

FROM THE CREATORS OF FACING THE GIANTS

FIREPROOF

BEING SERIOUS IN MARRIAGE REQUIRES BEING SERIOUS IN DATING

Unfortunately, too many Christian/secular marriages begin with a limp because of sins that generally accompany the pre-nuptial dating/engagement stages of the relationship.

How we search for an object often reflects the value of the object sought. Culturally, we do not value marriage as an institution, so our spousal search often reflects our low value of marriage. The casual/non-committal attitude we have in dating correlates with how casually we treat our marriage vows. Bad habits are hard to break.



Tips on how to break the cycle of un-seriousness in the spousal search:

1. Parents need to prepare their young children to have an expectation of marriage by their mid-twenties, and not be satisfied with just the child reaching economic self-sufficiency. Young adults need to be educated to be productive members of society and be emotionally mature to assume adult responsibilities of making a home with a lifelong mate for mutual comfort, society and bringing up another generation.
2. Change our attitudes about dating: Approach dating with intentionality and purpose, and view dating/courtship as a method to find a lifelong spouse, as opposed to an indefinite, undefined, goal-less buddy (with possible benefits) type relationship. Conduct dating/courtship in a fashion so that there is as little scar tissue as possible, so that it does not ultimately infect the future marriage.
3. Change our attitudes about marriage: Approach marriage as an estate that is to be honored by all, and an institution and boundary established by God in paradise for the benefit of man. For many, this might mean letting go of negative fears that hold one back, for some, it might mean revisiting the stagnancy of singleness or abandoning unrealistic expectations of romance, and for yet others, it might mean the evaluation of other beliefs that have stealthily crept in that keep us from understanding the joys of oneness that God wants us to experience.
4. Stop defrauding one another by not only stealing joys that are to be reserved solely for the marriage bed, but also from stealing precious time from one another by staying in undefined, purposeless dating relationships that exist for every other reason save the exploration of the potential for marriage.
5. For those on their way to the altar, to do a sober evaluation of the prospective candidate by asking trusted and wise older counselors to help assess the potential of a future wife/husband. Establish healthy patterns for individual and joint decision making. Commit to obeying Christ and his laws in every sphere of your life and praying the same for your partner. Resolve to let love and the needs of the other take priority so that intentions are pure, and an investment of trust is established to make withdrawals on in the future.



Debbie Maken is an author, wife and mother of two little girls. Prior to her marriage, she was a litigator for seven years, a judicial clerk for the Supreme Court of her home state, and an advocate for various conservative causes. Following the publication of *Getting Serious About Getting Married: Rethinking the Gift of Singleness* (Crossway 2006), she has been on several Christian radio interviews, maintains a blog www.debbiemaken.blogspot.com, and presents lectures for Christian singles groups.



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