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As a child I would often walk around my house and the property surrounding it. It seemed to be just the right size for me. I had plenty of room to laugh, play, and enjoy being outdoors. I had all of my needs met within the boundaries of that land, and I enjoyed my childhood to the fullest. I also felt safe, knowing that others did not have the right to cross those boundaries. I was free to live, yet protected from harm.

I have seen boundaries looked at in one of two ways: either *confining* or *defining*. God has given us definite boundaries to live within—not to confine us, but rather to define how to live a truly satisfying life, avoiding the pitfalls of the world. One area of confusion concerning boundaries is sexual abstinence before marriage. For many people, sexual abstinence seems like an old-fashioned rule that makes no sense in today's world. To them, it unnecessarily confines their dating relationship. Others say that sex should not be a casual event, but one reserved for marriage. So where are the boundaries? Who should we believe?

God does not leave us guessing as to the answers. He wants us to know how to be satisfied and to fully enjoy life, even in this area. Let's go to the Scriptures to see what God wants for our lives.

*I Corinthians 7:32-34:*

*...He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:*

*But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*

*There is difference also between a wife and a virgin [a young woman]. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

The married and the unmarried are not the same, and God notes a distinction between the two. He also tells us that He expects different behavior from those who are married and those who are not.

I Corinthians was written to the born-again believers. Chapter 7 of I Corinthians provides a positive framework for sexual behavior between men and women—whether married or single—setting the standard God wants for His people.

*I Corinthians 7:1:*

*Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

It is good or pleasing to God for a man to not touch a woman as if she were his wife, if she is not. Dating is not the time to “try it out.” Touching in a sexual manner should be reserved for marriage. If we keep reading in this chapter, we will see this even more clearly.

*I Corinthians 7:2:*

*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

If a man has the burning need for a sexual relationship and is sufficiently mature, then let him marry and have sexual relations with his wife. The same rule applies for the woman. This allows the man and woman to avoid out-of-bounds sexual relationships. That’s God’s solution to a distracting sexual desire—find someone who wants to live the Word and get married. Our loving heavenly Father makes the boundaries clear.

God did not design sex to be a casual thing—He designed it for a lifelong marriage commitment. If a person simply gives in to impulses because of their emotions or hormones, they are limiting the fullness of life that God wants them to have. There are many stumbling blocks that arise. For example, being sexually involved outside of marriage can put pressure on the woman and/or the man to feel bound, or obligated, to the other; yet there is no marriage commitment between them.

The benefits of obedience to God in this category far outweigh the fleeting pleasures of lust. When sex is kept out of the arena of dating, it allows those who are dating to be free to live their lives according to God's Word. This builds a mutual respect and care for one another. Also, where there is no premarital sex, one is safe from pregnancy and the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases. There is also the wonderful freedom of living blamelessly above the suspicion and condemnation of others, and the joy of being upright in our actions before God and man.

*I Corinthians 7:35 [The Amplified Bible]:*

*Now I say this for your own welfare and profit, not to put [a halter of] restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly and in good order and to secure your undistracted and undivided devotion to the Lord.*

Keeping the proper sexual boundaries while dating will bring profit to each individual in the relationship and will also help to solidify their resolve to do God's Word. Culture may tell us that sexual relations are proof of one's love for another, but God tells us that loving Him and keeping His commandments—including sexual abstinence before marriage—is the real proof of that love.

*I John 5:2,3:*

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [oppressive].*

We've seen that the Bible is not vague concerning premarital sex. Dating is a time to enjoy each other's company and get to know someone's heart and love for God, not to get wrapped up in sexual desires. God's loving commandments are not oppressive, but safe. As we keep ourselves within the boundaries that God defines, we are not confined but free to pursue the godly life He desires for us!

*For more information, visit [www.theway.org](http://www.theway.org)*

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