



DC503: My Brother is Making a Big Mistake

“My twenty-year-old brother has been living with his girlfriend for two years in the home of her parents. He called me and said that they’re talking about getting married, but he is confused and afraid about all this, because she is the only girl he has ever dated, and he’s not sure if this is the right thing to be doing. He feels pressured by her and by her parents. He wants to date other girls before he makes a commitment, but he’s afraid to tell her that, because he’s afraid that then she’ll leave him. How do I talk to him without it sounding like his older sister is telling him what to do or I’m preaching to him?”

Under most circumstances, I suggest that other people’s behavior—including their mistakes—are none of our business. That would not apply here, because he CAME to you and discussed his confusion and fears. You have wisely understood, however, that just because he has come to you, and just because you have a bit of wisdom to offer, that does NOT give you the right to tell him what to do.

So what is the wisest approach here? To love and teach him. What could loving him look like? Tell him something like this: “I want you to know that no matter what decision you make here, I will support you. None of this is any of my business. I’m always glad to listen. I care about you a lot, and I’m tickled to offer additional OPTIONS you may not have considered, but I will NOT tell you what TO DO or what you SHOULD have done. That’s YOUR business, not mine.” He already feels pressured. He needs a place—a person—where he feels accepted and loved. That alone can decrease his fear and make it possible for him to think clearly and make better decisions. That’s a huge thing.

As you love him, he may feel safe enough that it will become more effective for you to actually teach him something, which you have a RIGHT to do only because he CAME to you with this problem. What can you teach him? A lot. It’s obvious that he’s quite inexperienced with relationships. You might say, for example, “Ideally, getting married is an experience that lasts for an entire LIFETIME. Before you choose a LIFETIME partner, there’s one thing you’d want to do more than anything else: Gather all the INFORMATION you possibly can. For example, look at all the information we gather just to buy a car we’ll drive for a few years, and that affects our lives very little. AGAIN, I’ll support you no matter what you do, but IF you want to be HAPPY, you’d be wise to gather all the information you can before getting married.”

Now, how can he gather this information? First I suggest that he read the Real Love book with his girlfriend and learn about truth telling and unconditional love with her. It will be good practice for him, and he’ll learn a lot about her. She might say she has no interest, which again would be useful INFORMATION. You might help him as he does this. And if it turns out that they develop an unconditionally loving relationship as a result, great. But if he continues to have ANY doubts about marriage, come on, this is his FIRST relationship. Then proceed to the second way to gather information: Give him a little encouragement not to make a decision in fear, but instead to read the Real Love in Dating book and learn more about Real Love and about OTHER relationships before making this lifelong decision. You won’t be controlling him. You’ll be teaching him that he doesn’t have to be afraid and be controlled by his fear. You’ll show him how the truth and love set us free, and that’s a loving act on your part.