

Romantic Relationships

6 Principles for Women

1. **Learn to be OK by yourself before you attach yourself to someone else.**

Whether you are single again or never married, it is important for you to learn to be OK on your own before you enter into a committed relationship. If you are not a whole person alone, then you will look for someone else to fulfill you. That's a job which only God can do and an expectation which will disappoint both you and your partner. Find your own purpose, identity, and foundation for life. Then find someone to join hands with you.

2. **Just because you love him doesn't mean he's right for you.**

Nobody tells you this. In fact, every romantic comedy and grocery store novel tells you the opposite: if you love him, nothing else matters. However, most of the marriages we see in the Bible, as well as those in centuries past, were arranged; God's good gifts in marriage were equally available to those men and women – everything doesn't depend on chemical attraction. And just because you have a chemical attraction doesn't mean this is a good guy or a good relationship. You might need to let a relationship go even if you love him. Don't worry – you can fall in love again.

3. **Are you a better person when you are with him?**

This is a great diagnostic question to ask *before* you enter into a long term commitment. If another person makes you stronger, wiser, more peaceful, giving and loving, then it is probably a good relationship. If another person makes you panicky, critical, fearful, confused or bitter, then it probably isn't.

4. **Look for a man like Jesus.** Here are three key areas:

- a. **Heart** – Look for a man who is gentle and compassionate. There is a list of qualifications for church elder in I Timothy 3:3 which also makes a great list for potential husbands and fathers.
- b. **Mind** – Look for a man who is wise in his decisions, who pursues truth, who challenges and respects you intellectually and will lead you spiritually.
- c. **Will** – Look for a man who is powerful in defense of the weak, yet self-controlled in his own emotions and character. Don't confuse violence with strength. It takes a strong will to do the right thing when we would much rather give in to the temptations of the moment.

5. **Don't have sex before marriage.**

This principle has fallen entirely out of fashion, but it deserves better consideration in a society where more children grow up without two parents than with. Sex before marriage is not the unforgivable sin; however, God's guidance is always for our good, for our health and for our ultimate happiness, so we should listen. Sex is the physical act which symbolizes the "one flesh"-ness of marriage. ***When you celebrate the sacrament of marriage without the commitment of marriage you expose your heart and your body to someone who has not promised to take good care of you.*** You open yourself and your children to the possibility of a lifetime of uncertainty and regret. Most men want sex before marriage; many women do, too. But wouldn't you rather be with someone who wanted your heart and your mind – who wanted to follow hard after God – *more* than they wanted your body?

6. **If you have children, think again before you enter a new relationship.**

Second, third and fourth marriages have about a 70% failure rate¹. Live-in relationships are even more unstable. You might think you are doing your children a favor by finding them a "new father," but you are actually exposing them to more divided loyalties, disappointment and chaos in their physical and emotional lives. They need to be your first priority. Spend your time getting yourself and your kids as healthy and grounded as you can be [see Principle #1]. If another relationship comes along anyway, pray long and hard before you enter into it [see Principle #2].

¹ According to Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Springfield, Mo., accessible at <http://www.divorcerate.org>.