**DATING DURING COVID**

Dating was hard enough to begin with, much less during COVID-19. So how are you supposed to date when 1) Your options of connecting are Walmart, Walgreens and the post office; 2) You have to stay 6' feet apart; 3) You have to wear a face mask and gloves?

Yesterday while I was at the grocery store, a really cute guy who was not wearing a face mask smiled at me. I was like, whoohoo, isn't he cute. So, I smiled back. But he didn't acknowledge. I was bummed. Then it hit me, I was wearing a mask. He had no idea that I was smiling back. Lol.

So how are we supposed to date, to even meet someone new if we can't be in their presence? Some would say online dating is still the best option. But is it? Others are setting up Zoom dates, hoping it will turn into a physical date once the doors open up again. But is that even the best solution?

A few weeks ago, I set up Zoom Bible studies with the focus to connect singles. I was thrilled to find out these studies are happening all over the world. This past week we added breakout rooms of 5, allowing deeper, more personal discussions. While this is not designed to be a place to find a date, it is a place to share, encourage and pray for each other. At least this is a first step. During our study we encourage singles to post their praises and prayers in the chat section. Then after our study is officially over, we encourage folks to stay on, allowing even more discussion. Some of these after discussions have gone on for two hours. Another opportunity is singles hosting game nights using Zoom and/or other social media resources. All are wonderful ways to connect us, to build friendships. So even with COVID-19, it's the same. We need to meet, learn about each other, and allow the Lord to guide us with the next step.

What is that next step? It could be a private conversation with someone you met on Zoom to build a basic friendship. It could lead to an "Intentional Friendship" where you spend more time asking harder questions to gather more information to see if you want to date them.  If COVID-19 has done anything positive, it has made us slow down. And slow is good in all relationships.

So, you met on Zoom, you spent a few weeks building a friendship and now you are ready to meet in person. Well you can agree to get take-out and sit in your adjacent cars either yelling or using your phones to talk. You can then follow it up with a visit to a home improvement store, getting separate carts of course. You can take a romantic walk through the lumber section, smelling the fresh wood, finishing up in the lawn and garden section. OK, so it's not so romantic but at least you can get some great ideas for your home once you are married. OK, just kidding.

But in all seriousness, while COVID-19 has slowed us down, it's a great time to work on ourselves, and our relationship with God. It's a great time to reach out to others who are isolated and lonely. It's a great time to make changes and become all that God plans for us to be. From one single to another, let's continue to trust God in all areas of our lives, especially our love and dating life.

***Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.***

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