



It's Complicated Week Five

Opening Prayer: God, we know you want to help us with our relationships. Help our group to be a safe space for us to grow in wisdom and love.

Talk It Over:

Dating can be hard, and we can easily make it even more complicated.

- In your opinion, what makes dating so complicated?
- Tell us your funniest 'dating gone bad' story.
- What is your most cherished dating story? What about this story is special to you?

Read Ephesians 5:15-17 (The Voice)

A wise person applies what they know to their life. Wise people look at various choices on how to live, they consider the possible paths, and they make decisions that lead toward a desired outcome.

- Unfortunately, sometimes even the wisest people learn the hard way. What is a piece of dating wisdom you learned the hard way?
- Tell about a time you were fortunate enough to gain some dating wisdom by learning from someone else's mistake.

Read Proverbs 4:23

This week's dating advice included: Moving slow emotionally and physically, focusing on friendship, intentionally seeking the kind of person we want to marry (verse just dating anyone interested, good enough and available), and being willing to push the eject button (verse ignoring patterns of behavior).

- Looking at your dating life (past or present), which piece of advice listed above was (or is) hardest for you to follow? Which piece of advice was (or is) the easiest to follow? Why do you think that was (or is) the case?

While we often hear sad stories about 'the one that got away', many people actually have a *positive* story or two about 'the one that got away'. This might be a person you wanted to marry, could have married or almost married, but now looking back are so grateful you didn't marry.

- If you have one of those stories, why did you want to marry this particular person at the time? What changed between then and now? Did you change, they change or circumstance change?

Read Proverbs 14:15

One of the repeated ideas throughout this series has been 'promises don't trump preparation'. Our good intentions alone will likely not prepare us for the life we want or long standing, mature love. Instead of simply laser focusing on finding the right person or on ways our spouse isn't doing things right, we all gain something by working towards being the 'right kind of person'. In other words, we all can actively engage in becoming the kind of person we would like to marry or be married to.

- Whether you are single or married, what are ways you can actively prepare yourself for a long lasting, life giving, satisfying relationship?
- What are some positive habits a single person may want to intentionally look for in a spouse?
- If you are married, what are some specific positive habits you first saw in your spouse when you were dating that you now benefit from? In what ways could you see your spouse was preparing to be a good partner?

If you are married, consider communicating these positive habits to your spouse and thanking them for their efforts.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:3-13 after reading the notes and questions below.

Important Note: As someone *slowly* reads 1 Corinthians 13:3-13 and then allows a couple minutes of silence afterwards, quietly consider these next few sets of questions and ideas:

- What stands out to you from this passage? For example, in what ways does this passage speak to or confirm a desire of your heart, stir up longing, bring up anger or sadness, leave you grateful, cause you to want to change, make you think of someone, or so on?
- Ideas and talk of perfect love can cause us to think about ways we missed out on love, love we are not getting, or even guilty for love we are not giving. Be open to admitting mistakes, you're hurt or angry feelings, and be open to giving or receiving needed forgiveness.
- While it's a normal and healthy human desire to be well loved by others, we can sometimes spend our life looking for perfect love to come from other imperfect humans. The good news is that our desire for perfect love can be found in God — through various Bible verses, God promises his perfect and never ending love to each of us. His love not only has the power to build us up, it has the power to restore us, and the power to help us love others better. Be open God's love for you.

There are no wrong or right answers. Be open to whatever you or God may bring up.

If you are comfortable, share about this experience.

Closing Prayer: God, regardless of our marital status, or how much love we feel we are currently getting from others, help us to grow more aware of your perfect love for us. Help us to experience your love, and in turn, to grow better at giving love away. Help us to be wise and to take responsibility for the things we can in our life — we want to become the best versions of ourselves for our own sake and for the sake of others. For our single friends who looking for lasting love, help them to honor themselves well on the journey and to experience your best for them.