**Intentional Relationships:** *What Does It Mean When Rejection is Unclear?*
By Kris Swiatocho and Pastor Dan Houk

*I am a 35 Christian man, and I think I have just been put into the 'friend-zoned' after asking for a second date. I recently went on a coffee date with a woman from my church.  I texted her later and asked her out to dinner. Instead of saying yes, she invited me to a group lunch with her friends.  This sounded like a gentle rejection, but she assured me that this would be fun and we could spend some time together. I was encouraged as I thought maybe she did want to date me.*

*I went to the group lunch, and I got to meet a lot of new folks. However, I didn't get to spend much time with her. I, again, felt she was rejecting me. I think she is fantastic (from what I know about her), and I want to date her. Is she rejecting me, or am I looking at this wrong? Should I ask her for a date again?*

Yes, while it could be a possible gentle rejection, it could be that she doesn't know you well enough to have a more serious date. We encourage everyone to have a season of friendship first, [intentional friendship](https://www.amazon.com/Intentional-Friendship-That-Between-Dating/dp/B09W3R45V4/ref%3Dsr_1_23?crid=RBC732CRL6E&keywords=swiatocho&qid=1675288651&sprefix=swiatocho%2Caps%2C88&sr=8-23). This is a time between basic friendship *(I see you at church or my small group, school, neighborhood, the gym, etc.)* and dating. It's a time when you agree to spend together by phone and meals, but you are not dating. It's time you can ask each other more questions to decide if you do want to date. It's also a great time to do group gatherings so that your friends meet you and they can observe you in other environments.

A few questions: Were you friends with her before asking her for coffee, and for how long? Do you have some of the same friends? You said you go to the same church. Are you in the same Sunday school or a small group? Have you served with her or gone on a mission trip? Do you know enough about her to date? What is her dating history? What does she believe spiritually? Does she want to be married one day? How does she handle stress? How much debt does she have? I think you might be getting the idea. Christian dating should be because you believe this person has the potential to one day be your spouse. It doesn’t mean your dating will lead to marriage, but at the same time, you are not dating to just date. Knowing if this person could be the "one" cannot be known after one coffee date. You need a lot more time as friends first. A lot more time to ask the harder questions. This way, your heart is guarded.

**So, here are 7 steps that can help you in your journey:**

**Step 1: Pray and be sure God wants you to get to know her better.** If God says yes, you are ready for Step 2.

**Step 2: Talk to her, let her know how you feel and be open about how she might respond.** Tell her you enjoyed your coffee date and would like to get to know her better. While the group lunch was fun, you didn't learn more about her. If she says, " I am not interested in going on a second date with you, " or she seems uncomfortable talking more about it, you know the truth and can move on. If she responds, “I'm sorry, I invited you to the group lunch so you could meet some of my friends, and vice versa. I had hoped we could have spent more time talking and getting to know each other. How about we have another coffee date.” Then you are ready for the next step.

**Step 3: Give her a call and set up a 2nd coffee date.** If she seems interested *(has eye contact, leans in as she talks, asked you questions, too),* then you know the feelings are mutual. You are ready for the next step.

**Step 4: Have another group date.** Ask if her group is doing anything that you can attend. Invite her to a group gathering you set up. This keeps things on the friendship level, allowing you to learn more about each other. If things go well, then you are ready for the next step.

**Step 5: Starting an Intentional Friendship.** Share with her about the concept and see what she thinks. In our study, [Intentional Relationships for Singles,](https://www.amazon.com/Intentional-Relationships-Singles-Kris-Swiatocho/dp/B08VCKKDQ3/ref%3Dsr_1_30?crid=RBC732CRL6E&keywords=swiatocho&qid=1675289882&sprefix=swiatocho%2Caps%2C88&sr=8-30) we have over 650 questions you can ask someone. We also have a companion book, which can be purchased separately from our main study, "[Intentional Friendship."](https://www.amazon.com/Intentional-Friendship-That-Between-Dating/dp/B09W3R45V4/ref%3Dsr_1_28?crid=RBC732CRL6E&keywords=swiatocho&qid=1675289882&sprefix=swiatocho%2Caps%2C88&sr=8-28) Being more intentional with spending time with her and asking deeper questions will take time; however, in the end, it's the best investment you can make in your potential relationship. If you make it this far, the next step will help you know where things stand.

**Step 6: Watch out for red, yellow, and green flags.** As you continue to talk in person and on the phone, text, ask more questions, and listen to God, pay attention to the types of answers that will indicate your next step. It could be to stop or slow things down, ask for more information, or continue forward. If God says to go forward, you are ready for the next step of dating. If not, you can part and stay friends. For more on intentional dating, see Chapter 11 of our study.

***Jeremiah 10:23 Lord, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.***

Order your copy of [Intentional Relationships for Single's 12-week Bible study](https://www.amazon.com/Intentional-Relationships-Singles-Kris-Swiatocho/dp/B08VCKKDQ3/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=3CA0PI6W0OKWH&keywords=kris+swiatocho&qid=1675291128&sprefix=swiatocho%2Caps%2C80&sr=8-1) to learn more about dating, friendship, and intentional friendship. This study covers topics on why our relationships fail, identity, gender differences, boundaries, conflict, blind spots, friendship (in all our relationships—family, work, church, neighbors, friends) but also intentional friendship, including red, yellow, and green flags, intentional dating, and engagement.