The ‘10 Commandments of Dating’

Your guide to finding a soulmate who suits you down to a ‘☥’

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Introduction

As Christians we are all familiar with the 10 Commandments found in the Bible. They are God's guide for living a great life. Whether you read them in their simplicity or interpret them and draw out all the underlying meaning, there is a wealth of wisdom in them to guide us in our daily living as individuals and as a society. Follow them and you can't go far wrong in life.

These 10 Commandments of Dating are the same. They've been written to prepare and guide you in your own personal journey of finding someone special, and to give you the tools to make a success of your journey. Every single person hoping to find someone to share their life with travels their own individual path and no two journeys are the same. However the tools required for success are the same and having them will definitely make your journey easier and more successful.

We hope you will enjoy them and find them useful in your life.

1 – Thou shalt love thyself

You're Special!

The old saying: 'How can you expect someone else to love you if you don't love yourself' holds true.

This is what Jesus was getting at when he made the second commandment "Love your neighbour like you love yourself". It all starts with a genuine love of ourselves – a Godly love, a love that sees ourselves as the unique and special creatures that God has made.

We're not talking false pride and arrogance here – we're talking true humility – one that recognises that God created you – that he doesn't make rubbish and that he only made one of you – and that one is very special. You need to take this on board and be content and accepting of yourself before you can truly enjoy meeting new people, knowing in your heart that they are going to enjoy meeting you.

Get this – You are absolutely unique and wonderful in your own very special way.



Start this way of thinking by putting aside all the reasons you feel you struggle and are not perfect in life, and try to accept and know the fact God recognises who you are and loves you for it. Everybody is unique but God knows every hair on everyone's head.

> *"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" Luke 12:7*

Everyone has different likes, dislikes, character traits, good points and bad points but remember that since God created you in His image, you are a beautiful person

> *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;*
> *male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27*

People with confidence in themselves and in what they have to offer are like that because they have come to terms with who they are – the good and the bad – and they are comfortable with themselves. *You* can get to this point too.

Remember this is *not* arrogance – it's just seeing yourself as God sees you. It's not puffing yourself up, thinking you are God's gift to the human race – we've all come across people like that and they

are a real turn off. No it's recognising the unique gifts, talents and character that God has given you and being quietly thankful for these things.

There really is only one of you. You are utterly unique – there will never be anyone quite like you ever again and this is a wondrous thought when you truly let it sink in.

Take some time to sit down quietly and think about yourself. Think about yourself just as yourself – not in comparison to anyone else!

This is critical for your interaction with others too. People who are comfortable in their own skin are very attractive to others. There's an integrity about them that is appealing – compared to other people who are always trying to be or look like someone else. You can probably think of people you know – those who seem comfortable with who they are and those who are always trying to be someone else. Chances are you feel more comfortable around the former – and that's how other people will feel around you if you are comfortable with who you are.

Basically what we are addressing here is the possession of good self esteem. This directly affects our happiness and certainly affects our interactions with others. If we are actively looking for new friends or even a soul mate then having good self esteem is critical. Self esteem can also be called confidence and one of the most attractive things in someone else is confidence.

Some people think that their self esteem will improve once they find a partner – but this is dangerous thinking because although new friends and partners can bolster positive feelings about ourselves, ultimately a partner can't change our own self esteem. This is completely personal and the only person that can truly affect it is yourself.

A good self esteem is definitely something that is attractive to others and will certainly ease your path to finding new friends. A low self esteem can be destructive and can prevent you from forming good relationships with other people. It can also affect your life in general.

Now self esteem is a very large topic – thousands of books have been written about it and it's a complex topic. We're not offering a quick fix here and we aren't suggesting that self esteem issues that have been present for years can be instantly resolved. However this is a very important topic and if you haven't given it much thought, then we hope these thoughts will get you on your way.

The INSIDE

Self esteem is effectively how you value yourself and how you see yourself as being valued by God and others around you. So let's see where you stand.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I like myself?
- Am I a good person?
- Do I deserve happiness?
- Do I deserve to have someone else love me?

If you have truly said Yes to all four questions that's great – move onto the next commandment! However if you cannot say yes to all four questions then your self esteem is not what it should be. This directly links to your self confidence which may be affecting you in many ways but you may particularly be noticing it when it comes to making new friendships and dating.

The effects of low self esteem on making new friends and dating

A low self esteem will often lead to awkwardness, shyness and a feeling of *"this person is too good for me"* when dating. Obviously having these feelings and emotions will never help you to find a partner, it will only hinder you. It can then also get you stuck in a vicious cycle as the more unsuccessful dates you have the more your self esteem and confidence will be affected.
The most dangerous thing about making new friends and dating when you already have a low self esteem is that you will tend to beat yourself up about things that really you shouldn't. The perpetuation of a low self esteem is formed through the constant justification that *"you knew you weren't capable of that"* or *"it would go wrong because I was there!"* style of thinking.

The first thing you need to do is accept that everyone makes mistakes. If someone doesn't like you; you mess up something up at work; a date goes wrong; or you have an argument with someone then realise that this doesn't necessarily mean that you are totally to blame. Learn from your mistake but don't let it add to your low self esteem, and don't agonise over it. In the grand scheme of things most things pan out to mean very little.

We want you to look to the future and not to the past. Use the following verse from the bible to help you when negative thoughts are crowding your thinking.

> *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." Philippians 4:8*

In other words, don't dwell on bad things that have happened in the past. Think about good positive things and move forwards. Remember this every time you are developing new contacts with other people or going on a date for the first time.

Developing a better self esteem

If you are suffering from low self esteem then you have to decide to grab the bulls by the horns and do something about it. Start now by giving yourself twenty minutes of peace and quiet. Get away from all your daily stresses, turn off your phone and switch everything off. This will take some discipline but it's your future at stake here so it's worth the investment. If you can't do this at home, then go out and do it away from home – your local church might be an ideal place to do it as if you pick your timing well, it is likely to be empty and a good place for some uninterrupted reflection.

Close your eyes and simply escape from all the worries you have, all the judgements that you and others have made and try to take yourself mentally somewhere where you feel positive and proud of yourself. It may be a sunny beach on holiday, or it may be a time back in your childhood when you won an award or game. Absorb that feeling and try to see the good in yourself.

Now ask yourself those four questions at the beginning again and, regardless of what you think, find a way to answer "YES!" This might take some time but it's definitely worth finding the time to do it. Find any reason however small that you can to give you the justification to saying yes. If you truly think about it you should soon see that you do deserve to be loved by others and love yourself as much as the next person. If that hasn't helped then the following exercise may seem a little ridiculous or embarrassing but it works. Take some time out of your day and sit down with a pen and paper.

Think long and hard and write down fifty things you like about yourself. At first, fifty individual things may seem like a very long list and you will think you will never be able to come up with that many reasons. However, the task is to sit there and spend as long as it takes until you really cannot think of any more. You can then leave the list and return to add other items as they reveal themselves to you.

For example, you may list down:

- I listen to other people's problems
- I am always on time
- I care about animals
- I'm always willing to help someone in need
- I visit a lonely elderly neighbour
- I give someone without transport a lift to church

And so on. You may then feel you have exhausted the list. However, the next day you may see someone struggling with some shopping bags and run over and help them. While this is fresh in your mind you can return to your list and add:

- I sometimes try to help others

Don't be hard on yourself. Just because you don't help someone all the time doesn't mean you can't add it to the list. The full list may take a while to populate but keep going until you have at least fifty positive things about you and your character.

Once your list is complete you can write them all on separate pages of a diary or on post it notes and then look at one of them each day just as a reminder of your worth.

You will see that each positive thing you do often has a knock-on effect to what someone thinks about you. For example, helping someone with their shopping bags is likely to have a positive impact on what that person thinks about you.

Another thing you can do is to confide in a good friend or family member that your confidence is not as great as you'd like it to be (and the chances are they'll be surprised to hear this) and that you'd welcome their thoughts about some of your strong points. The chances are that they will not see you as you see yourself. They are most likely to see all sorts of good things in and about you that you can't see yourself (remember we are all our own harshest critiques). Getting these things from others can be a great way of adding to your positive list.

Having taken a good hard look at yourself, you may find there are aspects of yourself that you don't much like. For example - perhaps you dress sloppily; perhaps you are very selfish; perhaps you are unkind; perhaps you moan and complain a lot. These are all aspects of yourself that you can work on and change – they are not how God made you and they are not how he wants you to be.

We are all sinful and have ungodly sides to our character but we can recognise these sides of ourselves for what they are, and start to work on them. Although they are there, don't let them pull you down into a place of thinking you are no good. Focus your thoughts on your positives and be aware of the things about yourself that you need to work on.

Although you may think that the thoughts in your head that you have about yourself are private to you, they actually affect the way you interact with others and how others see you. That is why failing to think good thoughts about yourself is so damaging to your ability to make new friends and find a soul mate.

Perception Is Reality

Now when you are making contact with new people and/or meeting new people you need to take control of how you put yourself across. People with a low self esteem tend to instantly highlight their faults to other people. This can quickly make a poor self perception become reality. Let's say for example that you knock a glass of wine over at a bar while on a date. This in itself could be something of very little consequence and possibly even generate a small laugh. However, if you had begun that date by telling the other person that you always knock things over and always ruin things, then knocking the glass of wine over would then seem a bit more of an awkward moment straight away.

In other words, you can start to break your feelings of self-esteem and how people perceive you by simply stopping putting yourself down and highlighting your faults to other people. Everyone has faults and you may find that what you see as faults in yourself are actually not seen in the same way at all by others. Let the person you are with find out who you are for themselves without you telling them. Even better, try concentrating on positive elements and highlight what you are good at and enjoy. Use the information you've gleaned from the above exercise to influence your own positive thinking and turn it away from negative thoughts.

By improving your self esteem you will be amazed at the new opportunities that open up to you and how much more receptive people will become to you. With a strong healthy self esteem you will literally become a human magnet!

What About When It Goes Wrong?!

Let's carry on with the example of helping someone with their shopping bags. There is always a chance that you could go over, offer to help someone with their shopping bags and they told you to "mind your own business" or "leave them alone!" To someone with low self esteem this would instantly be confirmation that they are no good to anyone. This is where you must STOP!

When something goes wrong don't blame yourself. There are plenty of people who are rude, plenty of people who are having a bad day and plenty of people who simply act out of character or get it wrong. It may well be that you come across one of these people one day. The trick is to not let it

personally hurt you. Rather than concentrate on the result, focus on the fact that what you were offering to do was with good intent and that makes you a good person. If you are a good person then you can be happy with yourself and know that eventually the right person will recognise that in you.

Be Nice To Yourself

You may not be able to control how others are to you but you can control how you treat yourself. ALWAYS treat yourself with respect. Don't compromise your beliefs or morals and always be proud of what you have done. Reward yourself for your achievements and remind yourself of what makes you a good person.

The OUTSIDE

How your image can affect the way you feel and what you can do about it.

Dealing with self esteem is fundamentally about our thoughts and feelings – things that go on inside of us – generally completely unseen by others. However how we look on the outside can also affect you feel about yourself. If you don't believe this then I challenge you to go and buy some really lovely (even sexy) underwear (for women) or a really lovely shirt (for men) and just see how you feel wearing it. You can't imagine the feeling – you actually have to try this experiment to find out.

People wear lovely clothes not just because they can afford to (although that obviously makes it a lot easier) but because it makes them feel great about themselves. Mark Twain said:

> *"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society."*

So one of the easiest ways to feel better about yourself is to update and improve your image. It is easy to get stuck in a rut with your look or simply to give up trying. However, you may well be surprised at what you can achieve (even if money is tight).

When was the last time you got a third party to give you genuine feedback on how you look? The best thing to do is to ask a couple of friends to give you honest feedback on your look. Ask them, and yourself, the following:

- Has your look become a bit dated?
- Could your look be improved in any way?
- Is there anything you could do to your image to make you feel more confident?
- What changes to your image would show you in the best light?
- Is there anything new you could implement into your wardrobe?

It's really worth taking pride in your appearance. It's worth it for your own self esteem let alone how it will impact what other people think about you. Make sure that you always make an effort. It is not about pleasing other people, it is about feeling good in yourself. When you feel good in yourself you are more confident and your personality becomes more appealing.

Always:

- Dress to the best standard that your wardrobe allows
- Wash and style your hair
- Apply makeup, do your nails etc (if applicable)
- Stand with a good posture and look ahead, never down

2 – Thou shalt not covert your neighbours character, gifts and talents and compare them with your own

Many of us are unable to see ourselves apart from how we compare with others.

We think others are more attractive, more intelligent, richer or more capable than we are. And yes that is often true – but it's totally and utterly irrelevant and totally unhelpful in our quest to find new friends.

Comparing ourselves to others the whole time is a very destructive habit which is why you mustn't do it – and why it's so high on our list of the 10 Commandments.

Moreover it's generally a total waste of time because this sort of comparison rarely leads us to action that enables us to change. It generally just leads us to feeling bad about ourselves as if we don't come up to some sort of standard.

As we noted in the first commandment God has made you uniquely you. He didn't make you as a comparison to anyone else – he made you just exactly as he wanted you and when you get to heaven and you're both looking over your life He's not going to be comparing you with anyone else – No he's going to be focusing 100% on you, and that's what you've got to do here and now.

So stop comparing yourself to anyone else – whether that's family members or friends, work colleagues or even famous people. You are you, and the sooner you focus on yourself and forget comparing yourself with others the better.

Having said that, if you think someone else is kinder than you and that you'd like to mirror that trait, then this sort of comparison that leads to positive action would be good. Perhaps you have a friend who is more generous with their time or money than you – and thinking about them, leads you to decide that you'll be more generous. Again this is good – but it's good because it's very specific and it leads to action on your part.

If you are comparing yourself with others in a way that leads to positive action on your part, then that's OK. However watch your thoughts – where your comparison leads to putting yourself down, then make sure you switch your thoughts to something else as soon as you find yourself doing this.

Comparing yourself to others in a way that does yourself down is going to affect the way you project yourself to others – and it won't be a positive projection!

3 – Thou shalt not judge others

As humans we all make almost instantaneous judgements about other people as soon as we meet them. This is happening all the time as we go about our lives – whether the meetings are casual – for example being served by someone in a shop – or being introduced to someone new by a friend. This process happens subconsciously but it's good to become aware of it particularly when your antennae are out to meet new people for a prospective relationship.

Obviously initial judgements about others are made on first impressions. But first impressions are very misleading because we are complex beings – with so much more to us than meets the eye. If you are wanting to find your soul mate, it's really imperative that you set your judgements of people aside when you first meet them, and allow yourself to get to know others in the most open frame of mind, before you make any decision about them. This is really hard to do because it goes against our natural instincts and habits, but being conscious of it really helps. It's also a common trait to think that your judgement of others is accurate – particularly when that judgement is made on first impressions. This is an absolutely critical mistake and leads to many people staying single quite unnecessarily

There is a golden rule that says that until you have had at least 2 contacts with someone – and ideally face to face – you can't begin to make an accurate judgement about them. Yes you can judge them but that judgement is very unlikely to be accurate if you do it hastily without giving the other person enough time to reveal their true selves.

If you are using any sort of introduction agency to widen your circle of friends then the first point at which you will be judging others will be their written profile and photographs. Look carefully at how you are judging them:

Is it on their looks? – If so remember the camera can and does lie.
Is it on what they say in their profile? – If so remember they may not be able to express themselves as brilliantly as you'd like them to.
Is it on the first conversation you've had with them? If so remember you may not know what was going on in their life when you spoke to them.

People are complex and cannot be judged from the relatively short words they write about themselves. If you base your decision about contacting someone purely on the few words someone has written about themselves, you may find you are restricting yourself from finding your ideal friend or soul mate.

Perhaps you are judging others based on their denomination and ideally you're looking for someone from the same denomination as yourself. Be careful that your preconceived ideas about what one denomination is like, don't stop you from being in contact with someone who belongs to that denomination. Your thoughts about it may not be correct, or the person who goes to that particular church may not fit the stereotype. You really can't judge someone's faith just by what denomination they belong to. Rather talk to them about it and find out if your preconceived ideas are correct. You may be in for some surprises and if you let your prejudices stop you being in contact with someone who is from a different denomination from you, or from one you are less familiar or comfortable with, you may be missing out on a friendship or relationship that could be perfect for you.

Although it seems sensible to only be make friends with people who have the characteristics you think you are looking for, you will miss opportunities if you restrict yourself too much. The saying 'Opposites Attract' is true and it is a common reality for thousands of people as your friends will probably tell you.

It's also easy to judge people incorrectly at the initial point of meeting them. Perhaps you are so set on finding a marriage partner that you don't really allow a friendship with the other person to develop. This added pressure will make both of your react in certain ways and this won't be conducive to really getting to know someone properly.

Another common mistake that can be fatal for your dating success is thinking and believing that your past experience or knowledge will stand you in good stead for the future.

It's quite common for us to hear people make sweeping generalisations about other people based on their past experience. So for example, people say "I've met lots of people who are shorter than me and I've never been comfortable with any of them." Or "everyone over x age is far too old for me." Or "men who like football just aren't my type."

These generalisations about others really limit your opportunities because they stop you contacting and meeting someone who is the exception to the rule (and there are plenty of them) who could be just right for you!

However hard it is to break out of our own belief systems about how other people are, if we want to have the most success in finding someone special, then we have to put our preconceived judgements and opinions to one side.

By all means think that someone over x age is probably going to be too old for you – but reserve judgement until you've actually spoken or met them – you might be in for the surprise of your life.

So the bottom line is give everyone you meet or have the opportunity to contact a chance to let you know who they really are. If you do this, you will find yourself pleasantly surprised about how many more eligible people there are around you than you might have originally thought.

Step 4 – Thou shalt ditch your 'list'

Many people in their teens compile a list of the character, qualities and interests their ideal future partner will have. Although this can be a fun exercise in your youth, carrying this list around with you (in reality or mentally) and judging everyone you meet by it is a certain way to miss out meeting many suitable friends or partners.

Although we all think we know exactly what our ideal life partner will be like, in reality we can be so completely wrong about it.

Talk to any married couple, and the chances are neither of them will have matched up perfectly to the other's check list.

In fact this would be a good exercise to do if you have a check list which you are unwilling to let go of.

Start talking to all your married friends, or people you meet at work or socially, and ask them what their check list was before they got married and whether the person they married matched up to it. Chances are that most people have married someone who is very different from all the things on the list.

And that's because our lists are often totally inappropriate for what is really good for us in marriage, and what we are subconsciously drawn towards.

Having a list massively compromises your ability to meet and get to know other people.

Supposing you think that you have to marry someone who loves golf as much as you do. Friendships with people who actively dislike golf will not develop in your life as a result – even though those very people perhaps had a hatred of golf because of a childhood experience of it. But if you'd had a less fixed view and got to know this person, perhaps your love of golf would have spilt over to them and they'd have supported you in it.

Or take another example of a good friend of mine. As a single man he was mad keen on politics. He lived, breathed and slept it. Now many a woman might have thought that if she married him, she'd be living a life full of politics – perhaps her husband would even become an MP.

As it turned out, this man met a wonderful woman and having met her, his interest in politics (which perhaps was just a phase – or perhaps something he pursued because he was single) massively waned – so much so that he is hardly interested in politics at all now and is far more interested in doing up their house and starting a family. The transformation is phenomenal – none his friends would have believed it possible – yet that is what has happened.

So don't assume that the way people are when you meet them, is how they are going to be. Having your list, and assuming that people must match up to it here and now is extremely limiting for your future. People change. People are influenced by others. People's past is not necessarily their future

This applies to so many things – including our faith – that changes for many people too.

Sometimes when we meet and get to know another person, we find they have qualities and/or interests we didn't even appreciate at first and these can become a great source of attraction to us. Sometimes the things we think we really dislike aren't in fact such a big deal in someone who is in all other respects right for us.

So, chuck away your list and keep an open mind!

Step 5 – Thou shalt not talk about thyself too much

A really common mistake made by many single people on first meeting others is to talk too much about themselves. It's really hard to see this in yourself – almost no-one does – but it's a common trait that really puts others off.

You'll have heard the saying 'God made us with two ears and only one mouth so use them accordingly' and it's so true. Listening is almost more important than talking as you are contacting and meeting new people.

As humans most of us want others to be interested in us. We are much more likely to be interested in someone is they have listened to us first – so we must do the same and listen to them.

Although it's a massive generalisation – with of course exceptions to the rule – women are better at listening than men – so if you're a man reading this, then be aware and double your efforts to listen to people – and know this is a really important part of forming new friendships – and developing a friendship into a relationship.

Step 6 – Thou shalt make an effort – and take massive action

No-one achieves success in life without massive action. For example take great sportsmen. They have to have lessons, practice, play matches ….. the list goes on and on. It's hard work but rewarding.

Dating is the same. You won't find your perfect partner without consistently doing lots of things.

If you've been hoping someone will just 'come along' – then it's time to truly evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy (because surely it is a strategy). How long have you been thinking this. If it's over 18 months, then I would say to you that your strategy isn't working – and if it hasn't worked to date, then it's pretty unlikely to work in the future. It's a bit like hoping to get rich by playing the lottery. Yes it's a strategy, but for most people a totally ineffective one –and certainly not as effective as having a clear plan of action for upskilling and earning money.

And so too in making new friends – it's far better to have a coherent plan of action and determine you're going to actually 'do' something to get the results you want.

So what does massive action on the friendship and relationship front involve:

- It means putting yourself 'out there' and being in contact with as many new people as you can.

- It means having a detailed plan of action for how you can meet more people. Take some time to sit down and think about how your life is currently structured in terms of the opportunities you give yourself to meet new people. Perhaps you have a job where you are always meeting new people but just not the right sort to make good friends with. Perhaps you don't meet many new people in the course of your day. In either case, can you change how you spend your time, and build in some new activities that will help you to meet new people. Even in the most rural area's there are generally clubs to join, activities to get involved in, volunteering to do. Make a list of all the things you are interested in, and all the clubs, churches, local activities that you could participate in. Then once you have this long list, choose one or two to get involved with over the next six months.

- It means keeping in touch with your social circle. Your social circle is very important as it's a key way to meet new people who are friends of friends. People are constantly moving in and out of your friends' or acquaintances lives. It's rare to go to a party or gathering of friends and always find the exact same people there – most groups ebb and flow and this means that there are always opportunities for you to meet new people.

- It means arranging to meet as many new people as you can. Getting out of your house to meet new people is important. This comes back to effort – as much of the time you may feel tired or fed up of going out to meet new people. Keep your goal in mind – and know that meeting new people is essential to reaching your goal.

- It means determining that you'll travel just that bit further than you necessarily wanted to, to meet someone without predetermining that the journey will be a waste of time.

- It means using lots of different methods to meet new people and expand your social circle – this might be joining a new club in your local area, or participating in your church to a greater extent, or volunteering to do something in your community – all ways in which you will meet more people

- It means saying Yes to every invite you receive – however much you think you may or may not enjoy what it is.

Step 7 – Thou shalt monitor your progress and learn from the past

One of the biggest mistakes people make when starting out to proactively make new friends whether or not they are using a dating agencies/site to help them, is the failure to monitor their progress.

It's really important to do this from the very beginning. If you don't do this, before you know it years have flown by and you're no closer to reaching your goal.

There are a number of things to monitor:

1) How many new contacts you're making each month
2) What the outcome is from each contact
4) Why things aren't as successful as you'd like them to be if things aren't going to plan

Failure to monitor what you are doing means that you have no way of evaluating whether what you are doing is working, or looking back on your actions and determining whether you can do something better to improve the results you are making.

For example, perhaps you have joined a new club or society to meet new people, but after 3 months you haven't made any new 'eligible' friends. You need to evaluate why not – have you joined the right club. For example, there's no point joining a rifle shooting club to meet women if 99% of the members are men!

Or perhaps you've joined a dating agency and you are sending lots of emails or letters to people who take your fancy. You're getting either no response or a very uninterested response back. If you have no record of what you are sending, it'd be tempting to think that the others were the problem. However with a record of all your contact, you might be able to see a pattern in your correspondence and perhaps see that you emails/letters are too short or too impersonal or not giving enough reasons for the other person to be interested in you. A system recording what you are doing will help you see such patterns.

Firstly you need to make sure you have some way of recording who you've contacted and what you've 'said' to them. Not only is this important for the reasons given above, it's also very important because once you've contacted more than two or three people, you'll find it very difficult to remember what you've said to whom. If your contact with other members is going to be authentic, having a consistent conversation with them is very important.

A good way to do this is to have a file into which you can put all records and correspondence. Now irrespective of what method you use for contacting someone, (i.e. phone, letter, email, text) you can record all your actions in your file. For telephone calls you'll definitely want to note down the time and date of the call.

As you do this over a period of time, you will be able to measure how effective your contact with others is being.

Are you getting no responses or responses that say 'No thanks'? In that case review the copies of the letters you've sent and see if there is a reason why your letters are not getting a response or the response you'd like.

Are your letters interesting?
Have you put some effort into each one you've written?
Do they talk about the other person or just about you?
Are you giving the other person enough reason to spend their precious time responding to you?
How was your letter presented?
Is your hand writing eligible if you've hand written the letter (which we recommend)?

Answer all these questions honestly – perhaps even get a friend to look at some of your letters to see if they'd reply to them.

Are you sure you're email has been opened? – if you didn't get a response, it might have gone into a spam folder or have been deleted by mistake.

Did you telephone at a good time? – if the conversation was difficult perhaps the circumstances at the other end weren't conducive to a good conversation.

If you aren't getting any responses to the contacts you've made, it might be easy to give up thinking "ah well, obviously no-one is interested in me, why did I think they would be, why did I bother?"

This would be very negative and unproductive and untruthful thinking.

Try really hard not to think like this – but rather to think – "perhaps what I did last time wasn't very good – I'm going to make it better next time until I get the results I want."

Of course there is always the possibility that your contact was the best it could be and that the person didn't respond because they are not that courteous or for any other reason – in that case judge them on their response (or lack of it).

Bear in mind that most people who are successful in life didn't get there straight away. No, most made mistakes (including some big ones); most had failures and set backs – but the reason they became successful was because they persevered, learnt from their mistakes, and ploughed on. As St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians v.25 "Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training."

Some (hopefully all) of the people you contact will reply to you and it's important you file these letters, emails and phone call records too. This system will help you review which letters of yours have elicited the best responses, which emails led to a response and which phone calls were the most productive. Use this information to make sure that all your contact with others uses whatever it is that has helped the other person respond to you.

Of course you might receive contact from someone who's contacted you first. Now here's your chance to learn from them.

As you read their letters or email, or think about their phone call to you, think about what you like (and even dislike) about their contact with you.

Is there something you can learn from their contact?
Did it make you feel good or bad?
If so, what was it that made you feel that way?
Did you warm to them – and if so what did they do that made you feel this way?
Was the opposite the case and if so why was this?

Try to document as much of these feelings and knowledge as you can – and add this to your file – either next to their profile if you have it or creating a new section for them.

As your file begins to grow you will find you have an invaluable resource to use as your dating venture progresses.

Are you making the effort contacting others as you should be?
Are you learning from what you've done in the past – and improving on it?

Now there may be times when people don't give you an encouraging response or make it clear they don't want to contact you further. This is never pleasant, but it is an opportunity to ask for feedback. You need to try and find out what has put them off – was it the way you were in contact with them; was it something fundamental about you, or any other reason. Asked in the right polite way and many people will be happy to give you this feedback – and this information is invaluable to your going forward.

It's worth analysing who you are saying no to and why. Failure to do this can also lead to dating disaster. Ask yourself if there is a common pattern? Are there some common characteristics that are putting you off? Then ask yourself if these are really vitally important to you. Might you be missing something in someone as a result of a predisposure to dislike people from X or people who do Y? We all think our judgements are correct, but often they are easily challenged when faced with someone different and if you are monitoring your progress you can challenge yourself in this way and make sure you aren't missing anyone that could be suitable for you.

Step 8 – Thou shalt pray….. (but not only pray)

Now as a Christian, praying about all aspects of our life is terribly important. Praying to find your future partner and praying for them is exactly what you should be doing. You should be praying as if it all depended on God and you should put all your faith in Him.

However many Christians stop right there. They somehow believe that if they pray hard and long enough God will miraculously provide someone without them having to do anything but pray themselves.

Ok this does happen for some people – but like Jesus' miracles, they were the exception rather than the rule.

Prayer on its own is not enough. We like the phrase:

> "Pray as if it all depended on God, but act as if it all depended on you."

You can think of it in the same way as selling your house. You can pray hard about selling it, but if that's all you do, the chances are you won't sell it, not least because no-one will know it's on the market.

If you're trying to sell your house, you'll be telling friends about it, and most likely be approaching an estate agent and enlisting their services to sell it for you.

And it's exactly the same with dating.

And if you think this isn't Biblical there are plenty of examples in the Bible of where people have prayed to God for a partner but then gone out themselves or enlisted the help of others to make this happen. Just take a look at the story of Ruth, or how Jacob met Rachel. In the same way the walls of Jericho only fell down when Joshua got up and walked around them!

Sometimes as Christians, we can be too holy about finding a partner.

We genuinely believe that God does not want most of us to be alone. We are created for relationship – and for most of us that includes an intimate one to one relationship. But God isn't going to put us to sleep and fashion our partner out of our ribs like he did for Adam. No, he expects us to get up and make an effort – as if it all depended on us.

So keep praying about your future partner – but don't leave it there. Ask God to direct your steps – and get out and act with all your might and resources to find that special person that he wants you to be with.

9 – Thou shalt take some risks

Developing new friendships does not come easily to everyone. Sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone and do things that perhaps make us feel slightly uncomfortable. Think of it like learning a new skill. It's always hard at first but it gets easier with practice and is always worth it in the end. This is also the key for your dating success.

Many of us are quiet shy and most of us wouldn't say no to a great big dollop of self esteem. Remember that when you are in touch with other people. Determine therefore to be the one who'll make it easy for others to move forward in a new friendship.

Lets suppose you meet up with someone and you like them. You're not sure what they think about you and you decide to let them make the next move. Perhaps they are too shy to do this and so don't, and your contact with them wanes. What a wasted opportunity.

Don't let this happen to you – if you like them, tell them! You don't have to go over the top (in fact that would be detrimental to do so) but a simple compliment about something about them, or giving away something of how you feel about them would be a low risk and high result strategy.

It is true that as you step out of your comfort zone, your zone of comfort expands. So the first time you try telling someone what you feel about them, it might feel awkward. The second time you do it, it will feel easier – until the point comes when this is natural behaviour to you. You have to try it to experience it, but it is true and does work.

10 – Thou shalt persevere and not be afraid of failure

And finally, our last commandment is thou shalt persevere.

If you don't reach your dream as soon as you'd like don't give up. Similarly if you experience a disappointment or rejection don't let it throw you off course. Keep persevering with the dream that God has truly set in your heart and don't be afraid of failure.

History shows that failure can actually become a bridge to success.

Napoleon was 42nd in his class of 43 at school, yet went on to build an army that conquered much of the world.

Albert Einstein was such a slow learner that he was recommended to change his studies away from physics, yet went on to be considered the father of the atomic age.

Do we remember them for their failures – No.

Only when you consider your failure to be final, are you finally a failure. Failure is not an event, only an opinion, and as long as it's not your opinion you can come back and succeed. Failure is not fatal – you can begin again. If you refuse to quit when you fail, you'll ultimately succeed. You just have to be willing to pick yourself up and keep moving forward.

Abraham Lincoln is considered to be one of America's greatest presidents, yet

In 1832 he faced defeat for the state legislature
In 1833 his business failed
In 1835 his sweetheart died
In 1836 he had a nervous breakdown
In 1838 he faced defeat for Illinois House Speaker
In 1843 he was defeated for nomination to Congress
In 1854 he was defeated for the US Senate
In 1856 he was defeated for nomination for Vice President
In 1858 he was defeated again in the US senate race

You are not defeated until the past takes your focus off the future. So don't be afraid of failure.

Failure can actually help you to discover more about yourself and drive you to explore other avenues to achieve ultimate success. This journey of discovery develops us in ways we would never have thought possible had we not pursued our dream in the first place. If we see problems along the way as challenges and learn from these as we go along we will reach our destination.

Another benefit of failure is that it makes us less judgemental of others, more sympathetic to others when they fail too. You know how it hurts to fail and feel their pain because of what you've been through. This makes you a better friend and a better example of grace.

Don't let your background, your preconceived ideas, your present difficulties, your past failures, your self- doubt or the opinions of others keep you from becoming all that God wants you to be or achieving what God wants you to achieve.

Sharon Wood, one of the first women to climb Mount Everest, said ' It wasn't a matter of physical strength but.. inner strength. The conquest lay within my own mind. I had to penetrate those barriers of self-imposed limitation and get through to the good stuff – the stuff called potential, 90% of which we rarely use.'

So whatever challenges you face, however many set backs you encounter, keep persevering for your dream. It's there for you to take hold of. You can find it – you truly can.

Conclusion



I, Katharine Gray, the founder and director of friends1st, have written these 10 Commandments of Dating based on the experience and knowledge gained since I set up friends1st in 1999. Since then we have become the UK's largest and most successful off line friendship and introduction agency dedicated to helping Christians find their soul mates. We believe our members are successful in their quest to find a soul mate because they approach it in the right way and do the right things.

I really hope you have found the content of this guide interesting, useful and thought provoking. Most of all I hope that however you use it and that it will give you the tools you need on your journey of finding that someone special to share your life with. It's a worthy goal and one worth working hard towards.

The guide has included lots of ideas of how to meet new people but we recognise this is often easier said than done. If you want an easy and effective way to meet new people, then you should consider joining our membership and letting us introduce you to our members. We have a large group of members – all looking to meet someone special and you may well find your soul mate amongst them

If you'd like to talk to us in person or find out more about how our service works, please don't hesitate to contact us on 0121 427 1286. Alternatively you can find lots more about us on our information only website at www.friends1st.co.uk. As on off line agency, the only thing you can do on our site is find out all about us and join us – after that everything takes place through our head office – by telephone, letters and email.

As someone who's read this guide, you're in a great position to make membership a success and as such we'd like to extend a special offer to you. Join us by 30th September 2014 and you'll receive a 15% discount on all levels of membership. Just enter '10C' into the promo code box when you check out and your discount will be applied.

Whatever course of action you take to find your someone special I wish you all the very best with your search – there's a great future ahead of you.