

BIBLE READING PLAN

Love & the Dating Game

 Day 1: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Psalm 1

1. What criteria does God give for assessing the character of a man? (Though 1 Timothy 3 lists the qualifications for an overseer, it nevertheless reveals how to assess the character of men).
2. In what ways does this challenge (a) your criteria for a boyfriend/husband, or (b) what you are seeking to cultivate in order to be a great man?
3. Critically reflect on this statement by Mark Driscoll 'The key to masculinity is this: Jesus takes responsibility for himself, and he also takes responsibility for me... My sins are my fault—not Jesus' fault—but Jesus has made them his responsibility... A man is not the one who can spit the farthest, punch the hardest, fart the stinkiest, or yell the loudest. A man takes responsibility.'

 Day 2: Proverbs 31:10-31, 1 Peter 3:1-6

1. What criteria does God give for assessing the character of a woman?
2. In what ways does this challenge (a) your criteria for a girlfriend/wife, or (b) what you are seeking to cultivate in order to be beautiful?
3. Critically reflect on this definition of femininity from John Piper, 'True womanhood is a distinctive calling of God to display the glory of His Son in ways that would not be displayed if there were no womanhood.'
4. Critically reflect on the following description of positive and negative feminine traits by Ronda Chervin: *Positive traits*: 'responsive, compassionate, empathetic, enduring, gentle, warm, tender, hospitable, receptive, diplomatic, considerate, polite, supportive, intuitive, wise, perceptive, sensitive, spiritual, sincere, vulnerable (in the sense of emotionally open), obedient, trusting, graceful, sweet, expressive, charming, delicate, quiet, sensually receptive (vs. prudish), faithful, pure.' *Negative traits*: 'weak, passive, slavish, weepy, wishy-washy, seductive, flirtatious, vain, chatter-box, silly, sentimental, naive, moody, petty, catty, prudish, manipulative, complaining, nagging, pouty, smothering, spiteful.'

 Day 3: Proverbs 4:23, Song of Songs 2:3-7, 3:5, 8:4

1. What would it mean to 'guard your heart' in your relationships? What makes the heart the wellspring of all you do?
2. Mark Driscoll writes, 'Sadly, it is common to hear married people speak of "falling out of love" with their spouse... [or] someone else in adultery. By using the language of "falling," people are cleverly avoiding any responsibility, as if they are simply required to follow their heart. However, the Bible tells us not to follow our heart, but rather "guard" it because it is prone toward selfishness and sin (Prov. 4:23; Jer. 17:9).' In what ways have you followed your heart into sin, and what ways do you need to repent and turn back to God with all your heart?
3. Are you heading the advice of the woman in Song of Songs emotionally and sexually? If 'intimacy is the reward of commitment,' how will this shape the way you enter relationships?

 Day 4: Romans 12:1-3, 9-16

1. What should be the motivation for giving every part of your life over to God in worship (v.1)? To what extent are your relationship issues related to not comprehending the mercy of God?
2. In what ways are you / could you be renewing your mind so that you are being transformed (v.2) so that you have the kind of love described in verse 9-16?
3. Verses 9-16 are short shotgun statements which describe what love should be like. Reflect on each statement, and seek to apply them to your relationships.

 Day 5: 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

1. What is to characterise your relationships with younger women, older women, younger men and older men?
2. Why is sexual activity (not just intercourse) with someone not your spouse taking advantage of (defrauding) them?
3. What will give you the power to heed these commands/warnings? (see Titus 2:11-14)