

# Guidelines for Male-Female Friendships

I conclude this series about a man's greatest challenge of maintaining sexual purity with some guidelines for all the relationships with women in our lives, whether it is relationally with our co-workers, friends, and neighbors, or relationally and sexually with our wife.

My earlier posts indicated that God designed sex for the pleasures of marriage but also to guard us against the temptations of sexual sin. I provided some useful tips on how to change the behaviors that reinforce our sexual temptations but suggested that we could only enjoy proper relationships with women after a "heart transformation".

So before I provide those guidelines, let's start with some understanding of the different kinds of relationships a man has with the opposite sex.

## Types of Male-Female Friendships



Image by Hans Braxmeier from Pixabay

The article [Can Christian Men and Women Be Friends?](#) describes four types of male-female friendships that deserve unique attention:

- A single woman and a married man
- A married woman and a single man
- A married woman and a married man
- A single woman and a single man

The article indicated that we must lean heavily on a process of weighing the risks of the relationship while implementing some necessary boundaries. The author suggests male-female friendships come with unavoidable risks, but can also have potential rewards, especially when they lead to Christ-exalting relationships.

## The Guidelines

Blogger, author, and book reviewer, Tim Challies wrote an article titled, The Joys (and the Limitations) of Male-Female Friendship that provides a few good guidelines for relationships with opposite-sex friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

### Apply The Billy Graham Rule

Challies stated there is a renewed emphasis on what is now called the Graham/Pence Rule to help protect sexual fidelity.

Originally enacted by the Reverend William Franklin Graham Jr. in 1948, the rule holds that a man should never be in a room alone with a woman to whom he is not married.



Photo by Dane Deaner on Unsplash

Current Vice President, Mike Pence practices another form of the rule today, by refusing to dine alone with women. This is a good practice to apply especially with work relationships.

## **View All Females like Siblings**

Tim Challies also suggests that any discussion about opposite-sex friendships depends on our understanding of the brother-sister analogy that's common in Scripture.

Romans 12:10 tells us to *“Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves.”*



Image by Bessi from Pixabay

With our biological sisters, there is a sharing of genes and living together as youngsters that bring about relational intimacy in which there is no danger, confusion, or

misunderstanding about the nature of the relationship or its intentions.

Likewise, when we choose to follow Christ, we become brothers and sisters who are adopted into the family of God. When you hear believers address one another as “brother” and “sister”, it is not just a Christian tradition but a description of something genuine – that we are bound together in Jesus Christ to model love, commitment, and purity just like in a family relationship.

### **Know the Biblical Mandates**

There are hundreds of verses in Scripture that exhort us to live as brothers and sisters in Christ, like Galatians 3:28 which says *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 12:5 clearly states *“So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

Paul later writes to his protegee, Timothy to treat *“older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity,”* (1 Timothy 5:2). It’s like Paul is saying, “Think about your own sisters and extend that very same level of love and purity to the young women in your church.”

Just as the biological brother-sister relationship should govern relationships with our Christian sisters, we need to apply that same principle with all females so there is no

misunderstanding of any improper intent.

## **Keep Your Marriage Remarkable**

A presentation by Brady Boyd titled "Remarkable Marriage" from this year's No Regrets Men's Conference outlined 12 steps that lead to an adulterous affair (which I edited slightly for clarity):

1. Something makes you lean away from your marriage.
2. There is an awareness of another woman in your life.
3. Innocent meetings with her lead to flirting.
4. You intentionally plan meetings or cross-paths with her.
5. The two of you linger in conversation.
6. Something happens in your heart.
7. Conversations shift to the romantic language about your feelings.
8. Isolated meetings begin under the guise of legitimate purposes.
9. You begin some isolated meetings for pleasure.
10. Embraces become affectionate, and playful touch begins.
11. Embraces become more passionate.
12. Sex happens.

Pastor Boyd says affairs will become public and several lives will get ruined. Thankfully, he also provides 4 things to do with your wife to affair-proof your marriage:

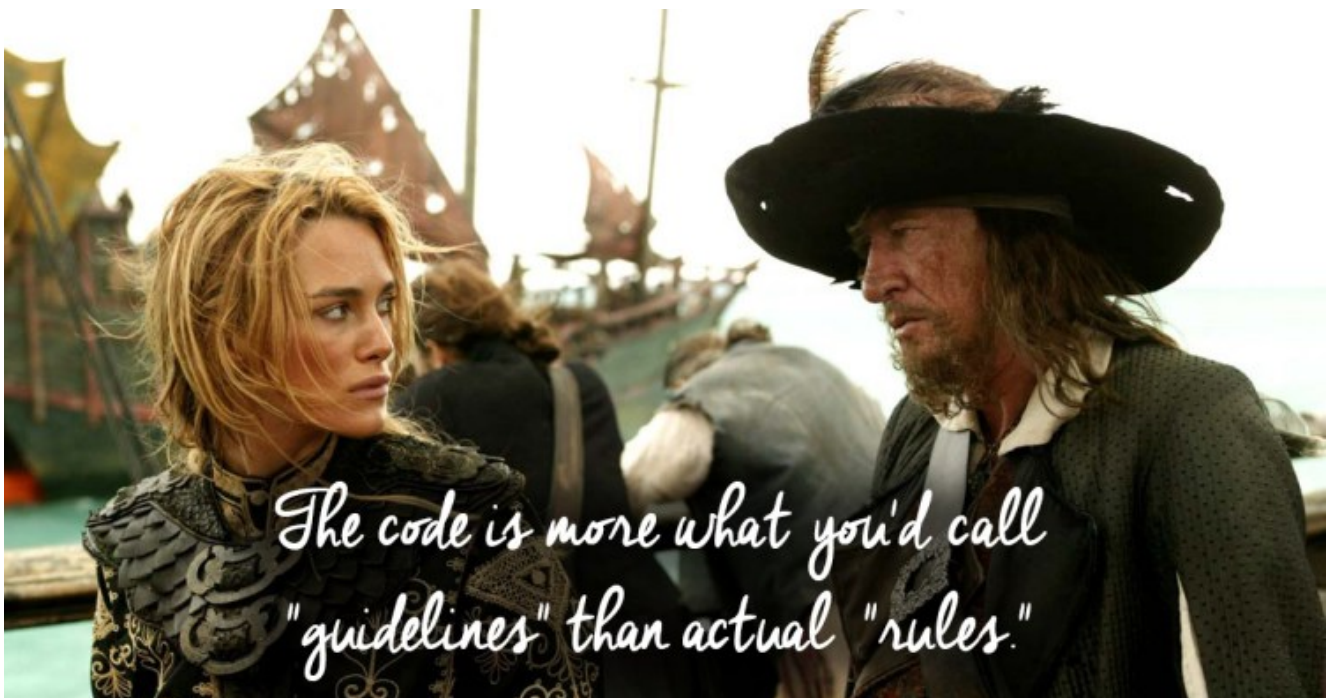
- Pray together holding hands. Bless her often.
- Cultivate your friendship. Treat her as your best friend.
- Talk openly about your sexual temptations.

- Praise one another often.

## The God Buddy “Code” is Rules; not Guidelines

One of my favorite quotes in Pirates of the Caribbean movies is when Elizabeth Swan (Keira Knightley) negotiates with Captain Barbosa (Geoffrey Rush) to give him the gold medallion in exchange for the pirates taking their plundering and pillaging elsewhere.

Barbosa agrees to leave but then violates the rules, taking Swan with him rather than returning her safely to shore. When questioned why he broke the rules of the parlay, Barbosa responds: *“The code is more what you’d call ‘guidelines’ than actual rules.”*



Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl

All the above stated, here is the God Buddy “Code” (not just

some guidelines) to help beat the temptations of opposite-sex relationships:

## Have Code of Conduct

This article by Focus on the Family suggests boundaries in which you:



- **Make your relationship with your spouse your priority.** Tending to the friendship you have *with your spouse* should take precedence over every other relationship you have outside the family.
- **Build shared social networks with your spouse.** Invite your opposite-sex friend to dinner, along with his or her spouse or guest. Instead of nurturing a friendship with a woman outside of your marriage, befriend a *couple* where you can all get together to share life and companionship.



- **Be careful about your interactions.** Follow the Graham/Pence Rule. Don't "casually" text the opposite sex. Make it a point to include others as a group text.
- **Take honest stock of yourself.** Be aware of your own weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and heed warning signs that this friendship might be veering into dangerous waters. Never fantasize about your "friend" or exchange personal information with her. Never hide the relationship in any way or delete texts so your spouse won't see them.
- **Set guidelines for how you should behave around members of the opposite sex.** What is appropriate and helpful? What is not? What are off-limit places, topics, and time with that person?



## **Give Your Wife Open Access**

I strongly suggest you give your spouse permission to access to your mobile phone and computer at any time so they can check your texts and emails. Sharing your passwords will enhance her trust in you since she knows you're not hiding any

improper relationships.

## **Be Accountable to a God Buddy**

Your companionships with God Buddies are the closest, most reliable friendships you should have. They will hold you accountable and provide a healthy balance of characteristics that feed your God-given masculinity. Having honest discussions with your GB can even reveal the early stages of an emotional affair or physical action that may be heading to inappropriate behavior.

Following a code of conduct with proper boundaries, being open about your interactions (especially the digital kind), and confessing anything even close to an indiscretion, are the keys to becoming a man, who is becoming more like Christ.

Most importantly, sticking to the God Buddy Code in your male-female relationships allows you to come before God with a clear conscience so He can bless all your friendships. God certainly delights in all of our relationships, especially when they demonstrate Christian love for one another.