

Dan & Becky's "Dating Guide"

GETTING READY

- 1 Have an idea of the kind of person you want to marry before you enter a relationship. You want to spend a lifetime together. Remember, couples don't separate on the basis of physical attraction—they separate on the basis of broken relationship or incompatibility. What's on your list of priorities?
- 2 Consider waiting to be in a relationship if you need to understand major issues in your past or family life. Marriage is a calling to join two wholes together! A healthy sense of your identity in Christ is of primary importance.

KEEPING STEADY

- 1 Grow emotional intimacy in proportion to commitment. Many couples reveal much about themselves too early—secrets, hurts, and desires. But too much too fast gives an illusion of intimacy. Real intimacy will require real time, both in commitment and trials. The four "seasons" are a good foundation to start with.
- 2 Do not arouse passions that cannot be righteously fulfilled (1 Cor 7:5, 1 Thess 4:4, 1 Tim 5:2). For dating couples, there is no right to a private intimacy that should not be expressed in public. Treat each other as a son/daughter of God.
- 3 Emphasize the friendship aspect of dating life. Couples have had successful marriages for *millennia* without the benefit of a pre-marital physical relationship. How? Physical intimacy can be blindingly powerful—it masks differences in the relationship. So cultivate a discipline of communication.
- 4 Be outwardly minded and learn to serve others when together as a couple. Your relationship should be a blessing to others. No one likes to be the third wheel when they walk into the room.
- 5 Date, don't virtually co-habitate. You should know when the date ends, and return to your own homes, routines, and the focus to which God has called you. Having a default that you will be together unless something else is "planned" is virtual co-habitation, regardless of where you spend the night. Most of your time should be apart to slow down and process the relationship.

SEEKING GUIDANCE

- 1 Make a covenant that involves (1) physical boundaries that keep your thought life pure, and (2) time boundaries that help you maintain your calling in Jesus and vocation. Have godly, mature, same-sex accountability to share with.
2. Seek input from God, leaders, and your biblical community when evaluating the future of your relationship. Remember that the person you date you might not marry—and then again, they might! Go SLOOOW and be wise.

5 PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL DATE(ING LIFE)

The 50/50 principle

When together, spend half your time hanging out with others, and half your time with each other.

The 11 pm principle

The later it gets, the more compromises you will make in your physicality and communication. Make a boundaries list and stick to it. Always be interruptible.

The accountable principle

Seek out a same-sex accountability partner who has permission to ask you questions about the relationship. Find someone who knows you and is a more mature Christian.

The breaking up principle

Time and space are the ONLY way to break up effectively. Seek to preserve Christ's reputation and remain in good relationship within the biblical community.

The asking advice principle

Ask other people what they think about your relationship. (1) Leaders of your biblical community: they know God's purposes. (2) Parents: they know YOU. (3) Mature Christ-following friends: they watch your relationship.

The kids & spouse principle

(Okay, that makes 6 principles). Have a single dating standard: ask yourself how you want your future spouse to have dated others before he/she met you?

(Adapted from *5 Principles* by Michael Mowry)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

—Proverbs 3