

## Choosing Whom to Date

1 Corinthians 15:33 HCSB Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

I'm going to begin by covering some texts that I feel are related to the subject at hand, commenting briefly on each one as we move along. Only after we've examined the Scriptures will I draw some derashot, some practical applications of what we've learned, ok?

The phrase Paul quotes here in 1 Corinthians 15 was a current saying that was made popular by Thais of Menander, the comic poet, who took it from Euripides.<sup>1</sup> It's a cool quote and succinctly states an important truth. We need to be very much aware of this principle at all times, but singles that are choosing whom to date must be particularly aware of it. Those we listen to may have plenty to say but no knowledge of God, and Paul says that if we get the wrong information we may act wrong too! It's the old GIGO concept – Garbage In Garbage Out.

In our materialistic and status driven society, one of the principle factors in determining with whom we "hang out" is often their beauty or their caste. Yet, it is far more important that we determine the quality of the souls of those who will soon be an influence, not only on ourselves, but also possibly on our children. In our interactions with them their philosophies will, at least in some limited fashion, be transmitted into our minds through this contact.

It is not only those from "the wrong side of the tracks" who are a danger. We are probably in more danger<sup>2</sup> of yielding to the views of those who are consumed by status and luxuries, than we are to those who traffic in drugs, beat their wives, or abuse their children.

Solomon has much to say on this matter. He said, "*Do not do as the wicked do or follow the path of evildoers. Avoid their haunts. Turn away and go somewhere else.*"<sup>3</sup>

Solomon also says,

- **Proverbs 18:24 HCSB** A man with many friends may be harmed, but there is a friend who stays closer than a brother.

Too many parents not only allow but *encourage* their children to begin calling other children "boyfriends" and "girlfriends" – even as early as the first grade! What kind of foolishness is that? How can such an immature person even begin to comprehend the complexities of the courting relationship? Even if they could, why would you set their feet on that path toward sexuality so young anyway? These kids grow up to become teens that glibly move from relationship to relationship, dropping and picking them up with more regularity than they do the clothes in their rooms. To those parents who are foolish enough to allow such nonsense Solomon says "*with this many shallow friends, your child runs an increased risk of harm.*" Far better that your child have few friends, even only one, but that they stick closer than brothers. The same message can be extended to those who actually ARE of an age when dating is suggested.

Turn if you will to:

- **Obadiah 1:10-11 HCSB** You will be covered with shame and destroyed forever because of violence done to your brother Jacob. (11) On the day you stood aloof, on the day strangers captured his wealth, while foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were just like one of them.

In this passage, God was addressing Edom. Edom was descended from Esau and that made them blood relatives to the folks in Jerusalem, but they just did not get along. Edom did not actually attack Jerusalem, but they did not help them either. They did not participate in

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iii.16

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 22:24-25

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 4:14

the attack, but they rejoiced about it. Though they did not directly attack the city, they did head off at the pass the ones who escaped and killed them.

You will stand somewhere. You can stand with God or your friends. When you stand by and let your friends mock other Christians or sacred things and remain silent, then you are as one of them. You are standing on the other side. If the one being mocked is a Christian, and you secretly enjoy their misery simply because they're someone you do not particularly like, then you are an Edomite at heart.

That Christian under fire is your blood brother and if you let the devil's kids beat on him and enjoy it, then you are not acting like God's kid. You are standing on the wrong side.

Turn to:

- **Luke 11:23 HCSB** Anyone who is not with Me is against Me, and anyone who does not gather with Me scatters.

This verse is related to Luke 9:50 where Jesus tells the disciples "Anyone who isn't against you is for you." In that earlier passage, Jesus was talking about a person who was driving out demons in Jesus' name. In other words, He was saying anyone who wants to fight evil is on the same side as the disciples who are also fighting evil spiritual forces. In this wicked world, we need as many allies as we can. We have so much to fight that we don't need to pick unnecessary fights.

In spiritual warfare, a person who is not on God's side is on Satan's. There is no neutral territory. Anyone not actively FOR Christ is AGAINST Christ. Because God has already set in motion the successful outcome of the war, why be on the losing side? Why choose losers as potential dates?

Don't choose people who are doing evil. Don't choose people who prefer immorality and are materialistic. Don't choose people who are apathetic about evil. Instead choose someone who is already actively struggling against the devil. Do this and you make God your ally.

Turn to:

- **Romans 16:17-18 HCSB** Now I implore you, brothers, watch out for those who cause dissensions and pitfalls contrary to the doctrine you have learned. Avoid them; (18) for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

You may be looking at a person who claims to be a Christian. They may agree to go to church with you simply because you're attractive to them. You need to be very careful of falling for "smooth talk and flattering words". Check out the rest of their lives. Are they getting along with their family? Are they getting along with their co-workers? Do they tend to trash other people? Generally speaking, I've found that the way people describe others reveals a lot about themselves. For instance, if they tend to think everyone lies, odds are they are subject to that particular sin.

Turn to:

- **1 Corinthians 5:9-11 HCSB** I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- (10) by no means referring to this world's immoral people, or to the greedy and swindlers, or to idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. (11) But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a reviler, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person.

The Bible teaches that the standard is higher for Christians, not lower. Some people hold a mistaken notion that "grace covers it all" and that "love covers a multitude of sins". By this they mean that we should wink at sin and be more patient with people who claim to be fellow believers. That is not the biblical teaching. Paul says that if they claim to be believers but are not walking godly lives that you should not have anything to do with them.

- **2 Corinthians 6:14-15 HCSB** Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? (15) What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

I would be more likely to marry two people of different racial and cultural backgrounds than two who are spiritually opposed. I would be more likely to marry a spendthrift with a scrooge than a believer to a non-believer. There are too many fundamental differences; differences in church attendance, values, priorities, child discipline, and the handling of finances...I could go on and on. Marrying an unbeliever is nearly a foolproof manner of destroying a potential marriage.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:11 HCSB** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.

Life is full of hardship. You will be faced with many crises, some of which are unique to someone in a relationship. There are dangers that face those who are dating or those who are married that singles will never have to worry about. You have enough on your plate – you don't need to deal with a difficult, negative, opinionated, self-serving person on top of it all.

After looking at all these issues that face the person who is trying to navigate the social reefs of dating, all I can say is,

- **2 Peter 3:17 HCSB** Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of the immoral and fall from your own stability.

In the end though, the possibility of a strong, healthy, mutually serving, mutually supportive relationship is worth the effort.

- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 HCSB** Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. (10) For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. (11) Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? (12) And if somebody overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

A horse can pull 1000 pounds, but two horses together can pull 3000 pounds. Though singletons can better focus on their service to God, the simple fact remains that two united people can end up doing more...IF they are actually pulling together.

So, let's wrap this up by drawing some practical derashot shall we?

#### **Derashot:**

1. **Never ever date an unbeliever.** Do not "missionary date", that is, date a person in the hopes of winning them to the Lord. What if they say they have but are lying or confused?
2. **Do not go out – even once – with someone who claims Christ but regularly denies Him with their life.** Paul says to not even eat with them.
3. **Never date someone who is rude.** If they will be rude to others they will, once they relax, be rude to you.
4. **Never date someone who is unjust.** If they will break rules to be with you, they will break rules once they are with you. A person who will cheat on his wife to be with you, will cheat on you once you're his wife, for instance.

5. **Never date someone who is critical of the godly.** Someone who either criticizes those who are trying to be righteous as “holy rollers” or mocks those who are trying to be good will criticize you, insult you, or mock you – even if you don’t actually try very hard to be good. That kind of negativity is a habit. They won’t be able to keep it from spilling into your relationship.
6. **Give the benefit of the doubt within reason.** “Love believes all things and hopes all things”. On the other hand,
7. **Don’t be gullible.** Trust but verify until you get to truly know the person. Remember that people tend to put their best foot forward in a courtship. What you are seeing is their absolute best to the point of pretense! If you’re not too happy about THAT, what’s going to happen when you see the real them?
8. **Ask godly people what they think of the person BEFORE you start dating them.** Ask before you get so emotionally invested that it’s too hard to do the right thing. Ask before they get emotionally invested and get their hearts hurt if you break up with them.
9. **Only date someone you would honestly consider marrying.** If there’s no way you would ever marry them, why waste their time and yours? If you do, you are only using them and that’s a sin.
10. **Only date someone who shares your core values.** Differences in culture, background, race, etc. can be overcome if you share these core values. I’ve seen people that were decades older than their spouse succeed. I’ve seen couples who could barely speak each other’s language succeed. I’ve seen mixed-race marriages succeed. All these, though they are real issues that must be dealt with, are irrelevant to the following:

**a. Spiritual Values**

Trust Christ as Savior and Lord  
 Love God with a whole heart and serve Him  
 Childlike faith  
 View life from God's agenda  
 Trust the Scriptures  
 A broken and contrite heart  
 Tenderhearted  
 Humble  
 Hunger after righteousness  
 Fear (reverence) of God  
 Depend upon God  
 Forgiving  
 Full of hope  
 Submissive

**b. Civic and Cultural Values**

Law abiding  
 Socially minded  
 Balanced patriotism  
 Convictions about specific issues  
 Sense of Christian ethics

**c. Relational Values**

Respect for others  
 Friendly  
 Gracious

Compassionate  
Merciful  
Caring  
Thoughtful  
Kind  
Helpful  
Giving  
Generous

**d. Moral Values**

On what do you base your moral choices?  
Stands on specific moral issues

**e. Lifestyle Values**

How you spend your time each day  
Emphasis on material things  
Work ethic  
Emphasis on relationships  
Mission mindset

**f. Family Values**

Commitment to your mate  
Importance of commitment to each other as a family  
Importance of grandparents and relatives

**g. Personal-Development Values**

Personal health convictions  
Intellectual growth  
Developing skills and hobbies  
Cleanliness  
Discipline

**h. Character Values**

Honest  
Loving  
Truthful  
Faithful  
Trustworthy  
Obedient  
Teachable  
Tolerant  
Temperate  
Patient  
Loyal  
Morally pure  
Financially ethical