

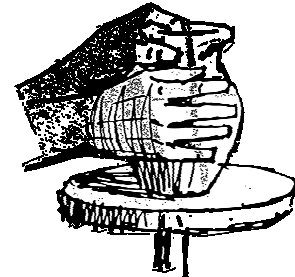
His Workmanship at Westside

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”
—Ephesians 2:10

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Isaiah 64:8

Dating to Display Jesus, by Marshall Segal (from last week)

We have been exploring how to date (and be married) with an eye to glorifying God. Only God has the right to prescribe the purpose, parameters, and means of our romances and marriages. God had so much more in mind with romance (and marriage) than merely companionship, sex, or even procreation, and so should we. Therefore, all Christians need to work hard to preserve what marriage ought to picture and provide in our relationships.

Expecting More from Marriage. The vision of marriage we see in God's word—the beautiful, radical display of God's infinite, persevering love for sinners—makes it worth it to date well and marry well. The world's approach can provide fun and eventually even some level of commitment, but it cannot lead to the life-giving Jesus after Whom our marriages are to take their cues. God created us to enjoy and thrive in love that lasts, like Christ's lasting love for His bride. God engineered romance to express itself in fidelity and loyalty—in oneness, Gen 2:24; Mt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:2–13. Because dating is only a means to marriage, God's design for our marriages speaks to his design for our dating.

God intended our love-lives for something more. More happiness. More security. More purpose. The more is found in a mutual faith in and following of Jesus. Jesus asks more of us. A

glorious, holy union can only be found through Christians' dating with Christ in mind—or with the mind of Christ. Dating as Christians—the intentional, selfless, and prayerful process of pursuing marriage—will secure and increase our greatest and longest-lasting happiness.

How Then Shall We Date? We have discussed two principles for dating:

1. Picking a mate is simple. Marriage really is more about commitment than compatibility. After all, there has never been a less compatible relationship than a holy God and His sinful bride, and that's the mold we're aiming for in our marriages. The Bible doesn't have a book devoted to how to choose a spouse. It was not an oversight on the part of God. The qualifications are clear and simple: a) he or she must believe your God, 2 Cor 6:14, and b) he or she must be of the opposite sex, Gen 2:23–24; Mt 19:4–6; Eph 5:24–32.

Certainly, you will exercise greater judgment than just those two. The Bible articulates some roles for wives and husbands. Husbands should protect and provide for their wives, Eph 5:25–29. Women should help and submit to their men, Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22–24. Fathers should lead their families in God's word, Eph 6:4. Parents must love and bring up their children in the nurture of the Lord, Deut 6:7. So admittedly we are looking for more than an attractive person who

“loves Jesus.”

That said, many of us need to be reminded that God's perfect person for me isn't all that perfect. Every person who marries is a sinner, so the search for a spouse isn't a pursuit of perfection, but a mutually flawed pursuit of Jesus. It is a faith-filled attempt to become like Him and make Him known together. Regardless of the believer we marry, we will likely find out soon that we do not feel as “compatible” as we once did, but we will marvel more at God's love for us in Jesus and the amazing privilege it is to live out that love together, especially in light of our differences.

2. Know what makes a marriage worth having. Marriage is intensely good and beautiful, but it's costly, too costly for small aims. Marriage is worth having when we get God in our lifelong commitment to one another. Marriage is about knowing God, worshiping God, depending on God, displaying God, being made like God. God made man and woman in His image and joined them together, 1 Cor 6:16; Gen 1:27; Mk 10:6–9; giving them unique responsibilities to care for one another in their broken but beautiful union. What makes marriage worth having is that we, our spouse, and those around us see more of God and His love for us in Jesus. If that's not our priority, we need to get a new plan.

Five more principles.

3. Look for clarity more than intimacy. The greatest danger of dating is giving

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Dating to Display Jesus, from p. 1 parts of our hearts and lives to someone to whom we're not married. It is a significant risk, and many men and women have deep and lasting wounds from relationships because a couple enjoyed emotional or physical closeness without a lasting, durable commitment; cf. 1 Thes 4:3; 1 Cor 6:18; Heb 13:4. Cheap intimacy feels real for the moment, but we get what we pay for.

While the great prize in marriage is Christ-centered intimacy, the great prize in dating is Christ-centered clarity. Intimacy is safest in the context of marriage, and marriage is safest in the context of clarity. The purpose of our dating is determining whether the two of us should get married, so we should focus our effort there. In our pursuit of clarity, we will undoubtedly develop intimacy, but we ought not do so too quickly or too naively. Be intentional and out-spoken to one another that intimacy before marriage is dangerous, but clarity is unbelievably precious.

4. Find a fiancé on the frontlines. The idea is to look for love in the right places. Instead of making it our mission to get married, make our mission the advance of the gospel where we are, and look for someone pursuing the same. If we hope to marry someone who passionately loves Jesus and makes Him known, it's best to put ourselves in a community of people committed to that.

This does not mean that we should serve because we might find love. God is not ultimately honored with that kind of self-serving service. No, putting the gospel first simply means that if we're looking for a particular kind of person, there are good, safe, identifiable places where those people live and serve and worship together. Get involved in a church, serve each other, and look for God to open doors for dating.

5. Don't let your mind marry him/her before the rest of you can. The trajectory of all true romance ought to be marriage, so it should not surprise us that our dreams and expectations, our hearts, race out ahead of everything else. It simply isn't that hard to imagine

what our children would look like or where we would vacation together or how family dinners would work or what kind of house we might buy. Like sex, all these things could be really good and safe and beautiful, but only in the context of your marriage covenant; see Mal 2:14-16. Satan subtly wants to help us build idols of false marriage and family that are too fragile for our not-yet-married relationship. *"He told me he loved me."* *"She said she would never leave."* They are the seemingly price-less sentences that don't always cash. They are often said with good intentions, but without the ring or the license—or a wedding—the results can be devastating. Guard your heart and imagination from running out ahead of your current commitment; cf. Phil 4:7.

6. Boundaries are our best friends. The most oft-asked dating question might be, *"How far is too far before marriage?"* The fact that we keep asking that question suggests we agree we need to draw some lines, and that the lines seem pretty blurry to most. If we're

"The great prize of marriage is Christ-centered intimacy. The great prize in dating is Christ-centered clarity."

pursuing marriage and it's going well, we're going to experience temptation, a lot of temptation.

Sexual sin may be the devil's weapon of choice in corrupting relationships. If we don't acknowledge our enemy and engage him, we'll find ourselves wondering how we lost so easily. Some of our best friends in the battle will be the boundaries we set to keep us pure.

While spontaneous plunges into intimacy look great in chick-flicks and feel great in the moment, they breed shame, regret, and distrust. So talk about touching before touching. Trade titillation for trust, surprise for clarity and confidence. Make decisions prayerfully and intentionally—and draw boundaries. Boundaries are necessary because on the road to marriage and its consummation, the appetite for intimacy only grows as you feed it. You are biologically built that way. Touching

leads to more touching. Being alone together in certain situations will welcome fierce temptation. Even praying together or talking for hours upon hours on the phone can create unhealthy overdoses of intimacy with not-yet spouses. Guard your heart, Pr. 4:23.

If we're honest, we much more often like to err by wading into love too far rather than waiting too long to take the next step. You will be hard-pressed, though, to find a couple regretting the boundaries they made in dating, while you will very easily find those who would like to have made more. As followers of Christ, we ought to be most careful and vigilant. Boundaries protect, and boundaries provide the trenches of trust-building; cf. Jer 31:21; Ps 80:12; 89:34-41; 104:9; Is 5:5; 10:13. As we establish some mutual boundaries, small and large, and commit to keeping them together, we develop depths and patterns of trust that will serve our intimacy, covenant-keeping, and decision-making if God should lead us to marry each other.

7. Include your community. Dating is a matter of doing our best to discern a person's ability to fulfill God's vision and purpose for marriage with us. While we might be the one with the final say, we might not be the best person to assess at every point. Just as in every other area of our life in Christ, we need the body of Christ as we think about whom to date, how to date, and when to wed.

While it's rarely quick or convenient, gaining the perspective of people who know us, love us, and have great hope for our future will always pay dividends. It may lead to hard conversations or deep disagreement, but it will force us to deal with things we did not or could not have seen on our own. We'll find safety in an abundance of counselors, Pr 11:14. Invite other people to look into our relationship(s). Spend time together with other people, couples and singles, who are willing to point out the good, the bad, and the ugly.

8. Let all your dating be evangelical dating. No, I am not encouraging you to

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Psalm 133:1

God's harvest we'll glean in 2016 "Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." —Ruth 2:2

Dating to Display Jesus, from p. 2 date not-yet-believing men or women. When I say evangelical dating, I mean dating that displays and promotes faith in Jesus and His good news, dating that is in step with the gospel before the watching world. I want us to win disciples by dating radically, by confronting the world's paradigms and pleasure-seeking with sacrifice, selflessness, and intentionality.

Men and women in the world want many of the same things we want: affection, acceptance, commitment, conversation, stability, sex, security, companionship, trust, etc. Eventually the world will see that the ground under our lives and relationships is firmer than the flimsy flings they know. They'll see something deeper, stronger, and more meaningful between us and our sweethearts.

Do the people in each of our lives know and love Jesus more because we're together? Do they see God's grace and truth working in us and our relationship as we walk through life together? Are the two of us thinking proactively about how to bless our friends and family and point them to Christ? More and more, as the world is watering down dating, our relationships can be a provocative picture of our fidelity to Christ and a call to follow Him.

Pursuing Marriage the Right Way. Is this kind of dating perfectly safe? No. Will it keep us from being hurt or disappointed? No. Will it guarantee we never go through another break up? No. But, by God's grace, it may guard us from deeper heartache and more devastating failure. My prayer is that these principles would prepare us to love our

Discipleship Here At Home

spouses in a way that more beautifully and dramatically displays the truth and power of the gospel.

If you are like me, you may have blown it on multiple fronts already. Maybe you're blowing it right now in a relationship. Be willing to make the hard decisions, large and small, to pursue marriage the right way today. Whether you're ultimately married to one another or not (or married at all, for that matter), you will thank each other later.

Land's End Issues Apology, from p. 4 was spun off from underperforming retail giant Sears in 2014. Aligning itself with a women's figure like Gloria Steinem might have seemed a way to give itself some style, though Steinem at age 81 might not strike a chord with youthful customers today. The fact that the company suffered an onslaught suggests that marketers today should be aware of their customers—the market is a lot more complicated than placing svelte models in stylish clothes before the public.

Assisted Suicide in Colorado

Update on last week's article. The Colorado House Democrats pulled the assisted suicide bill last Wednesday, stating that there was not enough support for it to pass. However, progressives are patient, and they will bring the bill back over and over for the next 15-30 years.

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Christian Harrod; Addison Tope; Rocco Jr. Ann Cox; Logan Corray—asthma
Orchid Cox—chronic blood clot condition
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease
Jonathan Hadders—RA
Kirk Johnson—MS; **Amanda Mailloux**—IBS
Virginia Menard—macular degeneration
Sandra Perry—diabetes complications; oxygen
Eric Perry—recent pre-diabetes diagnosis
Cheryl Reames—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis
Judy Sartin—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis
Judy and Mike Strand—hepatitis treatment
Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness
 • from Northgate church: **Andy Schmoltdt's** mother passed away last week; cards to 8546 Cody Ct, Arvada 80005-1542
Pat Johnson's brother—pancreatic cancer

Singing and learning new songs at Mina Gonzalez's at 5 pm, Sunday, March 6.

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Monica Thompson**—had sinus surgery Thurs
- **Brandon Thompson, Alivya Corray**—ankles sprained playing baseball (unrelated accidents)
- **Judy Sartin, Wendy Boyd, Pat Wilkes**—back
- **Lloyd Menard**—moved to hospice care facility, please visit (see website schedule) at Westlake Care Community, 1655 Eaton St, Lakewood 80214; 238-5363
- **Linda Szymanski**—broke arm & wrist on ice
- **Jordan Corray's** father, **Glen Kowalski**—home after ICU for diabetic complications
- **Judy Strand's** daughter **Shawntiel**—broke leg on ice, had surgery to insert pin
- **River and Forest Cox's** great grandmother **Martha Rowe**—in rehab after diabetic coma for knee strengthening
- **Kory Tope's** uncle **Skeeter Schulz**—broke hip
- **Brittany Tope's** mother **Gayle**—biopsy of spot on liver shows breast cancer has spread; **Brittany's** grandmother—on dialysis
- **Ava, Brielle, & Frankie Kosik, and Lorraine & Christian Harrod**—flu; breathing difficulty
- **Judy Sartin's** friend **George Vernon**—stage 4 esophageal cancer
- **Kim Howell's** coworker **Rachel Daniels**—recently had baby, **Titus**, with genetic disease
- **Jordan Corray's** colleague and mentor **Craig Smith**—in ICU with brain injury after fall from roof; friend **Kylie Cabalka**—staph infection complications; out of ICU to rehab and making progress
- **Sarah McMurray's** mentee **Lakesha Griffin**—age 12; safety, stable home place
- **Connor Boyd's** friend **Christian Lyons**, high school freshman—leukemia
- **Berney Charo's** brother **Eliud**—prostate cancer
- **Andrea Songer Greer**, daughter of **Bill and Debbie S.**—chemo for stage I breast cancer
- **Judy Strand**—finished with chemo for liver transplant; tests to determine whether chemo effective
- **Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
- **Ernesto Gonzalez's** father **Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma; to rehab center to gain strength
- **Ian Anderson, Mina Gonzalez's** nephew—to select rehab plan
- **Letha Fink's** brother **Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, diagnosed with neuro-muscular disease
- **Bill Dennis**—made dr. appointment, improving
- **Larry Campbell's** FL partner **Terry Hargadine's** wife **Michelle**—difficult recovery from mastectomy; **Terry**—recovering from knee replacement surgery
- **Kayla Knighten, Christine Adams's** daughter, needs our prayers; **Judy Strand** requests prayer for her son **Joe**; pray **Ed's** son **Rodney Schulz** and **Sheryle's** daughter **Tiffany** receive the gospel; **Ed's** daughter find God and prayer
- **Sylvia Chapman, Brett's** grandmother—third stage pancreatic cancer; **Brett's** grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Connie Doss**—cancer returned
- **Noah Hadders's** teacher **Sharolyn Elmore**—chemo for breast cancer



Exposing current trends abortion

Land's End Promotes Abortion, Provokes Outrage, by Michael Hiltzik

It must have seemed like a win-win at the time. Wisconsin-based clothing retailer *Lands' End*, desperate to refurbish its image into something relevant and chic, featured an interview with old feminist Gloria Steinem in its spring catalog, highlighting her failed work to pass an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s, complete with a photo spread of Steinem modeling items from the firm's latest collection, including a T-shirt that proclaimed, "I had an abortion." Steinem, for her part, got her new book plugged in the catalog copy.

But it turned into a spectacular embarrassment. Faced with an explosion of outrage from pro-life groups and customers, *Lands' End* has pulled the feature from its website and even appears to have canceled an arrangement to donate \$3 to the ERA Coalition/Fund for Women's Equality every time a customer ordered the group's monogram stitched into an item.

One person posted to the company's Facebook page: "Those of us who love family, love children, are completely puzzled why you would promote a very vocal pro abortion celebrity. ...Are you anti-child? You want to kill off possible future customers?"

The company issued a public apology last Wednesday. "Some customers were troubled and concerned that we featured an interview with Gloria Steinem in a recent catalog. We thought it was a good idea, and we heard from our customers that, for different reasons, it wasn't," reads the statement. "It was never our intention to raise a divisive political or religious issue, so when some of our customers saw the recent promotion that way, we heard them. We sincerely apologize for any offense." The apology has provoked a counter-backlash from pro-abortion advocates.

What *Lands' End* didn't count on, or perhaps didn't know, is that at age 81, Steinem has been controversial since she was a Playboy bunny. Most men and women of a certain age probably remember her as one of the more glamorous and articulate figures of the feminist movement in the 1960s and '70s. In 1972, she co-founded Ms. Magazine, which played a role in bringing feminist ideology into the mainstream. Steinem is a well-known abortion activist who once said women "need" abortion.

She has written about undergoing an illegal abortion at age 22; indeed, her latest book, My Life on the Road, is dedicated to Dr. John Sharpe, the London physician who referred her for the procedure, telling her (according to the dedication), "You must promise me two things. First, you will not tell anyone my name. Second, you will do what you want to do with your life."

Faced with a torrent of anti-abortion outrage, *Lands' End* may have folded its hand so quickly because it can't afford to alienate any customers. Like other aging retail brands, the firm has been struggling with stagnant sales since 2011 and said last month it had written down the value of its brand name by as much as \$110 million, producing a quarterly loss. It

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meets at
13789 W. 8th Avenue
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720-295-4530

Pastors

Larry Campbell (303) 246-8810
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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Like us: www.facebook.com/pages/Westside-Church-of-Christ/276475819148309

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, studies on the attributes of God: "Show Me Your Glory," Jim Reingrover
- **sermon**, "Preaching through First Corinthians, (PTFC): Chapter 7, Living Lives that Glorify God," Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon

- **praise, prayer, Scripture**

Wednesday night study:

The Thessalonian Letters

First Friday Joshua Study

Everyone is invited to an application study of Joshua 3-5 this Friday evening, March 4, 7 pm, at the Howells' house, supper before study. See **DeWayne Howell** for details; please RSVP.