

The book cover features a background of white roses. Overlaid on this are large, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of orange and red. The title is centered at the top in a dark, serif font.

DATING

A BIBLICAL
GUIDE

FAITH A. OYEDEPO

DATING: A BIBLICAL GUIDE

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Faith A. Oyedepo

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible, except otherwise stated.

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Introduction

Come now, and let us reason together...

Isaiah 1:18

No area of human existence is as volatile and capable of heartaches as premarital relationships. Many have been victims of promising dating relationships that have gone sour. The result is that the society, as well as church pews, are filled with people with broken hearts.

However, this is not the worrisome aspect of it. The real cause for concern is that, even Christian singles are not spared from being victims of this cycle of failed relationships.

It seems that everywhere you turn, you find single Christian men and ladies making the same mistakes and having similar experiences of pains, just like a host of others before them.

Fundamentally, our thinking pattern needs to be addressed. The continuous bombardment of people's minds, especially from the media, with ungodly relationship patterns with the opposite sex, subtly discourages discretion and virtue. Sadly, many youths are victims of their emotions rather than engaging in rational thinking and behaviours that will lead them to meaningful dating experiences.

It is, therefore, recommended that dating by Christians be, essentially, a relationship between a well-informed man and lady, for the purpose of choosing appropriate life partner.

The truth is: The prospect and thought of spending the rest of one's life with another person under the same roof, in all conditions and perpetually, could be scary and challenging; bearing in mind the unpredictability of human differences (Jeremiah 17:9). One's thoughts are clouded with many 'ifs': *What if the person turns out to be different from who I married originally? What if I get bored with him/her? What if he/ She changes physically and does not look as good as he/ she looks now? What becomes of my individuality, career, talents, dreams, etc.?* The list is endless! These are some of the legitimate concerns that single people grapple with, which make it imperative to address this matter of premarital relationship.

Of course, you cannot answer all the "what ifs" in life. However, the good news is that, there is an appropriate way to go about this all-

important subject! If God, our Creator and Inventor of relationships, is the God of order, then He must have a plan of how we should go about the business of choosing whom we will spend the rest of our lives with.

The truth is: Many people lack a proper understanding of what Christian dating is all about and how to approach it. This book seeks to enlighten you on what Christian dating entails, the process of getting to know the person you are dating, so as to establish a strong courtship that will lead to a successful marriage. There are things to watch out for and things that would foster success in the dating process.

This exciting book seeks to address these pertinent issues and more. You can expect to have them laid out straight for you, as we explore the Scripturally sensible ways to tackle this necessary phase that serves as a prelude to the wonderful world of marriage.

May you be enlightened as you read. Welcome on board!

Signed,
Faith

Chapter 1 - A Biblical Perspective

Be ye not unequally yoked...

2 Corinthians 6:14

Clearly, there are only two outcomes for dating relationships: marriage or a break up. The ultimate is knowing how to handle a relationship, in order to discern if the partner is worth marrying or otherwise.

By divine design, attraction between opposite sexes is biblical, normal, natural and beneficial. Also, it is often said that *opposites attract*; how true that is! This is why as we mature, we become 'aware' of the opposite sex and desire to get close in an exclusive manner.

However, the mere feeling of attraction and attachment for members of the opposite sex is not enough to build meaningful and lasting relationships. This is why most young people "fall" in and out of love at the drop of a hat. As soon as the excitement in one relationship wears off, a new one begins.

The truth is: It takes more than just a feeling or attraction to sustain a lifelong relationship marriage. This is where a good understanding of dating comes in.

First, let us examine what dating is.

What is dating?

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a date as an appointment, especially, an engagement to go out socially with a member of the opposite sex.

Another meaning suggests that dating consists of activities engaged in by two mature singles, with the aim of assessing each other's suitability as future partners.

While the term *dating* has several meanings, it usually refers to the act of meeting and engaging in some mutually agreed upon social activity in public as a potential couple.

The common idea is that, dating is two mature singles, exploring their compatibility, by going out together in public. Essentially, this kind is with the opposite sex, with the intention of getting better acquainted with that person.

Dating could also be described as the middle stage in the process of discovering a suitable mate. That is, dating comes between being friends and getting married. However, to the Christian, dating is more than a social activity as it is expected to actually lead to marriage.

What, then, is dating to the Christian?

The subject of dating can be a really touchy one, among Christians of all ages. As believers, it is important to clearly understand what the Bible teaches about relationships between men and women, and practise same.

For any Christian single, the ultimate goal of dating should be finding a suitable life partner. But first, you must do away with the world's view because God's way contradicts the world's (2 Peter 2:20). The Bible explains that, as Christians, you should not marry an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-15) because this will affect your relationship with Christ, while compromising your morals and standards.

Clearly, the Bible does not endorse the "recreational" or "shopping around" kind of dating that the world practises today. Such individuals have no interest in a long-term commitment, but date simply with "fleshly pleasure" in mind.

For any Christian single, the ultimate goal of dating should be finding a suitable life partner.

Conversely, many Christians are afraid to date, due to the fear of premarital sex. However, the problem is not with dating, but what you do while dating. As a result of the need to love and to feel loved, is understandable and expected of singles, including Christians, to desire dating. However, our relationship as Christians must be guided by God's Word that show us how to relate with one another.

If Christian singles are to date without the heartache experienced by many, then there must be an adequate understanding of what it takes to build meaningful and lasting relationship beyond mere physical attraction. This is because physical attraction usually wears off.

Dating, therefore, becomes a fact-finding process which two mature Christian singles of the opposite sex seek to know each other, so as to be able to make a quality decision concerning marriage. The entire process must be purposeful, well-defined and understood.

It is in the light of this that dating, in the context of this book, can be regarded as part of the process of finding an appropriate person, who you would spend the rest of your life with in marriage.

It is wrong for two people to pursue a relationship, when they are not eligible for marriage. The result is usually tragic. It is clear that the Bible only endorses relationships between young men and women that lead to long term commitment and eventually, marriage. Christian dating is founded on Scriptural principles and commandments that uphold righteousness, purity and truthfulness.

Unlike the roller coaster, breezy and always-changing phase of attraction, which many young people erroneously mistake for love, dating is meant to be between a mature man and woman, who are working towards a successful marriage.

Who should date?

Some of the questions often asked are: *At what age can one start dating? and Who qualifies for dating?*

It is advised that the dating relationship be engaged in by mature men and ladies who have set boundaries in place and understand how to relate respectfully with other people, especially the opposite sex. However, experience has shown that dating is engaged in by both the mature and immature.

Today, adolescents engage in romantic relationships because they have been taught unknowingly that it is normal at their age. The result is that dating, intimacy and friendship with the opposite sex are viewed as a normal part of life. Boyfriend and girlfriend relationships, more often than not, preoccupy young people's minds.

Sadly, many have not been properly schooled in handling this aspect of their lives in a godly way, to avoid adverse consequences like heartaches that result from jilts or unwanted pregnancies. Unfortunately, the situation is not different in the church; the body of Christ.

Also, on the other hand, some youths are extensively taught how to date the "godly" way, covering two important points: not being unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6: 14) and not engaging in premarital sex (Hebrews 13:4). Although these are awesome principles, unfortunately, they are not sufficient to tackle the dangers of teenage dating.

Understand this: Dating is not meant for young boys and girls, who are only interested in the company of the opposite sex, without a full understanding of what relationships are all about. Such youngsters should relate with the opposite sex in group settings first, to learn how to institute and respect set boundaries, before venturing into dating relationships that could lead to marriage.

According to the Scripture, Timothy, who had a good Christian upbringing, knowing the challenges of youth, strongly admonishes:

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:22

There is nothing wrong with friendship between a male and a female, as long as they treat each other with respect and observe purity. However, it is not right to demand for exclusive attention, until you are sure that you are genuinely interested in building a lasting relationship, with the proper boundaries instituted. Doing otherwise will result in taking undue advantage of each other. This can have devastating consequences, such as hurt feelings and heartaches from broken relationships for the parties involved.

God's Word emphasises on loving and honouring others as you love yourself (Romans 12:9-10), and this is certainly true for a dating relationship. Following this biblical principle is the best way to have a secure foundation for marriage.

Actually, to "marry" is to "be joined as one". It is one of the most important decisions you will ever make, because when two people marry, they cleave to one another and become one flesh, in a relationship which God intended to be permanent and unbreakable (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5).

The Bible teaches about how to deal with the opposite sex, with absolute purity.

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Also, the Bible admonishes us not to stir up or arouse love until the right time.

I charge you... that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Song of Solomon 2:7

This is because emotions and commitments, which every meaningful relationship requires, are to be reserved for your future spouse. When you play around with any of these, by offering them to others before its time, you are awakening a part of yourself that is not ready. When you do this repeatedly, your emotions become unstable; you find it difficult to be genuinely committed and consequently indulge in shallow relationships.

Each new relationship opens a window to your soul and allows the people to have a place in your heart and mind that will be difficult to erase. Ultimately, this robs your future spouse of the best of you.

Dating is, therefore, meant to be between a mature man and woman who have marriage in view in the not-too-distant future. They should have a clear understanding of where they are heading to in life, and should at least have prospects of getting there.

Young people, especially teenagers, that are in due course ready to obey God's Word in Genesis 2:24 (*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*) are encouraged to concentrate on building non-romantic relationships with fellow believers in groups for now. The aim should be to relate as brothers and sisters in Christ. Do not arouse romantic love until you are married.

So, if you don't have the intention of getting married yet, but all you want is a fling with the opposite sex, then, do not bother about dating at all. It is as serious as that!

The fear expressed by some youths is that they will be regarded as being weird, if they do not date. This is absolutely NOT so. The reality is that you can't have the attention of multiple dates and still be pursuing a God-honouring relationship with one. But you can start somewhere, slowly and casually, and trust God to lead you into more.

Dating without prospect of marriage is tantamount to playing with fire. Sadly, this is a common phenomenon in the world today. You see single persons going in and out of non-directional and aimless

relationships in the name of dating. Again, this is very dangerous as it results in hurts, which can make it difficult to trust anyone in the future. Apart from that, it makes it difficult to make a rational choice of a marriage partner after being hurt and desensitised by frequent broken relationships.

So, unlike what obtains in most circles today, dating is not something to be engaged in, simply because one wants to enjoy the company of the opposite sex. It is not about 'having fun' with someone for as long as it lasts. It is not supposed to be a time of going in and out of relationships like needle and thread moving stealthily in and out of a fabric. Also, dating is certainly not time to experiment and explore each other's bodies sexually.

Sensible and profitable dating is a process for information gathering and relationship building. It is, also, meant to be a public and social activity that helps prepare young men and women for marriage, by providing opportunities to develop certain skills necessary for a successful married life.

There is nothing wrong with friendship between a male and a female, as long as they treat each other with respect and observe purity.

Christian dating should be based on biblical principles and commandments that uphold righteousness, purity and truthfulness. As believers, the Word of God, not the world's wisdom, should be our standard in all issues, dating inclusive.

Who can I date? You may ask!

Morally, it should be noted that you are not expected to date just because you want a friend of the opposite sex or to fit in. That will amount to dishonesty and would be unfair to the person you are dating. Also, do not date out of pity or for physical benefits; rather, date for the right purpose.

Besides, for dating to be successful, who you can date must be properly defined. This is because not everyone qualifies as an appropriate candidate for you.

- **A Born-Again, Proven Believer**

As a Christian, the dating relationship is meant to be futuristic. This means that the future must be kept in view, as you should end up marrying tomorrow the person you date today!

Be wise enough to look from a distance, to determine if the person is truly a Christian and truly desiring to live for God. Why would you even think of developing a relationship with someone who does not have a heart for God?

As a woman, mother, counsellor and pastor, I can tell you several stories of people, who dated and eventually married unbelievers. Many of such have suffered greatly with unequally-yoked marriages. It is wisdom to keep your interest within the household of God.

Therefore, the first prerequisite is that whoever you date must be a born-again believer. The Scripture clearly instructs:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness! and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14

A born-again Christian is one who has repented of and forsaken his/her sins, turned to Jesus Christ for salvation, and as a result, has become part of God's family, forever (Galatians 3:29).

His/her born-again experience should be validated and known to others. There should be no consideration whatsoever for someone who is not born again. He/she must be a proven believer. No assumption!

- **A Person of Character in the Same Spiritual Kingdom**

The next thing to look out for is to date a person YOU believe is a suitable candidate for marriage. This eliminates 'trying out' syndrome.

A suitable person is one in the same spiritual Kingdom as you; one who possesses an attitude of upholding purity and honour in dating. This will require you to first establish that he/she is a person of character

There is a difference between dating by Christians and dating by those who do not live by the standards of the Word. While others focus on appearance and fleshly pleasures, as Christians, you should focus on building each other up, as you encourage each

The success of your dating relationship will determine your success in marriage.

other to obey God's commandments in every area of your lives including dating.

If your date is a committed Christian, it will reflect in his/her daily life. Such an individual will be eager to know more of God, enjoy going to Church, enjoy serving others, and generally be a faithful and diligent member of his/her local Church and community. Most importantly, he/she will be willing to address his/her faults and work them out with God by desiring to be more like Jesus.

Don't be deceived! A date with a person of ungodly character will surely end up in crisis. Character failure always leads to destiny failure! This demands that you do not jump straight into intimacy and romance; but promote wholeness, purity and genuine love. This is far beyond *sentimental gush*.

So that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of.

Philippians 1:10 (MSG)

How long should I date?

Don't be in a rush! This is because anything of worth that will last is never approached hastily; adequate preparation precedes greatness.

So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD, his God.

2 Chronicles 27:6

The success of your dating relationship will determine your success in marriage. As a beneficial forerunner in marriage, dating has the potential to set the pace for either a wholesome or a less than average married life.

Luke 14:28 says:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Since marriage does not involve only you, and it is meant to last for as long as you live, there is need for adequate preparation. The purpose of dating is to find out if both of you have enough in common, to be able to spend the rest of your lives together successfully as husband and wife.

Dating, if approached appropriately, affords you the opportunity to truly know your partner. This knowledge is indispensable to loving,

accepting and adjusting to that partner. So, before you say, "I DO" to anyone, take your time to really get to know who they are, not their public images or personalities, but who they really are. Find out about their background, upbringing, faith, outlook on life, ideas about marriage and family, etc.; all of which will have contributed to making them who they are right now.

A successful relationship is one where both partners understand, care, respect, appreciate and love each other. In other words, there is a kind of satisfaction in your relationship. However, if you are unhappy most of the time in your relationship, it's better to give serious consideration to it before it is too late.

Remember: Christian dating is not saying "yes" to every invitation or trying out everyone available, keeping them on hold for as long as you wish, and finally saying "no" when you have made up your mind.

Clearly, it requires time, counsel, making decision, prayers, discipline, and upholding your Christian testimony in every way. So, be patient; you'll be glad you did.

Biblical dating implies that you are secure in God first, before you can handle a *dating relationship*.

This is because dating someone who doesn't have a personal relationship with Christ, is playing with *fire*.

Beware!

Chapter 2 - Why Date?

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

Hosea 4:6

Like every other thing in life, dating has its purpose. If you are not eligible to marry, or there is no possibility of marriage with another person, then don't date! Dating with no intention or possibility of marriage is like a child playing with matches; inevitably, the outcome will be fire!

Marriage can be likened to a marathon race, not a 100 metres dash! Don't be naive; don't take a leap in the dark. It is a worthwhile venture to be able to say on your wedding day that you are marrying a friend and not someone you barely know. With this, you would have realised that adequate preparation for such a task is non-negotiable.

Dating is a serious business and as such, should be viewed as a significant venture that will affect you and the person you choose to date. The truth is that every relationship has its effect on us, whether long or short-term. Therefore, the decision on who to date or not to date must be taken seriously.

If you are not eligible to marry, or there is no possibility of marriage with another person, then don't date!

As a Christian single, you cannot afford to do it the way others do. God's Word and precept must be your guiding rule in whatever you engage yourself in.

Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Psalm 119:133-136

Therefore, having a good understanding of the purpose of dating will help you approach it sensibly and avoid the pitfalls, as you prepare for a life of marital fulfilment.

Please understand: Marriage is an unconditional, lifelong commitment that involves selflessness! Marriage on its own does not guarantee happiness and joy, neither does it single-handedly terminate loneliness and sadness: Are you surprised? Well, that's the truth! So, if your

motive and intention are to date so that someone can make you happy, you will be setting yourself up for a disappointment. The right motive is to get married with the intention of being a help and a blessing to your partner.

The purpose of dating includes, but is not limited, to the following:

- **To cultivate friendship**

The primary purpose of dating is to cultivate friendship based on honest communication and mutual acceptance of each other, which will form the platform for a successful marriage.

- **To know each other better**

Dating also makes available the time to know each other better. It is the time to find out, as much as you can, about the person you intend to spend the rest of your life with, whether he/she will make a good spouse or not.

You need to be as open as you can, so that the other person can get to know you. Don't pretend to be who you are not and don't stifle your feelings about issues in a bid to impress the other person. This tactic can work for only a short period of time; at the end of the day, it will backfire.

- **To know if both of you can get along**

Another purpose of dating is to discover if both of you are heading in the same direction in life. The Bible says:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed!

Amos 3:3

During the dating period, you should determine whether the person is someone you can play a complementary role in his/her life, as your dreams will be virtually intertwined. This information will help you to pull in the same direction, rather than going different ways. Your visions and goals for life should be complementary to the extent that you will cooperate with God to bring out the best in each other.

There is nothing as frustrating as being married to someone whose life and goals have no bearing with yours, either because you are not relevant, needed or valued.

God made Eve as a helpmeet to Adam by endowing her with virtues and abilities that will make her effective; and His intention for marriage has not changed since then. No matter your different talents, abilities and gifts, God's ultimate plan is for them to work together in harmony, to achieve His grand purpose for bringing both of you together in the first place.

- **To prove each other's sincerity**

Dating helps to determine and establish the sincerity of the other person. God must be sincerely honoured in every detail. You can only vouch for yourself as you know your own intentions and desires towards the person, but you must be able to prove that the other person is equally as committed to you and the relationship and not just wasting your time.

The process of dating helps you to determine all that early enough, in order to decide whether to put an end to the relationship or not.

The truth is: Though most first attraction is in the "looks", the one that will eventually last a lifetime is in the "heart".

The Scripture says:

But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NASB)

Why Some Dating Relationships Fail

Failure in dating relationships is traceable to many reasons. For instance, if dating relationship is influenced by movie examples, Internet connections peer pressures, timely financial assistance, or built on the platform of lies, pretence, deceit, assumption, etc. it will definitely fail.

A lot of dating relationships fail to end up in marriage for one of the above reasons or the other. The most common is operating in **assumption**.

By assumption, I mean engaging in dating without being fully aware of the benefits and dangers of same. This, in most cases, is as a result of failing to deliberately seek for appropriate knowledge that will help you make a success of dating. Rather, your dating attitude is based on what you have acquired from television, discussion with friends that are ignorant or reading books that do not give proper enlightenment on the subject matter.

Dating in itself does not guarantee friendship; rather, the skilful approach of the parties to building friendship is what does.

Mature people do not act on assumption, but deliberately go after and acquire knowledge. My husband, Dr. David Oyedepo, has said, "Assumption is the mother of frustration." You will not end your journey in frustration!

Ignorance is another reason why dating fails.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

Hosea 4:6

They are ignorant of the purpose of dating and how to make the dating experience a successful one.

Dating also fails due to **wrong information**. Many people have embraced the world's idea of self-centred relationships, which has resulted in being consumed by their needs, rather than being selfless.

Also, dating can fail when the parties are **not prepared to work** on building a meaningful relationship. This could be a question of wrong timing; some are either too young to date or not just ready for dating.

Misconceptions About Dating

It has been discovered that one of the main causes of problems after marriage is the lack of knowledge or inaccurate knowledge in finding a spouse. Many young people often have erroneous assumptions that result in unreasonable expectations, which they eventually carry along into their marriages.

Clearly, a successful dating process will lead to a successful marriage, provided accurate information is obtained and applied. The Scripture says:

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

Proverbs 24:3-5

Of course, right knowledge is the cure for wrong information, and misconceptions are the products of wrong information. Right knowledge, when rightly utilised, removes you from the realm of ignorance and brings about a revolution in your life. Not just any kind of knowledge will suffice, but the right kind of knowledge.

Now let's examine some of these misconceptions on dating:

- **Dating automatically guarantees friendship:**

Dating in itself does not guarantee friendship; rather, the skilful approach of the parties to building friendship is what does. Friendship does not happen overnight; it takes time to grow and mature. This is why before you start dating, it is important you learn how to build friendship.

A man who has friends must himself be friendly...

Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV)

Friendship is not a gift, but the result of hard work.

- **In a dating relationship, intimacy can only be built by sex:**

Most people associate intimacy with having sex; nothing can be farther from the truth! As a matter of fact, intimacy is much deeper than that. People who believe that sex brings about intimacy in dating usually end up with shallow relationships and in regrets.

Unfortunately, some Christians also have this idea about intimacy. If Christian marriage involves the union of spirit, soul and body, then spirit and soul compatibility must start from dating.

Myles Munroe said in his book about dating, "Intimacy is not an act but a state of existence in which both partners in a relationship trust the other with their innermost thoughts, dreams, desires and emotions. "

The ultimate of serious dating is to develop true intimacy, which connotes oneness in spirit and soul, before getting involved in physical oneness after marriage.

- **In a dating relationship, we can relate with each other as though we are married:**

Clearly, dating is not the same as being married; rather, it is to help decide if a person can be an appropriate choice of a life partner. Dating, therefore, is to **set the stage** for marriage.

Some people erroneously conduct themselves as if they are married, because they see the *dating relationship* as a *marriage relationship*. This is definitely not so. Until you understand that dating and marriage are not

Before you get involved in dating, both the timing and the person must be right, and dating must be for the right reasons.

the same, you may be tempted to practise "marriage" in a dating relationship. By so doing, you treat each other as husband and wife, while you are actually not.

Dating is not marriage; therefore, do not relate with each other as husband and wife.

- **Dating is a way of having fun and hanging out with someone:**

For a Christian, dating is not to be seen as a casual or romantic relationship, entered into to meet your needs, rather, it is a relationship to be engaged in for the purpose of identifying a lifelong mate and building true friendship.

If you open up to someone who is not responsible enough to handle your feelings with respect, the danger is that you could get hurt as a result of emotional involvement.

When you are emotionally involved in a relationship, you tend to unveil yourself. This is done by sharing your innermost feelings. Jesus said: *... I will love him, and will manifest (reveal) myself to him* (John 14:21). This is why you must always give whoever you are about to date, serious thought and prayer. Before you get involved in dating, both the timing and the person must be right, and dating must be for the right reasons.

The Scripture says:

... Those who are wise will find a time and a way to do what is right.

Ecclesiastes 8:5 (NLT)

Never let it cross your mind that dating is the answer to *loneliness*, low self-esteem, depression and insecurity. It is primarily for the purpose of *establishing* a godly relationship that leads to the *wonderful* world of *marriage*.

Chapter 3 - The Healthy Process Of Dating

Desire without knowledge is not good...

Proverbs 19:2 (AMP)

The development of human life runs in a process that cannot be short-circuited. With a gestation period of nine months, a normal child is produced. Anything short of nine months will be a miscarriage or at best a premature baby; this may bring about anxiety and specialised handling of the baby, if it must survive.

In the same vein, dating must be handled the right way, by following a healthy process, which is essential to the successful realisation of its purpose. Anything short of this can result in heartaches, which could have been avoided had the healthy process been adhered to.

In these days of on-line match-making and undisclosed emailing back and forth between two individuals of the opposite sex, it's rather easy to develop a correspondence relationship with someone before you meet them in person. This, of course, is dangerous to say the least, and is not a healthy process for dating, no matter how real the connection may turn out to be.

Don't be desperate just because you have been waiting. Trust God, pray and ask Him to guide you in the right direction.

Do not permit feelings of depression and loneliness. Don't be desperate; it will impair the effectiveness of your evaluation. Don't get yourself into that desperate mode of thinking that you must have someone now. Depending on someone else for happiness is a quick way get to stuck in an unhealthy relationship. It is important for you to find happiness within yourself and then allow someone else share that happiness with you.

The foundation of success in a dating relationship is in the strength of character of the parties involved in it.

So, be guided by God's love, which manifests itself in self-control. Also, spend quality time with God daily; draw strength from Him so as to be able to resist and overcome temptations.

Dating is either an information-gathering process or a relationship-building process. The foundation of success in a dating relationship is in the strength of character of the parties involved in it. This means that if the parties are of strong characters, their relationship will be strong but if they are of weak characters, the relationship will be shallow and weak.

You should depend on the Word of God to guide you and at the same time, look to the wisdom of your elders in this critical time of your life.

People of good character relate with integrity, grace and respect for each other and this gives depth to the whole process of dating. It is, therefore, important that you first of all develop an understanding of how to relate with people, particularly of the opposite sex, without any romantic inclinations.

When you are ready to date, learn and follow the appropriate process. The process is made up of phases, and each phase has its own set of rules that guide you on what to do, within the appropriate time frame. Each level of relationship also carries certain responsibilities. It is in the adherence to the demands of the rules that the utmost benefits are realised.

Let me tell you this secret: The best way to meet a great person is to be confident and be content in being single. This is when you will find someone who desires to join you on the journey of life in marriage. Once you meet that special person, he/she will appreciate you for the confident, successful, creative and spontaneous person that you are. This is exactly my story!

For a safe and fruitful experience, dating should follow a growing process of acquaintanceship, friendship, close friendship, courtship, engagement and wedding. Now, let us examine each phase briefly.

Acquaintanceship

This is the first level of contact with people, and it is characterised by everyday casual chance-meetings with no strings attached. The meeting point can be at work, in church, at school, in the neighbourhood, or at an event, to mention but a few.

However, don't participate in activities primarily to find dates. It does not work that way! This occasional contact results in having a basic and

general knowledge of each other. Interaction at this point involves talking about general topics that are considered safe to talk about, without the feeling of prying into someone else's affairs. There is nothing intimate at this level.

The acquaintance level is to be viewed as a divine appointment. This is because, as believers, there is nothing coincidental about our lives. God places people along our paths for divine purposes. The Bible says in Psalm 139:16 (NIV):

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Think about this: Often, the wrong person shows up just before the right one. So, don't be in a rush! The Dos and Don'ts of this phase include, but are not limited, to the following:

Dos:

- Be friendly.
- Be kind and helpful.
- Be courteous yet, discreet.
- Be yourself; no pretence or hypocrisy.

Don'ts:

- Never draw unnecessary attention to yourself.
- Never expect or ask for exclusive attention.
- Never drop romantic hints (this could mean flirting).
- Never get too familiar.

The truth is: This stage cannot be jumped, as it is the primary stage where you establish the spiritual Kingdom to which he/she belongs. There is no need going ahead to the next phase, if he/she does not belong to the same spiritual Kingdom as you; light has no basis of relating with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

The time frame of the acquaintance stage depends on the maturity of the individuals concerned and their emotional state. Mature and emotional people will naturally move faster to the next phase, as they tend to be decisive in taking actions, when they perceive they have found what they are looking for.

Friendship

As the name suggests, this is the phase where you become a friend to someone that you desire to get better acquainted with. A true friend

will behave in a kind and pleasant way and exhibit a positive attitude. Friendship can either be casual or close. However, one characteristic of this phase is that, the relationship is based on common interests and activities. Friends meet more frequently than acquaintances; therefore, meetings at this stage are not as far apart as the preceding phase.

The parties are at liberty to talk freely and ask specific questions, without being seen as prying or being forward. It is also normal to divulge a little more information about oneself that will be appropriate to share. These include telephone numbers, residential or business addresses, information about family background, likes and dislikes, goals and dreams, to mention but a few.

However, do not give too many details about yourself, family asset, etc. Gifts and cards should be as simple as possible. Do not give copies of car keys, house keys, account numbers, passwords, etc. There should be no room for pressurising the other person, to take the relationship beyond the level that they deem comfortable. Treat each other like brother and sister. Be careful not to do anything that you will regret, if the relationship does not progress beyond this point.

Courtship does not begin until you both are fully convinced and have agreed to get married to each other.

At the casual friendship phase, there is more involvement than at the acquaintance stage, but the attraction is towards common interests than towards each other. This means you both focus on things and not on each other, as romance is not permitted at this stage. The friendship is to be nourished by the pleasure of shared interests, as you discover the things you have in common that draw you closer to each other. Be sensitive enough to know the focus of your date's heart, and guard the focus of your heart too. Keep your own heart focused on the Lord Jesus Christ!

What are the Dos and Don'ts of this phase? They include, but are not limited to, the following:

Dos:

- Take genuine interest in the other person.
- Find ways of being of help or source of inspiration to him/her.
- Endeavour to be real and open.

- Involve other friends and family in your circle of friendship, casually.
- Seek your parent's input.
- Inquire about him/her from people who know and relate well with him/her, and are trustworthy (beware of people with malicious intentions).
- Study your friend prayerfully.
- Get involved in each other's interests and hobbies with a view to seeing him/her in his/her elements and catching the flow of his/her passion.
- Watch from a distance. Look for proven godly character. Many people can put up a "good show".
- Let things take their natural course.

Don'ts:

- Never "let go" of your heart exclusively at this stage.
- Never indulge in suggestive physical intimacy of any kind.
- Never spend too much time alone.
- Never talk in terms of "we" or mention marriage at this stage.
- Never ask for or feel obliged to meet financial needs (You are not the 'great provider!').
- Never make promises you don't intend to keep.

The period of friendship is not the time for emotional attachment; rather, the time to spend building up inner strength. Give each other space, so as to back out of the relationship at any time there is a need to do so.

I encourage you not to keep your parents in the dark of the happenings at this stage. Learn to listen to your parents, because they have been down the dating road and see farther than you do.

You must continually seek the approval of God in taking steps. The Bible clearly states:

Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psalm 37:5

It is important to check your motive. Do you have genuine affection for the person or are you out to prove a point, meet selfish needs, or on an ego trip? Make sure you are not trying to get back at someone who

jilted you, be seen to be "in" or "happening" or just wanting female/male company that you can practise your fantasies with!

The time frame of this phase can range from a few days to months. This, again, is a function the emotional and spiritual maturity of the parties involved.

Close Friendship

Having pursued a casual friendship successfully for a while, and after being convinced that you want to take things to a higher level, you can begin to develop a close friendship relationship, though not intimate. At this stage, the intention for marriage can be discussed as it will be clear to you and to others that something exclusive is taking place between both of you.

The following are the Dos and Don'ts of this phase.

Dos:

- Ensure that you are genuinely interested in pursuing a lasting relationship with the person.
- Ensure you are at peace in your spirit, as the Holy Spirit bears you witness (Romans 8:16).
- Ensure that the interest is mutual (not one-sided or enforced).
- Ensure that you are open about yourself as your expectations from the relationship.
- Discuss your personal convictions about the future of the relationship.
- Make sure you are not in a similar type of relationship with another person at this stage.
- Show true care and concern for the well-being of that person.

Don'ts:

- Never neglect your other crucial relationships with your family, colleagues, church members, etc.
- Never allow your other interests to suffer because of this relationship e.g. studies, work, service in church, household chores, etc.
- Never keep the relationship a secret.
- Never make assumptions or assume interests.

- Never enter into a blood covenant or swear an oath with each other.
- Never engage in any sexual activity or anything that can lead to it (save that until after marriage).

The time frame of this phase before moving to the next one depends on how sincere both of you are with each other, and your personal persuasion of the future of the relationship as assured by the Lord.

The truth is: It is wisdom to "go steady" in a dating process. "Going steady" in a dating process is when both parties become formally committed to each other. Clearly, a successfully handled dating process will bear great success in your future marriage.

Courtship

At the close friendship stage, one thing that must be established by both parties is the conviction that they are both interested and ready to pursue relationship that will ultimately lead to marriage. When this is established, the courtship period can commence as courtship is essentially proving if they are appropriate for each other.

The courtship stage is the period between when two people of the opposite sex agree to get married and when they actually get married. Courtship does not begin until you both are fully convinced and have agreed to get married to each other. It is the foundation-laying period of your marriage, and you must be careful about how you lay that foundation, because the benefits of a solid foundation are innumerable.

Even in the physical, the foundation of a building is laid because it ultimately determines the strength and longevity of the building. The Bible says:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it!

Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.

Luke 14:28-29

That is exactly how crucial your courtship period is. If handled well, courtship provides an unshakable framework upon which to build a marriage that will last. Courtship period is a time for preparation and

planning for a good home. Remember, if you fail to plan, then you are planning to fail.

There are no laid down rules for the length of your courtship. The whole essence is for it to be reasonably long enough, to get to know each other adequately before you say, "Yes! I do". This is because getting married to a stranger can be disastrous. However, your relationship should not remain at the courtship level forever.

Please note: If at any point in the above stages, you realise that the relationship is Scripturally out of place, wisdom demands that you call it quit. A broken courtship is better than a broken marriage.

Engagement or Traditional Wedding

Now, this phase of the process may be absent in some cultures, but in most African cultures, it is very important and the requirements also vary. Having obtained parental consent, the engagement ceremony follows.

Engagement is a formal or public introduction of each other to parents, relations and friends. In Ruth 4:1-12, Boaz publicly declared his intentions to marry Ruth before his relatives and elders of Israel.

It also involves the payment of "bride price" to the bride's family. Genesis 24:1-67, categorically, describe the payment of "bride price" as an integral part of marriage ceremonies. This explains why during counselling sessions in Church for intending couples written approval from the parents of both the bride and groom-to-be should be demanded.

The engagement or traditional wedding must necessarily precede the holy wedlock in the Church. If "bride price" is not paid, it is contrary to the Scripture. It is important to note however, that only things which are 'precious' and 'glorifying' to God should be given as "bride price".

The Bible says:

And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

Genesis 24:53

Please understand: Engagement or traditional wedding does not replace church wedding, but it is necessary in order to fulfil all

righteousness (Matthew 3:15; Mark 12:16-17). It is a period when you publicly give honour to your parents.

Registry formalities should also precede church wedding. This is done in order to fulfil all righteousness, too, as the Bible enjoins us to be subject to the laws of our land (Romans 13:1-7). The laws of our land require that we register our marriages with the appropriate government agency, in order to have it **legalised**.

You may be wondering, "Does this phase also have Dos and Don'ts?" Yes! It does. Let's briefly explore them.

Dos:

- Honour God in every step you take in the relationship (Hebrews 13:4).
- Uphold your Christian testimony. Give only things that are in line with your Christian beliefs.
- Refuse any form of compromise that might jeopardise the presence of God in your marriage, constitute a sin and open you up to the devices of the enemy.
- Uphold moral purity.
- Separate yourself from all works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11-12).

Don'ts:

- Never move in with your partner to start living with each other, until a representative of God, in the presence of family and other witnesses, has blessed your union.
- Never defile the marriage bed through sexual activity or anything that can lead to it (Hebrews 13:4).

Marriage

Since dating is part of the process of finding an appropriate person that you would spend the rest of your life with in marriage, it is safe to say that marriage is the last phase of the entire process. However, marriage is a new beginning, not an end in itself.

The success of a marriage is dependent on the success of the various stages prior to it. It should not be "stumbled" into unadvisedly! You must enter marriage with the correct motive, which is that of being a help and

a source of inspiration to your spouse: not just looking to terminate your loneliness and misery.

You must be ready to place the interest and well-being of your future spouse above your own. After all, God instituted marriage primarily to create help for Adam in the pursuit of his assignment, a help that is meet (suitable) for him (Genesis 2:18-22).

Endeavour to be a mature, good, and correct single, before you get into marriage. So, seek to develop yourself. Spiritually, be God-fearing; be involved in Kingdom service and be a doer of God's Word. Mentally be willing to learn more at every opportunity. If need be, go to school, take advanced or professional courses.

Physically, keep fit; watch your appearance and what you eat.

As stated earlier, marriage can be likened to a marathon race and not a brief 100 metres dash. Therefore, you need endurance, which you begin to gather prior to marriage.

A successful Christian dating will earn you trust, honour and respect from your spouse in future. If you gather the wisdom put forth here and follow it, the result will be a good, controlled flame that won't burn anybody. I guarantee you!

Set *intentions* instead of having *expectations*; in the process, you will find your dating relationship *flowing accordingly*. Note that finding the right person requires *time* effort and a *genuine intent* in the other person.

Chapter 4 - But, How Do I Know?

*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man...
...because they are spiritually discerned.*

1 Corinthians 2:11, 14 (NIV)

...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit...

1 Corinthians 2:10 (NIV)

God wants the best for us in every area of our lives, including relationships. You can have the future God planned for you, if you choose to go after it. However, the question that many people in dating relationship ask is: "How do I know whether I have made the right decision or not?" Briefly, let's examine few ways to tackle this issue:

- **Do you feel peace in your heart?**

This is the very first and foremost area to take cognisance of. Peace is the acid test of a true and right relationship. Psalm 23:1-2 says:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

God always leads beside still waters —peace! So, how peaceful do you feel when you think about marrying that person you are presently dating? If you do not feel peace in your heart about it, God is not in it — it is that serious!

Peace in a relationship is important; it is equally important to set peace of mind as your highest goal, in all spheres of life and organise your life around it. I charge you, therefore, to be sincere with yourself about whether or not you are dating or chasing someone. This is because you are wonderfully and fearfully made and worthy of a relationship that you do not have to chase after.

You deserve peace in your relationship, and be with someone who shares your standards. Don't make excuses for the other person because you want to keep that relationship going at all cost; even when you not in agreement. Even if you have to give an excuse to yourself about your

partner, think sensibly about the direction you are heading for. This is very crucial! (Philippians 4:6-7)

- **Is your spiritual life enhanced or under attack?**

To effectively answer this question, you must be able to clearly differentiate between spirituality and religion, and how it affects your relationship (2 Corinthians 6:14). Your spiritual life should include your spiritual practices and the path they take you through, to get closer to God. This will help you to experience spiritual growth and eventually reach spiritual maturity. I strongly believe that the essence of a devout relationship is to build deep spiritual connection.

Remember this:

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and PEACE.

Romans 8:6

Unfortunately, many single persons are just anxious about finding companions or playmates. This implies that you consider if the amount of time, energy and emotion you spend on your relationship is actually worth the input. Of course, such focus and attention would only be justifiable if it is obviously enhancing your spiritual life, and not putting it under attack. Seek to prioritise building a foundation of spiritual intimacy with your partner, which can only be attained when there is a solid level of spiritual compatibility, in order to uphold the kind of marriage you truly desire (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

- **Have both of you discovered your purpose and are going in the same direction?**

It is good to assess your level and situation per time. You are the principal factor in every relationship. That is why a good understanding of yourself and your purpose will help you to succeed in that relationship. But, then, have you figured it out yet or are you still searching? Discovering your purpose is the road map to living your life.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Jeremiah 1:5

If you don't embrace this truth, you can spend your entire life striving to conform and comparing yourself to others, which is very dangerous.

Once you have discovered your purpose, you can start equipping yourself for it, and then pursuing it. Most likely, you will meet your spouse whilst you are out fulfilling your purpose. Your partner, too, will be there fulfilling his/her purpose, which is similar to yours.

To discover your purpose, you need to go directly to God through a prayer of enquiry (Habakkuk 2:1-3). Having settled this individually, it is crucial for you and your partner to discuss and understand if you are heading in the same direction or contrariwise. A purposeful relationship is dependent on the belief that you are both sailing on the same boat and thus, will arrive at the same destination. The earlier you sort this out, the better for both of you, before it is too late. Not sorting this out on time is the reason for so many failed marriages (Amos 3:3).

- **Are you fighting and making up?**

Fights have a habit of becoming a usual practice. Don't be fooled by the unscriptural belief which insinuates that "fighting" and "making up" make the relationship stronger. If you are fighting and making up repeatedly, it is not an indication that the two of you are getting along well. Although, generally, people like to be understood; they want you to make an effort to understand why they do things the way they do them, their various temperaments, backgrounds, etc. But, the process of doing so shouldn't lead to fighting (James 1:19).

God intended sexual relations between husband and wife in the sanctity of marriage!

God's intention for marriage, which is the target of your relationship, is not to be a battlefield of wills. The practice of fighting and making up will definitely continue when you are married, if it keeps occurring in your relationship and nothing positive is done about it. Besides, it is not in line with any biblical marriage principle. Continuous fighting is synonymous

with physical abuse. Therefore, run from any form of physical abuse before you blame yourself thereafter.

- **Do you feel sex-pressured?**

As Christian singles, you are called to a higher standard of living (Ephesians 4:1-16). Whether young or old, there should be no negotiation in your flesh to remain pure and holy while dating. Refuse the urge to have sex in order to match up/fit into discussions with your school mates, colleagues at work, neighbours at home, etc. I resent using the word friends because you shouldn't have such people as friends, in the first instance.

Only when sex is practised within the right can it be beautiful and fulfilling. Outside that, it hurts and has very devastating consequences. Don't be fooled by the subtle and sometimes blatant depictions especially by the media and movie industry, of illicit sexual activities as being desirable and gratifying. Doubtless, there is a whole lot more they do not show you — the emptiness, guilt and emotional turmoil that sexually promiscuous people mask with drugs, fine clothes, alcohol, charming personalities, etc.

The only one to listen to about our sexuality is the one Who thought it wise to give it to us in the first place - God Almighty Himself. Any dating relationship that keeps you sex-pressured requires serious consideration!

Premarital sex shouldn't be a controversy in your dating relationship, if your desire is to enjoy a Christian marriage and honour God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God intended sexual relations between husband and wife in the sanctity of marriage!

Only when sex is practised within the right can it be beautiful and fulfilling.

The good news is that help is made available to you through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and victory of Jesus, Who has overcome the world! If your goal, therefore, is to base your relationship on godly principles, then don't feel pressured to engage in the act of sex, prematurely. Why? This is because, among other things, it robs you of the blessedness and honour of marriage (Hebrews 13:4).

- **Are you honouring God in/with your relationship?**

This is dependent on if you have given your life to Christ, whereby God becomes your Father. There is no way you can walk with God without being in agreement with Him on every other issue of life. Redemption is key to honouring God every step of the way. The truth is: It is very impossible to honour God in/with your relationship without a focus on the first commandment (***Thou shalt hate no other gods before me*** - Exodus 20:3). Have you made a god of your partner in that relationship? It is pertinent to make Jesus Christ and His love for the Church your ultimate focus (Ephesians 5:31-33, Revelation 21:1-6).

Before you even leave home to meet your date, learn to spend time on your knees, asking God to help you honour Him and your date. You can never go wrong with prayer. This will also put you in the proper mindset for your time together.

Unfortunately, so many singles date for identity, sex compatibility, money, fame, etc. Thus, by a relationship of discovery, I mean you should aim at discovering who the other person is and, especially, with regard to his/her heartbeat for God. The clearer you recognise how your activities fit into salvation, the better chance you have of making wise decisions in your relationship.

You should honour God in your relationship, honour your body and honour the one you are dating.

- **Is it really love?**

Primarily, it is the love of God that makes it possible for you to relate successfully with all categories of people.

That love is made possible by the help of the Holy Spirit.

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:5-6

However, the Bible defines real love as being patient, kind, never envious or boastful (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Therefore, in your relationship, it is fundamental to ask yourselves questions like: Is this relationship characterised by humility? Are we rude to each other? Do we seek the good and progress of each other? Are we

kind to each other? Are we self-seeking? Do we get angry easily with each other? Do we keep record of wrongs? Are we truthful with each other? Do we protect each other? Do we trust each other?

Your answers to these questions will determine if you are on track with God's perfect purpose for your marital destiny. If otherwise, you need to discuss with your partner and your counsellor on the way forward.

Remember: A real relationship is one where you love that person enough to be honest. That is, being honest about who you are, what you plan to do and be, how you feel about them, and what they do and say.

- **Do you ever secretly wish there is a better alternative?**

Occasionally, your partner may exhibit some attitudes; that may have made you secretly wish for a better alternative. I believe this must have been as a result of being overwhelmed, depressed and unable to chart the way forward. Well, it's not too much to think in this direction.

However, you must note that man, in his natural state, is incomplete in so many ways, and evidently needs help (Genesis 2:18; John 8:32). Perhaps, that's the reason your paths crossed; to help each other overcome your shortcomings. So, be patient! However, this is not to say you should continue in an abusive relationship; be wise to come out of such as quick as possible. Also, you may like to talk to him/her on the subject matter, and thereafter, speak with a Christian marriage counsellor to guide you on the right step to take.

- **Have you set boundaries for yourselves well in advance?**

Clearly, what makes Christian dating different from the world's is in **who, what, when and how you date**. These are all about setting limits, which are obligatory, if your aim is to maintain a healthy balance in your relationship. Your limits, therefore, must answer the following questions:

- **Where:** This refers to places and locations, where you and your partner must be or never be found.
- **What:** This refers to your determination, as an individual, towards things you should or should never do with your partner, even before you begin the relationship.

- **When:** This talks about timing. Settle in your heart what periods of the day are off limits for you to be accompanied with a date under any circumstance, with or without supervision.
- **How:** This refers to a strategic style of approach you may want to approve of with your date.

Setting these margins in advance is highly significant, because where there are no principles, anything is free to happen. Also, with these limits in place, no one will be able to order you and dictate your conducts while dating, let alone compel you against your wish in your relationship, because you are already in control.

This further drives us to examine some logical guiding principles to an effective dating relationship. They are, but not limited to, the following:

First, you need to guard your heart

The Scripture warns you to be careful about giving your affections, because your heart influences everything in your life.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 4:23

In the contemporary life, the word "heart" is primarily used to speak of emotions, but biblically, the heart is who you are inside; which consists of your emotions, intellect, desires, and wills. Those words you speak (Matthew 12:34) and the choices you make, *flow out* of your heart (Proverbs 23:7). Therefore, guarding your hearts in this context implies paying careful attention to your thoughts, emotions, desires and choices. Do not allow peer pressure to force you into dating situations that are not appropriate.

Learn to put God first in your life

It is no doubt that the demands and distractions of life clamour for our attentions and devotions. But, be careful not to let them become more important or more of a priority than your relationship with God. Note that you do not judge by outward appearances, but prayerfully seek a Word-filled, competent, faithful and successfully married Christian, to confide in,

on any issue in your relationship. Your primary purpose in life is to seek and serve God, and fulfil your destiny in Him.

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

This is equally true in the area of relationships.

In adequate preparation for a Christian marriage, you need to find out God's plans for relationships, and then follow it to the letter. You get to know these by constantly meditating on the Word, fellowshiping in a Bible-believing Church where you feel comfortable, studying God's wisdom for marriage through anointed materials, etc., for God's blessings, directives, leading and guidance. In whatever you do, learn to put Him first.

Perfectly understand what you need

This is an integral part of a relationship you cannot compromise! You need to first of all come to terms with what your personal aspirations and needs are in life (definition of your core values, most especially), before trying to figure out if the needs of your spouse-to-be line up with yours.

Having done that, it is also wisdom to effectively communicate your needs to your partner, from the onset of your relationship and get to know his/hers. Otherwise, there is a 100% possibility of falling prey to negative needs, which may end up denting God's divine purpose for your life. Thereafter, decide whether the two of you can meet these needs for each other. If not, my advice? Dissolve the relationship as soon as possible!

Know yourself

Psychologists say the key to getting off the dating merry-go-round often requires nothing more than taking time to get to know yourself before you try to get to know someone else. This is also true Scripturally.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2 Corinthians 13:5

In order to become a good partner to another person, it is crucial to take time to examine yourself first and make necessary changes, before going into a relationship. It is pertinent to take this point serious, because you cannot be happy in any relationship without first being happy with yourself.

Accept warning signals that you may feel while dating

Practically, it takes time and effort to maintain all intimate connection in relationships. Yet, good relationships run smoothly and enable you to enjoy other aspects of life beyond the relationship. You are not always talking or worrying about it. A relationship with the wrong individual could lead to years of heartache, emotional and even physical damage. Insensitivity and prayerlessness is often the reason behind this (Luke 21:36; Colossians 4:2). Some of these warning signals include abusive behaviour, challenging your ideas and actions, etc.

However, the fact that things do not go well between you, does not mean that such an individual would not be suitable for someone else, and vice versa. So, it is wisdom to respect yourself enough to pull out and free the other person, if it does not work out. Both of you merit a happy life!

Don't entertain the fear of being single all your life

Fear, in this context, would make you depressed and handicapped from living your life to its fullest, and being attractive to your potential partner. Undoubtedly, wrong expectation is a huge factor contributing to this kind of fear. Please note that fear has torment.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18

The torment can lure you into making irrational decisions, which may end up in disaster. That shall not be your portion. Rather, fill your life with God's promises as contained in His Word, communicate your worries

in that relationship to God, and trust Him enough to take care of same in your best interest (Jeremiah 29:11).

Seek a good and reputable Christian counsellor

This is a good start in every dating relationship. Of course, nothing can ever replace the confidence of relying on God's wisdom through His ambassadors. The Psalmist wrote, *Your statutes are my delight; they are my counsellors...* (Psalm 119:24 NIV). Also, *I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes* (Psalm 119:99 NIV). These are proofs that wise counsel comes first from God.

Among many other things, a reputable Christian counsellor assists you in making right decisions. However, do not judge by outward appearances, but prayerfully seek a Word-filled, competent, faithful and successfully married Christian, to confide in, on any bugging issue in your relationship. Don't just confide in them, but follow their advice for your desired expectation.

If you truthfully follow the principles outlined above, you will surely end up with a beautiful relationship, and you will have no regrets!

Having gone through this material, it is advisable to stop and ponder on every point raised, for your proper repositioning. A well-considered strategy is as crucial to success as showing remorse, sincerity and humility. Therefore, if you have already gone too far, there is room for you to stop and reconsider your ways. You can do that by acquainting yourself with the following information below:

God is Forgiving

Most people find it difficult to accept God's unconditional love because, in the world, there's always payment for everything we receive. But God is not like man! 1 John 1:9 tells us that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins, if we confess them. So, you should be glad about that truth! You can start afresh with God any time you choose to; however, do not wait until it is too late.

However, God's Word says: ...***Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*** (Romans 6:1). Don't think that because God is forgiving, you can always go into sin and come back crawling for forgiveness. Be

Careful not to take the grace of God for granted in your life and relationship.

God is Holy

God's Word emphasises that premarital sex is a sin, and He knows what is best. One big mistake some singles make is that they confuse or equate sex with love. Don't be deceived; selfish desire can make anyone want to have sex with you in the name of love. A typical example is that of Amnon that lusted after his half-sister, Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-17). At the end, the Bible says he hated her more than the love he thought he had for her.

Therefore, before you start dating anyone, understand that premarital sex is not healthy for you; it will cost you a lot of heartaches in the long run. If you have involved yourself in the act, it is better late than never. Therefore, put a stop to it NOW, before it devastates your destiny.

God is Caring

You may be wondering if God really cares about your relationship. Oh yes, He does! God's care for us covers all that concerns us (1 Peter 5:7). We have a forever friend in God, Who is always affected by the intensity of our situations (Hebrews 4:15), even in that relationship. Yet, to find the comfort He offers, we must first acknowledge, invite and trust Him for the best in that situation (Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:8; Proverbs 3:5-6).

For instance, you just met a good-looking man, and you've been out on few dates. Obviously, you find yourself getting too friendly with him. You can TALK to God in that seemingly confused state, with all sincerity. I purposely used the word talk rather than pray! Let Him know how hurt you were with past relationships and you will like to avoid those pitfalls in the present one. Therefore, you need His guidance, if this new relationship is His perfect will for you.

Once you have talked to God, trust Him to do what you have asked, and be

Do not judge by outward appearances, but prayerfully seek a Word-filled, competent, faithful and successfully married Christian, to confide in, on any bugging issue in your relationship.

sensitive to your request. After all, God knows that going too far before marriage will break up homes much later, as most men do not want to marry a lady who has been too intimate with someone else.

Trading *godly* principles in your dating relationship reveals hidden dispositions, temperaments and *characters* of your partner, which enable you to decide wisely. Sensitivity to godly principles is key to a *healthy* dating relationship.

Chapter 5 - Don't Just Talk, Communicate!

How forcible are right words...

Job 6:25

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge...

Proverbs 15:2 (ESV)

Relationships don't exist in a vacuum. They exist between two emotional human beings. Next to love, the most important ingredients in a relationship are openness, honesty and communication. Clearly, the desired outcome or goal of any communication process is perfect understanding. That's why it is key to any healthy relationship, whether during dating or in marriage.

For a better understanding of this chapter, let's try to define some key words here:

Talk: This is defined as "to give expression to in words to speak of or discuss, to say words in order to express your thoughts, feelings, opinions, etc."

Communicate: The *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* defines it as the "act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. to someone else"

Literally, communication the act of transferring information from one place to another. Among many other things, communication helps you to better understand a person or situation and enables you to resolve differences, build trust and respect, and create environment where creative ideas, affection and can flourish.

Notably, there is a major link between talking and communicating. One major myth communication in relationships is that since you talk to your friend, you're automatically communicating. While talking to your friend is indeed a form of communication, It is not enough to communicate, but to do it effectively. It is obvious that effective communication is important for married couples, but it is vital to keep talking and exchanging views, when you're dating.

Effective Communication: This can be referred to as ways through which communication skills can be improved. It is also the art of introducing wisdom in style of communication.

Undoubtedly, effective communication is the cornerstone of happy relationships; without it, relationships are bound to end up in disaster. Therefore, if communication is to achieve the desired result of being *well understood*, some strategies must be seriously considered and practised.

Strategic Keys To Effective Communication

- **Listening:**

As a single, it is highly necessary for you to know that communication is vital in creating and maintaining a great relationship. Though some people consider speaking as the most important aspect of communication, good listening skills are equally significant to effective communication.

Listening is not just about hearing; it also involves paying attention to your partner. The following tips will aid effective listening:

- **Avoid distractions:** Discipline yourself to know when to be serious and when to crack jokes. For example, you may find it helpful to switch off your cell phone when listening to your friend. To avoid distraction, focus your attention on the speaker. Learn to listen with keen interest, so that you can follow up on previous discussions, when next you meet.
- **Don't interrupt:** Effective listening is nearly impossible with constant interruptions. This is done often by people who get so caught up in their own ideas in hopes of gaining control. It is, therefore, important to allow your partner 's entire message to be conveyed, before you give your input. After all, you'll have your chance to speak.
- **Avoid misinterpretation, rather, ask questions:** Trying to interpret, or actually interpreting, what your partner is saying, eventually introduces possible errors in communication. Rather, seek to ask for clarification on important issues to you. As easy as it may seem to interpret everyday matters, it's, however, superlative to

make sure you get the correct interpretations on more important matters than making assumptions.

- **Respond appropriately:** Responding is an integral part of active listening. Your choice of words while responding and non-verbal behaviour, will convey whether you understand and are interested in what your friend is saying or not!
- **Be ready to learn:** Insisting on your point of view is a serious barrier to effective listening. Readiness to learn will definitely improve your listening appetite.

- **Talking:**

There is no better way to know someone than by talking to them about a wide variety of topics. The more you talk, the more you will be able to know if it is a relationship that you should pursue or not. However, the primary goal of talking is to pass a message to another person for accurate understanding, as intended. It is not just to talk but to talk effectively. That is the whole essence of effective communication. Please, note that there's no prize for speaking for as long as you can; therefore, it is important to strike the key points.

The following tips would help sharpen your talking skills:

- **Say exactly what you mean:** To get this done properly, avoid unnecessary words. Say and mean one thing at a time. It is also crucial to relax and put your words properly together; you may decide to write out in points what you would like to say to avoid mistakes. You may also want to cross-check what you plan to say, to ensure your choice of words can get you the desired results.
- **Respond, don't react:** Reaction takes effect only when you let emotions take over. The impression you give when you react is that something is not just right. Responding, on the other hand, involves taking action to address whatever is necessary, let go of others and move on. Acknowledge and appreciate comments about you, whether positive or negative, and act on them as deemed fit.
- **Maintain positive body language:** Effective talking is not only about what you say, but also about how you say it. It

implies that you make and maintain eye contact, keep a neutral body stance and watch the tone of your voice when you're talking to your partner. Be cheerful and learn to smile from the heart. Be yourself and do not look down on anyone, irrespective of their social status. In addition, it ensures that you are able to read and use signals to convey your messages properly, without getting misconstrued. This usually takes time and patience to achieve.

- **Openness/Honesty:**

If you can't be open and honest with the person you are in a relationship with, then is that person worth dating? But, before you can be open to anyone else, you have to first be open to yourself. Nothing can be as bonding in a relationship as being honest. Lies, on the other hand, break relationships, which leads to heartaches and pains. But openness helps build sound relationships.

Please note that relationships are very important part of people's lives; so, ensure you don't hurt the other person by your bad behaviour. The following are ways to enhance openness/honesty in relationships:

- **Address your feelings as soon as possible:** To address your feelings in a way that your date will truly understand, state your feelings without blaming or attacking him/her. Ask for clarification on what you don't seem to understand; be specific when discussing what needs to be changed or be avoided, to eliminate the possibility of hurting your feelings again. Lastly, confirm that you understand one another and there are no more issues to be discussed.
- **Avoid lying, be truthful in all circumstances:** Do you ever wonder if you should avoid telling the truth, to avoid hurting your date's feelings? Remember that honesty gives rise to trust, which is essential for maintaining a healthy relationship. It also establishes consistency, allowing the other person to rely on what you say. Never give your date the reason to doubt you. A half-truth is as good as a lie. Instead, seek to divulge the truth always.
- **Be free to communicate your concerns:** You be wondering how to communicate your concerns and worries, while respecting your date's feelings and points of view. To communicate effectively take

a loving, caring, and non-judgemental position. You may not get an immediate positive response, but stick to your observations and why you are concerned. While doing this, be careful not to judge, but state your expectations, if you have any.

- **Be ready to learn:** In a healthy relationship, you must be ready to learn, because no one is an island of knowledge. There are certainly some things you innocently do, but are not meant to be. Until someone close to you points them out, you may not be aware of such. In such cases, try not biased or defensive; instead, receive observations and corrections with an open-heart and strong desire for a change.

Benefits of Effective Communication

Effective communication is highly essential and helps to improve morale, communication skills and promotes healthy relationships. In any form of relationship, good communication skills are real assets. If you have suffered breakdowns or are having challenges in relationships, the few keys to effective communication explained above will serve as extremely useful resources.

Briefly, let's look at two major benefits of effective communication:

- **Transparency:**

One of the golden benefits of effective communication is that it engenders transparency. Effective communication amazingly brings you to a level of trust with your friend; you know what to expect from him/her per time, you are sure of when and where he/she can be found, you have a good understanding of your relationship status, etc. These and lots more are what effective communication helps you to achieve.

When you treat your date with honesty and respect, they come back to you as manifold virtues. Your relationship won't suffer deceit under any circumstance. Effective communication is the best way to create that respect.

- **Familiarity:**

Familiarity at this level of relationship (courtship stage) cannot be compared with intimacy in marriage. As much as this is another significant benefit of effective communication, it does not mean that you should hop into bed with your date, or cuddle and caress each other. It, simply, implies that to some extent, you know what to expect of him/her, wherever and whenever, and it also gives you the privilege of vouching for as the case may be.

It also signifies level of interactions that builds positive memory bank of shared experiences. At this stage, it's not just the activity that matters, but knowing whether both of you are able to flow.

Obviously, the status of your relationship has a lot to do with the things you talk about. While conversations come naturally as two people start dating, there are things you should not talk about when you're in the beginning stages.

On what you should talk about, here are a few hints:

- **Your Person:** It is very important to let your date know who you are, from the onset of the relationship. Getting to know this much later is the reason for many failed relationships today. You hear things such as, "I never knew you are this kind of person!" "How can you be like this?" "So this is you!" etc. This discussion includes your daily events and activities, religion, beliefs, habits, hobbies, interests, dislikes, education, how and where you like to spend your vacations, etc., to avoid any misconception in future.
- **Family Background:** Being familiar with a person's upbringing and family life is fundamental to understanding his/her present approach towards life. In the context of relationships (especially when contemplating a future with him/her), it helps to discuss and ask few questions such as how well your friend gets along with his/her family members, why he/she takes exception to or become more intimate with some of them (if noticed), and how well he/she handles family gatherings, etc.
- **Past Relationships:** This is a touchy one! They are, without doubt, suspense mysteries in the dating scenario. Some may really want to talk about it, yet, become too scared, contemplating the right timing. Despite the fact that talking about past relationships may lead to pains, guilt, regrets, etc., hiding facts about same can create insecurities and confusions (blackmails in some cases), that could

damage your relationship faster than building a strong foundation. It is, therefore, very crucial to discuss it; however, at the right time. You must know the right time to talk about your past relationships during your dates; constantly seek guidance from God on this.

- **Finances:** With time, this would be more significant if the relationship finally gets close to marriage. However, money matters play a big part in any long-term relationship. It is crucial to both discuss how money is being spent (individually), ways by which you save and invest your money, your financial responsibilities (even as singles) etc. This would go a long way in helping you both to plan your finances and also determine how restful you would be financially (when married), being already familiar with each other's financial strength. This is how financial satisfaction can be best achieved.
- **Future Expectations:** This point is one of the major satisfying conversations in relationships, and of course may lead to a final conclusion of *together, forever*, as it involves future plans and goals in life. It is, therefore, paramount to talk about dreams and aspirations and make sure you know your friend's wants and dreams in life too. It takes a few conversations and exchange of ideas to truly achieve this, instead of making wrong assumptions.

It is crucial to discuss family matters and how either of you can deal with them. Areas of deliberation could range from the number of children you would like to have and the intervals, your future plans for their lives and where you like to settle down as a family, among others. Conversations like these are better earlier than later, to avoid the pain of being stuck in a relationship with two different goals and ideologies.

All of the above and lots more are issues to be discussed at different levels of the dating relationship, as elucidated in the preceding chapter. In all of these, discuss issues, not people; make sure you do not gossip or backbite!

However, since dating relationship encompasses different stages that wouldn't give room to physical privacy, it then leads us to the question: Where should these discussions be?

There are no other places to discuss other than a public environment like eateries, relaxation centres such as beaches, parks, etc.

Be sure not to hang out on a daily basis or too frequently with your date, as this can move your friendship to areas you should avoid.

Effective communication, nevertheless, begins with God. He is the ultimate Builder of all things.

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

Hebrews 3:4

Therefore, if your relationship must thrive, God must be at the centre of it. This implies that you must ensure the communication lines between you and God is open at all times.

While dating, be committed to honest and *respectful communication;* treat your partner the same way you will love to be treated. Effective communication enhances a *healthy relationship.*

Chapter 6 - Consider These Things...

...whatsoever things are of good report; ...think on these things.

Philippians 4:8

When it comes to dating, many Christian singles are in a battle every day. The greatest danger in dating, I believe, is giving your heart and, ultimately, life to someone to whom you're not married. It is a significant risk! Unfortunately, many young individuals have fallen victims, because they "enjoyed" emotional or physical closeness, without lasting or durable commitment. Cheap intimacy might appear real for the moment, but you will surely get what you pay for. Remember: Cause and effect never fail!

Therefore, it is wisdom to consider everything about your date. The areas to focus on are — age, family, background, religion, family relationships, appearance, reputation, race, how well you know him/her, common interests, goals in life, moral interest, etc. Make sure that your dating revolves around God's purpose for your life, since both of you need the clearly defined life-goal of serving the Lord, together. Without that goal, there will be no lasting basis for your dating.

Please understand: While the great prize in marriage is Christ-centred intimacy, the great prize in dating is Christ-centred clarity. Intimacy is safest in the context of marriage, and dating is safest in the context of clarity. The true purpose of dating is determining whether the two of you should get married; so, you should focus your effort there.

In pursuit of clarity, you will undoubtedly develop intimacy, but you ought not to do so too quickly or naively. Consciously inform one another that, as Christians, intimacy before marriage is unsafe, while transparency is unbelievably precious.

The truth is: Habits, attitudes and thought patterns that characterise a person's dating relationship will be carried over into marriage ultimately. Therefore, cultivating good habits and attitudes will help to secure the future of your relationships. Some of the good habits and attitudes will be considered here.

- **The Virtue of Chastity**

Chastity is the condition or quality of being pure or chaste. It is the practice of refraining from satisfying your sexual appetite. Simply put, chastity is the state of not having sexual relationships with anyone before marriage, or having it with only your spouse when married.

However, as a Christian, chastity is not only limited to your actions, but also includes your thoughts and words. Therefore, a chaste person is one that maintains purity of thoughts, words and deeds.

In dating relationships, people sometimes indulge in light or heavy petting, kissing and hugging that arouse them sexually. They claim they have not indulged in the physical act of sex, and as such, they have not done anything wrong. Though technically, they may not have had sex, however, they have lost their sexual purity and are no longer chaste. This is because chastity goes beyond not having sex, but also includes refraining from indulging in sexually stimulating practices such as masturbation, pornography, homosexuality, etc.

Chastity, as well as commitment, is a question of character and if a relationship will be meaningful, both must be present. Therefore, maintaining chastity in the dating relationship must be the goal of both of you; as possessing a virtuous character will bring about respect and honour in your relationship.

The Bible says:

A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong [men] retain riches.

Proverbs 11:16

Dating, as earlier mentioned, is meant to help you know the person you want to marry better. However, in the course of relating with each other, it is normal that bonding begins to take place and this intensifies with time. Strong feelings of attraction arise, and the need to communicate these feelings is what results in touching and other physical expressions of affection like kissing.

However, physical stimuli are not the appropriate way to express your feelings. There are other ways this can be done. For instance, you need to learn how to express your feelings for each other with just words. This can be achieved by talking about your future, how you intend to build a family and have children together. You also discuss your belief in delayed

gratification and commitment to maintaining sexual purity, before even in marriage.

Thereafter, discuss freely how you both intend to avoid the trap of premarital sex, and set your boundaries. Be determined to protect each other's sexual chastity, by avoiding anything that will arouse you when together. You may also need to talk about being accountable to someone whom you both respect. The thought that you do not want to confess to your mentor that you have indulged in premarital sex, helps you to maintain your set boundaries. This demands that you be open and frank with each other.

Our emotions are God-given and they will always be there. Therefore, do not pretend as if they do not exist. Talk about your feelings and about how you enjoy each other's company. However, it is your responsibility to control your emotions. This demands that you take a decision not to let your feelings dictate your sexual behaviour. Also, you should be able to decipher if your feelings for each other are mutual or not.

The greatest danger in dating, I believe, is giving your heart and, ultimately, life to someone to whom you're not married.

Do not pretend you do not have feelings; rather, express your desire to defer them until you are married. Indulging your emotions may be something you enjoy now, but they will eventually destroy the relationship. This is because other things like guilt, condemnation and frustration from unsatisfied sexual feelings will creep into your relationship. In the end, you would have deprived yourself of knowing each other better and building a relationship of commitment. Therefore, for you to date successfully, the virtue of chastity is a must; it will help you to maintain the honour in your relationship.

Chastity requires a lot of hard work and this is why most people find it difficult to maintain; but it is well worth the price, as this virtue of chastity will help you to lay a solid foundation for a successful marriage. However, the absence of it can rob you of a sense of fulfilment in your future.

It is the Word of God that empowers you to make a firm decision for chastity and maintain it.

Consequently, some practical steps must be taken to enforce this virtue. What this means is that rather than spend time exploring your physical bodies, spend the time talking about things that will build you

and the relationship. Always remember that the virtue of chastity is essential to enable you both lay a solid foundation for a successful marriage.

- **Be Sensible**

God has given you sense in order to exercise sound judgement. It is important to be sensible enough to critically consider common backgrounds, values and interests. To have a successful union, both of you must blend two different backgrounds, goals, emotional structures, beliefs, life experiences, to mention but a few.

You must be real, practical and sensible enough to find someone who shares many of these factors already. To do these, considering the following will be very helpful:

- Start on the right foot: At the beginning of your dating relationship, come up with scriptural, physical and emotional boundaries. Put thought and prayer into it. Learn to screen your date.
- Observe your prospective date in many situations: When hungry, angry, tired, tempted with wrong, etc., is he/she lazy or motivated? How does he/ she handle money? How does he/she relate to parents, siblings and friends?
- Type of dates is important: Select interactive outings that will give you a better reading on the competitive spirit, teamwork, willingness to help others, capacity to accomplish goals, perseverance, etc., of whoever you are dating.
- Carefully study his/her family, educational and moral value. Definitely, your lives will blend more easily if there are similarities. Was he/she an only child or raised in a large family? Does he/she like children? Are your energy levels similar or will one always want to sit, while the other wants to run? Would you want him/her to look and act like her dad/mum does? Really, heredity and environment make their greatest effects more apparent as people age.

- What about his/her ethnic root? The more racially similar you are, the easier your personalities blend. This has the potential of affecting even your children in future.

The bottom line is: constantly do a "reality check"!

- **Vigilance**

Vigilance is the process of paying attention. It is also watchfulness, alertness or readiness for danger. Vigilance is, essentially, to help you secure your future as many youths have been careless in their dating experiences. As a result of this, they become victims of failed relationships because of their laxity and ignorance. Prioritise your needs!

In the dating process, you must be vigilant and think wisely! For instance, set a time frame with your friend in advance for each date and let family or friends know your whereabouts. They should be aware, for instance of when you are expected back home from a date.

As a lady, it is advised that you make an input into deciding the venue of the appointment, to ensure you choose the venues of your dates. Make sure the environment is a familiar one, and ensure

It is the Word of God that empowers you to make a firm decision for chastity and maintain it.

that you can locate your way out of the place by yourself, if need be. If it is a place that you are not familiar with, look around and take a mental note of how to leave the building, if necessary. Also, try not to sit with your back to the door. If you feel uncomfortable about the venue in any way, let your friend know it and politely insist that you leave the place. Find out how best to transport yourself out of the meeting place if the need arises, especially if your friend is responsible for transporting you there.

As much as possible, avoid staying out until very late in the night. Avoid being in dark places alone with your date. Remember that evil thrives most in darkness. As a child of God, you should "walk in the light" literally! It is best to go to neutral places like restaurants, parks, shopping areas and concerts, to mention but a few, for the first few dates. Avoid visiting alone in a date's room or apartment.

Beware of being by yourselves in compromising, sensuous settings and circumstances on your dates, e.g., dimming the light in the rooms,

watching television and movies alone for hours (and sharing a two-seater sofa in the process). No matter how spiritual you are, never forget that you are still human, with flesh and blood.

You should limit physical contact to the barest minimum, so as not to send wrong signals to each other and complicate issues.

Remember that once you dabble into physical contact, romantic feeling is introduced prematurely. This not only changes the course and nature of the relationship, but also beclouds your sense of judgement, and it is difficult to be rational when your emotions are whipped up.

Thank God for technology! If you have access to a mobile phone, get it fully charged so as to contact family and friends if required. Also arrange for a friend or relation to call you intermittently. Never give the impression that you are 'alone' with your friend.

Watch out for signs of abuse of any kind; for instance, physical abuse, which is the use of strength or size to hurt or control someone. Also, be vigilant to recognise signs of verbal abuse, which is the use of words or voice to hurt or control someone.

Another kind of abuse to watch out for is emotional abuse. This is the use of any action or inaction to control or degrade. Sexual abuse is not to be ignored either; sexual behaviour, verbal or physical, engaged in without consent and which may hurt emotionally, physically or psychologically.

If you notice any of these, be quick to get out of the situation as well as the relationship, and see to it that confide in someone about the matter, in order to get help. Abuse only gets worse with time, especially, as the relationship becomes more serious. Do not be trapped!

Make sure your parents, guardians or friends know whom you are going out with. Remember, evil thrives on secrecy. Don't carry on in a dating relationship that only you know about. Constantly review the relationship as you go on, and be sure it is progressing the way it should. In other words, use both your "head" and "heart". Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and spend time in studying and meditating on the Word. Act on the Word! Align yourself to the Word of prophecies, both written and declared. This will definitely help you to be extra vigilant.

It is wisdom to cry out for help, when your relationship is not going as it should.

The dangers of not being vigilant include making poor choice of a life partner. It is advised that you endeavour to find a way of authenticating whatever your date tells you. This, you can do, by probing further on issues that relate to their spiritual experiences, friends in school or church, without making them feel that you are subjecting them to unnecessary interrogation. Watch out for any inconsistency in character and speech. Listen with keen interest and learn not to forget facts.

Do not encourage borrowing or lending either. Materialism will affect your judgement about people, therefore, avoid being materialistic. Do not use money or material things to entice a man or woman; it is an indication of desperation and lack of self-worth. Always remember that you can never buy true love!

Ensure the person you are dating is honest and truthful. For instance, some people join service groups in Church just to be noticed and get a date. Therefore, be careful who you date! Having studied yourself, you should know by now the type of person you think would best fit into your life and vice versa. Match this against all the people you have interacted with and make a decision. It is your responsibility to make the right choice of a date!

- **Godly Counsel**

This is the process of bringing out change in an individual for the better. A major component of giving godly counsel deals with the thinking patterns of the mind that subsequently leads to changes in behaviour, when the counsel is applied.

Godly counsel can come from parents, pastors and any other person God brings your way as advisers, mentors and role models. Honour your parents and respectfully consider their advice about who to date, as long as their advice does not contradict the Word of God. If it does, respectfully talk about it with them or get someone whom they will respect to talk with them, while remaining subject to their authority (Ephesians 6:2). Be sure that whoever you are dating equally has a lot of regard for and is subject to his/her parent's or guardian's authority.

Godly counsel will go a long way to help secure the success of your dating experience. It is needed for guidance and direction, if you are to avoid common mistakes youths usually make in the dating process.

The Bible clearly states:

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Proverbs 15:22

It is wisdom to cry out for help, when your relationship is not going as it should. This is not a sign of weakness. The Bible, in the book of Proverbs, assures us that there is preservation in obtaining guidance from godly counsel.

Where no counsel [is], the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors [there is] safety.

Proverbs 11:14

It is pride that keeps many people from seeking and accepting godly counsel.

Another aspect of godly counsel is being accountable. This means, it is wise to submit your relationship to spiritual authority like that of your pastor, for guidance and prayers.

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors [there is] safety.

Proverbs 24:6

The fact that you will always need to report back on the progress of your relationship will ensure you maintain appropriate conduct. Remember: The seed for success in tomorrow's marriage is planted in today's dating!

When dating, *willingly*
acknowledge what is
needful and adjust yourself
to obtain *excellent* things as
governed by God's Word.
Do not follow the
maddening *crowd!*
Godly counsel pays!

Chapter 7 - Traps To Avoid

Catch all the foxes, those little foxes, before they ruin the vineyard...

Song of Solomon 2:15 (NLT)

The word "trap" is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as something by which one is caught or stopped unawares. It can also be said to be a confining or undesirable circumstance, from which escape or relief is difficult.

There are, definitely, some apparent traps to avoid during dating. Let's briefly examine some of them.

Indiscipline

One of the traps you must avoid is indiscipline. Discipline, according to the *Online Dictionary*, means behaviour in accordance with rules of conduct; behaviour and order maintained by training and control. It also means the exertion of willpower over desires and is usually understood to be synonymous with self-control.

Both definitions point to the fact that discipline involves self-control or self-motivation. That is, one uses reason to determine the best course of action instead of one's desire. This ability motivates one do the right thing, in spite of a negative emotional state. Indiscipline, on the other hand, can be said to be the breakdown of moral and ethical values. In other words, indiscipline implies not doing what is right due to pressure of circumstances or one's desire.

In a dating relationship, indiscipline is usually exhibited in conduct, speech and even in thoughts. The result is indulging in acts that will not enhance the growth of the individuals and the relationship. Learn to concentrate on the mind and attitude of your date. Areas where indiscipline is usually exhibited are:

- ***Lack of discipline in choosing your dates:***

It is lack of discipline to date a person who is not in the same spiritual Kingdom as you or someone who is not born again (2 Corinthians 6:14-

15). As a Christian, the Scripture is clear on the issue of who to relate with, especially, if such a relationship could lead to marriage.

- ***Lack of discipline in your conduct in the relationship:***

The dating period is not the time to indulge in sex, not even anything that suggests a desire for it like holding of hands, kissing, fondling and petting. It will be indiscipline to indulge in such acts before marriage.

Dating is not marriage! This is very important to note, so that you do not lose focus of the purpose. Also, it will be a sign of indiscipline to pre-empt your partner's intentions. Love is to be mutual and until intentions are clearly stated, they are not to be assumed. Generally, a brother is to propose marriage in clear terms and a sister is to express agreement and consent, clearly. Do not use the word "**marriage**" on your dates, until you are absolutely sure about going into courtship.

It is not considered honourable for a lady to ask a man out on a date, whether consciously or unconsciously. This could lead to exposing the lady to unpleasant experiences. The fact is that some men still see it as being forward or wayward. Considering it is a man that searches for a wife, it will be in a lady's best interest to allow the man to *find* her (Proverbs 18:22). If a lady is persuaded about a particular man being appropriate for her, it is wisdom to pray and exercise patience, and allow the man to come to her.

It is not advisable to go on an outing with a date to your friend's house for any reason, except on very special occasions, when your partner's friends and yours would be around in an open place. Example of such occasions could be birthdays or other celebrations.

Some people date to exploit their partner. This is a show of lack of character, which is also referred to as indiscipline. Do not use the one you are dating to your material needs. Do not go on a spending spree with your friend, whether as a man or a woman all in the name of a date. This will be taking undue advantage of someone else.

Dating, if done orderly, helps to build up long-lasting friendship, but indiscipline can easily destroy this.

- ***Lack of discipline in your utterances:***

Friendship can be defined as behaving in a kind and pleasant way; showing and expressing a helpful attitude and not being in conflict with others. Friendship is a must, if you are to make the best of dating. However, friendship can be destroyed easily by careless utterances. In Proverbs chapter 15, a chapter of 33 verses, eight has to do with what you say.

Words can make the difference in a situation capable of leading to hot arguments in a relationship; the right words have the power to defuse anger.

Take a look at some things from Proverbs 15:

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger

Verse 1

The evidence of your maturity can be seen easily in your words. Also, foolishness can be evident in your speech, even while on your dates.

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Verse 2

While dating, your utterances can either refresh or break you and your friend's spirits, as what you say has an effect on both of you.

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Verse 4

A wise person will always speak the right words at the right time, but this is not so with the foolish. One of the characteristics of a good dating relationship is the ability of the persons involved to build-up each other. This, in turn, is a function of what they have to offer in terms of knowledge; that is, enlightening each other on issues of life.

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

Verse 7

The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Verse 14

Your words can bring about joy.

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Verse 23

Notably, purity of heart is what produces purity of words. You cannot separate your thoughts from your words. Therefore, for your words to reflect purity, it has to start from your thoughts.

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

Verse 26

It is a good attribute to think first before you speak This enables you to give careful thought to what you are about to say.

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Verse 28

A successful dating experience demands exercising discipline in the use of words. Indiscipline has ruined many relationships that could have led to good marriages. Invariably, some marriages have experienced violence, as a result of misguided utterances of one or both of the parties. Therefore, the need to discipline your utterances cannot be overemphasised. It is your responsibility to ensure you maintain discretion with your utterances, to avoid regrets in your relationships.

Wrong Association

This is another trap that you must avoid. It has been said that, he who frequents the association of bad or corrupt men, will soon be as they are. How true this saying is!

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Even if you are sound in the faith and godly but involved in a wrong association, your faith will be weakened. Evidently, the wrong association will corrupt your morals.

Think on this: Put a rose in a sack of fish, and soon the rose will start to stink.

The message is this: Beware of the association you keep! The company you keep is so important, as they can influence you in more ways than you think.

The people you hang out with will influence you are and what you become. This is because we fit easily into the information gathered from our environment.

Your future is largely dependent on the influence of the people you associate with. Truly, "Who you company with determines what accompanies you." This is why it is essential that you avoid the trap of a wrong association.

One of the characteristics of a good dating relationship is the ability of the persons involved to build-up each other.

When you keep a wrong association for a date, you tend to become someone else when you are around them, in order to gain acceptance or affection. You say things you would normally not say, in a bid to impress. Sometimes, we meet with people and after running out of things to talk about, we start talking about other people and mundane things that are neither edifying nor add to the relationship. Do not gossip!

Another important point to note is that, usually, wrong association is the ultimate reason for departure from your goals. Everyone has goals that they want to achieve. However, you need to bear in mind that a date is someone you should end up getting married to. It is, therefore, important that your goals match.

If the association you keep is so important, how you wisely choose your date must be considered at this point. Wisdom is key when you need to make proper choices.

Proverbs 12:26 (NIV) says:

...the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Premarital Sex

The mistake most people make is to assume that passion and sex indicate genuine love and commitment, but this is not true. True intimacy is purposefully cultivated, and this goes beyond sexual intimacy.

Marriage *is honourable in all* only if the bed is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19-21). There is no room for sexual intercourse or anything that leads to it during dating. Keep the marriage bed undefiled.

Many people lose the savour of building a strong relationship of commitment during dating, when they engage in heavy petting that gets

out of control. One thing leads to another. This is like the child who stood at the edge of a forest fire and said, "But I only lit a match. "

From the onset, make your boundaries clear and stick to them. Refuse to settle for less and certainly stay away from anyone who doesn't respect your faith.

This is why the Bible says:

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:22

Too often, people start off with romantic attraction, hoping they will later become friends. But the more you become involved sexually, the less likely you are to spend quality time talking about deep, significant subjects that really matter to your lives and future happiness.

Physical contact may, at first, be limited to kissing but usually end up with sexual intercourse. If care is not taken, the result is that you may end up experiencing arguments and misunderstanding in your relationship. Eventually, the relationship deteriorates because it is based on physical and romantic feelings, rather than a solid foundation of friendship. After a while, physical involvement becomes unfulfilling without commitment.

If you obey the instruction, ***give no place to the devil*** (Ephesians 4:27), by limiting physical contact between both of you, then the relationship will get a chance to thrive properly. Once you start getting physical, you introduce romantic feelings prematurely. This not only changes the course and nature of the relationship, it also beclouds your sense of reasoning and judgement. It is difficult to be rational when your emotions are whipped up!

- **Fallacious Arguments For Premarital Sex**

There are arguments people put up as rational, for indulging in premarital sex. This, however, does not change God's instructions or His stand. You cannot base your life on what is popularly done; you must base it on the revealed truths from the Word of God.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

1 Corinthians 3:19

Here are some arguments and how to handle them:

- **People argue that the sex drive is a basic biological drive and as such, premarital sex is justified.**

We may not be able to live without food, air or water; but, we can definitely live without sex. Abstinence does not impair one's health.

Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Corinthians 6:13 (NKJV)

When passions are ignited, before you know it, one thing leads to another; you certainly don't want to cross that line into a world of sin. So, be cautious!

The sin of sexual immorality has physical and emotional consequences on individuals that indulge in it. As we see from the Scripture, it can affect the body and this is why some of the incurable diseases are sexually transmitted.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NKJV)

- **People argue that everyone is doing it and, therefore, it must be right!**

First, not everyone engages in premarital sex; statistics does not establish values. A majority can be wrong!

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13 & 14

More so, we are told not **to ...follow a crowd to do evil...** (Exodus 23:2 NKJV)

- **People argue that sex is a proof of love.**

People claim that sexual activity is a proof of love and how much the other person cares. This result in pressure on the reluctant partner to demonstrate a certain level of care, by giving in to sexual activities. The reluctant partner, therefore, succumbs to this pressure, with the

underlying hope that it will somehow cement the relationship and discourage the other partner from jilting him/her.

Singles need to understand and appreciate the fact that true love cares about the well-being of the other person. A person with this view demonstrates love by sexual responsiveness. Ultimately, he or she gets married with a distortion of what real intimacy means. This eventually leads to lack of fulfilment in marriage, if they eventually do.

- ***People say one needs to have sex before marriage, in order to acquire experience.***

This argument emphasises a desire, on the part of an individual, not to appear like a sexual novice on the wedding night. The question usually asked is: *What if I get married and can't do it right?* But this is, in actual fact a lie to lure you into sin. The first time will always be the first time; whether you do it during dating relationship or in marriage. But one is definitely more honourable than the other.

You don't have to worry about being able to do it right. Just as you get into school before you learn, you have to be married before you learn certain things. There is no way good sexual techniques will remedy a poor emotional relationship. In other words, a deeply committed couple; with no sexual experience, is far ahead of a sexually experienced couple with shallow commitment.

- ***People argue about being compatible.***

The idea of this argument is: "How will they know if they will be compatible in bed after they get married?" A wise man said, "Building bridges of love and mutual care in relationships are the sure roads to honeymoon that can last a lifetime." When partners genuinely care about each other and take time to build a strong love during their dating period, this in itself is enough to cultivate a compatible future sex life.

- ***People argue, "We are in love and plan to marry soon. Why should we wait?"***

Loss of respect, guilt and dissatisfaction can occur if you indulge in premarital sex. Contemporary studies indicate that out of 100 couples who cohabit, 40 Of them break-up before marriage. Out of the 60 who marry, 45 of them divorce, leaving only 15 with a lasting marriage.

Besides, there have been incidences of people changing their minds a night before the wedding or on the wedding day; eventually, the wedding won't take place and the couple would not get married. Patience is a virtue. You are still better off waiting till when you actually exchange your marital vows and are legally married.

- ***People argue that sexual restraint may not be good for your health.***

Restraint does not have a negative effect on your health; it is actually lack of restraint that has a negative effect on your health; both now and in the future.

It is also worthy of note that sexual energy can be diverted into non-sexual and non-destructive goals. Guilt, on the other hand, produces devastating results in the future. Guilt is anger turned inward and it can result in depression, low self-esteem and fatigue.

How to Avoid Premarital Sex

God's Word says:

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NLT)

To avoid premarital sex in your relationships, the following are necessary:

❖ Make a Decision

The first thing is to make a decision to avoid premarital sex at all costs. This is a decision that must be made by both of you. It has been said that it is **decision** that determines **destination**.

This also implies that you cannot afford to be neutral but rather take a stand to abstain from premarital sex. To be neutral is to set yourself up

to be a victim. This is because without a firm decision in place, you are bound to give in when you are pressurised.

The Bible says in Psalm 101:2:

I will behave myself wisely... I will...

❖ **Set Appropriate Boundaries**

You must take practical steps to sustain your decision. One of such steps is to set appropriate boundaries. In your relationship with your date, if there is any indication that such a person will not respect the set boundaries, then he/she may not make a good future spouse. Both of you need to choose to promote delayed gratification.

❖ **Be Sensitive**

You need to be sensitive when on dates. There is a sad account in the Bible between a young man called Amnon and his sister, Tamar, whom he raped; both were King David's children. This sad incident happened because the girl was not vigilant, when her brother said "**...Come lie with me, my sister**" (2 Samuel 13:11). She should have fled at that time.

The young man Amnon was a victim of wrong counsel. This also is a lesson for singles. You must watch the friends you take counsel from and those you associate with. When you associate with people who do not see the need to avoid sexual sins, they will eventually influence your thinking and attitude to sex negatively.

Paul, in addressing Christians at Corinth, said:

...I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin.

...you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer (Christian) yet indulges in sexual sin...Don't even eat with such people.

1 Corinthians 5:9,11 (NLT, Emphasis Mine)

Never be ashamed of saying, "**No!**" When you engage in premarital sex, you sin against your own body, your family, and the society; but more importantly, against God.

Be guided by God's love, which manifests itself in self-control. Spend quality time with God daily, drawing strength from His Word, in order to be able to resist temptation.

Worthy of note is the fact that one trap leads to the other; the three are interwoven. Without any doubt, if you lack discipline, you will end up in a wrong association, which will definitely make you see premarital sex as a way of life, thereby becoming a victim. You shall not be caught in the web in Jesus' name.

Therefore, the first thing to do before contemplating on dating is to pray about your date. Be a friend of God, before you seek to find a friend that will be a date. God described Abraham as His friend (James 2:23). Abraham's friendship with God was founded on absolute truth and loyalty. A true friend strengthens spiritually and draws us closer to God (Proverbs 27:17).

Spend quality time with God daily, drawing strength from His Word, in order to be able to resist temptation.

Your spouse should be your closest earthly friend; therefore, it is advised that you marry a friend. The dating process places upon you the responsibility to choose a friend. Marriage is a lifelong commitment; therefore, a lifelong friend must be chosen carefully.

Set boundaries!

Be not unequally yoked
and make *purity* your top
priority.

Guard your heart against
ungodly environmental
factors that *spoil* the vine.

Chapter 8 - More On Christian Courtship

...Let everyone be fully satisfied in his own mind.

Romans 14:5 (AMP)

But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Philemon 1:14

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

As already established, courtship is the period between when two people of opposite sex agree to get married and when they actually get married.

Even in Bible days, courtship was a practice. For example, Mary the mother of Jesus was espoused to Joseph, and the immaculate conception of Jesus was before they came together (Matthew 1:18).

It is during the courtship period that one should get all possible knowledge of the other's spiritual life, likes and dislikes, experiences of the past, family background, strengths and weaknesses. These factors form the basis for attitudes and behavioural patterns that must be critically

Work on yourself and make sure you are not carrying any baggage of past hurts.

observed and assessed. This period also serves as an opportunity to help each other grow up spiritually, through the instrumentality of the Word and prayer.

Both of you must identify godly examples of good marriages that you desire to emulate. Visit such couples and take advantage of godly counsel from them.

Included in your discussions must be your future together and the family you are aspiring to have. Talk about issues such as the number of children you desire and how you intend to build a godly heritage for them. One very important thing you also need to discuss is financial matters — how to be good stewards of your God-given resources, your understanding of how God blesses and the different types of covenant practices in order to enjoy God's blessings financially. Good financial stewardship is a function of good money management habits. Therefore,

it is important you have the right attitude towards money, so that it does not become a source of frequent quarrels when you are married.

In Amos 3:3, the Scripture warns:

Can two walk together except they be agreed?

Your responsibility is to ask questions that will enable you get to know the other person well. This is the whole essence of courtship, because getting married to a stranger can be disastrous. The Bible admonishes:

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NKIV)

Divorce and separation are not expected to be a consideration in your marriage relationship. Therefore, you must reassure yourself about the person you are in courtship with. Time has a way of revealing the true nature of people, so take your time.

Information to be obtained includes family and educational backgrounds, upbringing, spiritual background, previous relationships, children if any, etc. All these, in addition to the knowledge of temperament, strengths and weaknesses, will help you appreciate how the person has been shaped into who he/she is presently.

You, on your own part, must be transparent and willing to also provide truthful information about yourself. This is why you must maintain your individuality. Build a strong relationship with God and His Word. You must also maintain a good attitude towards your family members and friends, as you will need them to give you support in your future marriage.

Work on yourself and make sure you are not carrying any baggage of past hurts. "Hurting people hurt others," says Joyce Meyer. Develop the right attitude towards life and its experiences. Appreciate who you are in God and invest in your talents, gifts and abilities. Do not compromise your values and beliefs for any reason. Remember that you will eventually lose anything you compromise to get.

It is important to discuss individual physiological or temperamental peculiarities, that is, blood genotype, etc. There is a level of risk involved in being open, but that is why you should be sure that you are not just "having fun" with him/her.

If you talk sincerely and with consideration in your heart, nothing will come as a surprise or shock when you get married. Why? It is because

you would have possessed a foreknowledge of most things. There is no point trying to cover up things that will eventually be discovered!

Start adjusting to your friend's likes and dislikes spiritually, mentally and socially as you prepare not just the wedding ceremony, but also life thereafter as a married couple. Spend quality time, individually and together, studying the Bible and praying for the future. This foundation will help both of you, when you do get married, to spiritually build-up each other. Read and discuss several books, particularly on marriage; listen to anointed tapes, teachings and attend seminars and programmes on Christian marriage and family together.

**Healthy relationships
require good, solid and
well-defined boundaries.**

Scripturally, a man should be the head of his home. Therefore, as a man, you should begin to learn to take the lead by initiating spiritual steps for both of you, such as calling for a fast together, attending fellowships, rendering Christian services or getting involved in charitable works and Kingdom investments together.

In all these, ensure you maintain your individuality. Among other things, your own life should consist of the following.

- Your relationship with and attitude towards God and His Word,
- Your relationship with and attitude towards your family and others,
- Your attitude towards life and its experiences,
- The appreciation and investment of your talents, gifts, abilities and principles.

Wisdom demands that you get your parents involved in the relationship by seeking their counsel, approval and acceptance of your choice. This is very important, because based on God's leading, your parents should be involved in initiating the courtship process. If for any reason, either parent are not in agreement or are not alive, you should seek for godly counsel on the way forward. However, do not be in a rush!

As time goes on, the involvement of families on both sides is to be on a more serious level, as you are getting to know your future in-laws; these include parents, siblings and extended family members. Therefore, relate well with them and begin to attend some family functions together. This will help to foster family acceptance.

The involvement of your spiritual family - your pastor, friends and the brethren, must not be overlooked.

If you discover during the courtship that you cannot spend the rest of your lives together as husband and wife, it will not be wise to continue. The Bible is clear on this, as it reiterates:

Two cannot walk together except they agree (paraphrased)

Amos 3:3

An example of what may demand you call off the relationship is discovering that the person you are involved with has an abusive attitude, particularly, if it involves physical abuse. This cannot be compromised, as it will certainly result in problems in the marriage. Do not patch things up and expect them to get better because they may never get better. Do not allow the pressure of people's opinions to rob you of your right to a life of joy and happiness. A broken courtship is not the same as a divorce, but rather, it gives you the liberty to make a better and more informed decision about your future.

A decision to get married does not equal marriage. So, any form of sexual relationship is a sin at this stage. Don't defile your marriage bed, thereby removing the honour in it.

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Hebrews 13:4

When God told Adam that he would surely die if he ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17), he actually did not die physically; the spiritual death of separation from God took place. It took the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to rectify this (Romans 5:10-21). In same way, premarital sex takes honour out of marriage.

Don't be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows! Sexual sin has serious consequences such as broken fellowship with God, guilt, shame, loss of dignity, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, low self-esteem, stirred-up desires that can't be fulfilled, etc.

The repercussions will eventually catch up with you in the future. It is not a question of being 'seen' or 'caught', but a question of the seed you are sowing towards your future and that of generations to come. As far as sex before marriage is concerned, don't even go near it!

At this point, it is important for you to standardise your relationship. Healthy relationships require good, solid and well-defined boundaries. In

order to be preserved, boundaries must be in place. Make a commitment to each other, before emotions start rioting and keep to it. In such a commitment, consider how you would expect someone to treat your spouse; treat that lady/gentleman the same way!

For example, avoid visiting your future partner at Odd hours; discourage sexual acts like kissing, petting and hugging at all costs. Discourage visitations at your place, if you live alone and do not expose any private area of your body or dress up before each other.

If for any reason you are in a room together, definitely keep the door open! Always be in a place where you can be easily interrupted.

Think deeply on this: If you play the instruments, you'll get the music. So, avoid everything that looks like or is related to sex, as one thing leads to another.

Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (NKJV)

Be in control of your emotions and take control of your thoughts. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as He is your covenant Guide, Who will help you to know when and how to be careful by keeping you on alert.

Please be aware: Spending a great deal of time with one person increases the temptation to "get physical". Meanwhile, through physical contact, you can find yourself in a terrible emotional predicament before you realise what is happening. So, be careful!

Other areas of caution include never owning a joint bank account, hoping that will commit you both to getting married. If you want to have a joint account, wait till after marriage. Do not fund his/her business, either!

Wisely suggest what you want your partner to do or wear, or how to behave in public; never impose anything on him/her during or after courtship.

Do not give expensive gifts in order to impress or buy love and do not make financial demands on him/her, as he/she is not financially obliged to you in any way yet! Do not borrow or lend.

Be "single-eyed" and avoid flirting with others (Matthew 6:22).

A successful courtship period is expected to lead to family introduction, engagement and eventually, marriage.

It is important to note here that neither family introduction nor engagement (whether customary or traditional wedding) is equivalent to marriage for a child of God.

God, and not your parent's culture or tradition, is the Originator of marriage. Therefore, it is important you honour God, His Word and the institution of marriage by ensuring that you and your future partner are joined together in Holy Matrimony. This should be done in Church and before a crowd of witnesses, to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

However, many relationships do not end on a good note. This is because they have not harnessed the benefits of a good courtship. These benefits can be experienced by developing good communication in the dating process.

Courtship is not yet *marriage* or *commitment* to marry.

Don't put yourself in a *compromising* situation.

Honour God's *design* for marriage, even before you enter it, by *paying* attention to your deeds.

Chapter 9 - Prepare To Marry

Marriage is honourable...

Hebrews 13:4

God designed marriage for honour. This implies that He wants you to have a wonderful, fulfilling lifetime with a special mate, in marriage. However, success is not a gift but the product of raw materials that have been appropriately processed.

The Bible says:

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way Prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

There are fundamentals that can be drawn from the Word and when applied, deliver to you good success in marriage. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Adequate Knowledge**

Many of the problems in marriages today result from a poor understanding of proper dating. Remember cause and effect never fail! Adequate knowledge will help you to create success, as well as avoid problems.

The Bible says:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou (you) hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee (you), that thou (you) shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou (you) hast forgotten the law of thy (your) God, I will also forget thy (your) children.

Hosea 4:6

And ye (you) shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32 (Emphasis Mine)

You must have clear understanding of God's purpose for marriage. He wants to raise a couple, fulfilling His call together, pleased with each other, certainly, but primarily focused on Him, not on their own pleasures.

Someone has said, "Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking together in the same direction."

A successful marriage depends largely on adequate knowledge about God's principles, and how He designed marriage to succeed. When you focus on God's principles instead of your pleasure, you will end up having a very satisfying and pleasant marriage. Many think that love is the only fundamental requirement; while love is important, knowledge is equally important.

God designed marriage for honour. This implies that He wants you to have a wonderful, fulfilling lifetime with a special mate, in marriage.

Many marriages end up in crisis because such individuals get married without adequate knowledge of the fundamental principles.

Knowledge on marriage can be obtained from reading, studying and meditating on God's Word. Also, knowledge can be contacted from Christian literature about marriage. However, you must be very selective about the books you read. Select Christian literature whose authors have proofs or good testimonies of marriage.

However, knowledge acquired will only profit you when acted upon.

The Bible says:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

James 1:22

Marriage is the total commitment of a man and woman as husband and wife, to Jesus Christ individually and then to each other. If someone is not committed to Jesus, don't expect such individual to be committed to you; total commitment to Jesus is fundamental. Make God's Word the standard for your relationships and you'll be glad you did!

• **Personal Wholeness**

Singleness is about wholeness, and personal wholeness is a necessary requirement for a successful marriage. If two people that are "wounded" get into marriage, it will end up in crisis.

The Bible says:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 1:27

God created you to be a complete person. It is only as a wholesome person that you can be a blessing to someone else, because what you do not have, you cannot give. So, work at becoming a complete, mature and responsible person, first.

Remember: There is nothing magical about marriage. It will not suddenly transform you into who you are not. Marriage is not an escape route from the challenges of life. Whatever you take into marriage is what you get from it.

You cannot make a good omelette out of bad eggs. In God's arithmetic, it is a wholesome man and a wholesome woman that make a wholesome marriage. This is why God created you whole and complete.

Sadly, many people go into marriage with unrealistic expectations. Remember that your emotional well-being is not in the hand of anyone but you. Please understand: In as much as it is important to marry the right person, it is equally important for you to be a right person.

It is your responsibility to achieve personal wholeness before marriage. "Responsibility is the price of greatness," declared Winston Churchill. Issues such as unforgiveness, bitterness, abuse and lust need to be addressed before marriage. There should be no area of unrepentant sin.

To be personally whole, carefully consider the following:

- **Break Loose From Your Negative Past**

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

Acts 17:30

Most of us do not come from perfect family backgrounds. This implies we have negative pasts. For instance, considering your family background, the relationship between your left your parents left you wounded and battered in one way or another. Even some of us were raised in non-Christian homes by unbelieving parents. Besides, some from perfect homes have been messed up in one way or another spiritually and

emotionally. You cannot undo your negative past, but you can be healed and recover from it.

No matter what your own case may be, it is still possible to have a great marriage; but this will require that you break loose from your negative past. If you intend to go forward, you cannot be looking backward at the same time. You must allow the past to pass by letting go of it. Until you let go of your negative past, you cannot lay hold on your colourful future.

To break loose from past wounds, take the following steps:

- ***Repent***

The first step to take in order to break loose from the past is repentance. What did you do wrong? Go before the Lord and ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Ask God to open a new chapter to your life.

- ***Forgive yourself***

After repentance, you must forgive yourself. Many people have a hard time forgiving themselves, even after they have asked God for forgiveness. This ought not to be so. Yes, you have done wrong, but God has forgiven you and so, you must forgive yourself.

- ***Forgive others***

In case you have been a victim of hurt caused by others, that is, someone abused you sexually or emotionally, you have to forgive them. Whoever the person may be and no matter how painful it is, you need to forgive them, because God commands it (Colossians 3:13). Also, note that forgiveness brings healing.

- ***Refrain***

You must ensure that you refrain from past wrong acts and never go back to them. You cannot afford to continue in sin and expect grace to

abound (Romans 6:1). Endeavour to allow old things to pass away and become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- **Package Yourself Appropriately**

To package yourself appropriately, you need to work on yourself through personal development efforts. This includes, but is not limited to, packaging yourself spiritually and physically.

- ***Spiritual packaging***

"How do I package myself spiritually?" you may ask. By this I mean, having a quality walk with God and continually submitting yourself to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Being under the influence of the Holy Spirit at all times influences the things you do, what you say and your thoughts.

This Scripture makes this very clear:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Romans 8:4-6

The process starts with a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Simply put, spiritual packaging starts with you being born again. This is then sustained by a daily walk with the Lord that requires studying His Word and developing a life of prayer.

Decide that no day passes without a dose from God's Word; because what physical food is to your body is what the Word of God is to your spiritual life. You cannot afford to be famished spiritually.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Colossians 3:16

Develop a quality walk with God in your prayer life. Be a Christian that creates adequate time for communion with God, and prayer is about communing with God (Luke 18.1). Among other things, prayer helps you

to be a spiritually sensitive Christian. That way, your thoughts will become pure, righteous and holy.

Philippians 4:8 says:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Spiritual sensitivity makes it easy for you to catch the signal when the Spirit of God speaks to you on the subject of marriage. So, be spiritual in all that you do.

- ***Physical Packaging***

This has to do with your appearance. Remember: You do not have a second chance to make a first impression! If you desire to enjoy a successful marriage, you must know how to work on your physical appearance, because the way you dress is the way you will be addressed (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Interestingly, when Pharaoh sent for Joseph, the first thing Joseph did was to shave himself and change his raiment. Joseph worked on his appearance and made himself presentable (Genesis 41:14). Always appear like a child of God, dignified and respectable! Your physical appearance should not depict carelessness, irresponsibility or that you are disorganised.

- ***Build Character***

The Bible says:

Ye (you) are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 (Emphasis Mine)

Let me tell you: Loose conduct can easily get people into tight places. Your character is your behaviour. Read this next scripture also very carefully:

For yourselves know how ye (you) ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 (Emphasis Mine)

Clearly, character is the foundation for destiny. Your character is your true person. It is not what you wear, your name, fame, neither is it a gift; it is a choice you make to a faithful, honest and disciplined person. It is the foundation for your future home and the stabiliser of your marital destiny. Character has to do with every area of your life. It is your responsibility to build your character! Remember: You can be morally upright in this immoral world.

- ***Serve God Unreservedly***

The Bible says:

But seek ye (you) first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 6:33 (Emphasis Mine)

As you prepare to marry, ensure that you constantly seek opportunity to render service unto God; remember that service has rewards. Get involved in serving God willingly, joyfully, faithfully, sacrificially and wholeheartedly. Prayerfully locate areas where you can serve God, especially, in your local Church. Be actively involved in a service group; serve God with your resources (financial and material), etc. The reward of faithful service includes being blessed with a successful marriage.

Concluding the Dating Process

The Bible enjoins us to do everything to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Dating is no exception, but is, in fact, one area where this instruction must be observed.

If you are a born-again child of God, your entire approach to the dating process has to reflect that. Being born again means you have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and have been translated to the spiritual Kingdom, where Jesus rules (Colossians 1:13). This implies God expects you to date and marry a person who belongs to the same spiritual

family as you, someone who is also born again and a committed Christian. The Bible states clearly:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14

This has nothing to do with how 'nice' or 'good' a person is, but the condition of their spirit. Anyone that is not born again and not a committed Christian does not deserve your consideration.

The Bible says:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Dating or marrying an unbeliever should not even be an option no matter what! I cannot emphasise this enough because it is absolutely crucial. Remember that marriage is meant to last a lifetime, so take care not to start wrongly by being unequally yoked. You will not be spiritually compatible and this will hinder the power in agreement between both of you. The power of agreement is an invaluable asset to a marriage that will succeed.

Also, do not plan to 'convert' someone with the intention of dating them or to date someone with the intention of converting them. This is dangerous, as someone may just play along and act 'saved' all in a bid to get you, only to put on his/her true nature after the wedding.

Develop a quality walk with God in your prayer life.

There is a first-class husband or wife that God has destined for you. Stay true to God, shun all appearances of evil and make a decision for purity, holiness, integrity and righteousness.

As I conclude this book, I want you to always remember that the starting point of a relationship between a Christian man and woman is an understanding that their coming together is not by chance, but by the supernatural hand of God (Romans 8:30).

A strong love for one another must exist, and be on the build-up (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). You both must be spiritually mature, emotionally

stable and physically mature to parent children. God places an emphasis on *man* not *boy* in Genesis 2:24.

Making a success of marriage requires physical stamina, objective reasoning, being considerate, etc. One that is mature for marriage should be able to accept responsibility for his/her actions and look after the welfare of his/her spouse and children.

Both of you should propose and agree on the number of children to have and whether brothers and sisters from your families can live with you, and from what period after the wedding.

Marriage is *honourable in all* only if the bed is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19-21). There is no room for sex or anything that leads to it before marriage. Keep the marriage bed undefiled. Keep your sexual drive in neutral until after marriage. Set boundaries and refuse to eat the "forbidden fruit"

As you apply the principles already discussed, your marriage shall surely emerge successful. May you enjoy for a glorious marriage that will serve as a testimony for others to follow!

May you enjoy a very happy marriage!

The basis of *satisfactory* preparation for marriage is to *enhance* your worth in all areas of life. Besides, spend much time in prayer, asking God for guidance, choice and His *perfect* will for your life.

Things I Don't Want You To Forget

Chapter 1: A Biblical Perspective

The Bible does not endorse the *recreational* or *shopping around* kind of dating that the world practises today.

Dating someone who doesn't have a *personal relationship* with Christ is playing with fire. **Beware!**

Sensible and profitable dating is a process for *information gathering* and *relationship building*.

Chapter 2: Why Date?

If you are not *eligible* to marry, or there is no *possibility* of marriage with another person, then **don't date!**

Dating is **not** marriage; therefore, do not *relate* with each other as *husband and wife*.

Dating is the time to *find out* about the person you intend to spend the *rest* of your life with.

Chapter 3: The Healthy Process of Dating

Never defile the marriage bed through *sexual activity* or anything that can lead to it.

Don't be *desperate*, it will impair the *effectiveness* of your *evaluation*.

A successful Christian dating relationship will earn you *trust, honour* and *respect* from your spouse in future.

Chapter 4: But, How Do I Know?

God wants the **best** for us in every area of our lives, including **relationships**.

Good **understanding** of yourself and your purpose will help you to succeed in that relationship.

One big **mistake** some singles make is that they confuse or **equate sex** with love. Don't be deceived.

Chapter 5: Don't Just Talk, Communicate!

Listening is not just about hearing; it involves paying **attention** to your partner.

Next to **love**, the most important ingredient in a relationship is **communication**.

It is crucial to **discuss** family matters and how either of you can **deal** with them.

Chapter 6: Consider These Things...

As a Christian, **chastity** is not only limited to your actions, but also includes your **thoughts** and **words**.

Do **not** pretend you do not have feelings; rather **express** your desires to defer them until you are married.

At the beginning of your dating relationship, come up with **scriptural, physical** and **emotional boundaries**.

Chapter 7: Traps To Avoid

Spend **quality** time with God **daily**, drawing strength from His word, in order to be able to **resist** temptation.

Your **future** is largely dependent on the influence of the people you **associate** with.

Set **boundaries**; be not unequally yoked and make **purity** your top **priority**.

Chapter 8: More On Christian Courtship

Work on yourself and make sure you are not carrying **any** baggage of **past hurts**.

Courtship is the period between when two people of **opposite sex** agree to get married and when they **actually** get married.

A **successful** courtship period is expected to lead to family **introduction**, **engagement** and eventually **marriage**.

Chapter 9: Prepare To Marry

Making a **success** of marriage requires physical stamina, objective reasoning and being **considerate**.

If you are a **born-again** child of God, your entire approach to the dating process has to reflect that.

When you **focus** on God's **principles** instead of your pleasure, you will end up having a very **satisfying** and pleasant marriage.

SALVATION PRAYER

The only condition God places before you to becoming His child is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Saviour (**Romans 10:10**). Having considered this truth, you can now say this prayer:

Father, I realise that I have been a sinner.

Today, I come before You asking for forgiveness of my sins. I believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and I believe in His power to save me if I ask Him to.

Now Lord, save me, accept me as Your child and write my name in the book of life. I receive and accept You today as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank you, Father, for saving me, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

ABOUT THE *Author*

Faith Abiola Oyedepo has, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, brought hope, joy and peace into many families and homes.

For many years since she received the ministry for families and homes, she has in no little measure dedicated her life to showing people the perfect will of God concerning their family relationships and homes. Her regular and scintillating weekly newspaper and internet columns - Family Matters, Family Success and Family Life, among others - have helped in no small measure in achieving this goal.



Also, she has a divine mandate to enrich the lives of singles and unmarried persons in a unique way.

She reaches out to the less privileged, the needy and those in the valley of decision, through her Faith Abiola Oyedepo Foundation (FAOF).

Pastor Faith has written over 20 anointed and impactful books that have transformed many lives and given them change of stories, including her best-selling title: *Rescued From Destruction*.

An anointed preacher of the Gospel, Pastor Faith has been doggedly supportive of her husband (Dr David O. Oyedepo, the Visionary/President Of Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc.) in the work of the ministry. They are parents to four children - David Jr., Isaac, Love and Joys.

Books By Faith Oyedepo

- Dating: A Biblical Guide
- The Force Of Joy
- The Force Of Hope
- Building A Successful Family
- Making Marriage Work (*Co-authored with Dr David Oyedepo*)
- Success In Marriage
- Marriage Covenant
- Raising Godly Children
- Rescued From Destruction
- Single With A Difference
- The Effective Minister's Wife
- The Spirit Of Faith
- A Living Witness (*Expanded version*)
- Nurturing The Incorruptible Seed (*Expanded version*)
- Service: The Master Key (*Expanded version*)
- The Dignity Of The Believer (*Expanded version*)
- Growing In Grace
- The Power Of The Communion Table
- Healing, Health And Wholeness
- Overcoming Anxiety
- Salvation: The Way Of Escape
- The Healing Scriptures
- The Healing Ministry Of Jesus Christ
- You Are Welcome To God's Family
- Understanding Motherhood

INSIDE VIEW OF

Faith Tabernacle

Dr David Oyedepo is the Founding President of the Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc. and the Senior Pastor of the Faith Tabernacle, a 50,000 capacity sanctuary located in Canaanland, Ota, a suburb of Lagos, Nigeria.

The construction of this gigantic architectural masterpiece was completed within twelve months and dedicated on September 18, 1999, built totally debt-free and without any foreign inputs! To God alone be all the glory.

Today, Faith Tabernacle stands as the home of signs and wonders for men and women all over the world, who keep coming in droves to worship the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God.



OUTSIDE VIEW OF FAITH TABERNAACLE



OVERVIEW OF FAITH TABERNAACLE



Visit our website for more information: www.faithtabernacle.org.ng

Covenant University



Dr David Oyedepo is the Visioner and Chancellor of Covenant University, founded 21st October 2002. Today, Covenant University has a student population of over 6,000, all fully boarded on campus; in state of the art halls of residence. All degree programmes offered at Covenant University are fully accredited by the appropriate accrediting body. Presently, CU offers 42 degree programmes in 3 different faculties:

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:

Computer Science, Management Information System, Architecture, Building Technology, Estate Management, Industrial Mathematics, Industrial Chemistry, Industrial Physics, Biochemistry, Biology, Microbiology, Computer Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering.

COLLEGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:

Philosophy, Psychology, Counselling, English Language, Mass Communication, Public Relations and Advertising, Sociology and French.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:

Accounting, Taxation and Public Sector Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Marketing, Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, Economics, Demography and Social Statistics, International Relations, Political Science, Public Administration, Policy and Strategic Studies.

Visit our website for more information: www.covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Some Facilities at **Covenant University**



Landmark University



Senate Building

Landmark University is a product of the education mandate given to Dr David Oyedepo, the President of the Living Faith Church Worldwide. Dedicated on the 21st of March 2011, it is the second university to be established by the church.

The vision of the University is to raise leaders with particular emphasis on promoting agricultural enterprise. The purpose of this focus of the University is to provide a learning platform that makes her graduates, leaders in meeting the food needs of the nation and solving the food security challenges of humanity.

The teaching, research and community services of the University are weaved around the intellectual and natural resource endowment of her immediate community.

Landmark University Offers the following courses:

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COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & ENGINEERING:

Industrial Chemistry, Industrial Mathematics, Industrial Physics, Computer Science, Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Electrical And Information Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Agricultural Engineering.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES:

Accounting, Banking And Finance, Business Administration, Economics, Sociology, Political Science, International Relations.

Visit our website for more information: www.lmu.edu.ng

Some Facilities at **Landmark University**



DATING

A BIBLICAL GUIDE

No area of human existence is as volatile as premarital relationship. It is like a proverbial coin which has two sides to it, capable of offering endless ecstasy and glee or phenomenal heartaches and despair. A lot of singles have been victims of promising dating relationships that went sour. The result is that the society and even the church pews are filled with an innumerable number of people living with heartbreaks.

There seems to be no better time in our history than now to launch a redirection in the perceptions of the youth who have painfully been offered unwholesome solutions to questions bordering on:

- Who is qualified for dating?
- At what age should I start dating?
- What makes my date a right choice for marriage?
- What if this person turns out to be someone other than whom I think I'm marrying?
- What if I get bored with him/her in marriage?
- What becomes of my individuality, career, talents, dreams, etc., in marriage?

In *Dating: A Biblical Guide*, Pastor Faith Oyedepo, a proven life coach on this timeless subject, gracefully steers the singles through such bugging questions and a lot more. In her typical calculated manner, she raises the curtain on the grey areas less talked about, with intent to illuminating the less travelled path that leads to successful dating and ultimately a successful married life. This book will open you to truths often concealed and facts rarely disclosed. It is time to leap out of the acceptable to the profitable.


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