

# Chapter 1: Discovering Discernment: Dating After 50

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## **M.A.G.I.C. Phase: M — Meaningful Preparation**

What you clarify here becomes your foundation for discernment—guiding your dating strategies, shaping honest, aligned profiles, and helping you evaluate potential partners with clarity rather than reaction. It's M.A.G.I.C. keep moving forward.

**Quick Start (QS) Worksheet:** 10–15 minutes

**Estimated Time to Complete:** 30–45 minutes

Before you begin, take a breath. This isn't about getting the "right" answers — it's about noticing what's true. Discernment grows when we slow down long enough to listen.

### **This Worksheet May Be Especially Helpful If You're:**

- Feeling uncertain after loss, divorce, or long seasons alone
- Unsure how to define your standards without guilt or fear
- Wanting clarity before moving forward, instead of repeating old patterns

### **What You'll Gain From This Worksheet:**

- Clear insight into who you are today — not who you used to be
- Understanding of your core values, boundaries, and preferences
- Language for profiles, conversations, and decision-making

### **Field Tools Included in This Worksheet**

#### **Part 1: Grounding & Self-Awareness**

- Then and Now
- Am I Honoring What Truly Matters?
- Your Relationship With Yourself

#### **Part 2: Clarity for Dating With Intention**

- Core Values
- Deal-Breakers
- Nice-to-Haves

**Reflection for Real-World Dating:** Questions to Ask Myself While Dating

## CHAPTER 1 – QUICK START WORKSHEET

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*“At our age, love doesn’t last because we try harder.  
It lasts because we choose wiser.”*

**Start Here:** It’s designed to help you pause, reflect, and notice your current readiness before moving forward in dating. There are no right or wrong answers—only information.

Discernment begins by telling yourself the truth with kindness.

1. **Complete the QS Question** – There are no wrong answers.
2. **Review – Discernment: What This Could Mean**
3. **Suggested Next Steps** – Based on research and reader experience, the following sections have been especially helpful for gaining clarity in this area.

### QS Question: Where am I really at right now as I think about dating?

Before continuing to date, it’s important to acknowledge your current season—not where you wish you were, or where others expect you to be.

This reflection isn’t about fixing yourself. It’s about understanding your starting point.

**QS Pattern Recognition:** Check any statements that feel uncomfortably true right now:

- I’m online dating out of boredom or loneliness, not because I feel genuinely ready
- I’m more afraid of being alone than excited about finding the right person
- I keep hoping the next person will be different, but I keep choosing the same type
- I’m looking for someone to ease my loneliness rather than share my life
- I’ve dated multiple versions of the same person (different names, same patterns)
- I downplay my core values to avoid seeming “too picky.”
- I know my deal-breakers, but I’ve ignored them when someone felt “close enough.”
- I haven’t taken time to grieve my last relationship—I just jumped back in

## Quick Start Discernment: Starting Point

(Review these suggestions based on your responses)

- > **0–2 items checked:** You're likely in a relatively healthy readiness space. You're dating with awareness rather than urgency, and loneliness isn't driving your decisions.

**QS Next Step:** Continue reading Chapter 1 to strengthen what's already working and clarify your values as you move forward. Chapter 2 will make a good relationship better.

- > **3–5 items checked:** You're noticing signals that something has felt off—and that awareness is wisdom, not failure. Many people never pause long enough to see these patterns.

**QS Next Step:** Complete Chapter 1's full worksheet to clarify values, boundaries, and readiness. Chapter 2 will also be helpful as you explore how these patterns show up emotionally in everyday dating.

- > **6 or more items checked:** Pause. This doesn't mean you're broken—it means your heart may be asking for care before attachment deepens again. It's your starting point. Repeating patterns often signal unresolved grief, fear, or exhaustion.

**QS Next Step:** Slow down before continuing to date. Suggestions are to read Chapter 1 and complete the full worksheet. This worksheet will help you explore what you can work on this week. When ready, move into Chapters 2 and 3 to support healing and clarity before making new relationship decisions.

This reflection does not define your future. **It simply helps you recognize your starting point—so you can move forward with wisdom rather than urgency.**

Discernment doesn't rush decisions. It creates peace before them.

## Chapter 1: Full Worksheet

### Part 1. Then And Now – What’s Changed in Me?

Dating earlier in life — whether through multiple relationships or a long, faithful marriage — was different from dating now.

Move slowly. Write what’s true — even if it surprises you:

**THEN (in my earlier relationships):** My top three priorities in a partner were:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What I believed made a relationship successful:

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**NOW (at this stage of life):** My top three priorities in a partner today are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What I now understand makes a relationship last:

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**Choose the statement that's most true right now:**

- My priorities have changed completely - I know what matters now.
- My priorities are similar, but I understand them more deeply.
- I've been approaching relationships using assumptions from an earlier season of life.
- I don't know what my priorities should be at this stage. That's okay.
- Other:

*“Growth doesn’t mean you were wrong back then — it means you’ve lived, learned, and become wiser.”*

## A. Reflection Question: Am I Honoring What Truly Matters Right Now?

Clarity begins when you can clearly distinguish between:

- **CORE VALUES** — The foundation. These are not negotiable.
- **DEAL-BREAKERS** — The boundaries. These protect your heart and future.
- **NICE-TO-HAVES** — The extras. Here, flexibility is healthy.

Why this matters:

In Chapter 1, Tracy walked away from “good enough” when Scott dismissed her faith—a core value of hers. A month later, she met David, who shared her faith but not her love of hiking (a nice-to-have). Today, they’re engaged.

**Never Settling Again didn’t limit her options—it clarified them.**

### Your Clarity Moment

Think about the **last person** you dated (or seriously considered dating).

Which statement best reflects **your behavior** at the time?

- I compromised on a core value, hoping it wouldn’t matter later.
- I overlooked a deal-breaker because I felt lonely or hopeful.
- I turned a nice-to-have into a requirement and missed someone compatible.
- I stayed true to my values and made a peaceful decision

**Now, complete this Sentence:** The pattern(s) I notice in MYSELF when dating were:

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## B. Relationship with Yourself: The Foundation

Before you can build a healthy relationship with someone else, check your relationship with yourself.

Check the statements that are true TODAY:

- I can enjoy my own company without feeling desperate or lonely
- I know what boundaries are non-negotiable for my well-being
- I see myself the way God sees me - beloved and worthy
- I'm dating to share my life, not escape loneliness
- I've done some healing work since my last relationship ended
- I have trusted friends who will lovingly call me out if I slip into old patterns

**Readiness Compass:** Based on what you checked, notice what feels wisest right now:

- **4–6 statements:** You appear grounded and ready. Move forward with confidence and care.
- **2–3 statements:** You're making progress. Chapters 2–3 will help strengthen this foundation.
- **0–1 statements:** Consider slowing down. Giving yourself time to heal is not a setback—it's wisdom.

## C. Next Faithful Step:

Based on everything you've checked, or circled and written on these pages, pause and notice what you see. *You can return to this worksheet anytime. Clarity grows as healing continues.*

This is the moment of choice.  
No judgment - just honesty.

Choose **ONE** that feels wisest right now:

- I'm ready to date with purpose and clarity.  
**Continue to PART 2 to define your Dating Standards**
- I need to slow down and do more healing work first  
**Stay in Chapters 2-3, then return to PART 2 when ready**
- I'm not sure yet - and that's okay  
**Work through Chapter 2 this week, then come back**

## D. What Will You Do This Week?

Pick **ONE OR TWO** actions that support where you are:

- I will identify my three most essential core values
- I will name one relationship pattern I don't want to repeat
- I will spend time in prayer asking God for clarity, not urgency
- I will talk to a trusted friend about what I'm learning
- I will complete Chapter 2 before making any dating decisions

Write your commitment here:

This week, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **A WORD FROM PAUL:**

The dating world will always be there. But the clarity you gain by pausing—that's the gift that protects your heart for the rest of your life.

You're not behind. You're not broken. You're continuing your journey.

Choosing to slow down, reflect, and listen for peace is already an act of faith.

## If You're Ready to Continue

- If you selected “**I’m ready to date with purpose and clarity,**” turn to Part 2 on the next page to define your Core Values, Deal-Breakers, and Nice-to-Haves.
- If you chose to slow down and focus on healing, **Please Pause Here. Pray for God’s will for this season.**
- Then, return to Part 2 after completing **Chapters 2–3**, when greater clarity begins to form. What follows isn’t about raising the bar — it’s about clarifying it.

### ***“God Never Wasted a Hurt.***

*What felt like setbacks were actually setups -  
preparing you for something deeper than chemistry,  
Steadier than passion, and wiser than hope alone.”*

## Part 2: What Do I Value?

In this section, you'll clarify your **Core Values, Deal-Breakers, and Nice-to-Haves**.

Together, these become your mirror while dating—helping you recognize when you're honoring what truly matters and when fear may be quietly influencing your choices.

- **CORE VALUES** — The foundation. These are not negotiable.
- **DEAL-BREAKERS** — The boundaries. These protect your heart and future.
- **NICE-TO-HAVES** — The extras. Here, flexibility is healthy.

If something feels essential to you and isn't listed here, write it in—your clarity matters more than completeness.

**FROM MY EXPERIENCE:** Discernment doesn't come naturally — it came to me when I intentionally slowed down to name what truly matters. These lists may not feel glamorous, but they became one of the most protective decisions I made and a roadmap I've returned to with clarity, confidence, and intention – one we'll return to again as we move forward.

### A. My Core Values (Non-Negotiables)

These are your non-negotiables - the foundation of any relationship. Without these, the relationship cannot last. This is a short list to get you thinking. Add additional values to your top 5 core values.

#### STEP 1: Check ALL that matters to you

- Shared Christian faith and active spiritual life
- Mutual respect and emotional safety
- Integrity and trustworthiness
- Honest, open communication
- Emotional availability and willingness to grow
- Aligned views on marriage and long-term commitment
- Commitment to faithfulness and exclusivity
- Shared vision for the future
- Kindness and compassion
- Emotional maturity and self-awareness

*“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”*  
— (Proverbs 4:23 NIV)

## STEP 2: Write your TOP 5 Core Values below

These are the five most essential non-negotiables for me:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Remember Tracy, in Chapter 1: She walked away from "good enough" because her core value (shared faith) wasn't met. She stayed true to HERSELF, and God honored that faithfulness.*

## B. My Deal Breakers (Not Tolerated)

Deal-breakers are unacceptable behaviors or circumstances that safeguard you from harmful or confusing relationships. Use this list as a starting point and add your top 5 deal-breakers or more as needed.

### STEP 1: Check ALL that are true deal-breakers for you

- Dismissiveness of my faith or core values
- Dishonesty or lack of integrity (including finances)
- Emotional unavailability or fear of commitment
- Controlling, manipulative, or abusive behavior
- Disrespect toward me, my family, or my boundaries
- Active addiction without accountability
- Anger issues or aggressive behavior
- Pressure toward physical intimacy
- Chronic unreliability or avoidance
- Secretive or evasive behavior
- Refusal to address relationship issues
- Incompatible views on major life decisions

*"You cannot give from an empty well."*

**STEP 2: Write your TOP 5 Deal-Breakers below**

These are the five boundaries I will NOT compromise on:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Aloneness can negotiate with values. Fear can excuse red flags. Hope alone can overlook what wisdom sees clearly."*

## C. My Nice-To-Haves (Preferences)

Nice-to-haves keep you open-minded and can enhance a good relationship. Start with this list and add more than five if you wish.

### STEP 1: Check ALL that would be enjoyable bonuses

- Enjoys outdoor activities
- Appreciates meaningful conversation
- Likes spontaneous trips or travel
- Shares similar taste in music, movies, or entertainment
- Has hobbies or interests I enjoy
- Values physical activity or wellness
- Enjoys social gatherings
- Appreciates quiet evenings at home
- Has a good sense of humor
- Enjoys trying new foods or experiences
- Likes attending church events together
- Enjoys reading or thoughtful discussion
- Shares similar political or social views
- Prefers similar vacation styles
- Enjoys similar holiday traditions
- Has pets or is open to them
- Lives within a reasonable distance
- Has close relationships with their family
- Enjoys volunteering or community involvement
- Prefers a similar living environment (city/country)

### STEP 2: Write your TOP 5 Nice-to-Haves below

These preferences would add joy to a relationship:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Before You Move Forward:** When you've completed your lists, keep them close. We'll return to them throughout this guide as tools for discernment — helping you listen for peace, recognize misalignment early, and choose with clarity rather than urgency.

# Questions to Ask Myself While Dating

*A mirror for discernment—not a scorecard.*

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## When to Use This Page

1. Before every first date
2. Anytime you feel yourself compromising
3. After dates, as a reflection: “What did I notice about myself?”
4. In conversation with an accountability partner or friend
5. In prayer, when seeking clarity rather than urgency

## Before the Date

- Have I reviewed my core values?
- Which value(s) matter most for me to honor today?
- What attachment triggers (See Chapter 2) should I watch for in myself?

## During the Date

- Do I feel peace—or anxiety?
- Am I being authentic, or performing to be liked?
- Am I noticing red flags and explaining them away?

## After the Date

- Did I honor my boundaries?
- Were any of my deal-breakers present?
- Am I compromising core values because I feel lonely or hopeful?
- What pattern in myself showed up today?
- Am I turning a nice-to-have into a requirement?

## The Key Distinction

This tool never evaluates or scores another person. It helps you see yourself more clearly—your patterns, your peace, and your priorities—so you can make wise, loving decisions without pressure.

"Would you walk away from 'good enough' to wait for 'God's best'?  
Tracy stayed true to HERSELF in Chapter 1. God honored that choice."

***Discernment doesn't rush decisions — it creates peace before them.***