

# What's the Matter with Motives?

Dating that Delights God, Man and Woman!

## Motives For Going on a Date

There may be many motives for single Christians to go on what we call 'encouragement dates', but two principles stand out. The first is that God must be honoured by the purity of our actions and hearts - as in, "Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity." (1 Timothy 5:1-2 NIV). And the second principle is that we offer mutual encouragement to each another in the spirit of the one another passages in the New Testament - as in, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22 NIV). Therefore in going on a date we aim to have the right motives so as to delight both God and the other person we are taking on a date.



## Do motives matter?

Motives matter because the purpose behind any action effects its impact. If I take my wife out to dinner because I want to encourage her she will be delighted. But if I take her out to dinner because I want to get her in a good mood so that she feels OK about me buying an iPhone4 it is very unlikely she will be

delighted (and yes, sadly it is true that I have succumbed to such low motives at times). True motives shine through. If a sister says she is going on a date to encourage the brother, but in reality her desire is to figure out whether he is a potential husband, her behaviour and conversation will be influenced by this fact (and the same applies to a brother with such a motive towards a sister). Motives are a big deal.

## **Love One Another**

If our focus is on giving and not receiving - “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35 NIV), and if we consider the needs of others more important than our own - “in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3 NIV), then we will be delighted to take a sister on a date, and delighted if she is delighted by the date. Such is the distinctive nature of going on a date in the Kingdom of God. It is an issue of imitating the motives, the heart, the character and the love of Jesus Christ.



## **Moving our Motives**

Is concern about motives one of the reasons our single men and women in the church do not go on more dates? What do we do when we are not sure about our motives? Let's take a lesson from the Scriptures. The first thing to do is to acknowledge that only God knows our hearts fully and completely, “the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.” (1 Chronicles 28:9 NIV), “All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.” (Proverbs 16:2 NIV). If that is so, then perhaps we should not be paralyzed by over-analysis of our motives, but instead pray for good motives - “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalms 51:10 NIV). Following that we can trust God to purify our motives as we go. In other words, if you desire to have good motives, and pray for good motives, then at some point you have to stop waiting around to **feel** different, and act in faith that God will help you to **be** different. Take that sister out on a date, brother, and have faith that if your motives are less than pure God will reveal it to you, that you can handle it, and that the sister will forgive you.

Motives matter - so pray about them. But fear of bad motives must not prevent us from encouraging one another.

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