

The Collegiate Letter

May 2007

The Dating Game--Part 2

“Flesh, you’re fired.”

As you read in the last chapter, our unredeemed flesh pulls powerfully against us. There is a literal war going on inside a Christian between the flesh and the Spirit. This is heightened even more in a dating relationship, and Satan will ignite your flesh to work overtime to destroy your testimony for Jesus Christ. He will try to pervert the love you are building with each other by tempting you to do things against God’s will.

So you must make no provision for your flesh with your dating partner. Never be alone with each other in a dorm room. Never stay together when traveling. Never spend time in a deserted place—even outside—especially at night. In short, *never put yourself in a private situation that could be conducive to moral impurity.* Period.

This applies to not only your dating partner but anyone of the opposite sex. I know many godly men and women who make no provision for their flesh by upholding this principle. More than any other sin, sexual immorality often occurs suddenly and unexpectedly because it is fueled by passion and emotion, which can spike in a moment. Read how a young man is seduced by a woman in the book of Proverbs:

“For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. . .Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter. . . He did not know it would cost his life” (Prov. 7:6-9, 22-23).

For this young man sexual immorality happened suddenly (“*immediately*”) and unexpectedly (“*devoid of understanding*”). Yet he is without excuse. He made provision for his flesh. He went to her house at night. His flesh overpowered him and it cost him his life.

How far is too far?

While we’re on this topic, let’s clear up an issue that is often debated by unmarried Christian couples: Where is God’s line between sexual purity and sexual immorality? Is everything short of sexual intercourse okay? Is oral sex permissible? Can we take our

clothes off and touch each other's bodies? What about hugging, or kissing with the tongue? Or hand holding? Is that wrong?

I'll let you answer the question: *Can you romantically touch another person's body without breaking God's commands to abstain from every appearance of evil and to make no provision for your flesh?*

If you're honest, the answer is no. Those who say that God permits anything besides sexual intercourse are only rationalizing and deluding themselves. Remember, to God a lustful thought is the same as a sinful act. No one can intimately touch another person's body without lust entering the mind. I believe God wants unmarried Christian couples to stay on the side of holding hands or a "non-invasive" kiss. . . and wait until marriage for the rest.

Parental Approval

Far and away, the second most important decision you will ever make in life is whom you marry. (Whether you believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the first.) The saying goes that whom you marry determines 95 percent of your happiness in life. . .or 95 percent of your misery! Perhaps a bit overstated but you get the point.

Can you name all of the Ten Commandments? The one that people invariably forget is number five:

"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).

The Apostle Paul repeated the command in the New Testament:

"'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3).

When you're divinely dating, make sure you seek and listen to those who know you best and want the best for you, namely, your parents.

What we're really talking about here is utilizing your God-given authorities. Notice that I said *utilizing* and not *resenting*. God has designed a structure of authority to protect us from getting off course and to direct us down the right road. Submit to your God-given authorities and you are blessed; resist and you are on your own—unprotected and undirected. It's a simple equation.

God has ordained four structures of authority: parents over children, government over citizens, church leaders over believers, and employers over employees. He wants everyone, and I mean everyone, to willingly submit to these authorities.

Most people strongly resist being under authority because it goes against our human pride. “I will make my own decisions; I will be the master of my own ship; I won’t let anyone tell me what to do!”

So they pay the price. Ask a divorced person sometime if their parents wholeheartedly approved of their marriage. My anecdotal poll says that the answer is invariably no. (Some will say their parents didn’t care, and in that case, shame on the parents for not giving counsel on such a major decision!) To the contrary, you will have a difficult time finding a divorced couple where both sets of parents gave their wholehearted approval. So what does this have to do with dating? Everything. You have found another Christian you can envision yourself marrying, you are committed to abstaining from every form of evil, and now it’s time to get some counsel from your parents. *Get it early!*

Before you become so emotionally attached that it would be difficult to let go, make a special point to introduce the person to your parents. Spend time together with your own family. Spend time together with your dating partner’s family.

If after plenty of interaction your parents have major problems with your choice of a dating partner, you had better take their warning very seriously. To “*honor*” means you make every effort to obey. That is why I say get your parents involved early rather than a week before the wedding.

What if your parents are divorced, not believers, or you have a highly dysfunctional family? These situations will take some discernment on your part. Unless you sense your parents are intentionally provoking and trying to hurt you, do everything you can to honor them. But you may need to seek out counsel from your church leaders if a parental problem persists.

Remember, use your parents to protect you from dating and marrying the wrong person and to help direct you to date and marry the right person.

Triangulate!

And then it happens. There you are in a divine dating relationship. Finally—true love at last! You’ve found your soul mate. Parents on both sides approve. Wedding bells are ringing in your head. You’re imagining sunset strolls on the beach, your first home, 2.3 children. Life is good.

Don’t forget to *triangulate!*

What on earth does that mean? It means to remember to include the most important Person in your divine dating relationship—Jesus Christ. It means to form a virtual hand-holding triangle with Him and your boyfriend or girlfriend. Keep one hand reserved for Christ and the other reserved for your dating partner.

A natural tendency in dating (and marriage) can be to get your eyes totally focused on the other person, to the exclusion of your more important relationship with Christ. Or worse yet, you can get overly focused on yourself, expecting your dating partner to fulfill your deepest needs. No human being can or should be expected to do that. Expecting this is a recipe for a ruined relationship. Only your relationship with Jesus Christ can fulfill your every need; only He can make you complete. . . not another person.

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9-10).

Besides, do you know what God calls a relationship where a couple has eyes only for each other? *Idolatry*. Idolatry is putting *anyone*, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend, or *anything*, such as education, career, sports, recreation, and possessions, ahead of your relationship with Christ. It is putting one of these “gods” ahead of the true God.

And, oh boy, does God hate idolatry. He won’t stand for anyone or anything taking His rightful place. Even the closest human relationships must come second to our love for Him. If not, the Bible says He will be “*jealous*”:

“For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14).

So form your triangle with your dating partner and Jesus Christ by keeping your relationship with Him in first place. Some practical ways to do this with your boyfriend or girlfriend are to study the Bible together, attend church together, memorize a passage of Scripture together, and pray together. Whether single or coupled, God wants believers to seek His kingdom and His righteousness first before anyone or anything else.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

One final benefit of forming a triangle is that you will soon discover the true spiritual condition of your dating partner. If, in time, you find his or her spiritual life lacking and don’t detect any motivation to change, you might come to the conclusion that he or she is not the right one for you. On the other hand, if you discover someone who is motivated to grow spiritually, this will confirm and give you confidence that you are on the right track with the right person.

And what about those sunset walks on the beach with just the two of you? Make room for three!

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So, what have you learned about dating? First, forget the dating game so prevalent on college campuses today. Almost everyone plays the game, and it only trains them for future disaster.

Rather, commit to divine dating:

- Date to marry.
- Possessors only, please.
- Check your appearance.
- Parental approval.
- Triangulate!

Even if you follow this plan, your first divine dating relationship may not end up in marriage. You may find out things later about the person you don't like; you may discover the person is a professing rather than possessing Christian; you may find out the person does not want moral purity; or you may find your parents have sound objections to the relationship.

Be comforted, though. God knows your heart—He knows you went about it the right way. You made the best decisions you could at the time. You were obedient to Him. You didn't compromise yourself morally and are still saving yourself for the right one someday. You weren't indiscriminately playing the dating game; you were dating with a purpose.

Just wait on the Lord. . . for in God's time, it will be truly divine.

From: *The University of Destruction*, by David Wheaton