



Dating & Divorce



Few people realize it, but the relatively modern practice of dating is a key component of the epidemic of divorce. You might even say that dating is “practicing divorce”. It certainly is not a practice which increases a person’s purity, stability or even knowledge of the other person. It is not inherently altruistic, nor is it an expression of service or ministry. The recreational dating model is, at its best, an exercise in selfishness. And at its worst, it is defiling and predatory.

Proverbs 4:23 says:

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.
(KJV)

Or

Keep your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life. (The Amplified Bible)

It is not only important to keep our lives physically (sexually) pure, but also emotionally and spiritually pure. When virginity is lost it is lost on all three levels: physically, emotionally and spiritually. But even without the intimate act of sexual intercourse, people can lose their emotional and spiritual virginity and purity. When we give our hearts away in intimate emotional coupling, only to tear apart the relationship, our hearts become damaged. Our ability to respond according to the promises of covenant decreases as our reactions to past hurts and disappointments increase. With each dating experience, the longing for commitment increases, but without the covenantal framework of God’s blessing.



Likewise, spiritually, soul ties can be formed. Soul ties often take years to break. Longings built in the heart or mind do not easily dissolve with a new boyfriend or girlfriend. The level of intimacy experienced in dating creates a void which must be filled at the onset of the next dating experience. This often leads to the belief that these feelings represent deeper bonds of love and commitment. But this is false. It is an addictive behavior which requires more self-gratification to satiate the desires. There is indeed a deeper commitment, but this commitment is to self.

After multiple break-ups, the scar tissue thickens. Guardedness, suspicion, and fear become deeply seated issues. The heart, even the spirit - the deepest, innermost part of the being - will begin to protect itself with barriers and fear. By the time a covenant is made, connections and commitments may not be made at the deepest levels. The guardedness is no longer based on the protection of an innocent heart, but now rather the protection a repeatedly wounded heart.

Certainly not every dating experience turns out to be traumatic. And it is possible for two adults with healthy hearts to have a casual, recreational date and not become injured. But this is not our current cultural model. Children and teenagers begin dating during the most emotionally turbulent time of life. Recreational “fun” dates quickly become intimately personal experiences centered around intimate behavior. Passions are aroused and behaviors follow to sate the desires and passions.

Virginity

It was mentioned earlier that there are three levels of virginity: physical, emotional and spiritual. We typically understand the loss of physical virginity, so let us discuss emotional and spiritual virginity more closely. Emotional virginity or *purity* reflects that part of the heart which should be reserved for the covenant marriage relationship. This purity is lost when the person becomes involved in a lustful relationship (or imagination) and is unable to quench the fire of lust, finding himself or herself addicted to thoughts and behaviors designed to fulfill that lustful desire.

A note here about lust. Lust is not to be confused with temptation. Temptation is a thought, that while it may be difficult to shake or control, remains in the thought life until taken captive in obedience to the Lord. Lust, however, while it begins in the thought life (perhaps with a temptation) takes ground as an appetite. It is fed, and behaviors follow that reinforce the desires that are allowed to burn.



Spiritual purity, as it relates here to virginity, deals with that part of the heart that should be reserved for God and His role in the covenant of marriage. Without the benefits of God’s covenant, God’s role is given to some other ruler of the relationship. Selfishness, fear, even power might take the place God should hold in a covenantal relationship. This ultimately is defined as idolatry. Something else is now ruler and lord over the relationship. Or, the other person might be elevated into a place of worship - viewed as the source of love, nurture and fulfillment. This is the place that only God should possess.

Protecting Our Children

It is never too early to start training our children to deal with matters of the heart. Guiding our children into knowing their own hearts is an important part of parenting.

Note These Scriptures:

2 Cor. 3:14–18; Eph. 4:17-24; Heb. 4:12; 1 John 3:20&21; 1 Cor. 2:11;

We suggest two book on courtship: *Dating Vs. Courtship* by Paul Jehle, and *Christian Courtship vs. The Dating Game* by Jim West. We also recommend *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris.

Protecting Yourself

If you are a young adult, here are some tips. If you are in a believing home, submit your relationships to your parents. If your parents are not believers, this might be a opportune time to talk with them about the Lord Jesus and ask them to help you guard your purity and prepare for a successful marriage.

Set strong and exact barriers and be prepared to want to challenge your own boundaries. For example, no one of the opposite sex in your bedroom (immediate family members excluded). You will always find a “good” reason to want to cross your own set boundaries, but allow yourself to be held accountable. Changing your rules as you go makes the ground mushy and distorts sound thinking.



Ten Commonly Held Myths

1. I need someone to deal with my loneliness.
2. I need someone to share my affection.
3. Kissing and embracing are what the teenage years are all about.
4. It's cute to see 7 to 10 year olds acting like romantic couples.
5. I need to date because my parents (family) doesn't understand me.
6. Dating is not worldly, it is only natural.
7. Dating helps you find "the right one".
8. I can safely date; I know where to draw the line.
9. Group dating is not really dating, so it is alright.
10. If it was good enough for mom and dad, it's good enough for me.

The Three Kinds of Love

1. **Eros:** *erotic love.* Attention and affection based on self-pleasure and self-gratification.
2. **Phileo:** *friendship love.* Attention and affection based on common bonds and interests.
3. **Agape:** *selfless love.* Attention and affection based on God's heart for others.



Find Healing & Restoration

If you are an older, independent single or divorced, recognize the areas and relationships in which you have given your heart away. Go before the Lord and ask if there is a need for repentance. Ask forgiveness for allowing someone else to fill that place that belongs to God.

Ask God to break any soul ties related to previous relationships. The deeper the intimacy in those previous relationships, the stronger any soul ties will be. Allow God to reveal any residual effects from previous relationships and allow Him to deal with those heart issues. Remember that 1 John 1:9 is a two part verse. Forgiveness is the first part, cleansing is the second. The first part is instant, the second may take some time, and be uncomfortable as well.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

SUMMARY

The relatively modern practice of dating is really more a preparation for divorce than marriage. Recreational self-pursuits with consequent break-ups and new partners build a pattern of self-protection and self-interest. Very little about dating is based on real life and nothing about dating is grounded in scripture. God's way to prepare us for marriage is healthy and nurtures the future commitment for covenant.

AFFIRMATION

I choose today to renew my mind to God's Word and His heart concerning dating. I will be aware of the world's standards that have affected my thinking and practices. I choose to find Godly, biblical ways in which to bring up my own children and help those in the body of Christ. I understand that these issues are foundational and effect the life and testimony within both the Church and our culture. I therefore choose holiness.