

A Christian Man's Guide to Dating

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The word *dating* is powerful among men - a great equalizer, whether you're a Christian or not. It can bring to mind moments of utmost joy and moments of searing rejection. Asking a woman out and getting a rejection hurts. On the other hand, getting an acceptance can make you feel like you're on top of a mountain.

From the mountaintop to the valley, dating without the proper guidance is like trying to climb Mt. Everest wearing only a pair of swimming trunks - foolhardy and most likely to leave you frozen in your tracks.

There are other similarities among all groups of men when it comes to dating. Men in Christian and non Christian circles are attracted to beautiful women. There's nothing wrong with that. Whether a man of faith or not, men want to date women who are attractive, intelligent, interesting and interested in *them*.

There are also differences among men when it comes to dating. It's faith that ends the similarities between the groups of men. Christian men are instructed to date women of faith.

That instruction is from the Bible and is found in II Corinthians. Why is that instruction so important for men of faith? Because as a Christian, faith is to be the foundation upon which you build your future relationships with the opposite sex. When the foundations don't match up, you can't build the kind of relationship God intends for you to have with one another.

There are some Christians who believe that Christians shouldn't date at all, but those beliefs are usually based on seeing how the world views dating. They believe that dating is simply an invitation to intimacy. Dating as a Christian man doesn't mean you have to or will date the way society deems acceptable.

As a Christian man, there is a right way and a wrong way to date. This guide will help you understand the ins and outs of dating and act as a map for navigating around the potholes you may encounter along the way.

Start With Prayer

You want to honor God with the choices you make in your life, especially the romantic choices. There can be long lasting consequences relating to dating outside of God's desire for your life.

When you think of a woman you'd like to ask out, first go before the Lord and talk to Him about it. Not only will prayer ensure a better outcome in the long run, but praying before you ask can keep you from trouble.

Prayer acts as a compass to help with self-control, strengthens your resolve for purity and keeps you on the path you desire to be on. Your heart can lead you down a path you don't want to end up on. Just because you're attracted to a woman and want to get to know her better doesn't mean it's what's best for you.

Before you ask out any woman, spend some time praying over whether you should ask her or not. She might be the one you should ask out and then again, she might be the road to heartache.

Not only should you seek prayer about asking out the right woman, but as a Christian single, pray that God will protect you from the challenges of temptation as well. God gave you the desire for the opposite sex, but His timing should be followed in the area of romance.

Even after praying, if you decide that you should ask her out, you might fear rejection but if you believe you should ask her out, then go ahead and take that risk. She might say no, but then again, she might say yes. If you believe you should ask her out but then you don't, you may always

wonder about the chance you let slip by because of your fear of rejection.

The Art of Asking

Men of all ages and from all backgrounds have said that the hardest part about dating is getting over the first hurdle: asking. They get tongue tied and become shy. No one likes to put himself out there and risk rejection-it's not fun, but there are ways you can lower your risk of rejection by how you ask for a date.

There aren't any tried and true ways to ask a woman out-no one way will guarantee you a date. However, there are better ways to ask than "Hey, want to get some coffee with me Saturday?"

Your odds of getting a *no* have risen. Why? Because you asked a question where you can get a yes or no answer. Instead, you want to ask in a way that gives you a definite yes or a thoughtful maybe. Be careful that you don't ask in a way that comes across as insulting.

Wrong: "I'm not doing anything Saturday and I wondered if you'd like to go out." This assumes she's not doing anything either and this could come across as offensive. You asked because you're not doing anything? Meaning if you had something better to do you wouldn't ask her? That may not be what you mean, but that's how it comes across.

Better: "I know you like Italian food and there's a new Italian restaurant in town. I'd like to share the experience with you." How do you know she liked Italian food? You took the time before you asked her out on a date to talk to her friends or family about the kinds of foods she likes.

Women appreciate a man that will go the extra mile to discover her likes and dislikes. It shows that he's the kind of man who will put effort into getting to know her. Finding out what she enjoys first will also increase your odds of getting a yes response because if you ask her to go out to

seafood restaurant and she hates seafood, she might just say no and not explain that she doesn't like seafood.

The Perfect Woman

What's your idea of a perfect woman? Is she tall, short? Slender, curvy? Blonde, brunette? Financially stable? Own a home? Come from a Christian background? If you have any preconceived notions of what a perfect woman *should* be, forget them.

If you have a mental list of qualities a woman should have, forget those too. Why? You could be closing the door on the right woman to date if you go into dating with your ideals of what the woman should or shouldn't be rather than God's ideal.

There were two Christian men. One man had a list of what he wanted in any woman he dated. She had to be tall. Had to be a brunette. Had to come from a Christian family. He kept searching until he was in his thirties and he found the *perfect* woman.

They dated and married a few years later. He'd finally found the perfection he'd searched for. Ten years later, they divorced. His wife discovered he wasn't perfect.

The second man sought God's wisdom before he dated. The woman he was led to was short, a bit overweight. She didn't come from a Christian family but she loved the Lord with all her heart.

They dated for years, then married. Twenty-one years later, they're still together, still serving God. So forget looking for perfection and instead seek God's will about the woman you should ask out.

About serial dating: Don't date more than one woman at a time. Hard to believe this advice pertains to Christian men, but it does. You cannot date more than one woman at the same time and get to know both of their characters equally. It's not fair to either party involved in the date. You

can't commit yourself to two women at once. Plus, serial dating makes you come across as a player.

Pay attention to how the woman conducts herself before you ask her out. Don't assume that because she's busy and active in the church or church related activities it means she has a steady relationship with God. You don't want to date a woman that's so busy doing she has no time for simply being. It's easy to fill a life with everything but time for God. There has to be a healthy balance.

Planning the Date

If you take your date through the drive thru at a fast food restaurant and splurge on a box of chicken nuggets, don't expect a second date. There's a huge difference in not having a large budget for dating and being cheap.

What cheap says to a woman is not, "He's good with money." What it says is, "He doesn't think I'm worth spending money on." You can plan dates that show you've put thought into it without having to break your budget to do so.

If you know what your date enjoys, the work is half over already. You can plan a date around what she likes. There are low, medium and higher cost dates you can plan. Keep in mind, there's nothing wrong with not being able to afford to spend a lot on a date, that's where your creativity can come into play.

Free or low cost dates: going on a picnic, taking food and grilling out at a lake or by a pond-not only low cost but toward the evening as the sun is setting, this can be a beautiful and romantic backdrop.

Check out historical places where you live. Take a walking tour. Do you live near a beach? Walk along the beach. Spread a blanket on the sand and share a treat-iced tea in the summer, coffee or hot chocolate in a thermos in the winter. It's a relaxing way to spend time together and talk.

Is she the outdoor type? Play tennis or badminton, go for a horseback ride-if you have a friend who owns riding horses, this can be a great low cost date as long as she's not afraid of horses. Go skating. Check your local newspaper for any community events. One city offers Music Beneath the Stars and hosts free jazz concerts.

Medium cost dates: dinner and a movie, a short boating trip, a horse and buggy ride, bowling or golfing.

Higher cost dates: go to a concert, eat at a five star restaurant, visit a museum, if she likes sports, go watch a baseball or basketball team play, go white water rafting or skiing. The ideas for dates are endless and while a dinner date is always pleasant, women do like for a man to step outside the routine and plan a date that's different from the norm.

For your best odds of a successful first date, make it a memorable one. Have an activity planned so that the entire time isn't spent in conversation. The way to choose a good first date activity is to have at least some idea of what your date will like.

If she doesn't have someone you can ask what she might like to do, then just ask her. Be up front about it and say, "I'd like to make sure you have a good time. Do you enjoy ___" fill in the blank with the activity you had in mind.

If you plan on taking her to a restaurant where you've never been, make sure you know beforehand if the restaurant has anything in it that you or date might find offensive. You would hate to take your date to a nice restaurant only to discover a singer serenaded customers by singing in a suggestive manner.

Conversation and Dating

Conversation is a great tool to get to know someone but what about those awkward moments of silence when you just can't think of anything

to say? That can kill a good date fast. If you experience moments of silence that seem to linger, use humor to deflect it. Be honest about the uncomfortable silence. Many people experience this first date issue.

Ask her about herself-her childhood-where she grew up, her family, what hobbies she engaged in. Don't make it like an interrogation with the spotlight on her (Who are you? What have you done all your life?). Be relaxed. Offer parts about your own childhood as well. Recount a humorous event.

You can ask her about her favorite childhood memory. If she didn't come from a good home, ask her what she loves about her life today. First date conversation is a good way to find out what your date likes so that you can gain insight if you decide you'd like to ask her out again. If you discover she loves gardening on the first date, maybe on the second date, you can bring her an outdoor plant or shrub for her garden.

You can ask her what her favorite Bible verse is. Most Christian women have a life's verse that holds special meaning. When you ask her about her favorite Bible verse, you can follow that up with asking her why it's her favorite.

Talk about one another's relationship with the Lord. How long you've been a Christian, how you first came to Christ. What is she passionate about when it comes to serving the Lord? What is she passionate about in her life? What are her dreams? Her goals?

Finding out about her relationship with God can clue you in right off the bat if it would be a good idea to keep dating her. If you ask her about God and she says, "Who?" then you know she's not the woman you should date.

I know that's kind of tongue in cheek, but you'd be surprised at the number of good women who are active in the church and yet because of their many activities have no relationship whatsoever with God.

Make sure you listen when she speaks. Don't cut her off if she says something you don't agree with. By paying careful attention, you can often pick up cues that can keep the conversation going.

What not to talk about or mistakes to avoid during conversation: Don't talk about your past girlfriends, your past dating experiences or how wonderful your mother is. Even if she's the greater woman in the world, you want to keep the focus of the date on the person you're with.

Keeping up Appearances

You've heard the phrase 'be on your best behavior' and 'put your best foot forward' especially on a first date. You should make an extra effort on a first date but always be yourself. Never act like someone or something you're not.

There's an older British show titled 'Keeping Up Appearances.' In this show, the main star is Hyacinth Bucket. She pronounces her last name as 'Bouquet' and loudly corrects anyone who pronounces it as Bucket. She's embarrassed by her family and is forever pretending to be something she's not. The results are sometimes quite embarrassing and painful for her.

The worst thing you can do is present yourself as a man who enjoys one way of living when you don't. Presenting yourself as a pillar of perfection gets hard to maintain day in and day out. If you keep dating the same person, you'll eventually get tired of the façade and when who you really are comes out, the woman you're dating will end up feeling disillusioned.

You want to start out dating like you plan to end up. If you'd like to have a dating relationship focused on a mutual relationship with the Lord, then start it out the right way.

Read and study the Bible together. Begin and end your dates with prayer. Dating someone is more than simply looking for a woman you may have

things in common with. It's more than seeking a companion. You want a woman that has a steady walk with God herself.

You can be interested in what she has to say and interested in what she does without pretending you're a fan of the activity. You wouldn't expect her to pretend she's interested in football if she's not.

Too many men believe that it's the common hobbies that cement relationships, but it's not. You can have common interests but not all of them have to be the same. Or even should be.

Think about it. God created each one of us unique. The differences can actually add to a dating relationship so apart from an interest in things of God, don't write a woman off if you don't have other interests in common.

The Physical Side of Dating

As a Christian man, you are called to a higher standard of living than your non Christian peers. You want to be sure that your dating relationship is honorable. Is it wrong to hold hands?

To kiss your date goodnight? That depends. Are you in a position where you can't take intimacy any further than that? Without roadblocks, even the most moral of men can fail to keep his convictions.

If you don't avoid ways to cross certain boundaries, then you take a risk. Without safety perimeters even the most experienced of rock climbers can fall. It doesn't matter what your spiritual maturity level is, temptation is pretty powerful and can hit you when your guard is down.

If you're not in a place where you can cross a line, then even if temptation does hit, you won't be anywhere you can do anything about it. It would be awfully hard to cross boundaries in front of hundreds of other say ice skaters or sports fans than it would be if you were sitting alone in your place or hers.

Does the Bible forbid kissing and hand holding? No, it doesn't. But what happens in many Christian dating relationships is that the physical starts out as a simple kiss or a holding of hands. It then progresses from there. It's the progress from one step to the next that you have to be careful about. You can end up in a situation you never intended to get into.

Telling yourself she's the one and you know you're in a committed relationship doesn't matter when it comes to intimacy. You can't see the future. You don't know with one hundred percent clarity that you'll end up with this woman. If you do, great.

But what if you don't? You might see her again down the road as someone else's girlfriend or wife. How would you feel then knowing you'd been intimate with her? Any kind of intimacy creates a link between two people. The further you go, the stronger the link.

If you do engage in intimacy while dating and end up marrying the woman, you've still set a pattern that bases the relationship on the physical attraction rather than basing it on the spiritual side. You want to start out right so that it ends right.

How to Follow Up a Good Date

You made it through the first date and discovered you enjoyed her company and you'd like to see her again. At the end of the date, when you see her home, tell her you had a nice time and would be interested in seeing her again. This leaves the ball in her court. If she agrees, then you know she's still interested as well. If you tell her that you'll call her the next day, then call her.

The next day, if you've received confirmation you'll be seeing her again, send her a note through the mail - a simple card reiterating what you enjoyed about the date, about your conversation with her. Dating for Christian men doesn't have to be an emotional minefield if you go into it keeping the advice of this guide in mind.



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