

Hoping, Scoping, and Roping: Dating Christian Style

Joe's "Dating Talk"

Here are a few things I typically go over with dating couples. This of course is assuming that I approve of the relationship, which I generally do unless there is sin or co-dependency involved.

1. Dating couples should not act like engaged couples, engaged couples should not act like married couples. The basic idea here is the amount of time that a couple spends together should be limited. Some dating couples see one another more than I see my wife!
2. This refers to the nonverbal signals that couples send out that lets others know that "this is mine, back off". E.g. walking around hand in hand, sitting together, arm around the waist...
3. This one's from Walter Trobisch: Romance and sex are like an orchestra: the flutes and violins represent the friendship, the tubas and drums represent the sex drive. If you start out with the drums you will never get to hear the violins and flutes. All good marriages start out as good friendships. Give it time.
4. Intimacy must be kept in proportion to commitment. Many couples reveal too much about themselves too early. All their secrets, dreams, desires. They think they will achieve a greater intimacy more quickly. The impulse for self-revelation is strong but must be kept in check. If they reveal too much too fast they achieve only an illusion of intimacy. Real intimacy requires real time; it is built with both commitment, self-revelation and trials.
5. I ask each person to have their own same-sex accountability partner. This person is given permission to ask any question about the relationship at any time. They are encouraged to ask what went on during a date, are you keeping lust under control? etc.
6. I remind them that most of the people they date they will not marry. After dating a person they should be able to be that person's friend. That other person may not become your spouse but they will be someone else's. Don't you dare take what belongs to another. You should be able to go to their wedding and be happy for them, not ashamed. This can and does work in our fellowship!
7. I explain Paul's instruction to Timothy in 1 Tim 5:15, "Treat...younger women as sisters, with absolute purity." Remember that your first relationship to that girl is that she is your sister in Christ. All other relationships will some day change but that one never will. You wouldn't fantasize about your sister, manipulate your sister, etc. Also, if they break up they should not have done anything that makes them feel weird about being in the same fellowship.
8. I remind them that they must never arouse passions in the other person that they cannot righteously fulfill. There are times when they need to back off and stay apart. Obviously this is a tough one. I hate making rules about what is off limits unless I absolutely have to.
9. Dating couples need to date not virtually co-habitate. There should be a plan for when the date begins and ends and also where they will go and what they will do. When the date is over, it's over. Each of you are to go to your own home. Not just hang out because you don't want the night to end. For most situations, being together as a dating couple once per week is plenty. You must not have as a default that you will be together unless you have something else to do. That is virtual co-habitation, regardless of where you actually spend the night. You need to have most of your time apart to slow down and process the relationship.