**How to Please My Parents and Stay True to Myself?** *by Kris Swiatocho*

**QUESTION**:  I'm 28, and for two years, I have been dating an older guy who is 45. We love each other very much and would like to get married soon. He's divorced with two children. He's a very good father to his kids, and I know he'll make a good husband. We are both Christians. I'm Nigerian but have lived in the States since I was 17. My parents still live in Nigeria. The problem is they want me to end the relationship with him because of our age difference and because he has been divorced and has kids. My dad referred to him as "second hand" and said he would never give me into marriage to him. My parents say he will divorce me, too, and reminded me that the Bible says God hates divorce. They are worried that I'll shame them and people will talk about it.

I have been praying about our relationship because I knew it would be challenging. We have both prayed for God's guidance and discernment in helping us make good decisions that honor God. I have often feared him passing before me because he's much older. The thought of being without him hurts. But with prayer, I've been able to deal with it.

I love my parents and do not want to disappoint them. I've always done what they wanted, but I'm at a point where I don't want to end the relationship, and I don't think my parents will ever change their minds. I also feel I cannot live my life for them or for the Nigerian culture and what people back home would think or say. I feel torn. What do I do?

**ANSWER:** Thanks so much for sharing your story. As much as I agree that it's important to honor your parents, there also comes a time when you must stand alone and make your own decisions. At some point in time, you decided to date this man, knowing that his background would not be acceptable to your parents. As stated, you have lived in the US since you were 17. You have also wanted to separate yourself from your Nigerian culture and what people might think of you back home. Please know as much as I like to think I am all grown and do not need my parents to approve of what I do; I do need to respect them. When I was as young as you, I did something horrible. I not only dated a man who had been married (several times ), but I even moved in with him. I significantly hurt my parents and extended family. It was only through prayers that I got out of the situation and back to God. I am just thankful I never married him.

On the contrary, I realize your boyfriend loves the Lord, and you are not living together. I also have no problem he has been divorced. Divorce is not an unforgivable sin. What does raise a red flag is your struggle over your parents' opinion because some part of you knows it's wrong. Not wrong because you are sinning, but wrong because you always knew your parents would not accept this man's background. Is this man worth losing your parents blessing? Is this man worth a broken relationship with your parents? It is true that once you are married, you will become one. That your life will be with your husband, not your parents. But can you live with that?

Here are some ideas and some things to pray about. First, is there a way you and your boyfriend can go home to Nigeria so your parents can meet him and hear in his own words his love for you and God? If you can't fly home, perhaps you could Zoom. If you fell in love with him, despite his age and background, maybe your parents will too!

Another thought is that your father says God hates divorce. Yes, that is true. But God also hates a lot of other things. I think your father's concerns are normal. Second marriages have a higher rate of divorce than first. But again, with God leading and with God being the focus, your marriage can be successful. I know several people who were once divorced, remarried, and now serve as pastors. Perhaps your father needs to learn more about the circumstances of your boyfriend's divorce. Was he a Christian, then? How long has it been since he was divorced? Is the mother of his children still in their lives? Are you planning on having more children together, etc.? The more information your father has, the more he gets to know your boyfriend, the more likely he might change his mind. I encourage you both to read my study, Intentional Relationships for Singles. It's a great study to help you affirm your decision, learn more about yourselves and each other, and prepare you for your upcoming marriage.

If this is the man God has chosen for you and you have kept God as the center, if you have had some excellent counseling by your pastor and he is in agreement (maybe even have your pastor talk to your parents), then I think you will have to do what you feel God is leading you to do. You can't change people. If your parents would disown you, this tells me that their pride is more important than you are to them. Hopefully, they would see their error in time, and things could heal and be restored.

The bottom line is to do what God tells you to do. God is the only one you need to please.

*Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ*. Galatians 1:10

To learn more about growing in the Lord and with others, go to [www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org](http://www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org) and order your copy of Intentional Relationships for Singles' 12-week study.

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• [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org)

• [www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org](http://www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org)

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