

CHECK YES OR NO:

GODLY DATING

The Bible is silent on the topic of dating, much it has much to say about relationships. While cultural expressions of courtship change, the principles of purity, mutual respect and healthy interaction found in Scripture do not. If followers of Jesus are to be different from the world, this includes how we interact romantically.

Lesson #1 Right Thinking

Healthy relationships start with a healthy you. It is essential to have a healthy self-image and a healthy view of what you are looking for in a romantic relationship.

Introduction:

Proverbs 4:20 – 27 in the Message Translation

20-22 *Dear friend, listen well to my words; tune your ears to my voice. Keep my message in plain view at all times. Concentrate! Learn it by heart! Those who discover these words live, really live; body and soul, they're bursting with health.* 23-27 **Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts.**

Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies, and gossip. Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust.

Keeping watch over our hearts is an important lesson. While Solomon's words are about the importance of righteous living, the words are applicable to relationships. This whole discussion of dating and romantic relationships is truly about watching over – guarding – your heart. Too many young adults give their heart away too quickly.

Followers of Jesus need to be different in all our interactions, including the interactions of romance and dating. Over the years of working with young adults, I've observed less differences and more similarities with those who are not Christians. We have to "date differently" – at least in the sense we have to date better.

Teaching/Discussion:

It's true there is no chapter in the Bible on dating nor a chapter on how and what to do on a date. But we can observe principles of what we can should do in general and apply them.

In these lessons on dating, we will look at two opposing principles on dating topics. It will help us establish the right frame of mind in building healthy relationships.

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Movies have taught us that true love will surprise us. We won't be looking for it and then wham! It will appear. While this does happen, in my experience, it is very rare. For centuries, people have dreamed of the perfect spouse and come up with "wish lists" for the person they want to be with. Those are

Leader Notes:

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Discuss other healthy ways of building self-worth before starting a relationship.

Lesson #2 Dating and Purity

Sexual purity is more than having/not-having sex. Purity speaks to the whole relationship. Christians must strive to maintain purity in their relationships.

Big Idea/Focus: Keeping a sexually pure, healthy relationship

Introduction:

1 Cor. 6:18 **Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.** ¹⁹*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ²⁰*you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

When we start talking about sexual purity the following people usually stop paying attention:

Married people – “I don’t have to worry about purity, after all I’m married.”

Hurting people – “I’ve already had sex, so it’s too late for me. Listening to you talk makes me feel even more guilty.”

People not in a relationship – “I don’t have to worry about purity, I’m not with someone.”

Skeptical people – It seems to you that the Bible and the church are just a bunch of uptight people who are trapped in the stone ages about sex. You check out because the Bible’s view on homosexuality seems like prejudice and it seems cruel that God would give you a sex drive but then not allow you to act on it.

Uncomfortable people – there’s another group that’s just uncomfortable talking about sex.

Is this right? Who should be concerned about sexual purity?

***Dialogue Opportunity:** How should we respond to people who say, “I’ve already failed, it doesn’t matter anymore?”*

Teaching/Discussion:

Part One: Common mistakes about sexual purity

1. Sex is the only way to intimately connect with someone.

Intimacy is much more than sexual contact.

2. Being sexually pure only means I have never had sexual intercourse.

Impurity takes all forms. Pornography, lust, and objectifying others are all examples. There is more to being sexually pure than abstaining from sex.

3. When I get married my problem with lust will go away.

Leader Notes:

If this was true, we would have no such thing as adultery. Sexual impurity begins in the heart and the mind.

Matthew 5:25 “You know the next commandment pretty well, too: ‘Don’t go to bed with another’s spouse.’ But don’t think you’ve preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your heart can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your body. Those leering looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.

Dialogue Opportunity: Allow the group to discuss their agreement or disagreement with these ideas presented. Have them come up with some of their own mistakes/misconceptions about sexual purity.

Part Two: Steps to remain sexually pure: So what do I do?

1. Decide now to be sexually pure.

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman.

Col 3:5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires.

Prov 2:11 Wise planning will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

¹² *Wisdom will save you from evil people...* ¹⁶ *Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the adulterous woman.*

This is more than just saying, I'm not going to do it. It's setting up boundaries in advance and maintaining standards throughout the relationships.

Dialogue Opportunity: What are some good boundaries to set up to remain sexually pure?

2. Run away from temptation.

1 Cor. 6:18 Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body

Don't place yourself in tempting situations. Don't hang around with people or at places that lead to failure. Run away from the sin. Move yourself to a safe place. When it comes, respond in the right way.

3. Stay away from temptation.

Proverbs 7 ...take these words of mine most seriously. Don't fool around with a woman like that; don't even stroll through her neighborhood. Countless victims come under her spell; she's the death of many a poor man. She runs a halfway house to hell, fits you out with a shroud and a coffin.

Solomon warns about the immoral woman, but his warning is more to the man. She exists, so don't go where she is. Don't place yourself in places where you will end up falling sexually. Delete the apps from your phone, remove the

Leader Notes:

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channels from your cable, stop visiting this person at work, and don't go to his house. Stay away!

Dialogue Opportunity: Do you think this is an overreaction?

Conclusion/Application:

Discussions about sexual purity are emotional ones. Be prepared for emotions throughout the discussion. Also be prepared for raw emotion to come out from the hurting. It is likely that you will have one, or all, of the following in your group:

- The novice who has no idea what you are talking about.
- The victim who has experienced sexual trauma.
- The sexually active couple who are worried you are calling them out.
- The homosexual who is waiting for you to blast them.
- The person who failed and cannot shake the shame and guilt from their sexual experience.
- The sex addict who watches porn every night just to fall asleep.

All of these individuals need compassion and need to hear the message of sexual purity found in the Bible. Don't minimize experiences or assume anything when talking about purity.

Do your best to keep confidentiality in these moments – never share someone else's story. Even in they are not there, it makes the people listening wonder if you will tell their story to another group.

Provide a safe, restorative place of healing and understanding. Don't call people out or force them to admit things they are not ready to do.

Leader Notes:

In this lesson we will cover some basic, practical dating tips/advice.

Some people accuse the church or even God of having the wrong motive when it comes to dating, relationships, and sex. They say we are against fun, are judgmental, are close-minded, or that God is some kind of cosmic prankster to give us a sex drive and then say we can't use it.

Some people believe it's nobody's business what their relationships look like, who you date, or who you spend time with. I want you to have healthy wonderful dating relationships and live regret and conviction free. My motive is to give you information on the front end that will prevent you on the back end from being crushed with pain and sorrow.

God is into relationships. When Adam was in the Garden he said it is not good for that man to be alone. What you find is a God who created us and a God who loves us. He created us to be in relationship with Him and He created us to be in relationship with each other. And as our loving creator – he knows best what we need in our lives to be fully and completely fulfilled. The God who created us, knows what's best for us – especially in the area of our emotions, feelings and relationships. There are a lot of opinions about how we should live and what we should do – let's look at what our loving creator and our loving God says about relationships.

The following dating tips are from 20+ years of working with young adults. They are common sense (although they are not as common as one would hope) and most of the time they are easy to implement. Feel free to adapt to your personal situation as you see fit. Some, are clearly more important than others. In this checklist of sorts, you will see ways to know if “she is the one” or “he is the one” you should spend life and time with.

Tip #1 – The person you are with is interested in YOUR life.

Well, it should be that and vice-versa. If all the person does is talk about themselves and what they want to do, be concerned. If they never do what you want, never spend time with the things you care about, and force you to change to their way, you are in an unhealthy space.

We all know the story well. A friend starts dating someone and then, just like that, our friend disappears. All their time is with the new person and their

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Leader Notes:

What is age appropriate? What is the right age for me to date someone. I understand there aren't hard and fast rules about people 3 years older or 5 years older or even 10 years older than you. You will also always find exceptions, couples that defeated the odds, people who connect. The older

Leader Notes:

Tip #6 – The person I am with treats me with dignity and respect.

Do they struggle to find good things to say about you? We are not talking about flattery or false statements of love, but genuine affirmations of affection and honor. Are they proud of you? Do they share their pride and love for you with others?

Life is too short to spend with someone who does not articulate their care for you.

Conclusion/Application:

A smart person will not just evaluate the person they are with, but will also evaluate themselves. If you really love someone, do you do these well? Are YOU the one – at least through your actions and thoughts?

Leader Notes:

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- 1) Do I like *this* person or the idea of being with someone?
- 2) Do my spiritual leaders/mentors agree with me?
- 3) Have I lied to this person about important things in my life?
- 4) Have I caught this person in lies?
 - a. Once a liar always a liar....
- 5) Does my family approve of this relationship?
- 6) Are we doing things in secret, hiding it from others?
- 7) Is this person involved in helping others through ministry?
- 8) Is this person's family crazy? Can I deal with that?
- 9) Have I spent as much time in prayer about this person as I have physically expressing my affection for them?
 - a. Paraphrase – are you praying for each other or praying together as much as you are making out. Yes I am serious.
- 10) Is this person hurting me physically or emotionally?
- 11) When we are together, do we sin?
- 12) Is this person committed to Jesus Christ?
- 13) Is this individual growing in their commitment to Jesus Christ?
 - a. Are they committed to church attendance?
 - b. Do you see a desire to sin less?
 - c. Does this individual push you to be more like Jesus?

Conclusion/Application:

- Healthy
- Holy
- Growing
- Happy

If it isn't these things, work to make it that way or end it.