

What Is Dating?

Nowhere in the Bible does God say that we—His carefully planned creations—are to live isolated from one another. In fact, after creating Adam, the Lord God said, “*It is not good for the man to be alone*” (Genesis 2:18). Then God created Eve for Adam to marry.

But how do you know if marriage is God’s plan for you? And if it is, how do you know whether you have found the right person to date? Even more importantly, how do you become the right person to date? Purposeful dating can help you discover some of its benefits.

- **Dating** is a relationship between a male and a female who participate in prearranged social activities.
- **Dating** means setting aside time for social interaction with someone of the opposite sex. Dating describes male/female companionship that can move beyond close friendship into a romantic relationship.
- **Dating** provides the opportunity to ...
 - Learn how to communicate with the opposite sex
 - Help define what traits you do and don’t desire in a future mate
 - Come into contact with potential marriage partners
 - Grow socially and emotionally, intellectually and spiritually

Knowing the truth of God’s love takes the desperation out of dating. ...

“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”

(1 John 4:16)

What Is Contemporary Courtship?

- **Courting** is a term used when a man seeks to gain the attention and favor of a woman with the ultimate intent of engagement and marriage.

- **Courting** puts a strong emphasis on spending time in group settings to see whether there are multiple areas of common ground.
- **Courting** provides the opportunity to publicly practice and display ...
 - Moral values and spiritual foundations
 - Personal likes and dislikes
 - Social and relational skills
 - Maturity and experience
 - Physical/sexual restraint

“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”

(Amos 3:3)

What Is Love?

- **Agape** is unselfish love, unconditional love—a commitment to seek what is best ... and the highest good ... for another person, regardless of the response.
- **Phileo** is affectionate love, brotherly love, mutual enjoyment. *Phileo* is true friendship. The love of “liking.”
- **Eros** is passionate or physical/sensual love. *Eros* can be passionate, romantic love, but it can also be the feeling of strong emotion without a romantic focus. Positively, *eros* can describe the romantic love shared between a husband and wife. Negatively, *eros* can describe sinful behavior like lust and sexual immorality. *Eros* finds its proper expression within marriage, but within a dating relationship, we must be cautious about *eros* love.

The Character Checklist for Dating

Does your prospective date ...

- Demonstrate wisdom and discernment?
- Have a heart to do what is in your best interest?

- Possess a sensitive conscience in regard to right and wrong?
- Refuse to use you or others to gain status?
- Have a reputation of keeping commitments?
- Display follow-through in meeting obligations?
- Show respect toward authority?
- Have a positive outlook on life?
- Manage money well?
- Maintain eye contact when talking with people?
- Interact courteously and honestly with others?
- Have an active Bible study and prayer life?
- Share your personal values?
- Show evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their life?

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”
(Galatians 5:22–23)

Dating an Angry Person

“I’m dating a man who is angry all the time. Sometimes he explodes. I love him, but I wonder if I should continue to date him?”

No. The Bible is not silent on this issue. Decide now that you will not continue to date him. Destructive anger—if not stopped—is progressive and leads to domestic violence in marriage.

“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered.”
(Proverbs 22:24)

Myths and Truths about Dating

- **Myth:** “As a Christian, if I date someone who is not a Christian, God will use me to change my date.”
Truth: You have no such guarantee. The Bible never endorses “missionary dating” or “missionary marriages”—dating or marrying a man in order to make him your mission field. (2 Corinthians 6:14–15)
- **Myth:** “It doesn’t matter if I date a non-Christian as long as I plan to marry a Christian.”
Truth: The same factors that draw you into a dating relationship may very well later draw you into a marriage relationship. Dating a non-Christian places you in danger of becoming emotionally involved and, later, becoming unequally yoked in marriage. (Proverbs 22:3)

How to Maintain Purity over Passion

Prioritize God’s standard for purity in your dating.
(Hebrews 13:4)

Undertake personal accountability for how you treat your date’s body. (Ephesians 5:3)

Refrain from activities that violate God’s standard by arousing sexual desires. Then repent and recommit to sexual purity if these standards are violated. (1 Thessalonians 4:3–4)

Implement goals that are pleasing to God.
(2 Corinthians 5:9–10)

Trust in God’s timing. (Genesis 29:20)

Yield your life to the Lord. (Matthew 6:33).

“The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.”
(Proverbs 14:8)

How to Develop Godly Dating Practices

- **Be Wise**—Ask the Lord to ...
 - Guide your decision to date
 - Guide the decisions of your date
 - Confirm your choices with His peace as you date
- **Be Safe**—You deserve to be treated well and to be safe.
 - Do your homework. Using online helps and social media may lead you to a deeper understanding of a person’s true character.
 - When you begin to date, spend time together with a group as you get to know each other.
 - Meet in public places as you build trust and observe character.
- **Be Real**—Just as you want to get to know the person you are dating, be transparent and real with your date.
 - Share the basics: faith, family, friends, background, education.
 - Don’t be afraid to go deeper: Talk about previous relationships, career, and financial stability.
 - Discuss your expectations for the dating relationship. What do you hope to give and get from it?
- **Be Honest**—Talk to your date about what you do not enjoy or appreciate.
 - Don’t “go along with whatever” just because it’s what your date wants.

- If your date says or does something that makes you uncomfortable, speak up and say so.
- Don't cave in to peer pressure: Be willing to say *no* when you know you should say *no*. (If you respectfully speak the truth, in the end you will earn respect.)

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Then you will be able to test and approve what
God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*
(Romans 12:2)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”*
(Philippians 2:5)

Key Passage to Read

1 Thessalonians 4:4–6

Who I Am in Christ

- I am loved. (John 15:9)
- I am totally accepted. (Romans 15:7)

- I belong to God. (Romans 8:16)
- I am never alone. (Deuteronomy 31:8)
- I am complete in Christ. (Philippians 1:6)
- I have all the confidence I need. (Proverbs 3:26)
- I have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- I have a purpose in life. (Proverbs 19:21)
- I am made pure in Christ. (1 John 3:3)
- I have victory over sin. (1 Corinthians 15:56–57)

Dos and Don'ts for Dating

- **Don't** focus on romance but rather on friendship. (Proverbs 17:17)
Do ... Be aware of both the benefits and dangers in dating. (Proverbs 15:21)
- **Don't** dishonor God. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).
Do ... Follow wise counsel of trusted advisors. (Proverbs 19:20)
- **Don't** confuse lust for love. (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)
Do ... Reflect Christian values when on your dates. (Philippians 1:27)
- **Don't** wait to determine your standards. (Proverbs 4:26)
Do ... Become a good and honorable date. (Romans 12:10)

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