

Dating and Preparing for Marriage

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- I. The topic of dating is important for all of us, regardless of our marital status.
 1. This is a topic that we most often associate with teenagers and young men and women, but it is not limited to them.
 2. Older people sometimes find themselves in a position of being single and available due to the death of a spouse, or divorce caused by adultery, both of which free them to remarry.
 3. Some older people find themselves in a position of being single and NOT available to remarry.
 4. People with kids need to teach their children how to choose someone to date, and how to behave themselves when dating.
 5. Grandparents may even have opportunity to give their two-cents to their grandchildren or adult children who are in the dating arena.
 6. There is much instruction in this study concerning what constitutes good character in husbands and wives.
 7. Therefore, this study is important for every member of this church.
 8. This study is only directed at believers, not unbelievers.
- II. "Success in marriage is much more than a matter of finding the right person; it is also a matter of being the right person." - Leland Foster Wood, *Growing Together in the Family*
- III. Marriage is for most people.
 1. For most people, it is not good for them to be alone, which is why God designed marriage (**Gen 2:18-24**).
 - A. This is why in general, every man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband (**1Co 7:1-2**).
 - B. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." (**Pro 18:22**)
 2. Though marriage is for most people, there are those who have the gift of celibacy and it is good for those fitted for it (**1Co 7:7-8**).
 - A. A Christian should consider the merits of remaining single before seeking a spouse.
 - B. One can attend upon the Lord without distraction if unmarried (**1Co 7:32-35**).
 - C. But if you find that you don't have the gift, it is better to marry (**1Co 7:9**).
- IV. Who is able to date?
 1. The purpose of dating is to find a spouse, which will be covered later in the outline.
 2. In that the purpose of dating is to find a spouse, only those who are able to be married are able to date.
 3. Put another way: if you are not able to marry, you should not be dating.
 4. This means that the following people should NOT date:
 - A. Anyone who is married (this should go without saying).
 - i. Married people are not even to *look* upon another person other than their spouse (**Job 31:1**).
 - ii. A husband is a covering of the eyes to his wife (**Gen 20:16**).
 - iii. To look upon a woman to lust after her is to commit adultery in one's heart (**Mat 5:28; Pro 6:25**).

- iv. Therefore, for a married person to go on a date with a person who is not their spouse would be for them to commit adultery in their heart, or at least facilitate doing so.
- B. Anyone who is divorced for reasons other than their spouse committing adultery.
 - i. Marriage is a life long covenant to which God holds people (**Rom 7:2; Mat 19:6**).
 - ii. For a man to divorce his wife and marry another is for him to commit adultery (**Mar 10:11-12**).
 - iii. The only exceptions to this rule are:
 - a. If the man's wife commits fornication/adultery he is free to put her away and marry another (**Mat 19:9**).
 - b. If a believer is married to an unbeliever and the unbeliever abandons him/her (**1Co 7:15**).
 - iv. Since it would be adultery for a man who is divorced to remarry (**Luk 16:18**), then it would likewise be adultery in the heart for that man to date.
- 5. The following people are able to date.
 - A. Single people who were never married.
 - B. Widows and widowers (**Rom 7:3; 1Co 7:39**).
 - C. Single people who were divorced for reasons of adultery (**Mat 19:9**) or the abandonment of an unbeliever (**1Co 7:15**).

V. Dating vs. courting

1. Definitions:
 - A. Date *n.* - An appointment or engagement at a particular time, freq. with a person of the opposite sex; a social activity engaged in by two persons of opposite sex.
 - B. Court *v.* - II. 3. *trans.* To pay court to, pay courteous attention to; to try to win favour with. 4. To pay amorous attention to, seek to gain the affections of, make love to (with a view to marriage), pay addresses to, woo. 5. To seek to win or attract (any one) to do something; to invite, allure, entice into, to, from, out of, etc. Cf. to woo.
 - C. Courting, as it is defined here, often occurs on a date (except the love-making part!).
 - D. There is a more specific definition of courting that is used in the "Christian" world which is made reference to below.
2. We do not live in a culture where marriages are arranged.
3. Nor do we live in a Vision Forum (which is no more) utopia where the norm is for a young man to see a young lady he likes and approach her father for permission to spend time getting to know her among her family prior to entering into a completely adult supervised relationship where the two young people never spend any time alone, nor have any physical contact until they are married.
4. The scripture (specifically the NT) doesn't specify a particular manner for finding a spouse, including the two above mentioned ideas, so therefore this is an area of liberty for Christians.
5. The Bible nowhere forbids "a social activity engaged in by two persons of opposite sex" who are both unmarried; therefore the Bible doesn't forbid dating.
6. In that arranged marriages and Vision-Forum-style courtship are not practical in our time and culture (nor are they commanded in the NT), dating (a social activity engaged in by two

persons of opposite sex) is a reasonable and virtually unavoidable method of finding a spouse.

VI. The purpose and end of dating.

1. In a loose, general sense, a person can go on a date with another person for social enjoyment; in other words for friendship.
 - A. This should only be done when the person with whom you are going on a date is *not married* and is *Biblically available*.
 - i. At a minimum, going on a date with a married person or a divorced person who is not free to remarry would be an *appearance of evil*, which must be abstained from (**1Th 5:22**).
 - ii. If you are engaging in a "dating" type of friendship, the person you are "dating" should be available to marry (even if that isn't your intention) because, 1) the friendship could lead to a romantic relationship, and 2) to the outside observer it likely looks like a romantic dating relationship which would be an appearance of evil if the person is not free to remarry in the eyes of God.
 - iii. Even if there was not actual evil happening on the date (fornication, lust, etc.), it could lead to that, and the prudent man should foresee that evil and hide himself from it (**Pro 22:3**).
 - B. If the person is single and Biblically available, then a "dating" friendship is permissible.
 - i. Make sure to be up front with the person and let them know that your intention is only friendship.
 - ii. Friendship can turn into romance, which isn't a bad thing if it's a mutual feeling.
 - iii. Every good marriage is built on a solid friendship (**Son 5:16**).
 - iv. Be aware that the friendship could end sadly if one person becomes romantically attracted and the other person doesn't.
 - v. All relationships involve risk; if you are not willing to risk being hurt, you will likely never have a close friend or a spouse.
2. The purpose of dating (romantic dating) is to find a spouse.
 - A. The purpose of dating is NOT to "hook up."
 - i. The Bible calls this fornication.
 - a. Fornication - Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted use, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman. In Scripture extended to adultery.
 - b. Intercourse - 2. a. Social communication between individuals; frequent and habitual contact in conversation and action; dealings. d. Sexual connexion.
 - c. Connexion - 1. a. The action of connecting or joining together; the condition of being connected or joined together.
 - d. Fornication therefore is connecting any part of one person's body (sexual organ, hand, mouth, etc.) to the sexual organs of another person's body.
 - e. This means that oral sex and "hand jobs" are considered fornication.

- f. Fornication (sex before marriage) is a sin and is forbidden by God (**1Co 6:18; 1Th 4:3**).
 - ii. Hugging, kissing, cuddling, snuggling, etc. are not fornication and are therefore not necessarily sinful, but they are a slippery slope towards it.
 - a. Things such as these may be lawful, but they might not be expedient (**1Co 6:12; 1Co 10:23**).
 - b. Expedient - II. 2. Conducive to advantage in general, or to a definite purpose; fit, proper, or suitable to the circumstances of the case.
 - c. Physical contact with a person of the opposite sex excites lust within us.
 - (i) This is a good thing in the confines of marriage (**Pro 5:18-19; Son 4:9**).
 - (ii) This is a dangerous thing outside of marriage (**Pro 7:13-23; Pro 6:24-26; Pro 5:20-23**).
 - (iii) When lust has conceived it brings forth sin which brings forth death (**Jam 1:14-15**).
 - d. It is very important to not make provision for your flesh to fulfill its lusts (**Rom 13:14; 1Pe 2:11**).
 - e. We would all be wise to determine our limits ahead of time so that when the time comes we will know when to flee (**Pro 22:3; 1Co 6:18**).
- B. The purpose of dating is NOT to merely have a good time, though dates should be enjoyable.
 - i. Remember, delicate feelings are at risk of being hurt (both yours and theirs), so don't take dating lightly.
 - ii. If this is your approach, you will be more likely to not respect the person you are dating and also more likely to relax your guard and "get carried away."
- C. The goal and end of dating should be to find a husband or wife.
 - i. When dating someone, pay very close attention to the words, actions, personality, and character of the person.
 - ii. When you are dating, keep your eyes wide open; after you are married, keep them half shut.
 - iii. When it becomes apparent that the person you are dating is not husband or wife material, it's time to stop dating.

VII. When and who to date.

1. Deciding when in life to date.

- A. In that the purpose of dating is to find a spouse, it would not be wise to begin dating until you are ready and able to be married.
- B. For men:
 - i. For a man who is supposed to provide for his family (**1Ti 5:8**), this would mean that marriage, and by extension, dating, should wait until he has a job and sufficient means to provide (**Pro 24:27**).
 - ii. For a man, this also means that dating and marriage should wait until he is mature enough to be the head and ruler of his wife and family (**Eph 5:23-24**).

- iii. It would not be advisable for a man who wants to be married to intentionally wait until he has been living by himself for many years before marrying because he will become accustomed to living alone and may have a hard time adjusting to a life shared with a wife and children.

C. For women:

- i. For a woman who is supposed to bear children and guide the house, this would mean that dating and marriage should wait until she is mature enough to handle these duties which require a high level of responsibility (**1Ti 5:14**).
- ii. For a woman, this also means that dating and marriage should wait until she is mature enough to submit herself to her husband's headship (**Eph 5:22-24**).
- iii. It would not be advisable for a woman who wants to be married to intentionally first live on her own for years and establish herself in a career because she will likely have a hard time being a keeper at home and submitting to her husband (**Tit 2:5**).

2. Deciding who to date.

A. Look for a believer of like-faith first.

- i. In that husbands and wives are supposed to be "heirs together of the grace of life" (**1Pe 3:7**), and it's hard for two people to walk together unless they agree (**Amo 3:3**), it is strongly recommended that a Christian look for a spouse who shares his faith.
- ii. The first place a Christian should look for someone to date would naturally be in his own church.
- iii. If there are no prospects in his church, then check out churches of like-faith.
- iv. Your pastor may be able to ask other pastors if there are any available Christians in their churches.

B. If there are no prospects in other churches, then you can look outside of the church for someone with hopes of them converting.

- i. This can be done the old fashioned way of meeting a girl in person whom you find attractive and asking her for her number so that you can call her and get to know her better.
- ii. Dating websites are also a possibility.
 - a. I know Christians who met their spouse on a dating website.
 - b. I would recommend using one you have to pay for, since you get what you pay for.
 - c. Especially if you are a girl, make sure that the first time you meet in person, you meet in a very public area, as there are a lot of creeps out there.
- iii. A good "pickup line" is to ask a person you are interested in what church they go to.
- iv. This will give you an idea of where they are coming from theologically and also will open a door of communication between the two of you.
- v. This will likely be a long term strategy and will require much patience (**Psa 27:14**).
- vi. Finding a wife (**Pro 18:22**) requires seeking (**Mat 7:7**).

vii. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." (**Psa 37:4-5**)

C. Finding a husband.

- i. Much of the previous instruction is primarily directed at men who are the ones who traditionally do the asking and seeking when it comes to dating.
- ii. Women traditionally are the ones who are asked on dates, though this is increasingly changing in our modern world.
- iii. The best thing a woman can do to find a husband is be a virtuous woman, and good men will take care of the asking part.
- iv. If a woman does see a man that she is interested in, she could always use a third party to let him know she is interested, and then let him do the rest.

3. What qualities to look for in a potential spouse.

A. General qualities in both men and women.

i. Honesty

- a. Honesty - 3. Honourable character. †a. Formerly in a wide general sense, including all kinds of moral excellence worthy of honour. d. Uprightness of disposition and conduct; integrity, truthfulness, straightforwardness: the quality opposed to lying, cheating, or stealing. (The prevailing modern sense.)
- b. Honest adj. - 3. Of persons: Having honourable motives or principles; marked by uprightness or probity. ga. In early use in a wide sense: Of good moral character; virtuous, upright, well-disposed. c. That deals fairly and uprightly in speech and act; sincere, truthful, candid; that will not lie, cheat, or steal. (The prevailing modern sense, the 'honest man' being the 'good citizen', the law-abiding man, as opposed to the rogue, thief, or enemy of society.)
- c. Honesty should characterize the life of a Christian (**1Pe 2:12**).
- d. A Christian should speak truth *in his heart* as well as with his mouth (**Psa 15:2**).
- e. It is the person with an honest and good heart which brings forth good fruit in his life (**Luk 8:15**).
- f. Therefore, if you want to know if a man has an honest and good heart, look for the fruit in his life.

ii. Integrity

- a. Integrity - 1. The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety. 3. In moral sense. a. Unimpaired moral state; freedom from moral corruption; innocence, sinlessness. b. Soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue, esp. in relation to truth and fair dealing; uprightness, honesty, sincerity.
- b. A man's integrity is his moral compass which guides him through life (**Pro 11:3**).
- c. You will be much better off to marry a poor man with integrity than a morally corrupt rich man (**Pro 19:1**).

- d. A man with integrity will have a blessed family (**Pro 20:7**).
 - e. A good man maintains his integrity even when going through severe affliction and persecution (**Job 2:3**).
- iii. Faithfulness and commitment
- a. Faithfulness - The quality of being faithful. a. Fidelity, loyalty (to a superior or friend); trustworthiness, conscientiousness. b. Strict adherence to one's pledged word; honesty, sincerity.
 - b. A faithful man is hard to find (**Pro 20:6**).
 - c. A faithful man will abound with blessings (**Pro 28:20**).
 - d. If a man is faithful in the small things, he will be faithful in the big things, like the lifelong commitment of marriage (**Luk 16:10**).
 - e. On the other hand, if a man is not faithful in the small things, he will not likely be faithful in the big things (**Luk 16:11-12**).
 - f. Pay attention to the small things in a man's life.
 - (i) Does he do what he said he would do?
 - (ii) Does he call when he said he would call?
 - (iii) Does he cancel on you for non-emergencies?
 - (iv) Does he keep his word, even when it costs him to do so? (**Psa 15:4; Ecc 5:4-5**).
- iv. Humility
- a. Humility - 1. The quality of being humble or having a lowly opinion of oneself; meekness, lowliness, humbleness: the opposite of pride or haughtiness.
 - b. God resists the proud -- you should resist marrying them too (**Jam 4:6**).
 - c. Find a man that has a high opinion of himself and you have likely found a man who has a low opinion of you (**Luk 18:9**).
 - d. A proud man thinks too highly of himself to admit when he is wrong.
 - (i) He will therefore get angry when confronted about his behavior (**Pro 21:24**).
 - (ii) He will be one to stir up strife (**Pro 28:25**) and contention (**Pro 13:10**).
 - (iii) If you don't want to walk on eggshells for the rest of your life, then don't marry a proud person.
 - e. God will give grace to and lift up the humble (**Jam 4:6,10; 1Pe 5:6**).
- v. Wisdom (sound judgment)
- a. Wisdom - 1. a. Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs: opp. to *folly*.
 - b. Wisdom is held in very high regard by God (**Pro 4:5-7**).
 - c. Principal *adj.* - 1. First or highest in rank or importance; that is at the head of all the rest; of the greatest account or value; foremost
 - d. Wisdom is more valuable than wealth (**Pro 8:11; Pro 16:16**).
 - e. Wisdom is foundational for building a good house (family) (**Pro 24:3**).

- f. A wise man is a strong man (**Pro 24:5**).
- vi. Good communication skills
 - a. Does the person expresses their feelings well? (**Pro 27:19**)
 - b. Do they listen well?
 - (i) Is the person primarily interested in himself? (**Pro 18:2**)
 - (ii) Are they swift to hear, or speak? (**Jam 1:19**)
 - (iii) Do they hear you out before answering? (**Pro 18:13**)
 - c. Do they receive reproof well?
 - (i) A good man will accept reproof and be grateful for it (**Pro 15:31; Pro 13:18; Psa 141:5**).
 - (ii) A person who hates reproof is a stupid fool (**Pro 12:1; Pro 10:17**).
- vii. Selflessness
 - a. Is the person concerned with the welfare of others above himself? (**1Co 10:24; Phi 2:4**)
 - b. Do they seek their own pleasure and wellbeing above that of others? (**1Co 13:5; Phi 2:20-21**)
- viii. Diligence (hard working)
 - a. Diligence - 1. Constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent application and endeavour; industry, assiduity.
 - b. Is the person a hard worker or slothful in his business? (**Rom 12:11**)
 - c. Does he give his all to everything he puts his hand to? (**Ecc 9:10; Col 3:23**)
 - d. Or does he always find an excuse as to why he can't do the work that needs done? (**Pro 20:4; Pro 22:13**)
 - e. Is everything he owns falling apart, either literally or figuratively? (**Pro 24:30-34; Ecc 10:18**)
 - f. A hardworking, diligent man will go places in life (**Pro 22:29**).
 - g. On the other hand, a lazy sloth will be impoverished (**Pro 6:9-11; Pro 19:15**).
 - h. It is not only important for *a man* to be diligent -- a virtuous woman is a hard-working woman (**Pro 31:10-31**).
- ix. Patience
 - a. Patience - 1. a. The suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure; the quality or capacity of so suffering or enduring. b. Forbearance, longsuffering, longanimity under provocation of any kind; esp. forbearance or bearing with others, their faults, limitations, etc. c. The calm abiding of the issue of time, processes, etc.; quiet and self-possessed waiting for something; 'the quality of expecting long without rage or discontent'
 - b. Is the person easily irritated?
 - c. Do they get road rage every time someone pulls out in front of them or drives too slowly?
 - d. How does he deal with pain or sickness?
 - e. How does he react when his plans are thwarted?
 - f. Is he content with what he has? (**Heb 13:5**).

- g. Does he get angry quickly and easily? (**Jam 1:19-20; Pro 12:16; Pro 14:17,29; Pro 25:28; Ecc 7:9**)
 - h. Charity *suffereth long* (**1Co 13:4**) and *endureth* all things (**1Co 13:7**); in other words, charity is patient.
 - i. Endure v. - II. To last; to suffer continuously. 3. *trans.* To undergo, bear, sustain (continuous pain, opposition, hardship, or annoyance); properly, to undergo without succumbing or giving way.
 - j. Charity is not easily provoked; in other words, charity is patient (**1Co 13:5**).
- x. Compassion and mercy
 - a. Is the person quick to judge? (**Jam 2:13**)
 - b. Do they forgive and forget? (**Eph 4:32; Mat 18:33,35**)
 - c. Do they make a mountain out of a molehill over every word that is spoken? (**Ecc 7:21-22**)
 - d. Does he overlook and cover sins when it's possible and proper to do so? (**Pro 19:11; Pro 10:12; Pro 17:9; 1Pe 4:8**).
 - xi. Kindness and gentleness
 - a. Charity is kind (**1Co 13:4**).
 - b. A fundamental characteristic of a Christian should be kindness (**Col 3:12; 2Pe 1:7**).
 - c. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (**Gal 5:22**).
 - d. Is the person gentle and easy to be intreated? (**Jam 3:17**)
 - xii. Truth seeking
 - a. A virtuous person is a seeker of truth.
 - b. God is a God of truth (**Deu 32:4; Psa 31:5**).
 - (i) God's word is truth (**Joh 17:17**).
 - (ii) We must worship God in spirit and in truth (**Joh 4:24**).
 - (iii) Jesus Christ is the truth (**Joh 14:6**).
 - (iv) Therefore, a person who is not a truth seeker will not be a diligent seeker of God, God's word, God's worship, and God's Son.
 - c. We are exhorted by God to buy the truth (**Pro 23:23**).
 - d. A person who is willing to sell all that they have to buy the truth will find the kingdom of God (**Mat 13:44-46**).
 - e. Every Christian should desire a spouse whom they can love in the truth (**2Jo 1:1**).

B. Qualities in men.

- i. A man is the head (leader) in a marriage (**Eph 5:22-24**), so when considering a dating relationship with a man which could lead to marriage, you want to make sure he is a good and benevolent leader.
 - a. A wife must be subject to her husband *in everything* (**Eph 5:24**), so make sure that he exhibits good judgment in life in general.
 - b. Look for a man like Abraham who *will command his children and his household* (**Gen 18:19**).

- c. The last thing a godly woman should want is a limp-wristed, weak man for a husband.
- d. Make sure that his strong leadership is mixed with self-sacrificial love and (**Eph 5:25**) and a desire to honor and cherish his wife (**Eph 5:28-29; 1Pe 3:7**).
- e. Pay attention to his dad and see if he is the head of his wife and family, or if he is weak, hen-pecked, pathetic pushover.
- f. Remember the saying: like father, like son; therefore beware.
- ii. A husband is supposed to be the provider for his family (**1Ti 5:8**).
 - a. Find out what he does for a living and whether he has sufficient means to provide for a wife, and at least the potential to eventually provide for a family.
 - b. Pay attention to his work ethic and how he spends his money (more on that later).
- iii. A father is supposed to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (**Eph 6:4; Psa 78:4-8**).
 - a. First of all, pay attention to see if he even knows the scriptures himself, else how is he going to train up the children in them.
 - b. Then find out if he thinks it is primarily the father's responsibility to teach the children the ways of the Lord, or if he thinks that it can be left up to their mother, pastor, or teachers to do so.

C. Qualities in women.

- i. A wife is to be submissive and subject to her husband (**Eph 5:22,24; 1Pe 3:1**).
 - a. A wife should be obedient to her husband (**Tit 2:5; 1Pe 3:6**).
 - b. A wife should reverence her husband (**Eph 5:33**).
 - c. Therefore, when dating a woman, pay close attention to see if she has a submissive attitude toward a potential husband.
 - d. Do you find yourself asking for her permission when you want to do something.
 - e. Watch to see if she is respectful of men in general, or if she has a feminazi streak in her.
 - f. Watch her mother and see if she wears the pants in her marriage; if so, her daughter may be inclined to do the same thing.
- ii. A wife is supposed to bear children and be a keeper at home (**1Ti 5:14; Tit 2:5**).
 - a. If the woman you are dating currently has a career because she is single and needs to provide for herself, then find out if she intends to maintain a career when married and especially when children come.
 - b. Find out if she wants children and wants to stay home to raise them.
 - c. Find out if she likes to cook and if she keeps a clean and neat house.
- iii. Women should be of a meek and quiet spirit (**1Pe 3:4**).
 - a. Is the girl you are dating meek and quiet, or loud, stubborn, and clamorous (**Pro 7:11; Pro 9:13**).

- b. Would she be a woman whose attitude would make you pleased, or ashamed (**Pro 12:4**).
- iv. Women should dress modestly (**1Ti 2:9**).
 - a. On a date does she dress like a godly woman or a harlot? (**Pro 7:10**)
 - (i) Does she wear shirts that show her cleavage?
 - (ii) Does she wear dresses, skirts, or shorts which show her thighs?
 - (iii) Does she wear clothes that are generally seductive looking?
 - b. Is she all about her outward appearance? (**1Pe 3:3**)
 - (i) Does she wear a lot of makeup?
 - (ii) Does it take her two hours of preparation to leave the house?

VIII. Dating considerations for different age groups and statuses.

1. General considerations for all.

- A. Men, watch out for the strange woman.
- B. Ladies, watch out for the whoremonger who sweet-talks you.
- C. Be careful to not spend a lot of time together alone.
- D. Especially avoid spending time alone in a secluded place such as a house or apartment; abstain from all appearance of evil (**1Th 5:22**).
- E. It is sad that this must be said, but if you are dating someone who is not a virgin, find out if they are disease free.
 - i. Approximately 1/3 of all Americans have an STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease). (*More Than 110 Million Americans Have an STD: Report*, [US News Health](#), February 14, 2013)
 - ii. "One of the more concerning findings was that there are nearly 20 million new infections each year, and half of those occur among young people (aged 15 to 24)." (Ibid)
 - iii. This is one of the many reasons to find a virgin.
 - iv. Take the warning or be sorry later. "3) For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:...8) Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: ... 11) And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, 12) And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; 13) And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" (**Pro 5:3,8,11-13**)

2. Teenagers

- A. Early teens.
 - i. Children in their early teens (approx. ages 13-16) are not mature enough to be married and therefore should not date, since the purpose of dating is to find a spouse.
 - ii. Hormones begin to rage at these ages and kids will only be subjecting themselves to temptations which could easily be too great for them to resist.
 - iii. Kids at this age don't have enough sense to foresee the evil and hide themselves (**Pro 22:3**), so parents must be proactive and intervene.

- iv. Parents should openly discuss these things with their children and explain why they have chosen to not allow them to date until at least the latter teen years (if that is their determination).

B. Late teens.

- i. Young adults in their latter teens (approx. ages 17-19) begin to be mature enough (some of them) to be married and should be allowed to date if the parents think they are responsible and mature enough.
- ii. I do not recommend getting married before age 20 (especially for men), except in rare occasions when the couple is exceptionally mature.
- iii. Dating is a process that should take a considerable amount of time and is a process that may repeat as a person filters through his or her options; so if it is allowed to begin in the late teens with adequate guidelines and supervision, it would likely extend to a time in life when the young adult is ready to be married.
 - a. Extreme caution is needed in these years because a man's sexual peak happens around age 19 and sexual temptation is incredibly high.
 - b. Parents, you must make sure that your teens are well taught about the power and dangers of sexual lust at this age.
- iv. Plan dates that will be interesting and will allow you have fun and get to know each other.
 - a. Some suggestions for dates would be coffee shops, restaurants, zoos, museums, and sports events.
 - b. Avoid idle time, which leads to sin (**Eze 16:49**).
 - c. Idle hands are the devil's workshop.
- v. Make Christ a part of your date: discuss spiritual things.
- vi. Group dating is a good idea for early dating which helps a young person to become accustomed to dating.
- vii. Distinguish the difference between casual dating where different people may be dated in order to get to know them, and committed dating where only one person is dated, in which love could develop and engagement could be considered. (More on engagement later.)
- viii. Young people should make sure to keep their parents informed about people in whom they are interested and/or are dating.
- ix. Parents should talk to their children openly about being attracted to those of the opposite sex and dating.
 - a. It should not be a taboo topic.
 - b. Nor should parents tease their teenagers about liking girls or boys and make them feel uncomfortable about it, which might discourage them from bringing up the subject with their parents.

3. Young adults (20s-30s)

- A. Once a person reaches their late 20s and 30s, the likelihood of meeting someone that is either divorced or has children increases significantly.
- B. You should quickly inquire as to whether a person you are interested in is divorced.

- i. If so, then you either need to move on, or proceed to carefully find out if the divorce was due to adultery or abandonment by an unbeliever which are the only two justifications for remarriage after divorce (**Mat 19:9; 1Co 7:15**).
 - ii. See Section IV,4, B for more detail on this point.
 - iii. If they are not lawfully (Biblically) free to remarry, you must immediately cease pursuing them.
 - iv. It doesn't matter if the divorced (and not free to remarry) person is a believer or an unbeliever; God's law forbids you from marrying them (**Luk 16:18**).
 - a. The conversion and baptism of an unbeliever who is divorced doesn't change the fact that he is still bound to his wife and unable to remarry according to the law of God.
 - b. Adultery and other *sins* are washed away at baptism (**1Co 6:9-11**).
 - c. But a marriage covenant which was previously entered when one was an unbeliever is not a sin and is therefore not washed away at baptism.
 - d. If baptism washed away marriage covenants entered into by unbelievers, then all married persons who were baptized would need to be remarried to their spouse after they were baptized.
 - e. Divorce (a separation with both spouses remaining unmarried and celibate) is not a sin either, in that it is permitted by God (**1Co 7:10-11**), and is therefore not washed away at baptism.
 - f. Therefore, a Christian (or anyone else for that matter) is forbidden to marry a person who is divorced (and not free to remarry), whether they are a believer or an unbeliever.
 - v. If they are free to remarry, you have liberty to proceed, but be cautious.
 - vi. Remember, it takes two to tango, and rarely is only one partner in a marriage solely at fault for the divorce.
 - a. This is usually true even in cases of adultery.
 - b. Though the adulterer or adulteress is ultimately responsible for breaking the covenant, thereby freeing the other, a person who commits adultery rarely does so against a spouse to whom he/she is happily married.
 - c. Thus, the freed spouse may not be guilty of adultery themselves, but they may not have been entirely innocent in the lead-up to the sin of their spouse.
 - vii. Therefore, it would be wise and prudent to carefully examine the person's character before getting seriously involved with them.
 - viii. Second marriages have an even higher rate of divorce than do first marriages; so beware.
- C. A person with children (especially young children), whether divorced or never married, will bring a lot of baggage to a relationship.
- i. The children's other parent can sometimes make your life very difficult with custody battles, etc.
 - ii. If the other parent has a different parenting style, you could continually have to "unteach" a lot of garbage and bad behavior that was picked up at the other home.

- iii. You may also have your hands tied when it comes to disciplining the child because the other parent might object to spanking and try to get you into legal trouble for doing it.
- iv. These things ought to be seriously considered before dating a person who has children.
- v. If the person is widowed, these problems will be less significant because there is not "another mommy" or "another daddy" to deal with.

4. Older adults (40s+)

- A. Most (not all) people in their 40s or older who are able to date have already been married themselves and are either widows/widowers or have been freed to remarry due to the unfaithfulness of their former spouse.
- B. The likelihood of finding a person who has never been married and has no kids at this age is very slim.
 - i. Therefore many of the same considerations concerning dating people who are widowed, lawfully (Biblically) divorced, or have children apply (see previous section on young adults (20s-30s).
 - ii. The older you get, the more likely that the children of the person you are interested in will be grown, which may make things easier.
- C. If you have been loosed from a spouse, seriously consider before seeking to remarry (**1Co 7:27**).
- D. Your age or previous marital experience doesn't make you immune from becoming infatuated with someone and blinded by lust to the point of being tempted to make a hasty and foolish decision to marry someone you don't know well enough.
- E. Be careful about "rebound" dating soon after being freed from a former spouse.
- F. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are really over that other person if it's only been a few months, or even a year or more.
- G. Even though you have already experienced sex (if you were previously married), you still must abstain from sex until you are married again (**1Th 4:3**).
 - i. Fornication *n.* - Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted use, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman. In Scripture extended to adultery.
 - ii. It could be harder to abstain from fornication after having been married because you're already experienced, so vigilance will be necessary.
- H. Be aware that a potential spouse in your age range *could* have a lot of debt, so you would be wise to find out how much debt they have before getting seriously involved with them.
- I. Beware also of "gold diggers" who are after your money.
- J. If you have wealth or possessions that you want to leave to your children, make sure that your potential spouse is aware of that, and make sure you have a will which makes that clear.

5. Divorced, but not free to remarry

- A. No matter how badly you may want to remarry, you must not because to do so would be for you to commit adultery (**Mar 10:11-12**).
- B. See Section IV,4, B.

6. Divorced, but free to remarry
 - A. Before jumping into another marriage, consider remaining unmarried (**1Co 7:27**).
 - B. If you do decide to pursue marriage, take it slow and keep your eyes wide open (**Pro 19:2**).
 - C. Review the considerations in the sections on young adults (20s-30s) and older adults (40s+) concerning marrying divorced people, especially if they have children.

7. Widowed
 - A. When one's spouse dies, he/she is free to remarry (**Rom 7:2-3**).
 - B. It is good for a widow to remain unmarried (**1Co 7:8,40**).
 - C. But she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, but only in the Lord (**1Co 7:39**).
 - i. Though it is wise and advisable to marry a person of like-faith (more on this in Section IX), "only in the Lord" cannot be understood to mean "only a believer of like-faith".
 - ii. If this were the case, then children would only have to obey their parents if they were of like-faith (**Eph 6:1**).
 - iii. "In the Lord" must be understood as "in accordance with God's word."
 - iv. Therefore, a widow may marry whom she will as long as they are available to marry according to the scripture (not already married, divorced, etc.)
 - D. Young widows should remarry and start a family (**1Ti 5:14**).
 - E. Review the considerations in the sections on young adults (20s-30s) and older adults (40s+) concerning marrying divorced people, especially if they have children.

IX. Dating considerations when dating believers and unbelievers.

1. Guidelines for dating unbelievers (a believer dating an unbeliever - whether a complete unbeliever or a "believer" of a different "Christian faith").
 - A. Dating an unbeliever is not forbidden in scripture, but it must be done very cautiously.
 - B. Remember, the purpose of dating is to find a spouse; and though it is not absolutely forbidden to marry outside of the faith, it is not wise.
 - i. Can two walk together except they be agreed? (**Amo 3:3**).
 - ii. Consider *the principle* of not being unequally yoked to unbelievers (**2Co 6:14 c/w Deu 22:10**).
 - a. This is a warning to the church to not be joined with unbelievers and idolatry.
 - b. If the church should not be yoked with unbelievers, then a Christian should seriously consider the danger of marrying one.
 - iii. But **2Co 6:14** is not a proof-text that expressly prohibits "unequally yoked" marriages.
 - a. Paul is writing to the church (**2Co 1:1**) which is the temple of God (**2Co 6:16**), and telling them to not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, unrighteous people, and idolaters (**2Co 6:14-16**).

- b. He didn't tell them to not GET unequally yoked, but to BE not unequally yoked with unbelievers, meaning that the church should never be unequally yoked with unbelievers at any time.
 - c. He tells them to COME OUT from among them and SEPARATE from them (**2Co 6:17**).
 - d. If this passage is used to prove that a believer is forbidden to marry an unbeliever, then it also proves that a believer must separate from an unbeliever.
 - e. Paul contradicted that idea in (**1Co 7:12-15**).
 - f. Remember, if an error proves anything, it proves too much.
 - iv. The principle of not marrying outside of the faith was taught in the OT (**Deu 7:2-4; Ezr 9:2-3; Neh 13:23-26**).
 - v. Jesus said a house divided will not stand (**Mar 3:25**).
 - a. It could be the case that a weak believer marrying an unbeliever may not be a divided house -- the weak believer will simply compromise.
 - b. A "church admission certificate" type of faith where only the *form of godliness* (**2Ti 3:5**) has been attained doesn't guarantee an undivided house either.
- C. If a Christian's heart is right, his purpose in dating an unbeliever is to attempt to convert her.
 - i. There is a lot of risk involved in this approach.
 - ii. If the person ends up being truly converted, then glory be to God. I have seen this happen.
 - iii. If the person ends up feigning a conversion, only to later depart from the faith, there will be intense pain for you. I have seen this happen.
 - iv. If the person ends up not being converted and the relationship is broken off, there will be intense pain for you. I have seen this happen.
 - v. If the person ends up not being converted and you marry them anyway, you will have a divided house (**Mar 3:25**) and they might draw you away from the faith (**Deu 7:2-4**).
 - vi. If you marry an unconverted person with hopes they will convert after marriage, know that you are taking a big risk.
 - a. They may be converted. I have seen this happen.
 - b. They also may not be converted, which will be painful for you (**Pro 13:12**).
- D. I highly recommend not becoming physically involved with a person you are dating until *after* they are converted and baptized.
 - i. As was shown above, becoming physically involved (kissing, etc.) with someone will introduce a heightened level of emotional connection into the relationship which can cloud judgment and make a break-up much more painful.
 - ii. As much as possible, you want to make sure that the person is embracing the faith because they truly believe it, not because they are emotionally attached to you.
- E. Make sure to seek the counsel of your pastor when you are dating an unconverted person, and especially if you are considering marrying one (**Pro 15:22; Pro 11:14**).

- i. Sadly, if you would be considering this, you would likely not come to your pastor for counsel because you wouldn't want him to rain on your parade.
 - ii. As your pastor, I would not forbid you from marrying an unconverted person (because the Bible doesn't absolutely forbid it), but I would strongly advise you against it in almost every situation.
 - iii. I will only perform the wedding of a man and a woman who are both members of this church or of a church of like-faith.
2. Guidelines for dating believers (a believer dating another believer of like-faith).
- A. Do NOT assume that since you are of the same faith as another person of the opposite sex that you are compatible to marry them.
- i. Like-faith should be a *necessary* quality in a potential spouse, but it is not a *sufficient* quality.
 - ii. Different people have different interests and personalities and are therefore not always compatible for marriage or close friendship, regardless if they are of like-precious faith.
 - a. This should be obvious after a couple of dates.
 - b. If you find someone with a personality which is attractive to you, then move on down the list of essential qualities.
 - iii. Just because someone is a member of the same church doesn't mean that they have the same level of understanding of the faith and commitment to it as you do.
 - a. There are 30, 60, and 100 fold Christians in the church (**Mat 13:23**).
 - b. There are some who read their Bible routinely everyday for 15, 30, or even 60 minutes (**Jos 1:8; Psa 1:2**); there are others who frantically try to remember where they laid it last Sunday afternoon as they rush out the door for church.
 - c. There are some who only miss church when they are in the hospital or the morgue (**Psa 84:10**); there are others who attend just often enough to keep the pastor off of their back.
 - d. There are some who pray throughout their day: when they get up, before reading their Bible, before each meal, before they leave the house, in the shower, in the car, and before they go to bed (**1Th 5:17; Luk 18:1**); there are others who pray when they are in trouble.
 - e. There are some, who for them, church is their life (**Psa 27:4; Psa 87:2**); there are others, who for them, church gets in the way of their life.
 - f. There are some who are always at every church event (Bible studies, men's and women's outings, church picnics, dinners, etc.) (**1Co 16:15**); there are others who are never at any of them.
 - g. There are some who endeavor to make church brethren their friends and spend time with them outside of church (**Mal 3:16; Psa 119:63**); there are others who keep their church and personal lives separate.
 - iv. When looking for a spouse among believers of like-faith, I would suggest looking for someone who is at least on your same level of commitment, and

preferably someone who is a level above you who will pull you up, not bring you down.

- v. I would recommend looking for a believer that you can at least have fruitful spiritual conversations with, even if they do not have as high of a level of understanding as you do.

B. Once you have narrowed down the field to those believers with whom you are spiritually compatible, then it's time to talk about money.

- i. Financial issues are often listed as the number one reason for marital problems.
- ii. Therefore it is absolutely essential to make sure that you and the person you are dating and considering the possibility of marriage with are on the same page about money.
- iii. Some things to watch for and consider:
 - a. Does the person have debt? A mortgage, home equity loans, car loans, student loans, personal loans, credit card debt? (**Rom 13:8; Pro 22:7**)
 - b. Does the person spend all their income, or do they save a reasonable portion of it? (**Pro 21:20**)
 - c. Does the person love pleasure and spend money lavishly on food, drinks, entertainment, toys, etc.? (**Pro 21:17; Luk 12:15**)
 - d. Does the person waste and throw away food or other things? (**Pro 12:27; Pro 18:9; Joh 6:12**)
 - e. Does the person faithfully give the firstfruits of all their increase to the Lord, or do they give their leftovers when they happen to remember? (**Pro 3:9-10**)
 - f. Does the person want to spend multiple thousands of dollars on a wedding?
- iv. If the person doesn't have debt, find out if they are averse to it or if they just haven't yet embarked on their dream journey of being a lifelong debt-slave.

C. If you are spiritually and financially compatible, then consider whether you are intellectually compatible.

- i. It's not necessary for your potential spouse to have an IQ that is +/- 1 point from yours, but it would not be wise to marry someone whom you cannot relate to on an intellectual level.
- ii. If you are an astrophysicist by occupation and as a pastime you like to discuss quantum mechanics around the dinner table, then you probably don't want to marry someone who dropped out of pre-algebra in seventh grade.
- iii. This doesn't mean that a highly intelligent person would not be compatible with a person of average intelligence if the highly intelligent person was content to discuss normal everyday things and didn't feel the need to go too intellectually deep to connect with their spouse emotionally.
- iv. Intellectual compatibility should quickly become apparent if you are either bored or intimidated in conversation with your date; in which case you should keep looking.

- D. Finally, if you find that you are compatible with the person you are dating in all of the preceding ways, then (carefully) discuss whether you are physically compatible.
 - i. Physical and sexual attractiveness are normally the first thing (and the most frequent thing) that we think about when dating.
 - ii. Physical attractiveness is important in a relationship, but it is not the most important thing (**Pro 31:30**).
 - iii. A person who has godly character will become attractive to a godly Christian; while a physically attractive person with poor character will become unattractive to a godly Christian (**Pro 11:22**).
 - iv. Sexual compatibility.
 - a. Sexual compatibility concerning anatomy is almost never going to be an issue and most likely doesn't need to be discussed.
 - b. Sexual compatibility (concerning practice) will be learned during marriage.
 - (i) This is NOT something that needs to be experimented with to ensure compatibility.
 - (ii) That is called fornication, which is sin (**1Co 6:18**).
 - (iii) Contrary to popular beliefs, statistically, couples who "test drive before purchasing" have a higher rate of divorce than do those who wait until marriage.
 - c. Ideas about the purpose and frequency of sex should be cautiously discussed only when the relationship has progressed to the point where marriage is being seriously considered.

X. Final considerations

- 1. How long should you date before becoming engaged?
 - A. Dating is the process of sifting through potential spouses and then proving the one that you consider to be marriage material.
 - B. There is no Biblically prescribed time limits for dating; therefore it is up to your discretion.
 - C. You should date a person long enough to be certain that he or she would be a godly spouse for you and meet the qualifications set forth in this outline (**Pro 19:2**).
 - D. Make sure that you have seen the person's bad side before becoming engaged.
 - i. Remember, the person you are dating will always put on their best face in the beginning.
 - ii. Your girlfriend or boyfriend will usually be a better person than they are when they are your wife or husband.
 - iii. Pay attention to how they deal with conflict, stress, and disappointment.
 - iv. Date long enough to make sure you have had disagreements and even a fight to see how they deal with them.
 - v. Pay attention to not only how they love, but also how they fight.
 - E. Make sure you have a chance to observe them around family and friends who know them best.
 - i. Don't be afraid to ask those closest to them what they think of them.

- ii. Bring them around your family, friends, church, and pastor and get their opinion of them.
 - F. Date long enough until your infatuation with them has at least somewhat subsided and you can think rationally.
 - G. I recommend dating someone *at least six months* before becoming engaged, and a year or more would be wise in most cases.
 - H. Make sure you don't marry the wrong person (**Pro 21:9; Pro 21:19; Pro 19:13; Pro 27:15**).
 - I. It's better to go through the pain of breaking off a relationship prior to marriage than to go through the lifelong pain of being married to a bad man or woman.
2. How long should you be engaged before marrying?
- A. Engagement should not be considered part of the dating/proving process.
 - i. Engagement - 2. a. A formal promise, agreement, undertaking, covenant. d. The fact of being engaged to be married; betrothal.
 - ii. Engagement should only be entered into when you are absolutely certain that you want to marry the person and spend the rest of your life with them.
 - iii. Foolishly, many people today have very long engagements in which they continue to act as if they are still dating.
 - B. Therefore, since an engagement should only be entered into once you are certain you want to marry the person, an engagement should only last long enough to plan a wedding.
 - i. During your engagement, make sure to spend most of your time planning *your marriage*, NOT *your wedding*!
 - ii. Your wedding is only one day of your marriage and, with the exception of the actual vows which establish the covenant of marriage, the events of it are relatively unimportant in the big picture; so you would be wise to save your money and have a simple wedding which is inexpensive and easy to plan.
 - iii. If you go the simple route, an engagement would only need to last at most a few months.
 - iv. An engagement that lasts a year or more probably means that you are not ready to get married and you shouldn't even be engaged.