



Getting to Know You

Part 2 – Curiosity, differences, and Safety

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We're ending a series today, so if you missed the last three weeks, we've been going through a series. Travis kicked it off and did a phenomenal job in talking about how your wife should be your definition of beauty and what happens when you do that.

Ted talked a little bit about sliding verses deciding. He showed a video of these playground slides. I was really hoping he would use it to talk about sliding into DMs. For all of our veterans that just stood up, when you guys were all serving our country, you had to write letters back and it was an anticipation to get that letter back in a couple of weeks, maybe. Now, young people just slide into DMs. There's a thing called social media and they just text into the DMs and all they say is, "Yo, what's up?"

You young people need to understand something. When your grandfather pursued your grandmother, it was dialing a rotary phone. And then when you use the rotary phone, you called their home and most of the time, Dad answered the phone. "Hello." "Can I please talk to your daughter." "What are your intentions with my daughter?" "I just want to talk to her." Now, there is no fire wall, no barricade; they're sliding into DMs like, "Yo, what's up?"

My sisters in Christ, for those of you that have a relationship with Jesus, I want you to hear this very emphatically. You are a daughter of the King. You are a daughter of the most high. And no one and nothing should treat you other than such.

So, we're going to look at Song of Songs 2: 14 – 17 and we are going to wrap it up. I know the Song of Songs continues after Chapter 2, but we said we're going to keep this series PG... ish. And if you get into Chapter 3, it stops being PG quickly. We're going to stop after this chapter and then we are going to launch a brand-new series that Ted will kick off Next week. I'll be phenomenal.

But today, we are talking about *Curiosity, Differences, and Safety*

**14 My dove... another word for love ...in the clefts of the rock,
in the hiding places on the mountainside,
show me your face,**

let me hear your voice... There's a pursuit, young ladies. The individual is pursuing her, he's chasing after her. Birds were very high on cliff to protect themselves from predators to get to these cliffs or to get these hidden spots, it takes work, it takes time, it's a process. Ladies, I want you to know this. Treasures do not do the hunting, they are hunted for. And if he doesn't want to hunt, ladies, he's not

worth having. I'm just telling you. We're going to look into what Song of Song says about a man that is worthy to pursue you, and what that means.

...for your voice is sweet,

and your face is lovely. This is a compliment. Some of you, when you were dating your spouse, the compliments just flowed like honey. And then you got married and those compliments stopped coming out as much. These are like pick up lines, right? This is like, "Hey, girl, you ever read the Book of Numbers?" "No, why?" "Well can I have yours?" That's what this is. He like trying to pick her up. He's pursuing her, being smooth. It's like walking up to her like, "Hey, girl, do you like barbeque? Because I believe my rib belongs to you." It's a pursuit. It's honoring.

So, we get married and we stop encouraging, we stop speaking redemptively, we stop speaking in a positive tone. I'm telling you right now that your wife would love to know she's killing it with the laundry. "Baby, you are killing it with the Laundry." Ladies, you are killing it with the laundry, I'm just telling you that right now. Or killing it with the dishes. Or killing it running the kids everywhere that play 50 sports in a season. Or killing it with everything that she's doing. And wives, I know your husbands would love to know they're killing it. That they are doing their best to go work 40 hours a week and come home and be engaged with the kids. I've never heard someone be like, "Oh, stop encouraging me." No. Speak words. You don't have to go to those cheesy pickup lines I just gave you but speak words. Just try this this week with your wife, and genuinely mean it. "Girl you look hot. You look good." And recognize when she gets a haircut. See how it goes for you, fellas.

The reality is we tend to appreciate someone's unique gifts in dating, and then find their weaknesses in marriage. This is a call back to why this church is so adamant and passionate about an honor list. We honor people. We remember the things that we love about people.

I have misophonia. I'm not making this up. If you don't know what Misophonia is, it is a great dislike for mouth noises. So, if you come right next to me and chomp an apple, I'm going to freak out like you just took fingernails on the chalkboard. Or if we're watching a football game and you pull out Doritos. I can't do mouth noises. I thought it was pretty cute in dating. I wanted her to like me. Now, it's like, "Baby, you can't sit next to me on the couch when you're eating. I love you, but you have to sit on the other side of the couch." She doesn't chew with her mouth open, which sends me into a whole other flip out. She's got a hollow mouth. It's just how God created her.

That's why the honor list is so important. It's because when we get comfortable in a marriage, we forget about all the things we really love and appreciate in that person. You can find anything critical you want to find in your spouse. It's easy. I tell people in premarital counseling all the time, "One sinner plus one sinner equals more sin, not less sin." So, when you're stepping into courtship or dating and then it leads to marriage, you're going to magnify everything that's there. That's why it says, "What is found in dating is multiplied in marriage." That could be the positive too. It doesn't always have to have a negative connotation to it. And like anything, we get out what we put into it. So, if you want a fun, exciting, happy marriage, you're going to get out what you put in. Obviously, here in Song of Songs, they are putting effort and energy into this relationship. Now, there's a difference between courting and dating. Dating doesn't have to be as intense, but when you start courting, you are intentional.

If you've just walked in here or you're watching online... When I first became a believer, there were christianese terms that I didn't understand. "Protect her heart." What do you mean? Like get her a bulletproof vest? "Boundaries" – What are emotional boundaries? What are you talking about? These were things that seemed very foreign to me and seemed very legalistic to me. "You don't think I should kiss her until I get married?" There were things I never learned, and I was raised by culture. So, my perspective of dating, my perspective of marriage was all culture. And then the more I walked in the Word and the more I allowed Godly people around me, I realized they were actually trying to protect me. They were actually trying to set me up for success; they're not fun haters. By the way, God is not a killjoy either. He's just opposed to whatever is going to kill your joy. There's a big difference.

Some of you got cold this week. How many lit your first fire of the season? If you have a flue, it really warms the house. And that fireplace has a really good purpose in your home. It heats it. And that fire was designed to be inside the fireplace. But if I take that fire outside of the fireplace and put it somewhere else in the home, it burns the whole house down.

Sex is a really good thing, designed to be in the fireplace of marriage. And when you remove that outside of God's context, you can end up burning the whole house down. Or some of you are already in Christmas mode. Be honest ladies. How many of you have already watched the Hallmark Christmas movie this week? A real Christmas movie is coming up soon, Christmas Story. "Ralphy, you'll shoot your eye out" One of the great scenes from Ralphy is when this kid sticks his tongue to the pole. That's kind of like premarital sex. You're going to get your tongue back, but you're going to leave a piece of it on that pole. Now, your tongue is going to heal and you're still going to be able to taste, but it's impossible to enter into anything that is opposite of God's design, i.e., premarital sex, and doing those things in dating and not expecting that person to have a piece of you. We'll talk about it more here in a second.

***15 Catch for us the foxes,
the little foxes
that ruin the vineyards,***

our vineyards that are in bloom. What they are saying here is "What are the red flags in our dating? Our relationship is budding, our relationship is growing, what are the red flags in our dating that could potentially be hazardous down the road?" It's important to identify what those are because here's the reality... – how many of you have traveled and you get on the plane... This happened to me a year ago. They get out to the runway and all of the sudden the captain comes on and says, "I'm sorry, we're going to have to go back to the jet bridge. We're having a mechanical problem." You're just furious. You're like, "Are you kidding me right now? There's no way." You go back to the Jet bridge another two or three hours maybe if you don't have to deplane. I didn't have to deplane this time. It was another two hours and you're like "I'm ready to get home." But you know the only thing worse than being on that runway about to take off and get home? It's being 30,000 feet in the air and them saying, "I'm sorry, passengers, we have a problem, and we don't have enough parachutes. Good luck.

As you are pursuing or courting or dating anyone, if you can figure out the problem on the runway, it's a lot better than trying to figure them out in the air. Travis said this to me earlier. Would you rather be on the ground wishing you were in the air or be in the air wishing you were on the ground? So, it's important to identify these foxes of the vineyard, what you call red flags.

Gary Thomas, who spoke at Woodland Hills a couple of years ago, talked about when to walk away, talking about toxic people. He also wrote a book called *The Sacred Search*. In *The Sacred Search*, he talks about courting and dating. He says a lot of times in courting and dating, we're unable to see red flags because of what happens in infatuation. As a matter of fact, in infatuation, there is all this oxytocin that is released from your brain. What happens is you put on these rose-colored glasses and when you put on rose colored glasses, you can't see red flags. And when you magnify that with sexual intimacy, now you've got this oxytocin going on in your brain and then the connection of sexual intimacy releases all these opiates like a shower of cocaine into the brain which creates an addiction to that person. You end up sticking in a relationship you know you shouldn't be in because you're so addicted to what that feeling gives you rather than allowing common sense to override a relationship you shouldn't be in. So, there are red flags in dating that we miss because we put on rose-colored glasses.

Here are some of those red flags:

1. Different spiritual directions. 2 Corinthians 6: 14 is clear. Non-believers should not be married with believers. It's one of the hardest things I've done as a teaching pastor. I get asked to perform marriage ceremonies all the time for people here and outside of here. Before I do that, I have to know their spiritual background. A couple of years back, I got asked to perform a wedding for some people in Branson. I took them to dinner at Cantina Laredo, and I quickly found out that she was in love with Jesus, and he told me he was an atheist. You didn't have to send the email after that dinner. I sent the email the most loving way and I said, "I love you. I still want to hang out with you. I want to be in your corner. I would love to spend some time with you, please. Let me know when you are available. But I cannot perform your wedding." If you are watching, I love you. I still care about you. I still want to hang out with you.

But scripture is crystal clear. And as teaching pastors and pastors of the church, we are not ever going to waiver on what God's Word tells us to do. It doesn't mean we hate you. It doesn't mean we think we're better than you. But God's word has never steered us wrong. So, as hard as that conversation was... Just recently, I married a couple this summer. They were doing the right thing that we would encourage them to oblige by, that being you don't live together, you don't cohabitate until the wedding. Her lease was up a month before her wedding and they asked, "Can we just move in for the last month? I'm like, "No! The finish line is right there. What do you mean can you moved in together. My wife and I will personally give you money to rent for a month before you do that. You've gone this far honoring the Lord, don't do it."

Which, by the way, is why I'm not a fan of long engagements. Engagement is all the work without any of the perk. I just don't get it. Engagement was my hardest season with my bride. I'll explain that in a second.

2. No respect for authority or desire to grow (Proverbs 1: 5). They have no respect for authority if they are not humble. I've told you guys this before. We've never heard someone in our lives say, "I don't like that person. They're just too humble." The opposite is true. "I don't like that person – they are arrogant."

3. Different priorities. (Matthew 6: 24) They're going in different directions. Maybe they're both Christians, but this person loves to travel a lot. That person is a homebody. This person is a city slicker. That person is a hillbilly. Sometimes it can work, but sometimes when somebody wants to hunt a lot and somebody wants to go shopping a lot, it's going to be a lot of tension.

4. Excitement over potential and not character. This is bad. Potential is a scary word. "Oh, man, but he's got so much potential." Sweetie, you know he's also got potential to be a murderer. I would be more worried about his character.

It drives me crazy when young men I pour into say this. "I know, but Adam, she so hot." I'm like, "Bro, so is hell. I don't care." To Travis' point the first week when he kicked us off, when your wife is what defines beauty, then her character gets her even more beautiful, and then even when you're both 70 and you definitely don't look like you did and she doesn't look like she does at 70, then beauty is still beautiful because that is your definition of beauty. I don't care what she looks like; I care about her character. Scripture even talks about how beautiful character is.

5. Early signs of abuse, manipulation, or deceit. My older sister Nicole is one of my heroes. She was in a relationship, and she has a child with this individual that broke her face. She was in domestic abuse for years. I walked through it with her, and she is one of my heroes because of how strong she has gotten out of this. She's in a healthy marriage now. But those were some of the hardest years of her life. If she was standing up here with me today, she would tell all of you that she saw early signs that she ignored. There were red flags that she ignored and then she got in. And getting out of it was 30,000 feet in the air. It's so hard because they manipulate you, they threaten you, all those things.

So, my prayer for any of you in here who are involved in domestic abuse or know somebody, know that I'm praying for you and know that you have help at this church. This church will give you strength, give you support, and will do whatever it can to help you get out of an abusive situation. But you have to be aware of early signs. And if your parents, the people that love and care about you, because you have rose color glasses and you want to ignore some things about him firmly grabbing you or anything. God put those people in your life for a reason. Pay head to the people he puts in your life that can see your blind spots when you can't see them.

6. No respect for parents or parents are too involved. Ephesians 6 says, *Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth.* If they don't honor your parents now in dating, holy cow, don't even expect that you're going to go visit them at Christmas or Thanksgiving when you're married.

But, parents, you can't be too overly involved. Every time I do a wedding and the dad comes up and he's got the bride, I say, "Who gives this beautiful bride to be married today, I explain to the dad, "She's been under your hedge of protection. That hedge of protection is moving from you now over to the groom." Mom, we've got to cut the umbilical cord. Sweet bride, when you have problems and you have issues, mom cannot be your first phone call. It's not fair to him. You've got to let them work out this conflict.

Here's the other thing I'll tell you with Thanksgiving coming up, if they're just dating, I probably wouldn't have them over for Thanksgiving. That's intense. Because now if it doesn't work out, they're not just breaking up with your daughter, they're breaking up with you too. You have to think about how this emotionally impacts your daughter's heart, how it emotionally impacts your son's heart and who and what you allow in. Don't start treating a dating couple like a married couple. Which is family trips. Those are things that married couples do. I tell young people all the time, bring the level 10 conversation down to 11.3 conversation. Instead of asking how many kids you want to have one day when you're not even engaged, how about asking what their favorite candy bar is. Let's start there. Let's chill out on the emotional heaviness.

7. Unresolved emotional baggage. Now, hear me. If some of these red flags are you, God redeems it. It doesn't mean you're undatable and it doesn't mean your uncourttable. It just means you need to work through some of these things before you are in a healthy place to be in a relationship that is pursuing marriage.

8. Secrets or sneaky behavior. If they start hiding stuff or they're sneaky or they freak out every time you get close to their phone. That's a red flag. They are hiding something. Hebrews 4: 13 says, Nothing in all of creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything we've done will be laid bare before him to whom we must give an account. Someone who lives with a clear conscience is not going to be jumpy or scared. But secret or sneaky behavior is a red flag. If you feel like they are hiding something, they probably are. And if that is creating more insecurity in you, that's a good sign not to be in that relationship.

9. Co-dependent. They are expecting you to complete them. I love everybody in here. All of you make a horrible savior. Me included. And nobody in any relationship is going to complete you. Christ and Christ alone will complete you and until you are healthy in that relationship, you'll never be healthy to be in any other relationship. Why do I say this? God's Word says he created man first and the first relation that was formed was vertical relationship. It was a vertical between him and God. And then once he created that relationship, then there was a horizontal relationship between man and woman. So, the first relationship was with God and the second with each other. If we get that backward, it's called co-dependency.

10. Addictions. I'm not saying you can't overcome addictions. Alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, whatever. But that's a red flag. And if they are not seeking help to overcome those addictions, those addictions are going to pull you down with them. And if you are on the runway, why get up 30,000 feet when you already know there are addictions. It's a lot harder to handle those addictions at 30,000 feet than it is on the runway.

Listen, I'm not a home wrecker. I'm not trying to get anyone in here to break up with somebody they are dating or courting. I'm actually a big fan of more men stepping up and pursuing young ladies, daughters of the King. But God gives us red flags not because he hates us, but because he loves us and he wants what is best for us.

Courting someone shouldn't be conflict free, but it shouldn't be World War III either. So, my wife and I got into a conflict when we were dating. Our biggest conflict was at Crate and Barrell. We got the gun

and we got registered. She wanted me to go and be a part of it. We started going through Crate and Barrel and I quickly discover *Oh, she really doesn't want my opinion, she just wants my participation, she just wants me to be a part of the process.* I figured it out when I really took some interest in some knives and forks. I said, "I really like these knives and forks," and she just gave me this stink eye face like those are the ugliest knives and forks I've ever seen. I get my feelings hurt because I realize she really doesn't want my opinion. She just wants my participation. "Okay, you finish registering. I'm going to go out to the parking lot and have a quiet time."

So, I go out into the parking lot and open my Bible. Meanwhile, she's in Crate and Barrel crying the whole time. I found out later it was because she felt like I didn't care. She's like, "What am I getting myself into?" and I'm like, "Lord, what am I getting myself into?"

But if you are dating someone and you're like, "It's always perfect, we never fight. It's just like Disneyland." I'm like, "No, stop it." I get worried about premarital counseling I do where people don't ever have conflict. Whether it be over forks or knives or directions or whatever it may be. The reality is conflict is important, but it shouldn't be World War III. What I mean by that is if you are trying really hard to make this work, it's probably a red flag. It shouldn't be perfect, but it should be pretty seamless. When God joins it together, it just kind of flows. I'm not saying conflict free. Some of you have just got to cut the cord and say, "It shouldn't be this difficult." I know that's hard for some of you to hear, but it's the truth. You're giving way too much emotional effort, time, energy. And the thing is we feel so invested that we are afraid to walk away. I'm telling you God has something better for you. If that's you, God has something better for you.

You missed three "the ones" waiting for "the one." Let me finish this whole thought before you jump to conclusions here. I don't believe there is just one person out there for you. There are 8.4 billion people in this world. Divide that in half and that's 4.2 billion. So, if you are one of the male or female of that 4.2 billion, and you have to find 1 in 4.2 billion, go buy some lottery tickets. You've got a better chance. You have a better chance of finding an Oompa Loompa riding a unicorn, fighting big foot than you do finding the one.

Now, when you get married, that is the one. That's the one that you choose to be with, that you fight with, that you are in a covenant with. That is the one when you get married. But I don't know if they are the one. Do they love Jesus? Yes. Are they pursuing him? Yes. Do they have accountability? Yes. Do they honor your boundaries? Yes. Do they honor your parents? Yes. Get married. Stop overthinking it. This generation is so afraid of labels. You're courting, you're going toward marriage, get it done. The sooner the better. When there are not all those red flags.

Let's put it this way. "As you wait for the one, become the one God has called you to be." Be the one God is calling you to be. Stop looking...

She

16 My beloved is mine and I am his;

he browses among the lilies. He's a safe place. There is security, trust, comfort, a place to be safe..

This is my wedding ring that my wife got for me when we got married over 15 years ago. I didn't know this, but she engraved it. Inside this ring is engraved *My beloved is mine and I am his*.

I have a friend that actually won a national championship in a D1 sport. He's very humble. He's a believer, he loves Jesus, and he would never wear this championship ring. But he wears it when he travels and here's why, and I love it.

When he travels, he puts his arm up on the armrest. What do people inevitably do? "Dude! Tell me about that ring! He says, "Oh yeah, yeah, I'd love to." This ring tells me about a commitment I made to my wife." "No, no, dude, not that ring, the ring on your other hand." "Oh, this ring?" This ring is dumb. This ring? moth and rust will destroy this ring. But let me tell you about how this ring reminds me to love my wife the way Christ loves the church. Let me tell you about how this ring reminds me to wash her in the Word. Let me tell you about a covenant that I've made with God before witnesses and Him. Let me tell you about the way Christ loves the church. He sacrificed himself and gave himself up for the church, gave himself up for you and I. This reminds me to be humble. This reminds me of a commitment. This reminds me of a decision I've made to walk in faithfulness and to honor my spouse well and to honor God well."

"Okay, okay. Now will you tell me about the ring?"

"Oh, this is stupid can I tell you more about my Jesus?"

That such a powerful illustration that my friend uses every time he travels.

May you in here that are married be reminded of the security and the trust and the comfort that you've established when you made a covenant. And what that means when you love your bride well. How do you show the rest of the world Christ. How do you show the rest of the world Jesus and what he did for us.

Healthy relationships create trust and security.

17 Until the day breaks

and the shadows flee.. It's just an illustration of a new day that's coming. I can't wait until we get married.

I want you guys to know if you are walking in something and you feel like you're beat up or you're convicted or you're in a premarital relationship you shouldn't be in, let me show you this illustration.

If any of you guys were driving down Highway 65 right now and you missed your off ramp because you were on your phone. Not that any of you drive while intoxicated, but just humor me. You missed your off ramp. When are you going to turn off next? Next exit. None of you are just going to go all the way up to Ozark. No, you're going to get off at Saddlebrook. You're going to get off at the next exit to turn around and get back to Branson as soon as you can, if Branson was your exit. I'm encouraging you if you are walking or going in a direction you don't know if you should be going in, the best time to get on the off ramp is as soon as possible. God redeems, God forgives, God loves you.

The last verse in this chapter before it gets really intense in Chapter three:

***...turn, my beloved,
and be like a gazelle
or like a young stag
on the rugged hills***

That's what you think. That's why we're stopping the series here. It's getting intense, it's starting to get a little steamy in here.

Let me show you this picture. I think captures this really well when we talk about the Garden of Eden. (Adam and Eve in the Garden)

God loves marriage. It was his idea. God created marriage, man did not. And God wants to set us up for success. He tried to set them up for success. Think about this. Eve was literally the woman. She was the most beautiful woman in the entire world. There were no magazines in the grocery store, there were no mirrors. She was the most secure, the most confident woman in the world.

And Adam was literally the man. He could walk around and be like, "I'm the man." And she was like, "You are. You're the man." They were perfect and flawless, and they were naked. And they couldn't think of anything better to do but to hang around a stupid tree? You see why I'm ticked. God set them up for success and they wanted to believe the lie. They wanted to believe that there was something better, that there was a better spouse or somebody else they should have married or there's something else that they should have tasted.

If you are married in here today, God wants what's best for you and your spouse that you are with. And if you're single, he wants what's best for you moving forward and that's only found in the confines of his lovely Word. He's not a killjoy. He's just opposed to that which kills your joy. Marriage is his idea and it's to be honored by all. And when you step in it and have fun and do the honor list and honor him and guide young ones that are dating and courting, and you show the example of what a healthy, godly marriage looks like, it has a ripple down effect.

I pray for all of you. I pray for those who are single and wonder where he or she may be. I pray for those of you who are courting. That you would honor God well. And I pray for your marriages and the way you reflect how Christ loves the church.

God, I thank you so much for the families and everyone in here. I pray for every marriage that's in this room and every marriage that's online and every marriage that's in the chapel and the courtyard. I just pray, Lord, that you would bless them. That as the holidays come and more families and siblings and people see these marriages, they would see you in these marriages. And those that are dating or in relationships would honor you and if they're not, they would get off the off ramp as soon as possible.

We thank you so much for Woodland Hills Family Church, that this church cares about what you care about and that's marriage and family.

Thank you so much for all that you do for us and specifically the cross, Jesus, that even when we have red flags of our own that you redeem us, that you restore those and you renew us.

It's in your matchless and mighty name that we pray, and all God's people said... Amen.