights and privileges of a covenant relationship come with the intentional commitment to embrace the covenant responsibilities of that covenant. This means that Christians should think of dating as a Christ-honoring means toward marriage, and should not date if they could not or would not marry.

Begin with Marriage, not Dating

5. Marriage is good
 - a. Designed by God for His glory and our joy
 - b. A covenantal relationship
 - i. Covenantal relationships have blessings and responsibilities that are not disconnected
 - Ephesians 5:22-33
 - Deuteronomy 22:28-29
 - a. You can't take the blessings of the marriage covenant without the commitment.
6. What are some of the covenantal blessings within a marriage?
7. What are some of the responsibilities?
8. What are some of the ways those blessings start to get taken prematurely when formal dating starts?
9. Does engaging in various forms of intimacy before marriage strengthen a future marriage? Or undermine it?

No Semi-Covenantal Romances Endorsed in The Bible

10. Consider 1 Timothy 5:1-2... What are the categories for how men and women relate to each other outside of marriage?
11. How do dating relationships become a “semi-covenantal” relationship?
 - a. What are the dangers of allowing for a semi-covenantal intimacy before you could or would marry?
 - b. Practicing for marriage? Or practicing for divorce?

Definition of Christian Dating: Two Christians asking the question “should we get married?”

12. Implications:
 - a. Wait to date
 - i. if you could not or would not marry in the foreseeable future, don’t date
 - ii. If you could not or would not take on marriage responsibilities, don’t date
 - iii. If you aren’t sure, don’t date
 - b. Don’t date to date
 - i. Dating should not be it’s own thing
 - ii. Shopping without money
 - iii. Creating a semi-covenantal space that is not working toward marriage is unbiblical
 - c. Not a just saying “wait” ... saying “get ready”
 - i. Men should strive to be husband-ready
 - ii. Women should strive to be wife-ready
 - iii. Parents should work to prepare them (Titus 2: 1-7)

When Dating Begins

13. Guidelines
 - a. Let the dead date the dead (2 Cor 6:14, Deut 7:3-4)
 - b. Cultivate clarity before intimacy
 - c. Take as long as necessary and not longer (in dating and in engagement).

Recommended resource: Not Yet Married by Marshall Segal