

Today we start a study on relationships. This will include relationships for both singles and married. For both men and women. For young and old. The primary book for these studies will be The Bible. Why the Bible? Because it is in here we find all the truth about who we really are. And it is only when we understand who we are in Christ that we can begin to understand someone else.

First let's look at a couple of passages to get a foundation from which we can begin our study. **Genesis 1:26-28**. This passage tells us that God created us in His image and according to His likeness. That means that we are created to be like God. Now notice I did not say we are to be gods. But we are to behave with Godly behavior and with Holy thoughts and motives. That is our heritage. We bear the name Christian. That is Christ-like. People know us by our behavior and it is by our actions that we tell a much greater story of who we are than by our words. Secondly, look at **Genesis 2:18-25**. We see here that God in His infinite wisdom made male and female. Two different likenesses of Himself. Each of us, male and female, reflect a particular part of God's character. He is neither male nor female, but encompasses all of the good each of us possess. So before we even begin to study each other, we must first understand that we are created by God, in His likeness, and for His pleasure. And then He created both male and female for our pleasure. To begin this study, let's talk about who we really are. What is it that we are really going to offer to the world out there as friends, husbands, wives, girlfriends, boyfriends, and even daughters, sons, mothers, and fathers. Why should anyone want to be with us. We must first examine ourselves. Our relationship to God is the most important relationship that we could ever involve ourselves in. It is by our accepting Christ as personal Savior and Lord of our lives that we can begin to become what God intended us to be. **Phil. 1:6** says, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus". God is working in and on each of us. To make us more into His likeness than we have ever known. **II Cor. 5:17** says, "... if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away and the new things have come". God has plans for each of us. We only need to seek Him and His ways and His will for our lives. And if we do, the result will be, "... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, etc...." But what about the real world? What about today? Right here? Right now? In my life? Let's talk a few moments about that. Let's start with some of the mistakes we make.

First though I want to state a disclaimer or two about these mistakes.

1. Do all singles make most of these mistakes? In all my reading and research and counseling, I feel confident that most of these are fairly common to all of us at one time or another. Some are obviously preclusive; that is, if you

make one, it would eliminate others. Some are more common in certain stages in our lives or ages, while others relate to certain type of individuals more than others. If the shoe fits, wear it.

2. Do Christian singles make more mistakes than non-Christians? The answer is no. However the sources we go for answers is very different than what the non-Christian uses. Also, I would hope that with the Holy Spirit within us, we as Christians would resist more than non-Christians.

3. Do Christian singles make unique mistakes? Yes and no. Many of our mistakes are the same as others, but some relate specifically to our Christian culture and principles.

4. Are these mistakes necessarily made only by singles? Although most of these mistakes relate to single people, many cases involve married people. If we look hard we who are married can probably see ourselves in some of these mistakes.

Now to the meat of it all. What are some common mistakes we make?

A. We think marriage is the only normal life-style and that it will solve all our problems. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. Yet I see every day, single men and women living their lives as if they had dialed 911, the marriage emergency hot line, and are waiting for "Mr. or Ms. Right" to show up at the door to rescue them from a fate worse than Hell. We can't blame singles entirely. Our society is built for TWO. Try to take a singles vacation. Hotel rooms are double occupancy. There are few tables for one in restaurants. It is tough. And many people would never admit to feeling that singles don't fit into our society, but it seems to be a clear message that being married, is better. So the question we have to answer here is, "Did God intend for everyone to be married?" Look back at Genesis. We were commanded to "...be fruitful and multiply". We can't do that unless we are married. But let's not stop there. Look at **I Cor. 7:32-38**. This is a unique passage of scripture because it gives us something new to chew on here. Is God actually saying that it is better if we don't get married? No. Rather I believe that here we have a description of a life style that is pleasing to the Lord and the reasons why it is good. Verse 38 tells us the difference. If we marry, it is a good thing. Men are told in Psalms to find a good wife. But here, we are also told that the one who is not married spends much more of their time doing to things of God without the distraction of a spouse. It was from this passage the Monks and Priests took their vow of celibacy. There are many pluses and minuses, assets and liabilities in both life styles. The key thing to understand is that God has not put one life-style above the other. Being single is not second best. After all, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and of course Jesus, were all single. There are dangers in allowing ourselves to think that marriage is the only normal life-style.

First, we place unnecessary and unrealistic expectations on marriage itself. You set yourself up for disappointment and failure.

Second, you're asking too much from the other person. They will never be able to meet all your needs totally. I'll say more about this later.

Third, a person consumed with the desire to be married will become less attractive because that desperate message is reflected in the person's body language, conversation, facial expressions and other unconscious ways. This makes it a Catch-22.

Finally, we can, and often do, make it a idol. It becomes more important that our walk with God, and our family and friends. Remember what Paul said in I Cor. about being single? So what do we do? Where do we go? Do we pray for the gift of celibacy? I do think so. Look at **Matt. 6:33**, "... seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. and all these things will be given to you." Seeking God first means putting God number one in our thinking, planning, priorities, and our desires. God is the only answer to our needs. He is the only answer to our eternal salvation and likewise, is the only answer to earthly problems. The fact that Jesus Christ is the only one capable of meeting our needs is no accident. God intended it to be that way. We were designed in such a way that we cannot be completely satisfied with anyone or anything except Jesus Christ. He is the perfection of all God's glory, and there is no possible way He can ever disappoint us. He says He will be everything we'll ever need and He'll never leave us. And He has always made good on His promises. So the normal life for you is the one God has planned out whether it is married or single, He is working to complete that in you even now.

B. We misinterpret the attentions of the opposite sex. When we get to the marrying age, we often overreact or misinterpret the attentions of the opposite sex. I remember not wanting to sit with a single girl in church for fear someone would think we were serious and dating exclusively. ***Women have a greater tendency to over-interpret the gently behavior of a man, while men over-imagine the physical closeness of a normal woman.*** The best advise here is to avoid misinterpreting the attentions of another by going out of your way to avoid them. Discipline your thought life and don't allow misinterpretation of actions or attentions from other get you into trouble.

C. We put up with too much in a relationship and hang on too long. We have heard much about co-dependent relationships lately. Well, I think we as Christians are no strangers to this type of abuse. We sometimes feel that a bad relationship is better than none at all. We so often say, "I keep dating him or her till something better comes along". Do you really believe that someone really special will want to date you if you are already in a bad situation? They will probably run like a rabbit. If you are in a relationship and you're being treated with disrespect, thoughtlessness and unkindness, and you are being embarrassed in public, there is a good chance that you've been hanging in too long and put up with too much. The only solution is to get

out. Sound drastic. Yes. But its the only way. The truth is, if you are not being treated as you really want to be before you marry, it is a sure bet that you won't be treated any better after you get married.

D. We get too physically involved much too soon and go too far. I have had many young Christian singles tell me that this is the hardest area to deal with in dating. Believe me, I understand. I have heard the same story from many, many Christians. They get involved with someone and end up in bed. Now the real alarming part of this is not so much that they ended up in bed, I could have predicted that, but the remorse was not over the sin of premarital sex as much as the attitude of the other partner. Here's what I mean. Two Christians start dating. They think since they are Christians, and they are professing to want God's best, God will suppress their normal, natural hormonal sex drive. But God doesn't work that way. So when they experience the sex drive, and their hormone are running wild, they deceive themselves into believing it's Okay with God. After all, they are Christians, and God wouldn't let it happen if it weren't right. Boy, can we ever twist the truth when we want to. You see, God is not going to deprive you of the ability to enjoy the physical pleasures of the opposite sex, it is your responsibility to appropriate His power to bring it under control. **Romans 12:1** says, "*... don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.*" It is no secret that the world around us says it's Okay to have sex whenever and just about wherever you want. But the Bible is very clear. SEX is for within the boundaries of marriage. Period. No negotiating. No maybes. No exceptions. Too many young people have been thrust into adulthood far too soon because of their inability to keep themselves to themselves. God has a plan for each of us and He will enable us to fulfill that plan. It is just a lie from Satan that the world advertises, that you can't live without sex. In order to control your drives, you must know who you are. If you know yourself, and know you have trouble controlling certain urges and desires, don't do those things which make it easy to yield to the temptation. Stay away from long periods of being together alone. Don't let your hands go where they should not be. Don't let your mind continue to entertain the thoughts that will lead you to yield to the temptation of sexual sin. With so many don'ts, what should you do. Well, first I believe that the answer is very simple, but very hard. There is a direct correlation between the amount of time you spend communicating with God in prayer and Bible study and your ability to resist all forms of temptation. I know it sounds simple, but I assure you, it is tough. Many single and married people go in and out of victory on this issue regularly. When temptation comes your way, what do you do? Do you run to God's word and thank Him for helping you to resist the temptation, or do you try to fight it in your own strength. If you make it, do you recognize that God gave you the strength, or do you continue to expose yourself to the dangers of that same situation? Only you can appropriate God's power and strength when it comes to temptation. Let the Holy Spirit control your desires and then God will give you the desires of your heart.