

03.07.10

ENCOUNTER

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THE MAGAZINE



Before you date,
be a friend

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8 on love?

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says something
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HEY YOU!

I found some old journals of mine the other day. I crack up as I read some things I wrote when I was your age. I thought I fell in love at least every other day. I know now that it wasn't true love, but I do see that I had some good choices. Looking at most of the guys I had crushes on, they usually attracted me because of their love of God and fun personality. Those were the same traits that I saw when I truly did fall in love with the guy who is now my husband. So at least I was on the right track back then!

What qualities do you look for in someone to date? Do you understand the difference between true love vs. infatuation? How do you remain respectful and pure to all members of the opposite gender? We'll talk about all these things in the next few issues of ENCOUNTER. Keep reading!

A challenge to guys: not every girl worth dating will look like the girls on the covers of magazines. Most won't. In fact, the girls on those covers don't even look like that in real life. (Hello, Photoshop!) So first try looking for inner beauty that's focused on God and then a girl's physical package will be seriously hot!

A challenge to girls: not every guy will be as romantic as Edward in *Twilight*. Most won't. But cut them some slack. Again, look at a guy's heart first and see if it's devoted to God. And then you'll find a romance where you can both focus on eternity together.

Your friendly editor,

encounter@standardpub.com

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ENCOUNTER
8805 Governor's Hill Drive
Suite 400
Cincinnati, OH 45249
encounter@standardpub.com

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Fluff @myspace.com/encounterfluff

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Editor: Kelly Carr
Graphic Design: Liz Malwitz Design
Project Editor: Jeanette Hanscome
Assistant Editor: Lindsey Holder
Senior Editor: Jim Eichenberger
Stock Image Selection: Dorcas Design

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Are you trying to get up the nerve to ask out the person who sits in front of you in math? Are you looking for a date to the big dance? Entering the dating world brings new experiences and responsibilities.

RIGHT AND WRONG REASONS TO DATE

Before you begin to date, or even if you are already dating, stop and think about the reasons people date:

1. To avoid sitting home every Friday night.
2. Because everyone else is dating.
3. To develop friendships with the opposite gender.
4. To become popular.
5. To share ideas and interests.

If you relate most to numbers 3 and 5, you have the right idea. The best reasons to begin dating are for friendship, getting to know people better, sharing common interests and ideas. Dating just because everyone else is doing it or for popularity or just to be with someone can lead to unhealthy dating habits or dating people you know you shouldn't. Dating is special and shouldn't be taken lightly.

WHERE TO START

The best foundation for dating is friendship. So brush up your friendship skills and practice them on everyone, not just with potential dates.

Be friendly, smile, say "hello." Be genuinely friendly with everyone, not just potential dates. It's hard to resist someone who smiles and reaches out to others.

Learn other people's names and use them. Names are important. Using people's names when talking to them lets them know you took the time and effort to remember them.

Listen attentively. Make eye contact while someone talks. Listening shows you care. Almost everyone can use a friend who cares and takes the time to listen.

Be positive and encouraging. Negative and gloomy people don't make friends well, but a positive and encouraging person draws friends.

Keep secrets; be loyal. People don't want their business gossiped about all over school. Keep secrets to yourself no matter how tempting it is to tell them. If you spread secrets, you will soon have a reputation for it, and no one will confide in you.

If you are having trouble finding people to be friends with, go where teens are. Look around your school. Is there a Bible club or other organization that interests you? Does your church or a nearby church have a youth group or special youth activities? Sharing an interest such as photography, yearbook, or music is a good way to form friendships.

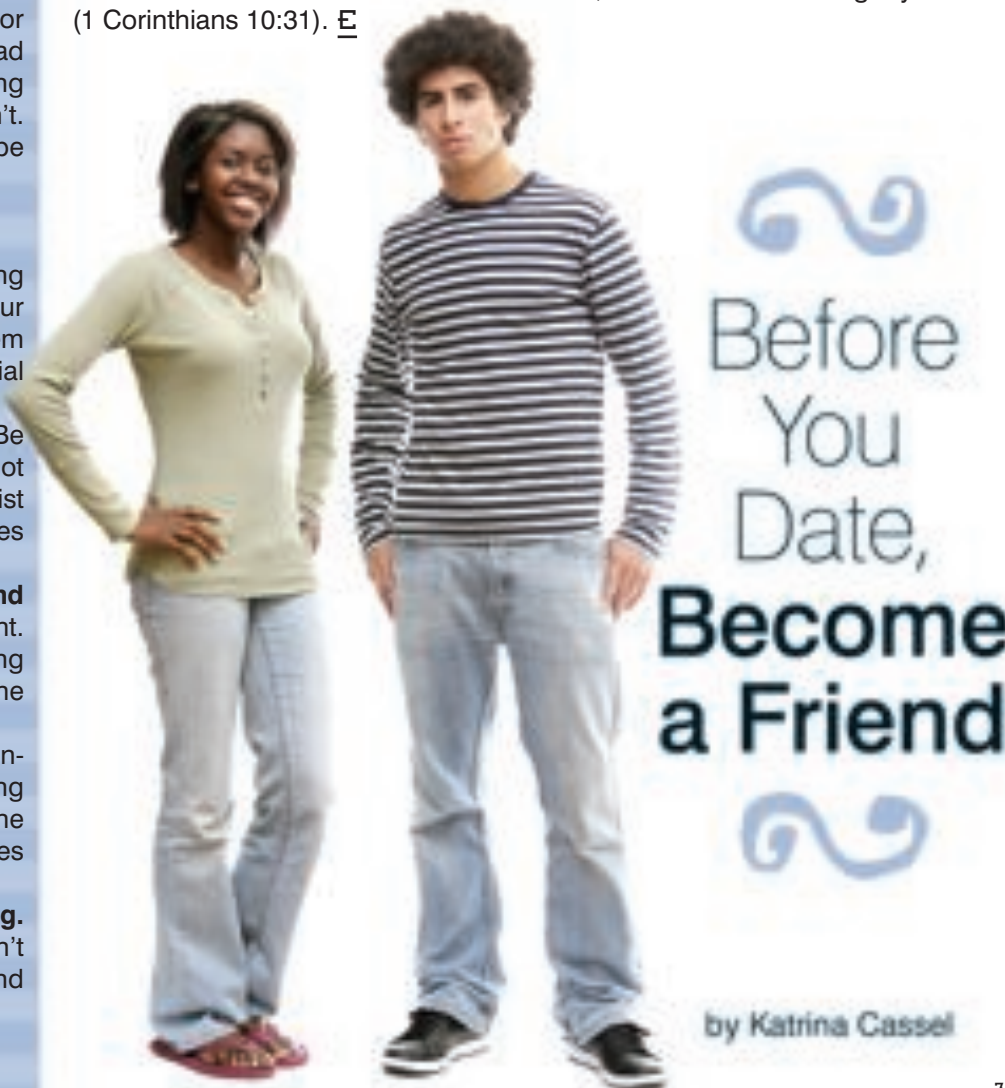
Find some teens with common interests, put your friendship skills to work, and learn to be a good friend. Later one of these friendships may lead to romance.

TAKE THE PLUNGE

Friendship may lead to dating. You meet someone you like, a friendship forms, and you decide you want to get to know a special person better. But what to do?

Plan dates that let you get to know the other person better. Parking and cuddling in a dark park won't help you form a lasting relationship. Go bowling, play miniature golf, attend a concert or play, cook for the person at your house, or work on a hobby together. Invite that special person on a fun date like a basketball game or youth group party. Keep friendship in mind, and the romance part will work itself out.

Let Jesus be part of your dating life. By praying together and sharing things you learn in your devotion times, you can keep Christ a part of your dating life—and that is important! It will help you avoid temptation and build a good foundation. Remember that whatever we do, we are to do for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). E



The way we dress can be a stumbling block to those around us.

Can you keep a secret? What if God asked you to keep it? Guess what? He has.

“They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves” (1 Timothy 2:9, *NLT*). Although this Scripture is directed toward women in this instance, we should all apply it to our lives.

Your body is a treasured secret. How well can you keep it?

Have Issues?

Purity is a heart issue. Modesty is a clothing issue. If you wear clothes that flaunt your body, you may need to evaluate your motives. Address matters of the heart. Once you’ve got your heart right with God, your behavior will fall into place.

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity” (1 Timothy 4:12, *NLT*).

Not My Problem

We don’t live in a bubble. Others notice what we wear; if they didn’t we wouldn’t sweat picking out an outfit for school every morning. We’d crawl out of bed and throw on the biggest, softest, comfiest thing in the closet.

Girls, the next time you squeeze into a tight pair of jeans or, guys, when you’re buying your tees a size too small to show off your muscles, think about your motives. Causing others to lust is *not* a pure motive. If we put others before ourselves, as God directs us, we’ll take into consideration that the way we dress can be a stumbling block to those around us.

“Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way” (Romans 14:13).

Don’t Settle

We’ve all gasped at the sight of someone who was showing way too much, but how much is too much?

Have you ever argued, “God looks at what’s inside. He doesn’t care what I wear”? Yes, God can see your heart, but your peers can’t. They see your outward appearance. Wearing immodest clothing can bring your character into question. Skimpy tops and barely hanging on bottoms are on every clothing store rack. Don’t let the malls set your fashion standards. Set standards for yourself, and don’t cross the line just because it’s a trend. Create your own trends!

Girls, if the shirts you find to buy are too revealing, layer. If you can’t find clothes in the stores you like, look online. Other females have discovered the same problems and have started their own online businesses to sell modest clothing.

Guys, you have it a little easier. Most problems with guys’ modesty is with fit. You can wear almost anything as long as it fits properly and stays in place: pants at your hips, shirts with some breathing room. And yes, do keep your shirt on!

Mirror, Mirror

As a Christian the desire of your heart should be to mirror Christ. We do that by focusing on inner beauty. What are you revealing about your heart through your clothing choices? Think about that the next time you look in the mirror.

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7). E



Shhh!
It's a Secret



by Ruth Schiffmann

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daily devotions

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

BY TEKOA MILLER

Sunday

1 John 4:7-9

Picture this: the girl hates the guy. He falls in love and proposes. She refuses. He sends her flowers and chocolate. He asks her again. She accepts. And they all live happily ever after. Reality check: true love is much more than a sappy movie! Love is part of God's character. How do you define true love? How does that line up with today's Scripture?

Monday

1 John 4:10-15

Ever get those little candy hearts that say "true love" on them? Thankfully, true love is more than a heart-shaped blob of pressed sugar. John says that true love is defined differently: God sent Christ to give His life for us. Love is much more than a cute guy or a hot girl—it's about sacrifice. How does your view of love affect your relationships?

Tuesday

1 John 4:16-18

"God loves you." If you're like me, you get sick of seeing those words on everything from bumper stickers to tacky T-shirts. But God's love is more than a phrase: it is perfect. John tells us that if we live in God, love is made complete in us. Seeing the love of God in my life has caused me to want to share that love with others. True love is God-based. What are some ways you see God's love in your life?

Wednesday

1 John 4:19-21

I expected to fall in love by the time I was 20. (For the record, it didn't happen.) Instead, God taught me to fall in love with His creation—all people. I shouldn't have to wait to love; I should learn to love the people God has made because God has poured His love out on me. How can you love those around you?

Thursday

Proverbs 2:1-5

I have no bigger fear than marrying the wrong person. (I mean, seriously! What if I accidentally pick the wrong guy?) Proverbs talks about us crying out for understanding. If we desperately seek wisdom, God will guide us in our biggest decisions. How are you asking God for wisdom in all your relationships?

Friday

Proverbs 2:6-11

I decided to do a little math one day. So I figured out that if you start dating at the age of 16 and have on average a three-month relationship, by the time you are 23 years old, you will have had 28 different relationships. Yet Proverbs talks about guarding ourselves and letting discretion (good judgment) protect us. How can you use discretion and wisely guard yourself in relationships?

Saturday

Proverbs 2:12-22

I am not married (just in case you were wondering!). I haven't found my "true love" yet. There are many times I have thought it would be easier to take the crooked path, to just enjoy flirting with guys I never intended to marry. But Proverbs shows us the serious consequences when we don't seek wisdom. What does seeking wisdom mean? How are you doing it?

Goosey Over Magill

"Whenever he's around I get really nervous . . . And I feel like I'm going to faint."

by Melissa O'Reilly

Spring break is 14 days away. But who's counting? Me!

It's the budding season of warm weather and love, especially since Austin Magill walked into my church two months ago after he moved here from Nashville. He's the nicest guy I've ever met. He's polite, friendly, and makes me all gooey inside when he talks in his adorable accent.

Which is why I'm at Frank's Frozen Custard. Oh, did I forget to mention Austin works here? I'm waiting for my best friend, Brittany. We were supposed to meet here after school, but Britt had to go home and get her ferret, Dexter. I swear she takes him everywhere she goes. At least she dresses him nicely.

JUPITERIMAGES

"It's obvious"

The smell of sugary custard and chocolate beckons me to order. I step up to the counter and smile at Anna, who goes to my youth group and has worked at Frank's Frozen Custard for at least two summers. I should know because that's when I discovered she could make the best Cuckoo for Coconut Blender in the world.

"Hi, Taylor. You want the usual?"

I nod, then sneak a peek to see if Austin is working.

"He's in the back getting napkins," Anna says with a sly smile.

I attempt nonchalance. "Who?"

"Like I don't know. It's only obvious." Anna writes my name on a cup. "But you know what? Austin's a nice guy. I could put in a good word for you."

"Nah, that's OK." I wouldn't know how to act around him at all if I knew she tried to set us up.

I feel a tap on my shoulder. My arm sticks to the spilled caramel sauce on the stainless steel counter when I twist around to see a well-dressed ferret in a biker jacket. He's a nose's distance from my cheek.

"Give Auntie Taylor a kiss," Britt says.

I yank my head back.

"Aww, you hurt poor Dexter's feelings." She hugs him to her chest. Then her long hair falls over her arm as she reaches behind me, grabs my Cuckoo for Coconut Blender, and tastes it.

"Hey, get your own." I retrieve my shake and cuddle it like she did Dexter. "You know, they might not appreciate you bringing him in here."

"Oh, right. Will you take him outside with you and get us a table while I order?"

"You're not acting natural"

As I head to the door, I pivot around for another chance to see Austin.

And there he is, tall and super hot with his curly hair. Let me tell you, that boy knows how to wear a pair of skinny jeans and an O'Neill hoodie, which he's not wearing now. He still looks cute in the Frank's Frozen Custard T-shirt though.

"Why don't you just walk back there and drool on the guy," Britt says as she comes outside and joins me. "You're not exactly acting natural."

So what if I chose a table that happens to be by the window where Austin will have to see me when he looks up from his work? How can I act natural when the countdown is on? I have only 336 hours, minus sleep time, to make Austin Magill fall in love with me. I decide to let Britt in on my secret plan.

"OK, so you know I've never had a boyfriend," I say. "Well I'm ready for one. Actually, I've been ready, it's just that I hadn't found the right Christian guy until I met Austin, and I intend to be dating him by spring break."

"Why spring break?"

"Because it's the perfect time. We'll be able to hang out. And then it's just the right amount of time to make sure I'll have a secure summer boyfriend."

Britt looks unimpressed with my idea as she spoons a bite of her Fruity Monkey Sundae. But she's the type who's more concerned about her grades and her relationship with Jesus than boys, even though all the guys like her.

"You're not in love"

"So what do you think I should do?"

Britt licks the back of her spoon. "About what?"

"About how to make Austin fall in love with me too."

She looks at me as if I'd just told her I'd enrolled in the circus. "You're not in love. What makes you think you love him?"

Obviously she's never felt this way. "Well, like, whenever he's around I get really nervous. And my heart pounds so loudly I think he can hear it. And I feel like I'm going to faint because my head gets all fuzzy."

Britt leans forward on her elbows. "That's not love."

What is she talking about? Maybe she's jealous because I have a plan for a fun spring break.

Dexter climbs onto Britt's lap and nudges her hand.

"Wait a sec," I say. "Is your definition based on how you love your ferret? Because I know it would be impossible to get all fuzzy-brained over Dexter."

"It's a different kind of love, Taylor." She takes a deep breath and sighs. "You're infatuated, not in love. Love isn't a bunch of crazy feelings. It's a choice. Remember when your Aunt Diane lost all her hair from chemo, and you said your uncle loved her more, even though she was bald? That's love."

Do I feel that way about Austin Magill? If he lost his curly hair, I'm not sure I'd even think he was cute. Maybe I don't know him well enough to love him yet.

"Don't confuse emotions for love"

I glance through the window to catch a glimpse of him mopping the floor. My heart starts pounding harder. "Let's say you're right, and this feeling of mine isn't love. Can this 'infatuation' as you called it turn into love?"

"Sure. Just don't confuse emotions for love." She giggles as Dexter climbs in her jacket, then pokes his head out the top and blinks at me.

Britt loves that ferret like it's her child. I wonder if that's how God loves us? Maybe she's right. Maybe I don't know what true love is.

Austin, mopping his way past the counter, glances up and catches me looking at him. The congo beat in my chest picks up tempo. He smiles at me, and I'm pretty sure I'm going to faint. I hope I don't fall out of my chair and hit my head. Wait, if I pass out, maybe he'll give me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

"OK," I say to Britt. "Maybe I do have a lot to learn about love. But that doesn't solve my problem."

"What do you mean?" she asks.

"I still have only 14 days to make Austin Magill my boyfriend."

Brittany buries her face in her hands. "Oh, brother."

OK, so I'm a work in progress. E

by Martha Wiley



Love Decided

Who decides your view on love? Is it the media? Do you get so involved in what you're watching that you forget that the "love" presented on the screen is going according to a script and has to be achieved in 120 minutes? Do you remember that same truth when you're watching a TV show?

Who decides your view on love? Is it the author of a book? Are you so involved in the storyline that you root for the two leads to find their way to each other even if they hurt others in the process?

Who decides your view on love? Is it your friends? If they're cynical, are you? If they're obsessed with having girlfriends or boyfriends, do you do the same? If they're convinced that they'll never find love, do you think it's hopeless for you too?

Who decides your view on love? Is it formed from the relationships you've watched break apart? Do you think love disappears when the going gets tough because you watched that happen between your parents?

Who decides your view on love? Is it someone who thinks love means you can control another person or that life can't go on without that person?

Who decides your view on love? Is it your mood? Do you let whether you're having a good or bad day dictate whether you're "in love" or not?

Who decides your view on love? Is it the world or God? What the world holds up as love always comes with strings attached. It doesn't look out for the other person; it looks out for number one. The love the world promotes is not concerned with who gets hurt in the process or what destruction occurs; it's about right here and right now.

God's love puts others first. Jesus' death on the cross proved that. True love moves us beyond ourselves, helps us forgive, helps us reach out to a hurting friend or stranger, strengthens us to sit at the bedside of someone who is dying, seeks help when needed, puts others' needs first, doesn't assert itself in a manner that hurts others, and believes that we can love others because God first loved us.

Who decides your view on love? You do. Who you allow to help you make that decision determines whether you'll experience momentary love or true love. E

What has God taught you about true love? Share what you've learned on our blog: encounterface2face.blogspot.com

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