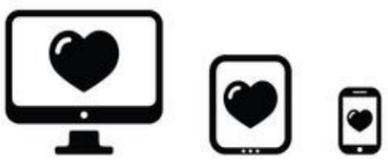


FRIENDS WITH BOUNDARIES & BLESSINGS (Not Benefits!)

10 Phases of Healthy Christ-Centered Male-Female Relationships

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Fellowship	Friendships	1-to-1 Connection(s)		Social Dating		Courtship		Engagement	Marriage
Connect	Participate in church and/or Christian singles group(s) or gatherings (e.g. weekly meetings, Sun School, church worship service, socials, outings, activities).	Previous items and: Personal conversations. Connecting at the church or group. Invitation to a smaller group activity, meal, or social event. Emails, texts, phone, FB, IM.	Previous items and: Only meet with a Christian. If a non-Christian asks you out, invite them to come to your Christian group(s) or church. +Connect for coffee, dessert, meal, activity in a public place. +Repeat if there is a "mutual" interest to connect again. Advice: Esp. first time or first few times, drive separately.	DTR1 = DEFINING the Relationship: State your interest. Other person can choose to backup, continue as is, or move forward.	Previous items and: +Participate in Christian group(s) together. +Worship at church(es) together. +Activities together. +Eat together. +Relax together. +Some intro events with friends/family. +Pray together. *Discuss Scripture, things you're reading, etc. +Look for ways to possibly serve God and others together through a ministry.	DTR2 = DIRECTION for the Relationship – Prayerful discussion(s). Is God ipossibly leading us together OR not?	Previous items and: +Relatives/family events. +Friend/social events. +Travel experiences. +Errands, shopping. + Bible reading/pray together. +Read books and/or listen to recorded teaching to help grow your relationship and future plans. +Pre-marital pastoral counseling and personality assessments.	DTR3 = DECISION about the Relationship – Marriage proposal. Other person may say no, hold, slow, or go!	Previous items and: +Meeting with people that will help you plan a wedding and the merger of our lives/futures. +Pastoral counseling.	Previous items and: Marriage bed. Living together (24/7/365). Note on 1 st year: Organize your lives and schedule so the man can focus on his wife's happiness (see Deut 24:5).
Focus	Group Friendships, Discussions, Conversations. Relate as Brothers and Sisters in Christ.	Smaller group or social activities where you can safely connect in a low risk and fun environment with others around.	Taking a personal interest in the other person -- wanting to learn more about them and their life. 2 nd , 3 rd , or 4 th get together: Social activity, events, outings, and/or restaurant meals.		<i>Intentionally</i> connecting, spending time together, and learning more about each other AND our own needs/wants/desires. In the DTR discussion, be sure to address whether the relationship is exclusive. Both people need to be clear on this matter.		+Exclusive relationship. +Exploring & confirming the relationship/future. +Invite feedback and blessing of family, friends, and spiritual leaders.		+Wedding planning. +Life planning and choices (preparing to blending houses, church, families, in-laws, calendars, goals, possessions, and finances).	Leave and cleave, learn to live and love as one, operate as co-heirs in Christ, please God, serve one another and others.
Learn & Share	Listen to each other and encourage each other.	Learn about people's life, family, thoughts, work, interests, struggles.	Life story, details about their life, spiritual journey, information about family, and discovering any "deal breaker" or unsafe characteristics.		Previous items and: Interests, beliefs, likes, dislikes, values, past hurts, dreams, work issues, struggles, family stuff, ongoing sins, red flags, yellow flags, deal breakers, or unsafe behaviors.		Previous items and: Future plans, deep hurts, failures, frailties, financial picture/details, work/career direction, ministry desires/plans, and merging lives.		Desires and decision making about future plans. Resolving conflicts.	Find marriage mentors – woman2woman, couple2couple, man2man.
Frequency of contacts	Weekly	Weekly, impromptu, or as planned/invited.	"One & Done" -- OR choose to connect again. Some are "3 & Out" because of deal breakers or a lack of interest.		Usually some type of daily connection, and 1 or more face to face connections weekly.		Daily connections and together multiple times per week.		Increased number of connections and time together each week.	Multiple connections throughout the day.
Physical Contact	Hug, handshake. Note: Some culture/friends kiss people on the cheek or lips when greeting.	Hug, handshake.	Hug, handshake, and touch. Intentionally refrain from kissing or sexual touch to honor God, avoid false impressions/expectations, guard your hearts, and to show godly respect for the other person.		Hugs, kiss, touch, hold. Intentionally refrain from sexual touching to honor God and respect each other. Discuss and determine safe boundaries. <i>To avoid frustrations and regrets:</i> Keep everything zipped, on, buttoned, and in. Avoid the horizontal position. Keep hands off the front and above the waist.		Enjoy physical affection but carefully refrain from sexual intimacy/ touching. Reaffirm safe physical boundaries to please God, protect your relationship, stay pure, build trust, and to save yourself for the wedding night and beyond.		Previous items and: Enjoy physical affection but be wise in helping each other avoid tempting situations. Read <i>The Act of Marriage</i> : T LaHaye	Begin to share God's gift of sex on wedding night, honeymoon, and in the marriage. Learn to please each other sexually.
Prayer	Praying for people in the group.	Praying for each other.	Previous items and: Meal prayers.		Previous items and: Opening & closing the date in prayer. Praying for God's will/leading. Consider reading "Jesus Calling" devotional.		Previous items and: Scripture reading and prayer. Praying about future decisions.		Previous items and: Praying for God's wisdom, direction, and provisions.	Previous items and: Individual & couple's prayer & devotions.



Online Video Teaching:
<http://vimeo.com/35381797>

Note: When Brian first taught this (video he identified 9 phases. Later, he added another DTR phase based on his personal experience dating Mary Ellen. Brian and Mary Ellen did follow this ROAD MAP and are in a very happy Christian marriage today.

1 Cor 6:18
Flee from sexual immorality.

1 Thess 4:3-5
God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.

Ephesians 5:17
Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Hebrews 12:1-2
I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: This chart is based on Brian Kluth's ministry to thousands of Christian single and single-again adults in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, and many other places. He has known many successful couples that have followed these phases or very similar healthy guidelines. For some couples it meant the LORD showed them to end the relationship at a certain point, but each person felt they were a better person for having been in this type of relationship. For many others, they were led by the LORD to move forward into good, godly, and happy Christian marriages. Brian has also personally lived this "Friends with Boundaries and Blessings (NOT Benefits)" journey three times. Once when he was in his 20's and he experienced a broken engagement just before the wedding. The second time he met and married a wonderful Christian woman, Sandi. But Sandi went home to be with the LORD after a long cancer journey. He then met and married Mary Ellen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (1) What do you find most helpful about this chart? (2) What are some new ideas you hadn't thought about or personally practiced? (3) Why is it important to have healthy boundaries in a relationship? (4) How would following these suggested guidelines help you from becoming emotionally bruised or broken in a male-female relationship? (5) How do you feel these guidelines honor the LORD and any male-female friendships you may have or may have in the future?