

Can I tell you that it makes me shudder when I hear so many young Christians members talking about things like *getting off<sup>1</sup> with so-and-so at the party on Saturday* or *dumping* each other. Why? Because five years ago, ten years ago, the then teenagers were saying the same things and what it taught *those* young Christians was how to fail in their relationships big-time, and how to fall sexually too. These are things of the world, and the world the way the devil has influenced it in the 21st century too. Its not the way the Bible teaches us to behave in our relationships.

**This isn't about don't have sex before marriage. Its more,I hope, about what to *do* than what *not* to do.**



You see, the world talks about *Body Mind and Spirit* in that order. This often leaves our spirit squashed. The Bible teaches us that it should be *Spirit Mind and Body* in that order: it's the Body that needs to be 'held down', not the Spirit. Our Spirit should be in constant communion and relationship with the Holy Spirit. For the worldly person the Body is the great ruler. It *feels*, so the Mind *plans* or *decides*,and the Spirit gets ignored largely, although does manage to get



heard through the conscience sometimes, but often too late. If the worldly person becomes a Christian, and God is relating to the Spirit, it can be even more of a disaster because the Spirit-Conscience is more sharply tuned, but still a servant to the Body-Mind dictatorship. So, when for instance the subject of fasting is raised, and the person's Spirit says *I'll* do it, the Body still comes along and says *I'm* hungry and the Mind gets to work on planning the next face stuffing. But the Spirit says *We're* not eating today and the Body/Mind goes overtime trying to deal with the upstart, so the hunger pangs get bigger and the Mind dreams up some amazing pictures of puddings that would take a week to get through!

Instead, the Body should be ruled by the Mind, and the Mind should be servant to the Spirit, which is receiving instruction from the Holy Spirit. Then when its time to fast the Spirit tells the Mind that's whats happening

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<sup>1</sup> Terms change with time. At the time this was written *getting off with someone* meant a heavy and long kissing ('snogging') session.

and the Mind gets to work on overcoming the hunger pangs. It doesn't become *easy* but it does become possible.

The world teaches us to *do what you feel* but the Bible says its *do what is right*. How does all this relate to sexual expression?

## **Firstly,**

we need to get ourselves the right way up, where our Mind is under the control of our Spirit not our Body. We do this by offering ourselves to God as a *living sacrifice* (Romans 12:1). What does that mean? Daily saying to God "Today, whatever comes up *I choose* to do it Your Way. Remind me of this in all the situations I come across. I give You permission to bring my thinking into line with Yours". That's not a formula or magic mantra. Those words alone are not enough, they have to reflect the desire of our heart. We also have to subject our Body to our Spirit. Paul wrote that he daily pommelled his body to bring it into line (1Corinthians 9:25-27). That's what a living sacrifice is!

## **Then**

we have to know what is *right*. That requires getting to know two things. The first is to get to know *the Bible* and what it says, that takes time day by day and week by week. But even if know the Bible throughout by heart, on its own that is not enough; you also have to know *Jesus* personally, not just about Him. Spend time with Him each day chatting, and listening.

When you do get to know Jesus, God, you will discover four things about His character which He wants to reflect in Your character:

- He is the God of Truth**
- He is the God of Love**
- He is the God of Justice and**
- He is the God of Faithfulness.**

In our relationships with others especially, He wants us to reflect these four characteristics. He wants us to deal with each other in *truth*, in *love* in *justice* and in *faithfulness*.

**Truth** includes the commitments we make to each other. “Will you go out with me and be my girl/boyfriend?” If we say *yes* then we are committing ourselves to something which we know and understand means a one - one no-others-involved relationship.

**Love** includes the ways we treat each other. Why are you going out, because you care about the person or because it makes you look good to be seen with them?

Its a long term word too. How can you reflect the love of God if you can say to someone “I’m dumping you”? You probably wouldn’t use those words, but if you end a relationship simply because you’ve got bored or found someone *better*, thats not reflecting Gods love!

**Justice** demands that we are fair to each other. If you know someone else is dating a person, it is not just to try to two-time them or steal them!

**Faithfulness** through thick and thin. We train ourselves not to even look at others in a lustful way; we stick to each other *for richer for poorer* etc.

**Of course,**

*all* our relationships and dealings with others need to reflect these qualities of God, not just our boyfriend or girlfriend. But if we don’t bring them into those supposedly special relationships, let’s not kid ourselves we are acting as Christians.

The Bible doesn’t speak about dating or teenage relationships, they didn’t happen. You married the person chosen for you, or the one you chose a longtime previously. There were no *old flames*. Our culture is different, but you might like to consider whether as Christians we need to buy into the dating game at all. After all, if you were asked “Do you believe that God has a special person for you to marry?” you would probably answer “Yes”(or, maybe, “no I believe I’m called to be single”????). So, if you *believe* God has a special person for you, do you need to play the field? Won’t He make sure you meet them in His time? Or don’t you really believe He can bring you together after all?

Let's suppose you convince yourself that it is ok to date. So let's look at the principles we should apply to that from the Bible. *Wait a minute, I thought you said that the Bible didn't talk about dating. Where are you going to get these principles from?*

By looking at the principles the Bible puts onto marriage, and sexual relationships.

Let me suggest to you for a moment that dating is one of the following things:

- **playing at marriage**
- **practising close relationships**
- **making it ok to have sexual encounters.**

You might be able to think of other things, such as perhaps helping you not to be lonely. But I am writing about relationships which play around on the borders of sex, or actually get to sex itself. Many young people today use their dating relationships to do this, and its true of young Christians too.

### **The Bible has two main no-nos for sex:**

- **You must not have it if you are married with someone you're not married to, or if you're not married with someone who is (adultery).**
- **You must not have it if you're not married (fornication).**

### **The Bible also has one main requirement for marriage:**

- **it is an unbreakable, for life, contract.**

Now, if dating *is* playing at marriage its easy to see what replaces sex (at least at first) in the game: close physical contact, 'getting off' with each other, etc.

Let's suppose you are dating someone but you are apart (on holiday, for instance). You go to a party or disco, you *get off* with someone else. Is that right? Haven't you just introduced a *play* version of adultery into your dating game? (Perhaps not *adultery*, let's call it *teenery* shall we?). If you keep on doing this you are learning that your relationship doesn't count when you are apart, my Body says *sex* so my Mind finds ways and my Spirit can't shout loud enough because it's not running my life as it should be. And if *this* relationship doesn't count now what you are doing is learning how to break faith with relationships for later, so when you are married the lesson will stand: when we're apart it doesn't matter.

The same can be said if you're not in a relationship at the moment, but you go to that party. Now you get off with someone. What does that teach you? That *getting off with someone* isn't just part of a relationship, but can be casual with anyone. When you are in a real relationship, and perhaps you are moving further than *getting off* will you have learnt that this new activity is also not that special? Now that you've moved this far in your physical experience, let's go this far with anyone?

What about the *for life* aspect of marriage? (Yes, there is divorce but that is only allowed if the other partner has already broken the marriage contract: even then God teaches that He is loving and faithful and woos Israel back to Himself though He has the right to divorce her...Hosea chapters 1 to 3. Divorce is a big subject and it is not being covered in this present article).

The problem with dating is that it teaches us exactly the opposite to *relationship for life*, it teaches us we can chop and change our partners frequently, for almost no reason; so when we get married, why be different? If a problem comes up, or we get bored, let's dump them/get a divorce.

Do you get the point I am making? I am not trying to say whether you should or should not be doing these things within a relationship. But I am saying that the *way* you use these forms of expression, even at a young teenage age, forms in you expectations and habits that will carry over into deeper sexual activity later....and that may have disastrous results in marriage, or before you get to marriage.

Tony Campolo, in his book *Young People: You Can Make A Difference* suggests that we shouldn't date at all, for all of the reasons above and also because there will always be some who get left out and end up feeling even more lonely or inadequate. Instead, go out in groups and enjoy things together. Of course, that misses out all the physical stuff too, but is that so bad? For every person who tells me how great their relationship with their latest snogger is, there are ten or twenty who are telling me they are in deeper than they expected; worried, concerned, not praying so much any more, no longer with God, completely fallen away *all because* their Body told their Mind to ignore their Spirit and the Holy Spirit and "God won't mind because He loves me".

Ok, theres a lot to think about there, and I may well have gone over the top. But that's partly deliberate because **I don't want you to think about any of this!**

**I want you to *pray* about it.** I want you to pray and pray and ask God what He says is right for you. I want you to develop that relationship with Him where you hear His voice for yourself, through the Bible, in dreams and visions and whispers and all the rest, and that you get yourself the right way up with your *Spirit* running things and not your *Body*. You will then be learning lessons for life which, when they transfer across to marriage (or being single!) later will powerfully bless you. I want to be able to look at *you* in five or ten years time and say ***They've got it sorted.***

"But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." -[2 Thessalonians 3:3](#)