

# Preparing for Dating and Marriage



# Preparing for Dating and Marriage

A 31-DAY FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

CORY GRIESS



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*With love and gratitude, I dedicate this book to my wife who helped me in the writing of the book (as she does in all things). Together with her, I also dedicate the book to the children the Lord has loaned to us. Children, it is our prayer that your marriages glorify your God and grant you a holy joy. We love you very much.*



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# Preface

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When I was in high school I worked for my uncle doing drywall. Although it was good to be with my uncle, it wasn't my favorite job from my youth. I did learn some useful lessons though. There is even one I learned later looking back on those days: parenting is a lot like putting drywall mud on a wall. You have a little bit of time to mold and manipulate the material and then when the time is up that opportunity is over, never to return. God-fearing parents realize instinctively what little time they have to "train up a child in the way he should go" that "when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). But being reminded of it can encourage us to remain zealously active in the lives of our children. And maybe the reminder will prevent us from rushing through family worship (devotions) more often than we should, or help prevent us from skipping it altogether.

Fulfilling our calling with our children, we are to teach them many things. We are to teach them biblical doctrine and a godly walk of life. We are to teach them that they are members of the covenant of grace and that the covenant bears on all their existence. We recognize that their whole future life, should God bless our labors, is built upon this foundation. They have many important decisions to make and we pray our instruction helps them decide wisely.

One of the most important decisions our children will make regards who they will marry. So much of their life is affected by

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this decision. And not only *their* life, but also the lives of their children and grandchildren. Even the future of the church is affected by this decision.

Given the fact that who they marry is such a serious matter, it is almost shocking that at times Christian parents delay teaching their children on this point until they find out their child has been dating someone. Some even then do not teach their children, assuming their youth have learned enough from other sources. Children certainly do learn things about who they should date and marry from other sources, like church, and, if we are privileged to have one, a Christian school. They know basically what kind of person they should marry and why. But just as it is important to teach youth about sound doctrine in the home as well as in the church and school, so it is important for *parents*, not only the school and church, to teach their youth about dating and marriage. In fact, training about dating and marriage belongs chiefly to the sphere of the home. And it is the responsibility of the home to teach on this point *before* the children start dating. We want them to learn biblical doctrine when they are youth so that when they grow up and are challenged they can stand firm. Don't we also want them to learn a biblical view of dating and marriage when they are youth for the same reason?

There is a void of material to help parents do this. There is not a void of material on dating and marriage itself, but there is a void of material that helps the *parents teach their children* about this important topic. In fact, I could find nothing like this when looking for such help for myself as a parent. The following is intended to be such a guide. Written in a daily family devotional format, this book is meant to be a *help*. It is not intended to replace parental guidance ("here, go to your room and read

## Preface

this”). It is intended to *help the parents* give that guidance, and to encourage parents in the giving of it. It is intended for an audience seventh grade and up, although even younger children will benefit. It does assume both a father and a mother in the home. It could still be used by a single parent with profit, but I recognize it may be painful for those in this heart-wrenching situation.

Each daily reading begins with a passage of scripture for the parents and children to look up and read together before reading the content of the devotion. You will also notice that there are questions at the end of each day’s reading. The intention of these questions is to encourage and guide family discussion interacting with the material from the scripture and the daily reading. This material could profitably be used as a Bible study guide for youth in a church setting as well, but my first hope is that parents use it in their homes during family worship (devotions). I wrote it with this use first in mind. It is fine if younger children are present at these devotions. They will pick up more than you think, and I will alert you if anything sensitive to younger ears comes up in the material. Another option could be to use it before bed with child(ren) who are around the intended age; that would work well too.

I know youth at the age for whom this devotional is intended can be hard to draw out sometimes. And I can’t promise this will be a magic bullet. But my prayer is that it will *help*, and that you will experience fellowship with your youth even as you teach and train.

Remember, the drywall is setting!





# What Marriage Is

*Day 1: Marriage is God-Ordained*

*Day 2: God Brings a Spouse*



*Day 1*

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# Marriage is God-Ordained

## **Read Genesis 2:18-25**

In order to know what something is we have to know where it came from. If you had never seen an Xbox before, it would help to know who made it, why it was made, and something of how the maker intended it to work. So too with marriage.

We learn these things about marriage in Genesis 2. In verse 24 God defines marriage (which is why it is the most quoted verse about marriage in the Bible). “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” God calls marriage a one-flesh union between one man and one woman who have left their parents to cleave to each other for life. It is a union of two so that they live together, raise a family together, if God is pleased to give them children, and “do life” together the rest of their days.

When a man and a woman stand up in front of the church and the minister pronounces them husband and wife, they don’t feel a bolt of electricity zap them, and there is no glow that surrounds them. In fact, they might not feel different at all when it’s

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over. Nonetheless, there is a God-created bond between those two that was not there before. No matter how the husband or wife feels about the marriage for the rest of his or her life, that bond has been created by God, and remains until God takes one in that marriage home to heaven.

In the way of *leaving* father and mother and *cleaving* to one's husband or wife, this bond is *experienced*. Cleaving physically, emotionally, spiritually to one another as the two live in their God-ordained roles, the couple *experiences* what God has put there between them. It is intimate; it is friendship; it is communication, the sharing of a life in the bonds of peace. It is hard work because both members of the marriage are sinners, but it is wonderful! It reflects the life God has within himself as triune, and the life that Christ and the church share with each other. And though sin has affected it tremendously, by grace, Christians may experience it as a glorious gift from God.

God made marriage to be this one-flesh union. And just like no one has the right to tell Kevin Bachus (the inventor of the Xbox) what an Xbox is and isn't, so also no one has the right to tell God (the creator of marriage) what marriage is and isn't. Marriage is God's institution for all people and all times and all places. God made a bond between *your* mom and dad years ago. And one day, Lord willing, he will make it between you and a husband or wife too.

### Questions/Discussion Points

1. Does marriage sound exciting or scary or both?  
[Parents, talk to your children about the good gift of marriage in your personal experience.]



## Day 1: Marriage is God-Ordained

2. Marriage is *God's* creation. How is the world rebelling against God by *telling him* what his invention is and is not?
3. What do you think it is like to cleave to your spouse “physically, emotionally, and spiritually?”

## Day 2

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# God Brings a Spouse

### Read Genesis 2:18–25 (again)

Verse 22 says God “brought her unto the man.” This is God creating marriage! It’s only after this that God calls the woman not merely “the woman,” or a “help meet for Adam,” but Adam’s *wife* (v. 24). God performed the first wedding ceremony, bringing his daughter Eve to a godly man, Adam, and giving her away to him. God still does this. As the Reformed form for marriage puts it, this passage is God’s witness “that He doth yet as with His hand bring unto every man his wife.”\*

It is possible to marry the “wrong person,” that is, marrying an unbeliever in disobedience to God’s word. If you do, we as your parents may be responsible for that (along with you), and so with this devotional we are going to teach you to guard your heart. But once a marriage is made, then in God’s sovereignty, even if it is to the “wrong person,” it is in fact the “right person,” the person you were supposed to marry. God brings to every man his wife. And God makes even sinful unions permanent.

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\* Form for the Confirmation of Marriage Before the Church, in *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 305–10.

## Day 2: God Brings a Spouse

How does he bring to every man his wife and to every woman her husband today? Not the same way he did for Adam and Eve of course. He does so by his providence. As he leads us to seek the right kind of spouse, and as we learn the teaching of his word regarding what marriage is, the goal of marriage, what to look for in a spouse, principles to follow in looking for a spouse, dangers to avoid, and examples to follow—he providentially leads us to our “Adam” or our “Eve.” That list above is everything we will discuss in the next twenty-nine days.

The process we carry out when seeking a spouse is commonly called dating. But no matter what you call it, dating, courtship, or something else, it is a process spoken of in Genesis 2:24. It is the process of leaving father and mother and cleaving to a wife (or husband). The key is that we learn this process from the word and not the world. May God grant his grace as we learn from his word in this study and may he in time and by his providence bring a godly wife or husband by his hand for you.

### Questions/Discussion Points

1. Maybe you haven't thought about dating yet. Maybe right now you don't even desire it. Nevertheless, why is it important to learn what God's word says about dating and marriage *before* you get married or even begin dating? Maybe you *are* dating or desire to date. Why is it still important to go through this material now?
2. How can we pray today for your future marriage? [*Fathers, please close devotions by praying for the potential future spouses and marriages of your children.*]