**2004 Additional Topic: Humour**

 The one topic I feel that I left out on writing this document in 2001 is that of humour and the important place it has in male-female interaction. In the right context, which is at almost any time, humour can much enhance such interaction by providing a safety-valve for vulnerable feelings, by helping people feel better and more positive and by perhaps allowing an important point to be made without it causing offence through a blunt or otherwise inappropriate style. Displaying a sense of humour can often be made difficult by lack of time, intensity or lack of confidence and this can become a vicious circle since exhibiting humour would in itself help in alleviating these difficulties. **A demonstration of humour, even bad or unpopular humour, can be effective especially if it is self-deprecating.** Even humour that has a go at a member of the opposite sex, if it is not too near an insult, can help build a relationship. It can also be harnessed when encountering difficult situations such as when offering or receiving invitations or at awkward moments arising during the sustaining of relationships. Above all humour usually demonstrates a state of relaxation which appeals to the opposite sex since being too serious is not usually attractive. Humour is anyway attractive and positive for life, for both speaker and listener. So learn to cultivate a sense of humour especially through the ups and downs of life, living life with a light and perhaps sarcastic touch, prepared for example to have semi-ridiculous conversations about nothing.

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Further Note: Another matter I might mention is the unfortunate amount of discussion that goes on about people while they are not present. **Gossip really should be resisted unless statements about someone would also be made to their face.** In particular it is not good for those of the same sex to discuss someone of the opposite sex which often unfairly interferes in their relationships and is based on prejudice and lack of information, rather they should ask the person themselves what they are like or what they are up to (there are so many methods of communication nowadays for doing this). I might also mention the observation of an eighty year-old nun who was working for a period with drunks and down-and-outs and so found herself habitually in a city park where, while not being intrusive, she could not help overhearing some of the comments of passers-by. She said that when two men were passing through 90% of the time their conversation was positive, if superficial, while 90% of the time when two women were passing through their conversation was negative. We really need male-female interaction to counter-act these extremes, while taking note to be positive *and* engaged when with one’s own sex.

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**Note regarding guidelines concerning a male-female relationship where one party and not the other is interested in taking things further** (example case for a man on the following page).

The guidelines overleaf may seem far from what most people would be willing or capable of agreeing to, but with appropriate flexibility I do feel they are a basis for the many situations where one person feels that another has been genuinely laid on one’s heart, but the feeling is not reciprocated. Of course it is not without risks, but I believe that such an agreement has been successful for me and could equally be so for others, basically in allowing time for a greater understanding, for feelings to be clarified and for God to speak. Indeed as it happens I believe such an agreement has over a long period of time been the making of me in the sense of meeting much of my emotional baggage in the area of male-female interaction and allowing me to see where I may be insightful and should be determined and where I should perhaps accept the realities of a fallen world and trust to the passage of time and prayer. **There are always reasons why any relationship does not work out as one hopes both good ones and those to do with personal, church, and seemingly unconnected factors, a number of which may to some degree be unacceptable.** But if time is given to the relationship and it is prayed over to a sufficient degree both parties can reach a peace in the relationship even if it is shown not to be suitable for a lifetime union, with the knowledge that God has not over-ruled any difficulties in the way of it moving forward, but neither need the friendship be cast aside with much benefit having been derived from each behaving in a Christian fashion during the interim period. Indeed at least some sort of friendship should result which has the benefit of experience in overcoming ‘water under the bridge’ and so provides a platform for positive fruitful ‘adventures’ in the future, if of a more ‘intermediate’ nature. Again I stress that there is no magic formula to be applied in relating to the opposite sex, love can take many forms, but there is always opportunity for greater understanding, wisdom, discernment, decision-making and lifestyle choices which underpin such relationships.

December 2002

**A Christian relationship - List of Guidelines**

(Draft for adaptation)

Definitions:

Where indicated below ‘the woman’ refers to ……………………………….

Where indicated below ‘the man’ refers to ……………………………….

Agreement:

1. ‘The woman’ shall be in overall charge of changing the guidelines.
2. ‘The man’ agrees not to ‘ask out’ or ‘propose to’ the woman until and unless ‘the woman’ makes it known to ‘the man’ that she wishes him to do so (such as by kissing him on both cheeks).
3. ‘The woman’ agrees not to reject ‘the man’ or make any remarks that suggest there is no possibility that she will change her mind and ‘go out’ with him at some point in the future.
4. As deduced from 2 and 3 ‘the man’ is continually to assume that ‘the woman’ is still not interested in ‘the man’ as a potential boyfriend and ‘the woman’ is continually to assume that ‘the man’ is interested in ‘the woman’ as a potential girlfriend.
5. ‘The man’ and ‘the woman’ agree that the other will be the first to know about any potential boyfriend/girlfriend relationships developing with third parties.
6. ‘The woman’ agrees to be as nice, friendly and joyful towards ‘the man’ as she can be (within reason), letting ‘the man’ be responsible for controlling his emotional attachment to ‘the woman’.
7. After two months from the date of this agreement ‘the woman’ agrees to allow ‘the man’ to ask her any question (within reason) that he wishes and to try to respond with a full and honest answer (and vice-versa).
8. ‘The man’ and ‘the woman’ agree to remain friends indefinitely, at least to the extent of having a willingness to meet up with each other occasionally.
9. ‘The woman’ has allowed ‘the man’ to give her a hug to seal this agreement.
10. ‘The man’ is to desist from attempting to kiss her, but he is allowed to shake hands any time (within reason) and from *(6 months forward)* he is allowed to give her a hug any time (within reason).

Signed ‘the woman’ ………………………….. Date: …………….

Signed ‘the man’ ………………………….. Date: …………….