



Dear Church Family,

Using dating apps is not inherently wrong. It is, at the very least, an efficient way to become introduced to someone who may be a good match. It also fits the lifestyle of a digital generation. Dangers exist, however, and we need to learn to address these dangers in the context of local church fellowship.

Consider Facebook. The founder started by finding a quick way to flash portraits of college girls so he and his friends could judge who was the prettiest. Face-book was about faces; the application appealed to the eye.

This is so different from the tone and tenor of Scripture. God did not choose David because of his chiseled features and burly physique. Though handsome to be sure, the Scripture is clear: "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

We should, of course, expect to be attracted to someone of the opposite sex. God made us to notice and appreciate physical beauty. This is a factor in our search for a spouse. Furthermore, we should strive to be as attractive as we can by caring for the temple of our bodies.

The problem, at least in Christian circles, is when the appreciation of physical beauty eclipses a concern for spiritual maturity. There is a reason the Apostle Peter exhorted wives to focus on inner beauty: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Pet. 3:3–4). God cares about the heart. Peter certainly calls on women to focus on inner beauty. However, implicit Peter's exhortation to wives is an exhortation for husbands to be more attracted to inner than to outer beauty.

Dating apps do not focus on inner beauty. They allow people to describe hobbies and interests, but tempt them to present embellished or idealized versions of themselves. In short, they appeal to the eye and not the heart. This is not the Christian way! Dating best begins in the context of community where we first get to know people as friends before we consider them as prospects for marriage.

If you are a single at Mount Vernon who aspires toward marriage, focus on being godly, prize inner beauty and, like God himself, look on the heart. Gather regularly and look around at who might be gathering with you. The Lord has given you a built-in community to get to know people—the local church. Don't go to "church" simply to find someone to marry, but gather with other saints to honor and serve the Lord. As you do, look around; see who else is striving to honor and serve the Lord. This is the type of person you should want to marry.

Specifically, seek a spouse who has a clear understanding of the gospel, a desire for holiness, and a love for the local church. You don't need a Christian Zendaya or a pious Chris Hemsworth. Men, you need a Priscilla. Ladies, you need an Epaphroditus.

If God used a dating app to help you find your spouse, praise God! But, if not, consider deleting Hinge and Match and simply gathering with the saints throughout the week. Who knows whom the Lord might put in your life!

Meanwhile, remember the gospel. As New Covenant Christians, we believe singleness to be a blessing. If you are married, it's good to help singles find a spouse. But work hard not to make a single feel that he or she has fallen short for not being married. We are not a church of couples or families—we are a church of Christians and some of those Christians are called by God to be single. We can praise the Lord for that. The gospel makes us one family.

My dear single friends, you don't have to be married to be whole. You have wonderful opportunities as a single to run after the Lord unencumbered by the responsibilities of marriage. You are free, in Christ, to remain single. But if you do want to marry, I'm simply encouraging you to pursue marriage from a Christian perspective. Whether you use a dating app is not the fundamental issue. However, what you value in a prospective spouse is crucial. Look for someone who hungers and thirsts for righteousness. Where do you typically find people like that? You find them joyfully tethered to the local church.

Grateful for His mercy and grace,

Aaron Menikoff
Senior Pastor

