



**Educate
+ Engage**



SERIOUS
RELATIONSHIPS:



God
and you

~~THE~~ OVERVIEW

Decisions about dating should be made **before** you date. Romantic relationships can exact a high price mentally, emotionally, and physically. They also affect the most important part of life—your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here is a typical dating cycle that doesn't end in marriage:

- Attraction (infatuation)
- Commitment
- Reality
- Conflict
- Break Up
- Grief
- Healing (sometimes)

According to weddingstats.org, the average person is in four serious relationships before they marry. We probably know people who have doubled that number and are not married yet. Imagine going through the dating cycle four or more times! Many marriages fail because of unhealed wounds from previous relationships that were brought into the couple's union.

It matters to God who you're going to marry; therefore, it also matters to Him who you date. We should consult Him about when and how we date. As Christians, we must be led by God's Spirit and Word in every area of life, including and especially this one.

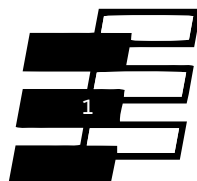
Scripture Passage

Mark 12:30

"And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

~~THE~~ EDUCATE

Many wonderful Apostolic young people have lost their way while dating. They had the reputation of being the spiritual superman or superwoman in their youth group, but dating was their kryptonite. Often no one foresaw disaster, including people stepping into unwise relationships. Weakness activated when infatuation set in, causing them to walk away from everything—their God, their church, and their calling. They traded anointing for attraction.



Lesson 1

In the Bible, we see people who won at life but lost at relationships.

Discussion Question: Can anybody think of someone in the Bible who "won" in life but "lost" in romantic relationships?

David: David was a man who loved God. When he was a boy (too young to even enlist in the army) he defeated a giant no warrior in Israel had the courage to fight. He became arguably the most successful king Israel ever had. He was a champ in war but a chump in relationships. A Philistine giant couldn't conquer David, armies couldn't conquer David, an insane king couldn't bring down David, but seeing a girl in a rooftop bathtub conquered him.

Samson: An angel appeared to Samson's mother before Samson was born and told her that her son was called to deliver Israel from their enemies. He was the Hebrew Hercules of the Old Testament. He became the judge of Israel (Judges 15:20). Yet, Samson chose to pursue women of the world rather than a woman of God's people, and that choice was his downfall.

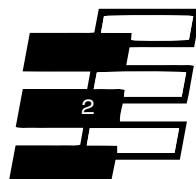
"Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?' And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well'" (Judges 14:1-3).

A thousand Philistine warriors couldn't subdue Samson, yet a worldly woman successfully separated him from his power. Choices have consequences. David's decision brought death and division in his family. Samson's decision meant he would die an underachiever with an unfulfilled calling. For better or worse, relationships have unintended consequences.

It's impossible to date and stay the same.

Relationships can hurt you or help you, draw you closer to God or push you further from Him. The kind of people you date and how you date indicate whether you will win or lose at romantic relationships in the future.

Before you can be intentional about dating, you must be intentional about prioritizing God and yourself. God deserves to be first in your life because He is our Creator, Savior, and Sustainer. As believers, we must understand that our lives belong to God. The apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 6:20: "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit,



Lesson 1

which are God's." You are His house, purchased, upgraded, and renovated by Him. Because we are bought at a price, we must reflect God's ownership in all things, including relationships.

The first rule of dating is to love God first and most: "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Dating doesn't start with a guy or a girl; it starts with God. When you love God wholeheartedly, nothing means more to you than He does. When you love God with all your soul, you love Him with all your personhood—including your mind, your will, and your emotions. When you love God with all your strength, your physical might, time, and talent testify of your love.

You are not ready to commit to a person until you have fully committed to God.

With **all** your heart! With **all** your soul! With **all** your mind! With **all** your strength! "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Your calling is not codependency; it's God-dependency. It is surprising how many people interpret incomplete feelings in their lives as a need for another person's involvement, when really their soul is crying out for God. Instead of seeking a holy, loving God, they search for a flawed person. No person can complete you; only God can complete you. Paul said as much in Colossians 2:10: "You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

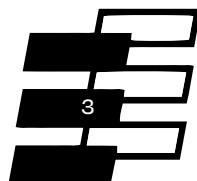
Working On You

Do you use lists? Maybe you write down things you want to get done on a given day or items you need to get from the store or cheat codes for your favorite game. Lists help us remember the important stuff.

Activity: Making a Non-negotiables List

(You will need a writing board, a large post-it paper, or a screen that students can see as you create the list.)

- What nonnegotiable qualities should an Apostolic look for in a potential spouse? (Write down student responses.)



Lesson 1

Here is a list made by one Apostolic teenager:

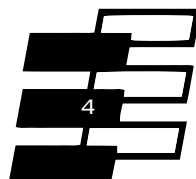
- Loves God more than he loves me
- Prays and reads his Bible every day
- Faithful in prayer
- Prays for others
- Does not miss an altar call
- A true worshiper
- Beautiful to me
- Organized and structured
- Treats everyone with respect no matter who it is
- Does not put status in front of talking to someone
- Willing to be a missionary
- Has an opinion instead of just going with the flow
- Makes me want to be better for him
- Loves my family
- Gets along with others

Everybody should make a similar list to help them focus on what is important in a spouse. If you don't know who is right for you, you won't be able to identify who is wrong for you.

Become the right person before you attempt to find the right person.

Are you the kind of a person a truly amazing, authentic Apostolic would seek? In I Timothy 4:16, Paul told young Timothy to take heed unto himself. It's easy to be distracted from the truth about ourselves. Look at the non-negotiables list we made together. Do you meet those standards, especially the spiritual ones? If you are not living on the non-negotiable level, you don't deserve someone who is. Examine yourself in light of God's truth. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:33-34, KJV).

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (I Corinthians 13:11, NKJV). The phrase *put away* means "to render inoperative." It's time to render inoperative the childish things in our lives. It's childish not to have a prayer life or a Word life. It's childish not to have discipline. Be sure that you are not a NO GO in relationships due to NO prayer, NO praise, NO Word, NO submission, NO consecration, or NO self-control.



Closing

Do not pursue a relationship with a guy or girl until you passionately pursue your relationship with God. Safeguard against danger. Make a list of the non-negotiables you are looking for in a future spouse. Also thoughtfully examine yourself.

ENGAGE

Which non-negotiables do you need to improve in your life?

- It's not enough to itemize what you expect from Mr. or Mrs. Right.
- What does God expect from you?
- What do you expect from yourself?
- Do the right things until the right things are not only what you do, but who you are.

