

# Love and Dating:

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## INTRODUCTION

Love and sex are given to us by God as special gifts to be enjoyed in the proper manner. When we deviate from God's guidelines in regard to sex, the results are always negative. A proper understanding of the purpose of dating will help greatly in the appropriate mate selection and form the foundation for a solid marriage.

The intent of this booklet is to present the Christian (Biblical) view of love and sex in order to enable the youth to have a healthy and positive and correct attitude of the above; to help the youth enjoy a proper, healthy and ultimately happy relationship with the opposite sex; and also to help prevent heartache and tragedy which can result from giving into the temptations of premarital sex.

### Why Talk About It?

Why talk about it? Why not?! Love, sex and marriage were given by God to us as gifts to be enjoyed in the proper manner. Needless to say, this is a topic of interest for all.

The Church has some very good and important reasons for educating its young people in this area.

A. First of all, we need to realize that marriage was instituted by God, and as the representative of God on earth, the Church has the right, as well as the responsibility to teach the purpose of love, sex, dating and marriage.

B. The Church should also teach young people the correct perspective and attitude regarding sex because the so-called "sex education" as taught in most public schools has failed. Sex related diseases and teen-age pregnancies have reached epidemic proportions. We have seen, that to teach teenagers about sex without the inclusion of Biblical moral values (outside of marriage), will result in tragedy and failure.

C. Christian education in this area is also important in order to help young people build their marriages on solid foundations. It is so sad to see rampant divorces which oftentimes are the result of poor pre-marriage planning. The members of broken homes lead unhappy and insecure lives.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE

“Many, O Lord my God,  
are the wonders you have done.  
The things you planned for us  
no one can recount to you...” - Psalm 40:5

*Question for thought: What does this verse tell us about the nature of God?*

*Answer: God loves us so much that He has provided many things for our enjoyment and well being. Among the special things He has provided are love and sex and guidelines for a happy and successful marriage. There is nothing bad or harmful which God has given to us, whether it is love, sex or His commandments.*

*But we must also realize that though sex is God-given, He has also given us guidelines for its proper use in order that it may truly be for our benefit and enjoyment, instead of causing us harm and misery. Let us look at one of the most important guidelines by discussing this question:*

*Is sex before marriage OK?*

Sex often sounds like a taboo rather than a blessing. In the Bible sexual intercourse outside marriage is called FORNICATION and is considered a sin. The Apostle Paul has written that it is the will of God that “you should abstain from fornication...” There are some very important as well as practical reasons that God has told us to save the sexual experience for marriage.

Sex is for two people (a man and woman of course!) who love and care for each other so much that they are willing to be united to each other in holy matrimony and to live with each other with all the benefits as well as responsibilities involved. One thing we should always keep in mind is that premarital sex always has its negative results: The uncontrolled sexual appetite can, in some cases lead to very serious results such as:

A. GUILT - The more and more we allow moral impurity into our lives, the more difficult it becomes to discern what is right and wrong. We deceive ourselves into thinking that sin is “OK”. Our conscience then starts to become hardened. An uncontrolled appetite for sex is like a one-way street—you can only go one way, which is deeper and deeper into problems. The following are some examples:

B. UNWANTED PREGNANCY - It is estimated that more than 1,000,000 girls in this country, from 10 to 18 years of age, get pregnant. Many of them then start a life of misery. Quite a few of the innocent babies grow up without a normal family life and many others get killed in their teenage mother’s womb by abortion. This

produces emotional disorders for both the mother and the living child.

For those who think it is OK to have teenage sex, please carefully consider the following questions:

1. CAN YOU TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP?
2. Can you handle an unwanted pregnancy?
3. And guys, if your girlfriend becomes pregnant, will you be able to care for her and your child?
4. Are you able to handle the guilt and emotional pain?
5. Are you mature enough to be responsible and committed to each other as husband and wife?

C. ABNORMAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR - Writing in his letter to the Christians of Rome, the Apostle Paul tells of the tragic results of those who deliberately disobey God's laws. In chapter 1 of Romans, verses 18-32, he tells of those who intentionally committed perverse sexual acts and shut God out of their minds in order to get away from their guilty feelings. St. Paul explains that the result was that they became increasingly more perverse, even to the point of becoming sexual freaks. He writes: "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools... Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Romans 1:21,22,26,27). In other words, God allowed them the freedom they craved for increased perversion, and the end result is that they became homosexuals!

The uncontrolled lust for sexual fulfillment has produced many other aberrant sexual practices in our society, including rapists and child molesters. God has good reasons for giving safe sex guidelines to us!

D. SEXUAL DISEASES - It is so tragic that venereal diseases have reached epidemic proportions among the Junior and High School students of America. This is directly the result of the lack of teaching in Biblical morality and the traditional Christian view of sex. The emphasis in our time is on AIDS, but there are so many other sexually transmitted diseases. God's warning about the hazards of sex outside the marriage are frowned upon, and many believe that there is nothing wrong with it, and that young people only need a good condom. In addition, the God-ordained institution of marriage is greatly cheapened, and young people who engage in sex before marriage often end up being unfaithful to their future marriage partners.

*BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES: The emotional and psychological sexual relationship of a man and woman is so demanding that God has instituted the sacrament of marriage for those who plan to share such a relationship. This cannot be a casual experience, but rather, it is a totally unique relationship for a man and woman. This involves total unconditional commitment to each other, and as a matter of fact, in God's sight, the married man and woman are like one person: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." - Genesis 2:24.*

E. SUICIDE - In relation to this Biblical principle, it is a sobering thought to keep in mind that of the estimated 6,000 - 20,000 suicides committed each year by teenagers (according to Mitch Anthony of the National Suicide Center in Rochester, N.Y.), many of them are a direct result of premarital sexual relationships and breakup. In an article entitled "Too Young to Die", Diane Eble, the assisting editor of Campus Life Magazine explains, "When a teenager breaks up with someone he or she was sexually involved with, it's like a divorce. Divorce is hard enough for adults to handle; for kids it's devastating."

## **DATING**

It is understandable that many teenagers are apprehensive about getting married, due to the high rate of divorce and the headaches which come with it. That is precisely the reason why preparing for marriage is so vital. Many problems which appear in marriages oftentimes have their start in the premarital relationship. The good news is that there is hope, and that those who put their trust in God and prepare wisely for marriage can and do enjoy successful marriages.

## **THE PURPOSE OF DATING IS TO PREPARE FOR MARRIAGE**

During this time you will experience fun and excitement, but most important, this should be a time when both of you:

A. Come to a better UNDERSTANDING of each other's needs, values and religious beliefs. Question: What other important things should be understood?

B. There should be the COMMUNICATION of ideas and feelings in order to develop trust. Question: Why is this vital for a good relationship?

C. FIND OUT potential trouble areas in your relationship. Question: Why is it important to work out problems **before** marriage?

D. This should, for the sake of a strong healthy bond, be a time of SPIRITUAL GROWTH together with God's help. Learn to pray, read Scripture and attend church together. Question: What potential problems do you foresee if there is no compatibility in this area?

E. ENJOY each other's company with activities you both enjoy.

It cannot be overemphasized that the primary purpose of dating is to develop a deeper friendship and a NON-PHYSICAL intimacy which will become the basis for a solid marriage. REAL INTIMACY, WHICH IS UNDERSTANDING AND TRUST, IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE SUCCESS AND SURVIVAL OF A MARRIAGE THAN SIMPLY A GOOD SEX LIFE.

WHEN IS A PERSON OLD ENOUGH TO DATE?

Generally speaking, a person is old enough to date...

1. When you are mature enough to understand the purpose of dating, as well as the dangers and the benefits involved.
2. When you, as a Christian, have an understanding for God's purpose in creating man and woman, along with the purpose of marriage.
3. When you are able to handle yourself properly with the opposite sex and not sacrifice your moral standards.

Question: If those who are dating are lacking in one or more of these areas, what potential problems/dangers do you foresee?

## TEMPTATIONS

Yes, temptations are all around us. In addition to the natural sexual drive in all of us, there are many other factors which stimulate us. For example, so many popular movies include explicit sex scenes, dirty magazines are sold everywhere and are easy to obtain, your friends tell you that "everybody is doing it" and all this makes the dangers so easy to forget.

In order to help avoid getting into difficult situations, plan your dates ahead of time. It is a Biblical principle and just plain common sense to do things and to go to places which will not put you into temptation - let's face it, if you're at a party where some of the people are getting "stoned" with booze and drugs, and the girls are extra friendly, don't blame God if you fall into temptation. It might be a good idea to go on dates in groups if that will help avoid certain difficult situations.

The further you get into a wrong sexual relationship, the more difficult it becomes to stop. Passion is like wild fire - or like a car out of control. Imagine yourself driving a car down a steep hill at 100 miles per hour, and saying to yourself "I can stop anytime I want to!" Sure you can - that's what they all say.

Think about these: What practical suggestions or advice do you have in regard

to avoiding difficult situations? A question for girls: *If you were dating a guy who said to you, "If you really love me, you'll go to bed with me" - how would you respond?*

*Answer to above questions: Every year about 1,000,000 girls in the U.S. up to age 18 get pregnant. Many of these babies get aborted and many others are taken away from the young mother and put up for adoption. These experiences produce severe psychological and emotional pains for the unwed mother. And quite a few of these girls fell into temptation because their boyfriends equated love with sex. Most pregnant girls get abandoned by their boyfriends and are left alone in a difficult dilemma. And the guys who claimed they loved them, were just trying to satisfy uncontrolled lust - they got selfish lust mixed up with love. Girls, if a guy wants you to "prove" your love by going to bed with him, tell him to jump into the ocean and don't just walk away from him, but run away.*

WHAT IS TRUE LOVE? True love which will keep two people in love "till death do us part" is described excellently by St. Paul who describes it this way: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts..." (I Cor. 13:4-7). In other words, God's love, which is the true love, looks out for the best interest of the other person and produces faithfulness and a lifelong relationship - lustful one night stands have nothing to do with love.

**BUT IT IS HARD TO AVOID TEMPTATION - DOES GOD KNOW HOW I FEEL? WILL HE FORGIVE ME IF I HAVE GONE TOO FAR?**

It is very helpful to realize that our Lord Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan. Jesus responded by quoting from the Bible. This should be a prime example for us. One of the most helpful and comforting verses to memorize and to use in times of trial is I Corinthians 10:13. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

As you know, God sent His Son into the world in order to teach us the truth and save us from our sins. Jesus was perfectly human as well as Divine. And as a human, Jesus went through the same temptations and life experiences which are common to us. He had parents, He went to school, He had home responsibilities, He was confronted with the hardships of life and as a young man, Jesus also beheld young women as God's beautiful creations. It is not a sin to be tempted, everyone is; but sin is to indulge in the temptation and to set yourself up for deliberate wrongdoing. Our Lord was "tempted in every way" - just as we are, and yet, He was without sin. In the Book of Hebrews we are told that "...since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). And we also read that

“He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray...” (Heb. 4:15; 5:2). Our Lord is kind and understanding. He knows exactly what we face and how hard it is to keep pure. That is why God has compassion on us and forgives our sins if we are sorry, confess our sins and repent.

One last note - in order to be strong morally in this sin-filled world and to receive God's help when facing temptation, it is very helpful to read Psalm 119. And also, the book of Proverbs is the greatest writing in the area of common sense and wisdom. Read Proverbs and learn the wisdom of God in order to conquer sin and temptation. When you feel you have failed, recite this prayer (written by St. Nersess Shnorhali) and ask God to heal you spiritually:

O Christ, who is a growing fire,  
in flame my soul with the fire of your love,  
which you have shed on the earth,  
that it may consume the stains of my soul;  
clear my conscience, purify my body from sin,  
and kindle in my heart the light of your knowledge.

Have mercy on your creatures,  
and on me, a deplorable sinner. Amen

#### OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST SAYS:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  
(Matthew 11:28-30)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.  
(John 3:16 & 18)

I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.  
(John 14:6-7)