

Dating

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In times past dating was very different than it is today. In fact, it was not a term known a hundred years ago. Instead, the term “courtship” would have been used to describe the social encounters of a man and woman. Chaperones (another person who watched over a couple) were always present, and courtship was a firm commitment that there was an intention to become engaged for marriage. Even when people were engaged, they were not expected to spend time alone. However, this all changed when the automobile was invented.

Today, dating looks a lot different than ages past. As Christians, it is clear that the world’s view of dating (its purpose and intent) is going to be dramatically different than dating for those who are in Christ. What should a Christian know about dating?

Dangers in Dating

There are multiple dangers in dating today that Christians must overcome. Some are obvious, and some are not. Perhaps the most dangerous issue is fornication. We are repeatedly warned in the New Testament of the danger of fornication (Matthew 15:19, Acts 15:20, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, etc.). But most Christians who stumble in this sin did not intend to do so; they simply put themselves into situations where the temptation to sin was too great to resist.

As Christians we need to know that overcoming sin means avoiding temptations. We need to see that there are circumstances that we can be in that may not be sinful of themselves, but offer temptations that are difficult to overcome and then give birth to sin (James 1:15).

The second danger in dating is not guarding our heart. We are encouraged by the world to follow our heart, and to “fall in love”. But simply allowing our hearts to be emotionally unstable is dangerous. Solomon repeatedly provided this advice: “*do not awaken love until it pleases*” (Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4). “Falling in love”, especially if we seek to do it often and uncontrolled, results in emotional instability. The Bible says that someone without self-control of their emotions is like a city without walls (Proverbs 25:28); it is unable to protect itself from destruction.

We must guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). This means we need to not be anxious (Philippians 4:6-7) about the one whom God will enable us to find, and devote this to prayer. Too many people are obsessed with finding someone, and date someone with disastrous consequences. People who allow their hearts to attach themselves to others without spiritual consideration hurt themselves terribly.

Should Christians Only Date Christians

It should seem obvious that Christians are most wise to date and marry Christians. However, there is no commandment to this effect. We need to consider that if a marriage is successful only when it permits us to be enabled to serve God, and that this requires joint Christian commitment, and that dating is for the purpose of finding that life partner, then it would be the wisest course of action to date those who have similar faith.

As well, dating non-Christians usually means dating those who do not have the same values as us in dating. They may have different concepts of purity and integrity, and may pursue situations we know are dangerous. At the same time, these dangers are present when we date Christians. We need to not let our

guard down just because someone is a Christian. Anybody can have a weak moment, and one weak moment can ruin your life.

Are You Ready To Date?

An important question we need to honestly ask ourselves is whether we are ready to date or not. There are three very important questions we need to ask ourselves that determine if the time is right to begin dating.

1) Do you have a purpose in dating? The wisest way we can approach dating is to understand that the purpose is to find someone with whom we will spend our lives. The world's purposes in dating are dangerous; we need to be understanding of why we want to date.

2) Do you love yourself? An important idea in relationships is that we need to have the proper affection for ourselves before venturing into relationships. A husband who does not love himself cannot properly love his wife (Ephesians 5:28). This is a reference not to love as the world sees it, but the "*agapeo*" love of Scripture that seeks the best for the object of our love. When we don't love ourselves and still enter dating, we tend to attract dangerous people, people who are empowered by that absence of love and have damaging control in our lives. Without self-respect dating is dangerous.

3) Do you trust God? Fundamentally, without trust in God you are likely to make bad choices in dating. You must believe that God is a partner in your life, and He works to helping you find someone with whom you can serve Him. His desire is that you should not be alone (Genesis 2:18). That commitment is only valuable if you believe that He is working with you.