

**GHANA FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (GHAFES)
TRAINING MATERIAL**

Friendship and Courtship

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The gift of friendship is one of Gods most precious gifts to man. He created us for relationships and intends us to enjoy the fellowship of others. Friendship between people who care for each other can be very thrilling.

George Eliot describes friendship as the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words. This makes friendships the most cherished legacy a person can have.

FRIENDSHIP

Boy meets girl

But what about the very mesmerizing moments when a boy and a girl realize they are feeling some unique, romantic emotions for each other? Are they really in love? Well, whether they are in love or not, that is where it begins. As one young lady put it in class when their teacher asked them to define love, **“Love is the feeling you feel when you are about to feel a feeling you have never felt before.”** So when this feeling comes, how do you handle it? Many young people have a strong urge to spend a lot of time together and are sometimes tempted to do “things” they feel like doing. But no matter how you feel about the opposite sex, both traditional societal norms and Scripture require us to behave decently towards each other. Decent behaviour suggests keeping a respectable distance between a guy and a girl. This implies that a young man does not do anything to a young lady that will disturb her dignity before God.

Things that disturb our dignity before God if we do them in relationships include the following:

- a. intense hugging
- b. kissing
- c. petting (caressing or playing with parts of each other’s body with the clothes on)
- d. heavy petting (caressing or playing with parts of each other’s body with the clothes partly or completely removed)
- e. mutual masturbation (engaging in petting or heavy petting until one or both person(s) reach orgasm i.e. until the boy ejaculates and the girl experience deep sexual satisfaction)
- f. oral sex (playing with each other’s sex organ with the mouth and/or tongue)
- g. Sexual intercourse.

When we go into any of the above with a member of the opposite sex whom we are not married to we displease and offend God. We also grieve and insult the Holy Spirit who lives in us. These actions also have negative implications and effects on us as individuals.

1. We cheat our future wives and husbands by getting involved with others before we get married.
2. We cheat ourselves and dishonour our bodies for our future spouses.

**GHANA FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (GHAFES)
TRAINING MATERIAL**

3. Our testimony and witness as Christians is weakened and we lose our spiritual power and vitality.
4. We lay a poor and weak foundation for our future marriages.
5. We become overwhelmed with guilt and regret.

The only way we can be restored is through repentance and confession of our sin before God. However, the consequences of what we've done remains with us, but God gives us the grace to continue with our lives.

How do I relate with the opposite sex them?

We are to relate to the opposite sex in a way that is pleasing to God. It is prudent for every young person to commit themselves to five foundational principles for having healthy, God given relationships. These are purity, respect, mutual edification and brotherly love.

Purity – Relationships grow best in the oil of purity. Purity is a product of the mind. The mind is where impure thoughts are birthed. Refuse to nurture impure thoughts with the opposite sex. Refrain from immoral films, books and conversations, which can cause impure desires about the opposite sex to be seeded in your mind. 2Tim. 2:22. Phil. 4:8.

Don't spend too much time with members of the opposite sex alone. It is obviously unwise for a young man to spend too much time with a young lady in a room with doors closed. Do not think you are strong. It is those who overestimate their strength who normally fall into trouble, and eventually mess up. Keep your mind pure, and seek to please God by the way you live.

Respect – One great philosopher". This means that friendships end to be very beautiful if the friends respect each other. Respect involves treating the other person with consideration, speaking words that build the other person up, being loyal to the other person (not saying anything evil about the other when he/she is not around), and not disgracing or teasing them in public. Ladies respond with respect to guys who respect them. As Christians we cannot do less. We need to set a standard for the world to follow. It is a shame when young men treat ladies roughly or crack coarse jokes on them. Christian young men should set an unbeatable standard in exhibiting respect to ladies.

Mutual edification – "Let us strive for what makes for peace and mutual edification" Rom. 14:19. To edify is to build up. Therefore discussing and doing things that will help the other person grow spiritually, emotionally and socially, must be our goal in all relationships. Five or ten years from now, ladies or guys you related to must be able to look back on your relationship with them and thank God for your input in their lives. A good God-honouring relationship will always make the friends involved better people and will draw them closer to God. So whatever you do or say in the relationship should result in building the other person up. Actually, young men in relationships are to help the ladies become more Christ-like, since this is the ultimate desire God has for husbands. Eph. 5:25. If a lady a young man is relating to become worse off after the relationship because she lost her innocence and purity, the young man has not done well. If you can only be remembered as the one who introduced a friend of the opposite sex to immoral

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behaviour that would be most unfortunate indeed. Be remembered as the friend who invested virtue in others, not as one who corrupted them with the vices immorality. This is a challenged to all to purse the highest good of the person in relationships.

Love – Love is difficult to define, but the Bible describes it beautifully in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable’ love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth, Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.” Genuine love for a member of the opposite sex is an awesome experience. In order to understand the characteristics of true love, it may be appropriate to distinguish it from infatuation and lust. Infatuation is the overwhelmingly compelling flow of affection a teenager has for a member of the opposite sex. The other person seems perfect and ideal and you spend the whole day daydreaming about them. Sometimes you can just weep while thinking about the person and you think your heart is going to break. Now to distinguish between true love and infatuation, know that:

True love is patient...lust rushes
True love waits...lusts want it now;
True love self-sacrificing ...lust is selfish
True love protects...lust exploits;
True love has a pure motive....lust has a selfish, self-gratifying motive;
True love does not insist on fulfilling sexual desire prematurely...lust demands from the other person premarital sexual favours
True love preserves the dignity of the beloved...lust disturbs the dignity of the beloved;
True love is giving and lasting...lust always wants to get or receive, and is temporal.

It is only God who can give us pure, genuine, affectionate love that will stand the test of time. If you build your future marriage on this kind of love, it will last. If you build it on lust, it is sure to fail.

COURTSHIP

Courtship begins when a lady accepts a proposal from a young man and ends when the couple gets marriage or when the relationship breaks. Thus, courtship is the period between the time a lady says “Yes” to a man and the time they get married. Before a man proposes to a lady he should have prayed about it for several weeks or months, sometimes a couple of years. It is good advice to discuss with your counselor or mentor that you are in love with a lady and get his prayerful input. The lady too needs to spend time to pray and be sure that she is in God’s will. It is advisable for her if she also seeks her counselor’s advice since marriage is serious business and has lifelong implications. No one should take a major decision like choosing a life partner with only his or her conviction alone. It is always prudent and safe to obtain objective guidance from a godly, mature Christian.

Once courtship begins it is important to do two things: (1) decide on a mutual counselor who will help you will counseling (2) set your standards – these must be absolute and are

**GHANA FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (GHAFES)
TRAINING MATERIAL**

the same as the things we are not supposed to do under friendship. Rather, pursue the four foundational principles and your relationships will bloom into a beautiful one, which honours God. The world is looking up to us to set a good example. We cannot afford to fail the lord in this. We cannot afford to disappoint our generation.

Since choosing a life partner is the second most importance decision a person can make (the first being one's decisions to receive Christ as personal Lord and Saviour), it is importance that we give relationships the greatest priority in our lives. We cannot afford to make a mistake.

It is important that you start praying now for your life partner if you have not already started. The idea is not to pray that God brings that person now but that God will prepare that person and bring him or her to you at the right time, when you are ready. As you pray do not only ask God to prepare the right person for you but also seek to prepare yourself to be the right person. The best gift you can give to your future husband or wife is your purity. If you are a virgin, keep it. If you are not, decided not to defile your body again, Ask God to cleanse you and help you preserve yourself for you future partner. As you honour God by obeying His word and taking your Christian life seriously, He will also bless you by giving you the man or woman who will be the best for you and with whom you will fulfill God's purpose for your lives together.