**Bible-based Thoughts on Dating for College Students**

Note: The Bible does not discuss “dating”, as this literally did not exist in the first century. Marriages were arranged by families. Christian advice about dating will therefore have to be based on biblical principles, rather than biblical commands.

But…

The Bible does discuss romantic relationships and marriage as well.

We are no longer high school students. We are not discussing puppy love here.

College students are in that in-between place between puppy love and mature committed loving relationships. This is a key time in that development.

We are talking about finding ways to pursue healthy committed life-long male/female relationships.

It is not clear that most 18-21 year-olds are quite at that point yet, so this is a time to train yourself to be ready for that in 3-10 years from now.

So, how do we do that.

One thought: Do NOT take your cues from the world!!!!!!

I am definitely going to use Scripture here.

But… I am also going to give you advice based on a LOT of experience.

I will occasionally use out-dated examples, and you will have to translate what I say into your language and youth culture.

Hook-ups, “in a relationship” vs going steady. Having 24/7 access to each other makes a massive difference. It poses great potential threats to developing pure, Christian relationships.

 But… there are many timeless pieces of advice, and I suggest you listen carefully.

A. Heading into marriage:

1 Thess 4:3-7 God wants us to be sanctified—holy

Sexual immorality is the greatest possible enemy of this sanctification.

His advice/command: Learn to control your body in a way which is holy and honorable.

v. 5 Not in passionate lust.

Q: How are relationships pursued in the young in 2024 culture?

God’s commandment for us is to pursue romantic relationships in a holy and honorable way.

1 Tim 5:1-2 Relationships between old and young, male and female

To young men and women: treat younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

Guys who are not married: Would you do that with your sister?

Our society is nothing like that in New Testament times. We do not arrange marriages. We (including faithful Christians!) meet, we get to know one another, we agree that we “like” one another. We begins spending more time around one another (dates), then we discover that we are in love. Then we choose, on our own initiative, to become engaged. Then we inform our friends and family, and we get married.

But Christians do something very different: We enter the state of marriage pure. Right? We do not do a “test drive.” Right?

We observe “absolute purity.” We control our bodies, right?

B. Once married:

Then, where are we headed?

Maybe I am wrong, but the way I understand it, “dating” is our culture’s way to approach engagement and marriage. “Who you date is who you marry.”

Which is why Christians only date other Christians—most likely from the same church you go to, right?

So, what are we taking about?

Eph 5:21-33

We are talking about two people living in submission to one another—considering other’s needs before their own.

5:28 Loving their spouse more than they love their own body!!!

Dating involves learning how to do this—how to prepare for this kind of relationship in a godly way.

1 Tim 3:1-5 In the Greek: He must be a one-woman man. Devoted to his wife and to his wife only. I assume the same applies to the wife!

A few thoughts, based on these scriptures:

1. We need to learn how to have casual friendships with members of the opposite sex, without the prospect of a romantic relationship being behind all of these friendships.

Are you able to look at a girl or guy, not as a perspective date/boyfriend/girlfriend? Who is the right one for me?

My suggestion: Let us do double dates or group dates as a way to spend time together simply as friends in a context outside of “church.”

In the initial phase, let us avoid “single dates.”

2. Going back to 1 Thess 4:5 and 1 Tim 5:2 We need to approach friendship, then “liking”, then loving, then marriage in a way which is not highly sexualized.

Q: Do you “struggle” with pornography? Why, then, are you even thinking about dating and marriage.

Be very careful how you spend time alone with a member of the opposite sex. Do not spend time in each other’s bedrooms, and be very cautious about spending time alone.

Do not be texting at 2:00 AM

A guy asked me if it was OK to be texting a girl every day.

I asked, do you text one of the guys in the fellowship every day?

No!!!

Suggestion: Learn how to develop intimacy gradually.

Casual date once in a while for a few months.

Do NOT start talking every day, texting every day, sharing intimate details. That is for someone who is engaged!!!

Let friendship develop, and hold off on intimacy

3. How do you view relationships with the opposite sex?

Are you thinking: “How can this person make me happy?”
“Is this the right person for me?”

Uh Oh… We are in big trouble.

What did the Ephesians 5 passage say? Husband to live his wife more than his own body!!!

Better: Can I make this person happy?

Am I the right person for him/her?

4. Learn how to be friends first, with absolutely NO implication of boyfriend/girlfriend. This is the opposite of what the world does.

Find a person you like. Then jump in and see if this deep intimacy works out.

SOS 2:7 “Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.”

In other words, move toward romantic/intimate love carefully.

Ex: At what age do you want to think about perhaps marrying? 25? 27?

Then consider just casual friendship dating, without “boyfriend/girlfriend” relationship until you are 23 or 24.

In the world, this is not a problem.

My experience: It is really hard to go steady for 3-5 years before getting engaged.

My suggestion, do not give your heart away at 19, 21, 22. Do not awaken love until it is time.

Learn how to build healthy, pure, non-romantic friendships with the opposite sex while you are college age.

Discussion groups:

Q: What would be the ideal Christian way to approach male-female relationships, including “dating” and developing an increasing level of intimacy, with the end result of marriage?