

***Preparing for Dating and Marriage* by Cory Griess. Reviewed by Dr. Sacha Walicord, pastor of Walker United Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, visiting Professor Akademie fuer Reformatorische Theologie (Reformed Theological Seminary), Giessen, Germany.**

Many Christian parents have lost countless nights' sleep over their child's unwise dating or marriage decisions. Much heartache has been caused by covenant children who entered the "dating game" or even marriage in an unprepared way. Much of this heartache and many tears could have been avoided if parents just had had a tool that helped them teach their children how to look for a godly spouse. Cory Griess' very readable devotional seeks to fill exactly this gap as it is not only written from a sound biblical perspective but also in a warm and easy-to-understand tone. This is not your classical self-help book, but it is written for an audience 7th grade and up to be used as a family devotional guide in thirty-one brief and straightforward lessons.

The book begins with a gentle but serious warning, comparing parenting to 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." This reviewer had to pause upon this warning as it is indeed a frightening reality that holds true in so many ways. So often we are not aware of the immense responsibility we have as parents before God. Accordingly, the author continues his warning by reminding us that even the future of the church is affected by our children's and grandchildren's marriage choices.

He begins with a biblical explanation of the nature and purpose of marriage. Concerning its purpose, I found this gem: "Before you start thinking about what you want in a spouse and hoping God's will conforms to your desires, your greatest desires must be conformed to his will." He continues to describe what to look for in a godly spouse and who one wants to be as a young Christian. Among others issues, he covers topics like biblical principles that should undergird the search for a spouse and some of the dangers that await young Christians along the way. He concludes with a short journey through the book of Ruth and draws valuable life lesson from the example of Boaz and Ruth.

While being encouragingly orthodox in its theology, this devotional does not sound archaic at all. For example, the author writes this about the Christian household, "The Christian home must be a place where life's difficulties are downloaded in conversation and then uploaded in prayer." What an ingenious way to make this book's language accessible for the younger generations!

This very readable 31-day devotional is easy to understand and yet full of profound truth, brief, but deep, warm, but serious. It will not only help your children tremendously; it will also challenge you in your own marriage. What else shall I say? I wholeheartedly recommend it without reservations. Pick up and read—it will be a great blessing to you and to your family!