

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

BGR stand for building Good Relationships (not just boy girl relationships). As a person grows up, emotionally, he/she will find a natural inclination to get to know someone of the other gender. If you have a liking, affinity or affection for someone of the opposite sex, I have an announcement to make:” You are perfectly normal.

God made Adam and Eve (not Adam and Steve) in Genesis 2:24 to complement and to supplement each other. Each gender has its own unique set of gifts, beauty, symmetry and loveliness. God’s verdict was that ‘It is very good for Adam and Eve to be together’. Having said all these, I must also add in the same breath, that we have to be careful about our emotions for and relationships with the opposite sex. We are made of flesh and blood and the devil knows our weakness and he will find out Achilles heel and tempt us where we are most vulnerable. Remember that the sins of Samson, David and Solomon were all because of unguided or uncontrolled emotions. Beware of the three great evils of 1 John 2:16, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life and always be on guard against temptation and sin.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul reminded us that it is the will of God even our sanctification that we abstain from fornication, that everyone should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. In 2 Timothy 2:22, he exhorts us to ‘flee also youthful lust but follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart’. The believer is to perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1) and that includes his conduct and relationships with others especially the opposite sex. So the Christian has to order his relationship and courtship after these biblical injunctions.

If we wish to have a happy and productive relationship with others, then we need to study the principles laid down for us in the peerless Word of God, which is the Creator’s timeless manual on both God and man.

Healthy Dating Principles

A healthy date is defined as an appointment with a Christian member of the opposite sex for the purpose of knowing and understanding each other better in the Lord in a God-honouring way and conducive environment. There are 3-fold objectives to be achieved in a date:

1. To prepare for a possible life-time relationship in marriage with the person of God’s choice.
2. To spend time to encourage, edify, exhort and bless another person and be a good testimony to him/her.
3. To afford an opportunity for genuine acceptance and affirmation in a Christian relationship and setting.

Dating with discernment

1. Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). The choice of a date must prayerfully thought through and God sanctioned. Do not let emotions override clear biblical prohibitions or else there will be serious repercussions one day. He and she must be a good Christian first of all and loves the Lord.

2. The place of dating must be conducive and helpful to the achievement of a healthy dating objective. Do not allow yourself to be found in a tempting or compromising place that would hinder or lead you into sin. Being along together is not a helpful thing all the time to engender a God-centered relationship.
3. What do you do and talk about during the date are not unimportant (Colossians 3:23) watching movies or going to a pub for dancing or drinking alcohol is out for Christian dating but sharing and encouraging each other over a meal or games or even in a group date or fellowship setting is recommended
4. The duration and frequency of dating is to be moderately regulated. You do not have to meet every night and talk or Whatsapp or be in email for very long hours. Take your time to get to know each other
5. No dating evangelism, please. Do not try to rationalise or justify your emotions. It does not work the way you think for we are weak and vulnerable. I have an announcement to make: There are enough people in your gender who do not know Christ yet. So cater to your own group before you think of crossing over.
6. Do not date more than one person during the same period of time. Make up your mind. Be honest and fair with the people you like.
7. Do not send wrong signals if you are not interested. It may hurt someone else in the end.
8. Do not tease one another unnecessarily. It may not be very edifying or helpful.
9. Men are affected by sight and ladies are sensitive to touch. So, men, be careful about physical contact and ladies, be careful how you dress.
10. Do not make use of people as a crutch or prop for your loneliness, depression or recent breakup in relationship with another. Be responsible with whom you relate to and do not trifle with other people's feelings.

Important pointers to Note in Building Good Relationship

1. Focus on wholesome and edifying activities like fellowship, bible study, service, bible classes, mission trips, church camps, Sunday worship and prayer (Colossians 3:16) and even healthy sports and games or serve in the VBS or a camp YF or YAF committee together.
2. If it is possible serve together in a church-based ministry where you can grow together in the Lord in a fruitful way (Romans 12:11). Involvement breeds commitment.
3. Develop scriptural convictions together, work ethics, family behaviour and discipline, budget, economics and share life's goals and vision to each other. Communicate and get to know each other in a more profound and meaningful manner. Learn to write, call and pray together. Share what you learn from your quiet time, messages or bible study with each other.
4. Do not allow the relationship to center and accentuate on the physical. Be Theo centric in your relationship and always remember the closer you are to Christ, the closer you will be to each other (Colossians 3:1, Matthew 6:33).
5. Be disciplined in the physical aspect (especially the guys, Galatians 5:22, 23) and beware of heavy petting that will lead you on to other things which you may regret later. Know for a fact that in God's all-wise plan, there is a place for very intimate relations only within the blessing of a marital estate. There is a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Be patient. Leave the best to the last at the right time and God will surely bless and reward you.

6. What about the in-betweens (holding hands, hips, occasional hugs, kisses and the like)? Let the relationship grow slowly with time. Do not rush into things. Set good moral rules and standards if you need them and be disciplined to abide by them. It is a long journey in a courtship. Do not pluck the durian but let it drop in the fullness of time and it will be sweet. Do not mess up anything here (Ladies, remember that you are in charge when it comes to the physical. Dare to say no and put a stop to unedifying moves). The average age of those who get married in Singapore is between 27 to 29 years of old. So do not start too young or else you will have to manage a long courtship. First things first and exercise moderations in all things. God will reward you in due time (Philippians 4:5)
7. Dress appropriately and modestly for ladies in a date and make sure that your apparel, gestures and body language do not cause your partner to be tempted fall into sin. (1 Peter 3:2-4). Brothers, respect and honour the one you love and the God that both of you worship and fear and He will bless and prosper both of you in the fullness of time.
8. True love glorifies the Lord and edifies each other and does not satisfy one or two persons only. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8). Selfishness destroys a relationship. Do not fall in love just emotionally. Stand tall and be Christians and be in full control! One of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit is temperance and exercise self-discipline (Galatians 5:22, 23)
9. There will be differences and conflicts along the way between two imperfect persons. Let it be a good test of your true compatibility and true love for each other. Seek the Lord together in prayer if you are unsure or talk to someone else who is mature enough to counsel or help you and let time takes its course. Put the interest of others first before yours (Philippians 2:3)

Bring into captivity every thought in our mind to Christ. Do not let your thoughts wander and waste your hours away. Be in control of your mind and renew it daily by the reading and study of the Word of God. Always remember that if you leave God out of your courtship and relationship, you will have to pay for the consequences.

Conclusion

We want to seek the will of God and glorify him in all aspects of our lives. The most important organ in a relationship is your mind. Your thought life is very important. Paul says in Philippians 4:8 *“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any praise, if there be any virtue think on these things”*.

Bring into captivity every thought in our mind to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Do not let your thoughts wander and waste your hours away in unedifying relationships. In all things that you do, seek to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Be in control of your mind and renew it daily by the meditative reading and study of the word of God (Romans 12:1,2). Always remember that if you leave God out of your courtship and relationship, you will have to pay for the consequences. If you honour Him, He will honour, guide and direct you in His will which is the best for you (Psalms 32:8, 37:4, 5). It is such a joy and blessing to be in a God honouring relationship. May the Lord keep and lead us into a blessed and lasting Theo centric relationship with someone of His choice in His own time (don't rush) and according to His holy and perfect will. If you are not attached now, pray and wait patiently upon

God's plan for you in due time. Finally, we shall conclude with this relevant stanza of a familiar hymn, Yield Not to Temptation by Horatio Palmer,

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin,
Each victory will help you, some other to win
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue,
Look ever to Jesus, he will carry you through.
Ask the Saviour to help you; comfort, strengthen and keep you,
He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through

Jack & Angelina Sin,
Sovereign Hope BP Church,