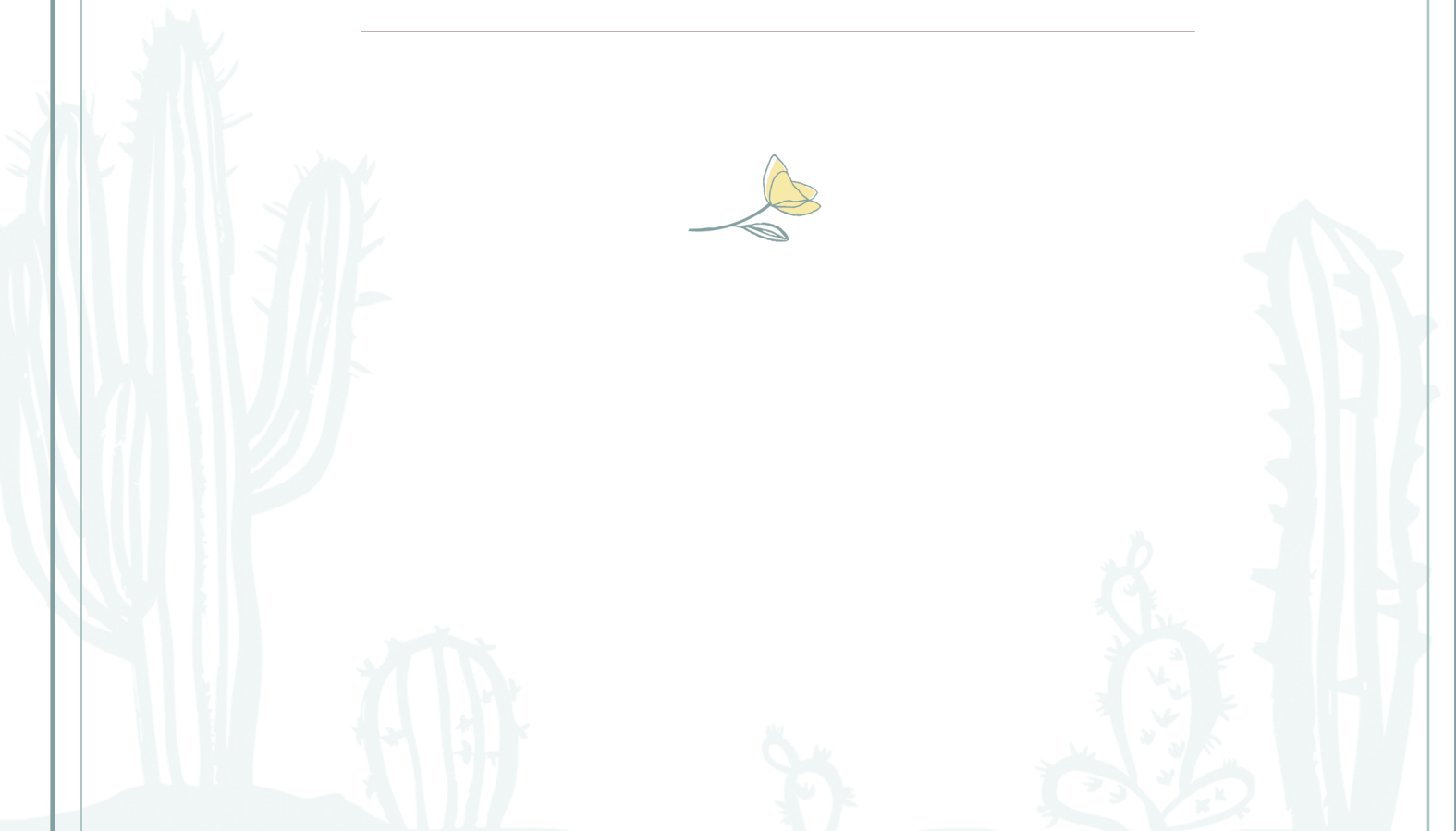




# **7 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR DATING RELATIONSHIP**

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You're not married, but you're dating. Or you're thinking about going out with someone. You're crushing on a guy. Or maybe you have a gut feeling you shouldn't be seeing the guy you're seeing. Let's chat, friend.

Who you date or hang out with can determine who you marry, which believe it or not dictates the direction you move in. That decision is huge and life-changing.

So ... I have seven questions worth considering in any dating relationship.

These points to ponder help push fluttery feelings into the backseat for a bit, turning the driver's seat over to some fundamental facts. I hear you: "Where's the romance in facts?"

Well, here's a fun fact ... I actually write inspirational historical romance novels. Love stories are my favorite. I'm a romantic at heart. But here's a little something I've learned in my five decades of marriage to Bob ... real romance isn't fashioned out of feelings but reinforces the foundation of a healthy relationship.

The dating, courting, going out with kind of romance often lives and breathes in a dreamy (or needy) state of mind. That phase might prompt all kinds of romantic gestures. Roses. Salted caramels. Table manners. Wearing a clean shirt. Trimming the mustache.

All of that is good stuff, but is it reliable evidence of a guy worthy of a wedding dress and marriage vows? Or breakfast?



Nope.

While I'm not a licensed psychologist, I'm not without some street cred.

- Big sister to three girls.
- Mother of two daughters.
- Grandmother to one grand-girl.
- Aunt to fourteen females.
- And hubby and I are celebrating 50 years of marriage.

Here's what you need to know before you take another step forward in the relationship:

**1. Am I in a give-and-take relationship, or am I doing all the giving, compromising, and apologizing?**

A healthy relationship is reciprocal, not one-sided. A healthy relationship is rooted in respect, in valuing the other person. Again, a two-way street. Do you feel valued and respected, or used? If he's not someone you can respect, lace up your running shoes.

**2. What are five adjectives I would use to describe the guy I'm seeing? (He's not listening and neither is his mother, so be honest.)**

Here are some examples: kind, moody, respectful, mean, honest, a liar, positive, controlling, compassionate, apologetic (bad sign if he's always trying to make up for bad or addictive behavior). When you weigh the five adjectives, do they stack up as predominantly positive or negative?

**3. Does the guy I'm seeing encourage me to become my best self, the person God designed me to be?**

In a healthy relationship, it isn't all about the guy. In a healthy relationship he cheers you on in your growth and personal pursuits. If he feels threatened by or jealous of your realistic interests, family, and friends—if you're feeling isolated—press the pedal to the medal, and don't look back! I'm not kidding.

#### **4. In a picture of our relationship, how would I draw the two of us?**

Are you standing behind him, following his lead and feeling like you don't have a say in the matter? Ever. Are you moving ahead of him, having to drag him along? In a healthy relationship, most often you are moving forward side-by-side, both giving and receiving respect and being heard.

#### **5. Is he self-centered or God-centered?**

Just because a man (or boy) calls himself a Christian or a man of faith ... just because he can talk the talk, doesn't mean he is in a life-giving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. His relationship with God doesn't have to look like yours, but if his faith is important to him, you'll recognize some characteristics of a Jesus-follower.

In Micah 6:8, we see three character traits that God calls important. We should too. "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Does that describe the man (or boy) you're interested in?

#### **6. Does the relationship empower me, or does he make me feel powerless?**

To the general population, physical abuse may be the most obvious and reportable form of abuse. The evidence is usually visible and somewhat quantifiable, but physical abuse and sexual abuse have evil sisters.



To the general population, physical abuse may be the most obvious and reportable form of abuse. The evidence is usually visible and somewhat quantifiable, but physical abuse and sexual abuse have evil sisters. Emotional or verbal and spiritual abuse also rank high in the tactics of an abuser. Narcissist. Control-freak! Making you feel less than, not enough. That's no okay!

But wait ... I have more to say, abusers are shape-shifters—they can be charming and generous one minute, mean and degrading the next. You know what to do with your running shoes. If you need to, get someone to help you run.

### **7. Based upon my answers to questions 1-6, would I call our relationship constructive or destructive?**

How would you define your current dating, courting, seeing someone relationship? If you can't honestly say it's healthy, let go. And if you've ever used the word toxic (or even thought it) to describe the relationship, it's a destructive relationship. Lose his number. Unfriend him. Be brave, end it.

I get that none of us are perfect. We are all in process. But you and I are talking about unhealthy patterns versus pliable hearts. The ability to differentiate between the two is a sign of discernment and wisdom.

Merriam Webster dictionary describes wisdom as **the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships, insight; good sense.**





Here's what the Bible says about wisdom:

**“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding.” Proverbs 3:13**

**“I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.” Proverbs 4:11**

**“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5**

Father God,

Help me humble myself before You and seek Your wisdom. Help me make brave choices so I can live and breathe in Your blessings and honor You with my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

