

“FRIENDS with BOUNDARIES & BLESSINGS (Not Benefits!)” – 9 Phases of Healthy *Christ-Centered* Male-Female Relationships

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	Fellowship	Friendships	1-to-1 Connection(s)	Social Dating	Courtship	Engagement	Marriage
Connecting points	Participate in church and/or Christian singles group(s) or gatherings (e.g. weekly meetings, Sunday School, church worship service, socials, outings, activities)	Previous items and: Personal conversations. Connecting at the church or group. Invitation to a smaller group activity, meal, or social event. Emails, texts, phone, FB, IM.	Previous items and: Only meet with a Christian. If a non-Christian asks you out, invite them to come to your Christian group(s) or church. +Connect for coffee, dessert, meal, activity in a public place. +Repeat if there is a “mutual” interest to connect again. Recommendation: Esp. first time or first few times, drive separately.	Previous items and: +Participate in Christian group(s) together. +Worship at Church(es) together. +Activities together. +Eat together. +Relax together. +Some intro events with friends/family. +Pray together. Discuss Scripture/Sermons. +Serve God together (find God’s possible “X” multiplication factor in your relationship – if you’re both 10’s for God, your combined impact is 10 X 10 = 100 fold impact, NOT 10 + 10 = 20.	Previous items and: +Relatives/family events +Friend/social events +Travel experiences +Errands, shopping + Bible reading/pray together +Read books and/or listen to recorded teaching to help grow your relationship and future and actively discussing what you’re learning. +Pre-marital pastoral counseling	Previous items and: Meeting with people that will help you plan a wedding and the merger of our lives/futures.	Previous items and: Marriage bed. Living life together: (24/7/365 good times, bad times, and the inbetween times) Note on the 1 st year: Organize your lives and schedule so the man can focus on his wife’s happiness (see Deut 24:5).
Focus	Group Friendships, Discussions, Conversations. Relate as Brothers and Sisters in Christ.	Smaller group or social activities where you can safely connect in a low risk and fun environment with others around.	Taking a personal interest in the other person -- wanting to learn more about them and their life. 2 nd , 3 rd , or 4 th get together: Social activity, events, outings, and/or restaurant meals.	<i>Intentionally</i> connecting, spending time together, and learning more about each other AND our own needs/wants/desires. In the DTR discussion, be sure to address whether the relationship is exclusive. Both people need to be clear on this matter.	+Exclusive relationship. +Exploring & confirming the relationship/future. +Invite feedback and blessing of family, friends, and spiritual leaders.	+Wedding planning. +Life planning and choices (home, church, blended families, in-laws, calendars, goals, possessions, finances).	Leave and cleave, learn to live and love as one, operate as co-heirs in Christ, please God, serve one another and others.
Learning & Sharing	Listen to each other and encourage each other.	Learn about people’s life, family, work, thoughts, interests, struggles.	Life story, details about their life, spiritual journey, information about family, and discovering any “deal breaker” or unsafe characteristics.	Previous items and: Interests, beliefs, likes, dislikes, values, past hurts, dreams, work issues, struggles, family stuff, ongoing sins, red flags, yellow flags, deal breakers, or unsafe behaviors.	Previous items and: Future plans, deep hurts, failures, frailties, financial picture/details, work/career direction, ministry desires/plans, and merging lives.	Desires and decision making about future plans. Resolving conflicts.	Find marriage mentors – woman2woman, couple2couple, man2man.
Frequency of contacts	Weekly	Weekly, impromptu, or as planned/invited.	“One & Done” -- OR choose to connect again.	Usually some type of daily connection, and 1 or more face to face connections weekly.	Daily connections and together multiple times per week	Increased number of connections and time together each week.	Multiple connections throughout the day.
Physical Contact	Hug, handshake. Note: Some culture/friends have the practice of kissing people on the cheek or lips when greeting.	Hug, handshake.	Hug, handshake, and touch. Intentionally refrain from kissing or sexual touch to honor God, avoid false impressions/expectations, guard your hearts, and to show godly respect for the other person.	Hugs, kiss, touch, hold. Intentionally refraining from sexual touching to honor God and respect each other. Discuss and determine safe boundaries... <i>To avoid frustrations and regrets:</i> ALWAYS keep everything zipped, on, buttoned, and in. Avoid the horizontal position. Keep your hands off the front and above the waist. Avoid total seclusion, have people nearby. Open/close each date in prayer.	Hugs, kiss, touch, hold. Intentionally refraining from sexual touching to honor God and respect each other. Reaffirm safe physical boundaries to protect your relationship, purity, and to save yourself for the wedding night.	Previous items and: Be diligent in helping each other avoid tempting situations. Read <i>The Act of Marriage</i> by Tim LaHaye.	Share God’s gift of sexual intimacy on wedding night, honeymoon, and in the marriage. Learn to please each other sexually. Intimacy problems? Get books by Dr. Ed Wheat
Connecting through Prayer	Praying for people in the group	Praying for each other.	Previous items and: Meal prayer	Previous items and: Opening & closing the date in prayer Praying for God’s will/leading	Previous items and: Scripture reading and prayer Praying about future decisions	Previous items and: Praying for God’s wisdom & provisions	Previous items and: Individual & couple’s devotions.

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Table Discussion Questions for this week:

1. Have everyone at the table share: Your name, where you “mainly grew your work/profession, and an activity you enjoy doing.

Group questions about the message (have 2-4 people answer each question).

2. What did you find helpful about this teaching?
3. What idea, statement, or concept did Brian share that was most “surprising” to you?
4. Did you find anything confusing?
5. What does this teaching show you about men, women, and relationships?
6. What does this teaching show you about God?
7. How might this teaching cause you to live differently in the future?
8. Is there someone you will tell about this teaching in the next week? What will you tell them? Why?

Helpful Tips for Great Table Discussions

Each table should have designated discussion

leader/facilitator. Note: If no one has been chosen by Jane to do this, we would ask someone in the group that has had experience leading Bible studies or small groups to volunteer to lead.

1. **Use God’s ear-to-mouth ratio:** Listen two times more than you speak. 1 or 2 people should not dominate the time, and EVERYONE should contribute during the discussion.
2. **Smile and be friendly.** Avoid excessive complaining about people or personal problems.
3. **God’s grace rules the day.** Recognize that everyone will not always agree – be gracious and give grace to one another. People are at different places in their spiritual walk and in their life journey.
4. **Moving the discussion along.** Table hosts/facilitators are to move the discussion along. They have permission to limit any negative comments, to invite people to answer a question, to ask someone for their perspective, to limit the amount of time some people speak, and to move on to the next question.
5. **Help for the hurting:** This is a supportive group, but it is not a support group or a therapy session. But if someone is really hurting, take a moment and have someone in the group specifically pray for them.

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