

The Dating Game

(appropriate for high-schoolers or older)

Michael R. Daily December 2015

(45 minutes)

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(ref #1: Christopher D. Hudson, et. Al., *Come Here Often? The Indispensable Guide To Dating Do's And Don'ts*, Barbour Publishing, 2005)

(ref #2: Univ. of Maryland, HONR 269J: The Beat Begins – America in the 1950s, <http://universityhonors.umd.edu/HONR269J/projects/sombat.html>)

(ref #3, Mike Daily, "Purity Before Marriage", <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>)

(ref #4, Mike Daily, "Marriage Convictions For Teenagers", <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>)

(ref #5, Mike Daily, "Modesty in Dress for Teenage Women", <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>)

(ref #6: Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, Multnomah Books, 2003)

Its 2004. I'm standing in front of a group of about 40 high schoolers at church. I just finished teaching a lesson on "purity before marriage" (see reference #3). I could see the regret in a few of their eyes, tears in some cases, tightly folded arms in others. And now its question and answer time. And the questions come:

"My christian friend's girlfriend is pregnant but he doesn't really want to marry her. What should I tell him?"

"My friend is going to get an abortion. How do I talk her out of it?"

"My friend's boyfriend has other girls she doesn't know about. When I tell her about it she gets mad and calls me a liar. What should I do?"

And then the private questions later:

"He said he loved me...."

"He said God told him we were to be married someday....."

"It was just kissing but then she put my hand on her....."

How did we get here? How did we get to this point where Christian teenagers are deceiving and using each other? And for what? For fun. To have a "good time". For... entertainment? How did this happen?

A History of Dating (see reference # 2)

People have been on the earth for about 6,000 years. During all of this time there was no dating as we know it today until about 100 years ago. Before that people got to know one another as they worked together in the community and marriages happened quickly without much in the way of dating. Economies were such that boys just through puberty soon began working for a living without the delays needed to complete a high school and college education. The closest people came to dating was something called "courting" or "calling" which existed up until the mid-1920's in America.

Calling was a formal process where a man came over to a woman's house and, if she allowed him in, they would spend time in the parlor under the supervision of the woman's parents, who she lived with. It was a time of talking and other parlor activities. The purpose of "calling" was to determine if the couple should be married. They either married or the process of calling was ended relatively quickly once it was determined that they were not suitable marriage partners.

The advantages of this process were that the woman and her parents had control of the situation. There was little, if any, opportunity to engage in sensuality (kissing and touching) much less sexual activity. The intent of both people was clear. They knew each other from observation in public settings and activities in the community and church. Now they were exploring the possibility of marriage. Discussions of intent or "where the relationship was going" were not needed.

Key Point: Before the 1920's the standards for dating were that only those whose intent was to marry should "date" and even then only under parental supervision.

This began to change in the 1920's. In cities, the less well off did not have parlors or places of semi-privacy so couples began to "date" away from the home. The practice was soon adopted by the upper and middle classes. This took the couple away from parental supervision, one of the advantages of calling.

After World War II dating changed dramatically. The automobile provided not only privacy from parental supervision but privacy from the public. At the same time people no longer thought of "dating" as something you do as a final evaluation before marriage. It was now an end in itself. It was a chance to "have some fun". It also completed the transition of power from the woman to the man. The man picked up the woman, took her away from her parents, paid for the entertainment, etc. The man now had control of the situation. Dating was now viewed primarily as a method of entertainment as well as an indicator of social status (popularity).

The end result of these changes is that sensuality (intimate kissing and touching) increased dramatically as part of the dating process, starting in the 1950's, even though virginity was still highly valued. In addition these changes increased the level of confusion and misunderstanding in relationships. Some were dating with an intent toward marriage while others were more interested in entertainment and sensuality – having a good time. The custom of "going steady" only amplified these problems.

Key Point: The world's view of dating during the 1950's was that anything was OK as long as you kept your clothes on. (For a detailed study on what the Bible says about the dangers of sensuality please see: reference #3)

Today, the world's view on dating is that sensuality is expected and sexual activity is good as long as it is done in a "safe" way.

Steve Harvey, in his popular book, *"Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy, and Commitment"*, talks about a 90 day probation period which has caused some controversy. Any guesses what he is talking about? He noticed that when you go to work for Ford Motor Company the company does not allow you to use their benefits program for the first 90 days. During this time Ford is evaluating you to see if they want to keep you. If they decide to keep you, you can participate in their benefits programs starting on day 91.

Now get this. His argument is that women possess a benefit highly valued by men - sex. So, he recommends that women give men a 90 day probation period where they will not have sex with them and use that time to get to know the man first. 90 days! The controversy is not that 90 days is too little. The controversy is: its too much to ask. Incredible!

God's Standards

But God's standards have never changed. He views people as single or married, period. There is no special situation with its own rules called dating, going steady, etc. The idea of dating is a recent invention of the world system.

I Corinthians 7:1-2

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

God's thinking is this: There are only two types of people, 1) married people and 2) don't touch! That's it. There are no other categories. That's the standard.

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Defile – morally blemish, stain, impure; place under suspicion or cast doubt upon; tarnish, make dirty or spotty, pollute.

This verse makes it clear that the marriage bed is to be undefiled. Notice that God says that defiling of the marriage bed can be done in one of two ways. The first way is by adultery.

Adulterer - a married person who engages in sexual intercourse with another person who is not their spouse.

That's pretty obvious. But there is a second way to defile the marriage bed. Fornication.

Fornicator – an unmarried person who engages in sexual intercourse.

That's odd. How can the sexual activity of an unmarried person cause a marriage bed to be defiled?

Think of it this way: ***Purity in marriage does not start when you get married – it starts right now, while you are unmarried!***

Guys, whatever you are doing to that girl you are doing to someone's future wife. Do you want someone doing that to your wife?

Girls, whatever you are doing to that boy you are doing to someone's future husband. Do you want someone doing that to your husband?

Sexual activity when you are unmarried (fornication) defiles your future marriage bed.

How many intense pre-marital sexual encounters with other people do you want to permanently burn into your memory so that satan can bring them back up when you are being intimate with your spouse? What is the right number? Is it 100? Is it 10? "Zero" is the answer that will bring you the most happiness and fulfillment in your marriage.

A few years ago the doctor was running some blood tests on me to figure out what I had. When I met with him he said that he wasn't sure what was wrong with me yet but he was happy to report that I was one of only 5% of Americans who did not have antibodies for mononucleosis. In other words I had never been exposed to mononucleosis (also known as the "kissing disease"). I told him that was because I had only kissed one woman in my entire life. Trust me, I have not missed anything.

So, what does all this have to do with dating?

Dating is a High Risk Activity

Dating puts your heart, your body, and through these, your spirit at risk.

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

I Corinthians 6:18-20

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

I'm not saying you can't date. Its not a sin to go on a date. But if you date please be aware of what it is, where it came from, and what the risks are. So, what are the risks?

I am an engineer so let me describe it this way. Very high reliability systems that can't be fixed such as deep space probes or satellites use something called, "dual redundant systems" to make them extremely reliable. Basically, two copies of a critical system are included on the satellite. Each one is pretty reliable. But if one system starts to fail you can switch over to the other one. Having two copies of the system pushes the overall reliability to extremely high levels.

Unfortunately, dating is also a kind of dual redundant system but one that is oriented toward failure.

For example, a girl may be very committed to maintaining her purity while dating but constant pressure from a boy who wants to be sensual can wear down her defenses and prey on her fear of being abandoned. Likewise a boy who is very committed to maintaining his purity while dating may collapse if the girl makes aggressive sensual advances (see reference # 3 for some “true story” examples).

“Oh but Mr. Daily, Mr. Daily, what if both are committed to maintaining purity, now things are OK, right?”

Well, things are better but we still have some risks. You see, the problem is bigger than it first seems.

The main reason for doing this study tonight is to help you understand what all the risks are so that you can think things through ahead of time, weigh the risks, make an informed decision and then implement a plan of action. And we have a lot more risks to discuss.

Proverbs 4:23-27

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life. 24Put away from you a deceitful mouth And put devious speech far from you. 25Let your eyes look directly ahead And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. 26Watch the path of your feet And all your ways will be established. 27Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.

Why People Date

The truth is that when someone chooses to date you one-on-one, you don't really know the reason why. You can hope, you can wish, and you can dream – but you don't really know why, do you?

What are some of the reasons someone might want to date another person? (make a list on the board)

- 1) Physical intimacy (kissing, touching, or sex) without emotional intimacy
- 2) Emotional intimacy without physical intimacy (romantic experiences)
- 3) Emotional and physical intimacy without commitment (you are one of many)
- 4) To have fun, entertaining experiences (the good timer)
- 5) To have someone else pay for gifts and experiences they want to have (the gold digger)
- 6) To be seen as normal by others (if you don't date there must be something wrong with you)
- 7) To participate in the social circuit (parties, dances, etc.)
- 8) To find someone to marry

Here's a partial list of some of the reasons people date. Perhaps you can come up with others.

This list gives 36 possible combinations of why two people are dating each other! 28 of these are couples who are dating each other for different reasons. Work through these combinations on your own sometime and see if you can identify the problems that each of these types of relationships is going to produce.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Results</u>
1&2 / 1&6 / 2&3	frustration, guilt, loneliness, rejection, anger, pressure
1&3	disease, loneliness, constant stream of serial physical relationships
1&4	disease, waking up when you are 40 and realizing you are alone
1&5 / 1&7	a civilized form of prostitution
1&8 / 2&8 / 3&8 / 4&8 / 5&8 / 6&8 / 7&8	heartbreak, rejection, deception
2&4 / 2&5 / 2&6 / 2&7	loneliness, feelings of being used
3&4 / 3&5 / 3&6 / 3&7	mutual feelings of being used
4&5 / 4&6 / 4&7 / 5&6 / 5&7 / 6&7	a business partnership, not a relationship

The point is, one-on-one dating is more complicated and risky than you might have realized.

In fact, if two people are dating each other for different reasons it never leads to a good end, never.

What about the 8 combinations where the two people have the same reason for dating?

1&1 - Both want physical intimacy without emotional intimacy

The number of women who truly want this is small. When it does occur the end result is large numbers of sexual relationships one after another resulting in disease, loneliness, and hardness of heart. Whenever someone comes along who appears to offer the opportunity for better physical intimacy the other person is dropped. In other cases each person may have multiple partners going simultaneously (i.e. a girl in every port). In some cases physical intimacy will result in one of the people wanting more from the relationship but the other one won't. When that happens the relationship ends.

(Proverbs 7:18-23)

"Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses. 19"For my husband is not at home, He has gone on a long journey; 20He has taken a bag of money with him, At the full moon he will come home." 21With her many persuasions she entices him; With her flattering lips she seduces him. 22Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, 23Until an arrow pierces through his liver; As a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.

2&2 – Both want emotional intimacy without physical intimacy (romantic experiences)

The number of men who truly want this is small except if it is short term and the real goal is marriage. If someone new comes along who appears to offer better romantic experiences the relationship will end. This brings up the issue of, "Can men and women just be friends?" Maybe. They certainly can be acquaintances but a real friend is someone who you share intimate information with.

Here's a test to see if you and that person of the opposite sex are "just friends".

When your friend starts telling you about that new person (of your sex) that they met how do you feel? They go on and on about how attractive the person is and how talented they are and how wonderful it feels being with them. What is your initial reaction? Are you thrilled and excited for them? Or are you somewhat shocked and hurt that the relationship you have "means nothing" to them? Be honest. If your initial reaction is shock and hurt then you are more than just friends - at least you think so.

3&3 – Both want emotional and physical intimacy without commitment

This couple will end up living together or "playing marriage" temporarily. When things get difficult or inconvenient they will end the relationship and move on to the next relationship. A marriage license may or may not be involved.

4&4 – Both want to have fun, entertaining experiences (good timer)

This couple will date only as long as the good times continue. Because the priority is fun, the relationship usually doesn't last long because someone offering better fun experiences usually comes along.

5&5 - Both want someone else to pay for gifts and experiences they want to have (gold digger)

Unless a third party (such as a matchmaking parent) is funding the dates, this does not happen.

6&6 – Both want to be seen as normal by others

A temporary business partnership

7&7 – Both want to participate in the social circuit

A temporary business partnership

8&8 – Both want to find someone to marry

These people value commitment. They will either marry or end the relationship without having reasons for guilt or regret.

Whether I got all the details exactly right or not I hope you can see that dating is a complex and risky game. So, what are your reasons for dating? Figure out which reasons apply to you and use this information to identify the risks you will need to be ready for.

But Wait! There's More! (risk that is)

Here's another big risk you need to be aware of that complicates everything else. The human heart is the most deceitful thing in existence. It has the ability to convince a person to believe something that is not true.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

On top of everything else, you or the person you are dating may not be fully conscious of the real reasons you are dating. Your heart may have deceived you. Their heart may have deceived them. They think they are dating you for one reason but the real reason is something different. This is why people that are dating can say one thing and sound so convincing (because they really do believe it) but their actions reveal the truth.

At the beginning of the lesson I mentioned the pregnant girl whose boyfriend wasn't sure he wanted to marry her. I'm sure at some point the boy was convinced he loved this girl but when an action decision had to be made his true heart was revealed both to himself and to the girl.

Years ago Tiger Woods (world famous professional golfer) was married. Why would he do that? Tiger Woods is a multi-millionaire would could buy any woman he wanted – and he usually did. Why would someone like that get married? It doesn't make any sense. Its because his heart deceived him. He thought he was the marrying kind of person. But his actions revealed to himself and to the world that he was not the marrying kind of person.

Key Point: Actions reveal the heart's intent, not words - even deeply believed words.

One of the reasons we have certain rituals around marriage is that they help protect us from this deception.

If a woman walks into a room filled with other women she knows and she says, "I'm engaged to be married!" what is the first thing the other women do? They want to see the ring. And rightly so. Because if there is no ring on your finger then you are not really engaged, you are deceived.

There are three things that need to happen for you to really be engaged to be married:

- 1) There is a ring on your finger that can be seen and examined by others.
- 2) A specific wedding day has been set as the date. "What day will the wedding day be? I want to put it on my calendar". "Well, we haven't really set a date yet. Its probably going to be sometime between this month and that one." This indicates you have been deceived. You're not really engaged to be married yet.
- 3) There needs to be a public announcement of the wedding or engagement, in writing. Examples include wedding invitations that have been sent out or a newspaper article has been printed. All three items need to be true. This will protect you from being deceived by your heart or the other person's heart.

Another ritual is in the marriage vows. Going back to our "reasons for dating" list I want you to notice something (point to item 5 and say these words out loud: "for richer or poorer", point to item 4 and say: "in sickness and in health")

- 1) Physical intimacy (kissing, touching, or sex) without emotional intimacy
- 2) Emotional intimacy without physical intimacy (romantic experiences)
- 3) Emotional and physical intimacy without commitment (you are one of many)
- 4) To have new, entertaining experiences (the good timer)
- 5) To have someone else pay for gifts and experiences they want to have (the gold digger)
- 6) To be seen as normal by others (if you don't date there must be something wrong with you)
- 7) To participate in the social circuit (parties, dances, etc.)
- 8) To find someone to marry

The marriage vows are a direct statement of lifelong commitment (item #3), physical and emotional intimacy (items 1&2), and an overt rejection of all the invalid reasons that people form couples with each other. If the gold disappears, I'm not leaving (item #5). If the fun experiences stop, I'll still be here (item #4). This is marriage. This is for real. No playing around.

Another way to safeguard yourself from deception is to ask the opinion of parents and spiritual leaders. "I'm dating Joe, what do you think of him?" If they see a problem they will tell you. It may be hard to hear but if 2 or 3 people are pointing out the same negative thing about Joe you need to be willing to listen, even though you personally can't see it. If you start defending Joe, people will stop telling you what they think - just listen quietly and let them say what they have to say. On the other hand if other people don't see any issues, that is good information. What they are saying is, "Even though we don't know him (her) as well as you do, from our vantage point, when we do a scan against the invalid reasons why he (she) might be dating you and against other risk issues, we are not seeing any red flags or high risk areas for concern". That is really important information. If they are seeing issues, ask for more detail and examples and then do some checking on these things for yourself. Make sure you are open to seeing the truth and not just hoping or wishing for the best.

Someone is Better Than No One – Wait! Reverse That!

Some people say, 'Well, he's (she's) not Mr. (Ms.) Right but they're better than nothing so I'll just hang with them and kill time until Mr. (Ms.) Right comes along". Is that a good strategy? That's a really bad strategy. If you are always tangled up in a mediocre relationship all you are doing is making it difficult for God to bring the right person to you when it is time. When the right person comes along they will see that you are "taken" and won't even approach you – and you will never even know it happened!

When I was a young Christian in college I had a morning test so I took my physics book and went down early to have breakfast in the dorm cafeteria. I got my food and sat down by myself to eat. It was early in the morning so the dining area was almost empty. As a new Christian I bowed my head to pray before eating, following the example of the guys who had led me to Christ earlier that year. I opened my book and started eating my breakfast when I heard a girl's voice say, "Excuse me, may I sit here?" When I looked up it was a beautiful girl so I said, "Of course". I closed my book and we had a nice breakfast and discussion. She was a mature Christian (way ahead of me) and we ended up going on a few dates. Later I asked her why she came over to my table that morning. She said, "Well, I noticed that you were sitting alone and then I saw you bow your head to pray – so I came right over". If some other girl had already been sitting with me she would not have come over. If I had not bowed my head to pray she would not have come over.

Although she was not the one for me to marry, God taught me a powerful lesson through that experience. The lesson I learned was: "Put Me (God) first, serve Me without reservation, and don't let yourself get tangled up in mediocre relationships. Do those things and it will be easy for Me to bring you the right girl when it is time".

Matthew 6:31-33

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32"For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

What to Do

The decisions are up to you but please consider the following recommendations:

- 1) Before you are ready for marriage spend time with the opposite sex in group settings. Church service projects are a great way to get to know people and observe how they react in real life situations.

Proverbs 18:1

He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.

II Timothy 2:22

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Romans 12:10-13

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

- 2) Focus on serving God and preparing for your future. Its hard to know if you want to marry someone if you don't know what they are going to be or what you are going to be.

Colossians 3:1-5

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. 5Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

- 3) Trust God – Let Him take care of getting you the right person at the right time. God delights in those who follow him closely and obey Him. God takes pleasure in arranging circumstances in order to orchestrate the bringing together of two people who have set themselves apart for each other in obedience to Him.

Jeremiah 29:11-12

'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 12'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

Psalms 37:23-24

The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. 24When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- 4) Don't date one-on-one until you are emotionally ready and financially able to get married. If it's the right person, emotional intimacy is going to snowball rapidly and temptations for physical intimacy are going to ramp up fast. If the ability to marry is not available, you have a problem (see reference # 5). Nevertheless, there is no hard and fast rule on this because every situation is different. Its really about being able to think through situations, understand the risks, and make an informed decision.

For example, some people wonder if high school students should date. Instead of trying to argue a blanket yes or no answer to that question lets work through two different scenarios.

- a) A freshman boy in high school dates some girls. Surprisingly he quickly finds a girl who seems ideal as a potential wife. She checks all his boxes and is jaw-droppingly amazing. The boy decides he wants her really badly. Then he realizes that he can't get married for at least five years. So, now what does he do? Five years is a long time. After a while he wonders why he was dating at all. What was his purpose in dating? Was it entertainment? Was it to find someone to marry knowing that he can't actually marry her? What was the point? It doesn't make sense. He wasted time going down a path that leads to nowhere. Instead of doing that, think through the situation ahead of time. If it can't go anywhere, then don't start. In this case there was not a valid reason for this freshman to be dating.
- b) A junior boy in high school knows for sure that he will not be attending college. He is convinced that God wants him to graduate from high school in two years and immediately join the Army. He believes he will likely be a career enlisted soldier. He starts to date girls and within a year finds that one of them is jaw-droppingly amazing and he wants her really badly. Through their discussions she understands that if she marries him she will be the wife of a career soldier and she believes that that would be an exciting adventure of a life. A year later they graduate from high school. The next day the young man joins the Army. A week after that the couple is married and on their way. There is nothing wrong with this. In this case starting to date as a junior in high school was a reasonable thing to do.

In my own situation my wife and I were married when I was a junior in college. I had excellent grades demonstrating 3 years of success in an engineering curriculum. The probability that I would not do well my last year toward my engineering degree was small. I was less than 12 months away from being an engineer. Although highly unlikely, if my wife had become pregnant during this first year of marriage (she didn't) the probability would still be high that I would finish my degree and be able to start an engineering job (with medical insurance) before the baby was born. So, everything considered, the risks from marrying her before I finished my degree were actually very low – and I didn't want to wait any more. It was a risk but the risk was calculated and was low. We were not taking a stupid risk. After we were married I ended up continuing in grad school but by then I was working two days a week as a computer programmer and making enough money to support us while also going to school.

A final comment on risk

We have talked about many different kinds of risk that could cause someone to delay dating or marriage. But there is another side to the coin as well. Delaying marriage too long can increase the risk of sexual immorality occurring. This is why hard and fast rules applied uniformly to everyone on these decisions is not the best approach. Delaying marriage until the other risks are zero can result in the couple falling into sexual immorality which can then have long-lasting negative impacts to their marriage in the area of trust. For example, "If I could not trust you to obey God in this area of life before we were married, how do I know for sure I can trust you in other areas of life now that we are married?" For some couples it can take many years to repair the damage done to trust in their relationship.

Questions & Answers

What about special events like the Prom?

A group of you can go together or you can meet there. It takes a little more effort but if its something you just can't miss, turn it into a group event - at least for some of you.

Won't I miss some important life skills if I don't date and other people do?

I don't think so. I only dated two girls in my life and I seem to be OK. When I was developing this study I asked my friend, Don, who I meet with every week for bible study, what his thoughts on dating were. Don and his wife have been happily married for 29 years. Don said, "I'm the wrong person to ask, I didn't start dating until I was a senior in college". I replied, "You act like there is something wrong with that – I think that's the answer". Some of the happiest marriages I know are made up of people who were not big daters.

If everyone else is dating one-on-one and I'm not, aren't I just depriving myself for nothing?

No. You are saving yourself for marriage both physically and emotionally - not depriving yourself. The real question is, "If I am going to all this trouble will it pay off?" The answer is yes. There are 300 million people in America. If only 0.3% of those people have led pure lives and are in your age group that is still 1 million people. How many of these 1 million people are you going to marry? One. Do you believe God will honor your obedience and bring you together with that one person? You should. By the way, if you think my 0.3% is too high, pick a percentage you think is realistic. Multiply that by 300 million. If you get a number greater than one you're still in good shape because God has a future planned for you and He is personally directing it.

Proverbs 23:17-18

Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the LORD always. 18 Surely there is a future, And your hope will not be cut off.

Boys rarely call me now. If I don't date when they do call, won't I be doomed?

No. For insight about why some high school girls don't get a lot of calls from boys and why it is not a bad thing, see reference # 5, *Mike Daily, "Modesty in Dress for Teenage Women"* at <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>. The truth is that unless you have the spiritual gift of singleness, God has plans to get you married. But don't worry, if the thought that you might have the spiritual gift of singleness horrifies you – that means you don't have it!

It sounds like all of my problems will be solved once I marry the right person, is that right?

Not exactly. Keep in mind that life is a character building experience. God is using our few brief years on the Earth to develop our faith and a Christ-like character. Once you marry the person God has for you, most of the problems you have now will disappear or be greatly reduced. But in their place a new set of problems will be given to you. This is why Christian books and seminars on Marriage, Parenting, and Money are so popular. This is true for every life transition. That's why you should be content regardless of what stage of life you are in. You will never get to a point in this life where you have "arrived" and everything is in perfect harmony.

John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

I Corinthians 7:32-34

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; 33but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 34and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

Are there any rules of thumb to use when determining how physical to be when dating?

Yes. The standard (**I Timothy 5:1-2**) is to interact physically just as if the girl was your sister or the boy was your brother. Guys, would you kiss your sister on the cheek? Perhaps. Would you kiss her on the lips? No. Would you walk around holding her hand? Probably not. Would you give her a passionate embrace? No. Keep this standard in mind and you shouldn't have any problems.

I Timothy 5:1-2

Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, ² the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

When I am ready and able to get married what should I be looking for in a potential spouse?

Someone who understands the roles and responsibilities of the husband and the wife as presented in the bible and who demonstrates the capacity to grow into those responsibilities. See reference # 4, *Mike Daily, "Marriage Convictions For Teenagers"*, <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>.

I Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Other things to look at are: How do they treat members of the opposite sex in general, do they have a positive attitude, are they diligent in their work responsibilities, do they dress appropriately, what are their closest friends like, do they respond well to those who are in authority over them, are they able to support a family, are they likeminded with you doctrinally, is their spiritual maturity and yours about the same (see reference # 1).

Now let me challenge you with something.

Let's say that amazing person shows up one day. They have all the attributes you wanted in a potential spouse. Here's my question, "Why would that kind of person want you?" In other words, are you becoming the kind of person that will be attractive to the kind of person you want to marry? I've seen this situation occur. The amazing person shows up. The other person can't believe it. But then, very quickly they realize that they are not ready. They are not at the same level as the other person. And the opportunity is lost.

Let me illustrate this with an example:

A young woman prays that God would give her a godly man to marry. Someone who is passionate about following God and obeying His Word. One day the young man shows up and thinks she is pretty. They get to know each other and perhaps date. One of their conversations goes something like this:

Man: *"I've been learning a lot from God lately in my quiet time. Take Matthew chapter 6 for example. Jesus talks about all the things the people of the world worry about and eagerly seek - food, clothing, jobs, spouses, money, etc. But then Jesus says that if we seek Him and His kingdom with everything we've got then, guess what - He will just give us all the other things! Isn't that incredible? That's how I want to live my life. What about you. What has God been teaching you?"*

As the young woman sits there looking into his eyes she realizes that she doesn't really have much of a daily time with God reading the Bible. Then she says:

Woman: *"Oh, well God has been reminding me of how much He loves us and all the ways He gives us grace"*

Man: *"What ways specifically?"*

Woman: *"Lots of ways. There are just too many to name, don't you think?"*

Man: *"You know when I moved here I took an airplane and one of the things I like to do on airplanes is share the gospel with the person sitting next to me. I have a 5 minute way of doing it using 11 memorized verses. Its hard for someone stuck on an airplane to say no to a short 5 minute presentation! It was awesome to see God working in the guy. He was stunned that God would go to so much effort to give him eternal life for free. He didn't become a Christian but God is definitely working in his life. What about you. How do you share the gospel?"*

As the young woman sits there looking into his eyes she realizes that she hasn't really ever tried to share the gospel. Then she says:

Woman: *"The way I do it is I try to be there for people. I think that's important. If you are there for them they will feel like they can ask you questions if they want. If they ask then I try to answer their questions as best I can or invite them to come to church with me.*

Man: *"Let's pray. I'll pray first then you can finish us up."*

The young man prays with specific reference to scriptures detailing God's will on various topics. The young woman, who is not much of a prayer, thanks God for all the good things He gives us and prays for the safety of those travelling and that her brother would recover from his illness soon. As they both finish their prayer they look up at each other. They both realize that they are not in the same place in terms of spiritual maturity.

What is the probability that they will marry? It is unlikely.

Why? Because the young woman is not ready. She has not been maturing as a Christian.

God answered her prayer but she's not ready – and she missed the opportunity.

Appendix - Additional Verses Related to Dating

I Thessalonians 4:3-8

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Ephesians 5:3-8

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

Romans 13:8-14

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 10Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12The night is almost gone, and the day is near Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Matthew 5:31-32

"It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:3-9

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY?"⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

I Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

I Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

I Corinthians 5:9-14

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? ¹³ But those who are outside, God ^ljudges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

II Corinthians 6:14-17

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹⁷ “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

I Peter 5:8

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Ephesians 4:27

and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Ephesians 5:15-17

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Proverbs 5:3-22

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; ⁴ But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol. ⁶ She does not ponder the path of life; Her ways are unstable, she does not know *it*. ⁷ Now then, *my sons*, listen to me And do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her And do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ Or you will give your vigor to others And your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰ And strangers will be filled with your strength And your hard-earned goods *will go* to the house of an alien; ¹¹ And you groan at your final end, When your flesh and your body are consumed; ¹² And you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! ¹³ “I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to my instructors! ¹⁴ “I was almost in utter ruin In the midst of the assembly and congregation.” ¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern And fresh water from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷ Let them be yours alone And not for strangers with you. ¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. ²⁰ For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress And embrace the bosom of a foreigner? ²¹ For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths. ²² His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin.

II Samuel 13:11-15

When she brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.” ¹² But she answered him, “No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! ¹³ As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you.” ¹⁴ However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. ¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Get up, go away!”

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 7:1-9, I Timothy 5:1-2*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 13:4*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 4:17-25*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 4:23-27*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 6:12-20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 7:18-23*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Jeremiah 17:9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 6:31-34*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 18:1, II Timothy 2:22, Romans 12:10-13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Colossian 3:1-7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Jeremiah 29:11-12, Psalm 37:23-24, Jeremiah 31:20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 12:1-2, Proverbs 23:17-18*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 13:4-7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 16:33, I Corinthians 7:32-34*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Thessalonians 4:1-8*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 5:1-8*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 13:8-14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:1-9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 3:16, Matthew 18:20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 5:9-14, I Corinthians 15:33, II Corinthians 6:14-17*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Dating Game*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 5:8, Ephesians 4:27, Ephesians 5:15-17*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 5:1-23*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Samuel 13:10-15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?