**Intentional Relationships: Are We Dating or What?**

*Portions of the content taken from* [*Intentional Relationships For Singles*](http://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/)*, Chapter 10 by Kris Swiatocho and Dan Houk*

*Have you ever been in a relationship with the opposite sex and confused about your status? Are you dating or just friends? Are you moving forward or standing still? Do you both agree on where you are in the relationship? If you agree that you are dating, then it’s a matter of dating with the intention towards marriage (more of that content in Chapter 11). But what if you thought you were dating when the other person’s behavior didn’t match yours? One day, they show you affection, spend time with you, and treat you like one of the guys the next day. These types of relationships, “friendationships,” need a DTR (Determine the Relationship) as quickly as possible before going further. Read below to see if you are in one of these relationships or have been and ways to avoid another one or end the one you are in.*

**What a friendationship looks like:**

One person likes or even loves the other person without it being reciprocated. That person will often do things for them, such as cut their lawn, shop, fix their dinner, wash their clothes, run errands, back rub, repair something, and buy them things, without a real commitment to a dating relationship. It is a confusing friendship because one or both friends can’t accurately describe what kind of relationship it is. Sometimes, it feels like dating; other times, it feels like friendship: one or both people long for a dating relationship, but not necessarily with each other. Physical and emotional boundaries are frequently crossed. This adds to the confusion. Friendationships can last months to many years.

In James, God tells us the importance of truthfulness and accuracy in what we tell each other.

*“But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.” – James 5:12 (ESV)*

**What motivates people in a friendationship:**

Because both people are getting something from the friendationship, they want it to continue. One friend receives the hope of a marriage, while the other receives the benefits from exclusive dating without the commitment. Both people are experiencing an increased degree of intimacy without the corresponding commitment.

In Philippians, God tells us that we need to go to Him about those anxious areas, especially ones of the heart.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” – Philippians 4:6 (ESV)*

**Why friendationships are harmful:**

This friendship is extremely damaging on both sides, emotionally and spiritually, because it is not based on truth. It is also selfish. We are looking for someone else to meet our needs in an unhealthy way. It is not unusual for people in these friendships to avoid defining the relationship out of fear of losing the relationship and its benefits. Friendationships also prevent the person from holding out hope from dating others who may be a great match for them.

Take a moment now and speak to God about any relationship you are in that is either not defined or unhealthy. What do you need to do next?

**How to avoid a friendationship:**

Friendationships usually start with some type of attraction and a significant amount of time spent talking, texting, or meeting with the person. One person will begin to feel attracted but fearful that the other doesn’t feel the same. We are beginning to get mixed signals. This is your yellow light. He wants to hold my hand but later says we are friends. He spends a lot of time sharing deeply but still dates online. She cooks my favorite dinner and invites me over but seems to flirt with other guys. This is when you need to have a DTRtalk, right when the confusing signals start. This will help you minimize the pain. “

In Philippians, God tells us that we should look out for others. Are there relationships in your life where you are not seeking to protect others, where you are only focused on what you want?

*“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” – Philippians 2:4 (ESV)*

**How to end a friendationship:**

If you know you are in a friendationship, it is important you end it, and the sooner, the better. It is honest to say you have different expectations for the relationship. When you end the friendationship, all communication must end as well, including text messages, emails, and in-person meetings. Why? At least one person in the friendationship usually has feelings that will keep getting ignited when they are in contact. Continued contact has the effect of prolonging their pain. The person who is hoping for something more needs to be able to heal their heart. Healing only happens when time is allowed. This can take six months a year or longer. This may seem harsh, but it is important to break that emotional connection.

*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” – Proverbs 13:12 (NIV)*

*For more information on Kris Swiatocho and Dan Houk and the* [*Intentional Relationships For Singles*](http://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/)*, please go to www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org*