How Should I Relate To Members Of The Opposite Sex?

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services
877-370-9988
www.accounseling.org
info@accounseling.org

My Disclaimer

• The state of your heart will determine how you hear and apply this information.
• The information in this presentation can be used to build up the Kingdom of Christ or be used to fuel unChrist-like motives and fleshly desires.
• My goal and prayer is to speak candidly about male-female relationship for the purpose of urging you to become more Christ-like in all of your relationships.

The Bottom Line

• You can either think about male-female relationships in a “rule-focused” way or a “heart-focused” way.
• The Rule-Focused approach says “How far can I go without getting into trouble?”
• The Heart-focused approach says, “Am I being Christ-like in all that I do?”
• Theme Verses:
  • Mark 12:30-31 “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

Self-Examination Questions

• For Girls: If you were a Christian guy who was struggling to stay sexually pure in your thoughts and actions, what kinds of things might be tempting to you?
• For Guys: If you were a Christian girl who was struggling to find her emotional security, self-worth, and identity (including her body image) in her relationship with Christ, what kinds of things might be tempting to you?

Levels Of Communication

Adapted from Wright, 2000

• Conversation that involves sharing of facts and information and the ideas and opinions of other people.
• It requires the least amount of vulnerability and intimacy. Little of oneself is disclosed.
• This kind of communication is done most frequently overall and is done with a large number of people.
• Examples: Talking about your major and the classes you are taking. It could also involve discussing what a minister said during a sermon or what a family member shared with you.
**Level 2: “I think...”**

- Sharing your own ideas, opinions, goals, and aspirations.
- A greater amount of openness is involved in this type of conversation.
- You reveal your own thoughts about a situation or circumstance.
- Example: You might share what you believe about something and why you think the way you do.

**Level 3: “Sharing”**

- At this level you share personal preferences, beliefs, concerns, experiences, and personal memories.
- Feelings of closeness significantly increase.
- Sharing life experiences (both good and bad) with the intent to share more of your life with the person you are talking to.
- This involves “opening up.” It feels very good to share at this level and to be understood and affirmed.
- At this level one person in the relationship may be sharing more information than the other.

**Level 3: “Sharing” Cont’d**

- For example, one may be trying to help and support the other or one may be trying to open up to another person.
- Sharing emotional things with someone draws the two of you closer. This is natural and normal. God designed us that way so we would share/bear burdens.
- **James 5:16** “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
- However, sharing too much with the wrong person can be dangerous; especially in male-female relationships.

**Level 4: Mutual Sharing & Increasing Trust**

- This level is an expansion of Level 3.
- Involves increasing self-disclosure of personal issues, beliefs, concerns, and experiences by both parties.
- Emotional intimacy surges significantly at this level. The amount of disclosure at this level increases trust, vulnerability, and openness.
- Boundaries drop significantly.
- Feeling connected and understood fuels more sharing and mutual discovery.

**Level 5: “This is me...”**

- A complete opening up of yourself occurs at Level 5.
- You share inner feelings, fears, preferences, hopes, and dreams.
- Sharing of painful, shameful issues and events may occur.
- The conversation may include emotional expressions from the heart and the disclosure of inner thoughts, ideas, and experiences.
- A feeling of “oneness” occurs.

**Steps Toward Intimacy**

- As relationships develop through ongoing communication, it is a natural progression for them to deepen over time.
- As you progress down the stair steps, boundaries are lowered, emotional intimacy increases, and desire for physical closeness increases.
- This process produces a wide variety of emotions from exhilaration to fear, from frustration to fulfillment, etc.
- God’s design for this progression is based on purity and holiness in accord with the Bible.
**Steps Toward Intimacy: God’s Design**

- **Just the facts**
- **I think…**
- **Sharing**
- **Mutual sharing**
- **This is me**
- **Covenant Marriage**

**Boundaries: Protecting God’s Design**

- It is important to guard against letting emotions drive a relationship to the point where Biblical values are compromised.
- People using healthy boundaries (ex. fence with a gate door) can set limits (ex. Say ‘No’) when appropriate, but can also relate to others in an appropriate, Christ-like manner.
- Healthy boundaries, accountability, and commitment to God’s Word and will protect us against this process becoming highjacked.

**Boundaries**

- Boundaries are *Emotional and Relational Property Lines* that clarify who is responsible for what in a relationship.
- **Loose Boundaries** (ex. chalk lines) – can be easily crossed
- **Rigid Boundaries** (ex. concrete block walls) – block people out – unfortunately they block out the good as well as the bad.
- **Healthy Boundaries** (ex. fence with a gate door) – can set healthy limits (ex. Say ‘No’) when appropriate, but also can appropriately relate to others in an open manner.

**Steps Toward Intimacy: Highjacked**

- **Just the facts**
- **I think…**
- **Sharing**
- **Mutual sharing**
- **This is me**
- **Impurity and Sin**

**Some Guy-Girl Differences**

**Guys**
1. Tend to be driven by their physical desires.
2. Crave physical intimacy.
3. Tend to be stimulated by what they see.
4. Sometimes they give love to get sex.
5. Don’t need emotional connection to become sexually aroused.

**Girls**
1. Tend to be driven by their emotional desires.
2. Crave emotional intimacy.
3. Tend to be stimulated by what they hear and feel.
4. Sometimes they give sex to get love.
5. Generally need emotional connection to become sexually aroused.

**Reflections on Getting Too Close**

- How can it be loving to compromise someone or lead another person into sin?
- It is an act of true love to make sure you never put the people you love in a compromising position.
- True love comes with self-denial, patience, self-control (temperance), integrity, etc.
Two Become One: Which Picture is Accurate?

1 + 1 = 1
1/2 + 1/2 = 1

Types of Relationship Patterns

A Emotional Dependency – two people who are overly connected.
H Emotionally Distant – two people who rarely connect.
M Mutually Interdependent – two people who are healthy and functional as individuals who then connect and are joined at their foundation…. Christ.

Get First Things First

“If you try to find intimacy with another person before achieving a sense of identity on your own, all your relationships become an attempt to complete yourself.”

What Does God Think About Sexuality?

• God is the author of sexuality. He created it and called it good. (Genesis 1:27, 31)
• You were created a sexual person.
• Experiencing sexual desires and temptation does not make you a less spiritual person.
• Sexuality and marriage were created before the fall. His design for marriage is a “one flesh” relationship. (Genesis 2:24-25)
• Example: wiring and electricity in the walls.
• God asks us to be responsible and holds us accountable for how we use it.

1 Thess. 4: 1-8

1. “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”
2. “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.”
3. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”
4. “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour:”
5. “Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:”
6. “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”
7. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”
8. “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.”

Reflection

• For Girls: Are you relating to all men in the way you would want another woman relating to your future husband?
• For Guys: Are you relating to all women in the way you would want another man relating to your future wife?
• Who is responsible for making sure a relationship doesn’t get overly close?  
  • The guy?  
  • The girl?  
• Why do you think people make promises in relationships they can’t keep?  
• What role does denial play in the process of a guy and girl getting too close?

**Ambiguity Adds Confusion**

**Three Problematic Factors**

• **Diffusion of Responsibility:** occurs when an individual feels less responsible for his/her actions because he/she assumes someone else will take the lead in doing the right thing.

• **Social Influence:** In ambiguous situations people tend to look to others for cues as to the proper behavior.

• **Evaluation Apprehension:** Fears that taking action will be embarrassing or lead to social disapproval.

**Some Relationship “Red Flags”**

• “Red flags” indicate a relationship between a man and woman may be getting too close:  
  ○ Exclusivity and possessiveness  
  ○ Loss of focus on serving others  
  ○ Elevation of another person over one’s relationship with Christ.  
  ○ Lack of accountability  
  ○ Believing things like “Everyone else needs boundaries… but we’re different.”  
  ○ Significant self-disclosure on highly personal issues.

**Key Relationships**

1. **Paul (Mentor)** – An older and wiser Christian person who can give you advice, perspective, direction, and corrective feedback.

2. **Barnabas (Accountability Partner)** – A peer who is in the same life-stage as you. Good for support, encouragement, and accountability.

3. **Timothy (Person that you Mentor)** – Someone who is younger than you that you can help learn and grow.

**You are a Steward**

• We are responsible to be a good steward of our relationships.

• Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

• Are people closer to God because of their relationships with you?

• 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”
Soul Virginity: 
Purity in All Areas of Life

- Spiritual Purity
- Mental Purity
- Emotional Purity
- Physical Purity
- Relational Purity
- Behavioral Purity

Adapted from Rosenau, 2005

Girls: Discernment and Motives

- Be careful of the signals you send. While you may think you are “just being friendly,” he may think you are giving him “cues” you are interested in him.
- Don’t manipulate and play on a guy’s heart and needs.
- In order to seek affirmation for yourself, are you seeking attention, spending time with, or being flirtatious with a guy?
- Don’t let your self-worth be determined by the amount of attention or affection you get from guys. If you do, you will always fail.
- Your desire to be cherished and secure meshes his desire to feel strong, admired, and heroic.

Modesty and Christ-likeness

- How you look says something about you. So, what does it say about you?
- How does your appearance reflect your security or insecurity in your Christian identity?
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”
- Girls: Sometime take a look through your closet, drawers, etc. and examine your wardrobe. However, when you do this... don’t simply use your eyes... look with the eyes and mind of Christ.

Guys: Discernment and Motives

- Your goal should be to protect and honor the integrity of every woman you come into contact with.
- You aren’t respecting a girl’s heart if you are playing with it.
- Don’t be afraid to call each other on compromise.
- You bear the burden of proving yourself to be a spiritually-sound leader. That is, simply because you’re a male doesn’t make you mature or a spiritual leader.

Reflection

- Singleness is a time of disciplining and learning the way of the cross.
- For example, dealing with sexual temptation while you are single may be training for staying faithful after marriage.
- What if you are in a situation in which you have to resist the advances of a seductive coworker?

Marriage is not your life Goal: Christ-Likeness is

- Pray for the presence of Christ in your life. If that includes marriage, so be it.
- Pray for yourself to be growing into the person Christ wants you to be.
- Pray for the purity and integrity of the men and women you know.
- Pray to be able to honor God as part of the Body of Christ.
1 Corinthians 7:32-35

**For Men:** 32 “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.” 33 “But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”

**For Women:** 34 “There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” 35 “And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”