**Intentional Relationships: Can You Really Be Friends with the Opposite Sex?**

 *by Pastor Dan Houk and Kris Swiatocho, co-authors of the study:* [*Intentional Relationships For Singles*](http://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/)

Is it possible to be friends with someone of the opposite sex? For some, they say “yes,” and for others, a resounding “no.” So why would you think that it’s not possible? Recently, I was a part of a chat discussion about this topic. I was amazed at the numerous comments made. Women, for the most part, had no issues with being friends with men. They could see the value of building a friendship that may or may not lead to romance. They saw the relationship as one in which they could learn about men and ask some of those awkward and challenging questions. They also valued friends with married men, especially when they were friends with the men before they got married.

Conversely, the men felt it was harder for them to be friends. They often see a woman as a potential date, someone of romantic interest that may or may not lead to marriage. For them, being friends with a woman fell into two categories: sister (thinking of her as a biological sibling—and you will know you are one when they start calling you “sis” or “sister”), romance, and nothing in between. They shared that they have tunnel vision and have difficulty seeing her as “just a friend,” which may or may not lead to anything other than friendship.

And, of course, we had some exceptions. A few women felt the same way as the guys and vice versa. So, what is the correct answer? Is it possible to be friends and nothing else? Friends that continue to build deeper relationships with each other, only for growing in the Lord without any romantic intentions.

I say “Yes”. Why? Because I have them. Now, don’t get me wrong, I hear ya guys. I know many men may say to me, well, Kris, you can do it because you are a woman, but we are in pursuit of a dating relationship, and we are either hot or cold. So, while you think you are great friends with one of us, in absolute truth, you are only great friends with the ones who don’t see you as a potential mate. But isn’t that ok? This way, I can just focus on the friendship without the concern of them like me in a romantic way, especially if I don’t feel the same way. I think so.

In our Bible study, Intentional Relationships for Singles, Chapter 9 discusses friendship with the same and oppositive sex friends. We also talked about the types of friendships to avoid.

**Jesus was an opponent of friendships with women:**

*The women in Jesus’ life not only spent time with Him, but they also supported His ministry. Jesus had direct conversations with them, gave them advice, and comforted them in times of sorrow.*

*“And also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.” – Luke 8:2-3*

*“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.” – Luke 10:38-39*

**Jesus taught us the value of opposite-sex friends:**

• You learn about the other gender. For example, why do men like to drive long distances without stopping? Are they in competition with other men? Is there a website where you post the winners? What about women? Why do they say I will be ready in fifteen minutes, but it’s really an hour or more? What have they been doing in the bathroom for so long? Why is it a requirement to go to public bathrooms in twos?

• It helps you set and practice boundaries. We talk about this in chapter 7.

• You develop your ability to communicate with the opposite sex.

• You can learn how to care for someone for who they are without a hidden romantic agenda.

• It can reveal what you need to change in your life. It can expose things like personal motives and habits that get in your way with the opposite sex.

• When you focus on building healthy opposite-sex friendships, they can develop into healthy romantic relationships.

**Here is the key to having opposite-sex friends:**

• You will need boundaries, especially so no one misunderstands your intentions. I am sure Jesus had many boundaries as he was a single man who probably had lots of mothers wishing he would marry their daughters. Jesus had a different future that would not include a wife. Can you imagine how he had to be careful with touching—including hugging, being alone and seen, private conversations, etc.? He is our perfect example of setting boundaries for the protection of yourself and the gospel.

• You need to communicate your feelings, especially if the other person likes you more than a friend. I am sure Jesus had many conversations with women, letting them know he was not interested in romance or marriage. He was more interested in their soul, salvation, and serving.

• Pray about the person if God has brought them into your life for a specific reason. Could it be to connect them with other people, ask them to serve on your team or in your ministry, encourage and support them in the work God has called them to do or build a friendship or a friendship towards marriage? Chapter 10 of the study discusses “Intentional Friendship,” the place between a generic friendship and dating, allowing you to build a deeper friendship. When you build a deeper friendship, you can learn things about each other, allowing you to make healthy God-led decisions about going forward with dating. Dating for the purpose of marriage. We included over 650 questions to help in getting to know someone better.

• Be a great friend: support, listen, build trust, keep secrets, and hold each other accountable.

• Enjoy it for the season you have it. Sometimes, they move away, sometimes they get married, and it changes things (as it should), and sometimes they just end your friendship, and you don’t know why, especially when you did nothing wrong. Embrace the time God has given you, value it, learn from it, and move on to the next friendship.

**If you struggle with developing opposite-sex friends, first look at:**

1. Your relationship with God. Is it healthy? Is it growing? How much time do you spend with God? Is he your first friend?

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. —John 15:5*

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.—Matthew 6:33*

1. How are your same-sex friendships? Do you spend time with each other? Do you hold each other accountable? Is it healthy? Would your friends say the same about you?

*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. —Proverbs 27:17*
2. *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.—John 15:13*
3. If and when you date, do you go from just meeting to asking them out, skipping building a friendship first? If so, why the hurry? Wouldn’t you want your feelings to be protected for both, first by having a friendship? A friendship that might show you why they would or wouldn’t be a good spouse. So, next time, while you are attracted to them for various reasons, slow down and get to know them first.

*“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”—Psalm 46:10*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.—Isaiah 55:9*

*For more information on Kris Swiatocho and Dan Houk and the* [*Intentional Relationships For Singles*](http://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/)*, please go to www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org*