

“Boundaries In Dating, Part 1”

By Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
‘You and Your Boundaries’

What is the biblical position on dating?

The bible does not specifically mention the word dating, but does speak in great detail about truth, honesty, integrity and holiness in relationships.

In other words the same respect and honesty you want from others, is what you should be portraying in your words and actions.

The bible also tells us not to emulate the world’s behavior, but to be Christ like in our character.

2Timothy 2:22 “Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.” (NLT)

What are boundaries?

A boundary is a limit, the furthest point

“...Personal boundary distinguishes what is your emotional or personal property and what belongs to someone else.” Pg 28

What is the purpose of establishing personal boundaries?

- Boundaries help to keep you on the right course in your life.
- Boundaries help you define who you are and what you like and dislike
- What you will and will not tolerate.

How do we establish personal boundaries?

Boundaries come from our core values and beliefs, our ethics and character, they help define who we are.

“Boundaries go much better when you are defined. When you are clear about your values, preferences, and morals, you solve many problems before they start.” Pg 29

Boundaries must be based on what the bible says is right or wrong, not societies standards of morality, or worse yet, what our feelings and emotions dictate.

Some examples of boundaries in dating:

- **Words**-be slow to speak, careful not to say things you do not mean.
James 1:19 “My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.” (NLT)
- **Distance**-physical space
- **Time**-go slow, allow time to get to know each other
- **Truthfulness** -if you experience lying or deception of any kind, run from the relationship

Psalm 51:6 "Behold, You desire truth in the inner being; make me therefore to know wisdom in my inmost heart." (AMP)

- **Locations**-be wise in choosing where you spend time together
Proverbs 6:27 "Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned?" (NLT)
- **People**-have someone you are accountable to, other than your date.
- **Physical**-let the person you are dating know that you will not violate your commitment to Christ to stay sexually pure.

"...Many of the struggles people experience in dating relationships are, at heart, caused by some problem in the areas of freedom and responsibility."

"By freedom we mean your ability to make choices based on your values, rather than choosing out of fear or guilt.

- Free people make commitments because they feel it's the right thing to do, and they are wholehearted about it.

By responsibility we mean your ability to execute your tasks in keeping the relationship healthy and loving, as well as being able to say no to things you shouldn't be responsible for.

- Responsible people shoulder their part of the dating relationship, but they don't tolerate harmful or inappropriate behavior."

"Freedom and responsibility are necessary for love to develop in dating...they create a safe and secure environment for a couple to love, trust, explore, and deepen their experience of each other." Pg 27

Violations of boundaries

Boundaries are violated when:

- Someone tries to make you do something you know you shouldn't do i.e. lie, cover up, cheat, etc.
- You are being controlled through guilt or emotional manipulation
- Your stand on chastity before marriage is not respected.
- Any of your core values or beliefs are compromised

Self imposed boundary problems:

- Giving up your identity to keep the relationship going.
- Being with the wrong person: good boundaries help us to attract the right people and keep us from wrong relationships.
- Dating from inner hurt rather than our values
- Not dating due to fear of rejection
- Doing too much, fear of being alone
- Control issues

Establishing good boundaries

Take God on a date

“The first thing to deal with is an appropriate stance on dating and your spiritual life. The issue is not how to fit our spiritual life into our dating life; rather, it is how to fit our dating life into our spiritual life.

- Bring dating before God and ask for His guidance.
- It is good to offer our dating life as part of the living sacrifice that helps submit all aspects of our lives to God’s order for our existence.
- The more our lives are surrendered to him, the more he is able to fashion our lives as we were meant to be.” Pg. 51

“The alternative to surrender in dating is dating idolatry...we can commit idolatry by demanding that dating bring us the love, fulfillment, or desire we want without allowing God to point the way.” Pg 51

“Surrender is a first and necessary element of bringing dating in line with God.” Pg 52

To keep dating from becoming an idol:

- God must come first in all areas of your life.
- Don’t allow dating to take priority over your relationship with God.
- Be aware of your spiritual temperature. If you find yourself losing interest in reading your bible, attending church, prayer services, fellowshiping with other believers, these are all danger signals that your priorities are out of order.

“The fruit of your dating relationship

Ask yourself how your dating relationship impacts your spiritual life. Does it bring you closer to God, or push you further away?

- Are you drawn to the transcendent God through that person?
- Do you have an alliance with the other person in your spiritual walks?
- Do you experience spiritual growth from interacting with that person?
- Does the other person challenge you spiritually, rather than you having to be the impetus?
- Is the spiritual connection based on reality? Is the person authentic as well as spiritual?
- Is the relationship a place of mutual vulnerability about weaknesses and sins?”
Pg.53

Integration of Faith into real life Pgs. 59-60

- ...Religious people know the Truth, but spiritual people do it.
- God meant your spiritual life to drive and direct all other aspects of your life: relational, sexual, job concerns, and everything else that comprises life.

- If you want your date to be a person with a life, get out in life and look for him!

Take an active role in each other's spiritual growth by making sure you both continue to mature spiritually while you date.

Ways to help each other grow Pg.62-63

- Input and Feedback-give each other permission to confront, give input and encourage on spiritual levels.
- Give it time
- Don't Be a Parent; Avoid the tendency to take the role of spiritual responsibility for your date.
- Spiritual Compatibility; are you a good match in your faith lives?

Ultimately, it is best to date those who are at about the same maturity level as you are.

This can solve so many dependency, control and growth conflicts. Pg. 68

Dating won't cure a lonely heart. Pgs. 72-73

If you do any of the following, then you might be giving up boundaries because of a fear of being alone:

- Putting up with behavior that is disrespectful
- Giving in to things that are not in accord with your values
- Settling for less than you know you really desire or need
- Staying in a relationship that you know has passed its deadline
- Going back into a relationship that you know should be over

The above are symptoms that your dating is controlled by loneliness, when it should be directed by God, and based upon your goals, values and spiritual commitments.

Fear of being alone will keep you from growing into a person who does not have to be in a relationship in order to be happy.

“To be happy in a relationship, and to pick the kind of relationship that is going to be the kind you desire, you must be able to be happy without one.”

- If you must be dating or married in order to be happy, you are dependent, and you will never be happy with whatever person you find.
- The dependency will keep you from being selective enough to find the kind of person who will be good for you, or will keep you from being able to fully realize a relationship with a healthy person.
- In order to cure your fear of being alone, you need to put a boundary around your wish for a relationship. Cure that fear first, and then find a relationship.

“The best boundary against giving in to bad relationships...is your not needing that relationship. And that is going to come from being grounded in God, grounded in a support system, working out your issues, having a full life, and pursuing wholeness.”

Pg. 75

QUESTIONS:

1a. Many people experience trouble in dating because of problems in the areas of freedom and responsibility. Explain what each means, and how it can affect your dating behavior. (Page 27)

b. Give some examples of good boundaries in your dating.

c. How do good boundaries protect you in your dating?

2a. Discuss 'right side up' dating verses 'idolatry' (Pgs. 51-53)

b. What should we surrender to God in our dating relationship?

c. What are some signs that our desire to date, or the dating relationship we currently are in, has become an idol?

3a. Discuss the differences in Spiritual levels and how to deal with them as they pertain to dating. (Pg. 66)

- Christian and Non-Christian
- Committed and Uncommitted
- Mature and New Believer

b. What impact will our choice have upon our future marriage or other dating relationships?

c. How can the level of spiritual maturity of your date affect your relationship with God? List positives and negatives.

4a. We discussed the fact that dating won't cure a lonely heart. (Pages 72-73)

List some ways we violate our boundaries because of fear of being alone.

b. In what ways, apart from dating, can you have a full life as a single adult?

c. What boundaries should be established to keep from dating out of loneliness or deep emotional need?