

Dating and Marriage: Parent Guide

Presuppositions for this discussion: That we were created male and female, and that God created marriage to be between male and female. - Genesis 2:22-24

Understanding marriage and romantic relationships:

- We reflect God's image individually and together - unity in diversity
- Marriage is a good gift from God - it mirrors the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-33) (Malachi 2:14-16 covenant).
- Singleness is also a good gift from God as seen in the life of Jesus. It is a chance to be focused on communion with God, community with others, and service for God.
- We can still have meaningful relationships and community, without romance/marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:32)
- We often idolize marriage/romantic relationships, but we can be fulfilled without it.
- In fact, we can flourish *without* romance and marriage, and we can flourish *with* romance and marriage; We find our fulfillment in Jesus.
- "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" - 1 Corinthians 10:31 - This includes dating. Our dating should be purposeful, and ultimately for the glory of God.

Why date?

"In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and *eventually find [a spouse].*"
(For the Strength of Youth, Dating)

Date with a purpose

- When we live for temporary desires, people get hurt.
- Dating can be fun, but fun is *not* the point. If that is why we are dating, then we will end up treating the other person like an object to be consumed.
- We are called to love our neighbors.
- We are not meant to treat people as if their lives are meant to be used for our self-gratification. That's not love. That is not treating someone with value and respect and dignity.

Love Who You Date.

- We are talking about biblical, "love thy neighbor" kind of love here, not romantic love.

- Treat them with respect, seek to honor them, desire their wellbeing above your own.
- “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” - 1 Cor. 13:4-8

Who

- We are called to be equally yoked - do not date or marry an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14-15).
- Don't date someone just because they say they are a Christian. Are they following Jesus?
- Someone that doesn't know God can't encourage you in your faith.
- They can't challenge you the way you need to be challenged.
- They can't understand your struggles or victories and they can't relate to your spiritual journey.
- There will be a huge piece of your life that you can't fully share with your partner.
- If your relationship with them is supposed to be deeper than any other earthly relationship that you have, it won't be possible if you don't believe the same things.

How

- Dating is *not* marriage.
- You are not one - You have not made a covenant - There are more boundaries
- The Bible is very clear about a definite boundary that is not to be crossed, and that is having sex outside of marriage. (Colossians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 7:1-4, Matthew 19:5-6, Proverbs 6:23-26, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.)

How far is too far?

- Don't ask this question!
- Instead ask “How can I use my relationship to honor, serve, and glorify God? How can I treat this person with love and respect and dignity?”
- 1 Corinthians 6:18 says to flee from sexual immorality. - “How far is too far” is the opposite of fleeing from sexual immorality - it can lead to a hint of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3)
- Establish your boundaries *before* you go on a date - communicate these to your partner.

- When making this decision, think about their future spouse. If your boyfriend or girlfriend marries someone else, you should be able to attend that wedding with your head held high. You should be able to shake the hand of your ex's spouse because you did right by them.
- Think about your future spouse - how you want that guy/girl to treat your future spouse is the same way you should treat the girl/guy you are out with.
- Don't do anything with your date that should be saved for your future spouse in the context of marriage.
- Do not break any boundaries that your parents have set for you in dating.
- Talk with your parents, youth leaders, other mature believers when determining boundaries, and deciding if you should be dating someone.

Surrender all to God

- He knows what is best
- Giving our lives to Christ also means surrendering our dating to Him.
- It means asking ourselves and God questions like:
 - Would God want me to date right now?
 - Would God want me to date this person right now?
 - Can this person help me grow in my relationship with God?
 - Will this person encourage me in my pursuit of God?
 - How can I glorify God with my relationship? etc.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you see our society idolizing romance?
- If you are dating to meet your future spouse, does this mean that you shouldn't date anyone you wouldn't marry?
- What are some possible problems that occur when a Christian tries to date a non-Christian?