

## **LESSON 14 - CHRISTIAN DATING**

### **Embracing Your Identity and Purpose and Dating Intentionally**

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**I**n the previous lessons we reviewed Christian marriage and Christian singleness. Singleness is a lifestyle of undivided devotion to God. Marriage is a lifestyle of devotion to God through the partnership. Christian dating is how singleness and marriage intersect; it’s the bridge between them. In Christian dating one lives in the *present* like a single person, with its benefits and challenges, while grooming themselves *towards* the future, being fit for marriage, in pursuit of a compatible partner.

**Date Intentionally.** The key problem with romantic relationships without Christian-specific goals (e.g. marriage and Christ-likeness) is the *foundation* they’re built on. It’s very different. People casually go out on dates, even sleep around, while enjoying the perks (sex, free meals, shows, expensive gifts, travel, etc.). The goal is selfish: to *get* what they want. If thought about in terms of living arrangements we could call this a “freeloading” mentality. Meaning they’ll stay there for now, and take and take as long as the other’s willing to give, but if that stops they’re out of there. Then there’s the “renter” mentality. Like how you’d rent an apartment, it’s a short-term lease. Both people are willing to make a small commitment to try things out and see how it goes. The individuals aren’t *really* partners; there’s no long term commitment or effort at teamwork. It’s more of a *short-term experiment*. Each person always has one foot out the door. The goal is still fleshly and selfish. I’m here to try this with you, but if it gets unpleasant or difficult I’m out of here. The final option is the “buyer” mentality. When we buy a house we’re making a big commitment and investment. There’s saving up money for awhile and many things to consider: budget, lifestyle goals, neighborhood, schools, driving distance from work and family. All these options are weighed before making a final decision. It still requires work once purchased, but we *go in* with a different mentality. With a long-term, *this-is-actually-mine* mindset. So you’ll care for it better. You’ll appreciate it more. You’ll work hard to maintain and improve it. It’s yours. Dating needs to be intentional this way. We *are* looking to *buy*—not freeload or rent! Don’t date anyone that’s just attractive or fun to be around. Have a clear idea of who and what you’re looking for then pursue that. And make sure that who you authentically are is who and what they are looking for to purchase as well!

**Embrace Your New Identity and Purpose.** The purpose of Christian dating is for two followers of Jesus, both seeking God’s will for their lives, to let the Holy Spirit lead each towards a compatible lifelong partner. The goal: glorify God in both the search for, and the final outcome of, a God-centered marriage. 1 Corinthians 6:14-18 says, “*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?... Or what*

*portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said... go out from their midst, and be separate from them... I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me.”* We’ve been reborn and adopted into God’s family. Called out of the world towards an eternal, heavenly dwelling. So in all worldly relationships don’t allow yourself to be yoked (deeply tied and connected to) someone going in a different, less-Christ centered, less eternally-minded direction. This is true of all relationships: friends, family, church, clubs, hobbies, even business dealings. But it’s even more true and important in your most intimate, romantic relationships. Seek to partner with a likeminded follower of Jesus, a fellow child of the same Father, someone who deepens and grows your devotion *to God*. View one another through your new identity and purpose and it will change the dynamic of the relationship. Seek to please your Heavenly Father by loving and caring for His child like He does. See yourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ seeking to partner to grow and support each other in your efforts to be more like Jesus. If the courtship leads to marriage, great. If it doesn’t, that’s okay too. If done right, it’s fruitful either way. It’s still two children caring for and building one another up, preparing them for their future spouse.

**Good Qualities to Cultivate within Yourself and to Look For in a Partner.** The journey in Christ is often long, tough, and full of faith-challenging obstacles. Developing and searching for the following qualities will help your success. We need to be born again, evidenced by a genuine love of God. Not just head knowledge of God or of religion, but a genuine testimony of repentance of sin, salvation by faith in Christ, and an ongoing and deepening relationship with God. We should be humble and living in submission and obedience to God. We should submit to God’s written Word (the Bible) as our highest authority, and seeking to hear and submit to the Holy Spirit’s personal leading and conviction. These two things will be essential for solving conflicts when they inevitably arise later. We should be seeking to let the Holy Spirit sanctify all of our lives and emotions, and to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (listed in Galatians 5:22-23) abundantly. We should each have a sincere desire to be like Christ and dedication to this pursuit. This will help both have the highest possible standards in their own behavior. We should have sexual purity. This includes total abstinence from all sexual contact outside of marriage, but also a dedication to continually crucify all other forms of sexually immoral behavior, even the lustful thoughts of the heart. We should desire to serve, serving God, our church, our neighbors, and our spouse, in love. We should seek to eradicate selfish desires and to let God fill us up so that we have the overflow to give rather than take. We should seek compatibility. A compatible calling from God as well as compatible lifestyle, goals, ambitions, dreams, personality, beliefs, habits, and preferences in the important things. They don’t need to be identical, we’re all unique, but they should be compatible for the partnership to be mutually beneficial. We should seek fruitful, honest, open, communication. Both should feel safe to share without judgment, seeking to listen and understand, and feeling heard, understood, and accepted.

Let’s pray. Father, help me put You first, always. Help me be intentional in everything I do. Remind me always to embrace my new identity and purpose as your child. Shine your light through me so that in everything I do I’m a blessing and help to your other children. Make me more like Jesus. Amen.