Expectations in Dating: Part One

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Today we're going to talk about boundaries and expectations. Both of which cause us to be selective.

I have to thank Brad Paisley for a song of his which has provided me with this metaphor: dating is a lot like shopping for new clothes. The line from the song goes like this:

> *When you go out shopping, you try on brand new clothes.*
> *To see if something fits or not, there's just one way to know.*
> *Why's it any different when someone asks you out?*
> *You might as well just try me on before you turn me down.*

I appreciate this metaphor. I walk into a store – even ones I frequent – and sometimes I don't know how something is going to fit until I try it on. Other times I can tell simply by looking at a piece that it isn't my style or is too big or too small. There are some stores I don't even have to go into because those clothes aren't for me: they might be too trashy or too preppy or whatever. Also, having friends with me whom I trust is helpful. They're honest with me and will encourage me to try things I might not otherwise; items they know will look good on me when I may be unsure – and they're almost always right! I also depend on them to tell me, "No, Renea. That dress doesn't do you right; that color is not for you. Renea, seriously; put that one back." 😀

You see where this is going don't you? Okay, so dating, well, living really, is about risk, but it's calculated risk – more or less. To say that it's important to take risks… in any relationship, dating or otherwise, is not to say we should be

uncritical or haphazard. Not being selective about who you'll date is like letting a perfect stranger pick out all your clothes for you; whatever that person brings you, that's what you have to buy, take home, and wear. You wouldn't do that. Why would you be unbiased about who you date?

Okay. So let's talk about dating non-Christians. How many of you think it's probably okay to date unbelievers? You can be honest. Come on. Forget for a minute that you know what the right answers are supposed to be, or that you think you know what I want you to say. 'Cuz let's be real, if you're unconvinced about what the church has to say about dating unbelievers, chances are we're dropping the ball in some way. And hey, we aren't right about everything; that's impossible; maybe we're wrong about this. So if you think we are, let's talk about it.

Worldview. Whole persons. Intimacy. (Sorry, I did this part extemporaneously.)

The author of our book* puts it this way: "If you aim for nothing, you'll hit it. Is that how you want to aim for your husband – with an open, blank slate? Or do you want to dream of someone who is just right for you, who complements your weaknesses, and who fulfills your hopes and desires" (63)?

And the point she's making is the same one Brad and I were making with the shopping illustration. If we don't have certain standards, goals, ideas and expectations for our lives, including our love-lives, we'll be directionless. We'll zig and zag here and there following any story about sex and romance that's compelling in the moment. And that makes us incredibly vulnerable to believing the lies and distorted views the world has about who we are and how we should live, distorted views about who we are sexually and how we should live our romantic lives.

I'd like to take this thought a bit further, if you'll let me.

I'd like to suggest a bigger target. That instead of aiming for a husband who will fulfill the hopes you've pinned upon him, we aim for the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus, and put our hope in him. As you release your arrow in the direction of the Kingdom, if you happen to snag a husband by the shirt collar, FAN-TASTIC! More to the point, if your arrow becomes intertwined with another going in the same direction, WONDERFUL!

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* Gresh, Dannah. *And the Bride Wore White*. Chicago: Moody, 2004.

Stay tuned for part two, and see where we go from here.

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