



Dating With Purpose

Dating as we know it is hopelessly flawed. What did God intend it to look like?



By Bro. Patrick Giannetti

If you ask any guy what's special about the month of February, there's a good chance he'll say, "the Super Bowl!" If you ask the same question to any girl, she'll probably say, "Valentine's Day!" This is just one example of the many differences between men and women. Maybe we really are from different planets. Why did God create men and women so different?

Men, women, dating and relationships are very confusing subjects. Go to your local bookstore and you'll see hundreds of books dedicated to love. If you just Google "dating advice," you'll have enough reading material to last 10 lifetimes.

Adding to the complexity is the notion of dating as a young Christian. What does God think about dating, anyway? It's not very clear. I mean, let's

face it, the subject of *Christian dating* isn't something we're always taught. You've probably never heard your presiding elder choose *Christian dating* as his sermon topic on a Sunday morning. Why have young Christians been left alone to navigate this crazy world of hooking-up, going-out, friends with benefits, just talking and all the other forms of dating that exist today?

What Does God Think About Dating?

For all Christians, scripture can help us overcome every issue, problem or moral dilemma. Scripture tells us that Jesus taught many things pertaining to daily life. Surely, He taught about dating, right?

Wrong.

Jesus *never* taught about dating. In

fact, if you look in any biblical concordance, the word "dating" isn't even mentioned. The closest thing you can find to dating is the word "betrothed," which is associated more with being engaged.

Why would God leave such a big part of your young life out of scripture? Everyone dates, right?

Wrong.

Nobody in scripture dated. Before Abraham married Sarah, he didn't say, "You know, I need to have a few more girlfriends before I settle down. Going out with a lot of people will help me understand what I like. It will help me mature." Nobody thought like that because dating didn't exist.

Early in the Bible, God laid out his plan for love and marriage. Those two subjects are extremely important to

Him: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24). In the beginning God defined the standard. By God’s definition, there is “single” and there is “married.” God didn’t mention *dating* anywhere in that verse.

But What Does That Mean?

Maybe this sounds like crazy talk, but the harsh reality is that God didn’t intend for young people to date around like so many do today. He didn’t intend for you to jump from relationship to relationship and exchange partners casually. This type of dating has become the norm in our society. Most of your friends are in relationships that probably won’t last longer than the semester. Maybe you’re in a similar relationship yourself. You know this isn’t someone you would ever marry or even date long-term. So why do you invest yourself in the relationship?

To be single is considered a bad thing today, especially for girls. When I talk to young Christians, many of them are angry or sad because they don’t have someone. This type of thinking is so destructive and can cause you to make regrettable, life-altering decisions. You might rush into a poor relationship because you are lonely. You might compromise your values or faith because you want a relationship to work or you’re tired of being alone.

Please realize that God’s plan is so much greater! God has so much more in store for your life. His standards and instructions for living are not the most popular and never will be, but they are the best. If you try to uphold God’s standards, He won’t let you down. It’s His promise.

So what *are* God’s standards? What does God expect from you? God’s definition of dating is very different from dating as we know it. *Christian dating* is dating with purpose.

Dating With Purpose

So what is *dating with purpose*? Before we jump into this, you need to understand a very foundational principle: Before you can *date* with purpose, you need to *live* with purpose.

As a Christian, you’ve already accepted that your purpose in life is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself” (Luke 10:27). And if you live by this truth, God has promised to guide your life and show you His will (John 10:29). The two go hand-in-hand. You live for God; God guides your life. When you truly understand this and put your faith in God’s ability to guide your life, everything makes sense.

God didn’t intend for young people to date around. He didn’t intend for you to exchange partners casually. But this has become the norm.

When you’re living with purpose, you understand that being single is part of God’s plan for your life. You don’t stay up late at night wondering what’s wrong with you—you’re single because it’s part of God’s plan. You use your singleness to God’s honor and glory. You use your freedom to serve God and serve others. The best preparation for serious dating is to have a very strong relationship with Christ.

When you’re focused on God’s purpose for your life, there is only one reason to start dating: to find someone you can marry and serve God with.

This is *dating with purpose*.

If you’re not ready to be married, you *shouldn’t even start dating*. Rushing into any relationship when you’re too young or not emotionally ready for marriage can lead to

problems. You’ll be tempted to have premarital sex or perform other sexual acts. You might not realize it, but when you leave one of these casual relationships, you leave behind a piece of yourself. When you find your mate, you want to give *all* of yourself to your spouse—not just pieces.

Put It to the Test

When you’re ready to start dating someone, you need to be able to answer yes to some very important questions:

1. Is this the type of person I see myself marrying?
2. Will I be able to serve God with this person for the rest of my life?

If you answer no to either of those questions, stop investing in the relationship. I know you may not be able to answer those questions on a first or second date, but if you come to a point in the relationship where you know this will not lead to marriage or to developing a spiritual life together, it’s time to move on.

When you start dating, be open about your intentions. Let the other person know that you’re looking to get married, and you want to serve God together. If the other person is receptive to this and your core values on faith align, go forward with God’s help. Nothing is more beautiful than sharing your spiritual life with a spouse. God wants you to pray together, serve others together and read His word together. It’s the way God intended it to be. Why would you settle for anything less?

My Personal Testimony

As a young person, I struggled with dating. Often times, I would find myself rushing into relationships with a person I knew I wouldn’t marry or who didn’t share my spiritual life. These casual relationships caused me so much frustration and really pushed me farther

away from God.

Finally, I got to a point in my life where I stopped focusing on dating and really threw myself into the Lord's work. After I graduated high school, I went on a YIA extended tour in San Diego with one of my best friends. I have so many memories from that trip. It really helped me build a solid spiritual foundation for the rest of my life. I left the YIA tour with a strong relationship with Christ. I was truly living a purpose-driven life.

When I arrived home, I decided to hang out with a friend from high school. I always had a small crush on her, and I knew she was a good person. Our first date was amazing. Everything just clicked. I knew that she was someone special. That night, I told her about my faith in God. I told her that the one true purpose for my life was to serve God and serve other people. I told her that I only wanted to spend my life with someone who could share these things with me. To my amazement, she responded in kind. She told me that she had always loved God and wanted to help other people. We both were so happy we had the same values and spiritual goals.

After a few dates, I knew this was something special. I started to pray and ask God if I should really continue with this relationship. I felt that I could truly answer yes to those important questions. I could see myself marrying her and sharing my spiritual life with her. After much prayer, God directed us to continue our relationship.

Eight years later, we are still together. We've been married for four years this month and are expecting our first child. With God's help, we overcame differences in religion to where we are today. We pray together, serve the homeless together, we read scripture together and we attend church together. My wife is truly a part of who I am. Our lives are deeply connected in ways I never thought possible. The love we have for each



Be Our Valentine! We would be ever so flattered if you'd like us on Facebook. Not only will you get our affection, but you'll also get thoughtful posts, videos and podcasts. It's how we say, "we love you." Visit our Facebook page or snap the code on your smartphone to get there.

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DO

Date with purpose

Date someone only if you're ready to get married and if you can share your spiritual life with him or her.

Pray about your decision to date

Ask God if this is really what He wants for your life, if this is the mate for you.

Use your singleness for God

It's God's plan that you have a time of singleness. Use it to serve and spend time with Him. Strengthen your relationship with God while you have the freedom.

Guard your heart

Your heart belongs to God first. Casual relationships distance you from God and can cause you a lot of needless heartache.

Wait upon the Lord

Prayerfully wait on God before getting serious with someone. Usually, we do the opposite. We jump in and evaluate things six months down the road.

DON'T

Date casually

If you're not ready for marriage, the only relationship you should worry about is your relationship with Christ.

Invest in a person you wouldn't marry

Don't give yourself to someone emotionally unless you see a long-term future.

Get your self-worth from a relationship

Your self-worth should come from your relationship with Christ—not a significant other.

Engage in sexual immorality

Sex before marriage is the norm today. Remember, you belong to God and you are *not* the norm.

Hide your faith

Let the person know up front about your faith and your purpose in life. Your third or fourth date should be attending church together. Set the precedent early.

other goes beyond description. Our love is deeper than feelings or emotions; it is built upon commitment, sacrifice and a common faith in Christ. She is my best friend and deepest confidant.

This type of marriage is what God intended for us to have. It wasn't easy, and it took a lot of prayer and patience, but in the end, it was worth it. Doing it God's way was best.