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**Training for Accountability Care Couples**

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## Forward by Pastor Mark

PACE, PURITY, AND PERSPECTIVE

The first couple in the church that came to me with giddy smiles to tell me they had begun dating in their early twenties. I congratulated them and told them I thought they made a nice couple. Three months later they wanted to see me again. This time it was to tell me that she had just found out she was pregnant. We had been working so hard with this young woman that had come out of a very abusive childhood. I remember how disappointed I felt. I decided I did not want to be in the mop up business, so I came up with a simple healthy dating plan.

Most of the college aged kids we were dealing with were first generation believers that had no idea how to date in a healthy Christian way. Without some help and mentoring it seemed like many couples on their own would fumble and soon be physically too involved or obsessed with each other. I decided we would get serious and proactive about providing some coaching for healthy dating relationships.

Dee and I began mentoring couples that were dating. We started asking that they would set some standards for their dating relationship. I developed a "3P" approach to dating accountability. We coached them to set standards in the area of PACE: how quickly their relationship progressed. In the area of PERSPECTIVE: not letting their universe revolve around the other person and of course PURITY: not crossing physical lines that was cause either person to stumble. When it came to purity the question most of the kids were asking was "How far can I go without sinning?" That seemed to be a slippery slope that always ended with regret. We challenge couples to assume weakness and to take account the temptations and struggles of the other person. At the beginning of the dating relationship, we asked the couple to separately write personal standards that they wanted to maintain during the courtship. From the two lists of standards, they compiled one list and made it their guideline.

Some of these young couples set some pretty high standards for themselves. We have had at least a few couples that did not kiss until the wedding ceremony. Our strong stance on purity in dating and accountability has gotten us in some hot water with parents and relatives who haven't understood our philosophy. I received a phone call after midnight and the man on the other side of the line was obviously agitated. He was ranting about us being a cult and legalistic. His nephew was dating a girl in the church that Dee and I were holding accountable. One of their standards was that they would find separate sleeping lodging when they traveled together. The guy, like a typical male, had failed to plan ahead and found himself taking a pillow to his car parked in the driveway to sleep. His uncle obviously didn't see the humor in it and tried to convince him for a couple of hours to "leave the cult." Another couple Dee and I held accountable was Jeff and Carolyn Anderson who are now part of our missions’ team in Spain. They had set a standard of not being alone in an apartment together. I received a phone call during a severe storm. Jeff was on the other line asking permission to step into Carolyn's apartment because he was getting soaking wet on the street. He was so committed to keeping his standards he would not set a foot into her apartment without first getting permission from his accountability couple. Not all the guys had as much integrity as Jeff.

We also quickly learned that if accountability was going to work, we would have to ask specific questions and go to the hard places right away. Some of our mentoring couples were a little shy at first and they would ask questions like, "How are you doing in the area of physical purity?" The dating couple would give a vague answer like "We're doing a lot better." They quickly learned that this could mean that last month they were having sex every other day and now they were only heavy petting every week. Seasoned mentoring couples learned to ask specific questions and expect specific answers so that the accountability was honest and real.

At New Life Midway, the Fusion Marriage Ministry takes responsibility to help line up Accountability Care for dating couples. The Dating Couple can help choose their Accountability Care couple. The goal is to provide healthy relationship and accountability for those that are dating. Eventually, if the dating couple becomes engaged, they will go through pre-marital counseling with a married couple if they want to get married at New Life.

## Session 1

### Introduction to Fusion

**Our Purpose:**

To be a ministry team that cooperates with God in mentoring, nurturing, and building strong marriages to create healthy, solid families that can be an example of Christ and a blessing to our communities and the world around us.

**Our Vision:**

Our vision is to see couples in our church and community transformed by a mentoring movement of couples who have found healing and restoration and have become “Oaks of Righteousness for the display of His splendor”, as stated in Isaiah 61:3. We believe that if we foster healthy biblical marriages, we will impact families as well as generations to come. We envision this type of mentoring as the ministry of Nehemiah, who restored the walls of Jerusalem brick-by-brick. We believe marriages are the “bricks” of our society. They bring order, structure, protection and strength to our churches, homes, and communities. Therefore, we seek to reach couples attending New Life Community Church, as well as couples who don’t know the Lord so that God might restore the cracked and damaged “bricks” of our cities and nation

**Our Method:**

We will seek to mentor couples in the Genesis model of “two shall become one” by:

* The teaching of Biblical principles of marriage via small groups
* Premarital and post-marital mentoring by couples that have been mentored
* Personal counseling that brings encouragement, reconciliation, and healing
* Training couples to mentor and serve other couples
* Providing accountability to dating couples within the church
* Seeking to renew and assimilate “fringe couples”
* Providing evangelical outreach.

### The Relationship Mentoring Process

Single Dating Engagement Premarital Marital

**The Why’s of Mentoring:**

1. It is God’s proven process or vehicle to pass on His treasure, wisdom, passion, blueprint for marriage, parenting truths and all that God has given us for life and godliness. The discipleship process has been time tested over 2,000 years since the early church began.
2. The rise in the divorce rate and attacks to redefine and frown upon marriage in our nation over the past 50 years have resulted in greater family dysfunction, increase in generational struggles (violence, chemical dependency, infidelity) and an erosion of God’s blueprint for healthy families- strong marriages and families. As a result of these attacks, we see:

* Role Confusion- The failing of fathers to lead the home
* Loss of trust/respect for marriage- an institution divinely ordained by God
* A loss of protection and spiritual covering over children’s lives- leading to greater cases of gang involvement, academic trouble, incarceration, teen-pregnancy, abuse, neglect, and abandonment.
* An intensification calling for a redefinition of marriage that does not align to scripture.

1. Christ commanded us to “go” and make disciples and mentor others. We do this by leading them towards steps in growing in their faith (salvation, baptism, service, Growth Track)
2. We mentor for our own personal growth. Dating mentoring is a very rewarding process as the bible indicates in “iron sharpening iron”. Through mentoring, the mentor couple also reaps the benefits of:

* A greater reliance on God- to empower you to mentor others
* A greater urgency for your marriage- to be a living example for others (i.e., “more is caught, than taught)
* A greater burden to grow spiritually- to improve your marriage and mentoring relationships (long term> multiplication effect> generations)

### The Six Key Principles of Mentoring

1. **Spiritual Authority:** Individuals are coming to you for mentoring. They are seeking guidance and direction for their lives. Don’t be afraid to speak directly into their lives.
2. **Build Bridges of Love**: Building relationships is the key to gaining trust, earning respect, and forming a teachable mentoring dynamic (i.e., “carrying the ammunition across”). Double dates are a great way to do this.
3. **Accountability**: Hold couples accountable to goals, steps for growth or boundaries that they adopt. Enforce the norms you set for your meetings- you have spiritual authority. Hold them accountable for applying their own consequences when they violate boundaries.
4. **Focus on Listening**: Mentoring relationships that are well-built, foster an atmosphere of candidness and honesty. Aim to listen first, before interjecting. When actively listening, look for the following:
5. “Red Flags”: areas of concern that should be addressed soon or immediately, if required (family/generational strongholds, breakdown in boundaries, doubt, backsliding)
6. Good Habits: areas of maturity or positive traits (spiritual discipline, prayer, healthy boundaries). Always attempt to reinforce positive behaviors.
7. Exhibit “Wait Time”: Let couples “pour out” completely before speaking. When you communicate, do so with a caring attitude and speak towards specifics.
8. **Expectation**: Always expect God to move in you and your couple during the process. Pray and create an environment where God can bring to light areas that need to be exposed or addressed.
9. **Vulnerability:** Be vulnerable yourself to foster vulnerability. Expect honesty from each other from the start. Leverage your failures and weaknesses to inform and guide the couple, and also to show how God can work and redeem us.

### Becoming an Effective Ministry Couple

**Key Attributes:**

1. Determine together to have a growing, but not necessarily, perfect marriage
2. Assist in identifying and encouraging each other’s area of gifting
3. Use your home as a ministry center
4. Keep lines of communication consistently open throughout your marriage and the mentoring
5. Dedicate all that you have and are to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. See God use you to the fullest and decide to live on mission with Him every day of your life
6. Remember that your marriage and your family are your first area of ministry, don’t neglect them, or lessen their priority, over mentoring
7. Choose together to use all the resources and talents you have, to further the Kingdom of God (Acts:1-3)

***When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.***

***Acts 18:26***

## Session 2

### Accountability Care for Dating Couples

**What is it?** The relationship mentoring process begins in the intentional dating or dating stage of a relationship. The mentoring that occurs during this time is called accountability care, and the mentors are called the Care Couple. Pastor Mark Jobe writes, “An Accountability Care couple will help a dating person by meeting with them regularly, encouraging them, and challenging them to date according to God's plan” with a 3P strategy for building intimacy.

**Who gets accountability care? “**This type of mentoring is designed for those who are motivated to serve the Lord and make sure their dating life is right before God. Anyone serving in a ministry who is dating is asked to have an Accountability Care couple if they are going to continue in ministry. Every couple is encouraged to have this type of relationship” (Pastor Mark Jobe). Ideally, the dating couple would seek this support as soon as the couple is sure they want to be in an exclusive, intentional relationship. Dating couples who are newer to the church should be directed to the Fusion ministry for help identifying a care couple.

**What’s the care couple’s job?** To hold the dating couple accountable and invest in them while they build healthy, God-honoring, respectful intimacy to determine if the other person is their life mate. Your job is *not* to keep them together, to control them, to issue consequences, or be a matchmaker.

**What’s the process?**

1. **Initiation by the dating couple.** The dating couple should initiate and seek accountability care from a married couple that has been trained to do so.
2. **Diagnostic meeting.** The dating couple and the care couple have an initial diagnostic meeting. The following should happen during this meeting:
   1. Get to know each other.
   2. Complete the accountability care sheet to establish the framework for accountability sessions.
   3. Assign the homework of creating individual 3P Strategies.
3. **Individual 3P strategies.** As homework, the couple should work on individually creating a 3P strategy and not discuss it prior to meeting with the care couple. Encourage couples to pray and fast for what boundaries the Lord would have them set to honor him in their relationship. The boundaries need to stem from their personal relationship with Christ and their personal convictions.
4. **Creation of a joint 3P strategy.** The care couple and dating couple meet again about a week after the diagnostic meeting. The individual 3P strategies are compared with the care couple present. The dating couple is encouraged to use the most conservative boundaries mentioned in each strategy to create a strategy as a couple. The care couple then approves or suggests modifications to the strategy and holds the dating couple accountable to the strategy.
5. **Meet 1-on-1.** Accountability check-ins occur at least bi-weekly (or more frequently as needed). Most of these check-ins will be 1-on-1 with the men meeting together and the women meeting together. At these sessions and post-session:
   1. **Care for them spiritually.** Demonstrate care for the individual’s growth apart for the relationship. Get to know him/her and build trust.
   2. **Give growth assignments**. Use the suggested resources to help them build their knowledge of godly dating.
   3. **Ask specific questions.** Learn to boldly ask specific questions related to their 3P strategy and expect specific answers so that the accountability is honest and real**.** Vague questions like, "How are you doing in the area of physical purity?" receive vague answers like, "We're doing a lot better." This could mean that last week they violated several of their boundaries and had sex and this week they only violated one boundary with heavy petting. A more specific question to ask would be, “How are you doing with your no-kissing boundary? Have you kissed anywhere except for the hand?” Specific questions should reflect the boundaries in their 3P strategy. *It is vital to hold them accountable for any boundary violation, even if the boundary was very conservative!* Every boundary violation represents a breach of conscience that damages spiritually.
   4. **Uphold the original 3P strategy.** As emotions get more intense and the hormones increase, they will naturally want to remove or liberalize their boundaries. Do not allow this! Hold them to their original boundaries! Those boundaries are worth fighting for because they were made when the dating couple was level-headed.
   5. **Compare notes.** The care couple husband and wife confer with each other and “compare notes.” Usually, one person in the dating relationship is more honest than the other. Identify any inconsistencies in responses to questions.
   6. **Schedule a joint meeting.** If needed, a joint meeting is scheduled with all parties present to address issues.
6. **Meet couple-to-couple.** At least once per quarter (or more frequently as needed) the care couple and the dating couple meet all together. At these sessions:
   1. **Heart checks.** Evaluate each person’s heart in the relationship. Listen for red flags and deal-breakers that indicate they are not a match. Encourage good habits and positive behaviors.
   2. **Call to account.** Call to account any inconsistencies in behavior or fractures in boundaries. See the next section about violating boundaries for more information.
7. Repeat Steps 5 & 6 as needed.

**They violated their boundaries!** If there is contrition for boundary violations, pray for them and encourage them that there is hope! Counsel them to enforce their consequences and/or create more conservative boundaries that will slow down their pace. As James 5:19-20 says, “My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”

If there is resistance or defiance when they are called to account or repeated patterns of boundary violation, your counsel will need to be very firm. Marriage requires self-control, trustworthiness, and commitment, and violating 3P boundaries is a sign they are not ready for marriage. Assuming they have already tried to enforce consequences and created more conservative boundaries, but it didn’t help, here are possible next steps:

* 1. **Take a break.** Taking a break from the relationship could be days, a week, or even a month “off” from contacting or connecting with one another in any way. During this time, they can pray and fast and seek the Lord to get their hearts back into alignment and submission to what they felt the Lord was asking them to do in the 3P strategy. After the break, you can meet again to re-evaluate the relationship viability. They may break-up or they may re-engage with renewed commitment.
  2. **Break-up.** If the boundary violations have been very damaging to each other, this may be the best choice.
  3. **Re-assignment.** If the dating couple is unwilling to respect your spiritual authority or is not listening to your counsel, you can release the dating couple. “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet” (Matthew 10:14). Don’t take it personally as rejection. They can seek a different care couple, and you can mentor another dating couple that *will* respect your authority.

**There are so many red flags!** Red flags can appear at any point in the dating process. When one appears, it needs to be addressed as soon as possible in a loving way. The accountability care couple must “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). It is not a reason to shame, blame or condemn someone because we are all broken by sin. However, red flags are generally signs that the relationship cannot end in a healthy marriage at this time. The couple should be told specifically which red flag has been seen and given clear action steps to address the red flag. The action steps may include taking a break from the relationship, attending Celebrate Recovery, going through counseling, or breaking up. For example, consider a red flag of physical abuse toward the woman in the relationship. After communicating the red flag and confronting the man with his sin, some action steps need to happen. The man must ask forgiveness of the woman. They need to break-up. He must pursue emotional counseling to uncover the root of the domestic violence. The woman may also want to pursue counseling, too. After successful counseling, they can reevaluate whether to pursue the relationship again.

**They aren’t a match.** Many dating relationships run their natural course and end. Maybe you see signs of disinterest, lack of shared values, differing goals, cultural differences that neither wants to work through, etc. As soon as you feel aware that they may not be the right match, question the man and the woman separately to address your observations. If they receive your advice, coach them through how to break up respectfully. Your job is *not* to keep them together, but rather to oversee that the process of building intimacy stays healthy and productive so that they can ultimately determine if this is their life mate. Breaking up is not a failure for the dating couple or for you! In fact, it is a success--God revealed directions that this is not your soul mate. Remind them that they are significant *without* a significant other.

If they do not accept your advice about breaking up, remind them that delaying a break-up will only cause them to waste time and postpone finding their life mate.Advise them that you can no longer provide accountability care for them because of your view that this relationship won’t end in a healthy marriage. The dating couple can try to find another accountability care couple. If it really isn’t a good match, they will probably struggle to find another care couple, or the next accountability care couple will give them the same message!

**When do they get engaged? “**The early part of dating is the time for a couple to get to know each other. We strongly advise couples to not get engaged until at least 10 months of dating. Again, this standard is designed to challenge a couple to build a foundation before moving forward.

Although it can be an awkward conversation for a dating couple, it is vital even in the early stages to have an expectation on timing. At New Life we have come to the conviction that it is best for a couple to date at least a year (including engagement) before getting married. Although a timeframe it is not specifically mentioned in the Bible for dating, it seems to fall under the area of wisdom. Experience has shown over and over that those who get married after less than a year of dating have a much higher rate of severe marriage problems and divorce. If a couple is going to get married at New Life or by a New Life Pastor, they must have dated at least a year and successfully completed pre-marital counseling with a Mentor Couple. These two requirements are set up to help couples prepare for a successful marriage. If a couple insists on getting married in less than a year, they will have to find someone outside of New Life to lead the wedding ceremony” (Pastor Mark Jobe).

The care couple should be consulted if the dating relationship is moving toward engagement. If the dating couple gets engaged, the care couple should then advise and help in finding premarital mentoring.

**They are living together. “**A couple that has been living together has essentially been dating, although not in a healthy way. Couples that are living together without being married should either move out or get married. Sometimes living separate is not a good option, especially if they already have children together. In these cases, a Mentor Couple can meet with the couple living together to help them figure out if they should get married right away. Often it is best for them to have a simple wedding (whether at court or in church). It is not good to delay a wedding and continue to live together. The Bible is clear that the Lord is more concerned with our sexual purity than the detailed plans of a wedding ceremony” (Pastor Mark Jobe).

### Accountability Care Template

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Info** | **Care Couple** | **Dating Couple** |
| **Names** | His:  Hers: | His:  Hers: |
| **Address(es)** |  | His:  Hers: |
| **Phone #s** | His:  Hers: | His:  Hers: |
| **E-mail** | His:  Hers: | His:  Hers: |

**Diagnostic Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** (date) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (time)

**Frequency of Meetings (check one):**

\_\_\_weekly \_\_\_bi-weekly ­­\_\_\_monthly

**How we will meet (check all that apply):**

* in person at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (address) at \_\_\_\_ (time)
* phone calls on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (day) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (time)
* text messages \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (daily/ weekly) for prayer and support
* online via \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(app) on \_\_\_\_\_ (day) at \_\_\_\_ (time)

### Accountability Care Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ fully understand that I am a willing participant in the Fusion Accountability Care service. I have made this decision on my own accord. I make this decision to declare that I seek to put God at the center of my dating relationship and my life. I agree to respectfully and to the best of my ability—with the Holy Spirit as my guide—adhere to the following service principles and norms.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ agree to:

* Commit myself to faithfully and punctually attend all accountability meetings
* Commit myself to faithfully complete ALL reading, viewing and written assignments—on time.
* Commit to diligently memorize all scripture verses assigned to me
* Commit myself to be absolutely honest and open during accountability sessions
* Commit myself to focus on my own issues
* Commit myself to prayerfully create and then uphold the 3P strategy by God’s grace
* Commit myself to listen to and consider the wisdom and direction of my care couple

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***“Whatever you do, work at it with all your hearts, as working for the Lord and not for men.”***

***Col. 3:23***

## Session 3

### Pace, Perspective and Purity: The 3P Strategy

***In their heart’s humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.***

***Proverbs 16:9***

Your goal in dating is to find out whether the other person is your life mate**.** To determine this, you will need to develop emotional, mental, and spiritual intimacy (physical intimacy will be minimally developed before marriage). The 3P Strategy that you create will help you safely build healthy intimacy through proper pace, purity, and perspective.

Your personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the source of the 3P boundaries. As you pray and fast and seek the Lord, he will give you personal convictions regarding boundaries that honor him. Setting and upholding the boundaries is a way for the gospel to be showcased in your relationship.

**Pace**: The speed, timing, and rhythm of the relationship

* Consider boundaries about how often you will see each other or how many hours a week you will spend together.
* Consider planning for open-ended evaluation conversations every month or every 3 months. This way you can determine whether you want to move forward or end the relationship. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” There is a time to get to know someone, a time to intentionally date, a time to decide to court or break-up, a time to get engaged, etc.
* Your strategy could include waiting to discuss certain topics such as marriage or children until the relationship achieves milestones in time or commitment. 1 Cor. 13:4 states, “Love is patient…” The relationship pace needs to progress slow enough for you to explore increasingly complex and intimate questions. Don’t divulge too much, too soon! More intimate and personal questions should wait until there is the commitment of dating or even engagement.
* Your boundaries may specify who will take the lead in setting the pace. We recommend that the man take the lead with moving the relationship forward because God calls men to be the head of their wives in marriage (Eph. 5:23). Good leaders remove confusion. Women wonder, so remove their confusion by clearly expressing your intentions and feelings. Answering a woman’s questions is intentional leadership.1 It is “speaking the truth in love” and a mark of maturity (Eph. 4:15).

**Perspective**: The mental/emotional awareness of the relationship

* Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” What will you do to intentionally sharpen one another intellectually?
* Consider boundaries regarding how much time you will spend with your families and friends to keep those relationships thriving.
* Here are some ways couples can keep perspective:
  + Keeping their personal relationship with Christ as a top priority.
  + Reading Christian books, Christian blogs and the Bible to inform their relationship.
  + Preparing for marriage: develop their spiritual life, eliminate debt, get a job, deal with deeper emotional problems
  + Having community involvement with other church family and biological family
  + Discussing their relationship with safe and trusted people and each other
  + Being willing to utilize the advice from your community

**Purity**: The sexual integrity of the relationship

To help you in the process of creating 3P purity boundaries, we have provided examples of real couples’ 3P strategies. Here are some other Biblical guidelines to consider for your purity boundaries.

* **Sacrifice out of love for Christ.** Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” With prayer and fasting, seek the Lord about how you can handle your body in a way that reflects death to self and life in Christ. The sacrifice Christ made for you fuels your motivation for the physical sacrifices you will make to guard your purity. He gave everything for you—what physical pleasures are you called to give up for him in this relationship and for how long? Express these sacrifices as purity boundaries, for example, “I will refrain from sexual relations until marriage” or “We will not kiss on the lips until we have been together for 9 months.”
* **Stay faithful to the original boundaries.** The boundaries the Lord spoke to you will help you respect one another, protect one another, and trust one another. State them clearly and openly with your care couple at the beginning of the relationship and uphold them for the duration of the relationship! Psalm 18:25 says God will show himself faithful to the faithful. As you honor his directions, you will reap his blessings. For example, if the Lord called you to a boundary like this, “We will refrain from hugging for more than 30 seconds” we recommend you uphold it all the way through to marriage, regardless of how your feelings and desires for closeness intensify. The only time to make changes is to encourage greater purity in the relationship by setting more conversative boundaries. In the case that you are violating the boundary, you could revise it: “We will refrain from front hugs and only give brief side hugs.”
* **Assume weakness.** 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, everyone *will* face temptation: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13). We can prepare in advance for the temptation to indulge in physical pleasures by proactively creating boundaries that *assume our weakness.* As the Lord leads you, set boundaries that are conservative enough that even if you violate them, you are still honoring what the Lord called you to sacrifice. Think of the image of a cliff. The cliff represents a boundary violation. Keep yourself as far from the edge of the cliff as you can rather than going right to the edge of it. For example, if you feel called sacrifice the pleasure of sexual touches on the chest until marriage, set a boundary that will hinder you from getting anywhere close to this behavior: “We will not touch one another anywhere except for the hands or back.”
* **Above reproach.** Set boundaries to stay above reproach in your physical conduct: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). In particular, if you are in a ministry or leadership position, you are a model for many people. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” The way you set and uphold God-given 3P boundaries affects not only you, but the people you lead. For example, if you set a boundary, “We will limit caresses to the hair, face and neck” and others see you doing this in public, they may wonder what you are doing in private and assume that many kinds of sexual touches are ok. So, a boundary like this might lead those under you to stumble into sexual sin. “It is better…not to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall” (Rom. 14:21)
* **Consequences.** Love “does not dishonor others…it always protects” (1 Cor. 13:4-5). Boundaries without consequences are merely suggestions. Consequences are meant to bring home the reality and importance of protecting and honoring the Lord and each other. They are an essential part of your 3P strategy. For example, “If we violate a purity boundary that is not sexual, we will confess to our care couple, and give up our next date.” Consequences could also be re-drawing the boundary more conservatively.
* **Bottom line boundaries.** Boundaries are not meant to be a legalistic, strict, one-size-fits-all measure. That is why you must pray and seek God’s face about your personal 3P strategy. However, there are certain minimum boundaries we recommend for any dating relationship to be God-honoring. Through experience, we have seen that these boundaries are vital in supporting God’s primary boundary of saving sex for marriage. To be clear, sex is defined as genitalia to genitalia, genitalia to hand, and genitalia to mouth.4 Sex is reserved for marriage, when the two “become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). We strongly encourage you to include these boundaries:
  + Refrain from being alone in a car, home or other unoccupied building that will not be readily accessible to others.
  + No traveling on vacation as a couple alone. If you need to travel as a couple, recruit trustworthy friends who will hold you accountable to join you. The women should overnight in a room together, and the men in another room.
  + Avoid being alone with no one other than your or your significant other’s children to prevent you from violating boundaries. Children are not able to hold you accountable! If you are in a situation where the only other people present are your children, you should consider yourselves alone.
  + Refrain from requesting or sending sexting messages.
  + Refrain from addressing one another as “fiancé” until the commitment of engagement. Refrain from addressing one another as “husband/wife” until there is the commitment of marriage. Prematurely addressing each other this way has led to some couples falling in their purity boundaries.
* **Handling your temptations.** 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 instructs us, “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.” Based on 1 Cor. 10:13 and 6:18-20, we recommend the following6:

1. Make a list of your “I wills”—statements that clarify your boundaries sexually.
2. Tell your care couple when you are tempted to violate boundaries.
3. Flee! Run fast from sexual sin!
4. Keep watching and praying against temptation.

### 3P Strategy Example #1: Boaz & Ruth

Prevention Plan

**Past**: *What did we learn from our past?*

1. We learned that no matter how strong a person feels he/she is still susceptible to being human and our entire hope must be centered in God and not a person.
2. We learned that violating physical boundaries produces shame and decay to the trust and respect of a relationship,
3. We learned that men and women perceive, communicate and cope extremely different.
4. We learned that our past causes certain actions and reactions that must be deliberately monitored and modified.
5. We learned that the more physical two people get, the more physical they want to get.

**Pitfalls:** *What Mistakes will we avoid?*

1. We want to avoid replacing God with each other.
2. We want to avoid regrets and painful memories caused by sin.
3. We want to avoid becoming ingrown and self-centered.
4. We want to avoid forfeiting a fruitful future for momentary pleasure

**Preparation:** *What will we do differently to anticipate and avoid those pitfalls?*

Pace

**Evaluation Checkpoints:** *Where are we now?* *Where are we at spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, financially, love languages?*

1. When will we do our next evaluation? The first Tuesday of every month.
2. Where should we be by then? Pure/Church status/ministry status/accountability partners

**Pace Protection:**

1. We will limit our time together to 4 days a week including ministry.
2. We will refrain from talk of marriage until engagement.
3. We choose to set apart the phrase "I love you" for our engagement.

Perspective

**Identity:** *Who are we? What Stage is our Relationship In? (Who does God say we are, or should be?)*

1. We are a New Generation, Promised Land Christians.
2. If we do not know each other, the proper place to get to know one another is in a friendship context, not a dating relationship.
3. Dating/Dating and exclusive, romantic involvement is reserved for relationships that are headed toward marriage.

**Purpose**: *Why does our relationship exist? (If our relationship didn't exist would it matter? Why?)*

*Mission Statement:* Our relationship exists to build us up in Christ and be God’s expressed love to a hurting world. The current stage of our relationship is to get to know each other with the prospect of marriage.

**Values**: *We are not willing to compromise these in our pursuit of our Dream/Vision.*

1. We are unwilling to compromise our devotional/spiritual priority.
2. We are unwilling to compromise our calling as ministers.
3. We are unwilling to compromise our Quality time together.

**Strategy**: *How will we accomplish our Vision/Dream?*

1) We will recruit strategic prayer warriors to hold us up in prayer.

2) Guard regular Tuesday Time.

3) Read a book together (Memorize Verses).

4) Save money from each date for optional ministry fund.

5) Prayer Walk

6) Utilize both of our giftings in ministry together.

7) Take parents out once a month.

Purity

**Purity Covenant**

1. We will refrain from any and all sexual relations,
2. We will refrain from kissing (save on the hand),
3. We will refrain from being alone in a home or other unoccupied building that will not be readily accessible to others.
4. We will avoid home visits except for planned family events.
5. We will limit physical touch to the hand, forearm, and an arm around the upper back (we will not play with each other's hair, face, neck, legs, waist, etc.),
6. We will only give short side hugs.
7. We will not spend time alone in a parked car in the late evening.
8. When together we will abide by an 11pm curfew.
9. We will refrain from watching romantic movies together alone (theater).

**Communication/Conflict Covenant**

We believe that as New Generation Christians, the patterns we set in our relationship now will set the pace for our entire future as well as deeply impact all whom we influence.

1. We will not let the sun go down while angry with each other.
2. We will always be completely honest with each other and never allow the smallest dishonesty to sit.
3. We will always save our disagreements for private meetings and protect each other in public.
4. We will never slander one another.

Consequences of breaking our covenant

1. If it is not a grave sin, we will forfeit one Tuesday together.
2. If it happens again or if we've dishonored each other, we will meet with our pastors to confess and assess our relationship.
3. If it doesn't stop there, we take time apart to assess whether or not we should be together. If we cannot be faithful to this covenant, we cannot be faithful to the greater covenant of marriage.

## Session 4

### Diagnostic Meeting

**Purpose**: To give dating couples a better picture of what to expect in accountability care. Clarify any questions about the process and set norms and rules for meetings and to get to know each other better and introduce other resources or materials that will be used.

**Clarifying our Goals**: What do we want to do?

1. To get to know you better as individuals and as a couple. Mentoring is most effective when the mentors understand the couple.
2. To help you lay a solid biblical foundation for a healthy, blessed relationship

**Clarifying our Strategy**: How do we want to do it?

1. By participating in regular sessions, in which we will discuss, share, and comment on your 3P strategy and progress
2. By completing other assignments like watching videos, answering reflection questions or reading materials
3. By looking closely at biblical principles (through scripture) that relate to relationships

**Homework due at our next meeting:**

1. Review and sign “Accountability Care Contract” (on next page)
2. Each person should prayerfully write out a 3P Strategy to safely develop healthy intimacy. They should reflect your personal convictions about how you want to honor God in this relationship. Do not discuss it together until the next meeting with the care couple. The 3P’s:

**Pace**: The speed, timing, and rhythm of the relationship. How quickly is this relationship progressing? What can I do to not go too fast and maintain a healthy pace? Many couples jump into a relationship too quickly. They become too emotionally, relationally, and physically involved before they should. Dating should be a time to get to know one another at a healthy pace.

**Purity**: The sexual integrity of the relationship. What boundaries will I set in the physical area to guard myself from slipping, stay above reproach (1 Tim. 4:12) and honor God? Many couples struggle in this area. When you cross lines in the physical and sexual area you sow seeds of disrespect, distrust, and disillusionment into your future relationship.

**Perspective**: The mental/emotional awareness of the relationship. How can I make sure that my life does not revolve around this relationship? Often couples make the mistake of focusing so much on their relationship that they lose their other friendships and become exclusive. This leads to emotional isolation and over-dependence on the person they are dating.

***Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.***

***Proverbs 15:22***

### Diagnostic Meeting Care Couple Notes

The diagnostic meeting is more critical than any other session. It is in this session that your active listening abilities will really be tested. Listening for “red flags” is key in this session. Remember, “red flags” serve as warning signs of possible deeper issues that may warrant a break-up. In this session you will be learning a lot about your dating couple and where they are at emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. In this session you will gain valuable insight, which you could use to direct the course of the accountability care. Do not be afraid to “dig” into specific areas by asking specific questions. Especially look for “red flags” in these areas:

1. **Maturity-**Are they capable of handling adult responsibilities? Are they ready to make the sacrifices required to care for another person?
2. **Emotionally**- Does either person struggle with bouts of depression or other manic behavior? Are there behaviors that suggest that the relationship is just a “quick fix” for something else? Are they comfortable being alone? Is there violence of any kind, or explosive and unexplained anger? Is there any sarcasm or teasing that is aggressive or mean?
3. **Spiritually**- Are they fully submitted to Christ? Is one person a newer believer or not a believer at all? Do they share an unequal view of faith or God? Are there any addictions or obvious areas of bondage? Is there dishonesty in the small or large things? Does either person use God’s word to demean or manipulate the other?
4. **Relationally**- Is there a significant gap in maturity between them? Are there signs of co-dependency? Are they “sucking the life out of each other”? Is there a healthy boundary in their relationships? Is there a good balance between time spent together and with others? Are they consumed with each other? Do their parents agree with this?
5. **Financially**- Is there a large amount of debt? Do they spend impulsively or unwisely? Do they have jobs?
6. **Relationship History-** Are they living together? Have they had previous relationships or marriages? \* How long have they been dating? Have they had sex? Is there any sexting occurring, or requests for sexting?
7. **Level of commitment**- Is one more committed/hesitant than the other? Is anyone “dragging their feet”? Are they committed to completing the process and or being teachable? One possible fed flag would be “we are only doing this accountability because they said we had to.”

The diagnostic meeting is also a time to:

* Discuss pace, perspective, and purity. Have the dating couple evaluate the 3P Strategy examples and encourage them to use the Model 3P Strategy as they write their own
* Set expectations and norms for the process
* Exchange contact information using the Accountability Care template
* Cast vision about the journey which you are about to begin together

This is also the care couple’s opportunity to ask about their reason for pursuing the relationship. Some couples enter a relationship solely on emotion and haste. However, others have properly sought previous counsel and/or advice from Godly leaders in their lives. Some examples of “emotionally” charged relationships are:

* “We just love each other too much”
* “This is “God’s will” for our lives”- without proper discernment
* “Our relationship is so great we never really argue”
* “I just feel this in my gut
* “I couldn’t think of life without him/her”
* “I just know that we were meant for each other”

Most “emotionally” charged relationships will reveal themselves with time. The guiding principle for a care couple can be summarized in the following question:

**“Are there any reasons why God would withhold his blessing from this relationship?”**

If there are certain reasons you can see or red flags that are present, note them and ensure that they are addressed in an accountability care session as soon as possible.

**\*Note**: As divorce rates increase, 2nd and 3rd marriages are becoming more prevalent. In cases where a mentee is entering a marriage for more than the first time consider the following:

* Was their first marriage failed by infidelity? If so, by whom.
* Was there abandonment on the part of a previous spouse?
* Was this before they were a believer?
* Where they both believers at the time of the divorce?
* Are there any children from previous relationships?

**Summary**

The diagnostic meeting is a time for the care couple and dating couple to get to know each other better. It’s a time to get some background information on the dating couple that could be beneficial in maximizing the accountability process. It’s also a time to set norms and expectations for the accountability period. It’s also a time to cast vision for a pace, perspective and purity strategy that will protect their relationship and help it grow.

## Session 5

### Dating Relationship Development

***“Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.” Song of Solomon 8:4***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Intentional Dating** | **Dating** | **Engagement** | **Marriage** |
| ≤6 months of time  (approximately) | More than 6 months of time (approximately) | 3-12 months-just enough time for wedding prep. | The rest of your lifetime |
| **No** commitment. I like you and want to get to know you more. | **Some** commitment. We are exclusive now. | Committed | Life-long commitment |
| **No** physical involvement | **Limited** physical involvement (holding hands, short hug, brief kiss) | **Limited** physical involvement | Complete physical involvement |
| Basic questions of compatibility | Complex questions of compatibility | Complex questions of compatibility and capacity to love unconditionally | Ongoing conversations of compatibility and loving one another unconditionally |
| Community Involvement: church together, Crossover participation, common ministry involvement | Community involvement: add accountability care | Community Involvement: move to premarital counseling, Fusion young marrieds group | Community Involvement: move to marriage small group, marriage mentoring |
| Coffee/meal | Coffee/meal | Planning for the future/Coffee/Meal | Planning for personal and family growth/coffee/meal/getaways/  overnights |

Line represents physical Involvement

Engagement

Marriage

Dating

Dating

Level of commitment

### Dating F.A.Q.1, 2, 3, 5

***“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5***

**Why We Date**

It’s all about the 3M’s: Master, Mission and Mate5. We're dating to find a life **mate** to be our companion on a common **mission** as we follow our **master,** Christ. We intentionally date or court with marriage in view.

**When We Date**

* Consider senior year of high school as the earliest to start intentionally dating or dating.
* If you don’t know your **master** or **mission** in life, maybe it is not yet time for you to intentionally date or court. You still have some big personal decisions to make that will affect the life **mate** you choose.
* You are content with your singleness before you date. “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Timothy 6:6).
* You are at an age and stage in your life where the relationship could have the chance of moving towards marriage.
* You have prayed, fasted, and sincerely sought the Lord for direction about getting married and finding a life mate.

**The 10 C’s**

The truth is that there are many people who will have a common mission and master and compatibility with you. Knowing God’s will for your lifelong partner is more like staying inside a yard with a fence than walking on a sidewalk. The fences can be represented by the 10 C’s of who and how we court. Within the fences, you have freedom and there are many choices. The 10 C’s are: *Christ Follower, Commitment, Character, Culture, Core Values, Chemistry, Competency, Communication, Chaste, and Community.* 5

**Who We Date**

1. **Christ Follower**: God tells his people to find a spouse within his people. 2 Corinthians 6:14 states, “do not be unequally yoked.” Dating an unbeliever is outside of God’s boundaries. A person who has not received the unconditional love of Christ will find it difficult to love another person with that same type of love.
2. **Commitment**: We are looking for a sole mate versus a “soul mate.” Rather than looking for “the one,” we are looking for a sole mate to live out our lives alongside. You are looking for a person who can commit to you for a lifetime as your one and only! Look for a person who commits to something and sees it through to the end. Do they follow through? Do they keep their word?
3. **Character**: We’re looking for a person of godly character. Like attracts like, so consider if you yourself have a godly character! Make a list of character qualities you want in a future spouse, then *become* a person with those character qualities. Use the criteria in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 or 1 Timothy 4:12 for your list to address speech, conduct, love for others and purity. You want to be and attract someone who is living “rooted and built up in Christ” (Col. 2:6-7). If you don't look know what you're looking for, you're looking at everything, and that wastes a lot of time and energy!
4. **Culture:** First, we aren’t looking for the stereotypical romantic ideal that is presented by our culture. Often our hearts have been informed about romance with stories, images and music from this world. Following a heart that has been informed this way will mislead you! Remove unhealthy cultural influences like music that degrades either gender, erotic images, or dishonoring shows from your own life. Rather, inform your heart with God's word to direct it with the truth about loving relationships. “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23).

Second, consider the other person’s cultural influences: media, family, ethnicity, religion, education, etc. Differences in culture can be very rewarding, but they can also be a major source of conflict in your relationship.

1. **Core Values**: As mentioned earlier, you are looking for someone who values Jesus as supreme and sufficient in their life. Starting with faith values like this, you should next evaluate whether you have similar values in areas like family, finances, work, ministry, etc. Asking each other questions helps you determine whether you are aligned in your God-given dreams, values, passions, and personal preferences. You can find some great questions at Brett Ullman’s [website](https://www.brettullman.com/2020/07/09/dating-questions/).
2. **Chemistry:** One of Satan's greatest deceptions in dating is the over emphasis on physical appearance. Looking for someone who is hot is not enough! Proverbs 31:30 states that beauty is fleeting. It's on its way out. Look for attraction to their character and inner qualities and chemistry that is more than physical. Attraction like this that lasts a lifetime is beautiful and timeless; in contrast, beauty will fade.
3. **Competency**: What skills or abilities do you have that will make you an excellent mate? What responsibilities will you have as a husband or wife (work, cooking, childcare, maintenance, car care, etc.)? It’s best to choose someone who is becoming competent at handling these responsibilities as a single through serving their family or the community around you.

**How We Date**

1. **Communication**: Love must be sincere (Romans 12:9) and mature Christians “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). This means no games in dating. Communicate with vulnerability and transparency about your thoughts and intentions. Don't play games by delaying communication so as not to appear too eager. Also don't be too intense. Be clear about when you will call again about the next date and give them time to think and decide whether to go out again.
2. **Chaste (Purity)**: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20: “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. **19**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20**you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

Avoiding porn and individual sexual temptations will help you to prepare for monogamy in marriage. Staying pure as a couple will help prevent you from confusing sexual compatibility with relational compatibility. Premarital sex will keep you in the wrong relationship for too long and keep you from the right relationship because sex has the capacity to camouflage an endless list of relational deficiencies and dysfunctions!3 Getting sexually involved causes you to give away your heart and attach in ways that are very painful when a breakup occurs.

Rather than pursuing pleasure through sex, we need to pursue pleasure through God. Psalm 16:11 states, “You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

1. **Community**: Proverbs 15:22 says, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” Live in Christian community for support and guidance. Your small group members or older, mature believers at church can be an invaluable source of feedback if you ask them, “Am I ready for marriage?” Additionally, having roommates can help refine your character and prepare for married life.

Furthermore, choosing to rely on your feelings alone in dating is unreliable! Infatuation and chemistry are powerful forces that cloud anyone’s judgment! Feelings change and cannot be a good indicator of whether a match will last a lifetime. A better indicator is the Christian community around you agreeing that you are a good match. In Song of Solomon 1:4, the friends of the dating couple say, “We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.”

**How We Break-up2**

Breaking up is not a bad thing. Your worth is not tied to the other person’s acceptance of you. Remember, this is about finding someone of good character with whom you have some attraction based on inner qualities. Breaking up can teach you to fully let go of things, and the brokenness can lead to personal growth and deeper intimacy with the Lord. You *will* feel normal again after a time.

* **Humbly**: Make it as easy as possible to the other person to bow out of the relationship and take responsibility for the reasons why you want to leave. Or humbly accept the reasons the other person wants to leave without arguing.
* **In Person:** not over text, email, Instagram, etc.
* **Honestly:** we provide honest reasons for why we will no longer pursue this person as a life-partner. We do this kindly and objectively, without breaking their spirit or putting the other person down.
* **Without Drama:** It’s ok to cry. It hurts! Avoid trying to persuade the person to re-commit, chasing them down or continuing to reach out when the door has been shut.
* **Respectfully:** We do not put down our ex or slander them to others. We wish the best for them-a godly, lifelong partner and a family that will further the gospel.
* **Just Do It:** There is never a good time to break up. It will always be inconvenient for one reason or another. When you know the relationship doesn’t have a future that ends in marriage, it is time to say goodbye maturely.

**What if I Found the Person for Me? 2**

Congratulations! Your next step is to get engaged! You are ready to pursue pre-marital counseling. New Life suggests at least 12 months of relationship time (including the engagement) prior to marriage.

## Session 2 Activity: Three Accountability Confrontation Scenarios

Read the one of the real-life accountability care scenarios below. Think about how you would advise the dating couple. What natural consequences will occur in their relationship because of the behaviors? What action steps do you recommend they take? What will you say to them?

**Scenario #1**

Benido and Benita have been dating for three years. Benita has two children from previous relationships. Benido just became a believer. They have a relationship history of being on again and off again. They currently do not live together, but they had in the past. Benita is the only one with a job and therefore pays for all their dates. They have regular intense conflicts over this and other aspects of their relationship. After talking to them, you can see there is significant hurt in their relationship from each other. It seems like they have vacillated between love and outright hate for some time. They are struggling to agree on any 3P strategy and Benita is dragging her feet about writing them.

*Natural consequences of their behavior:*

*Suggested action steps for the dating couple:*

*What you will say:*

**Scenario #2**

Oscar and Olivia both have extended family in the church community. Their families agree that they are great for each other. They spend a lot of time together in church, at family parties, and small group. They both want to pursue the Lord wholeheartedly. They create their 3P strategy, and you don’t see anything to modify. They are model standards. However, during the first accountability meeting, you talk with each of them privately and Olivia shares that they had sex multiple times this past week. She feels so remorseful, but Oscar is pressuring her physically and she doesn’t want to lose the relationship.

*Natural consequences of their behavior:*

*Suggested action steps for the dating couple:*

*What you will say:*

**Scenario #3**

Mario and Maria are college students who have been dating about six months. They are both committed to pursuing God’s best for their relationship. They have upheld their 3P strategy, but they are experiencing problems in their relationship. Mario is invested in the relationship and deeply cares for Maria. He believes she is his future wife! Their relationship started out great with mutual attraction and interest. However, recently when he approaches Maria, she is apathetic, indifferent, and seems disinterested. You meet with them and find out that Maria wants a career. She would like to pursue this career, perhaps out of state. When you ask where she is at with the relationship, she is indeed disinterested and indifferent towards Mario, who wants to stay and work in ministry in Chicago.

*Natural consequences of their behavior:*

*Suggested action steps for the dating couple:*

*What you will say:*

## Session 3 Activity: Evaluate the 3P Strategies

On the following pages are 3 real-life examples of 3P Strategies written by couples who got married at New Life. Read the examples and then evaluate them as if you were the Care Couple working with the dating couple. What are the pros and cons of the strategies they wrote? What modifications would you suggest, if any?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Example # | Pros | Cons | Modifications Suggested |
| #2: Isaac & Rebekah |  |  |  |
| #3: David & Abigail |  |  |  |
| #4: Adam & Eve |  |  |  |

### 3P Strategy Example #2: Isaac & Rebekah

**Purpose:**

To use our relationship to first grow in Christ as individuals and then together as a couple, to glorify and worship him, be it in ministry together and/or as led. The end resulting in being able to use our relationship to glorify God and impact others.

**Values:**

We are unwilling to compromise our devotional/spiritual priority.

We are unwilling to compromise our calling as ministers.

We are unwilling to compromise our quality time together.

**Communications/Conflict covenant:**

We will be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

We will seek to understand before being understood.

We will not interrupt each other and listen with eye contact.

We will not allow outbursts of anger (verbal or physical - no yelling).

We will refrain from attacking personal character and focus on specific issues.

We will not use "always" and "never" statements about each other.

We will not let the sun go down while angry with each other.

We will not walk away from or hang up on each other. If we are unable to talk about it at that moment we will politely ask to be excused from the conversation and immediately set another time to finish our discussion.

We will always be completely honest with each other and never allow the smallest dishonesty to sit for even a minute.

We will always save our disagreements for private meetings and protect each other in public.

We will never slander one another.

**Goals:**

Read a book together

Use our giftings in ministry together as a way to minister to others, I.e., worship ministry, audio, and tech

Spend quality time with parents together (Once a month per parental set)

Have double dates with other couples to grow and encourage one another

**Pace:**

We plan on dating for a minimum of one year with the intentions of marriage

We will refrain from the talk of marriage until engagement

We will have one date night a week

We will evaluate our relationship the first date night of every month

**Consequences of breaking covenant rules**

If not immoral - we will forfeit that following date night.

If it is immoral - we will forfeit that following date night and meet with our accountability partners to discuss appropriate actions.

**Purity covenant:**

Rule #1 - Try not to break the rules ☺

Rule #2 - We will refrain from any and all sexual relations

Rule #3 - We will refrain from being alone in a home or other unoccupied building that will not be readily accessible to others

Rule #4 - we will not be alone in a room together unless we are having a disagreement; Door must be open

Rule #5 - we will not sit on the same bed together

Rule #6 - We will not spend time alone in a parked car for more than 5 mins

Rule #7 - No texting during school hours except for one greeting text

Rule #8 - When alone together we will abide by a midnight curfew (with few exceptions & calls to our accountability partners)

Rule #9 - Making out is not allowed

### 3P Strategy Example #3: David & Abigail

Spiritual Strategy

* Pray together at shared meals, at the end of a date and when necessary due to conflicts
* Serve together in some capacity once a month
* Be faithful to meet with care couple for accountability
* Support him in ministry
* Hold him accountable to attending small group and reading the Bible
* Her: Have quiet time BEFORE I talk to him
* Her: Get involved in a ministry before I marry

Emotional/Intellectual Strategy

* Learn something new together once a month (devotion, reading a book, trip to the museum)
* Resolve conflicts within 24 hours whenever possible
* Be open about our feelings, but be tactful, too
* Avoid criticizing each other publicly, but rather defend and praise whenever possible
* Do not bring past conflicts, behaviors, and disagreements into present arguments
* Avoid having emotional conversations late at night

Physical Strategy

* When we are alone, he leaves before midnight, and the door always stays ajar
* Avoid spending time together in the evenings on weeknights except if there is a

planned activity or it is an extreme case

* When staying overnight at our family's, we both get dressed in the morning before seeing each other and avoid seeing each other in P.J.’s before bed
* When he visits her dorm room, she walks him in and out (no P.J.’s on in his presence)
* Regardless of location, no tucking each other into bed or waking each other up in person
* No prolonged kissing (thirty-second limit)
* No caressing her arms for more than 10 minutes
* No ear kisses for him
* Remain modestly dressed and fully clothed at all times
* No hands wandering underneath clothing
* Her: No clothes that reveal stomach, no deep V-cut shirts, etc.

### 3P Strategy Example #4: Adam & Eve

OUR LOVE COVENANT

Physical

Holding hands is encouraged to communicate our love and commitment to each other.

We will save our first kiss on lips and front hugs until our wedding day.

Emotional

In order to have a healthy balance we will see each other four days a week. This includes phone calls unless it is short and to the point. We will be considerate toward each other if one of us could not **meet on** these days.

We will end our evenings at 12am when alone or 1am when with a group in order to be rested for the coming day.

Environmental

We will not spend time at each other's houses unless we are with a group or its family related.

We will not be together in the same room with a door closed.

We will not be alone in a parked car that is away from view.

If this covenant of love is not being met it is our duty to approach each other in a loving way in order to cultivate this God ordained relationship.

**Notes**

1Jonathan Pokluda, *Outdated* video series

2Brett Ullman, *Dating.for.life.the questions* video series

3Andy Stanley, *The New Rules for Love, Sex and Dating*

4Bianca Juàrez Olthoff, *Love Is*

5Dan Chun and Neil Warren, *How to Pick a Spouse*

6Linda Dillow and Dr. Julie Slattery, *Passion Pursuit*

## Suggested Resources

***Outdated* by Jonathan Pokluda**

*Four 10-minute video sessions on Right Now Media; book*

In this four-session series, pastor and author Jonathan Pokluda will discuss the joys and frustrations that come with dating as a Christian and the ideologies of the world that impact how we approach relationships. He will debunk the myths that give us faulty expectations for dating and teach us a godly view of dating and God’s design for relationships and sex.

**Dating.for.life.the questions by Brett Ullman**

*1 hour 18-minute video on Right Now Media*

Brett answers the 8 basic foundational questions on dating, such as, “How do I start dating?” and “How do I break up?”

***Love Is* by Bianca Juàrez Olthoff**

*Six 8-minute videos on Right Now Media*

Bianca Juárez Olthoff uses 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 as a framework to discuss everything from love to sex, singleness, and dating from a Christian perspective. Falling in love can seem difficult—but with the love of Jesus, it doesn’t have to be.

***The Sacred Search* by Gary Thomas**

*Eight 20-30-minute videos on Right Now Media, book*

Whether you are single, dating, or engaged, Gary's unique perspective on dating will prepare you for a satisfying, spiritually enriching marriage even before you walk down the aisle. As Gary reminds us, a good marriage is not something you find-it's something you make.

***The New Rules for Love, Sex and Dating* by Andy Stanley**

*Four 20-minute videos on Right Now Media or Youtube*

In this video-based small group Bible study, Andy Stanley explores the challenges, assumptions, and land minds associated with dating in the twenty-first century. Best of all, he offers the most practical and uncensored advice you will ever hear on this topic.

[***How to Pick a Spouse***](https://www.amazon.com/How-Pick-Spouse-Practical-Lifelong-ebook/dp/B00LA9LCP2/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=how+to+pick+a+spouse&qid=1631226343&sr=8-3)**by Dan Chun and Neil Warren**

*Book*

This book incorporates Pastor Dan's principles, which provide practical and proven ways to pick a spouse and is your guide to finding--and keeping--a lifelong partner. You will discover how to test your relationship for key differences using a variety of methods including the Seven Cs: Character, Chemistry, Competency, Cultural Differences, Commitment, Communication and Core Values.

**90 Great Questions to Discuss When Dating by Brett Ullman**

[**https://www.brettullman.com/2020/07/09/dating-questions/**](https://www.brettullman.com/2020/07/09/dating-questions/)