

The Collegiate Letter

April 2007

The Dating Game--Part 1

The “Mrs.” degree—don’t leave college without one!

While the *completion* of this “degree” was more common in previous generations, the path to achieve it has remained the same—*dating* is, and will always be, the big game on campus.

We’re taking this interlude now because dating and the first Pillar of Peril share plenty of common threads. For the Christian, dating and moral purity should go hand in hand. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Aside from sexual immorality, the dating game is often characterized by emotional turmoil, academic distraction, broken hearts, parental conflict, petty jealousy, vicious revenge, and even physical abuse. The game can be nasty.

Just as problematic, many Christians continue right on struggling with hurtful dating relationships after college into their twenties, thirties, and forties. Worst of all, marriage doesn’t solve the problem—there is very little difference in the divorce rate of Christian couples and non-Christian couples. Something is seriously wrong with this picture.

So what is the problem? Better yet, what is the solution? And most important, how can you avoid being *relationship roadkill* in college? Read on.

Before we talk dating, let’s glance ahead at marriage. Just as God designed sex for marriage, He designed marriage primarily for companionship and procreation. If a man and woman choose to marry, the divine standard is that they stay married “until death do us part.” But just as sinful man perverted sex to include all the immoral manifestations outside of marriage, so man has done the exact same thing with marriage. Marriage is no longer “until death do us part,” but rather “until something gets in the way” or “until someone better comes along.”

It should come as no surprise because this is exactly what the dating game has *trained* men and women to do. Here’s the typical scenario: A man and woman start dating, but things just don’t work out, so they break up. Then they each start dating someone else, but in time they lose interest, so they break up again. The next time around, they’re sure they have found Mr. or Miss Right but then they meet someone else who seems even more like Mr. or Miss Right, so they end up breaking up again. Get the picture?

As they cycle through one relationship after another, they could be having premarital

sex, living together, bearing children out of wedlock, or having abortions. It's all part of the dirty little secret of the dating game.

But then the stars finally align! They find that "perfect person." They have a grand wedding. Everyone is smiling. Married life is great. Perhaps they have kids. They live in a nice home.

Unfortunately, the inevitable occurs. Life happens—financial problems, all-consuming careers, child-raising challenges, interfering in-laws, long business trips, alcohol abuse, another "love" interest. . . and the list goes on.

What do they do? Well, what did they *train* themselves to do during the dating game? If things weren't working out, or if it didn't feel right, or if there was a better option, or if they didn't love each other anymore, they broke up. They got through lost love before; they can get through it again.

So they break up, which in this case means they get divorced. And then they jump back into the dating game and start the whole cycle over again. It is really no wonder that more than 50 percent of marriages (Christian and non-Christian) end in divorce. They're all playing the same losing game. . . the dating game!

DIVINE DATING

What's a guy or gal to do? Is there a way to date but not get caught up in the game? The answer is yes, but you must abide by a complete set of standards that are contrary to the culture, the media, your peers, and even your own desires and feelings.

You must commit to following five fundamental principles of a different kind of dating. What kind of dating is that? *Divine dating*.

Date to Marry

To avoid the repetitive and destructive cycle of the dating game, your perspective on dating must go beyond enjoyment, fulfillment, and romance. Yes, dating can be exhilarating, comforting, loving, and many other things, but that should not be the primary purpose of a dating relationship. Dating for the sake of the little picture (i.e., the benefits) is a sure way to miss out on the big picture (i.e., a good marriage).

Dating should have one primary purpose—marriage. In other words, *date only someone you can envision yourself potentially marrying someday*. "But wait," you say. "How will I ever know if I want to marry someone if I don't date them?" I'm glad you asked. My answer is *look before you leap*.

You've heard the expression "Love is blind." Ain't that the truth! Once you get emotionally involved in a dating relationship, your ability to see the situation clearly drastically

declines. Everyone around you may see you are in a relationship with someone who is not right for you, but you are totally blind to it. So you carry on and set yourself up for a big hurt down the road. Then, after it's over, you ask yourself, "What on earth was I thinking?"

Your *one chance* to see a person clearly is *before* the dating relationship begins. This is what I mean when I say, "Look before you leap." Ask yourself the following questions before you start dating:

"Do we share the same beliefs and values?"

"What is this person's character?"

"Would this person be a good father or mother?"

"Would my family like this person and do I like his or her family?"

"What are this person's goals and ambitions?"

"Do we have some common interests?"

"Can I envision myself married to this person for the rest of my life?"

Answering these questions will take some time and perhaps a few dates. If you come up with several negative answers to the questions, save yourself the misery and don't get involved. If you come up with plenty of positives, proceed ahead, but with your eyes wide open.

The point is to guard your heart before jumping into a dating relationship. Make your decision to date based on sound mental reasoning rather than on just emotion. Ask others who know you best—your parents, and close friends—for their opinion and counsel. And don't forget to pray and ask God for discernment. Remember, once you're emotionally entwined, becoming untangled is like taking gum out of your hair—there's no easy and painless way.

This is not dating for the sake of dating. This is dating for the sake of marriage.

Possessors Only, Please

Did you notice the first question to ask yourself about a potential marriage partner: "*Do we share the same beliefs and values?*" In other words, "Does this person share my Christian faith?" This is by far the most important foundation for a dating relationship and marriage.

Who you are as a person is defined by your thoughts, actions, and motives. Guess what dictates your thoughts, actions, and motives? Your spiritual beliefs. If you are a possessing Christian, your thoughts, actions, and motives are going to directly align with the teachings and principles of the Bible

How does this relate to dating? In every way! A Possessor will be committed to sexual purity before marriage because that is God's will. He will be truthful and aboveboard because that is God's will. She will desire the best for the other person in the relationship because that is God's will. He will raise children with love and discipline because that is God's will. She will prioritize daily Bible study and Christian fellowship because that is God's will.

And last, but not least, he will only date—and thus marry—another Christian because that is God’s will:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial [Satan]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. . .”

Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you’” (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

This short passage says a lot. The Apostle Paul makes the point that believers and unbelievers are completely different beings—different *animals*, if you will. The “unequal yoke” represents a farmer who tries to plow his field with a donkey and an ox under the same yoke. It just won’t work—they’ll never plow straight lines because they have completely different *natures*.

According to this passage, God considers believers to be righteous, light, Christ-followers, and His temple. What union could a believer have with an unbeliever whom God considers to be just the opposite—lawless, dark, Satan-followers, and idol worshipers? There are only two “families”—God’s and Satan’s. Everyone is a member of one or the other, and they don’t mix at all. A very stark contrast indeed.

And God’s command is clear: *“Come out from among them and be separate.”* Don’t date or marry a non-Christian! The apostle Paul reiterates this point in 1 Corinthians 7:29, where he says a Christian should only marry *in the Lord*. In other words, Possessors should marry only other Possessors.

I know what you might be thinking: “Wait a second, I am going to help my non-Christian boyfriend or girlfriend so he or she can become a Christian.” For the one case where this actually occurs, there are 999 examples where the opposite happens—the Christian is almost always pulled down spiritually by the non-Christian.

Now, of course, believers must have acquaintances and friendships with unbelievers—Christians are to be salt and light in this dark world. But dating and marriage relationships are much deeper than mere acquaintances or friendships. Go ahead and pray for that person. Invite him or her to church or Bible study. Just don’t date or marry that person unless he or she truly becomes a Possessor.

“Missionary dating” is not just a bad idea, it’s a spiritually dangerous one. Remember the verse—Christians should not be “unequally yoked” with non-Christians. God’s will is that Christians date, and thus marry, only Christians.

Check Your Appearance

All right, so you have found another Christian whom you can envision yourself

potentially marrying someday. You start dating. Now what?

You check your appearance.

What does that mean?

The Apostle Paul wrote that Christians should “*abstain from every form of evil*” (*I Thess. 5:22*).

Avoiding every form (literally “appearance”) of evil means that you don’t give anyone else grounds to think something sinful is going on in your relationship.

God wants not only purity in your dating relationship but purity in the *appearance* of your relationship too. You see, God is very protective of His name, His holiness, His reputation. He doesn’t want those who say they represent Him (i.e., Christians) appearing to behave in such a way that would tarnish His reputation.

This means you must conduct your dating relationship to a much higher standard than unbelievers do. If people see you and your dating partner hugging and smooching in the hallway, you are giving them reason to think, “If they are doing that in public, I can only imagine what they are doing in private.” Or if they see you drive off together for a little weekend getaway, they’re going to think, “Hmm, hot nights ahead for those two.”

The reality might be that everything is aboveboard with you and your dating partner, but you are giving the appearance that it is not. Of course, some people will suspect sin due to the mere fact that you’re dating, but never give them any appearance to confirm their wandering imaginations.

Part 2 Continued Next Month

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