**Intentional Relationships, We Got It Wrong**

*Below is an excerpt from the Intentional Relationships Bible study, Chapter 1. To read more order your book/study today!*

Magazines at the grocery checkout stand give you advice on dating, sex, and relationships (including friendships, work, and family) as you wait to purchase. Every romantic movie tells us love is this magical thing that overcomes all obstacles no matter the circumstances. By the end of the movie, the couple reconciles and lives happily ever after. Of course, there is always a beautiful woman and a man, and, for some reason, a dog. That’s what we all want, right?

Then there are the reality shows, giving us a “true” perspective of what real relationships look like. Simply take sixteen model women; one tall, dark, and handsome guy; three months at a dream location, all expenses paid; and a rose, and you’ve got everything you need to find your spouse. I’m sure we can all relate. Then we discover that some of these reality shows are scripted,

The problem with this picture of happy relationships living happily ever after is that fewer and fewer singles are getting married and far too many marriages end in divorce. Even marriages that last sometimes aren’t fulfilling. Work relationships struggle because of unresolved misunderstandings. People start friendships with the hope of finding that kindred spirit, but find the revolving door of disappointment instead. Often our friendships are like social media. We appear to have hundreds of friendships, yet how many of those are truly close? Families continue to struggle due to personal past problems, addictions, blended family dynamics, or financial issues. These scenarios, and so many others, rob us of experiencing the deep relationships God originally intended for us.

Our culture is also changing the attitude many singles have toward marriage. The single population for adults over eighteen is now over 50 percent. Many younger singles are abandoning the institution of marriage and opting to live together. The reasons for this are numerous, yet the vast majority of singles desire to be in a healthy committed relationship or marriage.

Dan says:

*After my divorce I didn’t know if I would ever be married again. I had a lot of pain and confusion. But deep in my heart, I wanted someone in my life who I could love and who would love me back. Someone who could share life together with me. Even though I was married before, I had missed some of this. However, my dating life didn’t seem to indicate I would be married again.

When I talk with singles who have lost a spouse or have been through a divorce, many tell me they aren’t interested in dating or another marriage. However, I have seen many of these same people in a dating relationship when they thought the right person came along, some within a year of telling me this.

In my experience, most people in Christian circles are open to a loving,
committed marriage. It’s just that they are sometimes still hurting, feeling
awkward about looking again, feeling unprepared, or they have lost hope because of their circumstances. Well over 90 percent of the people I have talked to in singles ministry would be open to a marriage if the right person came along.*

Kris says:  *In my many years of starting and leading singles ministries, the most frequent question I get is, “Why hasn’t God brought me someone yet?” They feel they have done everything God has asked them to do. They are in church regularly, reading their Bible, serving, debt-free, healthy, and in shape. They think I have a crystal ball and can just look into it and know the answer. But the reality is, I don’t.

For some singles I meet, it’s obvious what the problem is, from the way they dress and groom themselves, to how they communicate, to unresolved issues, and immaturity. But for those who appear healthy, in love with Jesus and sold out for Him, it’s a tough one.

I wonder, “Lord, why haven’t you brought them a spouse? They seem healthy. Wait a minute! Why haven’t you brought me a spouse?”

Hmm, maybe the answer is more complex. Maybe it’s about an incredible calling of sacrificing my possible, maybe, almost amazing, future marriage and family. Maybe He has called me, like most, to marriage. Has it possibly not happened because of my own junk that I haven’t dealt with? Hmm, and if this is so, then what am I supposed to do about it? I had to confront it, pray, and ask God’s Spirit to show me the areas of my life that still needed help or change.

This journey of personal change led to starting a ministry called “Pray for a Mate™” — a monthly prayer group for those who are serious about praying, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal issues in their own life that need to be changed so you would not only be better prepared for marriage but healthier in the
process. But also allowing you time to accept the possibility that God may want to keep you single. I will share more about Pray for a Mate in chapter 10 and how you/your church can start your own group.*

We were created not just for “surfacy” relationships or acquaintances, but we were created by God for deep, healthy, and mutually beneficial relationships including our family, our kids, spouses, co-workers, and friends. Our relationships were designed to transform us into better versions of ourselves. That is how God works in our lives. Our relationship with Him has the effect of making us who He always intended, first starting with Him, and then affecting every other person in our lives.

In addition to the world’s definition of what it means to be single, well-meaning Christians often miss the mark with spiritual sounding advice to their single friends. This advice may be, “God will bring you someone when you least expect it,” or “You’re lucky you’re single; being married is hard,” or “God will bring you ‘the one’ in His timing,” or “Maybe God is trying to teach you a lesson.” Though it is possible some of these sentiments are true, only God would know. Its far more likely due to complex circumstances and the broken world we live in than any single, simple factor.
These kinds of comments cause unintentional hurt to single Christians who want to be married. Like many achievements in life, finding the one you want to marry is better approached with the right perspective and effort put toward it. We are relational beings, but relationships aren’t easy. Our primary goal is to help single Christians in their desire to be married to the right person. But we also know this curriculum can improve your family, friends, and co-worker relationships as well. The wisest man who ever lived said:

*“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning.“– Proverbs 9:9 (NASB)*

**—QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION—**

We encourage you to rewrite the questions and give your thoughtful answer about each one. Don’t rush, take your time, and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. If your answer is “Yes,” write down your “Why.”

• Do you want to stop making the same mistakes from past relationships in the future?

• Do you want to experience healthy boundaries?

• Do you want to have healthier conflict?

• Do you want clarity in your family, friends, and work relationships?

• Do you want meaningful friendships?

• Do you want your expectations in relationships to fit with reality?

• Do you want to have real accountability that leads toward change?

If you said “Yes” to these, have we got a deal for you! We address these as we go through the *Intentional Relationship* curriculum. We all are in different places in our growth and health. Some of these principles will impact you greatly, showing areas where you need significant work. Other principles might only pertain to you in limited ways. And in some areas you will say, “Wow, I’m already doing this well.” Don’t feel like you have to become a completely different person. God meets you where you are, with the goal of helping you grow into the person He knows you were designed to be.