



RESOURCES A FRAMEWORK FOR GODLY DATING

Usually it is said we shouldn't define something by what it isn't. But in the case of dating, it actually does help to start with the end in mind (i.e., marriage) and backtrack our way into a godly vision for dating in light of its overall goal.

Romans 12:2 says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." The Bible doesn't say much directly about dating, but it does promise we have all we need for life and

godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Our goal is to use the principles given to us in Scripture to have our minds renewed and lives transformed so that we would think less like the world and more like Christ on the subject of dating.

With that in mind, we've come up with a framework for godly dating that starts with the vision God gives us for marriage and works its way back to how we ought to think about dating as high school students. This is a grid of principles; though it is not comprehensive, we believe it is a starting point for thinking through what it looks like to pursue dating relationships in a godly way:

LIFE STAGE	INTENDED PURPOSE	COMMITMENT	INTIMACY	KEY STRUGGLES
MARRIED	Glorifying God: through shared adventure	Covenant: exclusive and permanent commitment	Life together: emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual intimacy	Oneness: cultivating and maintaining intimacy
— WEDDING DAY: COVENANT MADE —				
ENGAGED ↑	Pursue marriage	Exclusive commitment not yet made permanent	Working towards life together	Guarding & limiting a growing intimacy
DATING ↑	To make an informed, wise decision on marriage	Non-permanent; a defined, minimal commitment; brothers & sisters in Christ	Separate lives with healthy distance; managing & guarding against intimacy	Staying objective; treating one another with holiness
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS	Are you in a place where you could date in a way that honors God? Is it a realistic possibility that you could be married within the next few years?	Are you committed first to your relationship as a brother/sister in Christ? What are your real reasons for wanting to date?	How are you guarding against intimacy? Are you maintaining a healthy separation between your lives? Are you fighting for future intimacy now?	Are you satisfied in Christ? Would the person you date become an unhealthy center of your life?

DATING PITFALLS

There are a number of challenging pitfalls that we can be susceptible to when thinking about dating:

1. A major pitfall is allowing misguided emotions to lead you in dating. Don't rush in with your heart and body before you have time to truly learn their mind and character.
 2. There is a temptation to go your own way and ignore the leaders and community God has placed around you. We must remember that our hearts are deceitful above all things. This means we need wisdom from others, which requires us to be transparent with our relationships. Multiple people should be speaking in and helping you find the wise way to navigate dating.
 3. There is a temptation to be impatient and feel a great urgency for relationships that we must fight against. The purpose of dating is to make an informed decision on marriage, so before you date you must be sure that you are within a realistic time frame for the relationship to move towards marriage. Waiting in faith is one of the greatest acts of worship, and we must fight the urge to take control by trusting God with patience.
 4. Perhaps the most common pitfall is the tendency to date with a lack of purpose. We must examine our reasons for dating so that we are following God's will and not our own selfish motives.
3. Don't defraud your brother or sister in Christ.
 - Don't imply or promise a commitment that isn't there; the only guarantee right now is you are brothers and sisters in Christ. Make sure you treat each other with holiness and honor so that you do not build intimacy and take from someone else's spouse. (see 1 Thessalonians 4)
 4. Live an adventure based on God's story
 - Take part in God's plan to redeem the world from its brokenness. Give your life away, and you won't put an undue amount of yourself into a relationship. (see 2 Corinthians 5)

appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters." (1 Timothy 5:2)

PRINCIPLES FOR GODLY DATING

Out of the framework for godly dating, there are a few key principles we can see that help us catch a greater vision for God's intended design for dating relationships:

1. The purpose of a relationship is to glorify God, not get as close to sin as possible.
 - "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:3)
 - "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people." (Ephesians 5:3)
2. Commitment must come before intimacy.
 - 'Do not awaken love until the time is right.' (Song of Songs 2:7; 3:5)
 - "Never speak harshly to an older man, but