

"Dating Wisdom"

Series Overview:

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| 4. Dating and the Wife's Ministry | 5. Dating and Sex | 6. Dating and Children |
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I. The Character of the One You Date

- A.** Date only those who demonstrate by life and not just profession that they are following Jesus Christ.
1. Scripture is clear that Christians are only to marry other Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39), but it is also clear that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is (Matthew 7:21-23).
 2. The first indicator one should look to is that individual's commitment to worship with and serve the local church.
 - a. *"There are few more important indicators of a man's spiritual maturity than his frequency in worship with God's people."* --- Richard and Sharon Phillips
 3. The prospective dating partner should also evidence a commitment to personal Bible study (1 Peter 2:2) and prayer (Colossians 4:2) and be demonstrating the fruit of that in a lifestyle of godliness (Galatians 5:22-23).
 4. **DISCUSSION:** What are some practical ways to evaluate another in these areas?
- B.** Though physical attraction is necessary, it is a secondary consideration next to godliness.
1. Especially men must be on guard against making physical beauty too big of a priority in the women they consider as dating prospects (Proverbs 11:22; 31:30).
 - a. *"What really attracts most men are those things on the surface, while those things underneath exert precious little influence."* --- Richard and Sharon Phillips
 2. One who greatly values an individual's godliness will often find that person more physically attractive than they would otherwise.
 - a. *"But the man who has gazed into a Christian woman's heart and there found things of beauty and worth will be sure to look upon her face and find loveliness there as well."* --- R. and S. Phillips
 3. **DISCUSSION:** What things might a woman overvalue instead of godliness?
- C.** In evaluating godly character, the gospel must remind you that this person is still a sinner in process of becoming more like Christ.
1. The doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone has huge implications for the way we relate to others, especially the ones we date and marry.
 - a. Because we are accepted by God as we are through the work of Christ alone, we are to love other Christians the way they are because they too have been accepted by God through the work of Christ alone (Romans 15:5-9).
 - i. A healthy sense of our own sin goes a long way towards being patient with the sins of others. Whatever their sin against us, it is nothing compared to our sin against God (Matthew 18:23-35).
 2. In other words, just because we see some areas of sin in the one we date, this in and of itself is not a cause to break off the relationship.
 - a. The important thing is that this person is aware of the sin and seeking God's grace to put it to death.
 - b. *"The second problem is one that we have had to point out to many a smug, checklist-wielding single – dismayed at the absence of the perfect man or woman. To them we have had to reply, 'You're not such a peach yourself!'"* --- Richard and Sharon Phillips

II. The Character of the Relationship

- A.** From the onset, communicate that you date only with marriage in view.
1. Very early on and, if possible, before the first date, it needs to be clear that you are not interested in merely recreational dating.
 2. The man should take the lead in communicating the goals of the relationship that is being initiated, but if he does not, then the woman should help him by prompting him to do so.
- B.** Appropriate intimacy (i.e. non-sexual) must be preceded by commitment.
1. The pattern of the relationship must be commitment first and then emotional intimacy; the woman should never open her heart to a man who is not clearly establishing the nature of the commitment in their relationship.
 - a. *"There is where perhaps a majority of dating relationship go down the tubes: the man never wants to 'talk about the relationship,' usually because he wants to enjoy the woman's intimacy without the burden of commitment."* --- Richard and Sharon Phillips
 2. As the commitment grows towards marriage, the emotional intimacy can as well.
 3. **DISCUSSION:** What factors lead towards many relationships reversing the order and having intimacy before commitment?

- C. Encouraging one another in Christ should be a major part of the relationship (Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - 1. For Christians, Christ must be the center of every relationship, and especially the marriage relationship. If Christ is not the center of the dating relationship, then you can bet He most likely will not be in the marriage either.
 - 2. The goal should be that even if the dating relationship ends short of marriage, the other individual can honestly say that they grew in their walk with Christ during the time they dated.
- D. Sexual purity of mind and body must be protected (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8) by relating towards one another physically as with a sibling (1 Timothy 5:1-2).
 - 1. There should be no sexual intimacy in the dating relationship (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).
 - a. *"The first thing to say about sex and the single [person] is, there should be none!"* --- Mark Dever
 - 2. Kissing and stroking one another are designed by God to stimulate our bodies and prepare them for sex; one is extremely unwise, and often sinful, who toys around with such things!
 - a. *"All of the things that dating couples engage in physically, short of intercourse, married couples engage in too. The only difference is that the married couple has a name for this activity. They call it foreplay. So while the unmarried couple consoles themselves by saying, 'This is okay, because it is not sex,' the married couple says, 'This is great, because it is part of sex.'"* --- Michael Lawrence
 - 3. **DISCUSSION:** What questions about physical intimacy and dating do you have?
- E. Conversation must be intentional about major topics pertaining to marriage.
 - 1. One of the goals in getting to know the other person is to find out and perhaps even study together concerning the Bible's teaching on such important topics as the purpose of marriage, communication and conflict resolution, the husband's ministry, the wife's ministry, sex in marriage, children, finances, etc.
 - 2. Just because one has a faulty view in an important area does not mean the relationship should be ended at that point. They can study the Bible and good Christian teaching about that issue and perhaps the faulty view will be corrected.
- F. Accountability and prayer from friends and/or church leaders should be sought.
 - 1. We cannot trust ourselves even to stick to our own standards (Hebrews 3:12-13).
 - 2. God has designed us to live in community so that we may help one another to pursue godliness in every area of our lives, especially in regards to relationships (Titus 2:3-5).
 - 3. **DISCUSSION:** Why do you think so few in dating relationships pursue accountability?

III. The Character of the Dates

- A. At first, group dates may be the safest way to get to know one another.
 - 1. This may especially be the case when the two dating have not had much prior opportunity to observe the other's character.
 - 2. A young woman who is invited on a date with a man whom she knows little about would be very wise to suggest and only go out if they do so with others.
 - 3. **DISCUSSION:** What other benefits to group dating at the beginning of a relationship can you think of?
- B. As the relationship progresses, only or mostly group dating can cause problems.
 - 1. First of all, group dating does not typically provide opportunities for meaningful, personal conversation that is necessary as the commitment level grows.
 - 2. There can be some unhealthy relational dynamics, such as jealousy and insecurity, if the dating partners in a group setting give too much attention to a person of the opposite sex other than their dating partner.
- C. The dates should allow for alone time together ONLY in a public setting.
 - 1. Many young couples go wrong here, for they put themselves in situations where they are tempted and have little to no accountability to keep things from going to a place where sinful sexual activity occurs.
 - a. *"To be frank, adult men and women are both sexually tempted when alone with an attractive counterpart of the opposite sex.... A dating couple has no reason to be alone in an apartment, much less the bedroom, especially at tempting times such as the evening hours."* --- Richard and Sharon Phillips
 - 2. Much of our Christian fight to put to death sin starts in being wise in the situations we will not put ourselves in.
 - a. The way God often provides for us to not give into temptation is to flee from it (1 Corinthians 10:13)!
 - 3. **DISCUSSION:** What excuses might some Christians give for this not being realistic? How would you answer them?
- D. The majority of the dates should provide time for meaningful conversation.
 - 1. Though some of the dates should be just about having fun together, the point of the dating relationship is to find someone to marry and this can only come in a godly way through solid communication about important matters.

"Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do [such as date], do all to the glory of God."

--- 1 Corinthians 10:31