

Dating part 2

An Incomplete Guide... Part two.

SOME BIBLE WISDOM

In Genesis 2.7 we read that God created man. In verse 18 of chapter 2, God in his wisdom said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.'

So God recognised the need and took the initiative. We also find that woman is right for man (not another man). We also find that many times, man needs woman (his God-given best 'helper') in order to be fully satisfied and effective.

I realise that when God said 'it is not good that man is alone' he wasn't just referring to marriage. Not everyone gets married. Marriage is not for everyone – like the Apostle Paul. My view is that our priority in these matters, and our advice to young people is that our priority is Jesus, the Kingdom of God, righteousness. Read Matthew 6.33. I also realise that this verse extends to all kinds of relationships – friends, church, house groups etc. There are many ways we can 'not be alone'.

Back to Genesis. Man was busy, naming the animals, birds and all the wild animals. Man was occupied and working but he realised something was missing. In verse 20 we read that, 'Adam did not find a helper that was right for him'. So God recognised the need and then man did. This is always how it is in all things whether we recognise it or not! God brought the woman right for man. We aren't always the best judge of this!

Interestingly, we find that after God created woman from man, we read in verse 22 that, 'The Lord God.. brought the woman to the man.' Must have been very intriguing for both of them.. 'Hello, and what are you?' – 'What am I?! What are you?!'

So we can assure young people (and maybe ourselves) that you do not need to go out and 'find' a life partner. It is God who brings people together in his time and way. We do not have to chase. Dating may be fun and almost irresistible for some young people but it's not essential.

Verse 24, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' That's a very clear Biblical picture of what marriage is – or should be, and a representation of Jesus and his church.

Then man realised he was kind of lonely. God created woman from man. God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' While God did not specifically mean dating/marriage (but also more general human relationships), it can certainly be applied to this statement from God.

If we look at Genesis 24, we also see that Isaac's wife was brought to him, in this case through the wisdom of Abraham and the actions of the servant. By the way, Derek Prince believes this passage is a representation of the bride of Christ (Rebekah = the church) being brought to Christ (as represented by Isaac) by the messenger or the servant (the Holy Spirit).

In Matthew 19, Jesus was being asked provocative questions by the Pharisees about divorce. In verses 4-6, Jesus quotes Genesis 1.27 and 2.24. So we learn that marriage is not an Old Testament thing but has authority today.

So dating is basically boy and girl going out. As you're well aware, these 'relationships' aren't always what you may consider a proper relationship, and can last from half a day through to a couple of years. Sometimes they are for life. Let's read a story..

A STORY FROM MY LIFE – TO SHOW MY DATING INCOMPETENCE (SORT OF)

I was at a works conference. At the conference (for around 300 staff), I thought I saw a girl who was on my course. Not knowing most people there I thought I'd go across and say hi. As I walked over to this girl sitting with 2 mates and was about 5 metres away, I realised it was not the girl.

So here I am standing in the middle of a room, looking at these 3 pretty women who I didn't know, having thought one of them was someone else. They stared at me. I stared at them. Silence.

What to say.. hmm.. So I said, 'OK, you're not who I thought you were so now I'm gonna go away before I look totally stupid.' They just laughed and flirtatiously said it was a great chat-up line. As I walked back to my table feeling very small and a bit stupid I realised I had to spend the rest of the day at a conference with them.

Not yet another one of my incompetent attempts at dating, but maybe it will work for you..

SOME MORE EXERCISES AROUND DATING

Many of us have had the situation where young people are dating and it can cause a real shift in dynamic in the group. One time we had some lads visiting from Watford and attention was on them more than the youth service! Get young people to look at dating and habits in a private survey:

1. From your Bible experience can you find examples of dating in the Bible?
2. What kind of value does God put on relationships? What about you?
3. Have you treated someone badly in a relationship? How? How would you go back and do it differently according to Bible principles? Have you been badly treated? What was it like?

Some of this may be hard for some young people as they will not have dated, but may have wanted to. Others may simply not really be interested. I was more into football and dance music than women. But it is a sensitive area.

Let's look at some further questions:

1. If you had to name one celebrity you'd go out with, who would it be and why? (For a more practical exercise here, get some magazines and have them cut out the person they'd like!)
2. What would make your perfect partner – be realistic?!
3. What of these qualities would be most important to you if dating someone – put them in order but don't use those ones not important to you...

- Loving
- Trust
- Loyalty
- Good looking
- Good sense of humour
- Up for stuff
- Outgoing
- Sporty

- Cool
- Kind
- Sensitive
- Godly
- Happy
- Positive
- Doesn't whinge
- Helpful
- Popular
- Sexy
- Thinks differently
- Good possibility to marry
- Off the planet

DATING

It is important to stress that not everyone dates a lot and that dating isn't all that. It can be fun but it can hurt when things split up. Dating is not essential. Some people like to have lots of dates in order to find security. Others date to find that one person. Some date for fun. Others wait for the right person. No one thing is right.

Some people are called to be single, like the Apostle Paul. Your ministry may be one of a lot of travel, a lot of danger, very intense or at all hours of the day. A relationship wouldn't be possible or sensible. Others can achieve more on their own. Everyone is different.

However, as we've seen, on many occasions in the Bible, God brought people together. As we'll see this started with Adam and Eve, was the case for Isaac and others. The New Testament is less clear but we see both couples and singles working together for the Gospel in different ways. Your guys will be the same!

DON'T YOU JUST HATE THAT!

One of the very worst things about dating is that sometimes, friends get left out. I know of a couple of young people with boyfriends who speak to another girl a lot but far less (if at all) when their boyfriends are present. Many times in relationships a best friend gets almost pushed away. I have lost a number of friends in the past who became so involved with a girl, they no longer bothered to meet up with their mates. When relationships ended, there were times where there were few if any friends left.

I really think it's important to stress that in any relationship, God has to be at the centre. Here's another reason why going out with a non-Christian isn't a great idea/. How can Jesus be at the centre when one person doesn't know Jesus. If God is at the centre then we need to accept that however difficult it may be, we cannot get caught up solely in the relationship but must make time for friends and family and others. That's what Jesus meant when he said love others as yourself. Let's warn young people (and ourselves) not to get caught up in a relationship that they become selfish. That is not what God calls us to do and when he sees us do this, it grieves the Holy Spirit.

OUR RESPONSE TO YOUNG PEOPLE DATING

As below, unconditional love, even in those times where we can see the relationship is unlikely to last. For many it's a phase and something many of us went through – or are going through – I don't know you! We should also be aware of how needs can change in a relationship. We need to be there to offer guidance, counselling and help should anything unplanned happen. Think for yourself how this can happen.

An exercise here – put a list of situations to the young people and see how they'd deal with it.. for example..

1. The most popular lad is going out with the most popular girl and they're always attached at the hip. They're often away from the church
2. The person you fancy does not seem to fancy you, you're not sure how to get their attention. How do you?
3. Two of the young people have been going out and had sex. Now you find out the girl is pregnant.
4. Your mate is going out with a non-Christian who is a really bad person and bad influence. How do you deal with it?
5. You're worried that your Christian mate and Christian boyfriend/girlfriend are getting too intimate..

Another exercise – get a load of pictures of famous celebrities in relationships (or who have had failed relationships) and talk, discuss about their personalities and them. What about pre-nuptial agreements! (People agreeing before marriage about what will happen after marriage).

DATING NON-CHRISTIANS

In Ecclesiastes 4.9-12 we read about the fact that two are better than one. In verse 12, we read the essential bit: 'An enemy might defeat one person, but two people together can defend themselves: a rope that is woven of three strings is hard to break.'

So a key ingredient, the key ingredient in a relationship is the third cord. The third cord is God. If a relationship, even a semi-serious teenage relationship, does not have God, it is not something that God is in, it will not work as effectively as it should or could – and is certainly not something God condones. Let's look further..

The Corinthian church was in a state. There were many un-Godly practices that make the church of today look innocent. Paul knew he needed to write to sort out these evil and un-Godly things. In 1 Corinthians 6.13 we find Paul talking to the church 'as if you were my children.' When we work with young people, in some ways we are acting as kind of friends-parents. So this gives extra authority to what Paul says.

1 Corinthians 6.14, 'You are not the same as those who do not believe. So do not join yourselves to them. Good and bad do not belong together. Light and darkness cannot share together.' The Bible is quite clear here. Despite the difficulties and conflicts it causes we must speak the truth that a Christian young person should not be with a non-Christian. In fact, the Bible goes on to compare it to good and bad, light and dark, even Jesus and the devil. Heavy stuff indeed.

1 Cor. 7:39 – A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

2 Cor. 6:14-15 – Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

Practically, we realise it is difficult for young people to accept and do this as hormones, desires and feelings can overtake them. Many young people date non-Christians and come through un-scathed. So what should our response be?

The final point is that young people who date non-Christians do sometimes see the non-Christian person come to faith. So we can't be too hard and too religious on this one. Loving guidance and support is a far better option at times!

OUR RESPONSE TO YOUNG PEOPLE DATING NON-CHRISTIANS

Unconditional love. As a parent should give. This goes with support, advice, cajoling and tough words. But we must not alienate the young person. I have seen this almost happen, and actually happen and it has caused so much damage. We must speak the truth in love. If a leader is too involved, someone else must talk to the young person. It's rarely a sign of failure on your part!

We must point out that it's not God's best. We should also support the non-Christian if they attend. I have heard of non-Christians getting saved like this – 'flirt to convert' is one title. But it's not ideal and I don't think we're called to do this!

Young people say, 'my boyfriend is coming to youthwork stuff, he wouldn't be here otherwise' or 'they're getting close to God'. That is amazingly encouraging but an example of God working despite us, not because of us. We must continue to support the young people. And we must pray. Prayer brings results, in God's way and timing. We also have to know when to quit, when to stop moaning. They may even carry on because you don't like it, obviously!

Other young people can have a powerful part to play here. They may well be influenced in a negative way by older young people who you may need to confront. Or they can play a positive role in influencing others for God.

Close the session by summarising and praying.