



FREE

10

**POWERFUL TIPS
TO PREPARE
YOU FOR A
SUCCESSFUL
CHRISTIAN
DATING
RELATIONSHIP**

MARK BALLENGER

*10 Powerful Tips
to Prepare You for
a Successful
Christian Dating
Relationship*

By Mark Ballenger

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Introduction

If you are a Christian single person who desires to be married one day, there is an important step in western culture that must occur before you can transition from singleness to marriage. As you know, this step is called dating.

“Dating” is not a biblical concept nor was it a regular practice that was used during the time periods the Bible was written.

However, nowhere does Scripture explicitly condemn this practice either. And so Christians are left with little direct counsel on this important season that we all use now days to go from a season of singleness into a season of marriage.

I don't believe this lack of biblical counsel about Christian dating should be the case. While God did not see fit to clearly explain in the Bible how dating should occur, this really isn't a surprise. Why? Because many,

many important areas of our lives are not explicitly spelled out in the Scriptures.

Apparently God did not want his people following line-by-line instructions to get through every detail of our lives. What God expects us to do is to apply what is in the Scriptures to the important areas of life that are not mentioned in the Bible. Contrary to what many well-meaning Christians say, the Bible is not like an encyclopedia where you can look up any topic you are curious about and gain information.

Rather than give us step-by-step directions about everything we must do in life, the Bible does something very different. The Bible doesn't give us every direct answer we need. Rather, the Bible gives us the information so *we can find* the answers to everything we need. While the Bible does not cover every subject of human activity, the Bible does give us all the truths, theology, and wisdom we need as humans

to walk through all of life in a God honoring way when we are following the Holy Spirit.

It's much like cooking. If a master chef is training her students, her method would not be to help them memorize every possible recipe for every possible dish on earth. Rather, she will teach her students the principles and art of cooking so they will have the ability to create whatever they want. This is what a good seminary does for students as well. It won't teach them every answer they will need to know. Rather it will teach them how to find the answers to the varying questions that will come their way.

Therefore, when it comes to Christian dating, this is my approach. We should not blindly enter into this season of life just hoping it goes well. But we also shouldn't expect to have a legalistic step-by-step plan either. Rather, we should do our best to come up with a plan that is biblically wise,

God honoring, Spirit led, and practically useful.

This mini-eBook is meant to help accomplish that goal. It is designed to be a quick guide for anyone who is hoping to prepare themselves for a successful season of Christian dating.

Within these 10 tips, my goal is not to give you all the information you will need in this season of life. Rather, I want to give you some of the most important tips I know to help you, and then you can continue to expand your knowledge in these areas as the Lord points out certain topics you need to explore more deeply.

If you do want some additional helpful resources to assist you in preparing even more for your season of Christian dating, I have a huge selection of free videos, free articles, and free eBooks available through AGW Ministries. This ministry is where all

my teachings for Christian singles can be found.

[To visit the AGW YouTube channel for free videos, click here.](#)

[To visit ApplyGodsWord.com for free articles and eBooks, click here.](#)

And finally, if you want the most in-depth Christian relationship training I offer, the best resource I have is AGW University. This is where I offer extensive biblical training courses to Christian singles in a format similar to a traditional online college or seminary.

[Click here to learn more about AGW University.](#)

Let's get started!

-Mark

Tip #1: Truly Determine If You Are Ready to Date So You Have Peace About This Defined Season of Life

One of the biggest problems I see Christians having during their season of singleness is not fully knowing what God wants them to do or not do. What happens when humans are unsure about something is that they usually just stay still. Therefore, if you are unsure of what God wants you to do in regards to dating, you most likely will stay stuck right where you are at in singleness.

This is why my first piece of advice to Christian singles who desire to be in a healthy dating relationship that is headed towards marriage is to first truly determine if you should or should not be in a season of Christian dating in general.

If you meet someone that you are interested in but you are conflicted inside about your readiness to date, you will feel

all kinds of confusions about this relationship.

Secondly, if you do start connecting with this person but you have not yet decided if God has released you to date in general, you will most likely feel guilty about building a relationship with this person without fully knowing if you should be dating at this point in your life.

Thirdly, when you are unsure of what God is calling you to do in regards to dating, you will most likely stay away from the opposite sex and prevent relationships from even starting. This is fine if you are not ready, but what if you are ready and you are just missing out on relationship opportunities for no reason?

Again, this is why I believe a successful season of Christian dating must begin with clearly settling in your heart if God is leading you to enter into an active season of being open to dating. Be all in or all out

when it comes to dating. If you decide you are not ready, you can work on maturing in the areas you need to as you walk with the Holy Spirit. If you are ready you can start interacting with the opposite sex without any unnecessary shame or doubts.

When you are unsure if God actually wants you in this season of actively being open to dating if the right person comes along, you are just going to prolong your season of singleness and waste your time. Again, when you are unsure you will just sit and wait, missing out on relationships or missing out on strategically growing in the areas holding you back from entering into a godly relationship.

The last benefit of clearly defining what season of life you are in is that you maximize your time when you know the purpose of this season of life. When you know you need to grow and mature more before dating, you will be way more intentional about accomplishing this goal

which will then speed up the process of maturing enough to begin dating. And if you know you are in a season where you are prepared to date, you will be far more likely to take advantage of the relationship opportunities God brings your way.

So how can you clearly determine if you are prepared to be in a season of being open to dating if the right person came along? Well, I unpack this at great length in my course called [Marriage Material](#); but essentially, I believe Christian dating should be focused on marriage. You don't need to know you want to marry the person you want to date. But I believe you should be in a season of life where you are prepared to marry if God brought the right person into your life. So if you are not prepared to get married in general, then I do not believe you should date anyone at this point in your life.

What is required for marriage according to the Bible? In [Marriage Material](#) I explain the three qualities needed for a successful

marriage according to Scripture: Being a Christian (Ephesians 2:8-10), bearing fruit for God (Galatians 5:19-26), and being mature enough to fulfill the biblical roles of marriage as defined by God (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Don't be confused when you meet someone you are interested in. Be ready to go. Be prepared. If you know you are not ready, you will not need to wonder what you should do. You will know you should not date this person and you should continue to focus on maturing more first.

If you do know you are ready to date, you will then be free to enter into a relationship without any guilt or confusion.

Tip #2: Study and Learn So You Know How to Approach This Active Season of Christian Dating

If you want to enter into a successful season of Christian dating that God can use to lead you to your spouse, you should not expect this to happen by accident.

Is God sovereign and ultimately in control of what happens in your relationships? Yes! But throughout Scripture it is also clear that God has given humans responsibility for certain parts of their life. One of those parts is knowledge.

What we do flows out of what we know. We know as a society that every child needs to be educated because without certain knowledge they are unable to be productive and self-sufficient adults. People go to college when they want to succeed in a certain career field. People read books and consult medical professionals when they want to improve their health. And yet,

when it comes to relationships, many times we just “wing-it” and hope for the best.

But why would you expect this season of life to go well if you have not actively prepared for this season to go well? While learning about Christian dating, relationships, and the opposite sex will not guarantee everything will go exactly as you planned, it will help you overcome a lot of unnecessary fears that flow from a lack of knowledge and confusion.

When you don't know about something important, like relationships, the Bible tells us to ask God for the wisdom we need, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).

One barrier that often keeps people from learning and developing a basic plan for their season of Christian dating is that they feel like this is a lack of faith. People feel

like if they really had faith in God they would just sit back, relax, and let God supernaturally arrange everything. This is not biblically consistent. Throughout the Bible faith in God and taking personal action steps in our lives are consistently linked (James 2:17).

The Bible does not say to not plan (Proverbs 21:5). It says to not worry. One passage that is often misquoted and used as an excuse to not plan or work hard is Matthew 6:25, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes.” Nowhere in this verse did Jesus say not to work or not to plan. He clearly said not to worry.

This is what we discuss in my course called [10 Steps to Meet The One: How to Take Steps of Faith Rather than “Just Waiting” in Fear](#). We must be content in our hearts and trust God for all the results (James 1:17),

but through studying God's word, the Holy Spirit will also lead us to take certain steps in real life that will cause us to meet the person God wants us to marry.

Sometimes you should feel anxious if you are being negligent about the future. Peace only comes when you are following God. Sometimes God puts a healthy pressure on us to motivate us to learn, plan, and act to accomplish the will he has for our lives and relationships. If you procrastinate and know you are not planning well for the future, you should not be at peace.

Peace is not the freedom to escape personal responsibility for what is in our control as humans. Peace is knowing that no matter how much you plan, bad things can still happen, and so ultimately you must trust God with everything, for as Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Jesus said put God first, but he never said to be irresponsible with your earthly responsibilities. Proverbs 21:5 says, “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.” Proverbs 20:4 states, “Sluggards do not plow in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.”

So if you really want to have a successful Christian relationship one day, you should take the time in your season of singleness to learn and grow so you are as prepared as possible to take the steps of faith God will lead you to take to accomplish his will for your future.

Tip #3: List Your “Must-Haves” Compared to Your “Preferences” When It Comes to Dating Someone

One of the worse poisons to actually meeting, dating, and marrying a godly person is “perfectionism.” Perfectionists, simply put, do not do well in relationships when they let their perfectionism go unchecked. Why? Because relationships are inherently unpredictable and messy.

One way people often try to protect themselves from the fears they have about relationships is by trying to find a perfect person. What is a perfect person? Well each of us would answer that questions differently. Some of us want an extrovert while others want an introvert. Some people want a spouse that is deeply theological while other people want a spouse who focuses more on experiencing God. Some women want a tall man and other women don't care. Some men want a

woman with a certain hair color and other men don't care.

My advice, however, is to start by first accepting there is no "perfect person" besides Jesus Christ. While I believe in the concept of "[the one](#)," all I mean by that term is that God actually has a plan for your future marriage and he knows who he has for you to marry. I don't believe there is "one perfect match for everyone" as many people believe.

So I don't think it is healthy to list a thousand traits you would want in a spouse and then hunt for that person who fits your list. Rather, I would create a list of qualities that are "absolutes" and qualities that are just "preferences." You should not compromise on the absolutes, but the preferences should be held loosely. If you start turning people away because of preferences, you might be single a long time.

What are the absolutes you should have on your list? I talk about this at great length in my course called [Marriage Material](#). The quick summary is that you should limit your absolutes to what the Bible actually says is required for Christian marriage. For example, Christians are called to only marry other Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14). Real Christians will bear the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). And God has designed husband and wives to bear his image in certain ways, so people should be prepared to fulfill the roles for a husband and wife as defined by the Bible (Ephesians 5:22-33).

I think you could add some other absolutes in specific cases. For example, if you feel led to live the life of an overseas missionary, you should add this requirement to your list of absolutes for a spouse. If you feel led to raise a family for the Lord, you should add the willingness to have children as an absolute on your list.

However, when it comes to preferences, you must be careful you do not elevate these qualities too highly. For one, you will vastly limit your relationship options and this could lead to a prolonged season of unwanted singleness. Idolizing certain qualities like money, physical attraction, or a love for a certain hobby can actually lead you into an unhealthy relationship. When you focus too much on preferences you might lose focus of the real qualities that are needed to have a successful relationship with someone.

It's important to clearly define what you are looking for so you don't have to waste emotional energy and time wondering about people that are actually not a good fit for you. When you take the time to define what you are looking for, you won't have to pray about every single person you meet to know if God is leading you to pursue that person.

For example, you don't have to pray about every person you like if they are not a Christian. God has spoken about unequally yoked relationships in his word (2 Corinthians 6:14), and when you know that is not an area you are willing to compromise on you will be able to guard your heart and keep moving forward without looking back with doubts.

So set yourself up for a successful season of Christian dating by knowing what type of person you are willing to be in a relationship with.

Tip #4: Create Natural Bridges to Christian Singles of the Opposite Sex

“There are just no Christians singles at my church.” “I live in a small town so my options are really limited.” “The only people who want to date me are non-Christians.”

Have you ever said something like this? If so, you are certainly not alone. One of the biggest barriers to a successful Christian dating relationship is opportunity. This is by far one of the most common frustrations I hear when I am coaching or corresponding with Christian singles who want to be married.

So what can you do? I teach a lot more deeply on this subject in my course called [10 Steps to Meet The One God Has for You](#), but in short I believe there are essentially three options for Christian singles who want to be married. The first goal they must accomplish is that they must meet a Christian single person.

Every marriage that ever occurred started with a man and woman meeting for the first time. While everyone's story is unique, by definition marriage requires a man and a woman. So the first step for marriage to occur is that you must meet singles of the opposite sex.

We can't guarantee any of these encounters will result in a romantic connection or even a friendship that grows into something more. But the one thing we can guarantee is that if you never meet other Christian singles you will never make a romantic connection with a Christian single person. Which brings me back to the three options to accomplish this goal of meeting the one God has for you.

When it comes to meeting someone, you can try the random option, the natural option, or the intentional option:

The random option is when you make zero effort to change anything in your life while

simultaneously hoping you meet an eligible Christian single person that you have a connection with. If you are hoping to meet a Christian single person at the grocery store, at the gym, or on your walk with your dog – this would be the random option. It is not a sin to try this option, but this is the least successful path to meeting other Christian singles.

The natural option is what most people use who find success even when they think they are using the random option. The difference between the two is that the random option is based on “luck” (speaking in human terms) and the natural option is based on odds.

For example, while it might seem random when people meet, date, and marry their spouse while attending a Christian college, the reality is that this is a very natural outcome. If you go somewhere that has thousands of Christian singles right at the age where they are getting ready for

marriage, it is very likely that many people will meet, date, and eventually get married to each other. People may have not enrolled in college to meet someone, but it is very natural when this happens.

Likewise, when people meet their future Christian spouse at church, on a mission's trip, or through a mutual Christian friend, these are natural outcomes. They may have not intentionally done these things to meet someone, but the odds of meeting other Christian singles are good when you go where other Christians singles are.

The intentional option is when you don't just naturally go places where Christians singles would be, it's when you intentionally go there with the purpose of trying to make a romantic connection.

Online dating would be the most obvious example for this option. You don't enroll for an online Christian dating website unless your goal is to specifically meet someone to

date. You can go to church to learn the word of God and naturally meet someone there too. But when you go to a “single and ready to mingle” speed dating event or something along those lines, now you are using the intentional path to meeting someone.

Again, I unpack this a lot more in [my course](#), but here’s my advice if you are a Christian single person who wants success in dating: Don’t try the random approach. Focus first on the natural approach, and if that is not working then try the intentional approach.

Tips #5: Work on Having a Low-Pressure Approach at the Beginning of a Relationships Opportunity

The beginning of anything is fragile. Babies, puppies, a new company, a sprouting tree – anything new is usually delicate and cannot support a lot of pressure.

The same is true at the beginnings of a relationship. One of the biggest mistakes I see Christians making in dating is that they put way too much pressure on a relationship before there is any evidence for that much hope.

This creates many spiritual and practical issues. On a spiritual level, Proverbs 13:12 states, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” I love this verse because it shows the good and bad of having hopes. Hoping for something is good. If you never hope a relationship works out you will become

hopeless which will keep you from even trying anything positive for fear of failure.

But as the beginning of this verse explains, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” So it does seem like we have a conflict here. If you don’t have any hopes you become hopeless. And if you hope a relationship happens but it doesn’t you will make your heart sick. So what’s the solution?

I teach on this topic at great length in my course called [Heart Check: How to Prepare Your Heart for a Godly Relationship](#). The key is to hope in things that are reasonable and likely to occur. In fact, our ultimate hope should always be in Jesus Christ alone because only God himself will truly never let us down. But on a practical level, the way forward is to increase the level of your hope with the level of likelihood it will be fulfilled one day.

We can fully hope in God because through faith we are certain he will come through

for us (Hebrews 11:1). When it comes to “relationship hopes,” however, you should not have “high hopes” early in a relationship because you still have “low evidence” that this relationship will progress into something serious. The more you get to know someone and the more you realize there is substance to your connection, then it is right to start having “higher hopes.”

On a technical level, I think this is one of the reasons Christian singles need to fully understand what Christian dating model they are using. Essentially there are two common models in the church: courting and dating. Most Christian singles follow one of these two approaches whether they know it or not.

I unpack both of these dating systems in my course called [10 Steps to Meet The One](#). In this course I fully define the guidelines of each system, the pros and cons, and the hybrid version that I recommend Christian

singles use for maximum results and heart health. Here's a really quick summary of what I talk about in that course.

Christian courting emphasizes a pre-courting phase that values friendship and group activities before any type of romantic interest is expressed. Through this pre-dating process you get to know someone so well, you basically decide if you want to marry them before courting. The courting season is the final step before engagement. Courting is very "marriage-centered" right from the start. There's a lot more to it than what I just mentioned, but in general courting has a lot more rules than dating and emphasizes "guarding your heart" because there is a perceived constant threat of damaging yourself through this relationship.

Christian dating usually starts by a man and woman going on a few dates. They might have known each other as friends first or

they could jump right into dating without knowing each other previously.

At this point the commitment level is very low and the two are just feeling each other out socially to see if they would like to become a boyfriend and girlfriend.

“Marriage” is a scary word to hear too soon.

The dating season usually has phases to it. When the dating relationship just starts it’s usually not considered “too serious” until a few months have gone by. The longer the dating relationship lasts, the more serious this relationship becomes. Eventually the couple gets so serious and committed to one another they get engaged and then married. There’s a lot more to say but in essence, Christian dating is very similar to secular dating with the addition of clear biblical commands like no pre-marital sex.

The reason these two systems are important to understand is because those who follow the courting model have a

higher risk of being single for longer because of all the demands they place on a relationship. But those who practice the dating model often are so laid back about relationships they can often fall into sexual or emotional sin.

This is why I teach a hybrid version of these two dating approaches in my courses. I advocate for the heart preparation and protection of Christian courting with the practical benefits of Christian dating that produce less barriers at the start of a relationship.

In short, if you really want to be successful in your season of Christian dating, work on having a low-pressure approach to relationships so you can give yourself the best chance of getting to know someone without smothering the relationship with too many expectations.

Tip #6: Cultivate a Connection with Someone You Are Interested In

In the previous tips we discussed some options when it comes to actually meeting Christians of the opposite sex. This is certainly the first step in getting into a successful relationship.

In theory, to get married I believe there are basically three big phases people need to go through. Everyone who gets married in the western world does so by meeting, dating, and then marrying. As we said, it starts with meeting someone. Then you have to go through a season of dating so you can figure out if you truly want to be husband and wife. And after you do that, you actually have to pull the trigger and officially get married.

In this tip, however, I want to talk about the transition phase between meeting and dating. This is an area I see many mistakes made. People often try to get into a

relationship too fast after just meeting someone, or they go way too slow and miss out on their opportunity.

I was just recently coaching one of my students and after watching my [lesson on the differences between courting and dating](#), he made a really insightful analysis of the past dating mistakes he had made. In summary, he observed that he was using the high pressure and high commitment approach that comes with courting but he was also using the speed of entering into a relationship that often is associated with the dating model.

So he was actually combining some of the worst parts of the courting and dating models (high pressure and fast). The high pressure and commitment in courting is only supposed to occur after a lengthy, slow period of building the relationship in friendship first. And the speed that dating can often use is supposed to be accompanied by a low commitment early

on so people feel comfortable going on a date knowing that it is not a promise you will be together in the future. This odd combination of methodology that this student was making is just one example of how to make things harder than necessary as you try to transition from the “meeting” to “dating” phase.

So what should you do? As we already discussed, one great tip is to make sure the pressure you are putting on a relationship is equal to the substance of the relationship. But perhaps the way that looks in real life is to simply try to cultivate a growing connection with someone that you are interested in. In other words, your connection should spark commitment. (As a side note, in marriage your commitment will often fuel your connection.)

Going up to a complete stranger and asking them out on a date is not an impossible way to start a relationship, but statistically that approach will work far less than trying to

cultivate a connection first before dating. When you ask a complete stranger out on a date, you are asking them to commit to something without having any prior connection with you. The better the connection before the request is made for a commitment of any type, the better the odds will be that this person accepts that commitment request.

You should try to avoid using the dating season as a way of starting a connection with someone you like. Rather, you should try to start dating someone once you realize there already is a connection between you two.

Again, I am not saying it is wrong to just start going on dates with people you don't know that well. If you are in a season of life where you need to use the "intentional" dating approach, then that is fine. But normally the success you have in transitioning into the dating season will be

based upon how strong of a connection you have before the dating season.

If there is instant attraction and chemistry, then this person will probably be willing to transition quickly with you. But if there isn't and then you make a bold move, you will probably get rejected. But if you spent some time building a connection before dating, even if there was not instant attraction and chemistry when you first met, you will probably have a lot more success in getting a date with someone you are interested in.

So do you need to be friends for a year before you date? No. But that's okay if you choose to do that. There is no formula when it comes to the "pre-dating process." My biggest point is that the better the connection before you start dating the more likely you will start dating.

Therefore to prepare for a successful dating relationship you want to first cultivate a

connection with the person you are interested in. Become friends. Serve at church together. Talk to this person at group events. And if the connection grows between you two, you will then know it is time to try to transition into the next phase of your relationship.

Tip #7: Make a Move that Clearly Expresses Romantic Intent When You Feel a Strong Connection with Someone

One of the worst parts about dating for Christians is all the confusion. Does he like me? Does she think I'm attractive? Should we just be friends or something more? Is God putting us together?

Thus far we have talked about some of the top tips for preparing your heart and actually meeting other Christian singles. In the last section, we talked about building a connection with someone before trying to fully transition into a committed dating relationship.

It's at this point in the relationship journey where confusion is usually at its highest. Transitioning from the "meeting" and "friendship" phase into the official "dating" season is filled with all kinds of fears: rejection, losing a friend, getting into a bad

relationship, and the list could go on and on.

So how can you find answers to your questions? Of course we must first seek the counsel of our God. As Proverbs 3:5-6 states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

In my book called [*The One: How to Know and Trust God’s Sovereign Plan for Your Future Marriage*](#), I talk at length about the three ways the Lord speaks to his people: the Bible, the Holy Spirit’s impressions on our hearts, and through the circumstances of our lives.

This is a huge topic that I unpack in much greater detail in my book, but in summary anytime you want to know the will of God you must start with the word of God. God will show you what he wants and does not want through the clear commands,

instructions, and encouragements found in the Holy Scriptures.

But what about morally neutral choices that are more specific to our personal lives? What college should I go to? Which state should I live in? What job should I take? Which person will I marry? It's at these points in life we need to know how to actually hear the Holy Spirit's personal guidance in our hearts.

Lastly, since God is sovereign and in control of everything, we must also pay attention to the actual circumstances of our lives. If you are asking if God wants you to take a job but then you get a call that you did not get that job offer, that is God giving you your answer. If you are asking if God wants you to be with Ashley but then she starts dating someone else and then gets married, God has given you your answer through the circumstances of real life.

With all that in mind, this is why it is so important to eventually bring someone you like to a point of decision if you still have unanswered questions about your future together. Start with the word. If there is not a biblical reason to not date this person, then ask the Holy Spirit to give you some guidance on what you should do. If you still have no idea, the only way to truly find the clarity you seek is to make a clear move that expresses romantic intent towards this person you are interested in.

Most of the time the key to really answering relationship questions is to bring the other person to a point of decision. You have to ask a question that requires a clear yes or no. “Do you want to go on a date?” “Can I pick you up for church next week?” “Would you like to go to the concert with me?” “Do you want to go to the Christmas party with me?” “Will you be my girlfriend?”

When you ask clear questions you will get the clear answers you are looking for. Throughout the Bible God asks questions to bring clarity to the situation. Unlike humans, however, when God asks he does so for our benefit. Nonetheless, when there is confusion, God presents questions.

For example, when Adam and Eve sinned Genesis 3:9 records, “But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” God knew where Adam was. God just wanted Adam to become aware of where he was. God wanted Adam to realize his sins and that he was now hiding. This question brought clarity to the situation for everyone involved. In John 6:66-68 it reads:

“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We

have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.’”

Peter gave Jesus a clear statement of commitment. But notice Peter only gave this answer after Jesus had asked a clear question. So if you really want to clear up the confusion, ask a clear question that will require a clear answer from the person you are interested in. [In my courses](#) I teach on how to have a DTR talk (a define the relationship talk). In short, anytime you want to transition from one season into another season of a relationship, a DTR talk is needed.

An invitation to an event, a request to go on a date, or even asking how they feel about you if the relationship is to that level – you just have to make a clear move that expresses romantic interest in this person. How this person responds to you will give you your answer.

**Tip #8: Date to Develop Your Relationship
While Simultaneously Assessing This
Person Rather Than “Trying to Make It
Work No Matter What”**

At this point in our mini-study on how to have a successful Christian dating relationship, we are past the point of meeting people, we are past the point of building a connection, we are past the point of actually entering into a dating relationship, and we are now at the point where we need to discuss the actual dating season.

When you actually become an official dating couple, which is a phase usually signified by the terms “my boyfriend” and “my girlfriend,” you have to clearly define the goal of this specific season of your relationship. What is the purpose of Christian dating?

There are many possible answers that are often given here. In my view, however, the

most biblically wise use of Christian dating is to gauge whether a man and woman want to become a husband and wife. In other words, I do believe that Christian dating should be marriage focused.

The reason I do not believe Christians should date just to date is because there is no healthy example in Scripture of a long-term romantic relationship that was not a marriage. One big theme I talk a lot about in all my courses is that in the Bible, intimacy and commitment should always be paired together.

To have a long-term romantic relationship without the commitment of marriage is unbiblical in my view of Scripture. To clarify, I don't think it is a sin to date. I don't even think it is a sin to date for a few years. Rather, I think it is a sin to pass into the intimacy that should only be experienced in marriage without actually being marriage.

Sexual experiences are the obvious example here. The Bible only allows for sex between a husband and wife because sex, the most intimate physical act there is, should be paired with marriage, the highest form of relationship commitment there is. But sex is not the only boundary that should not be crossed in dating. In short, only a husband and wife should treat each other like a husband and wife. When you date for too long without breaking up or progressing into marriage, you will fall into some sort of sin.

This is why I believe Christians should only date when they want to clarify if marriage should occur. If through dating God reveals that you should not marry this person, you should breakup immediately because the purpose of dating has been accomplished. If through dating you realize God does want you to marry, then you should get married as soon as possible. If you begin to date but you are still unsure if God wants you to

marry or breakup, you should keep dating until you get the answer. Answering these questions is the purpose of dating. If you don't have the answers, date.

With this logic in mind, I believe one of the most damaging mindsets in Christian dating is the “make it work at any cost” mentality. Dating is kind of like when my wife and I were looking for our most recent vehicle. We didn't go on a test drive thinking that we would buy that vehicle no matter what. We would have been fools to ignore the rattling, bad smells, and other problems just because we really wanted to have it no matter what.

Likewise, when you go into dating trying to marry this person no matter what, you might end up causing yourself all kinds of damage. Once you get married you should have the “make it work no matter what” mentality because God wants a husband and wife to stay together whenever

possible. But this extreme commitment in dating is not the purpose of this season.

Dating will always be confusing because you are growing together while also knowing you need to guard your heart because this relationship might not progress into marriage. You are more than friends but you are not husband and wife, therefore this season will be filled with ambiguity.

So to have a successful dating relationship, you must simultaneously try to build a relationship with this person while also assessing this person too.

Tips #9: Find the Answers to the Important Questions During Your Season of Dating

As we discussed in the previous section, the point of Christian dating (in my view), should be to figure out if a man and woman want to be a husband and wife together. But how can you find this answer? How will you know when God is actually telling you to get married to someone you are dating?

I have a lot of resources on that topic because there is so much to unpack. In my bestseller called [*The One: How to Know and Trust God's Sovereign Plan for Your Future Marriage*](#), I do an in-depth teaching on how you can know the will of God for a particular relationship. As we discussed earlier in this study, if you really want to know the will of God, you must start with the word of God. So what does the word of God say about two people getting married? One of the first things we should point out is that marriage is a biblical option and not

a biblical command (read 1 Corinthians 7 for more on this). Since marriage is only for those who want it, you should never have the fear that God would make you marry someone you don't want to marry. That would be unbiblical because God does not make anyone marry who does not want to be married in general (meaning they want to be single); therefore he certainly would not make you marry a specific person that you do not want to marry.

With that biblical principle in mind, we should note that one of the first signs you should look for if you are wondering if God is leading you to marry someone is mutual desire. If both of you want to be married to each other, that is usually a huge sign God does want you to get married. I say "usually" because there certainly are other very important biblical requirements that should be present before marriage occurs even if mutual desire is present too.

In my course called [Marriage Material: The Qualities to Look for in Another and Develop in Yourself if You Want a Successful Christian Marriage One Day](#), I teach at length about the biblical qualities all healthy marriages have. Much like cooking, art, or building structures, there are certain fundamentals that everyone must submit to.

One cook will have a certain style that is very different than another, but their food will be horrible if they do not know the basics of cooking, mixing, and flavors. Two artists can be totally different, but if they do not understand how colors and brushstrokes affect a painting, they will not produce great art. Two architects can build two completely different houses, but if they do not know how to build a good foundation their work will be done in vain.

Likewise, every human who has ever lived is unique, therefore every combination of a man and woman will produce a unique

relationship. Every marriage is different. But just as there are fundamental qualities for all good food, art, and buildings, there are certain qualities all marriages need to function well. I talk about this at length in the course, but through dating you should assess the authenticity of someone's profession of faith. You should see the fruits of the Spirit in their life. And you should see the evidence that they are prepared to fulfill the biblical role of a husband or wife.

There are many other important qualities and preferences that should be assessed in dating, but you can be certain that God is not leading you to marry someone who does not possess these basic Christian qualities outlined in the word of God.

One of the most common errors in Christian dating is wanting every possible question answered about the future before committing to this person in marriage. I understand why people want to be so thorough. It is a huge life decision to marry

someone! And by all means, you should not overlook obvious flaws. You should not rush the dating process as you really could miss some serious red flags.

My word of caution, however, is to not spend too much energy on answering the wrong questions. People often spend so much time and energy worrying about very unimportant things when you consider the big picture. Start by answering, “Do I like this person? Is the desire there?” If you would want to marry this person you have been dating, then make sure all the fundamental biblical qualities are present too.

You should focus on this person’s Christian character and spiritual maturity more than anything else. Why? Because the absence of problems is not the path to a happy marriage. If you ever get married, you will find out quickly marriage will have problems no matter how hard you try to avoid them. Therefore the key is to be the

type of person and to be married to the type of person who will walk with God through these issues.

Bethany and I do not have a great marriage because we never had big problems in our marriage. Trust me, we have. But we have a great marriage because we are both people who submit to God. If we ever stop depending on him our marriage will suffer no matter how many tips or techniques we know. We have relied on God to get us through hard times, and he has! We are close to each other not because we never had problems. Rather, we are as close as we are because we have worked through our issues together and God has continued to mature us by his grace.

You will never find a perfect person and you will never be a perfect person while you are still on this earth. But you can become the type of person who is humbly dependent on our perfect God and you can marry someone like that. Having a God-centered

marriage is the key to having a blessed marriage.

So if you want to have a successful Christian dating experience, you must use this season of life to answer the really important questions.

Tip #10: Always Keep Christ at the Center of This Relationship and Do What Is Most Glorifying to God

At the center of anything truly good is the glory of God. As a Christian, you must always remember what your purpose is. Whether you are at home alone, at work, single, dating, or married, your ultimate purpose is always the same – to glorify God.

The goal of glorifying God is not to get something from God like a blessed relationship, more money, or better health. Rather, putting God first is the main point of our lives. Putting God first is the joy. Putting God first is not a means to an end. It is the end goal itself.

Psalm 89:15 explains, “Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.” Notice that the blessings comes through learning how to praise God. When you put God first the reward is his presence (Psalm

16:11), not an external gift like a human relationship.

If you ask a relationship to be your god, it will crumble under the weight of your needs. If you are asking a relationship to fill the hole inside your heart that only God can fill, you will ask too much of this relationship and you will crush it under the pressure you are placing on it.

One of the major blessings of putting God first in a relationship is that you free yourself to enjoy the relationship for what it is rather than killing it by trying to make it something it's not. Things work best and bring us the most joy when we use them how God designed them to be used.

A Christian dating relationship or a Christian marriage is a major blessing. But when we ask a relationship to take God's place in our heart, this blessing will turn into a curse because it will take us away from the true source of joy – God himself.

Putting God at the center of your relationship will also bring blessings into your life because it will cause you to treat each other better than you both deserve. If you only show love to someone because they deserve it, you will not show them love for very long because we all sin. You need a higher purpose if you want to love someone unconditionally.

You should love someone for who they are, but the main cause of your love should be your desire to honor God. In John 13:34 Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

If we love people for God’s sake, we will always have a reason to love. If you love someone based upon their own merit, eventually that person will do something you don’t like and thus you will struggle to keep loving them. Therefore, putting God first in a relationship is really the only way

to keep the relationship healthy and full of love even when you go through hard times together.

If you want God's help you need God's presence. If you reject God in your relationship you cannot then blame God when the relationship turns sinful. The main benefit of putting God first in a relationship is that God will actually be in that relationship. If God is not in it, it just won't work. As Psalm 127:1 states, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain."

In closing, I wanted to leave you with this reminder about the need to truly keep the glory of God at center of everything because throughout your life, including in this season of singleness and dating, you will continually not know what to do. Life is just that way. I wish I could give you 1 million tips for every possible problem, but that still would not be enough to help you live with clarity.

No, the only way you will have true clarity in singleness, in dating, in marriage, and in life, is when you remember that in all things your purpose is to glorify God. The goal of your life is not to meet, date, and marry someone. Rather, in everything, your purpose is to honor and love God. You can meet, date, and try to marry someone for the glory of God. And when you have questions along the way, just ask, “What is most glorifying to God?”

Do that. Do that every time in life. If you live with this singular focus of seeking to glorify God in all things, God will always lead you to be exactly where he wants you to be.



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