



**Educate
+ Engage**



SERIOUS
RELATIONSHIPS:



physical
Boundaries

OVERVIEW

People who are dating sometimes feel like they have physical entitlements to each other. Couples often quickly journey through romantic milestones that lead to sexual temptation. Clearly Christians can't date like most people in the world date and honor God at the same time. Healthy boundaries ensure we do not reflect an ungodly dating culture.

Scripture Passage

I Corinthians 6:13, 18–20

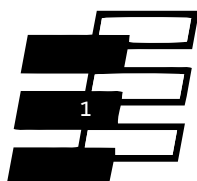
"Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

EDUCATE

Present-day culture evangelizes the notion that sexuality is our choice, not God's. People celebrate sexual freedom and roll their eyes at the idea of virginity. Some of these mantras counter to the Bible are promoted:

- "If it *feels* right" rather than if it is right
- "If it makes you happy" instead of "if it makes you holy"
- "Be true to yourself" instead of being true to God
- "I was born this way" instead of being born again

We must admit that sexual temptation is a real thing, even for Christians. James, the pastor of the Jerusalem church, proclaimed that everyone is tempted (James 1:14). Everyone! Many Apostolics don't sufficiently consider boundaries in dating because they are overconfident and reject the notion that they can be tempted. Don't make the mistake of thinking you are too spiritual or devoted to be affected. Jesus taught all of us to pray that we will not enter into temptation. (See Luke 22:40.)



Physical Boundaries

Boundaries are not complicated. We see them every day in our neighborhoods. Fences, shrubs, and even mowed grass reveal boundaries to help homeowners know what their responsibility is and what it is not. Relationship boundaries are not as easy to see but are just as important. Many people who have experienced moral failures in their relationships didn't plan to fail; rather, they didn't have a plan to prevent failure. Like putting up a fence, predetermining physical boundaries helps keep purity in your life and sin out.

God sets the boundaries in our lives, not us. We don't have the liberty to put fences wherever we want. God's Word defines the line around His property. If there is ever a boundary dispute, His Word is final.

Let's Get Real

God's Word addresses every facet of human life, including our sexuality.

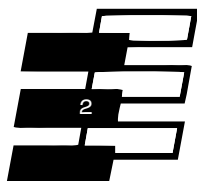
Although our body *was* created for procreation and intimacy, it was *not* created for sexual immorality.

God created sex for the purpose of procreation (Genesis 1:28). He also created sex for the purpose of uniting a man and woman in an intimate, complete, and enduring bond. Jesus said that "two shall become one flesh" (Mark 10:8). A husband and wife's intimacy is a celebration of their bond and protects the unity of their relationship. Hebrews 13:4 reads: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." The Bible teaches that sex is to be enjoyed only within the boundaries of a lifelong, committed marriage.

Sex is like fire with marriage as the fireplace. Fire in its proper place is beautiful. Out of its proper place, it will burn your house down. The National Library of Medicine discovered a clear association between first sexual experience at age fourteen to eighteen years old and sexual violence victimization, depression, and suicidal behaviors. ([ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6888888/). July 27, 2021.)

Friends and media may portray sexual activity as great, fun, exciting, and mature. Our culture argues that waiting for sex will make you unhappy. But the findings of the NLM study obliterate this notion, echoing what the Bible has said all along about the difficult path of the transgressor. (See Proverbs 13:15.) God's plan for reserving sex for marriage is for our good.

This is why the apostle Paul warned believers, "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). Flee sexual immorality. Do what Joseph did in Genesis 39 when his boss's wife tried to seduce him—he fled. God's plan is for your body to be a temple of His Spirit, but if you join yourself immorally to someone outside of marriage, it's not just sin; you've sinned against the very God-given purpose of your body.

Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 are clear: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." Abstain. Don't participate. Have zero tolerance. This admonition differs from the idea to experiment, just be careful. Then Paul reminded us we are responsible for our own actions. "That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor. Not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thessalonians 4:4–5). Don't make the other person responsible for stopping your passion. Practice self-control and set boundaries you will not cross.

Passion is natural; boundaries are not.

Passion is powerful. Passion without boundaries easily gives way to a "hands-on" relationship. Many people get a false read on their dating relationship because they are physically involved with each other. People who aren't in love can believe they are in love simply because of the sex. They think that because they are intimate with each other that they are right for each other. But if you can't keep your hands off each other, you are likely wrong for each other.

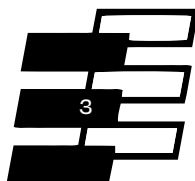
A relationship built on love is completely different from one built on lust. Love chooses to ascribe unsurpassable worth to someone, prioritizing them, not yourself. Lust is sexual desire without honor for the other person or for God. Love focuses on relationship; lust focuses on physicality. Love is measurable and observable; lust camouflages and distorts reality. Love can grow a "til death do us part" relationship; lust cannot. Love lasts; lust evaporates when the sensual aspects of a relationship become common.

Boundaries must be defined before you date, not while you're on a date.

Four Considerations for Setting Boundaries

The Law of Physical Touch

1 Corinthians 7:1, Paul taught: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Choosing not to touch in a sensual way is good because it honors boundaries, demonstrating restraint. We should factor the "it's good not to touch" perspective into the equation of building our own relationship boundaries.



Look at Paul's continuing strong words in I Thessalonians 4:6–7: "That no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." To defraud is to awaken a desire in the other person that can't be satisfied without sinning. Sensual contact encourages us to start something we're not supposed to finish. God will hold us accountable if we defraud another person. Rather than being slaves to our physical desires, we are empowered to be pure like our Creator.

The Law of Progression

Guys, if your first date involves picking up your lady in a limo, giving her two dozen roses, and taking her to the most expensive restaurant, what are you going to do on the second date? If you apply the law of progression, you start by taking her on a more economical excursion, and it only gets better from there.

If your physical boundary before marriage is holding hands, a side hug, and a simple kiss—and you're crazy if you do all that on the first date—where do you go from there? If you value holiness and purity, you must respect the law of progression. Remember, the person you are dating may not be the person you marry. You could be dating a person who will become someone else's spouse, so treat that person with respect.

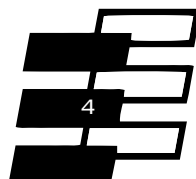
The Law of the Spirit

Staying connected to God in the season of serious relationships is critical. Many young people unconsciously disconnect from the Lord when they date because they are communicating more often with their boyfriend or girlfriend. Good boundaries won't be enough to hold you if you are not prioritizing the Spirit. Remember the first rule of dating? Love God first and most. If you walk in the Spirit, your boundaries will stand.

Don't Surrender!

Surrendering is not good if you are giving in to pressure or temptation. When two people date, they don't automatically have the same values or the same level of commitment to moral purity. Don't lower your boundaries for someone else. You don't become your boyfriend or girlfriend's property when you date; you still belong to God. The person you date must respect the Homeowner's (God's) boundaries. Some "God-honoring" boundaries are:

- Keep your hands off.
- Keep your clothes on.



Lesson 4

- Don't stay out late on dates.
- Don't go to secluded areas.
- Never go in a home alone.

Since you belong to God and God sets the boundaries, you must enforce them when they are challenged. If people pressure you to ignore a boundary, tell them you don't have the authority to change God's boundary. If they don't respect the fence, they are trespassing. Don't surrender God's boundaries.

Closing

If you visit a World Heritage Site (significant worldwide landmarks) such as a famous castle in Europe, you will see well-placed signs that clearly define what areas of the castle are accessible to the public. Because millions of people tour a famous landmark each year, officials don't want visitors touching the landmark or even walking on the grass. Hefty penalties are imposed on anyone trying to remove even a stone from the property as a souvenir. Although the restrictions may seem a bit excessive, they are designed to protect the site from the toll of so many visitors. If everyone takes liberties and does whatever they want, the site will no longer be a special place.

God deems you more precious than a World Heritage Site. He placed immeasurable value on you by purchasing you with His own blood and placing His Holy Spirit in your body (Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 6:19). For this reason, He has enacted special moral boundaries to protect the "site" where His Spirit dwells. Even if our world views His boundaries as excessive, they are designed to preserve His people from being trodden down and devalued.

ENGAGE

Though direct, this lesson's content is not meant to embarrass or insult. Grace is available to anyone who has made a mistake in this area. Allow God's boundaries to protect and preserve you. Set those boundaries now before you need them, vow to God and others that you will not surrender them, and keep your vow.

