

Let's Date: Okay, Now What?

by JOHN VAN DYK

When Joshua Harris, a young man at the time, wrote a provocative book called *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, it caused a stir among many in the Christian community who wondered about the whole process of dating, its flaws and its worldly influences. Harris's book seemed to be an answer, and particularly for the home schooled crowd, which Josh came out of, who were perhaps looking for an alternative approach that would give biblical guidelines for their young people and young adults searching for a life's partner.

Harris, who eventually became an ordained minister, has recently said goodbye to Christianity. He recognized as a minister that what he was expected to preach and what he actually believed had parted ways some time ago, and he could no longer play the hypocrite. He had also previously apologized for his famous book on dating or anti-dating, to all who may have held it up as the answer to a practical concern.

Of course others have written on the subject of dating, and web sites have also been set up to make use of modern technology to bring covenant young people and young adults together. Sovereign Grace Singles is one such web site that seeks to serve the

Reformed/Presbyterian community.

Recently Protestant Reformed minister Joshua Engelsma published his own effort called *Dating Differently: A Guide to Reformed Dating*. Pastor Engelsma does not dismiss the idea of dating as Harris once did, but he does offer guidelines that differ markedly from that of our current culture, which sees dating as a means, primarily, to fun and to sex.

Engelsma uses Scripture as his guide to a proper understanding of what dating is for, and offers it as a study guide of sorts with a few questions at the end of each chapter. He recognizes the limits of choice in terms of who a Christian young man or woman can marry, which limits the field to Christians only and male and female only. And he stresses the need to consider dating as a road to marriage, so the choice of whom to date needs to be taken seriously and carefully. He deals with the question of two people from different denominations



marrying (okay, but be sure to discuss the differences early in the relationship); the qualities of spiritual maturity; male leadership in the relationship, but not one who is domineering; and the qualities to look for in a future

wife and husband.

A chapter offers practical ideas on what to do on a date, and the author discusses the differences between dating and courtship. Have a plan for a date night, and spend a good deal of time talking together, although he does warn about the plague of excessive texting – too much information shared about minute details of daily life is to be avoided. Another chapter is on the role of parents and others in dating, and in chapter 7, the question of sex is addressed with good biblical, confessional and practical guidelines provided along with valuable advice and instruction to help maintain purity in a relationship.

There's a chapter on singleness, and a chapter on the question of when to marry.

A personal, pastoral, practical book that answers the questions dating couples will have, which should be read either before forming a relationship or in its early stages to be most effective and useful. ♦

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