

We're Just "Talking" | CBMW

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By JD Gunter

Talking

One of the unique opportunities I have attending seminary, after ten years of marriage, is discipling young men who are single or dating. One of the disadvantages, however, is not being current on the lingo.

This struck me in a recent conversation with a friend who told me he had gone out several times with a young lady and was uncertain about the status of the relationship. Curious, I asked him if he was planning on continuing to date this girl.

"You misunderstand," he said, "we aren't dating – we're just talking."

"Talking?" I replied, a little confused, "you mean like we're talking right now."

"No," he explained, "we're at the stage of the relationship just before dating. It's called talking."

Dumbfounded and feeling a little old and disconnected, I decided to investigate this new pre-dating phenomenon. "Talking," I discovered, is a widely accepted stage in current guy/girl relationships wherein a young man and a young woman get to know each other without better defining the relationship. This isn't even a real stage of the relationship; it's a pre-stage. They're not just friends; they're not really dating or pursuing marriage; they're "talking."

After these conversations, I was left with the question: Do we really need another stage in relationships that are directed toward marriage?

Shirking Responsibility

Our culture suffers from a large number of males wallowing around in quasi-manhood for many years. Boys used to grow up, get a job, and move out of the house. But we have inserted this chain of life stages from adolescence, to the college years, to early career, and so on – all of which permit young men to put off growing up, taking responsibility, and generally acting like a man.

This new phase of pre-dating called "talking" is like adolescence for relationships: an unnecessary stage in the relationship allowing young men to avoid taking responsibility and acting like men. It prevents the man from having to be clear about his intentions to pursue or end the relationship. If he wants to stop "talking," he simply walks away, leaving behind a confused, and potentially wounded, young lady.

John Piper defines biblical masculinity as, "a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships."^[1] It is the responsibility of the man to take a leadership role in relationships, to be forthright, honest, and clear about his intentions. This "talking" phase normalizes relationship without responsibility; closeness without clarity; cultural manhood, not biblical manhood.

The young ladies I've spoken to share this frustration. They are left in a state of relational limbo, where they are unsure of the young man's intentions and the purpose of the relationship. They are stuck going on non-

dates with guys who are scared to date.

In their defense, guys tell me they are afraid to ask a lady out because she might immediately assume he wants to marry her. I understand the concern, but that does not change the need for character – it makes it all the more necessary.

Intentionality Is a Way to Serve Sisters in Christ

First, you should ask girls out that you see as potential wives. Second, when you don't see her as a potential wife any longer, explain yourself and then stop asking her out. Third, throughout the relationship be clear, upfront, and honest about your intentions. If you just want to get to know her better, tell her so. If you see this relationship turning into something more serious, tell her that too. If you think she's a great girl but don't want to pursue the relationship further, tell her! That's the kind of "talking" that should characterize the relationship.

If things don't work out, and if you've acted like a true man, you've gotten to know a sister in Christ better and helped prepare her to meet her future husband. If things do work out, congratulations, you're married. Those are the only two options for a man of God.

If you are a young man intimidated by the prospect of intentionally pursuing a young woman as a wife, seek the Lord in fervent prayer. Search your heart and your intentions to ensure they are grounded in the gospel and informed by Scripture. With your conscience clear before the Lord and your heart and mind shaped by His word, stand confident in the care of your heavenly Father (and hers) and speak boldly to your sister in Christ. Our God is a God of truth, and your sister in Christ deserves to know the truth from you.

If you are a young lady stuck with a guy who isn't interested in pursuing you but expects your prolonged time and attention as he "talks" to you, ask yourself if this is the type of indecisive boy-man you want to follow for the rest of your life. It is impossible to follow someone who will not lead. Find a man who will treat you as a sister in the Lord deserves to be treated: with honesty, integrity, and clarity.

It's time to kiss "talking" goodbye. Our brothers and sisters in Christ deserve better than this.

[1] Piper, John. *What's the Difference?: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 23.

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