

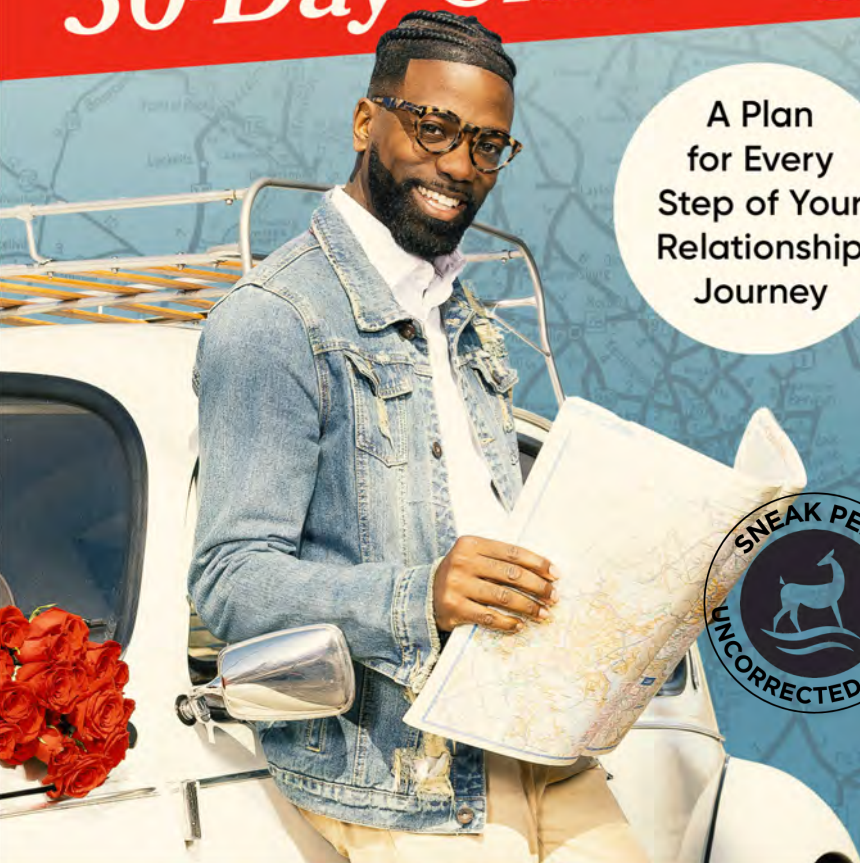
Bestselling author of STOP WAITING FOR PERMISSION

**Stephen Chandler**

# Relationship Road Map

*30-Day Challenge*

A Plan  
for Every  
Step of Your  
Relationship  
Journey



# **Relationship Road Map 30-Day Challenge**

**A Plan for  
Every Step  
of Your  
Relationship  
Journey**

**Stephen Chandler**

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica Inc.™

A WaterBrook Trade Paperback Original

Copyright © 2025 by Stephen Chandler

Penguin Random House values and supports copyright.

Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission.

You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for every reader. Please note that no part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems.

All rights reserved. Published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

WATERBROOK and colophon are registered trademarks of Penguin Random House LLC.

Some material is adapted from *Relationship Road Map* by Stephen Chandler, copyright © 2025 by Stephen Chandler, published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, in 2025.

Trade Paperback ISBN 978-0-593-19431-7

Ebook ISBN 978-0-593-19432-4

The Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

waterbrookmultnomah.com

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

ScoutAutomatedPrintCode

First Edition

*Book design by Susan Turner*

Most WaterBrook books are available at special quantity discounts for bulk purchase for premiums, fundraising, and corporate and educational needs by organizations, churches, and businesses. Special books or book excerpts also can be created to fit specific needs. For details, contact [specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com](mailto:specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com).

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Introduction</b>	00
<b>DAY 1 Begin with Your Destination in Mind</b>	00
<b>DAY 2 Check Your Engine</b>	00
<b>DAY 3 Check Your Engine (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 4 Get a Tune-Up</b>	00
<b>DAY 5 Hit the Road, Women</b>	00
<b>DAY 6 Hit the Road, Men</b>	00
<b>DAY 7 Hit the Road, Men (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 8 Avoid These Obstacles</b>	00
<b>DAY 9 Trust the Guardrails</b>	00
<b>DAY 10 Follow the Rules of the Road</b>	00
<b>DAY 11 Follow the Rules of the Road (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 12 Watch Your Speed</b>	00
<b>DAY 13 Heed the Warning Signs</b>	00
<b>DAY 14 Heed the Warning Signs (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 15 Travel with Others</b>	00
<b>DAY 16 Rely on Seasoned Travelers</b>	00

<b>DAY 17</b>	<b>Pay Attention to Other Drivers</b>	00
<b>DAY 18</b>	<b>Pay Attention to Other Drivers (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 19</b>	<b>Communicate with Other Drivers</b>	00
<b>DAY 20</b>	<b>Use Your Signals</b>	00
<b>DAY 21</b>	<b>Choose a Co-Pilot</b>	00
<b>DAY 22</b>	<b>Kick a Hitchhiker to the Curb</b>	00
<b>DAY 23</b>	<b>Assess Him as a Traveling Companion</b>	00
<b>DAY 24</b>	<b>Assess Her as a Traveling Companion</b>	00
<b>DAY 25</b>	<b>Notice the Mileage</b>	00
<b>DAY 26</b>	<b>Read the Instruction Manual</b>	00
<b>DAY 27</b>	<b>Examine the Wiring</b>	00
<b>DAY 28</b>	<b>Examine the Wiring (Part 2)</b>	00
<b>DAY 29</b>	<b>Arrive Safely</b>	00
<b>DAY 30</b>	<b>You Got This</b>	00
	<b>Conclusion</b>	00
	<b>Notes</b>	00

## INTRODUCTION

---

IF YOU'RE SINGLE AND WANT TO BE MARRIED, THIS THIRTY-day challenge is designed for you.

Maybe you've been out there working the dating apps and you're exhausted by the last seven disappointing dates you've had. Or maybe you're at home right now on your couch and you haven't left your apartment in thirteen days. I know that finding the person God has for you can be hard. I get it. But I also know that there are things you can do to prepare yourself to meet the person you'll share life and ministry with. And that's why I created this thirty-day challenge for you.

Now, if you wanna keep repeating those same bad dates over and over—and never know why you can't change the pattern—be my guest. Or if you want to stay on the couch bingeing Netflix, that's a choice you can make. But if you want to prepare your heart, your body,

your mind, and your spirit to meet Mr. or Mrs. Right, then this challenge is for you.

Wherever you find yourself right now, these next thirty days are going to bring clarity, hope, and vision. God knows what your future looks like, and I'm confident that He will guide your steps. Your job is to keep moving forward.

Each day I'll introduce you to an essential component of this journey and offer a challenge—an exercise, an assignment, a practice, a way to reflect—that will help you take your next step. If you embrace the challenge every day, you'll see the fruit in your life. You'll be better equipped for this journey toward marriage. And if you find yourself wanting to *skip* a certain day after you read the challenge, I want you to notice that and gather the courage to *push through* on that day. It might just be your most important step.

This challenge is a gentle nudge, or maybe an aggressive shove, from a friend who really loves you. It's an encouragement to position yourself—or reposition yourself—physically, emotionally, and spiritually to discover the person God has for you. The Bible says that the man who finds a wife “finds what is good,”<sup>1</sup> and I'll add that the woman who finds a husband finds what is good. What you're after is *good*, but you're going to have to be willing to do things differently. I know that doing new things can be scary, but to find something you've never seen before, you're going to have to go somewhere you've never been before.

On this journey, I'm encouraging you to keep your

eyes on the prize. And in this case, the prize is a vibrant marriage in which you and your spouse love and serve each other while influencing the kingdom as only you can. I hope that you can see yourself in a joy-filled, God-honoring marriage one day. But that destination is unlikely without intentionality, prayer, and wisdom. And that's what I am hoping you'll invest in this thirty-day adventure.

Sometimes we get so fixated on the destination that we miss the joy that God is revealing to us along the journey. There's no guarantee that you will be married at the end of this thirty-day challenge. As a matter of fact, I really hope that you're not—that would be a very quick engagement!—but you are laying the train tracks that will lead to happily ever after.

I was friends with my wife for two years before we started dating. Honestly, while she was incredibly attractive and godly, because our friend circle was so tight-knit, it took time for me to realize everything I was looking for was right next to me. When we did start dating, it didn't take long. Ten years, three kids, two dogs, and one wild adventure later, I can testify that everything can change in a moment and God really does have more for you than you would ever dare to ask.

The goal of this thirty-day challenge isn't for you be engaged next month. (Please don't be.) Rather, the aim is for you to develop a plan to pursue dating with the goal of marriage in mind. It's meant to help you be intentional and approach dating in a way that will lead to your good and the good of your neighbor. It's meant to equip you

to date in a way that glorifies God.

For thirty days, let's lean all the way in. You will learn so much about yourself and how God made you if you'll commit to the journey. I implore you to fight those two natural temptations—feeling pressured to make something happen or doing nothing—and enjoy the journey! One of the most attractive features of any individual is joy. It's infectious. So, let's make sure that this journey is marked with joy that is rooted in your confidence in God. With Him, you are more than enough, and He has promised to work out this area of your life for your good. As a matter of fact, when it's all said and done, He will work it out better than you would have ever dared to ask for.

So, here we go; let's get started.

## DAY 1

---

### Begin with Your Destination in Mind



OLIVIA AND TWO OF HER GIRLFRIENDS WERE ENJOYING brunch one Saturday morning when the conversation turned to marriage. Olivia was single, and her two friends were both married. Over the course of the conversation, one woman complained *continuously* about how much time her husband spent playing golf each weekend with his friends and how this had become a source of much conflict. It sounded like she harped on her husband about it *every day*. The rift between them had become so deep that they might go days without speaking to each other.

Olivia's other married friend also shared a bit about her marriage. She explained how her husband's boss had taken credit for great work her husband had done. Noticing how upset he was, she stopped what she was doing to pray with him about the frustrating situation. She even

shared how grateful her husband was for the TLC.

As Olivia drove home from brunch, she continued to think about the two relationships and what she did and didn't want in the marriage she hoped to have one day. She began to picture the future she aspired to reach.

I'll bet you know what it's like to prepare for a trip. When you take time off work, pack up the car, gas it up near home, and then hit the road at five o'clock in the morning to meet up with a friend for vacation, you know where you're headed. (If you don't? Well, that's a whole other conversation . . .) And when you're on this dating journey—whether you're still packing the car or you've been driving so long that you're running out of gas—you need to travel *with your destination in mind*. Specifically, I'm inviting you to notice the experience of other travelers who've been there.

I don't know what kinds of marriages you've seen, but God's plan isn't just for you to find someone to make babies with and then grow old and die. The writer of Song of Songs gushed, "I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go" (3:4). God's good intention is that marriage would be amazing. Joy filled. God glorifying. That's the beautiful destination.

In Jesus's ministry, the crowds who were curious about Him *traveled* with Him. And as He taught them about what it meant to be His disciple and follow Him, He wanted to make sure they had enough "gas in the tank," so to speak. He wanted them to consider—at the front end—what it would take to *finish well*. He offered, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you

first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?"<sup>1</sup> Today is your opportunity to consider where you're headed and if you've got what it takes to make it there.

---

### Day 1 Challenge

---

*Spend time considering the destination: the marriage you want to experience one day.*

List five things about marriage that you're looking forward to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List five things about marriage that may concern you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

All right, now I want you to get a little more specific. (And because you'll be naming names, remember that this challenge is private. It's between you and the Lord,

so *speaking freely*.)

When I look around at marriages I've seen over the years, I admire the relationship that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ share.

I'd like to emulate their marriage with my own future spouse in these specific ways:

When I look around at marriages I do *not* want to duplicate, a marriage that concerns me is the one between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

I want to be careful not to imitate what I've seen in their marriage for these reasons:

*God, show me what You desire  
in a strong, healthy marriage.*

## DAY 2

---

### Check Your Engine



WHEN DEION WAS YOUNG, HIS MOTHER WAS ADDICTED to alcohol and drugs. At the age of six, Deion and his twin brother were removed from her care and placed in the foster system. Growing up, they rotated through different homes. At sixteen, Deion was adopted by the foster parents he'd lived with for four years. He didn't date in high school, but when he went to college, he met Marissa during orientation, and they started dating exclusively the first week of school.

Everything was going well in their relationship at first, but after a few months, Marissa noticed that Deion would get angry with her for the smallest things. He would get heated when she was out with friends at night and didn't answer his texts. Or if she went home for the weekend to be with her family, he would act really cold and distant when she returned to school. Eventually, Ma-

rissa decided that she couldn't deal with his hot-and-cold moods, and she broke up with him. During his years in undergrad Deion dated two more girls, and both of those relationships had the same outcome.

Before you set off on a long trip, you want to know that your engine is running well. You need to know it's not going to overheat! And if you've been taking care of your car, you likely have that confidence. Deion's social worker knew he would benefit from therapy, but his adoptive parents never made it happen. Throughout his difficult childhood, Deion hadn't been offered the opportunity to care for his engine.

Not everyone's story is as difficult or complicated as Deion's, but we all have trauma—past hurts that have hindered our personal growth and continue to affect our relationships. One of the ways today that you can check your engine is to pause and consider the dating relationships from your past. That's what I'm inviting you to do. And if you haven't dated, or haven't dated much, ask God to show you how *your* old hurts have affected other close relationships in your life. (But, to be clear, a relationship with a committed partner is where old hurts will really interfere. Now you know.) And I want you to hear that this engine check isn't *my idea*. The psalmist announced this about the Master Mechanic: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (147:3). Heart healing is what God does. However, if we want God to heal our hurts, we need to acknowledge them. Take a moment to respond to the statements below.

- From what I know of myself, the hurts—little and big—from my past that might interfere with my journey include . . .
  
- From what I know of myself, the inner hurts that God has *already* healed include . . .

One of the ways our old hurts can interfere with our lives today is through the power of fear. Fear is a natural response to being hurt. If we've been wounded, we're *afraid* that we'll be hurt again. It's natural. But it's also something God wants to redeem.

How has the fear of being hurt again affected your relationships with others?

Even though our past hurts can negatively influence our current relationships, like they did for Deion, we can also reap the healing *benefits* of prior relationships. Maybe a previous boyfriend or girlfriend who accepted you entirely helped you believe you are worth loving. Or maybe their appreciation of one of your quirky habits allowed you to love it. Or they may have shared with you their wholehearted love of God's Word. Take some time to consider the following questions.

- What are some of the healthy parts of your previous relationships that you want to repeat in future relationships? Be specific.
  
- If you haven't been in a relationship, what quality do you value most in your *friendships* that you hope to experience in marriage?

Psalm 147, the one that says God heals the brokenhearted, is a song that celebrates all the good things God does. (If you want to see examples of His goodness, read all of Psalm 147!) Friend, God heals our broken hearts and binds our wounds so that we can love Him, love other people, and love ourselves the way He loves us.

---

## Day 2 Challenge

---

*Get serious about offering your old hurts to God.  
This week, consider doing one of these four things:*

1. Read Psalm 147 and make a list of how God acts toward the brokenhearted.
2. Commit to journaling about the hurts from your past that continue to affect you.
3. Find someone older and wiser who knows your story, and explore with them how old hurts might still be boss-

ing you around.

4. Make an appointment with a therapist to explore how old hurts might be influencing your relationships today.



Two broken people can't make a whole marriage. When you enter marriage, you've got to be whole in yourself. You have to decide to say, "I'm going to let God rebuild me. I'm going to let God restore me. I'm going to let Him remake me. I'm going to let Him bring back what the Enemy stole."

*God, speak to me about the hurts  
I'm carrying in my heart  
and how You want to heal me.*

## DAY 3

---

### Check Your Engine (Part 2)



FROM THE OUTSIDE, IT LOOKED LIKE KIARI HAD an idyllic childhood. And in many ways, she did. She had parents who loved God, loved each other, and loved their two daughters. They lived next-door to Kiari's maternal grandparents, and her grandfather pastored the church the family attended. Kiara had lots of friends and did well in school. She had everything she needed physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Anyone who knew her would say that she was thriving.

Kiari's sister, five years younger, was born with a number of intellectual and physical disabilities. And because Kiari's parents wanted to make sure *Kiari* wasn't neglected, they asked the grandparents if Kiari could stay with them. For the first two years of her sister's life, while her parents were occupied with her sister's visits to nearby

doctors, distant hospitals, and attending physical and occupational therapy appointments, Kiari lived with her grandparents so that she could receive everything she needed.

And while their intentions were good, Kiari's parents couldn't have anticipated the way those childhood years spent living with her grandparents would shape Kiari's heart. Although she *had* friends, she wasn't convinced that they wouldn't drop her if someone better came along. And although she had a boyfriend in high school, she was always waiting for him to leave her. She kept a smile on her face, but the Enemy continued to hiss that she wasn't worth loving.

I'm asking you to check your engine as you embark on this dating journey. For some people, like Deion, the dashboard lights are announcing—insistently—that the engine needs to be checked. But for someone like Kiari, who *appears* to be flourishing, what's happening under the hood is not as obvious.

Get serious about assessing the condition of your vehicle now. We've all had some wear and tear. Sometimes, as in Deion's life, there's been a wreck, and the damage is obvious. But for someone like Kiari, who has felt neglected, diagnosing the problem may not be as clear.

As you're checking your engine today, I also want you to consider *why* you're dating. Is it because you're lonely? Looking for a good time? Or are you dating to honor God as you search for the person He has for you? I don't want you looking to the world for cues about why and how you should date. That's a wreck just waiting to

happen. The whole reason I wrote *Relationship Road Map* and this thirty-day challenge is because I'm convinced that you were made for so much more. As you begin, I want you to be clear about *why* you're embarking on this journey.

Today, consider what you reflected on yesterday and ask God, *How healthy am I?*

Because there's not always a blinking light on the dashboard, I encourage you to prayerfully review your life's journey. Year by year, ask God to show you what experience or rupture may have had a lingering effect on your heart. Ask God to open your eyes to something that might not be obvious. Maybe your parents lost track of you at the mall one day. Maybe a kid in the neighborhood bullied you and you never told anyone. Or maybe your parent was emotionally unavailable. Acknowledging these hurts is the first step to healing. Take a moment to record one or two hurtful experiences from the eras of your life listed below.

- When I was a toddler . . .
  
- When I was in pre-K . . .
  
- When I was in elementary school . . .

- When I was in middle school . . .
  
- When I was in high school . . .
  
- When I was in college . . .
  
- When I was in my early twenties . . .
  
- When I was in my late twenties . . .
  
- When I was in my early thirties . . .
  
- When I was in my late thirties . . .

You get the idea.

When the prophet Jeremiah addressed the people of

Israel, they'd been beaten up and broken down. And through the prophet, God promised, "I will restore you to health and heal your wounds" (30:17).

Today, I'm inviting you to consider whether your engine is ready for the journey, and I also want you to be able to name *why* you're embracing this adventure.

---

### Day 3 Challenge

---

*Spend time reflecting on why you're launching into—or recalibrating—this dating journey. Then ask God to show you one experience that has had a lasting impact on your heart, and consider processing that one thing as you did yesterday: in your journal, with a wise guide, or with a professional.*

*God, I am offering You the hurts  
inside my heart. Speak, Lord, for  
Your servant is listening.*