

10 Worst Mistakes Christians Make While Dating

Singles make up a big percentage of any given church, and pastors spend a lot of time teaching about marriage and parenting. But how do you actually find the right person to marry?

You won't hear much teaching about dating in most churches. It's like we're afraid to touch the subject—so people just feel their way in the dark and figure out romance on their own.

Our awkwardness about this topic is one reason single Christians make so many relationship blunders—and why many marriages start out on the wrong foot. I asked some of my single friends and one of my daughters to help me compile this list of most common dating mistakes. Here are the Top 10:

1. Being desperate for a relationship. Some singles freak out when they hit age 25. They stop trusting God and begin a nail-biting search for a mate. My friend Nicole Doyley, author of *The Wait*, says she knows women who are so frantic about finding Prince Charming that they immediately fall for any guy who asks them out. "They should see the warning signs, but don't," Nicole says. "They start praying immediately if this is 'the one' and they quickly become blind to his faults."

2. Being too picky. On the flip side, some singles are waiting for the perfect human specimen to sweep them off their feet. Picky guys want a girl who could appear in the swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*. Or, some Christian women expect to marry a spiritual giant who prays four hours a day. Be realistic. Whoever you date will have feet of clay and plenty of flaws to match your own.

3. Not developing healthy friendships with the opposite sex.

Oftentimes too much pressure is placed on Christian singles to pair up, especially if they are attending a Bible college with a reputation for being a wedding factory. And in that pressure cooker it's difficult for guys and girls to enjoy nonromantic friendships. Relax and make friends, and don't view every opposite-sex friend as a potential marriage partner.

4. Letting other people control your relationship. Church friends usually mean well, but some people don't know how to stay out of other people's business. They will engage in what I call "prophetic meddling" by dropping hints, manipulating you to go out with someone or pushing you to marry someone you don't even want to be with. And while the gift of prophecy is valuable, you should never let personal prophecies steer your decisions about marriage. Let God personally guide you in this very personal area of life.

5. Ignoring proper boundaries. Some Christian couples are extremely naïve about the power of a romantic bond. They don't realize that feelings can zoom from zero to 90 miles an hour in a few seconds, and that one kiss can lead to intercourse if you don't have your emergency brake on at all times. If you are in a dating relationship, you must know your boundaries, discuss them with your partner and commit to staying pure. Don't be stupid. Don't spiritualize your lust and suggest, "Let's go to your apartment and pray." Don't wait until clothes come off to determine what is out of bounds.

6. Missionary dating. Never start a romantic relationship with a guy or girl who is not a believer. Christians who do this usually justify it with the old "I know I can change him/her" line. But the opposite happens: The unbeliever changes you—after he or she has broken your heart, compromised your morals or damaged your faith.

7. Lack of healthy confidence. Some guys I know are stuck in a state of spiritual limbo when it comes to their dating life. They may admire a girl from afar, but they just can't muster

up the nerve to break the ice and start a conversation. Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who *finds* a wife finds a good thing." If you are going to find a wife, you don't just sit there until you are 40. Develop some healthy aggression. And while it is true that some women prefer to be pursued, remember that Ruth proposed to Boaz in the Old Testament story. Don't be so demure that your future husband can't even notice you.

8. Expecting the person you are dating to "fix" you. God wants singles to have undistracted devotion to Jesus (see 1 Cor. 7:35). Yet too often we look to other people to bring the inner fulfillment that only Christ gives. Many singles fall into the trap of finding a boyfriend or girlfriend to heal the wounds caused by childhood trauma, their parents' divorce or their dads' addictions. Seek healing from the Holy Spirit for those issues before you commit to a serious relationship.

9. Spiritual stalking. I've met guys in church who drive by girls' houses regularly, monitor their moves and troll their Facebook pages. That's creepy. If you have to sneak around like a private detective to get a date, you need a new strategy. If a woman tells you she is not interested in going out with you, honor her request and move on. Don't develop an unhealthy obsession. And never, never, never tell a girl: "God told me you will be my wife." That's manipulative and could fall under the category of sexual harassment.

10. Not discerning a spiritual predator. One single female friend of mine said she went out with a man who did a financial seminar at her church. Because the guy was invited to speak from a pulpit she assumed he was a man of character, but he tried to get her into bed with him on the first date. It became quickly obvious he was an imposter. Beware of wolves. You must walk in the Spirit if you want to protect your purity and save yourself for the right person.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter @leegrady. He is the author of 10 Lies the

Church Tells Women *and other books*. You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at .