

Teenage Dating: How Close is too Close?

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Introduction:

- A. Dating is a precursor to marriage and the family, and therefore it is important
 - 1. None of the problems that arise in marriage, save infidelity, can be solved by ending the marriage. You are bound for life.
 - 2. Most of the problems that arise in marriage are discernable in the dating process. Roland Lewis, Home and Family professor at FC used to say, "Don't marry someone you can't live without; marry someone you can live with."
 - 3. However, the Bible does not discuss dating. But neither does it discuss marriage ceremonies, honeymoons, receptions, or any other matter that is based on local customs and social expectations
 - a. Romantic marriage is a relatively recent practice
 - b. For most of history and in much of the world today, marriages are arranged
 - c. Yet our custom is the romance based engagement governed by the dating process
 - d. And even though the Bible does not specifically name it, it does teach principles that guide every Christian in moral conduct

I. COURTSHIP IN BIBLE DAYS

- A. During Bible times, the choice of a bride was usually made by the relatives or a friend appointed by the bridegroom. Sometimes consent of the maiden was sought, but even then, it appears to have been subordinate to the previous consent of the father and adult brothers - Gen. 24:51, 34:11
- B. In America, it is not uncommon that dating starts when the girl is fourteen to sixteen, she makes all her decisions about dating, and is often engaged or married at eighteen. There is too often little advice or supervision from parents requested or offered.

II. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE DURING DATING

- A. Modern dating has many attendant problems, especially for the young at a time when hormonal activity is extremely high.
 - 1. Dating is often a time of sexual danger and temptation.
 - 2. Virginity should be valued, but it is often lost during dating. Great care should be taken in being alone, surroundings, and general influences.
- B. The boy/girl or man/woman should be primarily aware of and focused on substantive, spiritual qualities. Such as, will the boy or man make a good father and provider?
 - 1. Instead the focus seems to be on the appearance and physical attractiveness of the other
 - 2. Such persons set themselves up to be vulnerable to activities that increase desire and temptation
 - 3. Activities that are a prelude to fornication - Gal. 5:19; 1Cor. 6:18
- C. How far is too far? Anything that increases temptation is too far.

- D. Too often, though, youth, innocence, and purity are robbed because our modern dating practices put young people in a position where they engage in behaviors that cause sorrow for the rest of their lives - Ecc. 11:9 - 12:1

III. SO WHAT ARE YOUNG CHRISTIANS SUPPOSED TO DO?

- A. A difficult environment for Christians
 - 1. Lasciviousness is everywhere, fornication not only accepted but expected from most
 - 2. Hyper-sexualized culture; "Sexual freedom" abounds-- a lot of action, not a lot of responsibility
- B. One should consider this the second most important decision in life
 - 1. It should be seen as the one chance we get for a lifelong partner
 - 2. You very well might be living with this person for as long as 75 years

IV. WHO SHOULD I DATE?

- A. Does he or she support your desire to remain a faithful Christian?
 - 1. A good test of this is does he or she press you for more intimate behaviors or press to increase temptation?
 - 2. If so, then they are not supporting your desire to be a Christian.
 - 3. "But what if I can't find anyone else?" You were looking when you found him or her. This is a function, especially in girls, of a low sense of self-worth. Trust me, you deserve better than someone who is working to undermine your faithfulness to God. It will continue throughout life
- B. How well do you talk with each other? Communication
 - 1. One sided? Honest? How do they talk to you?
 - 2. How much do you trust them with what you say?
- C. Does this person have a prayerful, submissive attitude towards God?
 - 1. Men: would your girlfriend qualify according to Proverbs 31:10-31?
 - a. Does she dress modestly (1Peter 3:5)?
 - b. Is her conduct consistent with 1Timothy 2:9-15 and Titus 2:4-5?
 - 2. Women: will your boyfriend love you as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25)?
 - a. Or as his own flesh (Ephesians 5:28-29)?
 - b. Will he live in an "understanding way" with you (1Peter 3:7)?
- D. Do you both understand the permanence of marriage - Matthew 19:4-9?

V. HOW TO ACT DURING THE RELATIONSHIP

- A. The ever-present danger of fornication -- there is a reason why it is better to marry than to burn - 1Cor. 7:9
 - 1. The stronger a relationship grows, the more difficult it is to maintain self-control. Boundaries must be established in advance
- B. Where should the boundary be? None is explicitly given in Scripture
 - 1. Matt. 5:27-30
- C. Some things that should be considered:
 - 1. What experiences are special to me?

2. What if we break up? What memories of our conduct would cause me embarrassment and shame?
 3. How would I feel if someone I was dating had done this thing previously with another? Would I think less of them?
 4. If the relationship does not work out, would what I have done do harm to a future relationship?
 5. Will I feel guilt and shame over this thing? How would I feel if word of this got to my family, friends, fellow Christians?
 6. How will my relationship with God be impacted if I do this thing?
- D. I think you know the answer to the question, How close is too close?