

Romantic MythBusters: What Biola Students Believe about Love, Marriage, and Dating By Tim and Noreen Muehlhoff

[Band plays worship music]

[Audience applauds]

Ron Hafer:

Let's look to the Lord in prayer. Before I pray, a report regarding Dr. Jerry Miller, who underwent surgery on his jaw and a cyst, it was very serious. The surgery was extremely successful. Many of you were praying and looking for an answer. Praise God for that.

[Audience applauds]

Ron Hafer:

Yeah, we love the brother. Because Emily and I were eating together at lunch and we were talking about Dr. Miller and her love and appreciation for him, I thought it'd be nice if she led us to prayer, thanking God for his healing and also for him and Noreen as they start their session. Let's pray.

Emily:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for Dr. Muehlhoff and his wife and um, the decision that they made to speak in front of us today. And thank you for Dr. Miller and his surgery, that it was a success and that the comfort that he has, knowing that he has a massive gym full of people that are praying for him. Bless our hearts and minds as we listen to what you're trying to tell us today, in Your name, amen.

Ron Hafer:

Amen, and you may be seated. There will be this will basically kind of be a, not correction, but maybe a point of clarification on the program. It looks like, well, some people I'd question, following this session in the collegium, there will be a time of question and answer. Of course, the collegium doesn't hold this number of people. So those that would particularly want to do a follow up time with Tim and Noreen, that would be the perfect time to do it. The seminar that they are bringing today and tomorrow is actually, I understand, quite a bit shortened from what they normally do in their family life today seminars, marriage seminars, all over the nation. So I said, give us your two best shots, and here they are. The first best shot is today, I can hardly wait. Romantic myth busters: what Biola students believe about love, marriage, and dating, and what Scripture says. Let's welcome Tim and Noreen Muehlhoff.

[Audience applauds]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Wow. Thank you. This is uh, this is great to be here. What we're going to do, let me just give you an overview. Ron said it briefly. We're going to talk about romantic myth busters, what you-what we believe about love, romance, things like that. And then we're going to have a Q&A time, which will really be the fun part, and we'll get to tackle questions in depth. And hopefully our session today will spark some conversation tomorrow. I'm going to be doing a session on what are the questions you should ask before committing your life to a person? What is a biblical view of romantic love? What are some of the things we can ask ourselves as we're thinking about committing for a lifetime?

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Well, and as Ron mentioned, when we speak, we are usually speaking to an auditorium filled with married people. So this is a little bit different. But one of the things that really motivated us to address you this afternoon is that when we deal with the married folks, they tend to bring up the issues, the mistakes, that they made in their dating relationships. And what happens is in marriage, a lot of times those mistakes and those consequences are magnified. And so our desire today is to share some things that might help you bypass some of those mistakes and make better decisions where you are now.

Tim Muehlhoff:

So we thought about how can we package this session, so we thought about one of our kids favorite shows. We have three boys, 13, 11, and 8. And their favorite show, praise be to God, is SportsCenter.

[Audience applauds]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

They take after their Dad.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Can we just here it for the Detroit Tigers right now.

[Audience applauds]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Some people say God doesn't exist, the Detroit Tigers proves God exists. Okay?

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

But next to that show is a fun show called Myth Busters.

[Audience cheers]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Yeah, Myth Busters is about two scientists, great sense of humor about these guys. And they just tackle myths, like one myth they tackled was this idea that a hurricane blows hard enough that it can actually take a straw, the winds, and send it into a tree. No, it can't. Okay, second myth, a bullet shot up in the air will actually come down hard enough that it could kill a person. Yes, that's true. One of my favorites was this. If you take a Mentos, put it in your mouth and drink diet soda, it will actually explode in your mouth.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

We tried it at my office and a cup of soda, didn't work.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Didn't work.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, so we thought, let's do a romantic myth buster. So I took my comm students and I surveyed them. I asked them, what are your myths about dating and what are the myths that you perceive are true about Biola students? So we took all of that information, it wasn't a scientific study, but we took all the data, all that they said, and they said a lot. It was great. And we came up with the top five myth busters about what Biola students think about love, marriage, and dating. And we're just going to tackle all five, hopefully, to set up a great conversation in the collegium. So myth number one is this:

Noreen Muehlhoff:

It's that time is against me. And, you know, we understand how that goes. It's kind of like act now or it'll be too late, and you get it, you know, I mean, you're here for--most of you were here for four years, maybe five years. So you see this limited time and you've got this wonderful pool of piece-of people to choose from, like potential spouses. So you can almost hear the clock ticking. Well, this is how some of you articulated it.

Tim Muehlhoff:

From the surv--.

Noreen:

Our--

Tim and Noreen Muehlhoff:

Oh, go ahead.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

College is the last chance to find a mate. After that, you probably will be single.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Can you just hear the desperation? You'll be single.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Here's another one, be married by the age 25 or it's too late. You'll meet your future husband the first day of school, two days into S.O.S week, people are already talking about marriage, and our favorite, ring by spring or your money back.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Now, this reminded us, this reminded us of a movie we-uh, uh a long time ago, 1999, called The Bachelor. Okay, watch our trailer from the movie The Bachelor real quick.

[The Bachelor trailer plays]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, let's stop it. Let's stop it. You can stop it, before we get there. Okay, yes, you can stop it.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

But do you understand the pressure there, he's got one day to get engaged, and we really feel like the danger of this myth is this: you know, you enter your freshman year and you think, well, I've got four years to meet a spouse, okay, I'm fine. Sophomore year comes, junior year comes.

You're like, holy cow, I've got two years left! Then your senior year comes and you're just like, what is the deal? I've got one year or singleness!

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And think of all the pressure that is placed upon you during this Biola time, and this is where you have to meet your spouse. Well, we would like to try to break that myth.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

One of the things they always do on myth busting-myth busters is that they try to-they do experiments, they apply facts, and they figure out, is this really true? So we thought, well, let's try to apply some of the facts to this first myth and see whether or not it's true. So let me tell you what the alumni association was able to tell us. That was, that the class of 2006, and this is as of September of this year, the class of 2006, only seven percent of them were married and only two percent of them were married to Biola students. Okay, so, not everybody's getting married. And then the good news is, because really the second part of that myth is if you do not find a spouse now, you may never find one. Well, so that's where the good news is. As we looked farther back

with the alumni association's help, we saw that each year away from graduation, the percentage of students married or former students married increased and even students after they were 25 years old were still getting married.

[Tim Muehlhoff laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Now, Noreen and I really believe, and of course, this is easy to say because we're married, but we really believe there are more important things being at Biola than finding a spouse. And one of them is-that is really true. One of them is when I was your age, when I was in college, I heard a speaker get up and say that that there were three things you needed to get answers to in life in this order. First, who is your master? Who is going to be the master of your life? Who will be your lord? And will you make a lordship decision that will last the rest of your life to Jesus Christ? Second, it was determine what your mission in life is. What is God calling you to? What has He gifted you for? And it's very important to figure out the mission. Then think about a mate. And what I find with a lot of people is we totally reverse that. We first get a mate and then decide, hey, what should I do with the rest of my life? When that is really backwards.

When I first proposed to Noreen, the Lord really encouraged me to say to her one day, I really think I'm going to do graduate work. So I sat down with her and said, "I really feel like God is calling me to graduate work." Now, I didn't know it was going to be a master's and a Ph.D. And then I remember one of my kids sitting down with Noreen when I was getting close to finishing my Ph.D. and saying, "Mom, what grade is dad in?"

[Audience laughs]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

And I counted up--

Tim Muehlhoff:

And Noreen said--

Noreen Muehlhoff:

It was 22nd grade.

[Tim Muehlhoff and audience laugh]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So think of that. First, I need to find out who's going to be the lord of my life. Then, I need to find out what's my mission. And Biola is a great place to figure that out. Then and only then do I figure out who my mate is, because somebody that will compliment what God has gifted me towards and is leading me towards.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

But, you know, I do understand the pressure that you may feel. And we're not saying all of you do, but some of you may feel that pressure. When I first graduated from college, I joined staff with Campus Crusade for Christ and my assignment was at their headquarters at Arrowhead Springs, and there were a ton of singles out there. So you talk about a pool of potential mates. I mean, this was a filtered pool because not only were these guys Christians, but they were Christians that had chosen to go into full time ministry as a vocation. But, you know, I was there

for two and a half years, and when I left, I was still single. I was transferred to the campus ministry at Miami University of Ohio. And there the staff team had one single guy on it. But that guy was Tim.

[Audience laughs]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

And so.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Just takes one, baby.

[Audience laughs]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

But you know what, that actually, that is the point, is that God is bigger than that. God doesn't need statistics. He doesn't need a pool of people to choose from. All He needs is a heart that's willing to follow Him. One of the other things we talked about, really, that we feel like is more important to pursue than trying to focus in and finding a spouse is developing friendships, and specifically same sex friendships. I remember again when I was on staff with Crusade and listening to a friend speak to college students, to the women, saying the most important thing you can do is pursue friendships with other women because they will be your lifelong friends. See, when you get married, your relationships with people of the opposite sex will change. It really-it just has to. So the friendships that you develop, same sex friendships, are the ones that can

continue to grow deeper and deeper. They will become your closest circle of friends and that network of friends that you really need for support.

Tim Muehlhoff:

We sat down and made a list of all of our friends from college that we still stay in touch with, and we were just really encouraged to see how long the list was. I did uh, I was part of a Christian comedy group on campus at Eastern Michigan University, and we used to do standup comedy all across campus and weave in a spiritual perspective and a perspective of God while doing standup. So you can imagine some of the crazy friends we have, but they're still friends from our college days. I mean, and if God leads you to you find a spouse while you're at Biola, I think that's awesome. It could very well happen. But it's not the most important thing that could happen. And God, if He is Lord of your life, then he's able wherever you are, Oxford, Ohio, good friend of ours, met his wife in Moscow, Russia, and now they're serving the Lord together with Campus Crusade. So if God is Lord and He's as powerful as the scriptures say, God in His timing can have you meet somebody wherever He wants you to meet. So the first myth we want to bust is: time is against you. We want to argue time is for you. And it's a perspective change. Okay, let's tackle the second myth, which is by far the most controversial. This is the myth that was most passionately described in all of the questions, and that is: casual dating is bad. I mean, the way people talked about casual da--axe murderer, casual dating.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, listen to what some people said. This was really interesting. It-casual dating is what gives our society this meat market mentality to dating, as well as our hooking up mentality. Starting to date someone that you are not sure you could marry one day is a sin and frivolous behavior. Men are feeling chest pains right now.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I believe people should date with the intention of marriage, but we want to argue for casual dating. But first, we want to do something.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

We want to define it. You know, everybody, Tim often quotes, I can't remember who, but-but all words are a riddle to--

Tim Muehlhoff:

Yeah, how.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

All words are a riddle to be solved. And so what we need to do is be sure we're on the same page, that when we say casual dating, you understand what we're talking about. So this is a definition that we came up with. That casual dating can be a healthy step to take to intentionally develop a friendship to see if a deeper relationship is appropriate. But, here are some very important things. It includes no physical involvement and it includes limited emotional

involvement. And it is done in the context of honor and respect for the other person. Now, going back to my single days at headquarters with Crusade, I didn't leave there single because I never dated. I mean, I did date, but God never led me to somebody that I felt like I should pursue a deeper relationship with. But that's where I saw one of the advantages of casual dating, it was because I felt like I began to better understand what were the important character traits to me in a relationship. And I did it without losing part of my heart in the process.

And now the other thing that is kind of interesting here is that because we were not with the dating relationships I had when I was single, because we were not physically involved, because the emotional involvement was limited, the friendship wasn't ruined, which really turned out to be a good thing, because every other year Tim and I get together with a group of friends from headquarters. Several of them are guys that I dated when I was there. But there's no awkwardness, because the relationship was appropriate.

Tim Muehlhoff:

There's a lot of jealousy, but not--

[Noreen Muehlhoff and audience laugh]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

No, and here's the other thing, several of them are even married to my good friends now. One of my best friends is married to a guy that I dated when I was at Arrowhead, and I was in her wedding and she was in mine. But there was no awkwardness because we kept the relationship at the appropriate level.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Now, on the other hand, I was a cautionary tale in college. I am what's wrong with casual dating defined by the world. I never dated in high school, I played three sports. There was no time for dating. I wasn't interested in dating when I got to college. You know, the leap from high school to college is huge. So I didn't play any college sports and I became a part of Campus Crusade for Christ with a ton of attractive, sharp, spiritual women. So I was just a romantic moron. I mean, I, I would say things to women very early on. Like, "Boy, it's going to be really interesting to see what God has for us." Yeah, that's bad.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I mean, we would start yes, yes, we would start holding hands like very quickly--we would pray together, and just "Oh Lord Jesus, just--"

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

you know, I mean, we would get so quick and then I would break it off, I would just say, "Well, you know, I didn't--it's not my fault you interpreted 'I love you' that way. I mean it's--"

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

You know, it's like--or I got broken up with and my heart would get crushed, you know what that's like, well, that's what's wrong with casual dating. That's not what we're talking about. But but here's the problem if there's no middle ground at Biola, if there's no casual dating, this is what was reflected in the survey, and we didn't put these up on the screen, but listen to this. Men are paranoid to ask women out because they do not want to be seen as a player. Second, when a man says hello or smiles at a girl, she believes that he's in love and they will spend the rest of their life together.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Here's my favorite. After one date, one date, a DTR must take place.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

If you go on one GYRAD, you'll start dating, and if you go out for coffee, that's a date. You see the problem. So here's two conclusions that came from the surveys. One Biola girls are too eager when it comes to dating, and men are too standoffish when it comes to dating at Biola. Now, let me just defend the men for a second. If there's no middle ground, then I need to approach a girl and say what? Say, "You know what? I've been praying about us and I feel like God is really directing me towards you and feeling like let's spend some time together to see what that's all before the first date." I mean, think of all the pressure on that date, and I think that's honestly making it too mystical in dating. The best thing about dating is, casual dating, is you see what you like and what you don't like in a person. So Noreen and I did meet each other a little bit later.

At that point, I knew exactly what I was looking for in a woman and Noreen just matched up. And-and so we knew kind of through our casual dating experience what we were looking for.

So I really hope at Biola there could be an attitude of, let's not put all this pressure on the first date, and let me just be fair, kiss dating goodbye, I think what he's talking about is this idea of casual dating, but he doesn't want to use the word dating, and that is cultivating relationships, friendships, without physical involvement, or emotion, or super emotional involvement to see how well do we get along. And let's have some fun and take some of the pressure off of dating. Okay?

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Okay, let's take a look at the third myth. The third myth says you'll be safe if you marry a fellow Biola student. Now, sadly, you know that's not true. And I'm sure some of you know Biola grads who are possibly in difficult marriages or even broken marriages. The survey said, here are some of the things they said that made us come up with that myth. It says any person is a good candidate if he or she is a Christian. The idea that since we are all Christians, Christians, differences don't matter. Since you're Christians, it will all work out. And if I'm attracted to him, the attraction must have been put there by God.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Or, hormones.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay?

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Yeah. So again, you can't assume that the values that you share, or the values that you have are shared by your fellow students. And it's not always what they say that you can how you can determine that, but it's how do they live their lives? Are they living out values that you agree with or are they just talking about things, because it's not enough just to have the same stated values. You have to have the same shared values.

Tim Muehlhoff:

When we speak at marriage conferences, a fun session is we take all the pre-marrieds. A lot of people who attend our conferences are engaged, or they're thinking about getting engaged. So we gather them together for some special sessions. And I really get on my soapbox with these engaged people because they're where you are. This is before marriage. So I say to them, "It is irrelevant what a person says. It is irrelevant what they say, toss it out." So it's not that a person says, oh, the Bible is God's word. It's a lamp to my feet. Do they read the Bible? Do you ever see him with the Bible? Do they talk about the Bible? It's not that I think ministry is really important, but are they doing ministry while they're in college? I would argue that if you're not doing ministry while you're in college, I don't think you're suddenly going to do ministry once you graduate from college, it'd be kind of like me saying I love triathlon's Ironman events.

Can't beat an Ironman event. Honestly, you're on that bike, the wind is whipping past you.

There's nothing-- and that--after you swim and you were to look at me and say, "Well, how many Ironman events have you done?" And I would say, "Well, none. But can't beat an Ironman event. The swim itself, just invigorates--" You'd be like, "Well, you haven't done any!" Yeah, but I'm committed to them.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So one of the problems with Biola is we all kind of think we're on the same page and that's just not true. A person's passion will be lived out, not just described. So when you're dating a person or looking at a person, it is what they do. What they say, I say is irrelevant. And tell them about Amy.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Yeah, Amy is a girl that I discipled, she was a student at Miami of Ohio, and uh graduated, met a guy, was a great guy, a nice guy, talked a good talk, went to church with her, did the right thing, said the right things, until after they got married. And then he decided he wasn't interested in developing his relationship with the Lord anymore. He wasn't interested in going to church. They had kids. And it became Amy's sole responsibility to bring them to church or to teach them about the love of God. And it broke her heart. And I remember when we were visiting her once in Ohio and she just sat and she wept over this, and she just said, you know, she knew that there were things, she knew that she had her blinders on. And I think very often that is true. You know, you want to believe it. So you only see and hear what you want to see and hear. And she recognized

hindsight, the things that she was glossing over that should have been maybe red flags for her, that he really did not have a genuine walk with the Lord.

Tim Muehlhoff:

That's why time is on your side. When you're dating a person, you want to see a track record, a long track record. We're going to address that in a minute. But you want to take a look at--and are they living out their beliefs in very concrete ways? Okay, so let's tackle myth number four. And that is as soon as you think you're in love, you should get engaged. This is what it said in the survey. If you love someone, marriage is the next step. The first person they love, they know will be the one. If a dating relationship does not end in marriage, then it has been a mistake and a failure. Well, we want to respond to this myth.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Excuse me. Yeah Dr. Ted Houston, who's a professor from the University of Texas, did 15 years of research on studying the relationship between the length of the courtship and the success of a marriage. And what he found was that the closer the couple's courtship was to the average length, which was two years and four months, the more successful the marital union. Now, that does--it's not a magic number. You know, you don't shoot for two years, four months and then go, okay, we're ready to sign on the dotted line. But it's just that that's about how long he found in his research that it takes to really get to know someone and to be sure that you are making a lifetime commitment to someone that you really know and that you are not still in the infatuation stage because you know what the infatuation stage is, that person can do no wrong. I mean, they are just perfect and they're wonderful. And it's a fun stage. But you need to marry somebody that,

you know, in the reality stage, that you know about them, you know their struggles, you know how they are when they're stressed, you know how they are when they're around their family, when they're working all those kinds of different situations. So you can make a sound decision.

One of the problems he noted especially were with extremely short courtships. Um, he said especially anything over, uh, under one year, excuse me, that he would describe as the passionate courtship. And again, these are courtships that are very hormonally driven. He-he even described them, used the words, "They can't keep their hands off each other." They were the marriages that most often and most quickly experienced difficulties.

Tim Muehlhoff:

So sometimes we do premarital counseling, and we just finished with a couple here at Biola who got married in the summer. It was just wonderful. But we sat them down and we give them an assignment. And the assignment is: tell me five things you love about this person. Five, and they actually have to write him down. Now, we're concerned if they can't come up with five, okay, but usually that is not a problem to come up with. Oh, I love this about it him, oh, and this. And this one. Oh oh. Then we say, no, this is great, this is wonderful. But now I want you to come up with five things that you're concerned about. Tell me five things that you are concerned about, and you know one of them can't be. Well, I once told them to give me a vanilla latte and he got me soy milk and stuff, okay?

[Audience laughs]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Or it can't be something like, oh, he's so generous in giving, you know, I'm concerned he doesn't take enough time for himself.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Yeah, that's-come on.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Those don't count. They have to be really genuine concerns.

Tim Muehlhoff:

So what we got-when we got engaged, Noreen was concerned about a couple of things. I was really in a centric single, so I'll never forget this. We got together and we were just making a list of the things we would combine when we got married. And Noreen said, okay, like um, what kind of pots and pans do you have?

Noreen Muehlhoff:

We were doing our gift registry.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Yeah yeah yeah.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

You have to figure out what we needed and what we didn't.

Tim Muehlhoff:

And I just said, "Well, I have-I have a graphite tennis racquet. Oh, that is unbelievable. You should see what it's done to my backhand. It's just this is a beaut." And Noreen is like, "Okay, what do you have in savings?" And I just said, "Did I tell you how I can serve with this racket?" This is--I had no savings whatsoever. No pots and pans. Noreen got the flu once I had to go borrow pots and pans to make her soup out of a can, and didn't tell her--

Noreen Muehlhoff:

He did have books.

Tim Muehlhoff:

I had a lot of books, good books, hardcover books, hardcover books.

[Audience applauds]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

We had a library.

Tim Muehlhoff:

The history of Yiddish shepherding. I mean, you can't--

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

That's hard to find, two volume sent. Original, signed by a sheepherder.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So we make this couple, we really do, we sit down, we say you must come up with five. If they can't come up with five, we say, no, you must come up with five. What are you-what-what are you talking about in this relationship, then? You've not had enough time to see things to be concerned about, if you can't come up with five things, I think it's very important. You can hurry love, but you cannot hurry getting to know each other. So we're going to play a song real quick from one of Motown's best, the Supremes, soon to be home of the World Series champions, Detroit Tigers. So can we play that real quick? Is that possible? That's right. Okay, here we go.

[Song plays]

Tim Muehlhoff:

See that. I know, I know, but that where we go back to say time is on your side. There, there's very few reasons to rush it. And remember, the average length ought to be right around two and a half years. And research has shown that the divorce rate in the United States has actually decreased a little bit because couples are where individuals are waiting from 24 years old to right around 26 years old. And those two years of maturity are huge. Howard Hendricks, we went to a marriage seminar once. Hendricks said every year you get married after the age 26, your marriage will be better. Every year you wait after the age 36, marriage could be more difficult because selfishness has taken root in your life. So I think that's great advice. So one of the myths we want to bust is: quick courtships, quick engagement, quick marriage. We want to say slow

everything down. Two and a half year mark is probably a very good mark to get to know each other and then get married. And I'd say age 26 is probably a pretty good age to start thinking, you know, I think I'm mature enough to figure out what is my life going to be like in the future and what has God gifted me for. Okay.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Okay, you know, but also implied in that myth is that breaking up is a sign of weakness and this can kind of be, I think, maybe a repercussion if you have a different view of casual dating than we do that, you know, breaking up that it's a messy, emotional thing where you're actually, you know, damaging your heart in the process. But I, I don't think breaking up is a sign of weakness when the relationship warrants it. I think that idea can make you stay in a relationship much longer than you should. So we thought if breaking up is not a sign of weakness, then what are some legitimate reasons to break up? And one of the analogies we use a lot is just a traffic light. You know, you have the green light. That means it's smooth sailing. It's everything's a go. There's no major concerns in the relationship. You both have a heart for the Lord, your desire to serve Him, and your commitment to one another. But the yellow light are things that cause you concern and they are potential reasons for breakup.

Those might be things like you disagree on whether or not to ever have children, there's an addiction to pornography or to some other substance, there's an eating disorder or some other indication of unresolved issues. Those are yellow lights that might just tell you a little bit of caution is appropriate. You might want to slow down. If those things begin to clear and move toward green, you know, then you can continue on the relationship. If they're not or they're

moving toward red, then that's a reason to break up. And then some red lights, which would be major warnings in the relationship, would be that you don't agree that divorce is not an option, that there's been abusive behavior in the relationship, or that you don't share the same heart for God and His kingdom.

Tim Muehlhoff:

You know, when I first got to Biola, I teach-I teach the really fun classes. I teach interpersonal communication, I teach family communication. And so obviously that sparks a lot of conversations. A lot of couples who are dating will often come see us. And I was really struck by something. I've only been here two years, that's going on my third year. I would meet with particularly some guys and they would say things to me like, "Bro, we're-we're-I'm in this dating relationship. It's really work. It's a struggle. We're just trusting God that He'll work it out. And I want to love her unconditionally. And I know God's called me to that. And I'm really struggling--" and I just looked at him and I said, "How long you been married to this woman?" And he was like, "Oh, we're not married." I said, "You sound like a man who's been married for fifteen years." I go, "Are you dating this woman? How long you been dating?" "Well we've been dating for seven months." I go, "Seven months? You ought to still be like, 'I can't believe we're dating'." So, I mean, she's wonderful. She's I mean, not to be a ton of conflict. And I said to him, and this might be controversial, "You're not called to love her unconditionally. Not if you're dating. No." Your love is conditional. You're deciding right now, am I going to love this person for the rest of my life?

So at that point, you are learning about each other and making the decision whether you can love each other for. Now, once you get married, that love is unconditional. It is a lifetime commitment. But when you're dating, you want to be a little picky because you're thinking about spending the rest of your life with this person. If I said to you the next car you buy, you will drive the rest of your life. I drive a Nissan Maxima.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

1991.

Tim Muehlhoff:

1991, Nissan Maxima, I told my kids, this such a high-powered sports car, that few people are allowed to drive it.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And my kids were watching SportsCenter. And remember that the cars, the animated movie Cars, when they had one of the voices on and they asked him what's-what's the like the lamest car I've ever driven. He said, a Nissan Maxima.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So if I was going to stay in that Maxima the rest of my life, I would be incredibly picky and have pretty high standards. We see at marriage conferences people just settle. You know what, I'm 25,

I'm 28, I'm 29, I'm tired of being single, I'm tired of it. So I'm going to settle into a marriage because anything's better than being alone. And we see after the fact some really desperately unhappy marriages. And we believe God can turn those marriages around, but it will need work, and it's going to take a lot of focused attention. So before you're dating, you're not going to love a person unconditionally. You grow into that and make the decision to love them unconditionally. And that is signified by marrying that person.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Which is why when we meet with the primary at the marriage conference, we will always tell them a broken engagement or a broken relationship is so much better than being in a bad marriage, because at that point they still have the freedom to make that decision. But, you know, let me tell you, there are some legitimate reasons for ending a relationship that aren't quite that dramatic. You know, maybe they don't fit into the yellow light or the red light, but what about things like you just don't bring out the best in each other? I mean, don't you want a spouse that is going to bring out the best in you and that you bring out the best in or something? Sometimes a relationship just isn't growing. It's become stagnant and it is staying there for a long time. And the only reason that you're still dating is because you haven't broken up. You know, it's become kind of a habit. And so those are the kind of things that you need to evaluate and say. It takes courage sometimes, but it is better to have a broken relationship than an unhappy or a broken marriage.

Tim Muehlhoff:

And sometimes we just ask very basic questions of couples like when they're engaged, like uh, or dating. How much do you laugh together? And sometimes they'll say, "Well, you know, not much." And then I'll just say to them, "Well, how important is laughter in your life now?" "Oh, very important." And I'm like, see, this is why they passed the big money, right here.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I mean, do you see the disconnect? But it's like, well, yeah, but I'm 27. Yeah, I'll I'll take no laughter. I want to get married. I'm like for the rest of your life, you want no laughter? Noreen could have married an accountant with a lot of money, married me, not much money, but we laugh a lot.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

But we laugh. We do.

Tim Muehlhoff:

We do. Okay. Especially the more she finds out about me.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

All right, let's, okay, myth number five.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Let's move on.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Marry an accountant.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

No, myth number five.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

Accountants are great, but.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Accountants are great.

[Audience laughs]

Noreen Muehlhoff:

I mean, there's a lot of accounting--

Tim Muehlhoff:

Yes, I love that business school, we do. Accountants are wonderful. Can't be an accountant.

Myth number five, no accountants aren't. Life really starts when you get married. Life really

starts when you get married. Here's some things from the survey. Singleness is a waiting period. Marriage defines you. Second, marriage makes life easier, written by a single.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Once you get married, you will live happily ever after. Now, let me just say, we love marriage.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

We do.

Tim Muehlhoff:

We really do, and-and in a lot of ways, like, marriage made life easier. It really did, in a lot of ways. I won't say what I was going to say.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Um, but it also can make life really harder in a lot of different ways. You have to be really prepared for it, I think, and called to the person that you're going to marry. But--

Noreen Muehlhoff:

And the whole point to, you know, marriage makes life easier, in some ways that's true. When you are married to the right person. If you are not married to the right person, it will never make your life easier. It's only going to make it more complicated and more difficult, because the

reality is that marriage really doesn't change much. This is one thing we'll-we'll often point out, is that marriage, if I can get my cup out, that marriage is like hot water, here, I've already got a tea bag. It's just like hot water to a tea bag, in that it only brings out what's already there. You know, the longer the teabag sits in the water, the more the qualities of the tea bag come into the water, there's nothing new here. And that's what marriage does. It just brings out the good, if you're paired up with the right person, it brings out some of the bad, but the right person can handle that and so can you. But it just brings out what's already there. So if you are not happy with yourself walking down the aisle, marriage is not going to make you happy.

Tim Muehlhoff:

And one huge way marriage makes life harder is the sanctification process. I was an incredibly selfish person before I got married. I just didn't know it. Why? Because the universe revolved around me before I got married. The great thing about dating that you wish you could carry into marriage? At the end of every day, you get a break. How great is that about dating? The end of the day, I get to go back in my apartment, lay on the couch with a pizza on my stomach and watch Monday Night Football and Noreen doesn't know it.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I guess--I might tell her I'm praying for the world and stop, you know.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

But you still do that.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Oh, and I still do it, I still do it. Yeah, which is wonderful. Monday night-we watch Monday Night Football together. Noreen watches it with us. I mean, that's just pretty cool.

[Audience applauds]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And we pray for the Detroit Lions and it hasn't worked. Okay, so, um, but-but marriage brings out selfishness. It brings it to the surface and you have to deal with it. And then when you have kids, that's really the case. A child with the flu doesn't care if you're up for it at that moment. A child with the flu needs you to get up at 1:00 a.m., sit with that child. And, you know, it's amazing when a child walks into our bedroom, comes to my side of the bed, says, "Daddy, I really don't feel well." And I'm like, "Mom is right there."

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And I have 50 reasons why it should be Noreen, and you know what I mean? So it brings out the selfishness. Now, marriage is great, but the number one stated reason for divorce in the United States is unhappiness. The number one reason. And at a marriage conference, we have desperately unhappy people and they'll say to us, so you're saying to me, I'm supposed to stay in a marriage, an unhappy marriage, for the rest of my life. And I say to him, yeah, marriage is for life in God's economy. And he can turn around your selfishness and your marriage, if you let Him do it. But there's going to be a lot of sacrifice. So marriage should be work, but it shouldn't

be a ton of work. Engagement should be work. It shouldn't be a ton of work. There has to be a natural ebb and flow. I think that old adage, opposites attract and marry, you know what the whole adage is? Opposites attract, marry, and then kill each other.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And that's true. You want to have core similarities in most areas, now there can be things that we're not on the same page on, but at the core, we're on the same page with each other, mission, master, master, mission, and then mate.

Noreen Muehlhoff:

And the other thing is too, just an encouragement, to not put your life on hold because life doesn't start when you get married. Life is now. And so you lived your life to the fullest and you take advantage of the opportunities, and the opportunities you have here at Biola are amazing. And you don't want to pass those by because you're always looking to the future. You know, once I get married, then I will. Do it now. And what that will do, it only makes you a better person. It will allow you to contribute to the kingdom of God now. And when you do get married or if you do get married, you can do it without regret. You won't be looking back and going, "Oh, I wish I had done that when I was single." You know, when I lived in California, I had three roommates and I was getting ready. I was leaving for Ohio, packing up my stuff. And, you know, like most households, we shared a bunch of things. I was packing up my dishes and the roommates were talking about who wanted to replace the dishes. And Emily mentioned that Liz

had a set of dishes in the garage, in a box, unopened. Well, Liz's response was, "I'm saving those until I get married."

And it was kind of sad to me because I thought, do you not deserve nice dishes when you're single? I mean, is there something that, you know, you become more valuable after you get married, and that you can only have nice things then and that you sort of have this-put your life on hold? And really the saddest thing to me is with that mindset, is that Liz is still single. She's not gotten married. I don't-and I don't know whether or not she ever opened up her dishes. I didn't ask.

Tim Muehlhoff:

But one thing that attracted me to Doreen, it was a huge thing to wrap up with this morning when I met her, was not a woman waiting to get married. She wasn't-she-she had gone on mission trips. She was on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ. She was a leader on the campus. She was a skier. She had, I mean, when I met her, here's a woman who loved life. And-and she wasn't, like, waiting to get married because then it would have been too much pressure to initiate because then it's like, I don't want to overcommunicate. So the most attractive thing you can do is live your life, who God made you to be. And He can bring along a person that's going to look at you and say, "Wow, this is what I've been looking for." So we just wanted to start a conversation that will continue at the collegium. This has probably raised, I hope, a lot of questions. We would love to just sit and answer as many questions as possible. We're not marriage experts, but we would love to just tell you what we think about different issues. So let me pray for us and

then we're going to break and as many as you want to, let's head over to the collegium. So let me pray for you.

Father. We do thank You for marriage, Lord. It's something that You created. Lord, You said that love is stronger than death. Father, we live in a divorce culture today, and sadly, that divorce culture has included Biola grads. But Father, what a great environment to be here to learn about a passion for Christ, to learn about the theology of sex, to learn about the theology of marriage, dating, love. Father, thank You that that You survey our path as the Psalmist says, You know the very hairs in our head, You know everything about us, Lord. Your word says that You know our needs even before we do. Marriage is a beautiful thing, Lord. But, Father, it is not the only thing. There are things that exceed, that serving You, Your kingdom, the needs that people have today. So, Father, help us to discuss. What a wonderful environment to discuss. Thank You that You brought us together. I pray that lifelong friendships would come out of Biola, and I pray that for some they would meet that person they would commit the rest of their lives to. But Lord, even if it happens an hour later, You are sovereign. You love us as a father loves his children. We take comfort in that. We pray in Your Son's name, amen.