

Non-Christian Relationships: Be Set Apart

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1 Peter 1:13-17

- Verse 13: *What does it mean to prepare your mind for action? What does it mean to be self-controlled?*
 - Why do we need to do these two things? Jesus is coming back and we need to be ready.
 - Do teens typically think like this? Why or why not?
- Verse 13: Do not conform to evil desires from before you were a Christian. *What type of evil desires did you (or still) conform to?*
 - Impurity in different forms
 - Following your own feelings & emotions instead of God
 - Ungodly relationships at school & church (girlfriends, boyfriends, unspiritual friends, etc.)
 - Selfishness; no self-control; everything revolves around what you want (home & school)
- Verses 15-16: Be holy in all you do.
- *What is the definition of holy?*
 - Set apart
- *Why be set apart?*
 1. God commands it.
 2. God's plan is to use "set apart" people to make an impact on the world.
 3. Key point: Jeremiah 29:11 – God has a special "set apart" plan for your life: he loves you, desires to protect you, & does not want to harm you.
- Old Testament: God chose the Israelites, of all nations, to be His special people. Why?
 - He wanted Israel to be holy in order to draw all nations to Him.
- New Testament: we read the same thing over and over... we must be set apart to save ourselves and to save others.
- God calls his people to be set apart to be a "light to the world" and a "light to the Gentiles" (see Matt 5:14-16; Isaiah 49:6).
 - Are you serious about saving as many as possible? Be set apart.
 - ARE YOU IMPACTING THE WORLD OR IS THE WORLD IMPACTING YOU?
 - Are you impacting your school or is your school impacting you?
- *What happens when we are not set apart?* (at school, church, home, etc.)
 - When we conform to the world, no one gets saved & we personally waste away.
- "Be holy, because I am holy"
 - Do you think "being holy" is a command God takes seriously?
 - This is quoted at least four other times in the Bible (Lev. 11:44; 11:45; 19:2; 20:7-8).

Discussion:

What do "set apart relationships" with non-Christians look like?

- Set apart relationships with non-Christians are mission-minded.
 - Friends you are actively teaching about God through your daily example & through Bible Study.
 - You work together, go to school together, or have fun together with the ultimate goal of building a relationship to help save them.
 - See Paul's example in 1 Co 9:22-23 – He became all things to all men to save.

What does it look like when relationships with non-Christians are NOT set apart?

- Self-serving or sensual relationships: *What does this mean???*
 - #1 focus is NOT on saving them.
 - We live a double life with them. We try to blend with them; no spiritual impact

- Selfish -- it's mostly for our own pleasure, confidence, and security.
- We get fun out of the relationship, physical attention, attraction, etc.
- The relationship "feels good".
- It's sinful. It's based on gossip, idolatry, or debauchery. The relationship causes you to sin.
 - Two girls' friendship based on gossip.
 - Two boys' relationship based on playing video games (or other things) for hours (debauchery).
 - Boy/girl relationship based on building up self (excessively talking on the phone, texting, mySpace ---- foolish talk, idolatry, impure thoughts etc.)
- Examples
 - Girlfriend or boyfriend
 - A girl or boy that likes you and you refuse to draw a spiritual line so they will back off (Amy example)
 - Emotional attachments with opposite sex (no official title used to avoid getting in trouble; sneaky)
 - Same-sex friends who pull you into mediocrity or away from God (1 Co 15:33)

By God's command, God's people are to be set apart from the people in the world!

- God's command to be set apart in our relationships with the opposite sex is nothing new.
- The issue of Christians NOT dating, pursuing, or being influenced by non-Christian women:
 - **This is not a rule, guideline, or suggestion our church made up!**
- God has been commanding and demanding that we be set apart from the men & women of the world since the beginning of time.

Exodus 34:15-16

- One of the original commands of God
- Do not get too close (bind yourself) those who worship other gods (today = non-Christians). Why???
- They have different standards or no standards of holiness
- They will influence you and corrupt your holiness.
- You will begin prostituting yourself to their gods.
- What gods could non-Christian women or men influence us to worship?
- How could a woman or man have this type of influence on us – even as a girlfriend/boyfriend or close friend?

Numbers 25:1-15 – God's people start hanging out and blending in with the Moabites (non-Christians, if you will). The Israelites began worshipping their gods & had impure relationships with their women.

- God burned with anger against Israel.
- He ordered the execution of the leaders involved in this sin (unholy) in broad daylight.
- Phinehas stepped up and did something about it. Are you willing to be a Phinehas in your group? Are you willing to take sin this seriously?
- Phinehas's action stopped the plague, but not before God killed 24,000 Israelites.

Are we starting to believe how serious God is about being set apart from the world? Do you want to test him on this command?

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 – In his farewell speech, Moses warns God's people not to marry outside the Kingdom.

Joshua 23:9-13 – In his farewell speech, Joshua warns God's people not to marry outside the Kingdom.

1 Kings 11:1-11 – What caused Solomon's tragic downfall?

- Solomon's demise was women who worshipped other Gods.
- What did these women do to Solomon's relationship with God?

- God was angry & tore the Kingdom away from him.
- Solomon may have lost his relationship with God.

If this could happen to the wisest man in the world, could it happen to you?

Ezra 9-10

- Israel marries foreign wives, deliberately disobeying God.
- Ezra tore his tunic and robe, pulled out some of his hair from his head and beard, and sat down devastated.
- Ezra prays for the people.
- The sin is so serious that Ezra lists all those who married foreign wives in Ezra 10:18. God wanted people thousands of years later to know how he felt about this.

Why does God take our relationships with ungodly (non-Christian) women (or men) so seriously???

Nehemiah 10:30 – Israel vows to not bind themselves with women outside the Kingdom.

1. This was considered a vow of faithfulness.
2. If they married ungodly women, what does that make them? Unfaithful to God.

Nehemiah 13:23-29 – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem several years later.

- He found men who were unfaithful to God. How were they unfaithful?
- Did Nehemiah take this seriously? What did he do?
- How did the sin of these people hurt God? How did it affect their holiness?

We consistently see a common theme in the Old Testament.

- What principle do we see time and time again?
- What is God's standard for his people and their relationships with ungodly women? Don't do it.
- What pleases God and displeases God in these relationships?
- What is the result over and over again when we flirt with worldly relationships?

***God never changes. The same principles apply in the New Testament and today. God commands that we be holy as he is holy in our relationships with non-Christians.

2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1 – the worldly yoke vs. Matthew 11:28-29 – the yoke of Jesus

YOKE: Oxen tightly harnessed together; being stuck or emotionally attached to person; this person influences how you spend your time and influences your decisions (positively or negatively)

We cannot be yoked to Jesus & non-Christians at the same time and expect things to go well spiritually. You are stuck. You are being pulled in two different, opposite directions.

Important Questions to Consider:

- What are you looking to gain from getting emotionally attached to a non-Christian?
- Are you allowing your holiness to be corrupted by non-Christian relationships?
- Are you a light to non-Christian girls? Are you a light to non-Christian boys?
- Do you have a conviction that the world is lost and you must do something about it?
- Do non-Christian girls (or boys) know that you are set apart? Or do they think you have other motives in the relationship?
 - **The test of your holiness:** Do non-Christian girls or boys (in and out of the church) continue to show interest in you? If so, these girls/boys are sensing something. They are sensing (even slightly) that you are giving them an opportunity.
- Are you fleeing from the non-Christian girls/boys or do you like keeping the door cracked?
- The Christian life is like running a race. How hard will it be to finish the race with 20 pound weights on each ankle (see Hebrews 12:1)? There is huge burden that comes with being yoked to a non-Christian.

- Am I willing to wait on God to help me find a spiritual boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, or wife?
- What if I never get married? Will I still stay faithful to God?
- If you are truly focused on the mission, why even think about getting attached or dating a non-Christian?
- Does this relationship please God or just please me?
- How is this person helping me in my relationship with God?
- Who do I spend more time talking to and thinking about – God or someone else?
- Can you find one strong, faithful, and fruitful disciple of impact who is yoked to a non-Christian woman or man? You may look in the church or in the Bible. Good luck.
- How much does this person (potential close relationship) care whether I'm going to heaven or hell? How are they showing it?
- Am I really willing to give up everything (including unspiritual relationships) or am I only willing to give up some things?
- Why does God call us to set apart in our relationships with non-Christians? Is he protecting our salvation or trying to punish us? Does God know best?

Summary of Key Points:

Why have set apart relationships with non-Christians?

1. No matter the time period, culture, or circumstance, God consistently commands it.
2. God's plan is to use "set apart" people to make an impact on the world.
3. God has a special plan for your life: he loves you, desires to protect you, & does not want to harm you. God always has your best in mind!

Additional Scriptures for Personal Study:

James 4:4-10 – Friendship with the world is cheating on God.

1 John 2:15-17 – Do not love the world

Matt 5:29-30 – cut off the things or relationships that cause you to sin

2 Timothy 2:22 – Flee the evil desires of youth; passions and heart lead you astray

Jeremiah 17:9 – Following your heart, feelings, and emotions can be a dangerous thing

1 Co 7:39 – Looking ahead in your life ----- What is the strongest yoke? Marriage. Scripture says the expectation of God is that we marry a Christian. Why? To punish and restrict you? No, he wants to put you in the best situation to make it to heaven and have an impact in this world!

Helpful Tips for Reaching Out to Opposite Sex:

1. **Proverbs 14:12** -- There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death... GET ADVICE – CONSTANTLY. Are you an expert in spiritual male-female relationships? An expert on converting people? Probably not, get lots of input about even the small things.
2. Draw a line immediately with the person. They have to KNOW there is NO CHANCE you will be "emotionally involved" with them on a boyfriend-girlfriend type level.
3. Get them out to church or a church activity to see how serious they really are about God.
4. Hand them off to the teen workers and spiritual teens of the opposite sex.
5. Back off and have faith! You have scattered the seed, not let other people water it so God can make it grow. You cannot be their #1 relationship in the church.
6. If you insist on being too involved, you could damage this person's shot at getting saved. Are they involved with God for the wrong reasons (you)? Have faith & back off.
 - Examples of over-involvement: daily texts, mySpace conversations, phone conversations, hanging out just to hang out (let the opposite sex do that)
 - When in doubt, don't!!! Get advice.