

RELATING TO THE OPPOSITE SEX

CLASS QUIZ

The idea of this exercise is to get the class to reach the conclusions together. After giving the lesson or a brief introduction, do a hands up quiz and keep tally of yes and no on the board to show how the class feels about each of the questions. This will identify any areas that need closer attention and allow plenty of question time.

1. Is your body yours, or is it God's? *1Corinthians 6:20*
2. Is it possible for guys and girls to be best friends without developing feelings for each other? *1Peter 5:8*
3. Do you think it becomes harder to control physical desires as the relationship goes for a longer period of time (eg a 2 month or 2 year engagement)? *James1:14-15*
4. Do you think a relationship started at age 12-15 will end in marriage?
A) 10-30% chance, b) 31-60% chance, c) 61-100% chance
5. Do you think the risks of such a relationship (eg of heartbreak, going too far physically, growing apart, immaturity) are worth the chance of success?
6. Do you believe you are ready for marriage within the next few years?
7. Do you believe a relationship is serious if marriage is not on your mind for the near future?
8. Why do you think people start relationships they know are not serious or suitable?
A) For fun b) Peer pressure *1Corinthians 15:23*
c) Loneliness d) needing love e) feeling wanted, boosting self esteem
Psalm 103:1-5
8. Do you think that these are good enough reasons to start a relationship?
9. Do you think God would be happy with you having a non-serious girlfriend/boyfriend relationship before you are old enough to marry? If no, why not
a) Because your parents say no and you would have to go behind their back

- b) Because God says no in the Bible
- c) Because the church and confession father says no
- d) All of the above

1Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:18

10. Would you be happy to find out that your brother/sister is involved in a useless relationship when they are too young?

11. Reflection question-if we know all these things, why are we tempted to go the wrong way? Group discussion

MISTAKES MADE IN RELATING TO THE OPPOSITE SEX

Some of these apply to teens, others to older age groups

Mistake 1: IMPORTANT & RELEVANT We misinterpret the attentions of the opposite sex.

This misinterpretation of attentions is one of the major reasons it's difficult for a single man and woman to have a platonic relationship. This can be deliberate. Many times young males and females make up stories about their relationships with the opposite sex. This is one of the worst forms of lying as it can unfairly hurt the reputation of that person. If the person is fictional, it still hurts the liar by making them feel they need to pretend to be popular. It is denying God by saying that His way is not our way because it is too embarrassing to be pure.

Here the verse *"but whoever **denies** me before men, I also will **deny** before my Father who is in heaven."* Matt. 10.3 applies.

Or it can be that we believe someone is more interested than what they really are. A good way to avoid embarrassment is never to assume anything unless its very clear and never to share this with friends as they might later get involved with the same person, may become jealous or may even spread rumours. Also avoid overboard flirtation/rude conversations as males/females may later feel they cannot trust you.

A verse that may apply Luke 6:45

*"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the **overflow of his heart** his mouth speaks."*

Staying a good friend to everyone, and making it clear where you stand as a friend until the right time will gain you respect from the guys/girls in your age group and eventually more attention from them. Eg No one wants to chase a girl who's been ot with his friend later on.

Mistake 2: We know we should back away but we can't

Admit you have an emotional dependency you're calling "love" – or even admit that you really love the person if you think you do – but acknowledge that it's a wrong relationship and get out.

How do you get out? By taking drastic steps.

Jesus said, *"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell"* (Matthew 5:29-30).

Cut off all contact with the person and ask Spiritual fathers advice.

If you're not happy with the treatment you're receiving from a person before you marry, you can be sure the treatment you would get after marriage would be much more of the same and worse.

Mistake 3: We're not always very good at reading danger signals in a relationship.

The truth is, most of the time they just don't want to see danger signals in a relationship. We can know the relationship isn't from God, but we ignore that we are getting more and more attached, thinking we are strong enough to get out of it when we need to.

Remember that when our emotions get involved in a situation, it's very easy to lose perspective. The saying, "Emotions and feelings have zero IQ," You cannot trust your emotions.

Some danger signals:

Significant age difference. This will vary depending on individuals and depending on the ages involved.

Different family upbringing. It's a fact that no two families are alike, but look at the basics: Were both families Christian? What values were taught by the families? What kind of relationships exist among the family members?

Priority of spiritual life. If one person in the relationship puts a higher priority on spiritual life than the other, it's a real danger signal and should not be ignored. Usually when you are involved with someone whose spiritual temperature is below your own, you don't bring them up to your level, you go down to theirs

Mistake 4: We get physically involved much too soon and go too far.

Here again we Christians have allowed the world system and philosophy to infiltrate our thinking about the physical aspects of a relationship.

Romans 12:1-2 says we are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by a renewed mind. Our bodies belong to God. We are accountable to Him for any action we make that does not please Him.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body," (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

If you truly want to remain pure in your sexual life and keep yourself for the one person God has for you, or keep yourself for Christ if you remain single, you most certainly can do that. There is nothing impossible about it.

However, in order to do that, you will need a discipline, a discipline to go the extra mile in keeping the physical contact down to a minimum. You simply cannot trust the chemistry of your body. It is very powerful, and once it gets going, finding the discipline to keep it under control is extremely difficult. So the secret is to keep the electricity down to low levels by controlling the physical contact.

Mistake 5: We don't pay enough attention to compatibility

It's very smart to put yourself through intensive soul-searching when you consider marrying someone. Keeping in mind that your emotions are involved and therefore your perspective may be off center, ask for advice from trusted people.

IMPORTANT If we start dating too early, or personalities may change too much and we find ourselves incompatible with the person we are STUCK married to

Mistake 6: We carry our list of requirements for a relationship with us and judge others too quickly and selfishly.

Having certain important guidelines in mind as we meet and date people is helpful in keeping us from making totally emotional decisions. To want the same beliefs and values is important but if we date too early or date too many people (which can easily happen if we start dating without careful prayer) many problems arise.

We can start to compare everyone to the partner before. If someone is good at showing affection but not great, you compare to the great one before and although this person is also good, they will not be good enough for you in comparison and you can feel an emptiness. The only way to avoid this is to date only with serious potential for marriage.

Mistake 7: We think that anything is better than being alone.

While it's true that we have basic needs for companionship, it's not true that to be alone is the worst condition in the whole world. There's a big difference between aloneness and loneliness.

Most people fear aloneness because to them it represents loneliness. They haven't learned to fill their time so that aloneness is valuable and refreshing for them. We need to enjoy the presence of God and stop equating aloneness with loneliness.

Loneliness is a feeling, an attitude. We don't get through this life without experiencing it to some degree. But to settle for anything as a substitute for loneliness is a big mistake. There are worse things than loneliness, and by God's grace we do not have to be overcome and defeated by loneliness. He can take our aloneness and turn it into beautiful, fruitful, productive time with Him.

Recognize that being alone doesn't mean you're a social misfit or that you are not appealing to the opposite sex. Don't buy into the lies of our enemy, who wants you to feel desperate. When we feel desperate, we act in irrational and unprincipled ways. When we feel an overpowering need to have someone near, we'll settle for anything. Anyone who satisfies our immediate needs if they are the same religion or not, we sometimes compromise because we don't think it will last forever.

1 Cor 7: 34 Likewise, the unmarried woman and the virgin are concerned with the service of the Lord, to be holy in body and spirit. The married woman, instead, worries about the things of the world and how to please her husband.

Instead of feeling lonely and trying to jump through the stages of life too quickly, the Christian should make the most of every stage. When not involved with a partner, we have the time to develop the foundations of the most important life relationship- With Jesus. This can be a very sweet time without distractions. So sweet that some continue it alone with God forever as a monk or nun.

On those we can foolishly try to impress by having a boyfriend/girlfriend too soon

Do you not know [writes Paul in 1 Cor 6.9-11] that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹

Who should influence who-we who have the truth, or those that are sadly headed in the wrong direction?

How to resist

Dressing Modestly

Spiritual Practices to help resist

- Regular Mass and the reception of Holy Communion. The actual Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, when received with the proper preparation, is the greatest source of grace and strength.

- Appropriate dress should be decided by the family, where you are (eg beach or church). General ideas can be discussed eg no cleavage, stomach. This will avoid unwanted attention as well

...I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28).

Women should adorn themselves with proper conduct, with modesty and self-control...(Timothy 2:9).

- Monthly or even weekly confession. This heals one of failures, wounds, and sins. It gives one strength to overcome weaknesses. Your confession father may recognize a potentially disastrous situation early and save a lot of future heartache.
- The daily prayers, and asking the intercession of the saints that have defeated the same challenges we face.
- Fasting and self-denial. These practices have been recommended by the Church since its earliest days as a means of supporting the virtue of chastity. If you can resist other physical temptations, it will help with the others
- Reading scripture and spiritual books daily. *"One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4). Learning verses to help fight temptation just as Jesus fought them with the word of God on the mountain. Eg Reciting this verse above. The Jesus Prayer "Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner"
- Watching spiritual movies as an example and listening to spiritual Cd's
- Praying to know God's will for you; praying for wisdom in choosing a marriage partner. In this matter, consider asking the intercession of St. Raphael the Archangel who assisted Tobias in finding a wife (for the story

of Tobias and Raphael, read the Book of Tobit, specifically, Tobit 6:10-8:21).

Church fathers on marital love

Love is neither a physical nor a material issue. It is not primarily a sexual concern. It is a spiritual concern.

1) From a letter by Tertullian, an Early Church Father, to his wife, ca. 202 AD, illustrating the great esteem for the sacrament of holy matrimony in the days of the early Catholic Church.

How beautiful, then, the marriage of two Christians, two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice.

They are as brother and sister, both servants of the same Master. Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in Spirit. They are in very truth, two in one flesh; and where there is but one flesh there is also but one spirit.

They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another Side by side they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations. They have no secrets from one another, they never shun each other's company; they never bring sorrow to each other's hearts... Psalms and hymns they sing to one another.

Hearing and seeing this, Christ rejoices. To such as these He gives His peace. Where there are two together, there also He is present, and where He is, there evil is not.

2) "Woman is made in full communion with man : sharing every pleasure, every joy, every good, every sorrow, every pain"
St. Basil the Great

3) Married couples "share divine grace itself"
Clement of Alexandria

4) "The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together. Men will take up arms and even sacrifice their lives for the sake of this love. St. Paul would not speak so earnestly about this subject without serious reason; why else would he say, Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord? Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside down.

Homily of St John Chrysostom

In short, true love is a great sanctified feeling and we should not cheapen it or try to grab part and not all of the pure experience too soon !