

EAST
Singapore

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CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Lesson 1

The Dating Experience

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Dating is a very recent custom in human history, for until several hundred years ago, it was unheard of for an unmarried boy and girl to be alone together. This is still true in certain sections of the world today.
- B. The Bible says nothing directly about dating because dating was not a part of Jewish or early Christian culture. But it does talk about principles and precepts, which indirectly affect the morals in a dating experience.
- C. Why teach on dating? Because dating begins the basis for a happy or an unhappy marriage.
- D. If we are going to date as Christians, we must gain some convictions on the subject based upon sound biblical and logical principles.
- E. Is dating wrong? No, as it is vital to the normal growth of every individual, for every single person needs social contact with the opposite sex. Today there are many perverted views on dating, especially in legalistic Christian circles. Some folks are still very Victorian in the approach to boy-girl relationships. NOTE: Dating is not wrong, but the conduct of the dating couple is very important, for every Christian lives to please the Lord in everything (2 Tim. 2:4). If a Christian's life cannot glorify God, then the Christian's behavior is wrong before God (1 Cor. 10:31). NOTE: This lesson is directed towards Christian young people and older singles, for only Christians seek to live lives pleasing to God and they are not bound by man-made rules.
- F. We must remember that our present generation of young people face moral problems that their parents never faced. Their parents faced the problems of sex and alcohol, but not on such a wide scale as today. These things, plus the problems of illegal drugs, modern birth-control methods and marrying at an older age, have produced a very complex situation for people in the area of dating. NOTE: Surprisingly, most Christians are facing these problems very well, but they need prayer and guidance in this sin-cursed world.

A teacher of high school girls at my church came to me after I visited her class several times and asked for my evaluation. I said, "Anne, how straight do you want it? You want me to tell it like it is?" "I really do," she replied. "OK. Here it is. You're talking about parties and they're talking about the pill. You're talking about holding hands and they're talking about going to bed. Your task, Anne, is to get on their wavelength and to talk about their needs." (Howard Hendricks, Say It With Love)

II. THE MOTIVATION FOR DATING

- A. Dating is for fun, and God wants Christians to have fun and enjoy life to its fullest. Christians must learn to have wholesome fun with the opposite sex.

God never intended for Christian young people or older singles to be “squares” socially. He only asks that they glorify God in their dating lives.

- B. Dating is basic for learning to adjust socially: manners, conversation and how to meet people. Through dating, a person gains confidence.
- C. Dating is a time when one learns about the opposite sex—their actions, their thought patterns, emotional trends, etc. This is all preparation for a normal married life.
- D. Dating is also a time when a person is looking for a prospective future mate.

Dating is a time of testing and discovering with a view to finding the one with whom you may spend the rest of your life. In a certain sense, then, every date is a potential marriage. (Charles C. Ryrie, *Patterns for Christian Youth*)

III. QUALITIES IN A GOOD DATE

- A. Spirituality. A Christian should in most cases date a believer. This is true when one gets into college and especially an older single, for that is usually the age a person seriously looks for a mate. NOTE: There is nothing in the Bible that states a Christian cannot fall in love with a non-Christian, and it happens all the time because Christian’s are disobedient to God’s command to marry a believer in Christ. The disobedience started when he or she decided to date an unbeliever.
- B. Manners:
 1. Men: Manners for a young man are essential. Several obvious ones would be to have good morals, show respect and courteousness to a woman, having speech that glorifies God, knowing the appropriate place to take a woman out and showing confidence. NOTE: The Bible says that the man is to be the leader in a Christian marriage, and a Christian single man should be the leader in a dating relationship as good practice in making decisions. The leadership responsibility rests upon the man in dates. It rests upon him in physical matters and this means he is responsible to God not only for the conduct of his body but also his dates (Rom. 6:13). Single men should also lead in spiritual matters—godly conversation, wholesome dates, attendance at Bible studies, church, etc.
 2. Women: For women, good manners would include having good morals, being gracious and feminine, having speech that glorifies God, and shows appreciation to her date for his acts of kindness. NOTE: There are things worse than not having a date, and one of them is having a date with someone whose standards are low.
- C. Christian Ideals: A Christian should always ask whether the potential date has Christian convictions and desires to live by the Bible. Is the person a Spirit-filled Christian and not lukewarm? Mediocrity is not enough. Does this person worry about what the crowd thinks or is he or she able to stand on Christian convictions? A good date also is one who can carry out an intelligent conversation. People who are socially inept and unintelligent often occupy their time focusing on the physical, which can lead to problems.

- D. Negative Qualities: Today those who date often make looks, popularity, social standing, cars, money, etc. the main motivations in choosing a date because men and women are impressed with externals. These motivations at best are secondary. NOTE: Some people will do anything to date a popular person no matter what their moral and religious convictions are. Why? So they can be popular or accepted or not be lonely.

IV. ACTIVITIES ON DATES

- A. General Principles: (1) Learn to do things where you can get to really know your date without emphasis upon the physical. (2) Always go to respectable places. (3) Always thank your date. (4) Sometimes share the cost of the date. (5) Double date whenever possible.
- B. Activities: Picnics, miniature golf, zoo, sports events, acceptable movies, parties, horseback riding, walks, sports activities (tennis, bowling, skating, etc.), similar hobbies, things with the family, playing games at home, coffee or coke dates, visiting friends, reading books, etc. NOTE: If you take a girl out, be sure you get her in at the planned time. Young people must prove to their parents that they are responsible individuals who can be trusted and then parents will allow them more freedom. NOTE: The most logical place for a Christian to take a date is to church or to a church activity. Also, be with your date at home once in a while so the parents can get to know each of you.

V. SITUATIONS TO AVOID ON DATES

- A. Avoid going places that would stir one's lusts such as wild parties, passionate movies or inviting the date into the house late at night. Be careful about being alone with your date for long periods of time, and do not have too many unplanned lulls in a given evening. All these things can lead to something that would dishonor the Lord and embarrass individuals.
- B. Avoid too much physical contact with your date. This simply stirs emotions and could lead to trouble. NOTE. A good principle to remember is "when in doubt don't!" The Bible says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thess. 5:22).

VI. PROPER AGE TO BEGIN DATING

- A. It is impossible to set a definite age for dating because every individual is different. Some young people mature much quicker than others do. In some rare cases, a person may be ready for individual dating at 16. Yet, there are others who are not ready for individual dating until 18 or 19.
- B. A good generalization might be group dating at 15, individual dating at 16 (and then there should be a great deal of double dating), and at age 17 individual dating should be permitted. This may seem a little stern to most youth today, but this is for their protection. Too much dating too soon can produce an explosive situation. NOTE: If a Christian boy or girl has not learned responsibility before God by age 17 or 18, they probably never will. NOTE: Society often pushes a youth too hard in the area of dating and most kids have experienced everything about dating by the time they are 15. Yet

they are not able to cope with these things because of lack of maturity, and often many kids get a twisted view of dating and love (and sometimes sex).

VII. KISSING

- A. Kissing should be kept for someone special and they are not to be thrown around like confetti. Kissing should be enjoyed but limited so as to keep the emotions under control. NOTE: Christian kids know when they are dishonoring the Lord, for the Spirit of God brings conviction of this sin!
- B. It certainly is not necessary to kiss your date on your first time out together. Many singles think that if they do not kiss good night they will not be asked out again—this is a strange motivation for another date. Or they think that this is the way to thank the date for a good time—this is a strange way to say thank you. NOTE: Do not hang around the door and talk. It is not impolite to show your appreciation for your date by words.

VIII. GOING STEADY

- A. Going steady (especially in junior and senior high school) gives a person security but also presents many problems to the couple, especially in the areas of sexual matters.
- B. It is far better if a person can date widely before the age of 20 so as to get a variety of dating experiences with various personalities. Then a person is in a better position to determine what he or she wants in a mate.
- C. It might be wise for a Christian to have one special guy or gal where much dating is done but not to tie oneself down to one person. Christians should make agreements with their dates not to get tied down so as to feel guilty if they wanted to date someone else.

IX. A WORD TO PARENTS

- A. Parents must guide their children in the early stages of their dating life but not push them. Communication between parents and children is essential, for young people need and want interested (but not nosy) parents.
- B. Parents must develop a sense of trust with their children and set dating rules, but these rules must be reasonable. Kids want some authority over them and this often gives them an excuse with their friends who tempt them to sin. They can save face by saying, “My parents have set the rules!”
- C. Parents must pray for their children. Pray for their friends, dates and future mate (who probably has not shown up on the scene yet). Martin Luther said that- parents ought to pray about the life partners of their children as soon as they are born. This is sound advice and it is equally sound advice for Christian parents to pray about each date their children have.