



What Does God Say about Dating?

“How can a young man [woman] stay pure? By reading your Word and following its rules.” (Psalm 119:9, LB)

If you met Old Testament or New Testament characters and asked for guidelines from the Bible for dating, they would look at you with confusion. The word did not exist in their culture. In their day, people did not date; their parents primarily prearranged marriages, no need for courtship. However, God knew this would change and bring real temptations. That is why he gives clear principles for dating and finding a future spouse.

Choosing a date

So what is dating? This may surprise you. In spite of what you see on TV, dating is not about a search for fun and sex. Dating is about finding a partner for marriage. As a teenager, you may think you are too young to think about marriage, but do you know that many teenagers later marry their high school sweethearts? You may not be thinking about marriage, but God is! His plan will help you have a good marriage and produce godly children. (Malachi 2:15) Is there any reason you would not want that?

Did you know that God cares about who you date? He says to date only the people that would be okay to marry. Who are they? These words may shock you.

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can goodness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15, NLT)

In other words, only date believers because you will marry someone you date.

Spiritually, a believer and unbeliever are in different families with different beliefs and goals. Marrying an unbeliever is like two people going on a trip – one gets on a train going east, another west. There will always be a big division between you. How can you pray and worship together? Think how this will affect your children. God has a much better plan for you. If you are thinking, “I'll pray and convert him/her after we are married,” don't count on it. God may answer your prayer but he doesn't bless disobedience!

Did you know that God has distinct roles for husbands and wives in marriage? Read Ephesians 5:22-33 to discover these roles. Look for those qualities in the

person you are dating. Examine your own life to see if you have the qualifications for a good marriage.

Planning your date

What can you do on a date? The big question to ask is, “Will this activity please God?” Think about it. Would watching that R-rated movie or television show be pleasing to God? Remember, Jesus Christ lives in you. He never leaves you. Choose activities that you would do in his presence! Participate in activities together and with others at school. Go to a football or basketball game. Play a sport together such as tennis, etc. Attend church and fellowship with other believers. (Church is also the best place to form friendships and find a suitable person to marry.) Join a youth group. Attend a Bible study together. Go on a mission trip. Volunteer in a soup kitchen. God has loads of creative ideas. Ask him.

Setting limits

Although you will want to participate in activities with others, there will be times when you and your date are alone. The question is, “How far can you go in a physical relationship before marriage?” God created sexual intercourse for marriage only. (See the devotional “Who Created Marriage?”) Because he has something beautiful and loving planned for you, he asks you to keep yourself pure to achieve his wonderful plan.

J. Budziszewski in *How to Stay Christian in College* states God’s plan clearly.

- You can’t have sexual intercourse.
- You can’t do anything resembling intercourse.
- You can’t do anything that gets your motor running for sexual intercourse.

Here is his answer to questions you might ask: “Does oral sex count as sex? Does full-body grinding with clothes on count as sex? Does it count as sex if you use only your hands? Come on, don’t kid yourself; you know the answers. Pretending you aren’t having sex just because there is no vaginal penetration is like pretending you’re not naked because your eyes are closed.”¹

Also, avoid things that arouse you. God invented sexual arousal to prepare your bodies for sex. Save that for marriage, too. Avoid temptation!

Choosing God’s way

You have a choice. Paul said, “*But our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares for our bodies.*” (1 Corinthians 6:13b, NLT) Jesus said, “*All those who love me will do what I say. ... Anyone who does not love me will not do what I say.*” (John 14:23-24, NLT) Do you love Jesus enough to choose his way? It will not be easy. You are in a battle. The temptations are real; the peer pressure is strong. Only by trusting God for strength can you obey. “*For I can do*

everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.” (Philippians 4:1, NLT) Set your mind to do what is right. Let your date know where you stand. Your witness may encourage others to choose what is right, and God will get the glory! Moreover, you may spare yourself years of heartache and regrets. Put on your armor and never retreat. Join the saints of old, who never had a date, but knew how to stand firm when tempted. Live like the new you!

Attitude Check:

- How does your attitude toward dating compare with God’s attitude?

Explore:

- Read, “Recognize That You Are a New Creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-17) and “Why Christians Need the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-26)
- Write in your journal your commitment to obey God in your relationships and ask a friend to pray for you.

Talking with God:

- Father, I choose to obey you in my relationships. I trust you to keep me alert to temptations and to give me strength to keep my commitment.

¹ *“How to Stay Christian in College”* pp. 133,134 by J. Budziszewski, Nav Press, 2004