

*Preparing for Dating and Marriage: A 31-Day Family Devotional*, by Cory Griess. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2020. 112 pages. [Reviewed by Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church.]

As the title indicates, this little book is designed to be a tool to instruct children concerning dating and marriage. That in itself is an indication of the value of the book. Anything that will help future generations develop a proper biblical and Reformed understanding of dating and marriage is a valuable asset.

But there are a number of unique features about Rev. Griess' book that make it even more valuable. For one thing, the book is not aimed at young people in their late teens and early twenties, the typical audience for a book on dating. Rather, the book is geared toward younger children. As the author states, "It is intended for an audience seventh grade and up, although even younger children will benefit" (3). The reason for this is the author's conviction that our children need to be prepared for dating and marriage long before they are old enough to do so.

Another unique feature of this book is that, though it aims at the up-building of the youth, it is written especially for parents as a help to them in teaching their children about dating and marriage. The author says, "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...[This book] is not intended to replace parental guidance ('here, go to your room and read this'). It is intended to *help the parents* give that guidance, and to encourage parents in the giving of it" (2–3).

What makes this book unique as well is the fact that it is designed to be used as a devotional. It is not written as a full-length treatment of the various elements of dating and marriage, but is written to spark discussion either when the family is gathered for family worship or during nighttime devotions when tucking the children in bed. The book contains a month's worth of devotionals, each of which begins with a passage of scripture to be read, followed by a one-page explanation, and ending with thought-provoking discussion questions. This unique approach allows parents to tie good instruction regarding dating and marriage with something they are already doing: leading their children in daily devotions.

A noteworthy aspect of the book is its pastoral and fatherly approach. The author is a father and pastor who obviously writes out of a concern for his own children and their future marriages as well as the youth of the church and their future marriages. He even notes in certain places where certain subjects might be inappropriate for very young children. Such a warm, fatherly approach serves as a good model to parents as they nurture their children, particularly with respect to their dating and marrying.

Although in my opinion a couple of the devotionals were a little lengthy, as a parent of small children I appreciated that most of the devotionals were of manageable length, usually involving the reading of a few verses of scripture along with a brief explanation.

I'm appreciative of the work Rev. Griess put into this book and view it as a valuable resource for teaching my own children. I would encourage all parents to buy it and make use of it as well. My hope is that in the future Rev. Griess and the RFPA would produce similar devotionals on other subjects (e.g. a devotional for married couples to use in strengthening their marriages).