

Some useful guidelines about relationships

1. Make your position clear at the start: be open about your faith early in a relationship. Don't ram your beliefs down a friend's throat, but don't apologise for them either.
2. Don't expect to understand every last detail of why God commands what he does. Sometimes, it is difficult to see why commands that seem hard to obey are so important. But think. You will find it confusing just to work out your own emotions at times. It is just possible that God, who invented human love, who created your mind and designed you in the finest detail, may understand more than you do about the best way to live. If you don't understand it all, trust him, and follow his commands. Another thing to remember is that sleeping around brings its own problems, it isn't all fun.
3. Beware the 'snowball effect': the more you get emotionally involved with someone, the more difficult it is to stop. That's why countless people start by enjoying each other's company and spending time together, and almost without realising what's happening, go too far. Don't delude yourself that it will be easy to call a halt. Be forewarned and forearmed with a clear knowledge of Bible teaching and clear principles. To use a driving analogy, before you press the accelerator be sure you know when and where to find the brake.
4. It helps if your social life involves, in large measure, people who share your convictions but remember; even this is no guarantee against the 'snowball effect'.
5. Don't be deluded into thinking that sex is always a great success that brings pleasure to both parties. Sometimes, often, it is, but it can also be frustrating and upsetting.
6. Don't be deluded, either, into thinking that sex can be the basis of a long-term relationship. It can't. Sex can enhance a close friendship, but it can never create one.
7. There is a third delusion. Don't be fooled into thinking that everyone in the world is sexually active except you. Sex is vastly over-discussed, and even those who are sexually active will so very often regret it later and wish that they had had the presence of mind and strength of character to have waited until they were older.
8. Remember there is a very effective drug for switching off your moral caution and making it vastly more likely that you will do something you later regret. It's called alcohol: beware.
9. The best guideline of all, in virtually any situation, is to ask, "What would Jesus do?" - remember he was 'tempted in every way, just as we are' (Hebrews 4:15 - presumably including sexual temptation). And even if you do mess it up, he is still there, and still loves you.
10. None of this should make us killjoys. The Bible's morality does not mean going around with dismal faces and serious expressions, using Bibles rather like offensive weapons. It does mean keeping our wits about us, remembering whose we are and whom we serve, and refusing to compromise on fundamental principles.

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