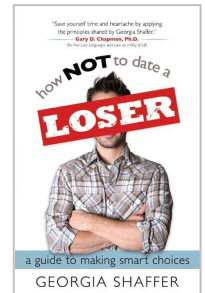




Georgia Shaffer



How NOT to Let Fear Control Your Singles Ministry



Recently, I was speaking at a singles conference where a woman named Kathy confided to me, "I know that my boyfriend doesn't treat me well, but at least there's a man in my life." After a long pause, she added, "I'm afraid that if I break it off with him, then I'll never find anyone else. And, then I'll be all alone."

One reason why many singles are attracted to the wrong kinds of dating partners and friends is that they're secretly consumed by fear. This fear, in turn, feeds feelings of desperation or an attitude of failure. As leaders, you and I are in a wonderful position to help the singles we know identify, expose, and deal with their relational fears.

But, how can you tell when fear is influencing a person's relationship choices? Below is a list of five fear-based behaviors that can reveal a deep seated fear:

- Fear Factor 1:** Changing who you are to be liked or loved by another person.
- Fear Factor 2:** Tolerating abuse because it's better than being alone.
- Fear Factor 3:** Not asking someone out because you might be rejected.
- Fear Factor 4:** Chasing away potential partners before they can hurt or reject you.
- Fear Factor 5:** Compromising your deepest values in order to be with someone.

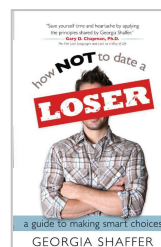
Some singles think that the opposite of fear is faith. But, you can mistakenly put your faith in the wrong ideals. In his book, *Stumbling on Happiness*, Harvard psychologist, Daniel Gilbert, states that just because we assume something will make us happy doesn't mean we're right. In fact, volumes of research have proven that what we're sure will make us happy often doesn't.

For instance, many singles imagine themselves being thrilled with a busy social calendar, large bank account, wonderful career, or having that special someone. Yet, the reality is that they are making predictions based on how they feel right now. What they forget to fathom is how they will feel when they actually obtain those things. Singles who are convinced that marriage and children will remove loneliness, depression, or insecurity, may marry only to discover they are just as lonely and even less secure.

Therefore, I encourage you as a leader to remind your singles group that God's best, no matter what it looks like, is better than anything we can envision for ourselves. The Apostle Paul reminds us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians, 4:6-7).

No matter what fears your singles group may face, staying focused on God's truth can help individuals make wise decisions with peace. Gently help your singles group identify, expose, and prayerfully let go of the fears that drive them. Lead them to put their faith in God, and look to the future with a sense of hope and anticipation!

Note: This article was adapted from:
How NOT to Date a Loser:
A Guide to Making Smart Choices



Georgia Shaffer is a licensed psychologist, life coach, and the author of *How Not to Date a Loser: A Guide to Making Smart Choices*. She writes and speaks frequently on the subjects of relationships, dating, grief, and rebuilding after loss. Georgia has over 15 years experience helping people identify: "What needs to grow? What needs to go?" For more information, visit: www.GeorgiaShaffer.com