

## USE OF A CHRISTIAN DATING SITE

**Have you or would you use a Christian dating site to meet other Christians?**

### Summary



On the Christian dating sites, 1/4 say that people appear to be too 'evangelical', 1/2 that they are not Christian enough and and 1/4 noted that 'Christian' is a flexible and wide-ranging term.

Experience of using a dating site is largely determined by what the intention was at the outset and whether that had been met. If it was to meet friends and that had been successful, then there is a different response to someone hoping to meet a marriage partner but was still looking. Just under 2/3 of people who had used sites said, unsurprisingly, that they were still looking. Around 1 in 4 were negative about their experiences and 1 in 8 positive.

Those that had used a site said that you need to invest time and effort into it and to have courage in being willing to communicate and meet people.

There are facilitating and inhibiting factors to use of a dating site including:

- how a person believes God acts in the world, sometimes mediated through their church teaching (facilitator or inhibitor)
- personal knowledge of partners meeting through a dating site (facilitator)
- a preference for events and meeting face to face to avoid the process of online selection (inhibitor).
- enough people on the site being local (facilitator)

### Overview

2,477 respondents answered the question: **Have you or would you use a Christian dating site to meet other Christians?**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 82 % | Yes I have                               |
| 13 % | I haven't used one but would consider it |
| 5 %  | No, I would not use one                  |

Because this was a survey run by a Christian dating site and primarily marketed to members, the results should not be generalised to all Christians. However the question gave an opportunity for those who had used such sites to comment on their experience, which over half the 664 did in responding to **Any additional comments?**

All the comments were analysed, using a coding scheme suggested by the structure of the question. They covered the following:

#### HAVE you ....

Over half of those surveyed took the opportunity to describe their experiences of using a Christian dating site, one third of them making specific comments. We will take these at the end.

- Did they describe their experience neutrally, positively, negatively or with or without success?
- Observations about the men-women imbalance
- General assertions about the other sex
- Importance of locality
- Comments and thoughts about age
- Presentational factors
- Behavioural factors
- Self-reflection

#### Have you or WOULD you use....

Responses described drivers and inhibitors in the following areas for using dating services:

- Apprehension relative to beliefs about how God works in the world
- Stories of success of others
- As a last resort because there was no other option
- General caution about using dating sites in general, worried about others who do so, doubting the effectiveness of the process or preferring to meet first in person.
- Cost of joining some services
- Access to and familiarity with computers

Over a quarter of the responses addressed one or other of these.

#### Have you or would you use a CHRISTIAN dating site...

What is the difference for people between a dating site that is Christian and one that is not?

Although there were not many comments in this area, those that did focussed on two areas:

- Expectations of what a Christian dating service would provide
- Comparison with dating services not specifically labelled as Christian

#### Have you or would you use a Christian DATING SITE to MEET...

There were some interesting differences in expectation from a dating site in terms of what it offers = both in terms of its purpose (is the dating on or off the site) and intention (friendship, relationships). There were also suggestions for additional functionality.

- What is a dating site for?
- Suggestions about how the site operates.

Have you or would you use a Christian dating site to meet other CHRISTIANS?

Comments discussed the idea that for some labelling themselves as Christian might be a generic term as being part of a Christian country and for others some very well-defined such as 'Evangelical born-again'. Views were expressed both ways, based on experience and expectation.

- What does Christian mean for those who describe themselves thus?

## Drivers and inhibitors to use of a Christian dating site

### How God works in the world - beliefs inhibit and facilitate use.

Some thought aloud into the survey about the way they thought God worked in the world and about whether it was OK to use a dating site or not from a Christian perspective.

*• Seems to be the real dilemma between getting teaching in churches that suggests God has a plan for your life (including a possible partner) and then we need to wait on Him versus dating websites where you need to try and 'sell' yourself to potential candidates. Takes a lot of energy and courage. (506)*

*• I have personally been selective about who I have told, because some Christians I know disapprove and think that if it's God's will, it should happen without us being proactive like that, especially as a woman... I want to tell them not to apply for any jobs next time they are unemployed, because if God means them to have a job, they can just in the house and wait for him to bring them one!! (364)*

Since 4/5 has used an online dating service, the comments mainly came from those explaining why they did not do so. They sometimes appeared to set their pro-activity against God's will for them.

*• But I stopped doing it, I cannot see myself paying to meet that person, when if it is not the choice of God, I would be just choosing what my eyes see, not God's choice. (16)*

*• Not happy about it really, so after a couple of weeks, I just didn't bother and believe that if I am to remarry it will be through God's intervention. (106)*

*• I ..feel that you are taking God out of the equation (169)*

*• I feel for me that it would be giving up on God's plan and trying to make it happen for myself. I'd rather wait for His best (365)*

- *I feel I'm looking for someone and not trusting in God to find me a life partner (415)*
- *Not happy about it really so after a couple of weeks i just didn't bother and believe that if I am to remarry it will be through Gods intervention. (106)*

Some were positive that online dating services are part of God's activity

- *I believe in using the tools that God provides - if that is a dating site, then I'll use it! (330)*
- *But I am glad I have given it a go, who am I to judge where God can't work? If He knows I am to meet someone on the Internet, then so be it. (502)*
- *It's great that this is becoming more acceptable. However I have personally been selective about who I have told, because some Christians I know disapprove and think that if it's God's will, it should happen without us being proactive like that, especially as the woman.... I want to tell them not to apply for any jobs next time they are unemployed, because if God means them to have a job, they can just sit in the house and wait for him to bring them one!! I would like to see more training/awareness for leaders re how it feels to be single, how to support singles, stupid things not to say etc. Difficult though, because those who need to hear it won't listen! (364)*
- *Have prayed and waited and trusted God for years - my hopes and dreams and trust (and heart) are nearly broken - but not my faith - so maybe God helps those who help themselves - here's to Christian Connections (79)*
- *Just signed up to Christian Connections - it's been really helpful to my friends, and because they are Godly, I don't feel like I'm striving, whereas a while back I'd have felt like I was taking things into my own hands rather than letting God do it. (194)*

Churches, some say, do or did not approve.

- *I also found that in the past that churches can be quite derogatory about online dating, which is completely wrong. (73)*
- *Happy to say that there is less of a stigma attached to Christian dating sites these days... (429)*

Some particular comments made by people who are divorced (and others about them).

- *...Whether it is right for me as a divorced person with a former spouse living. Were I to hear my husband had died, I would go for it whole-heartedly. (416)*

## FACILITATORS

### Success stories as a driver

A strong positive driver to joining an online dating service was knowing others who had success in their use of online dating:

- *My friend met her husband on a dating site. They've been married for 10 years (263)*
- *I have a friend who found her husband on a Christian dating site; personally I haven't found it very productive" !!! ...well, so far anyway! (343)*
- *I positively promote it, it seems far more effective than any other method, two of my friends are now married as a result, praise God. I tend to liken it to giving your details to a job agency.....which is exactly where all the jobs are! (414)*
- *8 of my boyfriend friends, my sister and a good friend of mine (who I was bridesmaid at her wedding) all found their spouses on Christian Connection (197)*

### **Online dating as the last resort**

A lesser driver was the 'no option' or 'last resort'.

- *It's a last resort! There's such a pitiful lack of forums for meeting up with other single Christians. (413)*
- *I have used a dating site as a last resort! (70)*

### **INHIBITORS**

#### **In selecting am I being judgmental or expect perfection?**

Although there were some comments about a shopping mentality that selecting people to approach and that it was choosing by appearance. Some commented that they experienced they became 'judgemental' in selecting or not selecting people with whom they might begin an online conversation. Others were criticised for expecting perfection.

- *I don't like them as they feel very judgemental and I don't feel comfortable knowing friends can see my profile! I also am aware that what I think I want isn't necessarily what I need... (166)*
- *Awful experience, sorry. Didn't like the person I became, "boy shopping" based on photos and a few stats. Plus the potential for disappointment when eloquent writers fail to match that with conversation. (132)*
- *I believe it is important to get to know someone, we can discard someone whose photo isn't good or they are not good at completing a profile. (582)*
- *I think it is good that they are there for people but feel that there is too much emphasis on looks, image etc - encourages people to expect perfection (70)*

### **Prefer to meet face to face**

Most of the specific comments covered the desire to meet more face to face, in events, Christian holidays, etc. They expressed that it was more natural to meet in person, or for eyes to meet across a room.

- *I feel it's really sad to use a dating site... I am fine with Christian events and socialising (256)*
- *The thing is that you can like the picture of someone, but when you meet the person it's a different story (243)*
- *I belong to Christian Connection, which is probably the best dating site I've seen. All dating sites have the problem that you get to know the facts, but not the person - they opposite way round to when you meet people in real life. (484)*
- *Used a number but difficult to get a feel for a person. Would prefer meeting someone face-to-face! (35)*
- *Nothing beats meeting someone face to face and knowing their friends, family, lifestyle etc. (45)*
- *I prefer to meet people face-to-face, though, e.g. at an event. I think everyone just puts their best points forward on a dating site, and for some people their hopes could be raised too high. I find it more natural to meet at an event or short holiday - I would want to see how a*
- *I don't really think Christian dating sites are the answer but it would be good to have more social activities for Christians that didn't cost the earth. (221)*

### **Cost of dating sites and familiarity with computers**

For some the cost of being a member or lack of familiarity with computers proved inhibitors:

- *Very expensive and very few (paid up) people in my area :( (33)*
- *I find it very sad that everything costs so much!! I'm limited as I struggle financially (51)*
- *Being a single parent have joined sites before but could never afford to become a full member because of the cost. (119)*
- *The problem is that I am not really a computer person at heart and do not like the medium. I also do not feel comfortable waving at a bunch of men or initiating a lot of conversation. (27)*

## Have you or would you use a CHRISTIAN dating site...

Some people commented on the difference between a dating site that is Christian and one that is not. In other words they applied the Christian as an adjective to the dating site itself. Although there were not many comments in this area, those that did focussed on two areas:

- Expectations of what a Christian dating service would provide
- Comparison with dating services not specifically labelled as Christian

Within a generally positive view (which one would expect given the survey sample), 8 had expectations that a Christian dating sites might filter out some members, for example those that lie, or the separated or divorced (3 people), others filtering adverts that might appear, and the remainder in responding to complaints.

- *Some of them don't really understand the issues properly, and allow inappropriate advertising on the sites or allow people on who are spiritualists etc. (312)*
- *I used another site and was attempted to be scammed three times, by men pretending to be Americans or Europeans working abroad, Christians, or working in the UK. I contacted the website, no response to any of my concerns. (42)*
- *It doesn't help when people lie about themselves. It really wasn't something I expected from a Christian dating site and really put me off. (447)*
- *I have but I find that there is very little difference between the type of man you meet on Christian on non Christian sites. I had hoped that men on Christian sites would be more considerate etc but that is clearly not the case. (218)*

8 said that they thought a Christian dating site was essentially the same as one without that label. 15 preferred to meet Christians on non-Christian sites, because of the greater numbers of people there, increased activity, better men-women balance, communication, or functionality. For example:

- *Yes but the pool of men was TOO small compared to Match and E-Harmony (246)*
- *Eharmony is certainly the best for privacy - and matching - only your matches see your profile, so as a woman, you cannot be bombarded by men who only look at the photos. (58)*
- *My friends who have used online dating have said it is better to use a general site and stress your faith is very important. They say Christian dating sites attract weird people! (334)*
- *I find I get more responses from non christian dating websites as the guys on the christian sites either don't respond or try to get you to tick all the boxes for that perfect person (549)*
- *I found that there was a lot of passivity on these sites in comparison to non-Christian sites where men will initiate contact and make it clear if they are interested or not. The Christian sites tend to reflect the same problems of the Church. (528)*
- *I found it to be very judgemental in attitude and ticking boxes - found non christian sites more open and chatty - will not use a christian dating site again (570)*

## Have you or would you use a Christian DATING SITE ....

There were some differences in expectation from a dating site in terms of what it offers, both in terms of its purpose (is the dating on or off the site) and intended outcome (friendship, relationships). There were also suggestions for additional functionality.

Like any tool or service, people find a variety ways to use a dating service. Some expressed concern people were there to form relationships, others rejoicing in the intentionality to do so. Some said that they had made good friends through dating services (an option that is presented in many), some disappointed that they hadn't found a relationship but only friends.

To make friends:

- *However to meet friends as I am stuck in the stereotype capsule of old values and believing it may not be the right thing to do (650)*
- *I am not looking to date but am looking to make friendships with men in a safe environment (467)*
- *I do appreciate the chance of meeting other christians and getting to know people on a friendship level. And who knows one day I may find someone this way! (479)*
- *I am not looking for a wife, but seeking to widen my circle of Christian friends (male and female). (585)*

Different women said that men were only looking for wives, that they were only looking for sex, and that they were only looking for friendship:

- *It wasn't for me. It takes too much time and effort with little fruition.Plus they are all looking for a wife! (The usual Christian obsession with marriage rearing its head again.) What's wrong with looking for a girlfriend?! (613)*
- *Depends on their take on being christian, sadly many are just looking for a sexual relationship (30)*
- *I found a lot of the men on the site were not really interested in meeting a partner. I tried several sites and saw the same profiles on each site. After several months away from the site I returned and found the same men still looking. There are more women than men on these sites so it was strange to see this. Having met some of the men in person it is no surprise that they are still single. I think people on the Christian sites are not serious in their search for a marriage partner, they seem to be more interested in using the site to widen their group of friends and acquaintances. I no longer use the site but look at the discussion boards. Sometimes they have very lively debates going on. (273)*

Intentionality towards dating and relationships

- *Online dating is great! I think it's much better for meeting people than in church - there's a level of intentionality that often doesn't exist in other Christian settings and people online have often given much more thought to what they are looking for, which makes for some very positive connections and a fun dating experience. (518)*

## Identifying people to meet

- *I also am aware that what I think I want isn't necessarily what I need... I kind of used it more as a way to meet up with people local as quickly as possible as I am much more of a face-to-face person. (166)*
- *Would not use for dating but would use for meeting other Christians (155)*

**Suggestions for making a dating site work better**

In reflecting about their use of dating sites and how it would help them, 10 made suggestions about what functionality would help them. (Additional ones that are similar can be inferred from the comparison of non-Christian dating sites in the previous section).

This include:

- More sophisticated search in order to find likely matches
  - More question and answer options
  - Chat facility to person of choice
  - Control over who sees a photo
  - Online forums
  - Videos
- 
- *The best is Christian Connections but it uses a crude search engine which often 'matches' you with someone who does not regard you as a match. (617)*
  - *It would help if before joining we were able to have more than the three set answers as to communicate as some times i would like to say hello first and have a little communication this has stopped me communicating with a possible candidate as to join straight away there hasn't been any one that has attracted me yet. I had a slight interest but no way of initial communication other than set response. (402)*
  - *I wish that dating sites would be more flexible (e.g. allowing members to have control over who sees their photos). (436)*
  - *I enjoy the CC site immensely but it is limited/limiting in its ability in some respects - especially in a feedback capacity. For instance - if one is getting no waves/mail - how could the profile be improved? Could there be some almost 1:1 help in addition to the general FAQ stuff for those who wish it, and some of the etiquette - if one has a conversation going and then a few days elapse, how do you play it? If I start another conversation will they think 'oh dear - not \*\*\* again' or if you don't will they wonder if you didn't like them when really you did but don't want to seem pushy? It's great on many levels but not always for dates :) The facility to perhaps start a topic anonymously so that posters wouldn't be able to see what areas you are personally struggling with would be good. (461)*
  - *Truly I cant really think what kind of person I am or who I would suit. Difficult to decide. Wish they had videos as I would like to listen to them first (550)*
  - *The man I have met now I did meet previously on a Christian dating site and rejected him - but when I got to know him over a period of time on a separate Christian forum site it was the*

*man himself rather than his appearance that I got to know and fall in love with after we met up with for a coffee. (153)*

### **Have you or would you use a Christian dating site to meet other CHRISTIANS?**

42 respondents made comments about the 'Christian-ness' of people on Christian dating sites. A quarter of these comments recognised that such a descriptor is one that is 'loose, flexible, broad'. Half were more negative in that they had experienced people as non-Christian - not 'Godly'. And the remaining quarter found other members on the site more fervent in some sense than themselves: 'too evangelical'.

'Christian' has a flexible meaning (25%)

- *Have become aware that "christian" is an elastic description, if you understand what I mean. (88)*
- *I find them a bit of a mixed bag, especially in terms of what counts as 'Christian'; but I have had some good dates and met some nice people through them too. (536)*

'Christians' are not really... (50%)

- *There are lots of people on them who say they are Christians but don't have a true grip of what this means and aren't born again. (219)*
- *I've found a disappointing proportion of men on some sites aren't really committed Christians (624)*
- *Even though I've used one, there are a lot of people on the site looking for dates or relationships, and are not committed christians. (578)*

'Christians' are too evangelical (25%)

- *While I support the principle, I think the way your site in particular words things can lead to a somewhat 'serious' Christianity being projected by many users in a way that I'm not sure is typical of those Christians I tend to meet in daily life. I feel there would be benefit to allowing users to present themselves as happy committed Christians (which I would consider myself to be) without necessarily appearing as candidates for full-time ministry (which I'm not). (503)*
- *A lot of the time when using the site I don't find anyone on there who either appeals to me or whose religious expectations i could live up to. (464)*
- *I often look at them but have not had the confidence to make that jump. I am concerned that others may be too strict in their beliefs.(298)*

## Experience of using online dating sites

Almost two thirds (63%) commenting about their use made neutral comments or that so far they had no success (the latter predictable from the sample). Just under 1 in 4 (24%) were negative in some way about their experiences and just over 1 in 8 (13%) positive.

### Lack of success

- *With very little success I should add (193)*
- *No success (245)*
- *With no or little luck (so far) (466)*
- *I'm an attractive woman who they accidentally put as 36-40 (I'm 42 but look 35). I was on Fusion101 for 3 months and in that time 1 person wrote to me. (234)*

### Negative comments

- *I have and have been disappointed.... (367)*
- *A bit disastrous (465)*
- *Still using it - but I hate every minute (427)*
- *See previous comment. It was a pretty negative experience, where I learnt to be rejected, learnt about who I am and what I'm looking for, communicated with guys that didn't seem to know what they wanted. I could go on....! (640)*

### Positive comments

- *It has been good to meet a variety of lovely men (190)*
- *There are a lot of strange men out there, but I've met a couple of great guys (230)*
- *Actually I have met some fantastic Christian females through CC (429)*
- *Only place I've met single Christian men and have made some good friends of both genders (72)*
  - *I used a dating site several years ago. The first time it was not successful, but later I met someone who has become a very dear long-term friend, making my life much more interesting and enjoyable. (147)*
- *Met my husband through Christian connection (336)*
- *...and I have a current relationship with a lovely man, and we are exploring a future together (596)*

### **Want to meet someone local**

The largest category of specific comment was about the need for potential partners to be local.

- One thing is location. People often live quite a distance away from where I am. I don't have a car and having been in long distance relationships previously I don't really want to be another. Its not always practical to move house or job or travel. (271)
- I have used and met some lovely men of which I am still friends with most however no-one lives in the area I do and it is hard to do long distance, men aren't interested in that. (377)
- Also most people lived miles away from me and I can't see the point in a distance relationship of any kind. (152)
- Good way to meet Christians but often the reason you've not met a person is they are not local which makes forming a relationship difficult (472)
- Not enough local people on there and I don't want a long-distance relationship (124)
- Again, these sites tend to have "quality" men 40 years and under. Any "quality" Christian men aged 50+ who live anywhere near to me, are few and far between. A lot of Christian Introduction Companies state that "distance should not be an obstacle" - it definitely is. (148)

### **Gender generalisations**

As a result of experience with online dating sites, many made generalisations about the other gender. There were disproportionately more generalised comments made about men by women than made by men about women.

#### **Women on men**

General approbation included adjectives about men such as 'timid', 'needy', 'boring and a bit pathetic', 'poor calibre' and 'weird guys and losers'. Particularly for those women over 40, they noted that men were 'unrealistic' in wanting someone either '5-10 years younger' or '20 years younger' with whom to have children. Others noted that they thought men didn't want women [already with] children.

They also recognised that men may not find the medium totally comfortable in that they find it harder than women to present themselves in writing: 'bad at representing themselves through writing' 'profiles hopeless quality'.

#### **Men on women**

Men made far fewer generalised statements about women. They focussed around three areas:

- About the women on the dating site: 'lots of time-wasting - fussy women' 'lots of strange women'.
- About the lack of response from women: 'difficult to get responses from women', 'the ones I like never message or reply back'.

- About meeting: 'women are happy to email, but when it comes to meeting, suddenly decline'.
- *Also internet dating tends to attract far too many people who are unwilling to take a risk - girls who might like the idea of finding someone, but want to keep their distance from anything that might look like a date (as well as guys who don't have the guts to ask a girl out in real life). In real life, I am a popular guy and don't have too many problems getting dates, but most girls I contacted on CC just were not willing to give anything a chance - and often just openly admitted that they were "not ready". (378)*

### **Self-reflection**

Comments that thoughtfully reflected their own individual behaviour or attitudes were further analysed. The majority of these noted the time and effort involved and how they had probably not invested enough or were not willing to do so. The second most frequent reflection by women was about the fear of dating, many signing up but hiding their profiles so that they could not be found.

### **Need for time and effort**

The greater proportion noted that they had made insufficient effort to be successful:

- *Have to be serious and put time in and I'm not (166)*
- *I don't have energy or time or both (367)*
- *Not particularly pro-active (588)*
- *I wasn't committed enough to make it a success (616)*

### **On gaining the courage**

The second most frequent was admitting the fear in dating, mostly from women:

- *I tried but bottled out (77)*
- *I have joined dating websites but keep my profile hidden. I don't have the courage to contact men via the Internet. (607)*
- *Yes, I have, but too scared to contact anyone I like (178)*
- *I get as far as inputting my details, but then I chicken out! (508)*
- *I have 'browsed' some website but been too worried about meeting strange people to take it any further! (23)*

### **Other comments**

And there were some other comments such as:

- *Either I'm too picky or not desperate enough (438)*
- *Truly can't think of what kind of person I am or who I would suit (550)*

- *I have used Christian dating for many years but only met a few females and found they were quite unsuitable or, those I liked didn't want to see me again. It has been quite expensive and time consuming. Perhaps there is something wrong with me but they won't tell me. (280)*

### **Behavioural (responsiveness, courtesy, sex, passivity).**

There were more concerns about courtesy of making a response than complaints about sex, rudeness or other comments about behaviour. Some expected Christians to be more courteous in this regard than non-Christians. Comments about this came from both men and women.

### **Age**

Some were concerned about ageism. All comments were from women and concerned those of age 45 and above. They say men look for child-bearing women who are younger and so only older men of no interests in that approach them. A few commented in the same way about the events organised by dating agencies.

- *A lot of the chaps my age want children and my biological clock has nearly ticked off!! Therefore you are left with the old men who want a younger women .Also there are more single men in the South and I live in the North west!! (543)*
- *Christian men are just the same as non-Christian men - faith seems to make no difference. Men of my own age all want someone much younger. (625)*
- *Dating sites aren't great for women over 45! (154)*
- *Also, many social events where people can meet are nearly always in London, or for the age group under 45. (148)*