

Sex and Dating in the Christian Life

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What is dating? What are some of the reasons for dating? Whom should we date?

What should we do on a date? How far may we go in our touching and kissing? Where do we draw the line? How do we know where to draw the line?

The subject of sexual purity is extremely important. It is not a matter of mere curiosity. It is of eternal importance, because the sexually immoral do not inherit the kingdom of God ([1 Cor. 6:9, 10](#); [Eph. 5:5-7](#))!

The perspective used in this pamphlet for finding the answers to these questions will be, unashamedly, the Bible. This will spare you from having to hear my opinion and about my experiences. And it will spare you from having a standard set for you by a mere human, a standard which might change tomorrow. Not Masters and Johnson, not some "expert," not the prevalent moral standards of two hundred years ago, not even the ideas of your "ancient" parents are to be your standard of morality.

We want an objective standard. We need an objective standard. That objective standard is the Bible. The only rule for faith and life is the Word of God. And this is a rule which applies not only to Sundays, but also to Friday and Saturday nights! It is my goal in this pamphlet to present only what God says in His Word.

Because I intend to make the Scriptures the only standard for our behavior, there are certain things you may take for granted. The first is that I will speak as openly and as frankly about this subject as the Bible does. Not always is this done. Sometimes the church avoids the subject of sex. Some families skip the book of the Song of Solomon in their devotions because it is thought to be too embarrassing. But God's treatment of this subject is open, and the church must be just as open. We must *not* be as open on this subject as the unbelieving world is today. But, on the other hand, we may not, in reaction to the openness of our society, be silent. The Bible will not let us. [1 Corinthians 7](#), [Proverbs 5](#), the book of the Song of Solomon, [Job 31:1](#), [Hebrews 13:4](#), and many other passages speak about the subject openly and frankly. To be faithful to God's Word, the Christian and the church must give due attention to this subject.

Secondly, you may be sure that I will forthrightly declare to you what is sin, and what is therefore forbidden, just as the Bible does. I must call a spade a spade. If God says that it is wrong, I may not fudge, or soften what He says. If I would try to compromise some of the standards we find in the Bible, then I would be untrue to the Bible, and unloving to you. The most loving thing that I can do for you is to make clear what the Bible says you may, should, and must do and what it forbids you to do.

May God guide us to love Him with our all, to adhere to His standard of purity and holiness, and to exercise the fruit of the Spirit: self-control.

Dating

Dating is really of recent origin. It is a development of the past few hundred years in Western culture. That is why the Bible says nothing specifically about dating. But this should not keep us from using the Bible when discussing dating, for the principles which must govern our dating are found in the Bible.

I would define dating as the middle stage in the process of finding a suitable mate. Dating comes between being friends and getting engaged.

Young people often send out conflicting signals about the seriousness of their dating. To their parents they often insist that dating is just "for fun." With their closest of friends, on the other hand, they are more likely to treat dating as pretty serious business. Generally these conflicting signals reflect some of the confusion which they experience within themselves as they deal with and try to understand their own emotions. (And sometimes they may even purposely send out the signal which is most likely to confuse their parents.)

Parents want to respond to both signals. Sometimes they must say that dating is serious business, and other times they may advise that dating should be for fun. Both are true. When young people "fall" quickly head over heels in "love," then their parents counsel, "Take it easy"; "Don't get so involved with just one, look around"; "Date in groups"; "Don't be alone a lot." But when young people say that dating is just for fun and that they may date whomever they want, then parents must say, "Be careful, because dating does lead to marriage." In fact, dating is the only thing that leads to marriage.

Because marriage is the goal of dating, you may not date just anyone. You may not date a person who may not be a lifelong mate. Why would you want to go out with an unbeliever? Why go with someone whom you know you should and could never marry? On the other hand, you may date anyone who is one with you "in the Lord" ([1 Cor. 7:39b](#)).

How ought we to date?

Let me say first that it is wrong to date in order to satisfy one's ego, or to fulfill one's sexual desires. It may be big stuff for a guy to land a date with the school's most popular girl, but dating is not a game to play in jockeying for position on the social ladder. For a serious-minded Christian, there must be higher motivation in deciding whom to ask.

Girls, on the other hand, may be more likely to romanticize dating. Looking for a Romeo to sweep her off her feet, she can begin to idealize dating, hoping to be able to enjoy the kind of totally unrealistic love affairs portrayed in romance novels.

Both perspectives are wrong. Both are opposed to the spiritual perspective of dating, which is objective and God-centered. When dating is selfish or idealistic, then God's Word is placed *under* feelings. But God's Word must govern our feelings and emotions. Sex and dating are not to be separated from Christ's dominion in our life. They are, in reality, part of His dominion, and we must consciously place them *under* His dominion.

This is not to say that being spiritual means there must be no romance. Please take the time to read the following passages of God's Word to learn that the opposite is true: [Song of Solomon 1:2b-4a, 10, 11, 15a](#); and [Genesis 29:20](#). But romance may not rule or dominate ([Gen. 29:31, 35](#)); romantic love does not make any thing legitimate.

Sex

We must have a biblical view of dating, of sex, and of marriage, and we must have a biblical view of purity.

Human sexuality is a most wonderful part of God's creation of man. Consider the fact that Adam and Eve's original holiness is described as unashamed nakedness ([Gen. 2:25](#)). This clearly implies that sexual desires, as part of God's creation, are not to be considered sinful, bad, or dirty. Human sexuality has been created by God. He created it a powerful and mysterious force ([Song of Sol. 8:6, 7](#)). Sexual desires are one of the strongest desires God created. [Proverbs 6:25ff.](#) describes the allure of a beautiful woman as almost irresistible.

But man's fall into sin greatly marred this aspect of God's beautiful creation. Just as Adam and Eve's sinlessness is described as unashamed nakedness, so also is it true that the consciousness of sin came to our first parents through the awareness of their nakedness ([Gen. 3:7](#)). This is God's way of saying that they became totally depraved. Their beautiful sexual powers were subjected to and dominated by sin. When dominated by sin, the sexual desires which God created are called the "lusts of the flesh" ([Rom. 13:14](#); [Gal. 6:16](#)). As a result, sexuality, while in itself good, is often expressed in perverse and wicked ways.

God comes with His law against the sinful use of this aspect of His creation. He forbids adultery in the seventh commandment. He condemns all sexual relations outside of marriage ([Lev. 20:10](#); [I Cor. 6:9](#)). And that prohibition is as relevant today as it was 3,000 years ago. The seventh commandment is not outdated. God does not change.

Whereas man's fall into sin spoiled the sexual desires God had created, God redeemed those desires from shame. God redeemed them for wonderful use within the union of those who marry "in the Lord" ([I Cor. 7:39b](#)). Sex is beautiful, but only in marriage. [Hebrews 13:4](#) declares in plain language, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." The Holy Spirit inspires the apostle to speak just as plainly in [I Corinthians 7:2, 4](#): "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."

Concerning their sexual relationships the third verse of this chapter declares that both the husband and the wife are indebted to each other. Sexual desires and activity are not bad and dirty, but good, and even beautiful and wonderful, in the marriage of a believing husband and a believing wife. On the other hand, all sexual activity outside of the marriage bond is described in the Scriptures for what it is - a grievous sin against oneself, against others, and especially against God. But the fact remains, that the Bible speaks of sexual desires and activity in the marriage relationship as being not only proper but also

good and beautiful. They are especially beautiful when no scars from the past are carried into the bedroom.

God's redemption of sexual desires means that He is as much Lord of them as He is of everything else. The issue is not only one of sexual purity, but also that of the Lordship of God in Christ. The question which constantly needs to be asked and answered is *not* "Who am I?" but "Whose am I?" [1 Corinthians 6:19b](#), 20 teaches that those who have been bought with the blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary are not their own, but His. Additionally, this text emphasizes that what was bought with the blood of Jesus is not only the souls of believers but also their bodies. To Him we belong in body as well as in soul. We are obliged to glorify God in our bodies as well as in our souls.

The Bible teaches that sex is a gift of God, a good gift. He gives this gift, not to be used selfishly or romantically outside of marriage, but to be used and enjoyed properly in marriage. We may not use God's gift any way we please. We must use this gift for Him, in His service.

Effects of Premarital Sex

It is helpful to consider what happens when we disobey God. If we misuse His good gift of sexuality, what are the consequences?

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)).

The girl who violates God's commands concerning sex feels used and cheated. She realizes, too late, that she has "lost" a most precious possession: her virginity. "Lost," however, is not really the right word, because she *gave it away* cheaply. Virginity is a gift God gave her. It is not really hers, but God's, and she is but the steward of it. She is responsible to God for its care. She can give her virginity away only *once*. She can never get it back. She will never be able to give this precious gift to her God-given husband at the proper time.

Today's society says very little about the pricelessness of virginity. To the contrary, television, movies, and romance novels make virginity cheap. They sacrifice it on the altar of "fun." While I am convinced that most girls do prize it, they face many and great temptations to give it away. Some do not want to be considered "odd." Others want the feeling *now*. Many think they can use sex to get love. Many give in to their boyfriend's pleas because they do not want to lose his "love." In every case, however, it is selfishness that has made them violate God's will. And the consequences are irreversible.

The young man also "loses" something when he goes too far before marriage. He also *gives away* a priceless gift, and he does so cheaply. The loss of innocence, through sexual impurity, is as real for the boy as it is for the girl. He may deceive himself into believing that the gratification of the moment will make that loss worthwhile. But he too will find, to his great grief that it does not. For God will not be mocked.

All sexual activity before marriage is entering into a holy of holies in a degrading, base, and profane manner, violating the will of God. And the only reason for rushing so boldly into this holy and beautiful mystery is the selfishness of pride.

Some claim the "right" to premarital sex because they are engaged to be married. They believe that their expressions of commitment to each other make it right for them to violate God's will. But consider the reasons for wanting to go contrary to God's command! Every one of them is wrong: self-gratification, the desire to be loved, the fear of what the partner will think. Can such motives and such action be defended before an open Bible? It is God's will that sex be only *in marriage*. And it is only God who unites two in marriage, using the church and the state to be His means to unite them. A couple is not married merely on the basis of their commitment to each other.

The command of our God is of course sufficient reason to refrain from premarital sex. There is however this added considerations that not always do an engaged couple end up marrying each other. Should they break off their engagement, after engaging in sexual intercourse, they can be sure that, when they do marry, the pleasure of the marriage bed will not be unaffected by the memory of what went before. Sin may deceive us into thinking we can get away with it, but God is not mocked.

Premarital sex always causes scars! Sin leaves scars. And the scars will have an effect on you years later. In the passion of the moment, you do not think about the implications and consequences which reach far beyond that moment. You do not want to think about the consequences. But this sin makes a searing cut, which always leaves a scar. You cannot violate the command of God concerning something so wonderful, and not be hurt by it. Sexual relationships many years later, with the husband and with the wife you love so dearly, are going to be affected by the illicit and immoral sexual activity which took place before you were married. I might add that many have been the counseling sessions with those whose improper sexual activity before marriage was with the one they did later marry. They judge each other, they blame each other, or they are plagued in conscience. When will we realize that God will not be mocked? We will reap what we sow! Sin leaves scars.

There can be healing from the wound which sin causes, but there will always be a scar. This scar will be removed only when we receive our resurrection bodies. Please consider the scars you will cause, for yourself and for the one you love, before you rush into intimacy before God permits it.

God's Answer

He who created sexual desires and who redeemed them from being only powerful lusts of the flesh is also gracious in providing us a way of escape from the guilt and tyranny of lust. There is hope for those who have already violated God's pure gift of virginity. There is hope for those who desire to maintain the gift of purity which God gave them. There is hope for those who feel that the power of sex is out of control in their lives.

This comforting hope of Divine healing is not for all. It is only for those with heartfelt sorrow and for those with an earnest desire to do God's will.

First, God's healing is the power of His sovereign grace to remove the guilt of sin. Grace is the power which delivers from the filth of our sinful flesh. We may not be able to get our virginity back (even as we cannot remove a hole after pulling out the nail), but we receive God's gracious forgiveness. Immorality is not a sin which cannot be forgiven. Sexual sins and temptations are to be treated as all other sins and temptations - they are to be confessed, repented of, and forsaken. The prayer for God's forgiveness and for God's grace to walk in holiness must be lifted up to Him. Then there may be the assurance of His gracious forgiveness. And He forgives completely. When He forgives, the sin is gone forever, never again to be brought against the sinner. As ugly as the sin is, forgiveness is more beautiful, and grace makes us beautiful before God.

We cannot retrieve our virginity, but we can retrieve our chastity and our purity before God. When God forgives, then He gives us a perfect righteousness. It is as if we had never sinned. It is as if we only did every thing right. Therefore we hide ourselves under the wings of the righteousness and holiness which Jesus earned for us and which God imputes and imparts to us. Then we may be sure that we stand before God in *pure, white* robes, and we are called "Holy unto the Lord." Virginity is a precious gift, but an even more precious gift is forgiveness.

Secondly, the Spirit of Christ brings, with complete forgiveness and perfect righteousness, the healing power of deliverance from sin's power along with the spiritual gift of self-control (called "temperance" in [Galatians 5:23](#)). Sexual energies and desires, no matter how strong, are controllable. As powerful as they may be, they can be controlled, for the power that is for us is greater than the power that is against us. The Bible teaches that we are not helpless before these lusts. It is Christ, to whom is given power over heaven and earth, who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). It is the divine Spirit whose fruit is self-control. We can therefore break with sinful self-indulgence.

We are called not simply to maintain but also to develop Spirit-filled self-control. Jesus spoke of those who were eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake ([Matt. 19:12](#)). He spoke of self-control and self-denial for the sake of God's glory. And He declared that any man who would follow Him must practice self-denial ([Matt. 16:24](#)), just like the Master, whose supreme Self-denial brought about the salvation of sinners.

There are sins against which believers are commanded to stand and fight. But the only way the Bible says we are to fight sexual sin and temptation is to "flee" it ([I Cor. 6:18](#)). Consider how Joseph *fled* from Potiphar's wife. This temptation is the kind that cannot be faced head-on. Will-power and resolutions do not stand a chance before this sin in particular. It is too strong. To think that we can be "brave" and stand up to this sin, is to be the fool. The only way to be faithful to God in regard to this sin is to flee it. The admonition to "flee fornication" has the clear implication that we must not over-estimate our self-control or our spirituality. That is why we are admonished to "make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof" ([Rom. 13:14](#)). To control sexual desires, we must realize the importance of avoiding situations where we know we will be tempted by the wiles of the devil. To control sexual desires one needs more wisdom than Solomon, for Solomon fell often to this temptation.

One way not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts while dating is to "be alone with others, never all alone." Date along with others. Also stay away from every form of pornography - it is not "harmless."

Another way to fight the temptation of this sin is by making a commitment, before we date, to be pure. This means that you must draw the line as to how far you will go. You need to draw a line before you date, because of how powerful the Bible tells us physical attraction is. We cannot have developing romantic love without having increasing desire for consummation. We are fools to deny this. It is abnormal to become more and more intimate mentally and emotionally and not want to become more and more intimate physically and sexually. You are playing with fire if you keep getting closer and closer together when you are not ready to marry. We need to draw the line before we date, because wavering at the beginning often results in our falling in the end.

You can stop what you are doing. If what has been written in this pamphlet pricks your conscience, then realize that you can stop what you are doing by putting the relationship in submission to God. Do not think that God wants to deprive you of something that is good for you. Real love will say, "No! I will not go further!" Real love restrains and controls sexual desires until God says, "Yes."

Motivation

Some motivations for not having sex before marriage are wrong. They can be just as wrong as having sex before marriage. One such wrong motivation is fear: fear of being found out, fear of pregnancy, fear of a disease, fear of the opinions of others.

One proper motivation for doing God's will is love of our neighbor. The neighbor we are to love as ourselves can be our neighbor's daughter. Also, your neighbor can be one who will be your wife. And your neighbor is your parents or your future wife's parents, both of whom would be hurt terribly when your sin is discovered.

But the main motivation is the love of God. Love God for the salvation He has so freely given. Love God for all things, including the sexual desires He has given. Submit your sexuality, along with everything else you are and have, to Him. Let your love for Him drive you to strive to please Him in all of your conduct, including your conduct on a date.

Conclusions

I have no desire to give you a list of rules. Law only provokes to more sin ([Rom. 7:5, 8](#)).

Rather, I will leave you to the custody of the guidelines and thoughts of the Word of God as we have just written about them. You, in light of the Bible, must judge whether you are misusing God's wonderful gift of sexual desires.

Do not forget that the woman or the man whom you lust after in your heart (called adultery in [Matthew 5:28](#)) may be the one you are dating!

You can come to your wedding night without ever having kissed, and not lose one thing. Many have lost much who kissed on the first date and kept going from there!

By the grace of God, hold fast to the teaching, the warnings, and the admonitions of God's Word. Strive to be pure as the Lord your God is pure. Purity or chastity is losing your life (your desires) for Jesus' sake, and having the promise of finding them ([Matt. 16:25](#)). Be willing to lose your life (a life of sexual satisfaction before marriage) for the sake of Christ your Savior.

God made your body, and in it He gave you the gift of virginity. And He gave you His Son to redeem you soul *and body*, both of which are not yours, but His ([1 Cor. 6:19, 20](#)). The gift of your virginity can be given away only once. Keep it for your God-given mate. And believe God's promise of joy and fulfillment.

Great will your reward be in heaven.

Note: Downloaded articles from the PRCA website