

A Godly Perspective On Dating

Introduction. Car manufacturers install warning lights to alert us when sensors are picking up unusual or dangerous signals from the car that indicate mechanical problems, failure, or potential danger. When dating there are also indicators that signal potential problems in relationships that the wise young person will look out for. You certainly do not want to marry someone who is demonstrating behaviors that will be worse in a lifelong committed relationship. But all is not bad, for there are also some positive signs that the person you are dating is worth investigating further and perhaps marrying one day.

I. **Five Warning Signs**

A. No respect for others.

1. The comedian Jerry Seinfeld wisely noted, "A person who is nice to you but not to the waiter is not a nice person." A person who does not show respect for his family, your friends, or people that he perceives as inferior to himself, is displaying insecurity or arrogance (Deuteronomy 27:16; 1 Timothy 6:1).
2. Watch for this because the person is nice to you because they are trying to make a good impression. When they no longer feel the need to impress you, and especially if you accomplish something that makes them feel insecure, they will start disrespecting you in their speech and they way the act around you -- sometimes publicly.

B. Irresponsible with money.

1. If the person you are dating is living on credit and wastes money, it will not get better when you are married. In fact, you will then have to share the responsibility for the debt. This type of person, like the wasteful son of Luke 15, is fun to be with when they are spending money. But like the wasteful son, the money runs out and hard times come leaving them struggling and depressed.
2. On the other hand, a person who is so cheap that they cannot enjoy spending money responsibly can create problems in a marriage. Covetousness can strike those who are frugal too (Matthew 19:23-24; 1 Corinthians 6:10).

C. Anger problems.

1. Poor temper control is very important to discover while dating. A person who is short-tempered or often angry has trouble controlling their emotions and often has deep-seated problems dealing with situations in life. If you marry this person and life really gets difficult, they will have a hard time responding properly and you will both suffer as a result.

2. Anger is associated with foolishness (Proverbs 19:19; 22:24-25; Ecclesiastes 7:9). Eventually, you may take the blame for everything going wrong in their life and you will become the target of their wrath.
3. Passive anger is harder to detect but often more damaging. This person will not tell you that they disagree with you but they will try to undermine you. They do not have the courage or self-esteem to voice their opinion, so it appears that they will go along with your request; however, they will not do what they said they would and will often make excuses for why they did not. They avoid confrontation but try to get their way by stalling, ignoring, complaining, begging, or whining. You will have a happier life with someone who will be honest about their feelings and desires than someone who seems to be agreeable but is hiding their anger.

D. Emphasizes the physical part of the relationship.

1. A person who does not respect your "no" is not concerned about what is good for you. A person who is concerned about what you can do for them physically is viewing you more as a slave than a person. Remember that a lot of sexual activities short of "going all the way" are still wrong outside of marriage (Ephesians 4:19; 1 Peter 4:3). Often these physical activities become a substitute for true intimacy. God decreed that the intimate, physical pleasures are to be enjoyed by married couples to help draw them closer together in their lifelong commitment and friendship (Proverbs 5:20; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8).
2. If they are overly concerned about your appearance, they will usually become more critical as time goes by. Someone subject to such foolish criticism generally develops a poor self-image and may develop emotional problems or devote an inordinate amount of time to their appearance. A person who does not accept you as you are and who pressures you does not deserve to be in a relationship with you.

E. No interest in spiritual subjects.

1. If the person has little or no interest in spiritual subjects, it is not likely to change once you get married. My experience has been that the person may show enough interest before marriage, but then will eventually get tired of pretending.
2. Does the person respect what is holy and that you are trying to be holy, or do they make fun of it? Whatever you do, do not tell the person that you cannot marry them until they become a Christian. You want someone who is genuinely committed to God and wants to go to heaven so you can grow together spiritually. Having someone to study, pray, worship, and serve with is one of the

greatest treasures one can have (Psalm 1:1-2; Matthew 5:6; John 6:27).

II. **Five Positive Signs**

A. Interested in you.

1. You will be blessed if you find someone who is interested in you regardless of who your friends are, whether you have many or few possessions, or whether you are popular or not. Someone who is not interested in what you can do for them but wants to serve you embodies the spirit of Christ (Galatians 5:13).
2. Does the person really listen to you or do they seem interested in what is important to you? Do they look at you or the TV (or their phone) when talking? If the person emphasizes the physical part of the relationship and what they can get from you, they are not interested in you; they are interested in satisfying themselves using you.

B. Respects your physical boundaries.

1. A person who respects your physical boundaries to preserve your purity values you more than their interests and desires.
2. You also want a person who respects your time commitments and responsibilities, and will not pressure you to break your obligations in order to spend time with them.
3. A selfish or insecure person does not respect the walls you have established in your life and does not reflect the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5).

C. Grows spiritually with you.

1. You want to find someone who wants to go to heaven regardless of how you live your life, not someone who changes their dedication to God based on your commitment.
2. You want someone you can study and pray with. You want someone that will help and encourage you in serving others and worshipping God. You do not need someone who is your spiritual crutch (or you are theirs) because they (or you) end up taking the place of support and strength that God should occupy. Your faith must be built on God, not another person.
3. Use the time in dating to go to Bible classes and gospel meetings. Perhaps you could cook a meal together and take it to enjoy with someone who is widowed or shut in. Service should be a natural part of two faithful Christians spending time together.

D. Responsible.

1. You can derive comfort in a relationship when you learn that they will keep their word no matter the consequences. If the person is a diligent worker and fulfills their responsibilities, you can trust that

- they have the foundation for being responsible in their role within the family as well.
2. A person who is lazy or makes excuses will continue to do so unless some drastic change takes place in their thinking (and nagging does not accomplish this). A person who works to meet their financial obligations, is active in serving God, takes care of their possessions, and other indications of responsibility will generally maintain those habits throughout their life.
- E. Comfortable and confident when you are not together.
1. A person who is secure in themselves and your relationship will not mind when you spend time with your friends and family or are away from them. An insecure person is often jealous of time spent with others and worries about you enjoying yourself with others. A person who is constantly asking if you still like them or questions you like a detective when you go out with friends does not trust you.
 2. This is unhealthy and must be addressed before the relationship becomes long-term, especially before marriage. Does the person text or call you like a stalker checking on where you are and who you are with? In order to have a healthy relationship, you must be able to spend time apart while confident in the status of your relationship.

III. ***What Parents Can Do***

- A. It is challenging to articulate the influence a father has on his children. It is staggering how much of his attitude and actions toward his children can determine their future relationships.
- B. Since husbands are to be the spiritual head of the house (Ephesians 5:22-23; 6:4), these suggestions relate more to him, but will be good for both husbands and wives to hear.
 1. Affirm her.
 - a) She looks to you for encouragement and guidance. As she grows through puberty, she needs you reminding her that she is valuable and worthy of love.
 - b) The more you affirm her now, the less she will seek affirmation with a teenage boy later. She will now believe her future husband when he tells her the same.
 2. Set the standard.
 - a) Dad, be the husband you want her to have one day. Is it difficult? Yes. Does it mean sacrifice? Yes. Is it worth it? Yes.
 - b) A husband and father who daily makes changes to be a better husband and dad is demonstrating for his daughter the kind of man he wants her to marry one day.

3. Talk about the standard.

- a) As you think about the man you hope she marries, tell her. Let her know what you expect. Set the bar, and she will do everything she can to jump over it.
- b) Fathers, remind your teenager daughters, "Never date a boy you wouldn't marry." What a way to narrow the playing field!

C. For boys

1. Teach him respect.

- a) He needs to know that his girlfriend's possessions, time, and relationship with her family is to be respected (Philippians 2:3).
- b) Furthermore, respect of a girl's parents goes a long way in showing them that a young man is worthy of dating their daughter (Leviticus 19:32).

2. Teach him self-control.

- a) Young men need to know that they should not walk according to the flesh regarding their thoughts, their girlfriend's body, and their money (Galatians 5:16).
- b) Not doing so means that they can develop a better fruit of the spirit: self-control (Daniel 1:8; 2 Peter 1:6). What a great virtue to possess for a better life!

3. Teach him how to manage a household.

- a) Show him a good relationship with your wife. He needs to see patience and love as it works through difficult problems (Ephesians 5:25).
- b) He also needs to see how fathers should teach their children about serving God, the Bible, and discipline and fairness in the home (Psalm 78:4-5).

D. Parents, do not lose sight of the impact you have today on your children's future. Good children put a lot of "stock" in what their parents think of them.

Conclusion. A word to the wise: you ignore these to your own peril. There are seldom more unhappy moments than those in a stressed marriage. The person you are dating may become your spouse, and therefore will greatly affect your future happiness.

Dating provides a great opportunity to learn about another person. Use the time to develop the friendship and understanding of the person, and do not concentrate on the inappropriate, physical parts. Pray for wisdom and discernment so that you find the person who will help you go to heaven. Do not rush the relationship and watch for the signs of strength and weakness that you will have to live with if you marry the person.

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