

Going On a Date? Take God With You

by Bryan Gibson

The dating years. Unfortunately, many young people make some tragic mistakes during these years, mistakes that could have been avoided by giving heed to God's word (Psalms 119:9-11). Let's look, then, at some rules or principles that need to be followed in dating—after a brief look at some of the positives of dating.

Positives

1. You can have a lot of fun, something God is certainly not opposed to, provided you observe His limits of behavior.
2. You can develop some good friendships, which can be mutually beneficial.
3. You can gain a better understanding of the opposite sex, which will serve you well when you eventually get married.
4. You learn how you react to different traits in those whom you date, which helps you find the right person to marry.
5. You can also learn how others react to traits you have. Dating can turn into a self-improvement course, if you handle it wisely.

Rules or Principles to Follow

1. Respect your parents' rules and warnings (read Proverbs 1:8-9). They can recognize dangerous situations better than you—for one simple reason—they've been around a lot longer than you. So don't get upset about the limits they put on you (curfew, places you can go, age you can date, etc.). Whatever you do, don't turn these years into a battle between you and your parents. They will be miserable and so will you. Submit to their guidance, and everyone will be happy. Remember, they are called your "guardians" for a reason.
2. Do NOT feel pressured to have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend. You don't have to have one to be "somebody." It may give you a secure feeling, knowing that someone likes "only you", but there are some dangers. For one, the longer the relationship continues, the harder it is to break it off, even when that appears to be the wise thing to do. Also, when you become too familiar with each other, you tend to want to stretch your limits, especially in the physical realm. The best course is usually to go out with a variety of people, because this helps you learn about different traits, which in turn helps you make a better decision about who you will marry.
3. Do not be flirtatious (Proverbs 2:16; 6:24; 7:5) in order to get a date. A "meek and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4) is a far cry from forward and flirtatious. When you're

overly forward, people may want to go out with you for the wrong reasons, and their expectations may be based on your flirtatious behavior. Just be yourself—a strong Christian—and you can be more confident about why they’re asking you out, and more relaxed about their expectations of you.

4. Be careful about who you go out with (Proverbs 12:26; 1 Corinthians 15:33). A strong Christian is obviously your first choice, but among others there are some who are “not far from the kingdom” (Mark 12:34). Look for values similar to yours, someone who will not pressure you to do wrong. If someone has a “reputation”, don’t take a chance. Don’t be afraid to say no—especially when the warning signs are present.
5. Be careful about where you go. Do not go anywhere where you’ll be expected to participate in sinful behavior. Be careful about the movies you see—the wrong kind of movie can loosen your restraints. Do not go to either of your parents’ homes, when no one is home—for obvious reasons. The same applies to being in a parked car, in a secluded spot. Ponder this passage for a minute: “A prudent man forsook evil and hid himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3).
6. Do not wear anything provocative, including outfits that are too tight, too short, too sheer, etc. You are asking for trouble when you dress this way, because guess what your date will be thinking about the whole time. Dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9-10).
7. Practice the “golden rule”—“whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them...” (Matthew 7:12). Be kind, polite, and considerate. Be completely honest with your date—don’t give the wrong impression and don’t make promises you can’t keep. Remember, dates get talked about, and you will be known by your deeds (Proverbs 20:11). Conduct yourself in such a way that you can keep your good name (Proverbs 22:1). If you have to “break up” with someone, be careful how you handle that. Don’t say bad things about them just because you don’t want to date them any longer.
8. Exercise self-control. There will be times you will want to go further than you should, but you must stop yourself. Do not subscribe to the myth that it’s only a sin if you go all the way. Learn other ways to have fun—besides making out. If the relationship becomes almost entirely physical, you don’t have much of a relationship at all. Girls, if you tell a boy to stop—and he keeps pressing the issue, or gets mad at you, don’t go out with him again. Please read the following passages and don’t ever forget them. “Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18). “The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord” (1 Corinthians 6:13).