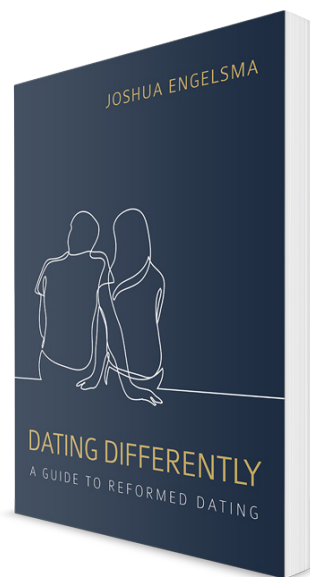


Dating Differently:

A guide to Reformed dating



Dating Differently
A guide to Reformed dating

by Joshua Engelsma
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This book transported me back to my years of teaching teens: Bible 12 classes exploring Song of Songs; Health Ed and Career courses with grade tens. Dating, a challenging but always engaging topic. So, is Dating Differently different? Yes, different from the typical fair readily available at Indigo or Amazon, but it falls in line with solid biblical principles about the relationship between a young man and woman.

This brief book covers a lot of ground in a conversational, pastoral tone. Joshua Engelsma unabashedly states his focus: outlining and explaining biblical parameters to guide a young couple in learning to know each other well. He has little issue with the term “dating” as opposed to “courtship” but maintains that the overarching purpose of dating is to move toward marriage.

Engelsma addresses more than a half dozen topics each in the form of a question. When should I start? Maturity is essential. Who’s the one? Someone of the opposite sex, a believer. He suggests: “The focus is less on finding the right one and more on ourselves becoming the kind of mature believer that a fellow believer would want to date. We should give more thought to becoming someone rather than finding someone” (p. 66). He gives some practical ideas on what to do on a date. He takes a strong position on the leadership role of the man, also in these decisions. Parental guidance remains important. He insists on sexual purity until marriage and gives some helpful suggestions on the discussions a couple could have in order to set clear boundaries. He briefly addresses the question, “What if I’m single all my life?” He rounds out his advice with a chapter on the right time to get married.

Engelsma writes in an accessible style. The chapters are brief and divided into sections with headings that make for easy reading. He covers a topic sufficiently so that real guidance is provided. Detailing some of his own experiences, he demonstrates he has not forgotten the anxieties and insecurities that face a couple as they move from the early stages of dating, through engagement toward marriage. He is not afraid to admit mistakes. The willingness to share speaks of a pastoral heart. Each chapter closes with a series of four or five pertinent questions. These serve as review for the reader, but would function well as discussion points for a couple or for their parents, elders, or pastors to use in a broader educational setting.

Are there points on which to quibble? Perhaps. Referring to sexual relations as icing on the cake is rather a minimizing of the integral and glorious role of physical intimacy in marriage. And the advice to those who struggle with same sex attraction was minimal and pretty blunt. But then, these were not the focus of this book. Dating is the subject and the author gives a trustworthy, reliable guide for young folk: a helpful resource for teens, their parents, teachers, and pastors.

One last thing. *Dating Differently* is a great title, but I wonder if the added descriptor “A guide to Reformed dating” is as inviting as it could be. It suggests a narrow audience – those of Reformed persuasion. Why not call it *Dating Differently: a guide for young Christians*. Hopefully it will be received as such by many. 



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