

When Am I Ready to Date?

Discussion questions

1. What are some bad reasons you heard to date someone?
2. What are some good reasons to date someone?
3. What is a good age to start dating? To get married?
4. How would you describe a "healthy" or a "good" dating relationship?

Wait for the Boy...

Wait for the boy who pursues you, the one who will make an ordinary moment seem magical, the kind of boy who brings out the best in you and makes you wanna be a better person. Wait for the boy who will be your best friend, who will drop everything to be with you at any time, no matter what the circumstances. Wait for the boy who makes you smile like no one else, and when he smiles you know he needs you. wait for the boy who wants to show you off to the world when you are in sweats and have no make-up on, but loves it when you get dolled up for him. and most of all wait for the boy who will put you at the center of his universe, because that's where you belong.

This sounds pretty good, right? But guys, are you ready to ... ? Girls, look around you, is this ... ?

Can (Christian) teenagers date? Yes!

When I first came to my church in Boston, it seemed dating for young people was discouraged until you were older and serious enough to date and get married. It turned out that for the first year or so, I did not talk about dating much. So one day, some teenagers came up to me to ask, "Enoch, do you think teenagers can date?" And I said, "Sure. Why not?" And they said, "REALLY? Ok! Great!" and as they turned to walk away I would saw, "As long as they're ready to date." And then the teenagers would pause for just a moment, look at each other, and then walk back to me. And say, "Enoch, how do you know if you're ready to date?"

Making a date to talk about dating...

So often, a person (both youth and adult) will make an appointment with me (which may be unusual for you) and tell me that they're interested in this other person. And that they are planning to pursue a dating relationship with them.

So then I will usually say something like, "Wow, that's great! I'm happy for you as I would guess this is a good thing." The other person will say, "Thanks! I'm so happy." Then I'll say, "So,... you think you're ready to date? And they say, "Um... well, yes. Yes! I think I am ready to date." And I will say, "OK, great. How do you tell that you're ready to date?" And they will pause...

Ready to date?

For each of these and many other conversations, my answer is the same. I would look at them in the eyes and ask, "If you don't know the answer to that question, then how can you say you are ready?"

My main point for this workshop is this right here. If you signed up today hoping for an answer because deep down, you're not sure or you don't know or you don't have a clue about what it means to be ready to date, then I urge you to consider this: How can you tell me you are ready to date?

Myths about dating are still myths for marriage

1. **The "experience" myth** - Is it valid to date people to get experience before marriage? Does logic and experience indicate that the more people someone dates, the better a partner this person is?
2. **The "I'll just break up" myth** - If it doesn't work out, some people think, "OK, just try again." Is it really that easy?
3. **The "test-drive" myth** - "It would be foolish to buy a car without test driving it first. Most people try out their shoes before they buy a pair, unless they are willing to return it. So shouldn't we test things out before getting married? What's the rush? Isn't it foolish to get into a relationship without checking for sexual compatibility?"
4. **The "harmless crush" myth** - "I would not date that person, and I would definitely *never* marry that person!" So, you think you'll marry someone that you are not attracted to?
5. **The "missionary dating" myth** - "I want Jesus to save this person! And God has blessed couples who were not both Christians before..." (more on this below)
6. **The "married-without-sex" Christian couple myth** - (more on this below)

Biblical principles for marriage & dating

What is marriage really about? Oneness.

And Jesus said to them, "... But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:5-9.

What kind of oneness?

- Spiritual oneness in Christ
- Emotional oneness in love
- Financial oneness in providing for each other
- Social oneness in time together
- Physical oneness in sex

In all of these areas, a marriage couple is one. This means...

- i. To break that oneness is painful, unintended by God, and always damages us. Illustration of opening up a sealed envelope.
- ii. True intimacy is closeness in all these areas.
- iii. To grow intimacy in just some of these areas increases desire for other areas.
- iv. If it doesn't, you don't really want intimacy.
E.g. – I want to be physically one with you, but not emotionally one. Plus, that's not how God wired us. We want to be intimate beyond the physical unless we really twist our hearts.

Therefore, a couple that is growing closer in all the other areas but physical/sexual oneness will face what? ... increasing desire to complete that oneness physically.

The desire for complete oneness (intimacy) is not bad, and it's not conquerable. The key is to cultivate that intimacy at the right time and in the right way.

Who you marry is perhaps the single greatest decision to affect your spiritual life... (yes, usually even more than deciding to believe in Christ)

Consider the OT command to not intermarry other faiths and royalty:

“Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters for whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.” (Exodus 34:11-16, ESV)

Consider King Solomon. In 1 Kings 3, we read the beginning of Solomon's fabled rule, beginning with his famous prayer for wisdom. From chapters 3-10 we read Solomon established his rule, prospered, built the temple, dedicated the temple with thousands of offerings, and distributed justice. But in 1 Kings 11:1-2 we read the beginning of his downfall. And this downfall began in the beginning of his career, in 1 Kings 3:1-2. Solomon chose to marry someone (“form an alliance”) of another faith, and the wisest, most powerful man in the world had his heart led away by the woman he married.

Who you marry will always either become an idol/god, or leave you looking for something better, unless that person's god is the reason you stay together.

Let me tell you what you need to be ready for

Ready for physical responsibilities

If you believe in saving sex for marriage, are you ready to fight for purity against temptations? Guys, are you ready with accountability and spiritual leadership?

If you believe it's OK to have sex outside of marriage, which I do not, but if this is you, then are you willing to be one with a person physically and sexually but not emotionally and socially and financially? If you say, "Yes," then do you ever want to be truly one with a future marriage partner?

And if you have already had so much sex or physical intimacy that sex is not connected to your heart and emotions, then you have gone a long way from what God intended. Because God intended that the same person you share your heart with is the very same person you share your heart and life with.

Ready for emotional & spiritual responsibilities

Guys, especially if you claim to be Christian, are you ready to be a servant leader? Do you realize you are not playing games, but are dealing with real emotions. Your emotions. Her emotions. You say you care about her. Do you care about not causing unnecessary pain for her enough to really prepare?

Girls, are you ready to serve and support him? Do you realize that you will greatly influence his self respect? Do you realize that almost every time you and him are alone, even for a few minutes, he will probably be thinking or struggling with his physical desire for you?

Scriptures on marriage issues

1. Genesis 2:20b-25
2. Ephesians 5:22-31
3. 1 Corinthians 7

Other passages not directly on marriage, but often used

4. Matthew 19:1-12. On divorce.
5. 2 Corinthians 6. On not being "yoked" with unbelievers
6. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Amos 3:3. On two people agreeing and working better together than one.

What people usually mean when they say “ready”

1. Growing walk with the Lord on your own. I didn't say super mature, but growing.
2. Interaction with a healthy married couple.
3. Interaction with an older, wiser, godly Christian that you can talk with.
4. Inviting someone to keep you accountable to normal Christian things, and then adding your relationship to that accountability.
5. Spent time getting into the Bible and what God says about marriage, men & women, and relationships.
6. Common commitment to follow God as a couple.
7. What do the older Christians you respect think about your (potential) relationship?
8. What do your parents think about your (potential) relationship? (Even if your parents are not Christians)

Ready for dating?

Some people think church leaders, pastors, and co-workers are against dating. For me, if you share with me about your dating relationship with a person, I want to be supportive and happy for you. But if your relationship looks like it's going to not be good for you, how can I be happy for you?

A story of my good friend.

Question & Answer (open) ***Hanging around for individual Q&A***