

Good morning and welcome to Trace. If you are new here, welcome, my name is Aaron and I am one of the pastors around here. Today we are kicking off a new series called, **Tell me more about...** where we will be looking at a variety of subjects that we believe you are either curious about, or we believe you should know more about. In this series we plan to cover the Holy Spirit, How to hear from God, next week I am going to touch on Aliens, but for our time today I want to talk to a certain population in our church that sometimes feels overlooked. Today I want to talk to the singles in the room. If you have your Bibles with you and I hope you do, go ahead and make your way over to 1 Cor. 7. To give some context before I read our passage, Paul is in the middle of giving married people advice about having a strong and healthy sex life, and can I just stop there and say thank you Jesus for your Word that does not return void. After he is done talking to the married people he decides to speak to those of you who are single, and what he says about singleness, not only do most people overlook this, but it might make all the difference in how you see yourself. We will jump in beginning in verse 5 as Paul is concluding his pep talk about healthy sex life. **“Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.” 1 Cor. 7:5-7 (NIV)**

Did you catch it, Paul actually referred to singleness as a gift. Now, I know many of you are single are thinking, that’s great Pastor, but I am ready to exchange my gift of singleness for a future spouse. And I get that, I really do. But here’s where I want to encourage you. **If you want to end up married and happy, you must start with single and secure.** All of us likely know someone who pushed too hard too fast on a relationship that was unhealthy, because they were so desperate to find their future spouse. And in their desperation, they started to make concessions, some overlooking major warning signs. So, for those of you who are single, hear me out, do not make the mistake of thinking that marriage will complete you. If you are looking for marriage to complete you, your placing an expectation on your spouse that they can never fulfil. And even if you end up with the man or woman

of your dreams, do not place an expectation on them that only Christ can fulfill. Don't take your relationship cues from Jerry Macquire, take them from Jesus. Listen, marriage is good, but it's not God. You must understand that if you want the best marriage, you must first feel complete in Christ. Because if you don't, you will likely make compromises that might not lead to a better marriage, but a more broken one. If you want to end up married and happy, it starts by being single and secure.

So, Single people can I talk to you for a second. Is it possible that some of you are building your dating relationships on this idea that your incomplete until you find that man/woman to complete you. Or maybe you have this underlying panic that everyone else is pairing off and you're gonna get left behind, So you start to compromise on things you said you never compromise on, maybe move too fast physically, date people you would never marry, and then wonder why things keep falling apart. Listen, you have a much less chance of lowering your standards if you first feel complete in Christ. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian church he encouraged them to find their fullness in Christ.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.” Col 2:6-10(NIV)

Everything you need in this world, can and should be found in Christ. And when that is in place, you will so much better prepared for dating and your future marriage. Think about what you want in your future spouse, now give yourself an honest examination, because you won't attract what you want, you will attract who you currently are. I heard one pastor say, become the kind of person that the person you are looking for, is looking for. Somebody probably needs to hear this, you can't marry the right person if you are dating the wrong person. And to be honest, I am 100% ok if this sermon leads some of you to break up.

So here's what I want to do with the rest of our time together. I want to give you some ground rules for dating that will set you up for success, and more importantly keep you in God's will for your life. So I am going to title this, **Pastor Aaron's Dating Advice that you didn't ask for but you should listen to.**

1. **Never date someone who is not a follower of Jesus.** The Bible calls this being unequally yoked. Ladies specifically, please listen to me, your dating relationships should never be your mission field, which means you should never date someone with the hope of bringing them to Jesus. I don't care how cute he is or how amazing his pick up lines are. Speaking of pick up lines, here's a good one. Baby you are a 9 out of 10, and I am the 1 you have been looking for. So if he slides into your DM's tell him to keep on sliding his way back out.
2. **Don't ever stay in relationship once you know you don't want to marry them.** The longer you stay, the more likely you are to make a compromise. As soon as you know he/she is not marriage material for you, put an end to it, be polite, but put an end to it. Which means some of you need to plan your breakup today, because you have been trying to make this thing work, but you know he/she is not marriage material for you. And here I will help you out, tell them your pastor made you do it.
3. **Don't look to anyone to complete you other than Christ.** Know who you are and whose you are, and allow that secured identity in Christ to be a blessing to your future spouse. And if you currently are unsure of who Christ says you are, take a break from dating and figure that one out. Your highest level of identity is being a son or daughter of the most high God, get that one right before you dive into another relationship.
4. **Don't move in until you are married.** And for those of you who are dating and living together, I know this might make you uncomfortable, but I promise you I am only trying to help. You have likely heard the stats around the divorce rate of Americans being around 50%. Hold that for a second. Often times when couples are living together before marriage they will make the argument that it better prepares them for marriage. And/Or how it is wise for them to live together because are saving money. Listen, I could

save money by not feeding my kids, that doesn't mean its wise. So, for those of you who are living together, hear me out. The average divorce rate in America is 50%, but when you live together before marriage that number goes up to 75%. And here's my best explanation of that. When you get married, you are supposed to feel a drastic change to your life, the Bible calls it leaving and cleaving. Moses talked about it Genesis 2, Jesus talked about it Matthew 19, and Paul talked about it Eph 5. Marriage is a covenant you make between you, your spouse, and God. It is the second most important covenant you make in this life, only second to the covenant you have with Christ when you surrender your life to him and his grace covers you because of the New Covenant he established through his death, burial, and resurrection. So instead of "playing married" by living together first, if you wait until you are married, it makes that step feel more significant, elevating the commitment and covenant you are making before God. So, hear me out. If you are currently living together and not married, I want you to do 1 of 3 things. 1. If you know he/she is the one, put a ring on it and get married. 2. Not sure if they are the one and/or you not ready to get married, move out, and do it God's way, He will bless that. 3. If you know they are not the one, run Forrest Run.

5. Introduce your boyfriend or girlfriend to me.

If you are dating someone and you tell them you want them to meet your pastor, you are setting a strong tone on what is important to you. It doesn't have to be anything formal, invite them to church and introduce them to me out in the lobby on a Sunday morning. Also, and this is for the young ladies in the room. I know for some of you there's not a Father figure in your life that cares much about who you date or how you date, well Emily and I do. And so if you want us to size up the knucklehead who think he deserves you, I will. I'm serious, I don't need to know him to look at him and say, make sure you treat her with love and respect, because she is the daughter of a King.

So what do we know. Being single does not make you an incomplete person, the Apostle Paul says singleness can be a gift. And if at some point you want to get married and be happy in that marriage, then start today by being single and

secure. Marriage should never be looked at as the missing component in your life to complete you, only Christ can do that. Marriage is good, but it is not God, so be careful not to make a good thing the main thing, because then it can become a bad thing. And lastly, No matter how many things you have gotten wrong in your dating relationships leading up until today, there is still time to do it God's way. Maybe you need to break it off, set up some new physical boundaries, or maybe you need to buy the ring. Whatever that step is that you need to take, I pray that you are reminded that God will always give you what you need to do what He has asked you to do. Pray