

# Three Keys For Dating

**Introduction.** A strange situation exists in society today. We have more readily available information about dating and marriage than ever before, yet we have more marital problems and divorces. Obviously something is wrong. It is not sufficient to say that God is needed in these homes, because even many godly marriages are failing.

The fact that a man and a woman are both Christians is no guarantee that their marriage will succeed. When one marriage or dating partner is not a Christian, that can make matters even more difficult. A lot of this failure is due to people not being in the right frame of mind when they date.

It is extremely hard to talk about dating and not talk about marriage. Marriage is the very foundation of life, and we date people in order to find those whom we wish to marry. The secret to finding a mate in dating is being smart and listening to wisdom. But when Christians try to imitate the world and get their relationship standards from Hollywood instead of Heaven, there will be trouble. If we imitate the principles found in the Bible, there will be joy and peace in the home.

We need to reexamine the issue of morality and its relationship to God. The first century was very sexually-saturated, just like our present-day culture. We cannot deny our call to moral purity and consider ourselves disciples of Christ. Let's look at three principles for successful dating and marriage:

## ***I. Take Your Time***

- A. There is no reason to be in hurry. When we date, we need to only build a deep relationship when we are ready to contemplate marriage. Too many young people are in love with the idea of love and not the person. Real love is a decision to hold fast to that person no matter what (Romans 7:2-3).
- B. The number one way that our culture chooses to perpetuate the cancer of broken marriages and failed relationships is by underage dating.
  1. The trouble with underage dating is that it presents an entirely faulty view of what interaction with the opposite gender should be about. Rather than placing emphasis on building one strong relationship with one person at a stage of life when a marital commitment is feasible, dating encourages young people to pour their energies into consistently seducing other young people at a time when neither of them are capable of making long-term commitments.
  2. Our culture constantly portrays girls as having value to boys only in proportion to their physique and their manner of flaunting it. Boys are presented as animalistic and incapable of responsibility. Putting

the two together is not going to be conducive to a long-term, healthy marriage.

- C. Do not get into a serious relationship until you are ready to make a permanent commitment (Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:9-12). Good mates take a while to find and develop (Proverbs 31:10). The beauty of marriage, as it was intended to be, is that it teaches two people of opposite genders to learn to work through incompatibilities and give of themselves.
- D. A lot of couples are in a rush to get married just because of the sexual relationship. That is a big mistake. The sexual relationship within a marriage is a wonderful part of marriage, but it is not everything in a marriage. Within a few months, you are going to be thinking of a lot more than that relationship.

## ***II. Find Someone Devoted To God***

- A. Young people need to find mates who have something in common with them. When you watch Andy Griffith and Barney Fife on television it is pretty funny. But it is not fun to be a part of an "odd couple." We all know, and scientific research has confirmed, that opposites will attract. What we do not know until it is too late is that living with someone's opposite can be extremely trying. What first attracted a couple together can become annoying, then exasperating, and finally, intolerable. Marriage only amplifies good traits and bad traits.
- B. Remember that Jesus is your first love. God had clear commands for the Israelites not to intermarry (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Exactly as God had predicted, marrying foreign wives turned Solomon's heart away (1 Kings 11:1-2).
- C. Some believe that marrying a non-Christian is a sin because of Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 6:14. However, Hebrews 13:4 says marriage is honorable among all, proving that marrying a non-Christian is not sinful. But one must be careful that the Christian's morality is not lowered to the level of the non-Christian rather than the other way around.
  - 1. A Christian and a non-Christian immediately have a lot of conflicts. What do you do about prayer in the home together? What do you do about studies with the children in the home together? What do you do about giving? What do you do when the spouse interferes with your service to God?
  - 2. A lot of heartache can be avoided by looking for a Christian or someone who really wants to learn more about God to date. There is no need to put yourself through the trouble and temptation of having a "one-sided" marriage.

- D. Even when we think we have found a faithful Christian, we need to be careful. Christians look for Christians to date and end up with one who only wears the name. When you take as big a step as marriage, you better make sure your future mate is committed to God and to you (Matthew 22:37; Ephesians 5:22, 25).
1. People can fool you. In fact, we can fool each other for a long time. However, personality traits almost always stay the same after someone is married.
  2. It is so sad to see the anguish that is felt by someone who thought their mate had "reformed" before they got married only to find out that they were putting on a show or playing the hypocrite to get what they want.
- E. When we are dating someone and parents or friends do not approve, we need to stop, look, and listen! Remember the three words they always told you to never forget when you came to a railroad crossing? They told you these words in for your safety. When others do not approve of your relationship, you had better be careful and listen to what they say. They say that love is blind. Sometimes, it is pretty stupid too. Your parents and friends love you and only want the best for you. As I grow and mature, I am finding out that my parents are not as foolish as I thought they were. If they or one of your friends sees something in your dating partner that they do not like, at least listen to them. That is the path of the wise (Proverbs 5:1-2; 11:14; 16:16).

### ***III. Act Appropriately Toward Each Other***

- A. God created the sexual relationship to be enjoyed in its proper time and place. The Song of Solomon is one long wonderful "snapshot" of the love between a married man and woman. It is wrong to create an unhealthy aversion to the sexual relationship. The rightful place of sex, within marriage only, is clearly established and honored (1 Corinthians 7:1-5).
- B. However, we can distort sex into something very bad by engaging in it before marriage. The Bible is very plain about condemning those who are fornicators and adulterers (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 18; Galatians 5:19-21; Hebrews 13:4). Many young Christians want to obey God, but their bodies get the best of them (Matthew 26:41). Do not confuse love and lust!
- C. There are specific, necessary levels in every relationship. Dating is meant to secure people along a spiritual level. An engagement is meant to secure along an emotional level as they begin bonding with each other to form the final, physical level, which is marriage. These levels form a triangle. But most people go about dating and marriage in the opposite way. Dating bonds the physical level and they wait until

marriage to bond spiritually. You cannot set a triangle on its tip and expect it to stay. You cannot do a marriage that way either!

D. A common question among young Christians who date is, "How far can I go?" We have obviously seen that premarital sex is wrong. Does the Bible give us the freedom to act up to that point (Romans 13:13)?

1. The word "wantonness" in the KJV has many other renderings: unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, shamelessness, and filthy. The word can mean filthy words, indecent bodily movements or actions, and the unchaste (or immoral) handling of males and females.
2. It is clear from the definition of "wantonness" that young Christians need to be very careful. If we go beyond kissing, we are in danger of pushing ourselves too far. Young women need to be especially cautious. Once a young man begins to be aroused, it is difficult to get them to stop because the hormones in the body are telling them to go. We would all be safer in dating if we greatly limit our contact with each other. Dating builds a spiritual relationship. If you truly have a biblical love and respect for the person you are dating, you will not put them in a situation where they will sin (Mark 9:42).

**Conclusion.** So many unhappy marriages could have been avoided if people had just listened a little more or followed three simple steps. First, sexual misconduct (whether when we are married or single) is an offense against God (Genesis 39:9). Second, your body is pledged to God as an "instrument of righteousness" (Romans 6:12-13). Finally, the secret to finding a mate in dating is being smart. Follow the advice of scripture and of others who have traveled down that road and you will make a much more intelligent choice. This intelligent choice will help you choose the right mate and live a happy life in Jesus Christ.