

Dating?

IN THE BEGINNING

After God created man in Genesis chapter one, we find that God immediately set out to create a helpmeet for him. Genesis 2:20 says, "And Adam gave names to all the cattle and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him." Thus God begins His plan to bring woman on to the scene as a companion for man. Woman was created from the rib of man (Genesis 2:21,22), and took her God-given place by Adam's side as his wife and help meet. It isn't quite that easy to find a mate today. Since God doesn't create a mate for us, we must do our best to find that "Mr. Right" or "Miss Right" on our own. We do not have the prearranged marriages which were so often seen in Eastern countries where the parents did the picking of the mate and the children went obediently to the marriage altar.

So where is our rule book for selecting a mate? Is there any such book? Unfortunately, no, there is no such book that will conveniently select the perfect soul-mate for life. However, there is a book which will be the most excellent guide that you will ever have; that book is the Bible!

THE PURPOSE OF DATING

Dating or courtship was designed for young people to have an opportunity to become better acquainted with other young folks so they could find out what they had in common and to see whether or not they enjoyed one another's company. If they did, it would be a relationship worth pursuing, the ultimate goal of which would be marriage. Today, many young people do not specifically date with the thought of marriage in mind. However, it is important for those who are dating to realize that **anytime** you are dating, the possibility of

a permanent relationship might occur. People have been known to fall in love even when it is least expected. Therefore we could say that dating is a "prelude to marriage." Keeping this thought in mind, let us consider some other subjects.

DESIRABLE QUALITIES

If we agree that it is possible for one who is dating to fall in love with the one they are courting, then we can logically assume that it is of the utmost importance for a Christian to be dating one who is of like faith. If dating ultimately leads to marriage, what Christian would want to be linked for life to an unbeliever? This is not to say it is sinful to date one who is not a member of the Lord's body, but my question would be, "Why would you want to?" Once we establish that an individual is a Christian what are some other qualities that would be good to have if you were going to spend the rest of your life with someone? Although not specifically named in the Bible as desirable characteristics for potential mates, there are a few qualities every Christian should possess: kindness, a loving nature, patience, unselfishness, humility, gentleness, purity, soberness, sincerely. All of these are Biblical examples of a Christ-like nature. That is what we should gravitate toward — one with a Christ-like nature.

Obviously, we would want to be physically attracted to one who we were about to begin a relationship with. Although physical attraction is not the main criteria for a relationship, it is a very important part as we see in Genesis chapter 29. Jacob loved Rachel; she was beautiful and well-favored, as opposed to Leah being "tender-eyed." Jacob was attracted to Rachel — he loved her. It is very important that couples be attracted to one another.

Once we have reached the point where we have found someone that we wish to date, there are a few rules that need to be followed.

DATING ETIQUETTE

There are a few things that need to be remembered when a couple is dating. Most of them can be summed up in the big word **RESPECT**, but we will try to be a little more specific.

1. Always honor your parents wishes — no matter how ridiculous you think they are! If they tell you to be home at a certain time — **be there**. If they tell you not to go to a certain place — **don't go**.
2. If you are a young man: go up to the door, meet her parents, don't be rude.
3. If you are a young lady: be considerate enough to be ready, on time.
4. Courtesy and kindness demands that you hold doors for her, pull out chairs, treat her like a lady — the same way you would want your mother or sister treated. Boys, always remember your date is someone's daughter or sister. How would you want your mom treated?
5. Girls, act like a lady! Don't embarrass your date by being loud-mouthed or by bossing your date around. He will not appreciate it.
6. Dress appropriately. Discuss ahead of time where you will be going and the appropriate attire. It is very embarrassing to show up under-dressed or over-dressed. Always wear modest apparel (I Timothy 2:9). If you are ever in doubt as to whether you should or should not do something, a good thing to remember is: "Does this violate any Biblical principle?" "Would I be ashamed for Jesus to see me?"

DATING BEHAVIOR

The next and probably the most important message that daters need revolves around the topic of dating behavior. That would be: Places to Go, Things to Do, and Your Physical Conduct.

With regard to places you go: again, it cannot be emphasized too much that you need to remember that you are a Christian. Rated R movies with sexual content, vulgar language

and such are bound to be an embarrassment (hopefully) to both of you. A good rule of thumb: if you wouldn't watch it with your mom or dad, don't take her to see it. If she asks to go, tell her you wouldn't feel comfortable, and suggest another movie, or miniature golf, or something. James 1:27 says, "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." It is difficult to keep oneself unspotted while filling our hearts and minds with lewdness and vulgarities. Beaches, swimming pools, dances, and other places where the dress is skimpy and the body movements are lustful, will only be an enticement to young people. These are not acceptable types of entertainment. They only lead to problems.

Things to do while dating runs right along beside places to go. Again, there are many ways of having fun without putting yourself in a place that will compromise your Christian standards. You should always try your best to fellowship with other Christians. Take advantage of the youth rallies in your area and the skating and Bible camp activities. When it is possible, have another Christian couple go with you — it takes the stress off of a one-on-one relationship, and often you will find you have more fun in a group setting. Go to ball games, miniature golf, bowl, school functions, skate, ice skate. Find out what is available in your local area — perhaps there are even museums or galleries you would both enjoy. Find out each others hobbies and try to cultivate an interest in that area. There are many things that you can find to do that is good, clean fun!

That brings us to physical conduct or displays of affection. As we mentioned before, it is always best to stay with a group of friends or another couple, especially if you feel there will be pressure to become physical with your date. When you are unable to be with others, avoid any compromising situations such as

being alone in a house, un-chaperoned. Allowing yourself to become entangled in an intimate relationship before marriage will only cause pain and heartache. It creates a stressful situation and you will carry the guilt of your sin. Few relationships ever work out that are based upon sex prior to marriage. As a young person it is difficult to try to remain pure as God would have us to be, but it is possible. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Also, I Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it." How comforting it is to know that our Lord has experienced everything we have and can feel what we are feeling. We are not alone! We can overcome our temptations, but we must put forth an effort to do so. The more we resist, the easier it becomes to resist the next time. One of the benefits in dating another Christian is that both of you are struggling together. You will both be trying your best to remain pure. That is why it is so important to choose your dating partners very carefully. Dating is serious business — we need to treat it as such!

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