

Excerpt from *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*

Many warn that because of the danger of cross-gender friendships, men and women should never be friends. Movies such as “When Harry Met Sally” hint that male-female friendships will always develop into something more. Comedians joke that men have no female friends, only women they haven’t yet slept with. And they say women have no male friends--they merely have men they keep around “just in case.”

While we would agree that inappropriate affection should be handled with extreme measures, the solution is not to avoid relationships with members of the opposite sex. Often there is little we can do to keep friendships from happening anyway. Meetings, projects, and ministries throw us together. Besides, God made men and women in His image, so both genders working together, using their unique gifts, bring a balance to any project.

So how do you tell the difference between friendship and romance? Your thoughts and motives give you away. We read in Proverbs, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). Here are some questions to help us identify misguided affections:

Do you make special trips past her desk or his house?

Do you manipulate situations so you can be alone in secluded, private settings?

Have you started taking special care of your dress and overall appearance? Are you wearing an alluring scent?

When you are around him or her, do you feel like you’re sixteen again?

Do you find yourself thinking of this person frequently outside of the usual context of your contact?

Do you purposely withhold some conversations, letters, or events from your spouse?

Do you dread accountability times? Do you not even have a person to whom you are accountable for your thoughts and actions?

Do you find yourself thinking of this person instead of your spouse when you watch romantic movies?

Do you think of this person during romantic activities with your spouse?

Do you talk about him or her more than about your spouse?

Is the love you feel for this person infatuation that wants to possess or is it true love? Real love wants the other to be all he or she can be in Christ--a love that would never lead the loved one down a treacherous path away from God. Are you acting with his or her best interest at heart?

Let an application of the Golden Rule help determine the state of your relationship. Ask yourself: Would I want someone else to treat me as I am treating his or her spouse, even if only in my heart?

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