

# Dating Principles

## 1. Dating understood biblically

The Bible doesn't have a category for dating. In other words, there is no explicit biblical instruction with regards to the how, what, why, or when of dating. In biblical terms someone is either "single" (unmarried) or married (Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:8-10). Apart from the category of being married, there is the period of engagement which precedes marriage, and Scripture does refer to this. According to Jewish tradition breaking off the betrothal was just as serious as divorce (Mat. 1:18-19). However, in modern times, even engagement or betrothal does not constitute as being officially wed (1 Cor. 7:25-28).

## 2. The purpose for "getting to know someone" romantically

The purpose for any romantic interaction between a guy and a girl should be intentionally aimed toward marriage, and for no other reason. All other reasons are not legitimate reasons for romantic interaction of any kind, whatever name society has for it, whether "dating," "going steady," and the like (1 Cor. 7:36-38). Someone either has the gift of singleness or not. However, not very many people in the church have this gift and statistics support this (1 Cor. 7:6). For this reason, the dating relationship should be "intentional." Again, there is no other reason to be dating than to explore the possibility of marriage. Sadly, the world has falsely created the notion that people can date for other reasons than pursuing marriage. In the eyes of the world, marriage has become passé or archaic and for this reason many have rejected the institution and God's requirements for it altogether. Christians cannot think this way. We cannot go about our dating relationships as if dating is the end goal. Marriage should always be the goal. Dating is merely the vehicle that allows us to determine the possibility of marriage.

## 3. Who is ready to date?

This is an important question to answer, and perhaps one that many who "think they are ready" have not yet thought through biblically. Answering this question wrongly could mean the difference between a successful "getting to know each other romantically" period prior to marriage, or one that is ostensibly disastrous. Without sounding clichéd, one can only date someone romantically once *mentally*, *physiologically*, and *emotionally* ready.

**Mentally:** Understanding that the interaction between you and a potential spouse is to determine whether you and this person can be married. The question that the dating relationship seeks to answer is "Is there the potential for marriage here?" If you cannot answer this question in the affirmative, you should not be dating. This is not an experiment in "compatibility," as the world does — something that can last forever and not necessarily lead to marriage. Rather, it is the calculated and purposeful attempt at a romantic relationship with the knowledge that it is to get to know the person more and determine whether it would be a good judgment call to continue the relationship. To arrive at this point, one should know enough about oneself to have some idea of where your God -informed desires lie, i.e. what you want to do with your life, gifts, and talents. This is particularly true for the man in the relationship, as the Lord looks to him to lead his wife and family (Eph. 5:22 -24). For the girl this would mean knowing that the Lord will require of you to submit to your husband-to-be when you are married one day (Eph. 5:22).

**Physiologically:** Some physiological changes are obvious signs that a person is getting ready to pursue marriage. This does not mean that thirteen-year-olds should be dating, but it does point to the fact that things are steadily moving in that direction. Physiological changes start to occur in boys and girls to get them ready to participate in the joys of sexual union within the confines of marriage. Just think Song of Solomon and the normal physiological progression that is commonplace (Song of Solomon 8:8).

**Emotionally:** Not everyone that looks ready for dating, is actually ready for it. The physical side, which is definitely a factor, does not by default indicate that someone is ready. Many who look the part, are actually not ready for it. For Christians seeking a marriage partner, they have to be emotionally ready to deal biblically with the ups and downs a relationship can bring. They must also be able to deal with the “normal” expectations that are involved in getting married, like the desire for children, for instance (Ps. 127:3). Often a guy will betray his true emotional maturity to the way he responds to a discussion about children. A girl might do the same if she has “fairy tale” inspired expectations in marriage, or if she is in the relationship just for the sake of convenience. A decent level of emotional stability is a definite requirement for a dating relationship, which in turn, becomes exercise for handling the tests that could come along in marriage. A good deal of biblical realism here goes a long way. Emotionally one should be able to process and work with the fact that you yourself are a sinner who is trying to pursue marriage with another sinner (Rom. 3:23).

#### **4. Who am I allowed to date?**

To answer this question, it is necessary to answer the same question, only as it applies to marriage. Remember, as Christians we may only marry in the Lord. This is not optional.

##### **a. Who may I marry?**

The Bible makes no ‘ifs’ or ‘buts’ about it, a Christian is only allowed to marry another Christian.

The apostle Paul made this quite clear in his first letter to the Corinthians when he instructed them in the following way:

*“<sup>39</sup>A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (Also see 1 Cor. 9:5).*

But this is not merely something that is prohibited by Paul. The Bible also issues a strict prohibition against the marrying of unbelievers in the Old Testament.

Genesis 24 conveys that Abraham went through much trouble to ensure that Isaac marries a believer, namely, Rebekah.

In Genesis 27:46–28:9, we see Rebekah and Isaac’s disgust at the thought of Jacob marrying an unbelieving Hittite woman. To prevent this from happening, Isaac instructed Jacob to travel to Rebekah’s family and seek a spouse from his uncle Laban. This is where he met believing Rachel.

One last example in Genesis is found in chapter 34. Here Hamor suggested the intermarrying of Jacob’s sons and daughters with his own sons and daughters. The refusal of this proposition was yet again based on the requirement to marry only in the Lord.

Under the law of Moses, the Israelites were repeatedly warned against the consequences of marrying unbelievers. For instance:

During the conquest of Canaan, the Lord issued strict laws against intermarrying with those who do not worship Him. Once in Canaan, the Israelites would not be allowed to intermarry with the various Canaanite tribes, again because of their false religion:

*“<sup>2</sup> and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. <sup>3</sup> You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly” (Deut. 7:2-4).*

This command from the Lord is repeated in the book of Joshua, where the Lord says to Israel:

*“<sup>12</sup> For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, <sup>13</sup> know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.” (Joshua 23:12-13).*

We also find examples of the negative impact unlawful marriages have had in the lives of the kings. Solomon’s heathen wives became a snare to him as they turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:3). Jezebel became a snare to Ahab (1 Kings 16-19).

True biblical repentance was even on one occasion signified by breaking from unbelieving wives (Ezra 9-10). On the other hand, when a woman of a heathen tribe embraced the God of Israel there was no prohibition on marrying her (this was certainly the case with Moses and Zipporah [Ex. 2:21], Salmon and Rahab [Matt. 1:5], and Boaz and Ruth [Ruth 1:16])

Weighing the evidence: This alone should be convincing evidence that anyone attempting to marry an unbeliever cannot evade. To marry an unbeliever is not only wrong in God’s eyes, but it is also foolish.

### **b. Who may I date?**

For this reason, it would also hold true that we can only date in the Lord. Some might be quick to say that there is no direct biblical commandment that prohibits dating an unbeliever, and this may be true. However, if you cannot marry the person then it stands to reason that you cannot date the person. It would also hold true if you are wilfully pursuing a path that leads to that which is sinful — i.e. marrying an unbeliever — that such behaviour would also be sinful.<sup>1</sup>

2 Cor. 6:14-15 is a passage that has been criticised as not teaching against marrying or dating an unbeliever:

*“<sup>14</sup> Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?”*

Granted, this passage does indeed teach that Christians must break from the world, and in that sense, not have fellowship with it. However, the marriage relationship is by nature one that is about fellowship. For this reason, you can only fellowship with a fellow believer in this relationship. In dating the same holds true. You cannot fellowship with an unbeliever on a level that seeks to determine the possibility of marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> Listen to John Piper’s explanation of this: <https://youtu.be/VqWgUd1015c>

### **c. What about a Christian from another church?**

Someone might ask, “but what if someone is truly saved but they don’t understand the Bible exactly the way we do at our church?”

This is an important question. In order to answer it, let’s start by saying that when it comes to the task of exploring who you can marry (i.e. dating), you would have to seek someone to date that is doctrinally as close to your understanding of Scripture as possible. Why is this important? Well, you have to think about where you will end up serving in a church. If there are significant differences between you and your marriage interest now it will affect your ability to worship in the same church. Once children are in the picture it could confuse them if mom and dad are not seeing eye to eye when it comes to their understanding of the Scriptures.

However, not every single doctrinal disagreement is worth breaking fellowship over. For centuries, likeminded believers have been able to fellowship together, albeit with their difference. The reason they could do this is because they saw a difference between essentials and non-essentials. When considering a spouse for marriage there is no way you can budge on essential doctrines, like Jesus is God, we are all sinners, Jesus is the only Saviour, things like that. But there are indeed some things that we do not have to be so particular over, like the kinds of musical instruments we use during singing, or the kinds of songs that we sing.

This said, in marriage you would want to get things as close as possible. There are some differences out in Christianity today that are significant enough to merit consideration before marriage. Someone you are interested in might be saved without a doubt, but they might be in a church that encourages things that are simply not scriptural, like speaking in tongues, ongoing prophecy, health-wealth-and-prosperity, carnal Christianity, etc.

If you were to pursue a relationship with someone who is not just convinced over the truthfulness of what they have been taught in their church, but actually desires to have these experiences, you might find yourself regretting it later if you marry this person. Paul’s instruction to “marry in the Lord only” could in this regard have a further application to the kinds of false doctrines being proclaimed in some churches today. You cannot really marry in the Lord in good faith if the person you are interested in believes things about the Bible and God that are obviously not consistent with what the Scriptures teach, even if the person understood the gospel and as a result became saved.

Rather, aim to get things as similar as possible. Aim to get them as close as possible. Most solid churches within reformed-evangelical circles have a level of fellowship among them. This means that if you cannot find someone in your home church, chances are you will be able to meet other like-minded believers in other churches who believe the same about God and the Bible, all the while committing your desire for a spouse to the Lord in prayer (Matt. 6:8).

### **5. What should I be looking for in a potential spouse?**

Apart from the fact that one can only date “in the Lord,” this does not mean that it is always recommended that we should be willing to date “anyone in the Lord.” Here’s an example of what is meant by this:

*Example:*

Let’s say Sylvia has been saved for a few years and in these years has grown from being a baby Christian, who once had an appetite for spiritual milk (1 Cor. 3:2a), to a mature Christian who has been feasting on the solid “meat” (1 Cor. 3:2b) of doctrine and has faithfully given

expression to it in her life for a number of years. People would even commend her for her spiritual growth over the years (Rom. 6:12-13; Eph. 4:7-24; Gal. 2:20) and have witnessed how she responded to the trials the Lord brought her way in these years (Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Stephen is a new convert who joined Sylvia's church a month ago. It is clear that he is saved without a doubt as there is a massive difference between his unsaved life and his life as a confessing Christian. Like Sylvia, his zeal for the Lord is also to be commended (Acts 17:11). His zeal notwithstanding, he is however still immature in the faith in many ways. Unlike Sylvia, Stephen has not yet experienced a good dose of testing as a Christian. The two eventually embark on a dating relationship that seems good to them. Although they are honouring the Lord, guarding their purity, Stephen's immaturity and lack of patience under trial soon becomes apparent to Sylvia's small group leader who eventually encourages them to put the relationship on hiatus.

The point with the example above is that someone might appear ready and fit for a dating relationship when in reality, they are not yet ready to date a certain person. One might be ready to date, but referring to the example above again, although Stephen was ready to pursue someone romantically, he was not ready to date Sylvia because he could not yet be a good spiritual leader to her, which is something God expects if they should eventually get married (Eph. 5:22-30).

A Biblical example:

It seems evident from the book of Ruth that Boaz had no reservations to eventually take Ruth as his wife because he knew about her "tested" character (Ruth 2:10-13).

So here follows some "check lists" which should help you decide whether you can pursue a relationship with someone or not. Let's frame them as questions that you can ask about the person and about yourself. Please note, this is not an ungracious and sinful "inspection" of a brother or sister in the Lord which leads to contempt. Rather, it is a way of helping one "estimate" whether a relationship would be successful or not, as far as is humanly possible. So here follows firstly an "external" check list that will help you to know what to look for in a girlfriend or boyfriend (i.e. potential spouse). After this follows an "internal" check list which should help you to know what you should be striving to be like in order to be "date-able:" "

### ◆ **External Checks**

\*\*Do note that these are in effect measures of character. Asking these questions should help you to determine the character of the person you are thinking about dating. \*\*

#### √ **Habits**

#### **Do they have good PRACTICES in their lives?**

Does the person seek to die to sin and grow in Christlikeness (Rom. 6)? Or do they seem alarmingly unsanctified for a potential spouse? Are they seeking communion with the Lord through personal study and prayer (Ps. 27:8)? Do they constantly seek ministry opportunities in church (Gal. 5:13)? Or do they only do the minimum in order not to be suspected for a lack of zeal?

### √ **Company**

#### **What kind of COMPANY does the person entertain?**

Do they love to be with the children of God (Heb. 10:24-25)? Or is it a “chore” for them to join the saints on a Sunday morning? Do they delight in sinners (this could include their media habits, i.e. T.V. shows, movies, music, social media, etc.)?

### √ **Communication**

#### **What does the person TALK about most?**

Do they like to talk about the Lord and ministry? Or do they like to mostly talk about other things? Do they speak highly of others (Phil. 2:3)? Or are they mostly seeing the failures of others? Do they like to talk about themselves and their own achievements? Or do they come across as genuinely humble in their communication?

### √ **Desires**

#### **What do they ENVISION for their lives?**

Are they in pursuit of mostly worldly things (1 Jn. 2:15-17)? Or do they seek the things which are above (Matt. 6:19-21)? Do they desire to build a family, i.e. have children (Gen. 1:28)? Would a potential wife be happy in full time ministry? On what do they spend their money (this can point back to “appearance”)?

### √ **Appearance**

#### **How does the person DRESS?**

Are they dressing to impress people or the Lord (1 Pet. 3:4-6)? Do they appear careless about what they dress in?

### √ **Likes/Dislikes**

#### **Can you live with their PREFERENCES?**

Financial, social, domestic, culinary, physical,.....etc.? In summary, “is the person undoubtedly saved, passionately living for Christ and his bride, the church, seeking to serve Christ by serving the church, and living every day in light of the coming kingdom?”<sup>2</sup>

### ◆ **Internal Checks**

But here’s a look at you. What should you be asking yourself about your eligibility to be someone’s marriage interest? That’s why it’s important to have some **internal checks**.

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<sup>2</sup> Think In terms of Jonathan Edwards’ “Resolutions.” See: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/resolutions-jonathan-edwards/>

√ Every “external” check mentioned above

### HOW DO “I” MODEL THESE QUALITIES that I impose on a potential love interest?

There’s no use letting yourself off the hook here, at least, not if you are going to do unto others as you would want to be done to you (Matt. 7:5; Lk. 6:31). Looking at yourself and being honest, can you say that you are modelling these traits?

√ **Effort**

#### Are you willing to give **MAXIMUM EFFORT AND BEYOND** even?

Here’s the godly characteristic that is being highlighted at this juncture: God expects of Christians to outdo one another in the doing of good, honouring one another (Rom12:10). As can be expected, this quality would be essential in any dating relationship. This is where we could be like Christ in another’s life who certainly modelled it in His relationship with His disciples (Jn. 13:12-17).

In summary, *“Are you actively seeking a spouse while constantly watching your own character before the Lord?”*

Just to clarify! Anytime a dating relationship has been approached sensibly and biblically, it could be seen as “successful” whether it ends in marriage or not. If you are being careful in your application of biblical principles in your search for a dating relationship, and the maintaining of a dating relationship, it will be a successful, God honouring relationship, whether it leads to marriage with a particular person or not.

### 6. How long should I date a person before I can get married?

It should stand to reason that because a dating relationship should be purposefully heading for marriage, marriage should become a reasonably attainable goal in the short term, not the long term.

Too many singles today, even in the church, are being influenced by the media and their peers to view “dating” as the long-term relationship and not marriage. Statistically speaking, some might even be dating their eventual spouse longer than what they would end up being married to them—until it leads to divorce. Sad but true.

When it comes to dating, we cannot take our cues from the world. The world sees marriage as a yoke and not a blessing. For this reason, the longer they can delay the better. Some have even distanced themselves from marriage altogether.

In another sense the world advises its “young and single” to take forever in the making of a decision about who to commit to. They especially don’t want their kids to make the same mistakes as them. They wrongly coach them that they have to have all measures of earthly security in order before getting married. This forces more and more single twenty-somethings to become single thirty-somethings. Sadly, many Christians have bought these lies about marriage.

So, here’s why Christians pursue marriage at a steady pace:

**\*\*Bear in mind, the obvious reasons of companionship (Gen. 2:18-23), procreation (Gen. 1:22), and generally glorifying God through it (Eph. 5:22-33) is assumed. \*\***

## **Steadily pursuing marriage:**

### **i. As an antidote against LUST**

It should be comforting news to learn that since God intended sexual interaction only for marriage, He also allowed for marriage to be pursued to guard against sexual lust. Paul taught on this in 1 Cor. 7:9:

“<sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

### **ii. As an antidote against DEFRAUDING someone**

To defraud someone means to deceive a person. In dating one has to be especially cautious of “defrauding” the other person by creating certain expectations based on one’s behaviour, and then not follow through with it. I am not advocating that it is not possible to call a dating relationship off. I am neither advocating “settling” for whoever.

However, I am warning against those who earn themselves a reputation as a “perpetual dater” who never commits to anyone in marriage.

Even Christians can become a “prisoner” to this kind of behaviour for a litany of reasons. Some typical responses might include:

“I just wish I could find that person that I am really attracted to.”

Or,

“I’m not in a hurry. I want a “next level” godly wife one day.”

Sadly, some delay and delay because they keep chasing after a perfect marriage partner that will never arrive. In other words, a good dose of knowing your own weaknesses and shortcomings would help to get you steadily on course for marriage sooner than you might think.

## **7. By what criteria should our physical contact be governed?**

Physical attraction is normal between two people who are exploring the possibility of marriage. More accurately it is a very necessary component for any future marriage (Song of Solomon 1:9-11; 4:1-16; 7:1). It is strictly prohibited in marriage to deny your spouse his or her conjugal rights (1 Cor. 7:3-5). But as dating is involved, we must not confuse physical attraction with physical gratification. Although physical attraction is a necessary component in marriage, sexual gratification of any type is always prohibited before marriage.

This is the main reason that those who plan to date should do so with some precautionary (governing) measures in place with regards to the level of physical contact they will allow during their dating relationship.

This is extremely important in light of the assumed physical attraction that already exists between two people who are already dating or still considering getting to know each other.

There are three broad principles that would help you to know how the Lord would expect of his children to conduct themselves “physically” in the “getting to know each other” phase called dating.

### **i. God commands us to be a 100% without LUST**

Paul reminded the Ephesians about this when he said:



“<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

In other words what Paul is saying is that, of all people, Christians should be known for their commitment to be morally pure before the Lord. Although they can indeed commit sins that are commonplace among unbelievers (think David’s sin with Bathsheba [2 Sam. 11]), they are still called to a high standard. And the standard is: Lust must not even be named among us.

The NIV brings out the gravity of what Paul says:

“<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”

This passage forbids any form of lust, even the kind that we “think about” and do not necessarily give expression to in practice. What Paul says here is on par with what the Lord Jesus taught in (Matt. 5:28).

“<sup>27</sup> You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Bringing this back to dating, God expects of us to conduct our dating relationships with no hint of lust among us. However, some go about the dating relationship compromising on this. They falsely convince themselves that their physical contact is innocent when in fact they have to struggle really hard not to keep “lusting” after more in their hearts.

Here are some tough and candid questions you have to answer:

1. Do you secretly wish the other person would make the first move with a specific form of physical contact? This includes anything below the belt as well.
2. Do you make certain physical advances convincing yourself and the other person it is okay?
3. Do you try to imagine what the person would look like naked?
4. What are some of the obvious ways in which your physical interaction has gone too far?

If this describes you, you have already been ill-disciplined in your approach to physical contact in dating.

Many get themselves in this situation because they suggest and accept a level of physical contact in their relationship which they think will not cause them to lust when the contrary is actually true.

Solomon has precious advice in this regard. He warns his son against that which is sexually forbidden after describing the potential “power” that lust can have on a person, in this case on a young man:

*“<sup>8</sup> Keep your way far from her,  
and **do not go near the door of her house,**  
<sup>9</sup> lest you give your honour to others  
and your years to the merciless...”*

In dating one cannot physically go “near the door” of that which is forbidden. One cannot play on the precipice of lust. Rather one must be resolute to:

*“**make no provision** for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 13:14).*

The Greek word for “provision” carries the idea of planning ahead or being organised. If you are going to be serious about physically honouring the Lord in your relationship, then you will have to plan ahead and be open about your temptations. This would mean that you would have to “lay the law” as it involves

what you will allow physically. It starts with the understanding that if God does not allow a hint of lust, then he likewise does not allow any sexual gratification before marriage.

## ii. God forbids any sexual gratification before marriage

To be sure, sex is exclusively meant for the marriage relationship between a man and a woman. However, this would also mean that everything which leads to this union and that is of sexual nature is also only meant for marriage. Not everyone might be sexually aroused and stimulated by hand holding, but some might be. The same applies to sitting tightly next to the person, hugs, pecks on the cheek or lips, etc. The point is, you have to determine what kind of contact stimulates you sexually, and you have to be honest about that.

Randy Alcorn explains it well when he says:

*“There is a continuum of physical contact that begins with things like sitting close and handholding on the near side and moves to sexual intercourse on the far side. In between might be an arm around the shoulder, a brief hug, a kiss on the cheek, a kiss on the mouth, a longer hug, prolonged kissing, fondling, etc. Scripture does not spell out exactly what “intermediate” behavior is permissible, but one thing is certain—the line must be drawn before either of you becomes sexually stimulated. This means that fondling—and anything else that results in a “turn on”—is forbidden.*

*If one of you begins to be stimulated even by an apparently innocent physical contact, then both of you should back off immediately. If you don’t back off, you are choosing to stay on a canoe headed toward a waterfall. This is not just wrong, it’s stupid. (Those who allow their minds to dwell on what’s immoral and who engage in sexual stimulation together shouldn’t be surprised when they have sexual intercourse. It’s simply the natural result of the choices they’ve made. If you want a different outcome, you must make different choices.)” – Guidelines for Sexual Purity (2010).<sup>3</sup>*

The main point yet again is that no sexual gratification, none whatsoever, is allowed this side of the marriage covenant. This means that if something as innocent as handholding stirs you sexually, you should refrain from it.

You must understand that you are vulnerable to this at this stage of your life. You might think you are immune to it but in reality, you are not. Again, David is described as “the apple of God’s eye,” (Ps. 17:8), yet he failed so miserably morally speaking.

Here are some good Scriptural warnings in this regard:

*“<sup>18</sup> Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” - Prov. 16:18*

*“<sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” - 1 Cor. 10:12*

*“<sup>1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” - Gal. 6:1*

Some practical questions to ask yourself:

1. Is my choice of dress tempting to the person I am dating?
2. Does the person I am dating know that certain clothing is tempting to me?
3. Are we spending too much time together alone?

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Jan/28/guidelines-sexual-purity/>

4. Are we spending time alone when we are tired?
5. What measures do we have in place when visiting out of town together? Does the person I date have their own courters to sleep in far away from sexual temptation, or are we forced to be in close proximity and to be tempted sexually?
6. Do we smooch?
7. Do we sleep on the same bed, for example., a Sunday afternoon nap?

If you are honest with yourself, how you answer the questions above determines the level to which you are already being sexually aroused in your relationship, and therefore sinning.

### iii. God commands us to treat a romantic interest as a brother or sister in Christ (Luke 6:31 “Do unto others...”)

This principle involves the basic assumption of self-love. Jesus said, “do unto others as you would want done to yourself.” Jesus assumed that there is naturally a level of love and care that people have and expect for themselves (Paul did the same when talking about a husband’s love for his wife [Eph. 5:28]). No one walks through a supermarket and picks all the rotten and expired fruit for themselves. No, naturally they would pick the nice ones. And this is our Lord’s point exactly. We should treat others as we treat ourselves.

How does this apply to dating? Well, since we are to love one another and care for one another in Christ, we are also to treat our dating partners **as we would like someone else to treat them**. This is where the sibling principle applies. Tim Challies explains it in this way:

First, find a scriptural basis for purity. And many people find it in different places. I think it’s helpful to go to 1 Timothy and to just see Paul’s breakdown there of “treat younger women as sisters, older women as mothers in absolute purity”. So that gives us this breakdown of, if she’s not your wife, she’s either your sister or your mother. So, until you’re actually married, then she becomes your wife and then you can relate to her as a wife, which includes, of course, a sexual relationship. Until that stage, you must treat her as a mother, treat her as a sister. And of course, you would never commit any kind of sexual deed with a mother or sister. You’d treat them with absolute purity. So, use that basis, find other things in scripture that just lay down the challenge. And don’t assume that you’ll be the one couple or the one person who never struggles in this way.<sup>4</sup> - What’s Wrong with Christian Dating;  
<https://www.challies.com/vlog/whats-wrong-with-christian-dating/>

Challies gives sound advice. A good question that would lead you to understand this concept is asking yourself: “Am I treating her in such a way that I can say to a brother in the Lord who dates her after me that I have treated her like a sister?” Or do you have two sets of standards? Do you expect other people to treat him or her in the right way while you in reality are taking liberties with them?

Some forms of physical contact would not allow you to uphold this principle, even if you say that you can do it without lust in your heart, which, if you are honest enough, can be seriously doubted. For instance, open mouth kissing for extended periods at a time is simply not right for people who are only dating. Why? Number one, it would be virtually impossible to do it without lust in your heart. By nature, it is sexually arousing. Number two, it would be a disregard of the current principle of brotherly love, and doing unto others as you would want done to yourself.

Think about it: Someone saying about a previous love interest to someone who is now dating him. “Hey sister, he’s one eager kisser.” After all, this kind of comment would not be unloving if our physical

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<sup>4</sup> What’s Wrong with Christian Dating; <https://www.challies.com/vlog/whats-wrong-with-christiandating/>

contact was above reproach. But the point is it is not above reproach and therefore adds to the reprehensibility of such a remark. Awkward in the least, preventable at best...

Again, the question is:

“What am I physically doing in my relationship right now that I wouldn’t want someone to do to my guy or girl if they were in a relationship with them before me?”

### **8. Thinking evangelistically when you date**

This does not mean “missionary dating” is ever right. You can never date an unbeliever with the hope of converting him or her to Christ. The “date only who you can marry” principle is not at all threatened by this. So, what then is meant by “think evangelistically” when you date? Simply stated, what it means is that your relationship with a prospective spouse should also be reflective of the gospel as your other relationships should be. In other words, you should be an example of Christ in the lives of others as you go about your dating relationship. Your example should be one that encourages people and draws them to serve Christ more earnestly, not one that repels them.

### **9. Conclusion**

God has spoken: “He who finds a wife, finds a good thing.” The Lord is also committed to the holiness of His people: “... as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” This is not optional. Rather, the Lord Jesus sternly threatens us, “repent... If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” May eternity loom large in our minds as we pursue marriage. Let’s resolve that the glory of God be our aim.