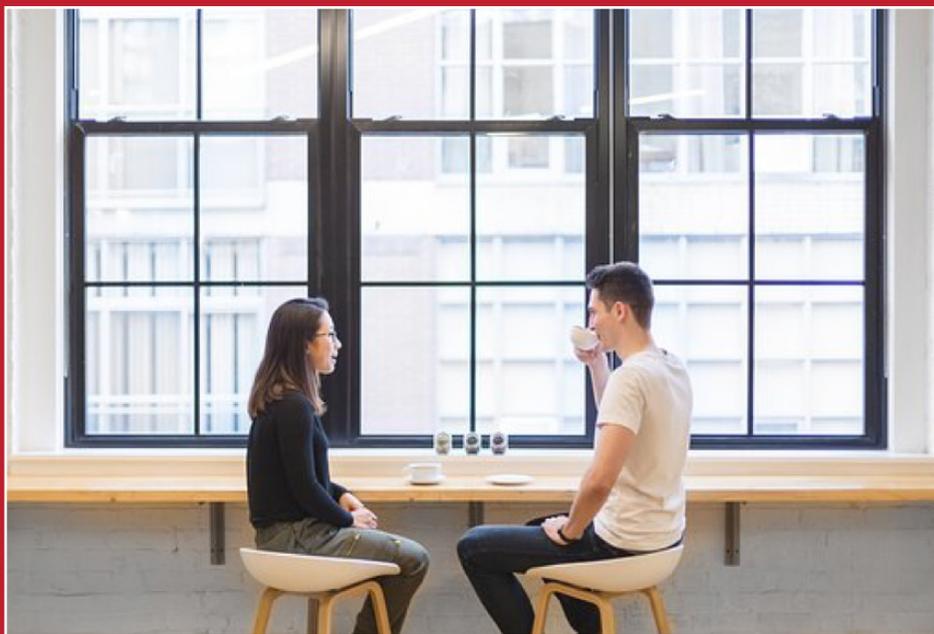


DATING

*A key to success in marriage
A practical dating guide for Christians*



*"Treat younger men as brothers, . . . and younger women as sisters,
with absolute purity." – (1 Timothy 5:1,2; NIV)*

BOB THIEL, PH.D

Dating

A key to success in marriage

A practical dating guide for Christians

The Bible teaches that “in a multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:6). Therefore, this book consulted many Church of God writings on courtship from ancient times to present. Such as a book originally published by the old Worldwide Church of God in 1969 titled “Modern Dating,” a series of articles in the 1987 editions of the “Good News” magazine, a 2003 article in Servant’s News, 21st century writings at COGwriter.com, and, most importantly, the Bible.

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1. Dating: A key to success in marriage

Pretty much everybody wants to be happy.

Even “loners” do not want to be lonely. If you ask a young single adult what would make him or her happy, you’ll probably hear something like this: “I just want to be loved. I want to build a relationship with someone with whom I can share my life - someone who understands me and will love me.”

Most people want a happy home life, with father, mother and well-behaved, happy children--a loving, close-knit, family.

In most Western nations, and many non-Western ones, dating is the way single people use to spend time with potential marital partners. So, if people are going to date, they should date understanding God and His plan for them.

The Bible teaches us that we are made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). The human family was designed by God to picture God’s own spiritual Family (Ephesians 3:14-15; 5:31-32). But Satan the devil, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), hates God’s plan and purpose. He works to try to thwart and pervert what God intends.

Satan has deliberately led people away from truth and into philosophies that lead to destruction. Among these is the idea that marriage is not necessary for sex, and that the gratification of sexual lust is something we owe ourselves.

The world has its views on dating. Different cultures have differing norms for dating. But the world’s norms and standards are not always the same as God’s.

In these end times, the family is under attack from many sides. The institution of marriage itself is no longer cherished as the basis of family life nor even limited to a male and female husband and wife, with possibly children.

Biblical admonitions, doctrines, and principles can help those who date (and those who wish to).

Too many have discovered they should not have married AFTER marriage — instead of before. They did not properly communicate enough before they were married. Dating properly can reduce the risk for divorce.

Marrying the wrong person can be one of the most difficult experiences on earth, to hear some describe it. Lack of preparation for marriage, lack of understanding the sobering responsibilities of marriage, coupled with marrying too young are leading causes of divorce, according to sociologists.

Why This Book Was Written

With the apostasy that hit the old Worldwide Church of God in the late 20th century and the subsequent scattering of the brethren, Church of God Christians in the 21st century face the reality of being isolated in many parts of the world.

This can be even more discouraging for the unmarried. Yet, despite concerns, the situation is not without hope.

Unmarried Christians are often facing the situation where there appear to be few, if any, other Christians to date, and possibly marry.

However, that does NOT mean that if you are single, you should lower standards and simply marry anyone, including any Christian that is willing to marry you as that can result in disaster.

This book is intended to help those involved with the Church of God, as well as those who are not, to be better at dating for marriage. Thus, hopefully they can reduce their risk of divorce and increase their chances for a happy and successful marriage.

Dating, Marriage, and Divorce

In most cultures, some type of courtship/dating precedes marriage.

In most societies, people are allowed to choose whether or not to marry someone. This is not a new practice as we see this choice shown in biblical times (e.g. Numbers 36:6; Genesis 24:5-57).

Proper dating reduces the possibility of divorce.

Why?

Because proper dating gives people an opportunity to learn whether or not they can get along with each other.

Divorce is commonplace in the 21st century. Divorce is court sanctioned, politically, religiously and socially acceptable to the world, in most cases. But divorce isn't happy.

Divorce is admission of defeat. While there can be valid reasons (Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:15), divorce is still a public statement of failure.

The "wrong partner" supposedly causes divorce. The divorce rate proves something is seriously wrong in too many marriages. No one really marries "just to get a divorce," in spite of the brave smiles through tears: the emancipated woman over 40 who bounces into her friends' homes with the announcement of how "free" she feels after divorce does not reflect the reality for most.

Like setting up a business or planning a career, marriage is a truly big step in life. It is not to be entered into very casually.

Now when one flippantly says that everyone should have at least one divorce, don't you believe it!

Those saying so are just whistling in the dark — trying to justify, even to themselves, what was in reality an emotional and mental trauma — and probably an economic disaster, too.

Divorce, including in places like the USA, most often severely hurts finances. And in time, at least one partner (usually the woman), will often end up in a much worse economic situation—as may any children the couple has.

This book speaks frankly about how to date and with whom. Should the female pay her own way? What about physical contact? What about racial cultural, religious, and age differences?

Single people need to be told the truth about these questions, and a whole host of others. Dating is often preparation for marriage.

It is better to be safe than sorry.

Way of Give and Get

It's been said that the first rule in dating is the first rule in all of life for a Christian, as Jesus stated:

³⁷ 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)

You will not truly and properly love anyone if you do not love God first and most. And no one will truly love you if they do not properly love God more than they love you.

Jesus also said:

³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

But you are NOT showing love to a date/neighbor if you compromise with God's commandments.

Most people today do not date for the right reasons. They do not understand what God wants them to learn in life, including interactions with the opposite sex.

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35, NKJV throughout unless otherwise specified).

The Bible simplifies life into two contrasting overall philosophies: God's way of love (e.g. 1 John 4:8) and Satan's way of selfishness (e.g. Genesis 3:1-6).

Or to put it another way, the way of give vs. the way of get.

The way of get is totally self-oriented—it seems so right to so many, but does not end well (Proverbs 14:12). People caught in the “get way” always need more and more to satisfy their wants.

Yet, the way of give—the way of real love—is the only true path to happiness and fulfillment. Giving is an outgoing concern that seeks to serve others rather than the self. Instead of being caught in the syndrome of ‘the more you get, the more you want,’ you find fulfillment in giving.

But what does this have to do with dating? Quite a bit.

If you are dating to be seen, to be more popular, to get physical affection, or other selfish motivations, you are following the way of get.

The give way is the right way. And it is perfectly fine to be looking for a potential spouse when dating (cf. Proverbs 18:22), one you will be able share your life with.

When you are on a date, try to be nice and strive to help the one you are dating have a pleasant time.

2. The Art of Dating

Why do you date? And what is a “date?”

A date is, after all, a day marked off on a calendar.

It could just as easily be called “meeting,” or “contracting,” or “calendarizing” as dating, but social customs prevail. Group activities give singles an opportunity to interact with people of the opposite sex and help them to better communicate with others.

Dating itself is normally considered to be when a single man and single woman intentionally spend time together for activities and/or to see if they can build a relationship together.

Dating should be a fresh, wholesome, constructive, and enjoyable activity that can also be intellectually stimulating and physically up-building.

Dating is helpful for personality development. There is something to what psychologists tell us about the shy man and wallflower woman - both of whom have stunted personalities and lack personal charm.

Conversation should be part of dates. But be careful about bragging and loud talking.

The type of dating that DOES develop personality is the kind where many people can get together, play together, and talk together.

Dating is also useful for having plain, down-to-earth fun. But not the kind of fun that ends up in a premarital pregnancy or marriage to the wrong person. It’s the kind of wholesome fun that is fun today, tomorrow, and forever.

Let’s get a few hints on right dating.

Date as many different people as possible - of all different personalities. Now, in the Church of God there may not be many choices. But that does not mean that you have to repeatedly date or marry the only person or persons that may immediately be eligible.

God can bring someone into the church and into your life at any time.

While you should not wait for the “perfect person” before going on any date (after all YOU are not perfect yourself), you do not have to ‘settle’ because you feel that there will never be any other options. It just may be that God wants you to develop more aspects of character while single longer than you may think. Don’t be short-sighted (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7).

Don’t think that every date has to be some Hollywood romance. But dating for marriage, could be considered a type of interview. You are basically meeting and asking questions of people who are perhaps candidates to be your spouse. This makes dating a very important job.

Consider also the following:

¹⁵ The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps. (Proverbs 14:15)

Hopefully, the person you are dating really is a Christian. Yet, some brought up in the Church of God, as well as some who come in contact with it, are not really converted. So, exercise wise judgement and caution.

Date people who are intelligent, talented, sensible, truthful, and competent — thinking individuals. Date people with alert, educated, thinking PARENTS. Date individuals of high moral standards.

Proverbs 27:17 says iron sharpens iron. The people you hang around with are going to build you up or drag you down. Don’t let yourself be dragged down. And you parents — watch whom your children are around with and be cognizant where your children are. And you teen-agers CO-OPERATE WITH your parents. Don’t think you know it all about dating? You may wish to seek your parents’ counsel about dating.

Remember, they’ve lived a whole lot longer than you. If they are Christian, they should have some advice they can give.

Open Rebuke?

It is not always easy to ask someone out on a date.

But for men who need motivation, the following scripture comes to mind:

⁵ Open rebuke is better than secret love. (Proverbs 27:5, KJV)

When I was single, I would remind myself of that scripture when I was *sometimes* hesitant to ask a woman to dance. Often, I would end up dancing with dozens of ladies in an evening.

It was not that I had 'secret love' for them, but at least had some interest in dancing with them. If I had more interest, and the woman also seemed amenable, I might then ask for a date.

When a gentleman asks a lady out, he is putting himself on the line - risking rejection and hurt feelings. By using charm and grace, a lady can promote a man's self-esteem in a right way, even if she wants to (or has to) turn a date down.

If you are a woman, be a gracious and truly feminine lady. Likewise, if you are a man, be a noble and masculine gentleman.

Act Appropriately

Be ladies and gentlemen on a date.

Women appreciate men who take the lead in the proper manner. Not on some macho kick, but truly showing thoughtfulness and consideration. Pulling out a chair, helping with her coat, opening the car door - these are but a few of the characteristics that make a man stand tall in a woman's eyes.

In the same way, men genuinely admire and appreciate a true lady - one who will respond and do her best to make the occasion he has planned for her successful.

If you feel ill at ease on a date (and not because your date may be a creep), don't let this stop you from trying again! The more you date, the more relaxed you will become in interacting with others.

With surprising swiftness, nervousness will subside, and confidence will grow.

At times, try dating in groups. People often feel more at ease in a group than in a one-on-one situation. Conversation is easier with more people to participate, and much of the anxiety and tension will disappear.

3. Men and Women Are Different

Through modern society, Satan wants us to believe that there is no difference between men and women - that we should be more alike than we are.

Additionally, many have taken aspects of immorality further than ever before by failing to believe that there are two genders. Or not accepting that one's anatomy should be accepted for proof of one's gender.

Some assert that gender is "fluid"--not determined by biology and genitalia at birth. When society abandoned God and His inspired Word, this world lost its moral focus. This type of thing was prophesied (cf. Romans 1:18-32).

Contrary to the views of some in the 21st century, males and females are not the same--nor is gender "fluid." To believe otherwise is to ignore biological facts.

Consider that a 2017 study identified approximately 6,500 genes that differ between men and women (The landscape of sex-differential transcriptome and its consequent selection in human adults. BMC Biol. 2017; 15: 7).

Therefore, even having gender changing surgery does not really change one's biological sex.

Consider also something that Jesus taught:

⁴ "Have you not read that He who made them at 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 then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)

God's laws lead to happiness and fulfillment. They provide a guide to help us chart the course through the troubled and confused times in which we live.

That being said, there are often complaints between the sexes.

Men and women are different emotionally. Men often accuse women of being over-emotional and irrational. Women frequently complain that men are demanding and insensitive.

Because God's morality has been more and more rejected, women sometimes say: "Where are the men? We just meet irresponsible, immature little boys - we never meet any real men!" The men counter: "Why don't women stop being so aggressive and hard? Aren't there any sweet, gentle, feminine women anymore?"

Now, men should not be cavemen types, with no regard for a woman's feelings, nor should women be spineless, clinging vines.

But the Bible teaches that men should be men and women should be women.

Here is some information on how people, whether they date or not, should act:

¹ Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them. (Ephesians 5:1-7)

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)

Ephesians 5 also teaches how men and women should relate to each other in marriage:

²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:21-33)

And on that last point (verse 33) ladies, if you do not really respect the man you are dating, you obviously should not marry him as you are told to respect your husband. A man wants to be respected.

On the first point (verse 21) gentlemen, notice that husbands are also to submit to their wives. Do not think that submission is a one-way street. That does not mean a husband should not take the lead, but it does mean that he needs to consider his wife's view and not only his opinion.

The relationship between a husband and wife is to be like that of Christ and His church.

The 5th chapter of Ephesian speaks not only of the marital relationship, but of the basic difference between the sexes. These differences have to do with physiological and psychological differences that God ordained and created in us. Paul tells us that a man is to lovingly lead and that a woman is to happily follow (Ephesians 5:22-23). These values are defined by God and are not contingent upon cultural conditioning. God's way is cooperation.

Christians are to cooperate with each other (cf. Ephesians 5:21).

Males and females are different, but they need to cooperate and live in harmony. And yes, hormonal differences between men and women do make a difference.

When we begin to recognize the differences in emotional makeup, problems that come up can be defused and overcome. A true gentleman will respect a woman's feelings. He will seek to understand her point of view, and he will strive to be sensitive to her moods and emotions. He will try to support her in both her ups and her downs. He will do things within his power to put her at ease. He will realize the value of a sincere compliment at the right time to encourage her.

Likewise, women should recognize how fragile the male ego sometimes is. As well as realize that men simply do not always see things the same way as women. That does not necessarily make them insensitive—it makes them different.

Notice some additional instructions:

⁴ ... admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. (Titus 2:4-5)

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. (Colossians 3:18-19)

¹ Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. ³ Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — ⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

⁷ Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:1-7)

The world does not understand nor care to believe much of what Ephesians 5, Titus 2, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3 teaches.

But understanding these verses means that Christians should realize where their dating ultimately should lead to, as well as some of how to act. If you are dating, consider these verses as you consider whether you can handle being married under such guidelines to the one you may be dating.

Perceiving and Giving Attention

Depending on one's culture, gender, environment, personal preferences, etc., one may perceive an act to be loving or not.

In 1995, Gary Chapman put out a book about what considered to the 'five languages of love.' He claimed people tended have one form as primary and another secondary, and that the other forms were not that important to them.

His five languages of 'love' were verbal affirmation, quality time, physical touch, giving or receiving gifts, and acts of service.

He suggests that to discover another person's love language, one must observe the way they express 'love' to others, and analyze what they complain about most often and what they request from their significant other most often.

He theorized that people tend to naturally give 'love' in the way that they prefer to receive 'love,' and better communication between couples can be accomplished when one can demonstrate caring to the other person in the love language the recipient understands.

An example would be if a husband's love language is acts of service, he may be confused when he does the laundry for his wife and she doesn't perceive that as an act of love, instead with her viewing it as simply performing household duties, because the love language she comprehends is words of affirmation (verbal affirmation that he loves her).

She may try to use what she values, words of affirmation, to express her love to him, which he might not value as much as she does. If she understands his love language and mows the lawn for him, he perceives it in his love language as an act of expressing her love for him; likewise, if he tells her he loves her, she values that as an act of love.

Now, while Gary Chapman called these things love, some might be better described as ways to give and receive positive attention.

But his basic point that people perceive things differently, and have preferences that may differ from their partner, is something to keep in mind.

That is true when dating, and also in marriage.

4. The Great Delusion - Love or Lust!

Before getting to dating, please understand that it is impossible to fall in love. A “fall” is an accident. And love should most definitely NOT be accidental!

Now that does not mean that you may not unknowingly run into someone that you may end up dating or even marrying.

However, there has been an avalanche of false propaganda which has been foisted upon many an unsuspecting generation about “falling in love.”

So many dozens of our songs, our motion pictures, our novels and magazine articles, and a tremendous amount of our conversation involving the whole situation between the sexes, dating, and romance involve the idea of “falling in love.”

But somewhere, somehow, the entertainment media have confused their spelling. Today, “lust” is spelled with l-o-v-e, instead of l-u-s-t.

What Hollywood and the world’s other media does not normally show you, however, are the adverse consequences of this lifestyle: Unhappy, unfulfilled people, divorce, broken hearts, sexually transmissible diseases, unwanted pregnancies, poverty, neglected children, and shattered lives.

Because the kind of “love” into which the world often pushes people to “fall” for, is not love, but lust. It may be a desire for intimacies and sexual experience with one another; a desire to be seen in each other’s company, to “have” or “possess” the other person - but that most assuredly is NOT LOVE!

Furthermore, please understand that the way Hollywood portrays women and their attitudes towards sexual relations are often grossly exaggerated and unrealistic. Reality is usually not like Hollywood.

Now, love is an outgoing attitude of concern for the one being loved.

Love is giving; it is sharing; it is a feeling of ADMIRATION and RESPECT for the qualities of character in the other individual, and not just hot lust while clutching hands in a darkened motion picture theater! Character should be built, not sacrificed when dating.

It's about time an adult society, and all teenagers, learned that love is something which must be grown into.

Love is primarily an outgoing concern! Love is a deep regard, respect, and a desire to give and to share with the one being loved. True love is totally give -not get.

Different Words Translated as Love

There are four Greek words that are often translated as 'love.'

The first three below are used in the New Testament, while the fourth is not:

Φιλέω (Phileō)

Ἀγάπη or Ἀγαπάω (Agapē or Agapaō)

Στοργή (Storgē)

Ερως (Eros)

Phileō means brotherly/friendship love, but can also convey deeper love. It sometimes appears to be used interchangeably with Agapē (e.g. John 20:2 and John 21:7).

Agapē means a giving, unselfish, love, but can also convey more of a friendship. The New Testament use of forms of the word Agapē is not limited to godly or spiritual love (e.g. Luke 6:32).

Storgē essentially means 'natural affection.' The one time it is positively used in scripture, it is combined with Phileō (Romans 12:10).

Eros conveys a passionate/erotic feeling.

Married people are essentially told in the New Testament to have the first three (e.g. Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4, Romans 12:10 respectively).

Here is some of what the Bible teaches about love:

⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

A famous woman once said, “Love is not a feeling. Love is doing.” And while there are feelings that are associated with love, do not confuse feelings with real love.

Most who are divorced, originally had strong feelings. Divorce indicates failure, hence the absence of real love.

Men are to love and women want to feel loved. And that means more than physical relations - we are talking about a permanent love.

Yet, when the world uses the word ‘love,’ it often means eros—a term not used in the New Testament.

Music

Music can be pleasant, but also convey wrong concepts.

For one example, there is an old song that you still hear sometimes, that has a false and powerful message. It begins with, ‘strangers in the night, exchanging glances.’ It is talking about two people, who never laid eyes on each other before.

Yet, they are wondering what the chances were they would be sharing “love” - that term is used in the song - “before the night was through.” Even before the dawn of morning, they’re going to be sharing “love.”

The song continues: ‘something in your eyes was so inviting.’ People are being told unconsciously that something in somebody’s glance at night was so inviting, and something in a smile was so exciting, and something in a heart just told this other person: “I must have you.”

While a glance may lead to a date, that does not make it love.

The song continues about ‘strangers in the night,’ two lonely people who were, just up to a moment ago, totally lonely. But “when we said our first hello,” the song says “little did we know that love was just a glance away, a warm embracing dance,” just a little distance away, “ever since that night” they had been together, and they were lovers at first sight - and then apparently fornicators within a short time. Now they were going to stay in love for ever and ever. It turned out ‘so right’ for these ‘strangers that met in the night.’”

I am unaware of any statistics that would support the view that a ‘one-night stand’ (someone met and fornicated with within hours of meeting) leads to true love for ever and ever.

‘Strangers in the night’ is just some absurd fantasy that is not really about love. But that is the type of wrong information that popular music can portray.

Consider the following:

⁴ Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Hebrews 13:4)

God endorses sexual relations in marriage (see also Genesis 1:28), but condemns them with any you are not actually married to.

Marriage is Misunderstood by Many

One 2015 poll found that marrying for the wrong reasons was the number one cause of divorce (The 10 Most Common Reasons People Get Divorced. Huffington Post, September 16, 2015).

Movies, books, television, and other forms of media regularly promote views of marriage and romance that are fantasies. The same is also true about romance novels and various forms of pornography.

If you have never been married, you will find that marriage is different than you think. It is not 50-50. If you think so, you will probably end up divorced. Your spouse cannot always tell what you are doing for your

marriage, nor can you always tell what your spouse is doing for your marriage. You have to give more than you probably think you will.

Marriage is not always fun. Feelings will vary.

Many situations you'll have to face as a couple will be difficult and unexpected.

Furthermore, please realize that many people have ideas about marriage that are not realistic.

Yet, once some get the idea of marriage into their mind, and someone willing to marry them, some forge ahead too quickly.

Notice the following story:

AT EIGHTEEN Maureen is a tall blond ... she has a warm, dimpled smile and a disarming air of innocence.

But at eighteen, Maureen is a bitter statistic in the nation's scoreboard of teenage marriages ... she is today on the threshold of divorce.

"That marriage was a farce" is a terse summation of "the biggest mistake I ever made."

Reflecting upon the jigsaw puzzle of the events that led to marriage too soon, a reckoning too late, she said: "We met at this part-time job I had. He was twenty-three, and head of the department. All the girls, even the engaged ones, used to coo over him and say, "Oh, he's nice." One day he asked me out. Three weeks later he asked me to marry him.

"Me? I never had any responsibility at home. Mother washed my clothes, ironed my clothes, laid out my clothes, even bought my clothes. Still does. To this day I don't do anything.

"The day after the wedding I knew it was a mistake. As time went by it only got worse. Nothing was the way it was supposed to be.

He wouldn't give me money. He pushed me from one dingy furnished room to another.

"And there were so many bills! I never knew what it was like. You know you live with your family - they pay for everything. Then, suddenly, you're faced with bills. You're on your back. And they are getting court orders. It was just too much!

"It was all so different from the way I'd pictured it. I don't know exactly how it is supposed to be, but more fun - different. And he seemed so different before I married him ... this man on the outside, so big and good-looking and nice. But so afraid on the inside, so chicken, afraid of his mother, his father - afraid of everything. He was a baby, really, a child. And he called me immature....

"The worst thing that happened to me was I learned to hate. I never hated anyone before. I don't even like the word. But I hate that man. And somehow, with all the troubles I've been through, I'm empty. Everything is gone out of me.

"Next time I'll look for someone more mature." (From the New York World Telegram, December 11, 1963.)

What a tragedy!

Despite being decades old, this story could be told over and over - at least thousands of times - in the 21st century.

Some young people rush into marriage to leave their families, change their lives, or to try to escape something. But a bad marriage is worse than none at all.

5. Authority for Morals

The Apostle John was inspired to write:

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

The world's way of lust will be passing away. It will be replaced by the coming Kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15).

Consider the following:

¹² There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Jesus warned that most end up going the wrong way:

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Obviously, we are not to get morality from the world and the world's media.

"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong" (Exodus 23:2, NIV).

So, what should be your authority for morality?

Jesus taught:

⁴ It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

Yes, we get teachings on moral authority from the word of God.

Consider also that the Apostle Paul taught:

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Previously accepted as the inspired word of God by many in authority, nowadays, the Bible is considered to be the uninspired writing of flawed men.

The Bible is sufficient to teach moral behavior—for both adults and children.

While children are to honor their parents (Mark 10:19), Christian parents should teach their children about sex and morality from the Bible:

⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

If your parents have neglected their duty this way, do not use it as an excuse to sin. You will suffer consequences if you live contrary to God’s word.

Consider also the following story:

A 19-year-old boy had been in a certain town only six months. He named to police eleven girls with whom he had engaged in illicit sex. Many from ‘the best’ families. “You can “make” almost any girl in town, on your first date,” he said.

In this particular scandal, which got into the newspapers, revealed facts which were significant. Of all involved, not one was close to either father or mother.

The police chief exclaimed that it was too bad he was unable to take a horsewhip to the neglectful parents!

One of the mothers whitewashed herself of blame, saying: “You can’t blame me for Janie’s predicament! Why, you can rest assured she never learned a thing about sex in my house. The word was never even so much as mentioned!”

Of course, parents should teach about sex and morality.

Sadly, few modern ‘experts’ accept biblical morality. Today, educators, religionists, psychologists, sociologists and others generally proclaim complete freedom to do as one pleases — that is the new religion --and they often claim this as a human or civil right. Many sexual practices they advocate are specifically condemned in the Bible (cf. Romans 1:24-32).

Though this trend is not unique to the 21st century, we continue to see more and more move away from the Bible for their moral guidance.

Decades ago, a Senior Editor for *Look* magazine declared:

“We are witnessing the death of the old morality Conditions are changing so fast that the established moral guidelines have been yanked from our hands. No single authority rules our conduct. No church lays down the moral law for all We are heading into danger. We are in the midst of a moral crisis — because the great majority of Americans, who want to try to live moral lives, no longer can be certain what is right and what is wrong.... We are groping, painfully and often blindly, for new standards that will enable us to live morally and decently.”

What is meant, here, is that people now want to adopt a moral standard which calls fornication, adultery, and homosexuality “moral.” Many want society to approve and adopt a standard which enables them to be promiscuous, unfaithful, or perverted, and have it accepted as living morally and decently. They do not want to be told such behaviors are sin. They want everyone to not just tolerate their “lifestyle,” but to condone and promote it.

Now, let’s continue to see what the *Look* Senior Editor also said:

‘the experts feel strongly that we cannot turn back to earlier, more rigid behavior patterns ... We must find a new moral code that will fit the need of the society we live in.’

Such philosophical drivel sounds terribly ATTRACTIVE to many teenagers and others who do not want to believe the Bible!

It’s the same old dodge used from time immemorial; “Since people just NATURALLY tend to be contemptuous of the laws - let’s CHANGE THE LAWS to suit the people!” This, religion has done; and this is what the “new moralists” are attempting to do.

Perversely, various ones teach from the pulpit that NO illicit sex is “bad.” And even that Jesus approves forms of sexual immorality—including homosexuality—that they call “love.”

Many moderns cannot stand the following scriptures:

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual

immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:22-32)

Government officials in Canada have actually worked to stop people from quoting parts of the Bible, including Romans 1. They do not want it publicized how seriously the Bible condemns various forms of sexual immorality. They do not want people to be told that such sins have terrible consequences.

They profess to be wise, but the Bible does not agree.

Beware of Immorality

As morals become more and more lax, men need to be even more wary of “loose” women:

³ For the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. ⁴ But in the end she is as bitter as poison, as dangerous as a double-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. ⁶ For she cares nothing about the path to life. She staggers down a crooked trail and doesn't realize it. (Proverbs 5:3-6, NLT)

Whatever “comfort” sexual relations with the immoral provide is not good for you. Consider also that prostitutes are usually women pretending “love” for their clients—they want their clients' money, but otherwise despise them.

Keep God's commands and avoid the immoral:

²³ For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, ²⁴ To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. ²⁵ Do not lust

after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.

²⁶ For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. ²⁷ Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? ²⁸ Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? (Proverbs 6:23-28)

The right type of love between a man and a woman is not pretense—it is one that elicits total participation by both parties. Real love is the kind of human relationship that overwhelms loneliness!

It is a giving and sharing of the self with another of like mind that reflects the attitude of Christ and the Church. Such a marriage relationship can result only when it is built on a right foundation. And that foundation starts with personal understanding of the purpose for the creation of man and woman. But those who will not read and accept the truth, as revealed in God's inspired Word, cannot understand!

Once a man has engaged in fornication (and other forms of sexual immorality), it is more difficult for him to keep from wanting to continue in it. Once a woman has engaged in fornication, she knows she is no longer a virgin and it is more difficult to turn down fornicating pressures.

Let me add that studies have found that Protestants that identify themselves as Evangelicals are about as likely as those who do not claim Christianity to engage in fornication. Many reason around scripture and confuse sexual desire for love.

In the world, men have a tendency to think that all that women are interested in is their money, whereas as women think that all the men are interested in is sex.

And while it is reasonable for a woman to want a husband to provide for her, and the man to expect to have sexual relations with his wife, neither money nor sex should be the focus of dating by single Christians.

Those who believe the Bible will strive to not be involved in fornication.

6. What Should a Date be Like?

But what about dating?

Dating should be an opportunity to give each other a pleasant (mostly, as things and accidents do happen) time. If both parties do their utmost to give to the other in the ways we shall now explore, a date will be enriching and successful.

What should a date be like?

Well, all dates should not be the same, but there are some basic points about what a date should involve.

Of course, if your parents consider you too young to date or have certain rules you must follow, you should communicate that and not ask nor accept a date that you cannot make.

Realize that a date is a commitment. Whether you are the one who asks for the date or the one who accepts the date, you need to keep your commitment. If you have agreed to a date, be ready for it and be on time.

Remember, the Bible teaches, “all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8).

Want to improve the chances of going out with that person another time? If, so, arrive or be ready on time.

Dating practices have changed over time.

In the past in certain Western societies, singles may have “courted” on the front-porch swing under the watchful eyes of Dad and Mom. For a time, chaperones were common on dates.

Many parents have required the young man to meet them, before allowing him to take their daughter to a dance, restaurant, the movies, etc. Some parents still do.

Dates generally involve fun activities, but do not have to be restricted to what is commonly considered recreation. Actually, if you and your date

sometimes work together (such as doing volunteer work somewhere, going to church service together, or helping someone move, etc.), you will see other aspects of each other.

Dates should pay attention to each other.

In modern times, communications are often interrupting by someone on their cellular phone either talking or texting. That should not happen on dates, except for emergencies.

Do you want to date?

The Bible teaches:

²⁴ A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Someone interested in dating should be friendly. In your dating, concentrate on building friendships. Listen to what the other person has to say, rather than consistently dominating the conversation. Go to places the other person would like to go, rather than always insisting on doing what you want. Take time to find out the interests, dreams and goals of the individual you are dating.

One purpose of dating is to help build long-lasting relationships. Friendship grows when we show concern for the feelings and interests of others.

Where you will go and what you will do on a date will vary depending on many factors. Weather conditions, activities available in the area, and how much money to spend are some of the considerations that will dictate what you can do.

Dating should be fun!

The possibilities for having good, clean fun on a date are endless.

Be creative! Explore the possibilities in your area. Take advantage of opportunities. Some activities may always be available, whereas others could be special events.

For the first few dates, the responsibility for selecting and planning activities normally rests on the man. While some men are not comfortable with this (especially when they first start dating), this is a unique and profitable opportunity to develop proper masculine leadership, and have fun at the same time.

A thoughtful leader will try to plan dates around activities that he thinks that the woman would like to do. A man could have two or three ideas in mind, and ask the woman which one she would prefer. This allows the man to do the planning and preparation, while giving the woman input.

For some activities, it may be helpful or necessary to plan well in advance. While, spontaneous dates can be enjoyable, it is only common courtesy to ask a woman several days ahead of time so she can prepare.

A man should tell his date what she will be doing and where she will be going so she can plan and dress appropriately.

Some ideas as to what to do could include the following:

- Take advantage of natural beauty in your area. Take a hike in the mountains, go swimming, go sailing, try snow or water skiing, go horseback riding, or take a pleasant walk through a national or city park. These activities not only give the opportunity for fun and even exercise, they also provide a scenic backdrop for conversation and getting to know each other.
- Museums, libraries, or parks are available, or within commuting/driving distances in most cities.
- Visit historical sites and other places of interest.
- When you can afford it, a lunch (usually less expensive) or a dinner at a nice restaurant can be pleasurable and provide a nice atmosphere for easy discussion.
- On occasion, a movie, play, or concert can be delightful. You might wish to go for a walk or eat afterward so you can talk.

- Sports activities such as volleyball, roller skating, and tennis help keep you physically fit while enabling you to become acquainted with a variety of people.
- Get together with his friends, get together with her friends. Getting to know each other's friends helps you get to know each other. Plus having more people involved tends to increase the amount of possible activities.
- Recreational activities like bowling are available in many parts of the world. Even if you are a lousy bowler (like me), it can still be fun.
- Attend church social functions when possible. They usually cost little or nothing.
- Try tastings at farms. In many areas, people can taste various types of farm products. In our area, we have tried honey tasting, olive oil tasting, and cider tasting.
- Inviting a friend to visit the elderly can encourage and inspire those who are lonely and shut in.
- Outdoor barbecues, picnics, sing-a-longs, house painting parties, and bike rides offer inexpensive social opportunities.
- Be an actual tourist. Many Christians may find that exploring an area that they are at for church events, like the Feast of Tabernacles, offer opportunities for both the man and woman to learn new activities and see new sites together. Or, even checking out their own area as a tourist might lead to exciting discoveries.
- Check out the internet. If you type in your town and/or county name and "activities" you may get many ideas. If you expand that to "activities calendar" you may find that there are unexpected events going on for a short time in your area that you and your date may enjoy.

The list of possible dating activities is virtually endless. Getting to know the opposite sex and enjoying wholesome fun - that's what dating is all about!

And if you and your date start to suspect that you may wish to marry in the future—that can be an added bonus.

Who Pays?

Who should pay for the date?

Well, in a two-person date, the one who asked for the date, should be expected to pay for it. So, normally, that means the man.

Furthermore, since men, overall, make more money than women, that is another reason the male should normally be the one paying.

However, this does not entitle the man to physical affection from the woman he is dating. Yet, it should entitle him to pleasant company and conversation.

That being said, a woman should not take advantage of her date paying and order, for example, the most expensive items on a restaurant menu, just because the man is expected to pay.

Also, being on a date does not entitle the woman to ask the man to buy presents or souvenirs she might see and want when they are together. If she really wants to buy something to take with her, she should be willing to pay for it herself.

Now, some guys are cheap (or poor) and think that the woman should pay for the date or, at least, that the expenses should be split. If you are a man and expect your date to pay for any costs, you should tell her when you ask her out.

What if the woman wants to go somewhere that the man cannot really afford? Well, the man should tell the woman that he does not have the money for that.

Can the woman offer to pay? Or even ask for the date?

Certainly, but some men may be offended by that, though others may be fine with it.

Dressing for a Date

How you dress for a date will be at least partially dictated based upon what you intend to do for the date.

If you are going to a fancy restaurant, to see a play, or do something somewhat elegant, formal attire might be called for.

If you are going on a hike or some similar outdoor activity, boots and/or rougher clothing are more likely to be called for.

If you are going bowling or something casual, casual clothing would seem to be called for.

If you are going to a beach, appropriate swimwear, which for women would tend to be a full one-piece bathing suit and a cover-up, and for men some type of bathing trunks (not like small, tight underwear) and a t-shirt may be appropriate.

Weather factors should also be considered when it comes to dressing.

Men and women can consider styles and fashion, but should not try to dress in ways society now considers to be sexy/seductive.

This basically means you should not wear clothes that are too tight or are sheer enough in inappropriate places to see through (unless there is a slip or something not see-through under it). Also, your underwear should normally not be seen and your clothes should cover up a sufficient amount of skin.

Do you want your date to end decently or in tragedy?

While dressing decently does not guarantee the date will end well, dressing provocatively increases the risk the date will end tragically.

Notice something that the Apostle Paul wrote:

⁹ in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but, which is

proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

Do not dress immodestly.

Since Christians are not to engage in fornication, they should not dress like that is what they want to be asked to do.

Ladies, despite seductive clothing styles many wear today, be assured that you do not need to dress seductively for a man to have interest in you. Any man who chooses to date you because you dress like a harlot or seductress will later look for others that way, even in the unlikely event he would stay around long enough to marry you.

The Bible teaches that Christians are “not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way” (Romans 14:13). Men and women are not to dress seductively on dates.

Gentlemen, you may be surprised to learn that looks are less important to women than men. That being said, your clothes should be clean, your underwear should not stick out (like many moderns wear their pants low), and your clothes should be appropriate for the activity.

You want to have fun dating and your clothes should be clean and appropriate for the dating activity.

Physical Matters

In parts of the 20th century, whether to kiss on the first date was a sizzling topic of conversation.

Today's singles are just as concerned about physical contact, but the worldly are more focused about when to go to bed together for the first time.

Times have certainly changed.

But people not so much.

Consider the following story about something that happened over a century ago:

I knew of an experience involving a young man about 21 whom I knew very well. He and a 21-year-old chum were double dating two girl chums. The other couple had begun “loving up” as the younger generation then termed it. So this friend of mine began to fear he would be considered ‘slow,” or behind the times. “Loving up” was then beginning to be considered the thing to do, after the first two or three dates.

So this fellow began cautiously putting his arm around this girl’s shoulder. She didn’t shove it back. A date or two later, he worked up enough courage to kiss her. She made no objection. He remained very proper otherwise.

The girl’s father was dead, and her stepfather was a dealer in Buick automobiles. He and his wife often took the young couple out on Sunday afternoon rides.

Very few families owned automobiles in those days.

The young people sat in the backseat, and his arm usually was around the girl’s shoulders. There was no objection from her mother or stepfather. It seemed to be accepted as normal. One night, sitting in a front-porch swinging seat, the girl began to tell this young man how much money her father had left her.

It was not a fortune, but a few thousand dollars. She began suggesting what they might do with it.

“Wait a minute!” he suddenly exclaimed. “Just what are you getting at?”

“Why,” she replied, “I thought we ought to begin to plan what we will do after we are married.”

“Married!” he exclaimed, in sudden alarm. “Who said anything about getting married?”

“Why,” she came back, equally surprised, “what have you been loving me up for, if we’re not going to be married?”

The flabbergasted young man then explained that he had never indulged in “loving up” before, but had begun to feel out-of-date, supposing it was expected. The girl burst into tears, jumped up and ran into the house, slamming the door behind her.

Next day the boy tried to contact her by telephone. Her mother answered the telephone. “Lucille told me all about it,” said the indignant mother, icily. “she never wants to see you again.” And she never did!

But in those “loving-up” days, prior to World War I, girls were kept “decent”. Actual sexual intercourse was “unthinkable.” The girl who did submit to it “lost her honor”. (Dating - and Teenage Morality. Youth 84, April 1984)

Men and women do not always see things the same. Even in the 21st century, men may take certain physical liberties or behave in various ways, but with no intention to actually marry many women they date--even if they do or do not commit fornication with them.

Consider also that unmarried “heavy petters” and habitual “neckers” are busily DESTROYING their chances for any real mystery, anticipation, discovery-in marriage! They’re busily RUINING aspects of their sex lives by breaking the living laws the Creator set in motion to protect and preserve them.

It has been claimed that modern dating has become a competition between male and female to see how much each can get from the other, perhaps trading flattery and attention for sexual pleasure. This selfish way of thinking is no way for two people to determine if each other would be the right lifelong mate. Divorce statistics prove it.

Today’s habit of living together without the sanction of marriage is not a good way to get to know the other person either. A relationship without a lasting commitment is play-acting to the highest degree. Statistics have shown that people who live together before marriage are more likely to divorce than people who do not.

And that does not count the couples who live together and then not marry. If they are counted, the “divorce rate” for cohabiters is even much higher.

Statistically, one of the best things a woman can do to prevent divorce is to be a virgin when she is married.

This is not simply “old fashioned” or biblical morality, it is supported by studies in the 21st century.

Consider the following related to a multi-year study from University of Utah professor Nicholas Wolfinger:

Though divorce rates have risen pretty much across the board in the last three decades, the group with the lowest divorce rates was those who had zero sexual partners before tying the knot. It’s also the group that’s shrinking most rapidly. In the 1970s, 21 percent of women were virgins before marriage. In the 2010s, that number fell to 5 percent. (Study: ‘Virgin Marriages’ Less Likely to End in Divorce. Relevant Magazine, June 7, 2016)

So, we see that virginity rates are plunging as divorce rates are rising (male virginity rates are similar to female ones). Yet, we still see that virgin brides have the lowest divorce rates. There are likely many reasons for this, including the attitude a man has toward a virgin bride vs. one he knows was involved with one or more others. One report stated that men had more trust in their wives if they were virgins when married.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Dating should not lead to fornication. Be careful about too much physical contact. Christians are to “flee sexual immorality”, not see how close to it they can come.

Ladies, consider that men, Christian and otherwise, can have issues with self-control. Male libido hormones tend to engage more quickly than

female ones. Be careful on dates to not be in situations that may tempt your date to pressure you to sin. If someone, be a date, relative, friend, or stranger, attempts to force you to have sex resist and scream as loud as you can—do not allow it (Deuteronomy 22:24-27). If you are raped, report it to the proper authorities. Do not enable rapists.

Gentlemen, you also need to remember that when a seductress grabbed Joseph's clothes, he fled (Genesis 39:12). "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18, KJV)!

As far as your date goes, it may not be his or your intent to engage in fornication, but some fall when they seem to be led to temptation (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:12). All should pray not to be led into temptation (cf. Matthew 6:13) nor put themselves in excessively tempting situations.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul was also inspired to write:

²² from all appearance of evil abstain (1 Thessalonians 5:22
[Young's Literal Translation])

In our affluent age, the automobile, and the opportunities it affords, can sometimes be singled out as a contributor to sexual immorality as vehicles can afford a type of privacy that many would not have at someone's home.

Consider also that today's ideas about 'open marriage,' group marriage, communal living, rotating partners, homosexual "marriage," "fluid" sexuality, and surrogate parenting cloud the meaning and purpose of the God-ordained male and female roles and rob untold millions of the profound joy of a godly marriage.

Such "modern" ideas actually go back to Sodom and Gomorrah and are soundly condemned in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Romans 1:26-27).

After you are married, you will have a lifetime to get physical.

Develop patience, and wait.

7. When There is No One Around to Date

You may have read the previous parts of this book and liked what you read.

But the question you really have is, “What am I supposed to do when there is no one around in the Church of God to date in my area?”

That is a difficult problem that we see a lot of in the 21st century.

There are a few options we will go over here.

The first is to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a biblically commanded assembly (Deuteronomy 16:13; Acts 18:21) and people in the Church of God will strive to do this. There will usually be one or more single people of the opposite sex there. Even if there is not, or there are other issues, attending the Feast of Tabernacles will help you spiritually. Plus, even if no one there is appropriate, others who attend there may remember you and may later recommend that someone contact you.

Another would be to consider travelling to a more distant festival location that may have more possible prospects.

Another way is to see if you can connect with other singles in the Church of God on the internet. The internet eliminates distance, but it is impersonal and can give a wrong impression. But with free ways to talk over the internet like Skype, Google Voice, etc. that can help reduce some misunderstandings that would happen in email only communications.

However, caution is advised. People can get a romanticized version of someone that they only speak to and do not see in stressful, work, family, recreational, and/or financial situations.

So, and this is much easier to say than to do, try not to get too emotionally involved with someone you have not physically spent time with.

Do Not Be a Troll or Seductress

While it is appropriate for most people to use social media like Facebook, some caution is advised.

Although it is not wrong to let people know that you are looking to get married, seductive/revealing photographs are not appropriate. Sadly, I have seen these even from people who claim to be Church of God Christians.

Furthermore, do not be a troll. In fishing, trolling involves putting a lure in the water while being pulled in a boat with the hope some fish will bite it. Trolling, for this book's context, is inappropriately contacting someone you do not know.

Let's look at a real-life example. I got the following message recently when I was on Facebook (with slight edits):

Shalom:

I am Ian XXXXXX from Africa. I'm happy to meet you. I'm looking for a wonderful lady like you. I hope you will like me too.

... God bless you we are in touch as a church.

So, this person is claiming to be a Christian, hints he is a Sabbath keeper, is claiming to be interested, and wants to someone to 'like' (presumably romantically) him. Well, he apparently does not pay too much attention to who he sends this type of trolling trash to as I am not female.

Also, during the time I was working on this book, I got a some type 'Flirt' request from some social media email.

Should you receive them, do NOT be flattered by such things and other improper flirtations. You need to be concerned about flattery (cf. Psalm 12:2-3; Proverbs 6:24; 26:28), even from people, like Ian, who claim to be interested in the Church.

Sending out that type of message is not right.

Does that mean you cannot message someone of the opposite sex?

No.

But something more appropriate might be:

Hi. I am XXXX XXXXXXXX. I am a member of the *Continuing Church of God* in central New Zealand. I saw your profile on Facebook. How long have you been part of the church?

Now, I am NOT saying that you need to message people over social media like Facebook or Snapchat to look for dates. But if you do use social media, be proper, polite, and cautious.

Before you personally meet anyone who you have been in contact through electronic media (also including telephone), you should check them out with their pastor or someone trustworthy in the Church of God to make sure that they are truly part of the Church of God. That does not guarantee that the person may not be a creep, but at least you should be able to determine if some of what you have been told is true.

Christians who use social media should not put up photographs that are intended to be seductive (Proverbs 23:27-28) nor those with a “proud look” (Proverbs 6:16-17).

As far as Snapchat goes, I have been told it is supposedly secretive (so parents are less likely to know what is going on). Snapchat has often been used by child predators and sex-traffickers (Snapchat Has a Child-Porn Problem. Bloomberg, November 8, 2017). However, that does not mean that those types of people do not use other platforms of social media, like Facebook or LinkedIn, as well.

Social media users (and their parents) need to be careful and not be naïve.

Let me add that being overly flirtatious is not only condemned by the Bible, it has risks.

A song that was once popular by *Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers*, titled *Don't do me like that*, had the following lyrics about a woman who was apparently not careful with her words:

I was talking with a friend of mine
Said a woman had hurt his pride
Told him that she loved him so

And turned around and let him go
Then he said, you better watch your step
Or your gonna get hurt yourself
Someone's gonna tell you lies
Cut you down to size ...
Love doesn't last that long

Now, this does not mean you cannot change your mind about someone. But what it does suggest is that you may be lied to by someone you date and it may not end well for you if you are not properly careful.

You may think you know better and do not have to follow biblical guidelines—but if you do not follow them, it will not end up as well for you.

As far as the line in the song that “Love doesn't last that long,” that is a reference essentially to lust—and while love will properly endure (“Love never fails” 1 Corinthians 13:8), the same cannot be said of lust.

Prayer

Pray for God's guidance in your relationship. Ask Him to help you choose the right mate for you, just as He did with the first man and woman at the start of human history.

If God is involved in your choice of a wife or husband, and both you and your future mate set yourselves to obey God's laws concerning love, marriage and sex, you can't go wrong. Ask God to help you see everything you should as you decide who you want to marry.

Jesus told His followers:

² The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.
(Luke 10:2)

Have you been doing that?

More laborers for the harvest means more Christians. Which also means more potential people to date.

In my own case, I remember that there was to be a private church singles' function about 110 miles away. A man who was 30 years older than me was going and told me about it. I was hesitant to attend as it was far from my home and the person who was putting it on was over twice my age.

But the night before it, I was at dinner with a church family. The family asked me if I wanted to get married someday and I said yes. The man of the house said to me, "Do you ever pray for a wife?"

I responded with something like, "I may have in the past. Mainly I pray about aspects of the work, other people, Matthew 6 items, etc., but not often something that I specifically want for myself like that."

He responded with something to the effect, "If you want to get married, it is probably a good idea to pray for a wife."

So, the next morning I did.

Later that day, I decided to go to the singles' party.

When I got there, there were several single ladies. But they were all much older than me—with many of them at least three times my age!

So, I said to myself, "Okay, this is what you thought might happen, you may as well be polite and enjoy these ladies' company."

After I had been there for a little while, I went into a different room and met a man about my age. As it turned out, there were many single women around my age as well, but they just were not in the part of the house that I had been in. To shorten the story, I met my wife Joyce there. And this was not a function I had expected to attend.

Prayer is important.

What if There is No One to Date?

Many Church of God people are scattered around the world in places where there may not be any appropriate person to date.

Does that mean then that nothing will ever change?

No.

If you are truly a Christian, it means that God does not think you are ready yet.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote:

²⁵ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. ²⁶ It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord. ²⁷ It is good for a man to bear The yoke in his youth. (Lamentations 3:25-27)

Sometimes you have to wait.

Adam had to wait:

¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. (Genesis 2:19-20)

While Adam did not have to wait long, he probably felt he had no options, but God already had planned to make Eve (Genesis 2:18). Yet, God waited until He knew the timing was right.

It may be that the sense of loneliness single people feel, will not only encourage them to date, but also will remind them when they marry, that they did not like being so alone.

So, if you are a single Christian, do not be surprised if you have to wait.

Being a single celibate helps teach restraint, self-control, and humility (cf. Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

It's Hopeless, So Do Something Your Way?

You may feel that because of where you live and how few Church of God singles there are that it is hopeless.

It is not.

Christians need to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) and trust God. Notice the following:

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Consider those passages along with something the Bible shows happened long ago.

In the Book of Genesis we learn that there were two young women that God allowed to flee from Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:15,30). They were likely grateful, for a time, that they were not destroyed by the fire and brimstone that fell on those cities.

Yet, in time, these women leaned to their own understanding. They decided that since there were no eligible men around that they would never be able to have children.

One said to the other, “there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth” (Genesis 19:31).

Now, that was not true. There were lots of men still on the earth. They could have waited. Plus, they could have visited their distant relative Abraham, who had lots of men working for him (cf. Genesis 14:14).

So instead of waiting to visit Abraham (which would have been fine) or otherwise trusting God (and it is appropriate to do more than just wait), they came up with an evil plan that involved getting their father drunk and getting involved with him (Genesis 19:32-35).

While that did result in both getting pregnant (Genesis 19:36), it also ended up that they never did get husbands (cf. Genesis 19:37-38), which they could have gotten if they would instead would have trusted God and relied on obeying His ways.

It May Seem Hopeless, But . . .

There was a man named Isaac whose father (Abraham) was wealthy, but he was unmarried. He apparently did not want to marry any of his father's servants, so he remained single.

After his mother died (Genesis 23:1), he seemingly spoke with his father and agreed to an arranged marriage. And he ended up getting married at age 40 (Genesis 25:20).

Well, you may say, he was the son of a rich man, of course, he could get married. Probably so, but he waited until he was forty to do so, which would be difficult for most men.

But the other part of the story has to do with who he married.

The woman he married had never heard of him at first.

Consider that she was a single woman, living with her parents, and apparently she felt that there was no one to consider marrying where she lived.

It probably seemed hopeless to her.

Then one day, a representative of a distant relative she never met showed up. He came to arrange the marriage for Isaac.

Now this messenger had prayed that God would lead him to the right woman for Isaac and the Bible shows that is what happened (Genesis 24:21-61).

And despite this being a somewhat arranged marriage, the woman (Rebekah) was given the right of refusal:

⁵⁷ So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." ⁵⁸ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

And she said, "I will go." (Genesis 24:57-58)

Rebekah probably thought that the potential marriage scene where she lived was hopeless, but God had other plans.

What about Moses?

Moses was part of the Egyptian royal family. He 'had it all' as far as the world was concerned. But, instead he gave it up:

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26)

Moses probably had a lot of available women when he gave up on Egypt. When he finally fled Egypt, he probably did not think he would end up married. But he did (Exodus 2:21).

Waiting Can Be Difficult, But . . .

The Bible teaches that even Jesus "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

As Christians "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Hopefully, you are a Christian that believes that.

Yet, that does not mean you should never take steps to try to meet others—remember those who want friends need to be friendly (Proverbs 18:24) and God does expect us to do our part in life—but you need to have faith in God.

Yet, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

If you want to date and get married someday, you may need to change yourself and become what God wants you to be before you date/marry. So, you do not have to wait while doing nothing.

Here some scriptures related to waiting:

¹⁴ Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord! (Psalm 27:14)

³ Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. ⁴ **Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.** (Psalm 37:3-4)

⁷ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; (Psalm 37:7)

⁷ And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. (Psalm 39:7)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Not having anyone around to date may be a trial you are going through.

WHEN God thinks it is best for you, He will, eventually, get someone into your life.

Though for some people, attaining a spouse is not best (cf. Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9).

It is normal to think about who you will marry, when it will happen, where this person is. Yes, it is a great blessing. It is something to look forward to — AT THE RIGHT TIME!

God has a plan for YOU (Jeremiah 29:11; John 14:2-3).

And as the Apostle Paul wrote:

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Philippians 1:6)

If you believe that God has worked with you in your life, believe He will work and do what is best for you.

As Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22).

However, Jesus asked, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Hopefully, you will be one that is shown to really have faith when He returns.

Dating Services and Matchmakers

There are computer dating and similar services that some in the West turn to.

These are sometimes successful from a worldly perspective.

Though they often imply something they cannot deliver. Advertisements of “beautiful women or successful men just waiting to marry you” are virtually always false. In the world, beautiful women and successful men do not need to use singles services—unless they are very strange in some other way.

When clients sign up for these services and are actually honest, dating services try to connect people with potential dates. Generally speaking, they focus on appearance, status, and/or compatibility.

But they really do not focus on spiritual matters, though religious compatibility is something many of them take into consideration.

God’s focus for you is not so much as carnal compatibility with a mate as much as it is character development.

Online and other dating services are not particularly concerned about the spiritual. Yet, God is:

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor

indeed can be.⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8:5-9)

God wants to maximize your potential (cf. Philippians 3:14-17; Ephesians 4:13; Jeremiah 29:11). His choice for your mate would normally be different than what a dating service would come up with. Spiritual growth, as opposed to software-determined “compatibility” is what God would be concerned with.

Since God is not likely to tell you who to date, what about matchmakers?

While professional matchmakers are rarely, if ever, appropriate for Christians, friends and relatives can sometimes be helpful in connecting single people.

This, of course, can also be annoying to the single people. However, if you are single and would like to at least date, you could tell friends and/or relatives to try to help you.

One advantage of this is that they may have ways to know (or at least learn) more about the person(s) they recommend than, let’s say, an online dating service would.

When some people look for a job, they try to network with people they know in case any are aware of jobs that they may be appropriate for. Well, if you are single, you can try to network with other Christians, who may know people you do not.

8. How About Dating Outside the Church of God?

Some people believe that they should date outside the Church of God and that they will be able to convert one that they might become interested in.

This almost never works.

Even if someone claims to convert and gets baptized, if someone really did it because of you—despite denials before possibly marrying you—that person may not remain as true Christian and your life will not be as it should be.

Does that mean that you need to avoid all recreational activities with people of the opposite sex who are not in the Church of God?

No.

But be very careful about one-on-one dates with the unconverted. You may think you are strong enough to resist someone's charm, but feelings are fleeting and should not be trusted above the word of God.

The Bible warns:

⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (James 4:4-6)

You need to know where to draw the line—and Christians realize that they do not want to marry non-Christians. Be humble enough to accept God's will.

Solomon was wiser than “all the men of the East” (1 Kings 4:30), yet he did not obey God’s laws concerning marriage (Deuteronomy 17:15-17), and as warned in scripture (Deuteronomy 17:17) this turned him away from the worship of the true God (1 Kings 11:3-4).

Notice also the following:

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. 27 Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women? (Nehemiah 13:26-27)

Christians are not to sin by marrying non-Christians.

Religious Differences

Do religious differences really matter?

Of course they do. They are often listed as a factor in divorce.

Now, for true Christians, this should not be a factor.

Why?

Because true Christians should not marry someone who is not one.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

¹⁷ Therefore

"Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

¹⁸ 'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.'" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Because of this and other supporting passages in the Bible, ministers in the *Continuing* Church of God are NOT authorized to perform marriage ceremonies between baptized true Christians and others.

When I have seen people marry when one was a Church of God Christian, and the other not, I have not seen that work out. Even King Solomon was affected by marrying outside his faith (1 Kings 11:4).

It does not matter how much the couple claims to "love" each other, such combining of two into one is not to be done.

People that intend to get married should realize that as a married couple, they are to stick closer together to each other than to a brother (Mark 10:7-9).

Furthermore, that God wants godly offspring:

¹⁴ ... Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit?

And why one?

He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

¹⁶ "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,"

Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously." (Malachi 2:14-16)

God wants married people to be converted and following Him, then they can produce and best raise godly offspring (though we are getting closer to the time that having little ones is warned about: Matthew 24:19).

God hates divorce. He considers it treacherous. So, do not marry someone you are likely to divorce (or who is likely to divorce you).

Does this mean that the only people in the *Continuing* Church of God can date are those who are baptized members in the *Continuing* Church of God?

No.

There are other true Christians in many Sabbatarian Church of God groups.

However, since we are unaware of other such groups/organizations being Philadelphian, it is our hope and prayer that your potential spouse is one who would be 'Philadelphian' (Revelation 3:7-13).

And if you are dating someone in another organization, yes, you can (and should) discuss the differences so that they can see why they would want to be part of the *Continuing* Church of God.

What about marrying someone in one of the Greco-Roman faiths, like the Protestants, Roman Catholics, or Eastern Orthodox? Or others like the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons (LDS)?

No, those would not be considered as believers in the original Christian faith. If you are a real Christian, you would not want to be unequally yoked with one who is not.

Conversion?

What if someone converts?

If you encounter someone who was interested in the Church of God before becoming interested in you, then this type of person could very well be interested in actually converting. Thus, that one could be appropriate to possibly marry.

But, be warned that many people will outwardly convert in order to marry someone. If someone was not interested in the *Continuing* Church of God before meeting you, then you may have reason to doubt their commitment.

Marital partners need to be religiously compatible. The differences between what we believe and how we live are too different from the Greco-Roman and other faiths to intentionally blend together.

That being said, if you convert after being married, that does not mean that you should leave your non-baptized spouse. The Apostle Paul wrote:

¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Corinthians 7:13-16)

If you live properly as a Christian, your example may result in your spouse's conversion.

But What if the Unconverted Really Loves Me?

In pop culture and on the internet, there are various views on how to "prove" that someone loves you.

These are unreliable.

Some will question your "love" if you will not have sex with them. Those who will not stay with you unless you commit adultery/fornication do not love you.

Many think they can tell whether or not someone loves them by the intensity of the passion and determination that the other demonstrates towards them.

That is dangerous.

The Bible shows that the unconverted can really think they love someone, but after becoming sexually involved with them actually hate them (cf. 2 Samuel 13:1-15).

Do not trust feelings of “love” from those who do not have the proper love of God. Do not confuse determined lust for real love.

Don't compromise with the world.

9. Teen Questions and Answers

While many in the Church of God do not date in their teens, we decided to cover a few questions teens have had in the past as well as more recent concerns.

The following was the question the old Worldwide Church of God said it got from teens more often than any other.

Q. I am crazy about this really cute guy (or gal), but he (she) doesn't seem to know I exist. How can I get him (her) to notice me and like me?

A. The answer is that you can't. That's right, you can't get someone of the opposite sex to like you.

Don't misunderstand. This doesn't mean you are helpless to find friends of the opposite sex, or that you are doomed to a life of loneliness. There is much you can and should do if you want to have friends (Proverbs 18:24) and someday find an appropriate spouse.

In time, the person you have interest in may end up being interested in you. But you cannot force that.

You might be able to get them to notice you, but depending on them and what you do, you may turn them away from you instead of towards you.

It's not a matter of what you can get. It's a matter of what you can give.

If you are a giver, other givers will tend to be attracted to you (as will takers—so be cautious about prematurely settling for someone just because they may pay attention to you).

Q. Is it okay to wear more revealing clothes or buy an impressive car to get someone's romantic interest?

No.

Even if you can get someone's attention by your appearance, the car you may drive, money, smooth conversational skills, etc. that will not make them like you or truly love you.

Do you really want to marry someone that you have impressed by making yourself look seductive or by the car you drive?

If you flaunt your body or your money, eventually the one you attract is likely to leave for one who flaunts 'better' than you.

Consider also that the Bible teaches:

²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Christians are to have a pure heart and not pursue youthful lusts.

Those who are mainly attracted by lusts of the flesh tend to let their lusts control them and are not likely to stay with you. Those with wandering eyes, tend to continue to wander.

A Christian man does not want an immoral lust provoking seductress as his wife.

Q. Many of my friends are engaging in sexting. That's okay, right?

A. While we realize that many teens engage in sexting, and some 'authorities' claim that this is a good thing (e.g. Teen sexting may be more common than you think. Reuters, February 27, 2018), no it is not.

Sexting is essentially a form of lust-inciting pornography and is not appropriate (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9; Matthew 5:28).

For those who are unfamiliar with the term, sexting is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs or images, primarily between mobile phones and/or other electronic devices.

Do not 'date' by, nor with, sexting.

Furthermore, realize that although many think that sexting is "cute," if you engage in this there can be images of you in ways you do not want everyone to see for a very long time.

Sexting is wrong and the consequences are not worth it.

Q. My parents don't like the guy I'm dating and are trying to split us up. Why don't they want me to have fun and be happy?

A. If your parents disapprove of your friend, be cautious! Your parents probably do want you to be happy. They have likely seen similar situations - perhaps in their own experience - where someone has been deeply hurt, and they don't want that to happen to you.

Realize that your parents know you better in many ways than you know yourself. Also realize that they were once teens themselves. They've seen more of the trap doors and problems of life than you have.

Consider their advice seriously. Talk to them calmly when both you and they have the time. Ask them to explain why they do not care for your friend. If you will listen to them, you might be able to learn a bit more about yourself, and about your friend. And you can avoid the heartaches many have reaped because they ignore what can be the best source of personal dating advice available outside of the Bible - parents!

Q. So many guys today seem to think dating and sexual intercourse automatically go together. I haven't given in to my boyfriend yet, but I'm feeling the pressure and I don't want to lose him. Can you help me?

A. God's law forbids premarital sex (Exodus 20:14, 1 Corinthians 6:8). Having sex before marriage is a grave mistake many regret later in life.

Look at this letter, for example:

I always thought of myself as a nice girl because I wouldn't go "all the way." With every new boyfriend, necking became just the thing to do. But also with each it became less exciting ...

About four years ago after losing my virginity, I met the man who would become my husband. I cannot put into words how much I love this man. However, there is a major problem. Because of my previous sexual experience, my senses are deadened. How I wish I could go back and erase all the relationships I had with other men. What a true blessing it must be to have a wonderful sexual life with your mate!"

The young woman who wrote the letter above points out just one sad result of premarital sexual experimentation. There are many others, including un- wanted pregnancy, abortion and a vast array of sexually transmissible diseases.

If the young man you are dating doesn't respect you enough not to stay with you unless you will engage in premarital sex, how much do you think he really cares about you?

You will have to decide what you value more - the temporary (and it tends to be just that, despite promises of permanency) attention of a guy or your chance for personal happiness for many years to come. Men will have to decide whether to indulge in temporary physical pleasure now or to buck the crowd and wait to enjoy sex with that one special woman in a loving marriage, as God intended.

Christians know what God teaches on this.

Choose God's way of life and you will not regret it!

Q. Others in the Church have ignored what it recommended related to dating and marriage, and gotten married. Why shouldn't I do that?

A. Most who ignore God's principles relating to dating and marriage, will have regrets—major regrets.

Many will get divorced. Many will have numerous problems and will one day wish that they did things God's way.

Consider:

¹⁹ Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked;

²⁰ For there will be no prospect for the evil man; The lamp of the wicked will be put out. (Proverbs 24:19-20)

It really does not end up better for people who will not trust God.

The Apostle John wrote:

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

We are able to respond to God because He loved us first. That sets the major pattern for all human relationships, including male-female interaction.

10. If You Are Looking to be Married, Prepare and Consider Many Factors

Why don't you ask yourself what your plans are in life. What do you expect to get out of dating? What are your intentions concerning marriage?

Are you aware of the seriousness of it? Are you preparing for the responsibilities of it? It's about time you asked yourself questions of that nature if you're a teenager, and you wonder what your life is going to be like.

Not every date leads toward marriage. Not every date ought to. Most dates should simply give men and women chances to build friendship, personality and character through varied cultural and recreational activities. But at the right time and in the right way, dating can and should lead toward marriage.

"A surprising number of couples of all ages have blamed not being prepared for married life for the demise of their relationship" (10 Most Common Reasons for Divorce. Marriage.com January 31, 2018).

If you are hoping to be married, you should prepare for it.

How?

By following biblical instructions.

Not only by keeping God's commandments and laws, but also in other ways.

Consider the following:

²⁷ Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field;
And afterward build your house. (Proverbs 24:27)

In ancient times, most people were farmers. This proverb is teaching that you need to be prepared for your livelihood before you focus on your house. You build your household with your spouse.

Men should strive to complete their formal education, whether academic or trade related, and get a job, before getting married.

That does not mean one cannot date until they are ready to support a family, but they should be cautious about looking for a spouse before they can support one.

Women should prepare as well. This may entail learning household matters while growing up, but also might entail being part of the work force, which may or may not entail the need for formal education. In many places, it is needful for a wife to also generate income.

Ladies, consider:

¹⁴ ... a prudent wife is from the LORD. (Proverbs 19:14)

So, you should strive to develop prudence. The same is true of prudent husbands!

Consider also the following traits:

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.
¹¹ The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. ¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. ¹⁹ She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. ²⁰ She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet. ²² She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the

merchants. ²⁵ Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. ²⁷ She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." ³⁰ Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:10-31)

Gentlemen, for your wife to be a Proverbs 31 wife, you need to be a Proverbs 31 husband to facilitate much of what is listed.

While some of those traits will be developed after marriage, many should be worked on before marriage.

Getting married is good:

²² He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD. (Proverbs 18:22)

Since the Bible discusses finding a wife, that shows a man would be looking for one. Dating is normally one way a man looks.

It is normally much easier to get most/all of your formal education before you get married, than afterwards.

Once you are married, you will need to be supporting a household, and will have less time for formal education. You will have more responsibilities. So, beforehand is the time to prepare.

Don't Decide Too Fast

If you are "looking" to get married and your "outside work" is prepared, be careful about deciding on a potential spouse too fast.

Infatuation is a powerful emotion.

Feelings and hormones change.

Do not think that whatever feelings of infatuation you may have towards another will not change.

If you are considering marriage with someone, ask yourself if you can endure and love someone, even if your feelings have changed.

Pretty much everyone has had that infatuated feeling about one or more people in their life.

Just because you get what feels like a powerful, positive, feeling from seeing someone, does not mean that you are truly in love and should plan to marry that person.

Many single people today face loneliness and frustration. It is very easy to find false comfort and security in a premature romance. But getting carried away and letting emotions run rampant can lead to pain and disappointment in the long run.

Give yourself time to evaluate whether or not you are compatible with a person you are interested in.

Try not to let blinders like the person's looks, charm, and mannerisms blind you to reality.

It is too easy to dismiss as unimportant, negative signs and signals the other person is giving off if you rely mainly on your emotions of the moment.

Be careful. Just because you find someone appealing, does not mean you are better off marrying them.

People do not tend to remain in periods of euphoria. Tests and trials will come (John 15:20; 1 Peter 4:12).

Is your potential mate going to be able to handle them? What about you?

The Bible teaches that it is better to be single than in the wrong relationship:

²⁴ It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman. (Proverbs 25:24)

Some people are difficult to live with:

¹⁵ A continual dripping on a very rainy day And a contentious woman are alike; ¹⁶ Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right hand. (Proverbs 27:15-16)

By having conversations with your date, you should be able to get a feel for whether your date may be a foolish or a contentious person.

When you are on dates ask the one you are dating questions. Ask about your date's background, plans, and hopes.

But do not be overly carried away by fanciful promises. It is not, for example, that a man might not be able to accomplish goals he states, but also pay attention to what you observe about your date.

Is this person ALWAYS truthful?

If not, you can be sure that if you are with that person long enough, he or she will not be truthful to you.

Does this person complain a lot about others?

This may tell you about someone more often to evade responsibility and blame others.

Did this person complete education and/or vocational training programs?

If so, perhaps this person can stick some things out. If not, perhaps not.

Now this does not mean one cannot change one's mind about one's vocation (our older son successfully did this) or you should rule out ambitious people (as proper ambition is a good thing), but you should pay attention to how committed or reliable a potential mate may be.

Can this person handle money?

If not now, then probably not later. Those who are faithful in little are inclined to be faithful in much:

¹⁰ He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. ¹¹

Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? (Luke 16:10-12)

You need to see your potential mate in many situations, so you can better evaluate whether he or she is right biblically for you.

Consider the following:

²⁴ Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, ²⁵ Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

If you almost only see your date in fun recreational activities, you may not know if he or she is prone to anger or other problems.

Also, it should be pointed out that you need to consider aspects of your date that you overlook are likely to be something you have to live with the rest of your life if you marry.

Of course, since you are NOT perfect, your potential mate will not be either. While you should not have unrealistic expectations (which can also be improperly affected by romantic fantasies), do not overlook obvious problems. If you are seeing 'red flags' about someone you are dating, do not rationalize them away or you may regret doing so the rest of your natural life.

The following from the Apostle Paul gives some obvious problems to avoid:

¹¹ But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

To that list, you can add things like the violent and various addicts. The Bible warns:

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

DO NOT THINK YOU WILL CHANGE SOMEONE AFTER YOU MARRY THEM. Do not convince yourself that God wants you to marry someone addicted to drugs or alcohol to help him or her. You could be making a much bigger mistake than you may imagine.

If you do marry a real Christian, God will mold them to change over time, but they may not change to the image you want.

Men want a prudent wife, not one that nags:

¹³ A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping. ¹⁴ Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord. (Proverbs 19:13-14)

The word translated as “contentious” in the NKJV is translated as “nagging” in certain other translations like the NIV.

So, do not go into marriage thinking that you will significantly change the behavior of your husband or wife.

And while YOU are ultimately responsible for who you choose to marry (unless you are in a culture that enforces arranged marriages), you should also consider the opinions of your parents and others who know you and know something about your potential mate.

Try not to get too emotionally involved before you know the other person better.

One of the best ways to NOT get overly emotional is to not get too physical with your date.

Your Spouse Needs to be Your Friend

People often marry for the wrong reasons - for convenience, out of lust, to gain security, on a whim, to get away from parents, for money. But you should not even consider marriage unless it is built on a relationship of growing love.

Perhaps the most important point is that you should simply be strong, deep, close friends. You may well start out as friends before you both realize that you have become or would like to become something more. If your marriage is based on friendship, that unity and closeness can transcend any problems that come along later. Whatever happens, you will always be friends, and that, along with your spiritual commitment, will help keep you together!

Being friends means spending lots of time together, whether working together, enjoying some type of recreation or just being happy in each other's company.

Being friends means building deep trust, understanding, respect, and reliance. Cherishing, nourishing and enjoying the relationship you have with your special male or female friend will mean more to you than any other physical consideration.

A husband or wife can actually become "a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

Before going further, understand that if your spouse is not your best friend, then someone else will be. I have been told by others that outside influences (friends and family) can work to destroy a marriage.

If your spouse complains to others a lot about you, and the others tend to take your spouse's side, your spouse is more likely to fall away because of outside influences.

Your spouse needs to be your best friend. You need to be careful about complaining about your spouse to others. Complaining, with confirmation, becomes reinforcing, and may not end well for your marriage.

Now, of course, if the spouse is violent, unsafe, an alcoholic, a drug addict, etc. In such cases, you really do need to get help about your spouse.

The Staggering Statistics

In the USA, there is one divorce approximately every 36 seconds. That's nearly 2,400 divorces per day, 16,800 divorces per week and 876,000 divorces a year.

Do not blindly think that this cannot possibly happen to you.

The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is eight years.

Notice also the following related to divorce in the USA:

41 percent of first marriages end in divorce.

60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.

73 percent of third marriages end in divorce.

(32 Shocking Divorce Statistics Posted on Oct 30, 2012.
<https://www.mckinleyirvin.com/Family-Law-Blog/2012/October/32-Shocking-Divorce-Statistics.aspx>)

So, those who think that their first marital partner was a mistake, often seem to make "more mistakes." The problem is not always their partner, but may be them personally. But few want to consider that reality.

Behind these statistics are human beings, whole families whose lives have become distorted, twisted, wretched things. Little children crying "Mommy, don't leave me." Boys and girls wondering what their choice will be when they are asked with which parent they would rather live. Teenagers without homes, youths living with 'foster parents' or thrown into institutions.

You need to understand the basic reasons for divorce, to understand the underlying causes of unhappy marriages, and to know how you can AVOID marrying the wrong person.

If you are contemplating marriage, what kind of a chance do you think you have for a happy marriage? Well, if you take the world's approach, they don't paint a very happy picture.

But real Christians should fare much better.

Race, Economic, and Cultural Differences

What about race and cultural differences?

Marriage is a serious, lifelong, decision that should not be entered into lightly.

The Bible shows that God had peoples and races separated after the flood. Yet, various peoples mixed (like the Polynesians and Mexicans for two examples) and various ones made individual decisions about this that crossed ethnic (like Joseph; see Genesis 41:45) and racial (like Moses; see Numbers 12:1) lines in their marriages.

People with major cultural differences often have major difficulties in marriages. The way husbands and wives interact and work in a marriage can differ greatly for cultural/traditional reasons.

Years ago, for example, when it was not politically incorrect to do this, US government officials would recommend that American women not marry Greek men. Essentially, the warning was that while Greek men were charming when courting women and nice looking, the way they treated their women after they married them and what they expected from them was so different than in the USA, that American women were often very sorry that they married them.

While this example was not intended as a warning about Greek men, it was simply presented here to warn people that there may be major issues with cultural differences and it is better to try to understand them before making a major mistake.

Furthermore, some cultures treat in-laws and others differently. This include how close or how distant they will be with the married couple. Sometimes this can be good, but sometimes it can be stressful and frustrating.

Even economic differences can be a factor. Even in the same general culture, some families have more wealth than others—hence different spending habits.

Even among those with similar economic situations, how money is handled varies from family to family as well as from person to person. When dating, pay attention to your date's attitude towards money. He or she might handle it well or might spend so recklessly that you will always have money problems.

Consider the following:

⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
(1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Often one spouse will not be content, while the other will be. This does not mean that the couple should be lazy and not try to earn more if possible, but lack of contentment can cause nagging and arguments.

It is not usually a lack of finances that causes divorce in Western cultures, but the lack of compatibility in the financial arena. This is something to try to check out while you are dating.

Despite the assertions of some, the Bible has no specific injunctions against Christians marrying across ethnic/racial lines. However, because of problems with the world (cf. Numbers 12:1-2) as well as difficulties in marriage, we recommend that people try to marry someone that they are most compatible with, while also considering how their future children might realistically be affected (this tends to vary by country/culture).

According to the 2010 Census in the United States, interracial divorce rates are comparatively higher than divorce rates between white couples. So, race does seem to be something to consider.

While we in the *Continuing* Church of God do not encourage miscegenation (marrying across racial lines), we do not see that we have the biblical authority to prohibit it, therefore do not prohibit it.

But there is a serious issue racially-different Christian couples MUST consider. In many parts of the world, children of racially-mixed marriages are treated terribly. Even when they are older.

Christians are to love their neighbors as themselves (Matthew 22:39). Therefore, they should give SERIOUS consideration to how any one they marry will affect their children physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Heredity and Environment

While you cannot choose your parents, heredity and environment most assuredly do affect all of us.

When dating, find out about the person's background. Take a look at his or her parents. What have they accomplished? Do they look down on anyone who aspires to higher education or who wants to better himself or herself? Are they comfortable in elegant environments and humble surroundings? Are they improperly prejudiced? Do they drink heavily? Are they overweight? Do they curse?

If you look at your future wife's or husband's parents, you can probably get a pretty good idea what your wife or husband is going to look and be like in about 20 to 25 years!

You will also want to think about the education, experience, political stance, and social and cultural level of your prospective mate. If you discuss these matters, you will better be able to determine if the other person's views are sufficiently compatible to yours.

Age Differences

While the Bible clearly shows marriages of people whose ages differed greatly (e.g. Genesis 25:1-4), overall, your marriage is likely to be happier and last longer if your spouse is relatively close to your age.

Couples who are relatively close to each other age-wise tend to have better marriages. They tend to go through the same stages of life at the same time, so are a bit more in tune with each other that way. They are more likely to have similar outlooks on matters and to experience future events better together. They can also often better share tasks together—yes, married people will have work, household, and family tasks.

A 2017 study found that although couples with large age differences who married were initially happier than couples with closer ages, that, in time, this changes.

So much so that one of the study researches concluded:

“The people who are married to a much older or younger spouse tend to have larger declines in marital satisfaction over time as compared with those who are married to spouses who are similar in age.” (This Is What a Large Age Gap Does to Your Relationship. Livestrong.com Sep 08, 2017)

Do not let the seemingly exciting prospective of a much older or younger spouse cloud your vision. Statistics support the idea of having a spouse relatively close to your age.

Mental and Emotional Health

WHAT about the mental and emotional stability of the man or woman you think you'd like to marry?

Is he optimistic-or a cynic? Is he easy to get along with - or will he be a tyrant? Will she be a loud-mouthed virago? Is this potential lifetime partner free from excessive tension, fear and anxiety? Or is he an emotional and mental wreck?

Does he or she get angry and fly off the handle? Is he an actual or potential compulsive gambler, child molester, drug addict, murderer?

You need to consider these things very deeply.

The second major consideration, mental and emotional health, is directly related to physical health.

The world has more than its quota of weirdos, homosexuals, neurotics, psychotics, child molesters, and mentally unbalanced people.

Just because someone associates with the Church of God, does not mean that they are real Christians (cf. 1 John 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

How can you KNOW about mental stability?

Take your time. Don't rush into marriage. Be sure you get to know this person. See him or her in all conceivable types of situations. That means over a LONG SPAN of time, so that you've had opportunity to thoroughly discuss all types of subjects. Don't dismiss warning signs. You can also speak with others who know him or her.

The Apostle Paul warned:

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

Yes, there are people you should not hang out with.

Do not be a gullible man or woman.

If you want to get married, try to develop character to be a better spouse. Also, when you do date, pay attention to more than your date's appearance, and do things God's way.

11. If You Have Been Married Before

If you have been married before, and are scripturally eligible to remarry, it is often best not rush into a second marriage.

You may be lonely and heartbroken, but you do not want to make a mistake “the second time around.”

Dating toward a second marriage is much the same as any other dating. But you are more experienced. You also are likely to have expectations, both positive and negative, that a second spouse will not meet.

All husbands are not the same. All wives are not the same. Just because your first spouse handled matters in some way, that does not mean a future spouse will do so.

Dating toward marriage is a time to get to know the other person. Talk to one another and get to really know each other before you get serious. Relax and have fun.

Because you were married before, you may be tempted to get too close too fast, but don't let it happen. Take time to become good friends first. Do not think that if the one you are dating handles certain matters like your first spouse, that this one is enough like that spouse to rush the process—everyone is different.

Some who have been married before find their loneliness so overwhelming that they want to remarry as soon as possible. They tend not to want to spend the time needed to get to really know the person they are dating, or to allow that person to get to know them. Those of you who are tempted to do this, realize that while you may believe you know exactly what you are looking for, and don't need much time to make up your mind, you may be making a big mistake.

Plus, the one you are dating may not be in as much of a rush to marry as you.

Beverly Thought He was a Friend

While second marriages involve people who are older than for their first marriages, some issues can still remain the same.

I heard this story about someone we will call “Beverly” for this account.

Beverly lived in New York City. She was married to a musician. She suspected he was committing adultery, but she was not certain.

One day, she came home a day earlier from a trip than scheduled. She caught her husband in bed with a co-worker. Beverly packed her bags and moved out.

In time, she moved to Pittsburg and was interested in getting remarried. She ended up running into an old friend there, who asked her out on a date.

Beverly accepted.

At the end of the date, the man asked her to come up to his apartment.

Beverly declined.

The man then grabbed her. She told him to stop. He then said, “Do you think I went out with you for conversation?”

Beverly opened the car door. The man made another physical move towards her that she resisted. He then pushed her out the car door. He left her face down on the street and drove away.

Understand that “not all have faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:2), including “friends” and many who claim to be Christian.

Discuss Your Previous Marriage

Of course, if you are dating someone multiple times, you likely get along, at least to a degree.

If you are considering that you may grow close to one you are dating, you really need to discuss your previous marriage. Sooner or later you need

to talk openly with the one you are interested in about your previous marriage.

Don't just focus on your former mate's problems and don't put your past spouse on an unattainable pedestal.

Look at yourself honestly and see what you have learned. It isn't necessary to tell every detail of why your marriage failed, but it is wise to admit that you made mistakes, too, and show what you have learned from them. Otherwise, how can those who are considering marriage with you know that there won't be a repeat?

By the way, singles, if someone tries to lead you to believe that all the problems in a former marriage were the fault of the former mate, beware. No one is perfect. You don't want to marry someone who can only see your faults. You can't change the other person. If you are considering marriage and you find the problem in the first marriage of the person you are interested in centered around drink, sex, drugs or any other such issue, don't think you can change the person. Such addictions are not changed easily, even by the person with the problem.

As far as sex goes, older couples will find that they are participating in sexual relations less than younger couples. This is not because the man finds the second wife less attractive, this is essentially what happens because of aging and hormonal changes. Ladies also have various hormonal and aging issues.

12. Engagement, Marriage, and Dating

Most couples realize that they will marry each other before they actually get engaged.

Historically in the Church of God, engaged couples are encouraged to get premarital counseling from a leader in the church. And that is fine.

However, it may be better to get such counseling before actually getting engaged.

Once you get engaged and tell everyone about it, it is harder to back away from it if you suspect that you may have made a mistake.

Getting proper counseling before getting engaged can save not only potential embarrassment, but perhaps making the biggest mistake of your life.

Do not ignore counseling, even if you think it will not help nor change your mind. Twice the Bible teaches “in a multitude of counsellors there is safety (Proverbs 24:6).

In the 21st century, Church of God ministers have recommended the following secular materials for couples to read and/or complete:

Divorce Busting by Michelle Weiner-Davis (Part Two more helpful than Part One according to my son who read this)

Couple Assessment test: <https://www.prepare-enrich.com/pecouple.html>

Before You Say “I Do” by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts

Suggesting materials and counselling is not intended to stop people from getting married. It is hoped that the couple will learn more about each other than they have dating, as well as learn more about marriage.

With that information, each party can then make the best decision on whether or not to marry the other.

Marrying the wrong person and/or being the wrong person in a marriage is a life-scarring disaster. Don't rush into marriage until you are ready and reasonably certain your intended is as well.

Really Consider Counsel

When most people (whether or not they intend to get engaged) seek counsel, they tend to listen to those that agree with them.

Often, people will not accept counsel that is good for them. This is not a new problem and it has been warned about:

⁵ It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:5)

Fools may tell you to marry outside the Church of God, dress seductively, compromise with God's laws, and/or have sexual relations outside of marriage—do not listen to them.

Be willing to take biblically-based advice, even if it is not what you hoped to hear.

Here are some passages about aspects of counseling from the Book of Proverbs:

⁵ A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, ⁶ To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. ⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:5-7)

⁸ Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. ⁹ Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. ¹⁰ "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:8-10)

¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise. (Proverbs 12:15)

¹⁰ Rebuke is more effective for a wise man Than a hundred blows on a fool. (Proverbs 17:10)

²⁰ Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days. (Proverbs 19:20)

Don't be a fool, yourself. Be wise, take proper counsel, and live God's way.

Plus, realize that parents, friends, and relatives can be a source of proper counsel, as long as their counsel is properly biblical.

Engagement

Traditionally, Church of God ministers have tended to recommend long courtships and short engagements.

This way, the couples will tend to know each other better before they commit to each other. Plus, they will tend to keep their physical guard up until marriage. "For it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9). Sexual relations are for marriage, not the engagement period.

Although this is not a biblical requirement, engagements should tend to be a period of some months (months are typically needed in the West for wedding plans, etc.) and not years.

Shortly after becoming engaged, the couple needs to figure out when and where they will get married. They also should contact the ministry to see if an appropriate man will be able to perform the wedding ceremony at the place and time hoped for.

The engaged couple should go over matters like work and finances. They should also plan, if appropriate, a post-marriage trip (typically called a honeymoon in the West). Because of financial and other considerations, my wife and I decided to get married a few days prior to the Feast of Tabernacles and essentially considered our first feast together our honeymoon.

What kind of environment will the person be comfortable in after marriage? Is he or she perfectly happy in a small apartment in a rundown section of a large city?

While engaged, the couple should be able to finalize where they will live after marriage during the engagement period. There will also be other details related to that and other matters.

Two in One in Marriage

Loving monogamy, a desire to be faithful and an attitude of caring for and serving one special, beloved person for the rest of your life lead to a wonderfully happy and lasting marriage.

When a man and a woman commit themselves to each other in marriage, they commit themselves to the mutual sharing of all of life's experiences. They become one:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

The word joined in this verse means to 'stick to' or 'be welded to.'

This is confirmed by other biblical passages such as:

3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (Amos 3:3)

Clearly, God generally intended that a man and a woman leave their parents and marry. Their new relationship is to supersede even the attachment to their blood relatives. And God provided that through the most intimate expression of love for one another, in the sexual union, husband and wife could produce a child with the blood of both in their child's veins.

Dating for the Married

Should couples stop going out together just because they are married? Or because they have children? The answer is, no, they shouldn't! Often,

as we get caught up in the demands and pursuits of life, we tend to forget the need to spend time together.

Notice something from the Bible:

⁹ Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 9:9)

Dating your spouse is a way to live joyfully.

In our marriage, my wife and I try to go out on Sunday afternoons. Now, this does not happen about 1/3 (or more) of the time (mainly because of a need for reliable care for our youngest child), but generally we are able to go out together alone. We went out less often when our children were younger.

Both the husband and wife should try to come up with dating ideas that they can afford. Some can be free.

So, if you thought dating was just for the unmarried, think again. Dating after marriage is important. A long and happy life together as husband and wife should be joyful.

Dates should be a part of your marriage.

The Kingdom of God is Coming!

Whether you marry or not, dating should be fun and wholesome.

It should have positive effects on your character. Try to be a pleasant and uplifting date.

If you are unable to date for various reasons, do not give up hope. Believe and rely on God.

Jesus taught His followers, “do not worry ... But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:31-33).

Date or do not date, but do it God's way. Be careful that you do not say because the *Continuing* Church of God did not specifically prohibit something that we (or God) condones it. Be wise and do not discard biblical principles.

Do not compromise with the world.

The Bible prophesies that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth will usher in a time of renewal and restoration (Acts 3:20-21). What will be restored to the earth is the perfect government of God in His millennial Kingdom! At that time Satan will be dethroned and God's ways will be embraced around the world.

The *Continuing* Church of God is actively involved in preparing for this "restoration of all things". We are commissioned to warn this world about where its evil ways are leading us, and to announce the gospel, the good news, of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14) as well as all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

This world needs right knowledge about family relationships – including about dating, courtship, and marriage (Malachi 4:5-6).

Believe what the word of God says.

Date and live as a Christian should.

Continuing Church of God

The USA office of the *Continuing Church of God* is located at: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA. We have supporters all around the world, and in all inhabited continents (all continents, except Antarctica).

Continuing Church of God Website Information

CCOG.ORG The main website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

CCOG.ASIA Asian-focused website, with multiple Asian languages.

CCOG.IN India-focused website, with some Indian languages.

CCOG.EU European-focused website, with multiple European languages.

CCOG.NZ Website targeted towards New Zealand.

CCOGAFRICA.ORG Website targeted towards Africa.

CCOGCANADA.CA Website targeted towards Canada.

CDLIDD.ES This is a totally Spanish language website.

PNIND.PH Philippines-focused website, with some Tagalog.

Radio & YouTube Video Channels

BIBLENEWSPROPHECY.NET Bible News Prophecy online radio.

Bible News Prophecy channel. YouTube sermonettes.

CCOGAfrica channel. YouTube video messages from Africa.

CCOG Animations Animated messages on YouTube.

CDLIDDsermones channel. YouTube messages in Spanish.

ContinuingCOG channel. YouTube video sermons.

News and History Websites

CHURCHHISTORYBOOK.COM Church history website.

COGWRITER.COM News, history, and prophecy website.

Dating: A key to success in marriage

The Book of Genesis teaches:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Jesus confirmed that (Mark 10:7-8). Furthermore, the Book of Malachi teaches:

15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one?

He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce..."

(Malachi 2:15-16)

Many people want to get married and later have a family.



In most parts of the world, some type of dating or other courtship happens first.

Would you like to learn more about dating from a biblical and Christian perspective? Listening to God reduces the chances of divorce!

This book also deals with matters not specified in the Bible, such as 'who pays for the date?' It also has practical tips and suggestions relating to dating in the 21st century.