

the Andersons

WEEK 1 | DATING | GROUP GUIDE • SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

What was the worst date or dating experience you can recall and why was it so bad?

SHARE

Welcome to our teaching series called “The Andersons.”

God has much to say when it comes to doing relationships his way. Relationships done right can enrich our lives and bring us to whole new levels of fulfillment, peace and growth. Relationships done wrong will reap frustration, stagnation and ultimately will bring us harm.

We can all recall times in our lives where we asked people for relationship advice. Whether a friend, co-worker, stranger on the plane or even a counselor, how do we know what advice is good advice and what advice is bad advice? Throughout this series, we are going to look at God’s perfect design on how to do relationships right by contrasting that with what it looks like to do relationships wrong. Each week, we will start the message with a look into the dysfunctional world of “The Andersons.” We will learn what not to do when it comes to friendship, dating, marriage and parenting.

This week we will be talking more in-depth about what God says about dating. Whether you are single, divorced or you are married and need to know how to give good dating advice to others, this week will be really important for each of us.

Dating can be difficult and with all the pressure, how do we make good choices and wait on God’s best for our lives? We are going to look at a story from Genesis, a story about Abraham and his son Isaac.

Let’s start by reading Genesis 24:1-4

As Abraham aged, he saw just how important the right spouse was. Why do you think he was so serious about this with his senior servant?

If you are a parent or have friends or relatives with kids, why do you think we are so deeply concerned about who our children will date?

Let’s continue reading Genesis 24:34-48

This senior servant is searching for the perfect spouse for Isaac, but the question is ... will Isaac be what she is looking for? When we are looking for someone to date, sometimes it is easy to concentrate on all the things we are looking for and overlook the person we are becoming as we wait. Andy Stanley said it best... “Are you who the person you’re looking for, is looking for?”

If you are single ...

What characteristics are you looking for in someone to date?

What do you think the person you are looking for ... is looking for in a potential husband or wife?

If you're married ...

What is the characteristic you most value in your spouse?

What do you think is the most valued quality your spouse sees in you?

If you're a parent, what would be the most important characteristic you would want your children to find in a spouse?

GROW

Dating is serious business. It can be exhilarating, suspenseful, fun, crazy, and challenging. How do we prepare ourselves to date well? It is easy to fall into the trap of dating people we know probably won't be marriage-worthy, but continue in the relationship out of fear of being alone, boredom, or for other reasons. To date God's way, we need to be brave and prepare ourselves, take advice, be prayerful, and look in the right places.

Genesis 24:37

And my master made me swear an oath and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live ...'

We are not always brought up in God's ways and many of us haven't had a parent who was concerned for us or showed us the right way to do relationships. In Isaac's case, Abraham took his son very seriously when it came to looking for the right spouse. Whether parents or friends, we can give guidance and support to those we love by praying for them as they look for the right spouse.

As parents, what are ways we can be involved in helping our kids be ready to date?

As friends, what are ways we can guide and support our friends who are dating or looking for that right person?

Genesis 24:42-43

"When I came to the spring today, I said, 'Lord, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. See, I am standing beside this spring.'"

In K. Strassner's Opening up Genesis he talks about the importance of prayer in this journey:

We learned in chapter 15 that Abraham's servant was called Eliezer. Here in chapter 24 we find him assigned a difficult task: travel a few hundred miles (without either the father or the groom) and pick a suitable wife for Isaac! What if he made a foolish choice? He simply couldn't do that. The task was too important. So what did Eliezer do? He prayed! Listen to him in verse 12: "O LORD ... please grant me success." And notice that, not only did he pray, but he prayed specifically—he asked God for a sign (24:13–14). And not just any sign, but a sign that accorded with biblical principles. He asked God, through the sign, to guide him to a woman of character—one who had a servant's heart. And Eliezer is an example of how Christians should seek the Lord's guidance in every endeavor. First, we must pray. Next, we must pray for specific guidance. And third, we must pray for guidance that clearly matches up with what we already know from Scripture.

Why do you think we should pray for specific guidance when looking for a spouse?

When we think we are getting guidance, we need to make sure it matches up with Scripture. Why is this so important?

MOVE

God gives us great insight about looking for a spouse. First we are to take Godly advice, especially if we were not fortunate enough to have parents who prayed for us and gave us guidance. Second, we are to prepare ourselves and focus on becoming the type of person that someone else might be looking for, that means allowing God to shape us, and form us to be more like the man or woman of God we need to become. Third, we pray for specific guidance and specific answers that matches up with what we already know through scripture. Last, we go looking for a spouse in the right places. Rebekah was the perfect person for Isaac and it is important to look at where she was found:

Let's read Genesis 24:44-46

We read further in K. Strassner's Opening up Genesis as he talks about what made this woman different from the others:

Rebekah is an example of what every young woman ought to be. She was chaste (24:16). She had a servant spirit (24:18–19). She was hospitable (24:25). And she was modest (24:65). Rebekah was everything that modern teenage girls are so often encouraged not to be. Instead of locking herself in her room, she was out collecting water for her family. Instead of being glued to her cellphone, she was on the lookout for strangers who needed a drink. Instead of showing off her undergarments (or lack thereof!), Rebekah “took her veil and covered herself” as she prepared to meet her fiancé. And (wonder of wonders!) Isaac was attracted to her! Need we say more? Rebekah is a picture-perfect example for young ladies!

Rebekah was already the type of Godly person that someone else would be looking for. What made her most attractive and made her stand out from the others?

In verse 43, the servant was standing beside the spring, a specific place that drew specific people. Where are some specific places that would be great environments to find high-quality, Godly and date-worthy people?

What changes can we make in our lives that would allow God to mold our character and make us more like the type of person we should be?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

No matter what you face, there is a God who is greater and promises to strengthen you to do the things he calls you to do.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.