A Biblical/ Theological Overview of Dating[1]

I. Summary in How to Critique Topics (such as dating) not Directly Addressed in Scripture?

A. Surface, unpack and critique your own presuppositions
1. "Dating is wrong because it led me to into immorality"
2. "I met my wife through dating so it is okay"
3. The Bible provides no mention of dating is it is fine

B. Unpack and critique common Christian cultural clichés
1. "Paul was single"
2. "Jesus is all you need"
3. "Just wait"
4. "God will lead you to a guy or gal when you are godly enough"

C. Identify the components of "dating" for evaluation
1. Ask worldview type questions
2. Ask the "what, why, how" questions

D. Identify Biblical propositions (or principles) that directly address the components of dating

E. Critique the components of dating with Scripture

II. Develop a list of Biblical Purposes for Dating and Contrast that List with Common Flawed Views in Society.

A. Define Dating. I have underlined the following components in the definition below. These concepts and terms in the definition can be critiqued by the Bible. Interaction with Scripture will help critique and refine this flawed definition.

> **Dating** is a form of courtship consisting of social activities done by two people with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a partner in an intimate relationship or as a spouse. While the term has several meanings, it usually refers to the act of meeting and engaging in some mutually agreed upon social activity in public, together, as a couple. . . . Another meaning of the term *dating* is to describe a stage in a person's life when he or she is actively pursuing romantic relationships with different

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people. . . . One of the main purposes of dating is for two or more people to evaluate one another's suitability as a long term companion or spouse. Often physical characteristics, personality, financial status, and other aspects of the involved persons are judged and as a result feelings can be hurt, and confidence shaken (underlined emphasis mine).[2]

B. Surface culturally held views of dating by applying the "why" question to dating (e.g., why do people date?) and evaluate using Scripture.

1. Mitigate loneliness
2. Explore sexuality
3. Enjoy closeness
4. Look for life-partner or life partner in marriage

C. Theological critique "why" people date with responses?

1. Mitigate loneliness (not through serial dating, denial of personal need, materialism, or only career pursuit, etc.). Loneliness is addressed through:
    a. close moment-by-moment fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:3-10)
    b. biblical marriage w/ godly person or embrace the gift of celibacy (Gen 2:18-25; Eph 5:22-25; 1 Cor 7:7)
    c. family (1 Tim 5:4; Proverbs)
    d. friends (Prov 17:17; 18:24; 27:6, 9)
    e. local body of Christ and ministry (1 Cor 12:12-27)

2. Explore sexuality (not through premarital sex, pornography, or course jesting, etc.):
    a. sexual love is exclusive to the marriage-union (Prov 5:15-23; Eccl 9:9; 1 Cor 7:3-5; Song of Songs)
    b. premarital purity (1 Thess 4:3; Proverbs 2; 5; 7)
    c. develop and desire the inner person (Eph 4:1-32) vs. only developing external appearance (1 Peter 3:1-7; Proverbs 11:22)

3. Enjoy closeness (not through sexually dominated relationships, number of Facebook friends, virtual relationships, sinful or unrealistic fantasies):
    a. prioritize brother/ sister Christian relationship (1 Cor 3; Rom 14)
    b. work at honesty, acceptance, and transparency (Col 3:12-17)
    c. bless *one another* and *others* through your dating relationship
    d. maintain other friendships and make new friendships (Proverbs)
    e. apply principles of Christian liberty (glorify God, act in faith/confidence without violating/ searing your conscience or being a stumbling block, etc. (1 Cor 8-10; Rom 14)

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dating (accessed 9 February, 2014). Each of my underlined components in the Wikipedia definition has direct biblical commentary that should be evaluated. As an example, the Scripture has much to say about social activities, priority of physical characteristics, confidence, etc.

4. Look for life-partner in marriage. Biblical marriage is God's gift for aloneness; note the following priorities:

a. Spirit controlled Christian showing fruit of the Spirit (commitment to authority of Scripture; Eph 5; Gal 5)
b. consider future ministry partner (vocational or lay-ministry)
c. consider future parent of children
d. wisdom to help navigate the trials of life (look to how a person responds to patterns of disappointments, trials, finances, ability to compromise, integrity, realistic life views, etc.)

III. Summary Comments Regarding Formulating A Biblical View of Marriage

A. Marriage is only between a biological male and biological female.

B. Marriage involves sexual union that is sanctified by God.[3]

1. Sexual union before marriage or with someone other than spouse is referred to as fornication or adultery and prohibited (Ex 19:14-17; 1 Thess 4:1-5). Sexual union within marriage is both commanded and celebrated in Scripture (Prov 5:18-19; 1 Cor 7:2-9; Song of Solomon).

2. God created Adam as male and He Himself brought the woman to the man.

3. God excluded all shame and censure of their nakedness and union.

C. Marriage involves a mutual covenant of relationship to one another before God.

1. Mutual covenant of companionship before God (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17).

2. God instituted marriage and He serves as the witness (Matt 19:6; Heb 13:4). Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed *is to be* undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Heb 13:4).

D. Marriage is a lifelong commitment though not eternal (or celestial) relationship (Mat 19:6; 22:28-30).

E. Marriage is monogamous (1 Cor 7:2; 1 Tim 3:2). A one-man to one-woman relationship.

[3] All forms of sexual sin are a result of the Fall of mankind including fornication, adultery, bestiality, transgender activity, forms of homosexuality, incest, polygamy, sexual activity outside marriage and are all condemned by God (Romans 1:18-27; 1 Cor 6:12-20; Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Tim 1:10; Mat 19:1-12).

1. Each man is to have his *own* wife, and each woman is to have her *own* husband. (1 Cor 7:2).

2. Summary comments regarding polygamy.

    a) Bible records events but does not always endorse events

    b) Polygamy is prohibited by precedent (the one man for one woman order); precept (Deut 17:17); moral prescription (no adultery); and moral principle of punishment (1 Kings 11:4).

    c) While God allowed polygamy, the Scripture often shows the disastrous results of polygamy.

IV. Exploring Honest Questions and Suggestions as You Move Closer to Marriage

A. Do you see *marriage* and your future *home* as a platform for ministry (lay or vocational)?

B. Can we as a *couple glorify God better* together in marriage than separately?

C. Can we *glorify God* more through vocational ministry and/or through serving as a highly committed couple in non-vocational ministry?

D. Work at maintaining absolute *moral purity* (1 Thess 4:3; 1 Tim 5:2) including thought and speech (Eph 4:29-30).

E. Express *outward display* of affection in a cautious and kind manner.

F. Learn to *subtly and kindly communicate* your interest or lack of interest in pursuing a dating relationship without unnecessarily hurting someone.

G. Develop some short-term *companion ministry tasks together*.

H. *Honestly discuss* ministry expectations, geographical locations, financial expectations, parenting expectations, respective family expectations, etc.

I. Continue to *retool* yourself with applied Biblical truth (communication skills, defense mechanisms, assertiveness, stewardship issues, etc.).

J. Discern the difference between loving someone vs. *expressing your nature to nurture* or *nature to protect*.

K. Move from dependency to inter-dependency.

L. Be patient, honest, kind (and if necessary firm) and *personal with break-ups*.

M. *Delight in spiritual disciplines together*.

N. During your engagement, spend more time *preparing for a life of marriage* than for the wedding day celebration.