

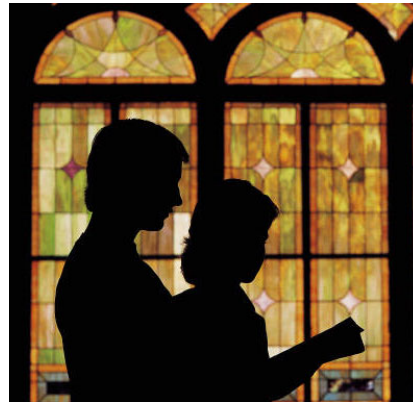
*I shouldn't be surprised when my grandmother asks, "Do you have a girlfriend?" That's a typical question for someone my age. I guess it's also ordinary when an older lady tells me, "You look handsome. Better watch out for those girls!" These statements, plus a recent discussion, prompted me to write a few thoughts about where I stand on dating, using Scripture as my reference.*

## Does Ben Have a Girlfriend?

By Benjamin Gribaudo – June 2003

My merciful God pleads with me to present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him. He expects this surrender of me (Romans 12:1). Starting in the early teens and continuing until they marry, many single people's thoughts are absorbed with the opposite gender. "Will she like this new shirt?" "Did he notice me on Sunday?" "Does she think I'm handsome?" Can I whole-heartily serve God if my thoughts are constantly on a girl?

It is wrong when I cause another to expect from me that which I cannot or do not plan to fulfill. Quite simply, Scripture says, "Defraud not" (Mark 10:19). If I asked for your resume, interviewed you and told you I might have a position for you, the whole time having no intention of hiring you, I would have defrauded you. Likewise, dating raises unfounded hopes. Bob was just enjoying the friendship. Suzie hoped they would marry. Bob met another girl and broke up with Suzie. Heartbroken, Suzie spent weeks depressed and crying. Did defrauding occur? And, it happens time and time again!



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Am I whole-heartily serving God if my thoughts never leave the girl next to me throughout the entire church service?

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I do not want to hurt others and I want to save myself from emotional pain. I also do not want to "give" a part of my heart to each girlfriend. Reclaiming a piece that was "given away" would be hard. I want to keep my whole heart for the Lord, and I want to have it all for my future wife if I am to marry.

Fellowship is an important part of Christianity. We are to be of one accord—united in spirit, harmonious (Philippians 2:2). But with Christian youth, it can be a different story. Tom and Alyssa broke up. Now, none of Tom's friends will talk to Alyssa's new boyfriend. Alyssa's friends will not speak to Tom's new girl. Further, Alyssa's new boyfriend's friends are not talking with Tom and vice versa. And on it goes! What disunity of spirit this causes!

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Can a male-female relationship be built that avoids the problems of defrauding others, disunity of fellowship and being distracted from the Lord? Absolutely! The resulting marriage should be very strong, as both parties will be giving each other their whole heart.

A paramount key to this kind of relationship is that both enter it with the understanding that, Lord willing, it will culminate in marriage. Of course, if some irreconcilable difference came to light, the relationship could be broken. This means that the man and the woman should be ready for marriage before beginning the relationship. Similarity in spiritual maturity, emotional compatibility and maturity of character are necessary. He needs to be committed to being the spiritual leader and the financial provider, and prepared to honor, cherish and give his life for his wife. She must be virtuous with a reverent and submissive spirit and be skilled as a homemaker. Both must be “givers” and not “takers” and in proper relationship with their God-appointed authorities prior to, and throughout, the building of their relationship. Every qualification of a husband or a wife cannot be listed in one paragraph, but I think you begin to get the idea.

Differences are often grounds for breaking up and finding another friend because dating does not have the goal of building a permanent relationship. “When you find a problem with what you have, exchange it for a different model.” Repeated a few times, this provides excellent training for divorce. On the other hand, the kind of relationship to which I am referring is one of commitment. It lends to working through problems—as should be done in marriage—instead of breaking up.

The relationship leading to the wedding altar lays the foundation for this lifetime commitment. Today, strong, radiant, happy marriages are uncommon. How important it is for me to make every effort to build a rock-solid union that will stand strong against the raging gales and billowing waves of Satan’s attacks!