



RELATIONSHIP PACKET

2016

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Matthew 5:8 (ESV)

Brother / Sister,

We want you to know at the outset that we love you. We pray for you. We know that purity in relationships is difficult, but it's worth pursuing, and that's why we wrote this for you. It's our hope that you'll be able to take some time to read the whole thing. You might not be dealing with any of these questions now, but you may in the future, or you may have a friend who needs to hear one of these answers.

You may find yourself reading these questions and answers and thinking, "I've already messed up so much. I'm too far gone. No one will ever accept me and love me." And we want you to know that's just not true. We were all "too far gone" when Jesus saved us. If He can forgive us, others can too. There is grace waiting for you when you repent. When you catch yourself feeling that way as you read this packet, remember that we're here for you and we'd love to talk about it with you. Call us and let's talk.

We love you so much!
– The HSM Staff

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SINGLE

WHAT HOPE DOES GOD OFFER LONELY SINGLES?

- First, I just want to totally affirm the desire to be married. I don't want anybody to ever feel guilty about that desire. I feel like so often, particularly single women feel like the only message they get from the church is: "Find your contentment in Christ. Isn't Christ enough for you?" And I think that's such a terrible response, because the desire to get married is a good desire. It may even be a desire woven into them by the Creator of the universe. If the Bible says, "He who finds a wife, finds what is good" (Proverbs 18:22), that's all I need to affirm a desire for marriage in men and women. But like all desires, they have to be placed where they belong. I want to affirm the desire for marriage and I want to warn against letting the fear of loneliness becoming a major part of your life, to the point that you would be willing to compromise and put yourself in a situation that would be more horrific and far more lonely for you in the future.

WHAT IF I'M SINGLE AND DON'T WANT TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP? IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME?

- The simple answer, is no. God hasn't called every person to be in a relationship. If you're single and don't have the desire to be in a relationship, you find yourself in the same position as Paul, most of the twelve disciples and Jesus Himself! There is nothing "wrong" with singleness. You can still have a completely fulfilling life and worthwhile life without ever being in a relationship. Because, relationships don't define our worth value or success, Jesus does. Don't buy into the lie that you need a boyfriend/girlfriend.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I'M READY TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND "THE ONE"?

- This is another one of those questions where we can't just give you an exact answer. It'll be different for all of you. But there are things you can consider as you're thinking about this question. If you're wondering about when you're ready for a relationship, the most important thing to ask yourself is whether you desire a dating relationship more than you desire the Lord. If you're not even in a relationship yet and you already idolize it and place that desire higher than your desire for a growing

relationship with Jesus, then you're not in a great place to start dating. Because once you start dating someone, you're most likely going to go through periods of struggling with idolizing that person/relationship. It's just going to be bad news to start there already. Also, ask someone in your life that you consider to be wise, if you seem ready. Parents are a great option! If you feel like you're ready after thinking about this and seeking counsel, and you've found a person that you think is seeking after the Lord, spend some time getting to know them and ask your friends what they think about this person. They may see or know some things about this person that you're blinded to. Take their wisdom into consideration. If all of this falls into place, go for it! Pursue this person with a Christ-like love, seeking each other's holiness and purity, and have fun!

- Now if you've been dating this person and you're wondering if this is "the one" that you should marry, ask yourself these questions. Are we spiritually compatible? Do we believe the same things and encourage each other to pursue Jesus? Do I have a solid friendship with this person? Physical attraction, while important, will change over time. The best marriages are based on solid friendships as well as romance. Do you have similar life goals? If one of you feels called to be a missionary in a foreign country and one of you feels called to stay in America, you need to work these things out before getting married. Is this a person you're willing to commit your life to, to walk beside, supporting and encouraging each other, no matter what, until you die? If you're not ready to make that commitment or if this isn't a person you feel safe making that promise with, then it's not "the one." But if these things fall into place, get ready for a great adventure!
- It's very important that your parents are allowed to have a voice in your life when you're considering marriage. If you are a guy, it is extremely important that your girlfriends parents are approached and their voice and wisdom is heard. Remember, they would know your girlfriend better than any other person. Their approval should be sought before a proposal.

WHAT IF I DEVELOP FEELINGS FOR SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE ELSE?

- The harsh truth is you'll simply need to get over it. Most likely, if these feelings have been able to develop, your friendship with this person has crossed boundaries in some way. You've probably been spending too much time together or sharing too much of your hearts with each other. But once you realize that this is what's happening and that these feelings have developed, you need to immediately change

the way you've been behaving with this person and stop trying to be friends at all. Don't allow yourself to harbor any fantasies that this person will dump their relationship to be with you instead. Put yourself in the position of their boyfriend or girlfriend and ask how you would feel if the person you're dating maintained any sort of friendship with someone who had feelings for them. I guarantee you wouldn't like it, so don't be that person.

I'M SCARED TO DATE BECAUSE OF MY PAST (I.E. EATING DISORDER, DEPRESSION, ETC.). HOW DO I MOVE PAST THAT AND LET SOMEONE LOVE ME IF I DO NOT FULLY LOVE MYSELF?

- I think it's important to remember that we all have pasts and we all have struggles. While yours might have manifested itself in a different way from someone else's, we all have things we don't like about ourselves and things that scare us when we think about future relationships. When faced with this fear, it's so important to remember that God your Father loves you more than you could ever love yourself and more than any other person could ever love you. That love may be shown through another person, who will help speak truth into your life every day, who will try to love you as Christ does, who will want to help you continue to work through those things you're afraid of. Until Jesus returns, you will continue to be a sinner and you will probably never fully love yourself. But loving yourself isn't the point. Loving Jesus and striving to be like Him, repenting when you fail and letting Him comfort you in that, and seeking to love others the way He does – these things are much more important than loving yourself.
- When we realize how precious we are to Jesus, and how very much He loves us, we come to love ourselves in a more correct way. Think about how much He treasures us! He gave up His very blood for you! You are precious and you are deemed worthy of being loved by your Heavenly Father. Don't allow any part of your past to tell you otherwise.

I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW DATING WORKS. SHOULD I EXPECT IT TO COME NATURALLY WHEN I FIND THE ONE, OR SHOULD I RESEARCH/PRACTICE DATING FIRST?

- Honestly, the only thing that comes naturally apart from Christ is sin! So don't expect good, Christ-centered dating to come naturally. But that also doesn't mean you have to practice dating a lot of people before you can get it right. The most

important thing is, when you find someone you want to date, that you put Christ in the center of that relationship and bring other believers into it. Find an older person in the church, someone whose wisdom you want to learn from, and ask them to mentor you through this process. Find believing friends with whom you can be honest about struggles and questions and who will hold you accountable. And

whether you're dating someone or not, constantly put Jesus first in your life and seek to grow in Him, and He will teach you wisdom to prepare you for these situations.

I REALLY LIKE A GUY BUT HE HASN'T MADE ANY MOVES YET. CAN I HELP HIM ALONG IN ANY WAY, I.E. RUTH?

- Ruth's situation was a very specific one. There's a difference in Scripture between what's descriptive and what's prescriptive. Descriptive things tell us about what happened. Prescriptive things tell us about what we're supposed to do. What Ruth does isn't necessarily prescriptive. She was in a situation where the men of God weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing, and as the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus, a lot was at stake here. I'm going to go ahead and bet that you're not in this situation. In that case, we need to look at the passages of Scripture that are descriptive to see what we should do. Scripture talks about marriages that involve the man taking the lead. This means in marriage he takes responsibility for guiding the family. When you're looking for a man to date, you should look for a man who will show this sort of leadership, and that means taking the initiative in pursuing you. There are probably subtle ways in which you could let him know you like him, but your role is to wait for him to pursue you. Asking him out would take his job as your own and would set up an unhealthy precedent in your relationship. We all need to pursue the roles that God has designed for us, and that means that guys get the scary job of leading and pursuing and girls get the scary job of being patient and waiting. Trust in the Lord and wait for Him to bring you a guy that acts like a man. It's worth it.

WHAT IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU ON A DATE BUT YOU KNOW THEY AREN'T A CHRISTIAN? IS THERE ANY HARM IN GOING ON ONE DATE? IF I SAY NO, HOW DO I DO THAT WITHOUT OFFENDING THEM?

- If you know for certain that he's not a Christian, then you definitely shouldn't go on even one date. As Christians we shouldn't be dating non-believers, and if you know you won't be able to continue to date them, you shouldn't lead them on by going on

just one date with them. This is how you love this person, and it's protection for you. Maybe you go on just one date with this person, knowing you shouldn't go on any other dates with them, but then they are really nice and you have fun and now you're tempted to go on more dates. So not only have you lead this person on, you've allowed your emotions to get involved and it becomes harder to do the right thing. We are to *flee* temptation, not flirt with it.

IF ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS KEEP TELLING YOU THAT SOMEONE IS BAD NEWS BUT YOU'RE REALLY INTERESTED, SHOULD YOU KEEP DATING THAT PERSON? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOUR FRIENDS ARE WRONG?

- I think one thing we don't consider often enough in dating is the input of our friends. These are people who love us and want the best for us and they can often see things that we won't see in ourselves. If your friends all tell you that the person you're dating isn't good for you, it's time to take that into consideration. If they're not good for you, it's time for you to be strong and maintain your convictions and not let them back in.

DATING

MY BOYFRIEND / GIRLFRIEND COMES TO CHURCH AND IS A CHRISTIAN, BUT DOESN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN THE EXTRA THINGS LIKE SMALL GROUPS, ACCOUNTABILITY, SERVING, ETC. SHOULD I KEEP PUSHING THEM TO GO, OR LET THEM GET THERE ON THEIR OWN TIME?

- First of all, I think it's a mistake to believe that small groups, accountability, serving, etc. are "extra" things. Being a Christian means being a disciple of Christ, following His commands and example. We should be out in the world serving and loving the lost. We should be digging into the Word together, helping each other understand it and apply it to our lives. We should have people in our lives who know us deeply and hold us accountable to living a godly life and with whom we share our struggles. None of this is optional.
- As to whether you should "require" this from them – I think you should definitely encourage them to pursue these things, because in pursuing these things, they're pursuing the Lord. And they should be encouraging you to pursue these things as well. If you're not both pushing each other to grow closer to the Lord, then you're doing this relationship thing wrong. Understand that it might take time for them to find a small group that fits, to find community with which they can have accountability, and to find a way in which they loves to serve others. But also know that if they're unwilling to even try to do these things, they may not be the person you need to seek a relationship with. If they are unwilling to love the Lord more than you and pursue the things of God with passion, you're better off with someone else or alone.
- YoungLife or any other parachurch ministry should not be the sole ministry pouring into you or your potential boyfriend or girlfriend. These ministries are NOT the Church and by their very mission and vision are focussed on supporting the Church not replacing it. Don't hear that YoungLife or other parachurch ministries are bad or unhealthy to get involved with. That is far from true. Parachurch ministries would say their ultimate vision is to encourage everyone involved to attend and be an active, growing participant in the Church. YoungLife is designed to reach students who would normally not attend a church. This is why YoungLife has such an important role in reaching the lost. YoungLife knows that church involvement is essential for following Christ. They promote active involvement in the local church among the students who are growing in their faith, and try to communicate that

YoungLife is not a substitute for their local church. Talk to your YoungLife leader about this and hear their heart and desire for you to be actively involved in a church.

IF YOU ARE DATING A “NEW” CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER FAITH IS NOT AS FAR ALONG AS YOURS IS, SHOULD YOU WAIT TO DATE THEM SO THAT THEY CAN CATCH UP TO WHERE YOU ARE?

- The answer to this would probably depend on what you mean by their faith being not as far along as yours. If you mean that they're younger in their faith than you are, they don't know their Scripture or doctrine as well as you do, or something like that, then it's definitely okay to date them! There are lots of successful relationships and marriages where things like this aren't equally balanced. The point is to both be striving constantly to grow in your relationships with the Lord. But if you're talking about a situation where one person is solid and growing in their faith and the other one claims Christianity without acting like a Christian – then you definitely shouldn't date. Waiting for a person who is consistently seeking growth in their faith is worth it!

HOW DOES A GUY HANDLE A RELATIONSHIP WHERE THE GIRL WANTS TO TAKE THE LEAD?

- He needs to step up and be the leader! He can use this as an opportunity to show her that he wants to do his job as the man in the relationship and have a serious conversation. Usually when girls want to take the lead in a relationship it's because, for whatever reason, she doesn't think the guy is going to. Maybe he hasn't been leading in the past, and she doesn't know that he's ready to take the lead now. Maybe she's been in relationships before where the guy didn't lead and she doesn't know what it's like to not have to be the leader. Whatever it is, it would be great for them to sit down together and discuss what they think the biblical roles of men and women are in a relationship and he can assure her that he wants to do his job. It may be hard to get used to, but it will be a huge relief to both of them to be able to assume the roles God designed them for.

HOW DO YOU GET A GUY TO STEP UP AND LEAD?

- Ultimately, there's only going to be so much you can do in this situation, and then it's up to the Holy Spirit to convict this guy and change his heart. But that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do! Most importantly here, honest and direct

communication is going to be the key. For a lot of women, it'll be tempting to drop hints about what you want, to get angry when he doesn't react how you want, and

to be passive because you don't want to seem like you're leading. This just won't work. If you're in a relationship with a guy like this, you need to have a discussion with him. Tell him what you're looking for in a man, show him in Scripture what you're hoping he will be like, and then tell him you're not willing to settle for anything less (and mean it!). Tell him you'll have patience with him as he tries to learn to be a spiritual leader, because it won't be an immediate change that he'll master. If he refuses to lead, and just isn't interested in being that kind of man, break it off. If a guy is unwilling to lead in a relationship before getting married, it's highly unlikely that he'll suddenly become a great spiritual leader once he says, "I do."

HOW SOON IS IT TOO SOON TO SAY "I LOVE YOU"?

- There's probably no answer to this that will apply to everyone. We can't say that it's okay to say it only after a certain number of dates. (Though we can probably all agree that date #1 is probably way too soon. And a little creepy.) There's not a passage of Scripture to quote here to answer this question. All we can offer here will be some things to think about before you say "I love you" to someone you're dating. Whether you think this way or not, most people feel like "I love you" comes with an unspoken promise that you will continue to love them. True, biblical love isn't a feeling. It's an action you take toward another person. It's something we're commanded to do whether we feel like we love that person or not. So before you say it to someone you're dating, I'd recommend thinking through what it really means. Think about how either of you might feel if you were to break up after saying these words to each other. Are you just wanting to express a feeling you have in a certain moment? Or are you ready to make this promise to this person, to love them regardless of your feelings at any given moment? If you're not ready to make that promise, express yourself with other words and save these words for later.

WHEN IN A RELATIONSHIP SHOULD YOU OPEN UP ABOUT THE DEEPEST STUFF ABOUT YOU?

- The answer to this will vary depending on different relationships. You'll have to judge at what point in a relationship you're still just trying to decide if you even have enough things in common and enough interest in each other to keep dating, or if you're ready to get serious with each other and start really building a relationship. It

might seem lame to say, but you'll probably know when that time is. You'll start to wonder if now's the time to share. Maybe the person you're dating will start talking about this stuff in his/her own life. The Spirit will start convicting you about it. The main thing will be not to ignore conviction or refuse to share things because of fear

about how the other person will respond. If they truly understand the gospel, they will know that there's nothing that can't be forgiven and they'll remember that they have plenty of things they'll be wanting you to forgive as well. If they don't understand the gospel and refuse to forgive or move past things you open up about, then you'll know that this isn't a person you want to be in a relationship with anyway.

WHAT ARE SOME GOOD WAYS TO MAINTAIN SEXUAL PURITY IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP?

- Boundaries and accountability are crucial! Have friends (guys for guys and girls for girls) who you are committed to being completely vulnerable and honest with and who will ask you the tough questions about your purity every week. And when you set boundaries (like having a curfew for dates, not being alone at night, etc.) tell them to your accountability partners so that they can ask you about them. For example, if you know you struggle to maintain purity if your boyfriend/girlfriend is at your house late at night, set a curfew and then ask your accountability partner to call you randomly on any night after that curfew time to see if you're with them or not. You should also think back and think ahead. Think back to times and situations in your life when you've been tempted, and then think ahead to make sure you don't put yourself in those situations anymore. If watching a movie on your couch tempts you to be physical with your boyfriend/girlfriend, then plan ahead to only watch movies in theaters or invite other friends to watch movies at your house with you. The point is to be prepared. If you only think about boundaries and purity when you're in the heat of temptation, you're not going to be equipped to make good decisions. Set your boundaries and bring other people into them to help hold you accountable and to confess to when you mess up.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY BOYFRIEND KEEPS LETTING US CROSS PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES BUT IS AN OTHERWISE GOD-LOVING GUY?

- I would seriously consider if this is a guy to continue dating. If you've set up boundaries and he keeps crossing them, refusing to put your purity and your relationship with Jesus ahead of his desires, he doesn't seem like a guy that's going

to love you selflessly. At the very least you need to have a serious discussion with him, and you may need to just break up with him if this doesn't change.

IS IT BAD OR GOOD FOR A DATING COUPLE TO DO BIBLE STUDIES BEFORE MARRIAGE?

- It depends, I guess. When really studying the Word of God and seeking to apply it to your life, there's going to be a certain level of emotional and spiritual vulnerability that goes along with that. I would personally hesitate to get to this level of vulnerability with someone I'm not really serious about, and I don't like the idea of giving this much of myself spiritually to someone of the opposite sex that isn't my spouse. So doing something like this with multiple different people in dating relationships before finding the one who will be your spouse seems unwise. This is especially going to be true in a one-on-one bible study situation. Now if you're in a coed group with other guys and girls, couples or not, this might be different, but even many of those groups split up into guys and girls when discussing certain things or sharing some prayer requests. But I can also see situations in which a dating couple might want to do devotionals together as a way to encourage each other to grow in the Lord, and that sounds awesome. It all comes down to what level of vulnerability are you going to reach in these situations and what level of commitment do you have with each other.

HOW DO YOU GET OUT OF A RELATIONSHIP WHEN YOU FIND OUT YOUR BELIEFS DON'T MATCH UP?

- If you've gotten into a relationship without discerning this first, as soon as you realize this, you need to break up quickly and honestly. Don't try to wait it out, hoping that they'll change. Even if they do change, you'll never be able to tell if they're only changing for you or if they really believe it. And you need to be honest. Don't sugarcoat it or make it about some other reason. Tell them why you can't be with them and share your beliefs with them. This could be a conversation they remember later and that the Lord uses to bring them to Himself.

PURITY

IS IT MORE IMPORTANT TO PURSUE PURITY OR JESUS? WHY?

- If you're pursuing Jesus, you're pursuing purity. There's no either/or here. If we're truly pursuing Jesus, then we follow Him and obey Him, and He commands purity and holiness in our lives and hearts. And if we seek Him with all our hearts, then purity will become something that we desire and seek as well.

HOW CAN I KEEP MY MIND/HEART PURE WHEN EVERYWHERE I LOOK I SEE GIRLS SHOWING OFF THEIR BODIES?

- *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman."* – Job 31.31
- This is definitely going to be a struggle, as I'm sure you're already aware. Women, I hope you're reading this question and realizing that the way you dress has a huge impact on your brothers in Christ. There are so many things you can do to help in this struggle, and dressing more modestly is just one of them. But men, you can't blame your struggles in this area on women. This is an issue of the heart that will come out in some way no matter what a girl is wearing. You probably won't be able to control thoughts that come to mind when you see a girl dressed immodestly. But what you can control is how long you continue to look at that girl and how long you allow those thoughts to stay in your mind. You don't have to dwell on them. As soon as you catch yourself thinking this way, you need to pray. Ask the Lord to take these thoughts away, confess them, pray for the girl who's showing off her body in an inappropriate way. It's hard to objectify and have impure thoughts about someone when you pray for them and their relationship with the Lord. And if these are girls you know, as her brother in Christ, you can help her grow in holiness by pointing this out. She may be dressed that way to get attention, or she may legitimately not realize that what she's wearing causes men to stumble. That may feel like an awkward conversation to have, but if you can put her holiness above your comfort, the Lord will use that conversation to help both of you grow. Another great thing to do will be to memorize Scripture. When you catch yourself entertaining impure thoughts about a girl, recite Scripture to yourself. Lustful thoughts and the Word of God will not be able to occupy your brain at the same time. Ephesians 6 describes

the Word as a sword, a defensive weapon to be used in the battle to stand firm in the Lord. Know it and use it!

WHAT CAN I DO TO COMBAT LUSTFUL THINKING?

- This is similar to the question above. Like it says there, you may not be able to control thoughts that pop into your head, but you can control how long you let them stay there. Prayer, both for yourself and for the person you're thinking lustfully about, will be key, as will Scripture. If you're reading and meditating on the Word every day, and committing portions of it to memory, there just won't be a place for lust to live in your mind and heart. As you dwell on the Word and allow its truth to change your heart and desires, you may even find that those lustful thoughts show up less and less (and are less pleasurable when they do show up), because what you are learning to truly desire are things of the Lord.

WHAT IS TOO FAR WHEN IT COMES TO BEING SEXUAL WITH ONE ANOTHER?

- I actually don't want to answer this question. Instead I'd like to suggest that we ask a totally different question in its place. Ask yourself (and each other), "How much can I encourage the person I'm dating to pursue holiness and purity?" See, asking how far I can go with someone is ultimately a selfish question. It's basically saying, "I don't want to cross the ultimate line, but I want to get as much pleasure out of this person and get as close to that line as possible." It doesn't seek the best for the person you're with (or the ultimate best for yourself). It doesn't put another person's relationship with the Lord ahead of your own desires. And it's not love. But if you can ask yourself how you can best help someone else pursue purity, then you'll actually stay far from that line, and you'll learn to practice *true* love by caring more for someone else than for yourself. Scripture says to FLEE sexual immorality, not get as close to the line as possible without actually crossing it.

HOW DO WE ACT TOWARD HOMOSEXUAL CHRISTIANS WE SEE IN THE CHURCH?

- The most important thing to remember here is that homosexuality is a sin just like any other. All sins equally separate us from God and require the sacrifice of Jesus to bring us into relationship with Him. When we think that this particular sin is worse than any of our own, we put ourselves in the place of God, judging what's forgivable and what isn't. So we need to treat them the same way we treat everyone else. Speak the gospel to them. Love them by calling out sin in their lives and encouraging

them to repent and follow Jesus. And if they already say they are believers, then we treat them like other believers we know who are struggling with various sins – hold them accountable and remind them of truth.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE LED THE OPPOSITE SEX TO WRONGDOING, DO YOU APOLOGIZE OR START FRESH AND DON'T BRING IT UP?

- Whenever you realize that you have sinned against another person, especially when you've helped lead them into sin, the best thing you could do is confess it to them and ask for forgiveness. Matthew 5.23-24 talks about this. It says that if you're coming before the Lord and remember that someone has something against you, you should immediately go to them and be reconciled. The urgency arises here because this unconfessed sin can hinder your relationship with the Lord, and theirs as well. If this happened in a relationship that is over, the other person may be harboring resentment or just still be feeling the effects of this sin, and a heartfelt apology may help them heal. If this happened in a relationship that you're still in, this is a great opportunity to help each other set new boundaries and start to lead a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

IS MASTURBATION A SIN?

- Alright, we've reached the point where it's time to answer some questions on topics a lot of people feel uncomfortable discussing – masturbation and pornography. But studies show that huge percentages of men AND women struggle with these things, so we won't shy away from addressing them. "Is masturbation a sin?"... The simple answer is yes, it is absolutely a sin. You may think, "No one else is hurt by it, so how could it be wrong?" I'll get to that in a moment. One of the best passages that addresses this is 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. I'd invite you to read it before continuing. In it Paul is rebuking the Corinthian Christians for the very idea that sex is simply a natural appetite of the body, and that they need to indulge simply to meet that appetite. So sure, masturbation may be a good way to "get release" to appease your appetite, but that still doesn't make it okay. When Paul says that "not all things are helpful" (v. 12) and that he "will not be enslaved by anything," he uses two examples here to drive the point home for the Corinthians. Just because their bodies wanted something, didn't mean it was good for them. Sometimes, it even became destructive and "enslaved" them. Our sexual appetites are the same way. Often we're overcome and

owned by them. Just because it may be a natural desire does not mean it is something that you have to do, or even have the right to do. Anger and lust are both natural desires of sinful hearts, but God calls those sin as well. The truth is, your natural desires often lie to you. If you need scriptural proof, Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Back to the text, Paul says in verse 13, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” Here he is really saying you should be more concerned with glorifying God with your bodies, than seeking to fulfill your appetite. In the passage I mentioned above (1 Corinthians 6:12-20) Paul emphasizes the fact that in marriage, a husband and wife become “one flesh”. The only Biblically approved form of sex is in the confines of marriage, and the purpose of sex in marriage (other than for procreation) is to create and build “oneness”. Masturbation at its root is completely selfish. It is selfish because nobody else benefits from it other than the one person who is engaging in it. It is seeking to meet one’s own sexual needs outside of the one God approved method of fulfilling that desire (sex inside marriage). This is why Paul says in verse 8, “Flee from sexual immorality.” The Greek word here for sexual immorality is “pornea” (πορνείαν), and this means any form of sexual activity outside of marriage. He says flee, not indulge. Paul continues in verse 18 by saying, “Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.” Paul blatantly calls it sinful. Just because you think you aren’t hurting anyone or maybe you even think you “need” to masturbate, Paul says you are sinning against yourself (not to mention God) when you do so.

I AM ADDICTED TO PORN! HELP!

- Find a believer you trust and confess this quickly! Ask for help in holding you accountable to stop looking at porn, and fight this addiction. Maybe even seek out biblical counseling to dig into why you’re seeking out porn. There is a root sin that goes deeper than just lust at the bottom of this and if you don’t start to figure that out now, it’s just going to come out in a different sinful behavior next time. And spend more time in Scripture than ever before. If you’re filling up your mind on truth and the Word of God, you will find that you desire things like this less and less. The Word of God does not come back void. It will help to change your desires when

you truly seek it and ask the Holy Spirit to apply it to your heart. You will learn to love what is truly good and hate what is evil.

- Another great resource for you is an accountability software and resource called XXX Church. www.xxxchurch.com
- There are 2 books that we would recommend as well. Every Young Woman's Battle and Every Young Man's Battle by Stephen Arterburn. If you would like a copy, Johnny or Beth will loan you one. Just ask.

HOW DOES LOOKING AT PORN AFFECT YOUR MARRIAGE?

- When you look at porn, you're training yourself to be selfish. There is nothing in porn that teaches you to love and serve your partner, putting their feelings and desires first. It makes the other person an object of your pleasure to be used however you want. There is actual science that shows that porn causes your brain to view others as objects to be used, not people to be loved. This is the total opposite of what sex in marriage is supposed to be like. You're also typically going to be giving yourself incorrect ideas about what the other person will look like and do, which is setting yourself up for disappointment and false comparisons with your spouse. If your husband or wife knows that you've been looking at porn, you're also setting them up to struggle with feelings of not being good enough, attractive enough, sexual enough, etc. It's going to put a barrier in your relationship when you should be growing closer. And if they don't know you look at porn, you're bringing secrets and lies into your marriage, and that will absolutely cause problems and put barriers between you.

WHAT SHOULD I DO, IF A GUY SEXTS ME, OR ASKS ME TO SEND THEM NUDES?

- Turn them down. This person is obviously selfish and consumed by desires for their own pleasure. As daughters of Christ, you were made to be infinitely adored and treasured, first and foremost by Jesus and secondly by your brothers in Christ that surround you. You were not made to be used or treated as an object. Lust will seek to use you and diminish your worth. Love will never use you, nor degrade your worth to that of an object. Love will protect and cover you, even at it's own expense. Any guy that tries to use you in this way doesn't love you, or care for your good. We'd also encourage you to let someone know what this person is doing. (Yet again, parents are a great option)

I WANT TO GET STARTED IN ACCOUNTABILITY WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS. WHAT DO I DO?

- The first thing you need to do is pray about 2 or 3 other people (of the same sex as you!) who are seeking the Lord, with whom you can be vulnerable, and who you feel confident will speak gospel truth into your life (and you into theirs). Keeping the groups to 3 or 4 total will probably be best so that everyone can talk without taking 4 hours to share everything. When you feel like you have these people in mind, ask them if they want to do this with you. That might seem scary and like a pretty vulnerable thing to do, but you're going to be sharing a lot of your life with these people, so you might as well just start being vulnerable now! Decide when and where you want to meet, and commit to doing this consistently. Protect this time and only reschedule if someone is sick or out of town. Promise each other that, no matter what comes up during your craziest weeks, you will be committed to spending this time together.
- Some accountability groups decide to just get together and share what they're struggling with, but that often opens the door to hiding your sin because you may just share struggles that you think aren't too bad and keep the "worst" ones to yourself. So I suggest choosing a list of questions that you'll ask each other every week. You may decide to write this list of questions yourself, or below are some questions you can choose from. Answer these questions honestly and encourage each other with the gospel. It's also great to read through Scripture together. You can choose a book of the Bible to read during the week and then discuss that a little when you get together each week.

So pray about some friends, pick a list of questions, and get started!

1. Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
2. Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate thoughts about someone.
3. Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week, or coveted something that does not belong to you?
4. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this past week?

5. Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face-to-face?
6. Have you given in to an addictive behavior this week? Explain.
7. Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
8. Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?

GUY / GIRL RELATIONSHIPS

MY CHRISTIAN GUY FRIEND TENDS TO ACT LIKE EVERY OTHER GUY WITH GIRLS. HE DOESN'T CLARIFY INTENTIONS, CASUALLY MAKES OUT, AND "FADES OUT" INSTEAD OF BEING HONEST WITH A GIRL. NONE OF HIS GUY FRIENDS (WHO ARE CHRISTIANS) CALL HIM OUT. SHOULD I?

- Yes. If none of his guy friends are doing their job, then yes you should call him out on it. Lovingly and not out of anger, but call him out for sure. For any guys who are reading this, acting like this is not okay. We are not to look like the world, casually getting emotionally and physically close to each other with no commitment. As believers, our relationships should look different. Our intentions should be clear, and those intentions should be to pursue someone for marriage through dating, treating them as brothers and sisters in Christ, putting their holiness and relationship with the Lord before their relationship with us. If there comes time for a dating relationship to end, it should be made clear in a conversation in person (not through a text message or social media). It should always be done with love and respect.
- For guys who are friends with guys like this – it is your job as his brother in Christ to hold each other accountable! You should be able to call this guy out. Don't leave it to the women in his life whose job is not to be this guy's accountability partner.

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY RUINED DATING? IN WHAT WAYS HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED THE WAY WE DATE TODAY?

- If we are talking about a young man and a young woman who are actively dating, who have defined their relationship, and who know they are in a growing and committed relationship with one another, then I think technology creates an avenue to encourage one another and to connect more frequently. So in that way, I'm encouraged by what technology has to offer.
- If, we are saying that technology has changed the game in regards to how single young men and women approach one another, before that relationship is defined,

then I have a lot of concern about technology. The ability to text or to tweet or to just write on someone's wall, enable you to flirt and tease without there ever being a "what-exactly-is-this-relationship" moment. And so in that regard, when you have not

established what the relationship is, I think it can be hurtful to constantly be involved in the technological realm, rather than the face-to-face realm.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR BEST FRIEND WHO IS A CHRISTIAN IS DATING A SOMEONE WHO ISN'T A BAD PERSON, BUT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- As their friend and brother/sister in Christ, you should have a very serious conversation with them. First of all, ask them if this person is a Christian. If they says they are, but you see that they don't act like it, point these things out to your friend and see if they've ever talked about them. See if your friend willing to encourage them to pursue a deeper relationship with the Lord. (See above question.)
- But if they say they're not, as their friend it's your job to speak some difficult truth into their life. The point of dating is to end up in marriage. Scripture says we are not to yoke ourselves to unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6.14). If you know that you cannot marry someone who isn't a Christian, you shouldn't be dating someone who isn't a Christian either. No matter how nice that person is, no matter how well they treat you, your fundamental beliefs are different. The thing you love most in this world is different. You may be able to share your life with someone who likes different movies or food than you do, but you can't share your life with someone whose core beliefs are not the same as yours. It's simply not okay for a believer to date a non-believer. Hold this friend accountable, encourage them to break off this relationship, and remind them of truth.

MY FRIEND AND HER BOYFRIEND BROKE UP BUT HE STILL CALLS HER AND SHE IS CLINGING TO THE HOPE OF GETTING BACK TOGETHER. DO I ENCOURAGE HER TO MOVE ON IN CASE IT DOESN'T WORK OUT?

- It's hard at the end of a relationship to not get caught up in "we can still be friends" which mostly leads to one of the people clinging to the hope that they'll get back together if they can just stay in each other's lives. I don't know for sure that this is what's happening here, but it sounds like this guy wants to keep some kind of connection going without having to be committed to your roommate, or maybe even wants to keep her on the hook in case he ever decides he wants to get back together. When a relationship ends, you forfeit the right to maintain those connections you had when you were committed to each other. If he's not drawing clear boundaries in their breakup, she needs to. For her own emotional health, she needs to allow this relationship to be over and not allow him to continue to use her.

WHAT DOES A “RIGHT” FRIENDSHIP WITH SOMEONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX LOOK LIKE? HOW FAR CAN A FRIENDSHIP WITH A GUY/GIRL GO UNTIL IT’S CROSSING OVER BOUNDARIES?

- It may look different for different friendships, but there are some important things to consider in all of them. Would anything about this friendship have to change if one of you started dating (or married) someone else? If so, change it now. Don’t wait for another relationship to come along and make this one awkward. Do people often think you’re dating this person? Then you are probably spending too much time alone together. How much of your heart do you share with each other? Think about your future spouse sharing this much of themselves with someone else of the opposite sex. If you wouldn’t want them to do it, you shouldn’t be doing it either. And once any friendship gets physical, you’re definitely crossing boundaries.

HOW DO I PURSUE A WOMAN WHILE KEEPING GOD FIRST IN MY LIFE?

- Commit yourself to spending time in the Word and prayer. Be in fellowship with other believers (accountability, small group, etc.). And then put this woman ahead of yourself. Encourage her to be spending time in the Word and prayer and in an accountability/small group with other women. Seek to have thriving spiritual lives independent of each other, and then as you feel like you’re getting closer to marriage seek to incorporate prayer and the Word into your lives together somehow. Take her on dates that show you’ve put some thought and effort into planning something she’ll enjoy. Put her purity and holiness ahead of your personal desires. And all the while, seek to become a true man of God, which will bless your relationship with the Lord and with this woman.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY THAT A MAN OR WOMAN SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR IN A POTENTIAL SPOUSE?

- I think what you are looking for is genuine desire to grow in this person’s faith. And I think the church really serves and helps Christian singles consider if the person they’re interested in is serious about growing in their faith. Within this church community, there should be those this a person that can speak of their reputation and whether they are serious about growing in the Lord and putting sin to death in their life. And that’s what you are looking for. Is there genuine desire in this person to grow in their relationship and understanding with the Lord?

- What I have unfortunately found is that Christian singles hit an area of desperation, and say: "Yeah, they are a Christian, they come to church." And really what they're saying is this person comes to church a couple of times a month, but outside of attending a service, they doesn't have a real seriousness about growing in their understanding of the Lord, growing in their understanding of the Bible, or being in prayer. And no one who really knows them enough to speak to the growth in their character.
- One way to gauge a person's growth, is if they are being discipled by another believer, whether they are part of a church's system for discipleship or they just found an older man or an older woman and invited that person to speak into their lives. And I think those pieces are a much safer gauge than whether they highlight passages in their Bible and show up to service every week.

NEED TO MEET WITH SOMEONE TO TALK? WE WOULD LOVE TO BUY YOU A MEAL OR A CUP OF COFFEE...

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