

Discussion on Dating

✝ Just what does God say about dating anyway?

We have to remember that dating hasn't always been around. It's a fairly new concept in the history of the world. But even though the Bible doesn't address "dating" specifically, we know God has much to say about relationships with others! **A good picture of dating and respecting God's plan for our life lies in the book of Ruth** - Boaz was a man of integrity who had the opportunity to take advantage of the young, pretty and widowed Ruth. Instead, he chose righteousness as he protected Ruth and looked after her needs. He made an extremely difficult situation for her easy by not seeking his own lustful and longing desires and by respecting her completely. If he had followed his impulses, he could never have had a good, lasting relationship with Ruth. Ruth, who remained faithful, would also have missed out on the relationship (Ruth 2:20; 3:10-11). We should also look to Boaz in our relationships. He took it slow, got to know Ruth, and did not take advantage of her. This led to a strong friendship, with romance entering at God's appointed time. Also, Ruth kept her boundaries and didn't try to tempt Boaz or take advantage of his feelings for her.

✝ How far is too far physically in relationships?

Unfortunately God doesn't give us the easy "limit" answers that so many people are searching for while they are single. He doesn't tell us explicitly that a kiss here or a touch there is "over the edge." He does, however give some very clear direction on where your limit should be as well as what activities constitute sinning against God, yourself, your partner and your future spouse. Because each event in the succession of intimacy (holding hands – kissing – making out – touching, etc.) directly leads to the next, we should set our limit a few notches above what we consider the breaking point so as to avoid crossing that line in the "heat of the moment." I remember someone once challenging me to think of my future wife or daughter when I was around women and asking myself if I would like what I was doing to happen to either of those people. When you think of it in those terms, the limits should be very strict!

Ephesians 5: 3 (NIV) – "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7 (NIV) – "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God.... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV) – "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery.... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

✝ Is it ok to date non-believers?

God is very clear in Scripture when he speaks out against dating non-believers. This kind of relationship, whether there is a genuine interest or you are "witness dating" can lead to serious troubles down the road.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (The Message) – "Don't become partners with those who reject God. How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark? Does Christ go strolling with the Devil? Do trust and mistrust hold hands? Who would think of setting up pagan idols in God's holy Temple? But that is exactly what we are, each of us is a temple in whom God lives."

✝ Why should I wait until I get married to have sexual relations?

Sex, when enjoyed in concert with God's purpose for it, is good. God speaks very clearly about His intentions for sex throughout Scripture, as well as what happens when it happens outside of marriage.

Hebrews 13: 4-5 (The Message) – “Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex.”

1 Corinthians 6: 15-20 (The Message) – “There is more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, ‘The two become one.’ Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever – the kind of sex that can never ‘become one.’ There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for ‘becoming one’ with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.”

✝ **Paul and others led a very successful life single. Should I even want to get married?**

God designed marriage to be a perfect union between two people in an imperfect world. He designed it for us to enjoy, but marriage isn't necessarily in God's plans for all people.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (The Message) – “God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of married life to others. I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they cannot manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.”

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 (The Message) – “I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master. Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many more demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming whole and holy instruments of God.”

In *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, Peter Wagner offers this advice on singleness – “If you are single and know down in your heart that you would get married in an instant if a reasonable opportunity presented itself, you probably don't have the gift of singleness. If you are single and find yourself terribly frustrated by unfulfilled sexual impulses, you probably don't have the gift. But if neither of these things seems to bother you, rejoice – you may have found one of your spiritual gifts.”

✝ **Suggested Readings**

The following are some books that may help you in your dating decisions:

- *Tainted Love* – by David Mark Brown.
- *Passion and Purity* – by Elizabeth Elliott
- *The Sacred Romance* – by Brent Curtis and John Elderedge
- *Wild at Heart* – by John Elderedge
- *Dating & Marriage* (IVP Booklet) – by Melvin & Helen Friesen
- *Spiritual Compatibility in Dating* (IVP Booklet) – by Alice Fryling