

Good basics to think on:

◆ **Friendship** between men and women is a great thing, but keep it healthy by also having friends of your own gender. Don't let it get flirty, **just be you**.

◆ **'Dating'** has classically meant a guy asking a variety of ladies out over time because he wanted to get to know them. This same intent can be accomplished by hanging out in small groups at church, school, work or with family. **One-on-one time** (going out on dates) is okay every once in a while, but do not fall into the 'friends with benefits' or 'hook up' mentality!

◆ **'Courtship'** is a foreign word to most. Our culture calls exclusive relationships 'dating' but usually gives little thought to marriage. A good mindset is to not be wooed into this **more serious** relationship unless you have already been friends for a while and he or she is the type of person you think **you could marry**.

Courtship is where conversation and knowledge about **the other & yourself** goes deeper and deeper. Spending more time around **family and friends** will help gain perspective about the person as you start to **discern marriage**. A sincere embrace or kiss is **beautiful**, but movies & TV should not be role models.

◆ **Public vows of marriage** are meant to **protect** the intimate **bond of love** between **a man and a woman** so that they and their children have a **permanent place to grow in love!** If one of these intentions is missing (permanent bonding or openness to children), the **meaning of marriage** is not being upheld.



So how is engagement different from courtship?

Hopefully your friendship will continue until death do you part, but as you begin to pray on and talk about marriage, get more serious and specific in your conversations about daily life expectations, finances and family. Go on a marriage preparation retreat **before** you set the wedding date! Engagement then becomes a final time frame to discern marriage together (it's not just about planning the reception). Take a Natural Family Planning (NFP) class well in advance. Your bodies speak a language of giving and receiving; in this time of waiting for the marital embrace you will more clearly understand the responsibility and beauty of your ability to bring life into the world through your love.

Love

...looking for a lifetime guarantee?

Start by keeping your definitions straight...

LOVE is:

- ◆ A **choice** to make a gift of yourself to another person.
- ◆ To want & work toward the **best** for someone else, even when it is difficult. It goes beyond emotion.
- ◆ **A participation in God's love...the real thing is:**
 - **FREE:** not forced or enslaved to urges.
 - **TOTAL/FULL:** not conditional. In marriage, it is not partial or holding back any part of a person.
 - **FAITHFUL:** steadfast; never abandons. In marriage, vows are permanent, only broken by death.
 - **FRUITFUL:** physically &/or spiritually life-giving.
- ◆ **Shown in different ways to different people!**
Different types of love are appropriate between spouses, family members, friends, strangers in need, etc. Though many of us are in this habit, it is **not** an accurate word to use toward food, animals or objects.

LUST is:

- ◆ Not seeing the other as a person but as an **object**.
- ◆ Sexual desire that **distorts God's love**. Sexual desire itself is **not** the sin; it is a **gift from God** that points to a **good** desire for love, but it can be twisted!
- ◆ **Using** (in thought or in action) **someone** (body or soul) for your own benefit. (Marriage isn't an outlet for lust!)
- ◆ Can be a convincing **counterfeit** of real love.

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101 WAYS to build up REAL LOVE & show AFFECTION



Let's be honest.
Movies & TV aren't the best place to get ideas
about how dating should start and progress.

If you want **real love**, you have to build a
real friendship. That means not just looking
for physical pleasure or emotional comfort.

If you are interested in defending
your relationship against **using** each other,
"how far is too far?"
may not be the question to ask.

These ideas can be a **real** place to start
or deepen a relationship. Get beyond what
the culture tells you is normal—take time to
actually get to know yourself and each other
for who you are
and see if you enjoy each other's company!



"OK, SO WHAT CAN WE DO??"

First things first: Examine what is stirring in you. Are you craving contact with another person? Know that **the desire to be in relationships is not bad** (since we're made in God's image, we're made to **love!**) but we should not use others to fill us up. The reality is, **only God can do that**.



If you are asking **"how far is too far?"** you may have good intentions—but a better question is **"how can I really love this person?"**

God is the Standard for Love (see back panel) and we are made to love like Him—not to settle for less or to use each other. **Know what love is**.

If you see people as a means to your own end, you will treat them that way. **Purity in action flows from purity of heart and thought**. Aim to act as God made us to be from the very beginning: **good to the core**.

The draw toward **physical and emotional expressions of love** will very quickly get stronger when you **really connect** with someone. It's good to **acknowledge that fact** and not just push the feelings down—but it's also **not OK** to simply **indulge**. There is a **balance** to be found.

Rather than being **stuck in the two extremes**, you can **re-focus: pray, think and be creative!**

- ◆ **Thank God** for the other person and for the **good gift** of your desire to love!
- ◆ **Ask God** to show you how to take all that energy and **direct it toward loving like HE loves**.
- ◆ **Examine** what you have learned about relationships from family, culture, media, etc... you may have some **untwisting** to do!
- ◆ **Think about who, why & how you are choosing to love!** Let God guide your heart and don't brush off internal warnings; pray about them and talk them out!
- ◆ **Go into all this with your eyes open...** all the fun times, deep talks and even innocent kisses create a **bond** with the other person—**do not take this lightly**.

If you want to **really love** each other,
it's not good to spend your time pushing boundaries
that warm you up for sexual intercourse.

CONCRETE IDEAS

Not all these ideas will be your thing & that's okay!
This is just a launching point. The ideas will run out
only as soon as your imagination gives up. Be yourself!
If you are true friends, simple things will be fun...

- get up early to see the sunrise ■ *take an interest in the interests of the other* ■ **send a funny card** ■ learn to surf or sail ■ *examine ways you can improve your character* ■ PRAY ■ seek answers to your questions about Church teaching ■ help each other do chores ■ people-watch at the mall ■ share an order of **hot wings** ■ play a board game ■ make **popcorn** on the stove ■ **read a book to each other** ■ LOOK EACH OTHER IN THE EYES ■ *be best friends* ■ **hold hands** ■ go for a picnic
- build sandcastles ■ *figure out lyrics to songs on the radio* ■ long bike ride ■ ponder life ■ **go bowling** ■ help serve
- **gift** ■ visit your grandparents ■ say 'hello' and smile
- highlights from your day and give it to the other ■ *to love a person so you can say it and mean it* ■ BE
- water ■ *watch waves crash* ■ **admire the moon** ■
- *with younger siblings* ■ make up a **superhero** together ■ *make sacrifices for the other* ■ go horseback riding ■ learn how to ski or snowboard ■ wander through
- an **art museum** ■ don't be afraid to **sing** ■ *learn a musical instrument* ■ go to the library ■ paint something together ■ **go out for a play or live music** ■ watch airplanes
- take off at the airport ■ *notice what matters to the other* ■ BE FULLY PRESENT TO EACH OTHER BY TURNING DISTRACTIONS OFF ■ send a care package ■
- go ice skating at an outdoor rink ■ build a fire and roast marshmallows ■ *fly a kite* ■ tour a farm ■ tour the **tallest** building in the city ■ walk a trail in the woods ■
- *wash your cars on a hot day* ■ rent canoes or kayaks ■ **play frisbee** ■ go to the gym and work out ■ plan a service trip with a group of friends ■ BE THERE
- WHEN A FRIEND IS NEEDED ■ give and receive hugs ■ *give affectionate kisses on the face* ■ **be respectful** ■ go sightseeing ■ *stop to smell the flowers* ■ **have**
- **your picture taken together in fun places** ■ go to a science or history museum ■ watch life at a state park ■ *pay attention to little things* ■
- teach each other about something that fascinates you ■ **come up with harmless practical jokes** ■ *laugh* ■ *leave handwritten*
- *notes in places where the other will find them* ■ share goals with each other ■ commit to a time of Eucharistic adoration ■ attend Mass together ■
- PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER ■ pray the rosary ■ **have important conversations in person or by letters rather than through elec-**
- **tronics** ■ pray *together* ■ WORK ON INTEGRATING YOUR HEAD AND HEART ■ **be faithful** ■
- *look up into the branches of a huge tree on a windy day* ■ be okay with relaxed silence ■ study
- the Theology of the Body ■ read about the Five Love (and apology!) Languages ■ **laugh at yourself** ■
- honor each other as unrepeatable persons who are made for **Love** ■ regularly seek God's mercy &
- strength in the **Sacraments** ■ encourage each other ■ FOLLOW CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF MAKING A
- TOTAL GIFT OF SELF ■ **commit to saying 'yes' to God and make heaven your ultimate aim** ■

Laugh together ■ *talk about your likes & dislikes* ■ LISTEN TO EACH OTHER ■ *make a mix of favorite music* ■ share

a malt ■ go to a sporting event ■ **watch old movies** ■

newspaper & talk about it ■ skip rocks at a pond ■

coffee shop ■ **play in the snow** ■ drink hot chocolate ■

grocery shopping & cook a meal together ■ **take a walk**

children's shelter ■ wander around a college campus ■

look at **maps** ■ *tell the other what you like about them* ■

talking at a 24-hour restaurant ■ go fishing ■ **swing** at



play cards ■ visit the zoo ■ **read a**

watch the sunset ■ hang out at a

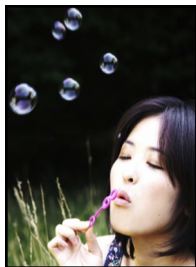
learn to dance the waltz ■ go

■ *volunteer* at a nursing home or

dream up travel destinations and

be honest ■ study together ■ sit up

a playground ■ figure out a puzzle



look at the stars ■ *watch a river rush over the rocks* ■ write letters ■ *write poems* ■ go for a

meals at a homeless shelter ■ HANG OUT WITH EACH OTHERS' FRIENDS ■ *give a thoughtful*

at everyone you walk by ■ **smile at each other** ■ throw a party together ■ audio or video record

blow bubbles ■ **run in the rain** ■ *explore foreign cuisines* ■ *think and pray about what it means*

TRUSTWORTHY ■ bake cookies (and share them!) ■ sit on a dock and put your feet in the

create a photo album for the other ■ **go swing dancing** ■ MEET THE PARENTS ■ *play games*



your ideas:

your ideas:

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