

## Some Broad Principles (not formulas!) of Wise Dating

1. **The Gospel Principle:** Fall in Love with Jesus and with His gospel. The gospel is what will make your relationships last (whether it be friendships or a future marriage). Why? Because Jesus did not cast you off when you were hard to love- He entered into our suffering and sin (and took it upon Himself). Believing that as a fundamental conviction enables you to love others who are hard to love.
2. **The Kingdom-Orientation Principle:** Look for someone who is living for something bigger than him/herself. Someone who is being transformed by the gospel and therefore is seeking to spur you on in heading toward a common horizon. Other orientations or “Mini-horizons” (ie common hobbies, music, sports, sense of humor, etc) won’t last in a marriage.
3. **The Marriage Preparation Principle:** Ask “am I preparing this person for a godly marriage” to me or TO SOMEONE ELSE (and vice-versa), or would what we’re doing/ thinking together bring baggage into a marriage (guilt or comparison over your sexual sin, bad patterns of self-absorption, being in love with love not the person, etc).
4. **The Community Principle:** LISTEN to the advice of parents (believers or not- Exodus 20:12), church authorities (Hebrews 13:7,17), and friends (see the Proverbs). IN THAT ORDER (since only the first two have authority)! Make your dating decisions with the honest council of the Christian Community and in submission to parents and pastors. Individualism in dating is a killer.
5. **The Equal-Yoke Principle:** The Bible is clear—you can only marry believers (1 Cor 6:14-18; 7:39). And the thing is, you ALWAYS date the people you end up marrying. Right? Therefore, this implies no “missionary dating”- it didn’t work for wise old Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-4), why should you try it? If you want to date an unbeliever, you’re already in DEEP trouble (see #’s 1 and 2 and listen to Steve’s “Free from a Bad Yoke” message at RUFgators.com).
6. **The Gender-Role Principle:** Men need to learn how to lead and women need to learn how to follow, but NOT with each other. Women need to learn to submit to their fathers, church leaders, and other authorities. Men need to learn to be leaders in all their relationships. But dating is not a biblical institution in which the guy leads and the girl follows. That comes only in marriage. The best way to see if a man is a good leader and a woman is a good follower is by observing the roles they play in other relationships- NOT (at least not primarily) by practicing with each other.
7. **The Love Principle:** Finding the person you marry is not so much about evaluating your feelings for the person, but evaluating your willingness to commit to the person. Don’t marry the person you’re “ga, ga” over- marry the person you’ll commit to. 1 Cor 13 describes love primarily in terms of character and commitment, not in terms of butterflies in your stomach. Love is a VERB first and foremost (for the grammatically challenged like myself, that means love is an action more than an emotion).
8. **The Purity Principle:** Paul encourages Timothy to treat older women like mothers and *younger women like sisters* “with ABSOLUTE PURITY” (1 Tim 5:2). So what would you do with your sibling physically? That’s what’s appropriate in dating. We are told in the Bible that we are not to have “even a hint” of sexual immorality, and “sex” is defined not as intercourse but as ANY physical touch that is arousing. You were made to go all the way in marriage- so don’t “arouse or awaken love till it’s time” (Song of Songs). If you don’t remain pure with someone in dating, you will question each other’s purity after marriage. (If you both know you couldn’t withstand temptation while dating, why should you trust that your partner can do so afterward when things get rough in your marriage and other people look better than you?). Lack of purity now hurts your sexual relationship in marriage.

**Some Scattered Thoughts On Dating (cut and pasted from KEVIN TWIT)**

**A. Friendship is the primary thing in choosing a mate, sexual attraction is secondary.** As Tim Keller contends, most of us when we walk into a room of people of the opposite sex, immediately eliminate 90% of them based on looks. We have it backwards. We look for people that turn us on, and then try to make them our friends. If we understood that being one flesh is so much more than physical we would be wiser and consider who can I grow old with and enjoy getting to know for the next 50 years.

**B. Talk through weirdness!** There are two interpretations to every event. If a guy doesn't call you it can mean either he isn't interested or that he is so interested that he doesn't want to come on too strong and mess things up. Girls, you will adopt one of these two interpretations based mostly on your self-confidence. But there is no way to know what someone's actions mean unless you talk about it. Girls, guys are not real good at picking up subtle messages. Guys, neither are girls. You need to talk to each other, don't assume and let things just remain confused and then drift away.

**C. But, beware are too many DTR talks!** Just enjoy the relationship! I think most people have endless DTR talks to try to eliminate risk and achieve a sense of control. There is a place for a DTR talk, but check your motivation. Don't make "the relationship" the focus, make getting to know and learning how to love another person rather yourself, the focus.

**D. "Ownership" is a right enjoyed only by married couples!** (1 Cor 6-7) This means that you don't have ownership over who you are dating either physically or emotionally. This also means that girls should not submit to someone they are dating.

**E. Guys, be men and pursue well.** It will relieve the girl's feeling that dating is an everlasting audition! But be willing to follow through. Don't just pursue hard and then back off. I really believe that from our perspective there are tons of people you could marry. Pray that God would give you His love for this person you are pursuing because if your love for God is like the morning mist that disappears as soon as the sun comes up (Hosea 6:4), how can you expect to love a sinner? But it is not sin for a woman to ask a guy out – don't call something sin that the Bible doesn't call sin.

**II. So, What is the Purpose Of Dating?** We need to ask 1st, what is the purpose of mankind? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So, this must ultimately be the purpose of dating! Dating is not just about getting married, but it is also not to be a substitute for marriage! John Holzman in his book Dating With Integrity (which, while far from perfect has some good principles) say that the purpose of dating is to be blessed and to be a blessing. I think that is a helpful perspective because otherwise dating takes on huge, overwhelming pressure. Too many people get caught in the catch-22 of "*I don't want to date them unless I would marry them, yet I don't really know them well enough to know if I want to date them.*" On the other hand, we don't want to make dating too casual. There are too many people who date around to have their cake and eat it too, to have fun but avoid any commitment or real intimacy. Being a blessing should be our goal in all relationships (remember we are love one another as ourselves) and dating is no exception!

#### **IV. The Problem With Most Christian Books On Dating**

- **"Super-Spirituality"** "We should focus on being the right person rather than on looking for the right person." This sounds good (and we *should* pursue sanctification) but unfortunately is not Biblical. There is nothing wrong with seeking a spouse, in fact, it is encouraged (if not by implication commanded.) Look at Prov. 18:22 "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing...*" Then compare it with what is said about wisdom in Prov 8:35. Finding wisdom and finding a wife (or husband -- the Bible is not being sexist at this point) both are means through which we receive favor from God. Are we called to seek wisdom? (look at Prov

8:1-11) So, by implication, are we called to seek a spouse. It is not spiritual to pretend that you are content when you are not. It's not spiritual to think you don't need anybody but you and God.

- **They present a "Simpleton Approach to the Christian Life"** Dan Allender uses the term simpleton to refer to the majority of Christians who want a little formula or set of rules that are guaranteed to make life "work" (whatever *that* means!) This approach is rampant in "Dating" books and even in books that advocate courtship instead of dating. For example, listen to these quotes from Choosing God's Best by Dr. Don Raunika (a book I would not recommend.)
  - *"Dating creates more problems than it solves: broken hearts, illegitimate children, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, and feelings of guilt or shame that can last a lifetime..."* [I almost laughed out loud when I read this -- is dating the problem or is sin the problem?]
  - *"As serious as these consequences are, the solution for them is simple: biblical courtship instead of dating..."* "[It's so simple, all you have to do is court rather than date and your life will be worry-free!]
  - *"...dating is little more than an experimental blip. As an experiment, though, it has been a total failure. With God's help, it's a failure you can avoid from now on... If you are one of those singles who has experienced the brokenness of a failed dating or marriage relationship, you will find healing in the courtship process this book describes. (pg 14-15)* [Is he serious? If you follow the rules his book describes - which he claims are Biblical even though he doesn't even deal with a single scripture until page 87 and then misuses Ruth as an example of courtship!] No rules, not even Biblical ones will bring healing -- it is the gospel that brings healing!
  - *"...courtship offers us a way to meet our needs legitimately without getting out of God's will, without missing God's planned blessing, without causing ourselves pain and grief, without causing hurt to other people, and without causing confusion in our lives."* [Courtship does not guarantee all these things but even if it did, it seems to me that God likes confusion, it is one of His best tools! see Deut 8:2 ff, Isaiah 50:10-11]
- **They are driven by fear"** I Kissed Dating Good-bye is like this. The whole motivation for courtship is that dating brings pain. Choosing God's Best even admits that it is counting on pain as the motivation for you following it's formula! (see pg. 14 at the bottom) These books are driven by the same thing our culture is, fear. But fear is a sub-Christian motivation! Perfect love casts out fear, therefore a distinctively Christian approach to relationships can't be driven by fear! These books fail to address the real sin issue that underlies so much of dating (and courtship by the way) and that is fear driving us to try to take control! [By the way, I do think there is wisdom to couples looking for community input into their relationship.]