

more to be

truth and
advice about
relationships

DATING

I think it is safe to say that one of the most sought-after pieces of advice from teenage girls is about dating! Most girls, just like you, want to know how to have fun dating without regret. Some of you want to know if God approves of dating. Others want to know how far is too far, sexually speaking.

These concerns are valid and worth an answer! The problem with giving dating advice, however, is that there are so many variables. Factors like age, emotional and spiritual maturity, parental opinions and instructions, as well as life circumstances influence the dating dilemma, and need to be taken into account. So what you'll find below are our thoughts and suggestions along with Biblical truths that will enable you, hopefully with a mentor or your parents, to make a wise choice about whether you should date in high school.

A Good Source of Information

Finding out what God says about dating may seem a bit tricky since it is impossible to find anything about "dating" in the Bible. Dating is a modern term relevant to our culture, where traditions like betrothals and arranged marriages have been replaced with choosing your own spouse. But the Bible is a valid, relevant source for dating information because it reveals why we crave it in the first place, and provides great wisdom on how to have healthy relationships.

Consider What Is Intended

Did you know that God designed each one of us to crave relationships? This is actually good news, for what you long for isn't something bad! We're designed, first and foremost, to be in relationship with God. We are the bride of Christ, and He longs for us to adore Him with our whole heart and mind (Rev 19:7; Mark 12:30; John 3:16)!

This love relationship with God, made possible through Jesus Christ, is so hard to get our minds and arms around (Eph 1:3-14). The longing to be loved in the flesh and blood, which communicates to our hearts that we are significant, often sends us searching in all the wrong places (work, addictions, hobbies, relationships) for satisfaction. We must be careful of where we are seeking love!

The one place God permits us to experience Biblical love is in marriage, which is designed to reflect His love for the church, His people. God blesses marriage and designed us for such a union. When God saw that Adam had no suitable helper, he created Eve (Gen

Genesis 2:24 NIV

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

2:20-24). God made Eve from Adam, creating two separate beings made in His image. In His perfect design, this couple must come back together, becoming one again!

When God designed one man to be united with one woman, it was intended to be a committed, monogamous relationship for life, in which both leave their families and begin a new life together. Any other sort of relationship that attempts to mimic God's design or fulfill the the desires meant to be satisfied by a Biblical marriage is not within God's will (see: Mat 19:5, Eph 5:31; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10). To some degree, we could lightly say that dating attempts to mimic the marital relationship, and this is a where it becomes dangerous. While the desire for a relationship is good, dating can awaken it prematurely, making a healthy relationship destructive.

It is equally important to note that God plans for some to be single. This is actually considered a gift from God (see: Mat 19:8-12; 1 Cor 7:7-9, 24-40)! It is a calling that gives God the opportunity to do great things through men and women whose lives are fully dedicated to Him and not divided by earthly relationships.

Whether we are called to be married or remain single, we will be responsible for the decisions we make during our teen years. We need to be aware of our desires and put off satisfying them prematurely. The goal is to emerge pure, emotionally and physically, so that no matter what relationships mark our future, we will be able live without regret.

Preserve Your Superglue

God designed for us to bond to our spouse for life, and that bond is established through physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy that work together to form a superglue bond.

"...everything that happens to us sexually begins in the brain, including arousal and the physiological response of sexual release. And like other organs in our body, the brain has chemical and hormonal functions. Two of the chemicals it releases are endorphins and enkephalins. These give us a sense of euphoria and well-being.

When we engage in activities that release these chemicals, such as aerobic activity, artistic or creative activities, intimate communication with a friend, and, of course, sex, the chemicals cause us to want to repeat the activity. But if we overuse one of the pathways to this chemical high, we can wander into addictive territory with that activity." (Kiss Me Again, p. 12-13)

"Scientists have discovered that in addition to releasing chemicals during sex, the brain also releases a hormone called oxytocin, and these work together to create a



strong bond between people. The invisible bond works like superglue, permanently attaching us emotionally and spiritually to a lover. This bonding happens with everyone with whom we have sex --wether we're married or single and whether the sex is consensual or forced. It's what God was talking about when He said that with sex 'two will become one flesh.' (Mark 10:8)." (Kiss Me Again, p. 14)



This bond is also like duct tape. Think of how super sticky a fresh piece of tape is when it is ripped off a roll. When it is adhered to "someone" else, it creates a solid bond. But once it is ripped off, its sticky factor diminishes. There is never a clean separation, with a bit of the other person stuck on your tape. Now that it is used, it is also not able to ever regain its sticky strength.

The further you go in a relationship, sexually or emotionally, the more you bond with that person. You can't control how much of your superglue bond is released, because it is a natural, God designed process meant to occur for our benefit. This superglue bond brings strength into a marriage, so that it can withstand the test of time. But if the superglue is opened and used before marriage, it not only creates a bond with a person that may not become your spouse, it also reduces the strength in the marital bond. The person you become after a break up is no longer whole. Instead, you have a broken off piece that bonded with another guy, and you've got a piece of him impaled in your heart.

The issue of bonding is the main reason we don't encourage high school dating. We experienced the effects of using up our superglue, or duct tape, and we regret it! We want

you to be whole for your marriage, which will last the rest of your life, instead of tasting a bit of joy in a dating relationship now, which will only last temporarily.

Purity Boundaries

The fact of the matter is that in any dating relationship, there will come a desire to express love and trust in a sexual way. This is the way God designed it, using the superglue bond to bring you closer together. This is why it is so important to establish sexual and emotional purity in a dating relationship. We are called to use every restraint to keep our marriage bed pure. So what is consider sexually immoral or impure? Use these boundaries to remain sexually pure:

1. If you don't have "that" body part, then don't touch it (with or without clothes on), nor let your parts be touched either.
2. If what you are doing, or have done, suggests or mimics any sexual act, it is impure and off limits.

Hebrews 13:4 NIV
 "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

3. If it has to be done in the dark or behind closed doors, it shouldn't be done before marriage.
4. Don't lay down together, even for a nap, or drape yourself across one another while watching a movie or TV show. Snuggling, in of and of itself, may start innocently, but it is guaranteed to bring on arousal.
5. If what you are doing should be done only with a spouse, than it is adulterous.

So what is permissible and wise? Not very much, because the desire is to protect one another's purity. Instead of setting up the relationship for arousal, carefully apply the "less is more" principle. From the point of what you think you are comfortable with, in order to maintain purity, back it up two or three steps to put a gap of protection into your relationship. Many Christian couples are comfortable with a kiss on the lips, but later realize kissing tempted them to want more. So for some, a kiss is even too much. We recommend saving the kiss for your engagement! Also, don't compare yourself to others, but be in tune with your convictions, and pull back if one or both of you struggle to want more. We suggest that you can be pure and do the following:

1. Hold hands.
2. Share a hug that is not long, face to face, or body to body embrace.
3. During engagement, a peck on the cheek or a quick kiss on the lips, but not deep and passionate, and without the tongue.

1 John 1:9 NIV
 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

The goal is to remain pure, thereby preserving the marriage bed! But what if you have been sexually immoral or impure? The good news is that Christ died for all our sin, including sexual sin, and in doing so, made a way for us to receive forgiveness from God. Even though

God already knows, we need to own it by confessing it to God while committing to purity from this point on.

David, who committed adultery, poured out his heart to God when he penned Psalm 51. We, too, can use his prayers and God's promises to begin a new, pure, journey. In the same way snow covers the ground, hiding the dead grass that lies dormant underneath, our forgiven sexual sin will still remain in our memory, but no longer needs to be part of our present day. God uses a blanket of snow, which never melts away, to cover it up, allowing us to begin new and pure!

Psalm 51:7 NIV
 "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

Another goal, often not mentioned, is to remain emotionally pure. Our hearts are a precious place that store up our deepest longings, greatest fears, and tender wounds. In a marriage relationship, it is right, good, and natural to share

your whole heart with your spouse. By doing so, trust is built and emotional intimacy grows over time. This process should begin in the engagement period, as you reveal to one another pieces from

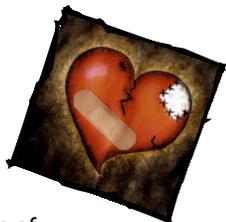
your past that have affected you emotionally and spiritually, but is not meant to be done during high school dating. Yes, some details should be shared with one another, in the same way you do so with a good friendship that is developed over time, but this is not the time to unload your baggage onto a boyfriend.



As we journey through life, we are like travelers with a large suitcase filled with souvenirs. Often times, we're lugging around some pretty heavy bags, which certainly impact our personality and current outlook on life. The engagement period, or just shortly prior to it, is the right time to share all these positive and negative mementos, as what is in the bag will soon become his (and vice versa) and both of you will have to figure out how to navigate carrying it in your future. Guard what you store in your heart, for sharing it will develop a bond that is meant for marriage.

Mind Your Motives

For many girls, the driving force behind wanting to date has nothing at all to do with satisfying sexual desires and everything to do with hidden motives of the heart. These motives can be anything from seeking love, running from a dysfunctional home, looking for approval, finding significance in the identity of being someone's girlfriend, or meeting a need by helping that special guy who just can't get his life together.



When we are motivated to seek out a dating relationship to fill the hole in our heart, we open ourselves up to deep pain. If we have been through difficult circumstances, like emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or have experienced the rejection of a parent, especially a dad, we tend to mask our pain while pursuing relationships that will make us feel better or safe. This is an unhealthy pattern that causes us to expect more from a relationship than was ever intended. Only

Ezekiel 36:26 NIV
 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

Proverbs 4:23
 "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

God can satisfy those desires in our heart to be approved of and unconditionally loved, and the first step is acknowledging our pain and seeking the Lord for healing, often times with the help of a Christian counselor.

If we insist that our boyfriend, or husband, fill up our needs, we will end up in a mess. The

relationship will suffer great stress and conflict will ensue. Instead of turning to guys, we need to guard our hearts and turn to God. This means giving God areas of pain, insecurity, fear, and anxiousness, and allowing Him to fill it with His love. He will take the hardened, wounded parts, heal them with His truth, and transform our hearts back to flesh, equipping us to love others without demanding anything in return. Before you get involved dating, give careful attention to what is happening inside your heart, checking in on your motives and desires.

Hooking Up Qualifications

2 Cor. 6:14 NIV
 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."

Hooking up, or having friends with benefits, is a popular way to satisfy desires without commitment. But after all our superglue talk, you should have a clear understanding why this is foolish. However, you still need to consider **who** you're "hooking up" with in terms of dating! Not every guy is suitable to be your man. If you are dating for the sake of marriage, you don't want to waste time on a guy who wouldn't be within God's will. And if you are dating just for fun (which we don't recommend -- again, don't waste your superglue), then you still need to consider what type of guy you want that close to your heart and influencing your life.

1. He should be a Christian.

The Scriptures lay out this principle in terminology of being "yoked together," which refers to two oxen pulling a plow. If one oxen has his head in the harness (yoke) and the other does not, the plow cannot be pulled. When it comes to dating, we are wise to commit to a person who we can head in the same direction with, and as Believers, that ought to be toward the Cross paved with Biblical principles.

Ephesians 5:25-29
 "25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church..."

2. He should be an Ephesians 5 guy.

Ephesians 5 compares the marriage between a husband and wife to the role of Christ and the church, and in doing so, lays out a clear description of a Godly man. This is the type of guy you'll want for a husband, so don't bother dating a guy that isn't heading in this direction. Ask yourself, does he:

- Remind you of Christ?
- Demonstrate love for others by sacrificing his own desires?

- Act in such a way as to keep you holy -- meaning set apart for God?
- Wash you with the Word by speaking it to you and encouraging you with it?
- Intend to do what he can to keep you without stain, wrinkle, or blemish, which means not causing you to sin?
- Take care of his own body as well?

This is not an easy call for any man, especially in a culture that defines manhood in terms of money, power, hobbies, and accomplishments. As we seek to find a man that reflects the character of God in His heart and life, we must remain humble and grace-filled.

Dating Disclaimer

Once you've checked your motives and made a commitment to the Lord to keep your marriage bed pure, you just might be in a good place to have a healthy dating relationship with a godly guy. However, let me add my personal disclaimer explaining why I don't support dating in high school: 1) It is a distraction from studying hard, making solid friendships with girls, pursuing gifts and talents, serving others, and spending time with family, 2) it makes it harder to stay pure, and 3) the effects of a break up are painful and affects every area of life.

The reality is that few relationships make it beyond high school to college, and even fewer to the altar. In fifteen years of mentoring teen girls, I've only seen two go all the way. That's not very good odds. Maybe you'll be the next, but the fact of the matter is that it is likely your high school relationship might very well be precious and seemingly perfect, and still not last the test of time.

The number of tears I've wiped off my shoulders, along with my own sob story, combined with the scientific evidence of bonding and God's call to keep the marriage bed pure is why I tend to advise against dating in high school. But since most of us would rather learn for ourselves, let me offer these last points that will hopefully protect your heart, at least a little bit, if you choose to date.

Consider Courting

If you come to the conclusion that the guy of your dreams has finally arrived on your doorstep and dating is the next logical step, consider courting instead. It is an old-fashion term that has modern-day application that looks like this:

1. **Seek counsel.** Get your parents involved, especially if they are Christians. Have them meet the guy and give their thoughts about him and your relationship. If your

The Kiss Experiment

1. Grab a hershey kiss.
2. Open it.
3. Put it in your mouth for one second.
4. Take it out.
5. Wrap it up.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 at least five more times, or maybe ten.
7. What do you have left?
8. Did it get messy?
9. Did you enjoy the kiss the last time as much as you did the first time?
10. What do you think about dating without boundaries on emotional and sexually purity now?



parents can't meet the guy, or if they don't share your beliefs, seek the wisdom and input of a mentor.

2. **Determine intentions.** Find out why he wants to date you and what he hopes to get from it in the end. Just having "fun" is not courting. Courting is the first step on the marriage journey, where you're trying to find out if this is the "one."
3. **Discuss boundaries.** In courting, a guy and girl have a special friendship, where their intentions for one another have been made clear, but their purity is a top priority. Some couples choose to just hold hands, not hug or snuggle, and hold off their first kiss until they are engaged, or even for their wedding day.
4. **Keep it public.** Courting couples spend time together with their families, mentors, and friends. One-on-one time happens in public places, like a restaurant or a walk in a public park. In order to resist the temptation to be physically affectionate, they don't spend time alone.

Courting is similar to dating, in that it sets the couple apart from their single friends, but they live in such a way that if the relationship fails, they haven't brought harm to their future marriage. Courting isn't mini-marriage, which is often the case with dating. Rather it is a time of preparation.

To Date or Not to Date

If you have made the decision that dating is something you'd like to experience, you need to keep a careful check on the state of your mind and heart. Use this check list to see if you are ready to date:

- I have considered the matter of dating, discussed it with a mentor or parent, and have prayed about it.
- I feel I am making an educated decision, as I am aware of God's design for intimacy as well as the need to keep my marriage bed pure.
- I have investigated my motives, and can honestly say it is well with my heart. I know that if I am longing to date to meet another need, emotionally or physically, socially or spiritually, that I need to get right with God first.
- I also know that my first relationship is with God, and I need to grow a healthy relationship with Him, by spending time in Scripture, prayer, and with other Believers. If I am not doing this, I need to develop this habit and lifestyle before I get involved dating.
- I also realize that the relationships I have with family and friends are critical. If they are neglected, I know that means I don't have the time to date right now.
- It is just as important to have an

accountability friendship with a girl that shares my beliefs and views on dating, or with a mentor who can guide me along. Do I have these relationships? If not, I need to put off dating until these relationships are established.

- I should also develop as a unique, gifted, and bright woman of God. If I am neglecting my academics, not focused on growing my gifts and talents, I ought to stay away from a dating relationship at this point.
- I'll know I'm in a good place when dating falls to the back of my mind, and instead my focus is on honoring God, while preparing for my future as a whole woman, skilled and gifted in all areas of my life. Am I in this place?
- Also, am I building friendships with godly guys? In other words, who am I spending my time with, and what am I doing with that time? If my goal is purity and preserving my superglue, then I need to get comfortable in friendships with guys who share these values, especially since the best dating relationships often build upon established friendships.
- Yes, I am ready. The question is, am I willing to stick with boundaries that will keep this relationship pure? Am I prepared to handle this relationship in such a way that I won't be embarrassed to tell my future husband, if this guy isn't the "one?" And more importantly, is he a Christian and does he agree with my philosophy of dating, so that we are equally yoked from the beginning?

Dating Guidelines

You're finally in that dating relationship! But what else do you need to know? Consider these points:

1. **Keep it friendly.** Treat him like a good friend and as the relationship grows, you can share more and more of your heart, but keep in mind how much you might have to let go of if you break up.
2. **Keep it present.** Don't plan your wedding, give away the names of your children (which you might have been dreaming about all your life), or adjust your future dreams to accommodate his (that comes when an engagement is around the corner, and not in high school).
3. **Don't pray together alone.** I know this sounds crazy, but prayer is so intimate, and often will arouse desires in one another. So keep to praying in groups together. However, definitely pray for your relationship to remain pure and honor God!
4. **Be modest.** Definitely consider how you dress and behave when you are with your guy! He will become easily aroused by you, especially if you show him skin with plunging necklines or leave nothing to the imagination by wearing tight clothes. Literally, this arousal can become painful for a guy, when he doesn't have sexual release. Just don't do that to him. It is not loving or respectful.
5. **Honor and respect him.** Guys may seem tough on the outside, but they are as sensitive as girls! Be careful of

what you say and how you tease. Don't mother him or take jabs. Treat him how you want to be treated, and likewise, expect to be treated tenderly in return.

Breaking Up Etiquette

For whatever the reason, the relationship is over. It is always a painful experience, especially if you are deeply in love, together a long time, or went too far sexually or emotionally! But there are things to do to make the break up move along.

1. **Let go.** When it is over, it is over. Don't try to hold onto a relationship that is truly over.
2. **Pour out your heart to God.** And definitely not to another guy! Use this time to get right with the Lord.
3. **Get wise advice.** Seek out a mentor to help you navigate through your emotions and get a glimpse of a brighter future ahead.
4. **Get distracted.** Put your mind and time into something else, such as a hobby or academics or sports.
5. **Be respectful.** Don't talk bad about your ex or treat him harshly. Mind your words and make sure you don't say anything you might regret later.
6. **Don't ignore the need to forgive.** You've trusted your heart to a guy, and now it is left broken. It hurts. Seek the Lord to help you forgive your ex and don't carry the pain with you to your next relationship.
7. **Don't date.** Give yourself at least six months or longer before entering into another relationship. You need time to heal and regain your whole self. A rebound relationship might feel good, but the long term results are usually more painful than waiting it out.
8. **Make him wait.** If a new guy is banging down your door, tell him he needs to wait. If he is serious, and worth it, he will.

Be a Warrior of Your Heart

This is a really exciting time in your life! Your awakening desires are definitely good, as they lay the foundation for what God will build on in your future. Whether it is God's plan for you to be married one day or to remain single, how you live through these teen years will have a lasting impact. It is a precious time for you, with decisions flying like darts at the bulls-eye nestled in your heart. Be a warrior of your heart, and carefully wage war against what attempts to penetrate it before God's rightful timing.

Our hope and prayer is for you to navigate through the dating scene unscathed and pure. We are certain you'll have no regrets waiting until your wedding day to experience even your first kiss, but we know that the pressure is on for something more between now and then. We hope we've given you truth to build on and wisdom to guide your way. May His grace be sufficient for you!

