



Unlike on TV - DATING IS NO GAME

Many issues and problems exist in our world that believers in Yahweh's Word must face. Because we come from different walks of life, certain issues that one believer must deal with affect another believer in a very different way. This is why we must understand the spirit of the law and not just the letter of the law.

Personal relationships, like dating, affect almost all of us at some time in our lives. While the letter of the law appears to neglect this important aspect of our culture, the spirit of the law is available to guide us.

Is dating allowable for true followers of Yahweh and Yahshua? Some big-name churches encourage it. Others condemn it. Who is right? The answer is a bit surprising, because both sides are partly right.

Dating's Purpose and Goals

There are at least two good reasons that a person might want to date another: to consider the possibility of marriage, and for companionship or friendship. There are also other, more selfish reasons for dating, such as using or taking advantage of another person, or using the opportunity to show off how popular one is, etc. But we are going to concentrate on "scriptural dating."

First, let's consider dating, with marriage as a possible goal. When we say "possible goal," it's best to remember that many people who are now married never had marriage in mind when they first dated their spouse.

After Yahweh created the world, He said, "It is not good that the man

should be alone; I will make him a helpmate," (Genesis 2:18, Jerusalem Bible). Yahweh recognized that man should not be alone. In fact, woman was made specifically so that man would not be alone. She was made as a mate for man.

Yahweh wants men and women to be together. Marriage symbolizes the holy relationship between Yahweh and His people, (Ephesians 5:30-33.) Scripture speaks of marriage as holy. Dating is a pathway toward marriage, toward finding a helpmate—a holy goal.

Be Selective

The questions may arise, "Weren't all the marriages in the Bible arranged by the parents? How, then, would dating fit in?"

Many of the marriages were arranged by the parents, but not all. Abraham sent his eldest servant to find a wife for Isaac, saying that Yahweh would choose the woman for his son to marry, (Genesis 24:27).

Jacob was told by Isaac to choose a wife from his relatives, but Isaac chose Rachel instead (Genesis 28:1, 2; 29:18).

David's marriage to Saul's daughter was not arranged by David's father, Jesse, but the girls were offered to David by King Saul, (1 Samuel 18). David chose Abigail on his own (1 Samuel 25:39-42). Numerous examples exist of people in Scripture choosing their spouse without a parentally-arranged marriage.

This is where dating comes in. If a person has marriage as a goal, he should know the person he is marrying. Dating is a natural way to get to know that person. Surely, in the Bible, these people became acquainted through courtship.

Knowing a person means more than finding out that person's hobbies, favorite music, and the like. It involves finding out what the person is REALLY like. The author of Proverbs wrote, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he," (23:7). To truly know a person is to know how he or she thinks.

Marriage is a big commitment and two people should know each other well before stepping into it. That means looking well beyond physical attraction.

Amos asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The obvious answer is "No, they can't." Similarly, a marriage will not hold together

(or even a dating relationship) if the couple are not in agreement. So, how will they know whether they are in agreement without spending time together? We see dating has a necessary place for those seeking a partner in marriage.

Dating Is Sharing, Caring

The second reason to consider dating is for companionship. Paul writes, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," (Romans 12:15). Yahweh made man a social being, not a reclusive hermit. He wants us to share our emotions.

It is not good that man should be alone. Dating can be a healthy sharing with another. It can be a way of dealing with the stress (and happiness) that we encounter in day-to-day living.

Dating can be a method of forming true friendship. The Bible speaks highly of true friendship. "A friend loves at all times..." (Proverbs 17:17). "And there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother," (Proverbs 18:24).

Dating, like many pastimes, can be used and misused. Dating can lead us, if used properly, to some honorable goals Yahweh has set for us, like friendship, companionship, and marriage.

Who Should a Believer Date?

The spirit of the Word seems to show that dating has a healthy place in Yahweh's plans for people. The next question that arises is, "Who should a believer date?" Scripture speaks often about what type of people with whom we should spend our time. We can use these verses as guidelines for choosing dating partners.

The Psalmist wrote, "I am a Companion of all them that fear you, and of them that keep your precepts," (119:63). David's words readily apply to our situation. If we keep company with followers of Yahweh and those who have accepted Yahshua's sacrifice, our faith can be strengthened, (Romans 1:12).

If we can see the spirit of Yahweh in the person we date, we're encouraged.

It isn't too hard to understand the advantages of seeking other believers as companions. Keep in mind that one possible outcome of dating is marriage.

The odds have proved to be against a marriage that works well between a believer and a non-believer. That is why the Bible cautions against it. What usually happens is that the believer's faith and zeal weaken. There are some people strong in the faith who are spiritually stable and are not affected to a great extent by an unbelieving spouse. But their numbers are few and their burden is always greater. Those married in the faith pull together, with common desires and the same spiritual goals.

Abraham was concerned about his son Isaac marrying a Canaanite. He made his eldest servant affirm that he would get Isaac a wife from his own country (Genesis 24:1-4).

Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, were so upset about Esau's pagan wives that Isaac, likewise, instructed his son, Jacob, not to marry a woman from Canaan, but to go to his own country to find a wife (Genesis 26:34-35; 28:1-2).

Yahweh later commanded specifically that the children of Israel should not intermarry with the various pagan tribes. The Almighty Yahweh cautioned us that those people might turn our sons to the worship of other mighty ones (Deuteronomy 7:4).

We cannot kid ourselves that this could never happen to us. Scripture says even King Solomon, builder of the great temple, was led into very evil sins by his wives (1 Kings 11:2-3). If Solomon, who was blessed with great wisdom by Yahweh, could not withstand the temptations to fall away from True Worship because of his marriage partners, do you believe you could?

Righteous Lot suffered from merely dwelling with sinners just because he had to see and hear their unlawful deeds (2 Peter 2:8).

Don't Associate with Evil

Spending a great deal of time around those who despise the way of our Creator is not a position we should want to enter. Paul tells us specifically not to associate with fornicators (1 Corinthians 5:9), or with those who disobey the Scriptures (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

The Word of Yahweh reminds us, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed," (Proverbs 13:20).

An abundance of Scripture instructs us to select our companions with care. We should apply this principle to dating, as well.

We have been instructed by the Bible to follow Yahshua the Messiah as our example of perfection.

Although Yahshua spent His time with sinners and what was considered "low

life”—prostitutes, tax collectors, etc.—Paul told us to avoid sinners. Is there a contradiction? No.

The Messiah had a special mission. Yahshua described Himself from the Book of Isaiah, declaring, “The spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because He has appointed me to preach the Good News to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of Yahweh” (Luke 4:18-19). Yahshua also said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” (Luke 5:32).

Yahshua had a special calling—a mission to sinners. He spent His time with them to bring them salvation; to preach the Word to them.

Most dates are spent in relaxation and enjoyment, so we can't use the Messiah's example as an argument to justify our dating whomever we please.

Cut-and-dried situations are easy to differentiate. We can tell what is obviously righteous from what is obviously wicked. The gray area, however, is difficult to handle at times. There is a gray area that should be addressed because it is bound to arise often

If we agree that it is not wrong to date another believer, we must consider who is a believer. There is a wide spectrum of people in the world. You might find an individual with whom you are in almost complete agreement about all Scripture other than very minor splinters in the eye (such as how much food preparation should be done on Sabbath).

There are others who do not keep all the commandments as we understand them, but they themselves believe they are obeying them all. Some think the commandments are not to be worried about; that we are under grace.

Then there are those at the extreme who don't even pretend to follow the Mighty One of the Bible.

Precisely where do we draw the line? What is the minimally acceptable date? A principle in Scripture helps us to answer this question. Yahweh gave us a reason to avoid marriages with total unbelievers. He said, “For they will turn away your son from following Me,” (Deuteronomy 7:4).

If any date could turn us away from following Yahweh, we should sit down and count the cost. As the prophet wrote, “Can two walk together,

except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

Dating can be a rewarding and maturing experience, but we should always keep in mind our faith when we decide who to date.

Yahweh's Assembly in Messiah

HalleluYAH!