

Dating verses Courting By Tom Brown

Joshua Harris wrote a book with a provocative title, "I've kissed dating goodbye." You need to kiss dating goodbye. I believe that dating is the world's way to find a spouse. Many might be wondering, *If I don't date, how am I going to find a spouse?*

You should find a spouse through courting. Courtship is more of a scriptural way to meet a prospective spouse than dating. What is the difference between dating and courting? Let me say first of all: Don't get hung up on terms. It is possible to use the word date but not necessarily have the same understanding as my definition. I am giving you my definition of dating. If you say you date but don't do what I define dating as being, then I feel you are practicing courting, although you might still use the term dating.

My definition of dating is that it is a modern game where intimacy is practiced before commitment. It often involves romantic talk, holding hands, kissing, making out, and oftentimes sex. Commitment never proceeds intimacy. The word date comes from the word mate. It doesn't sound good to tell someone you are mating with Mr. X. You prefer to use the word dating. It sounds so much better, but in reality, dating and mating are sometimes the same. I looked up the word *date* in my encyclopedia and it said, "see **Sex** and **Teenage**." Even my encyclopedia agrees with my definition.

Courtship is the time-honored and successful practice of learning about someone enough to know whether or not the two is compatible for marriage. It often involves friendship,

discussing each individual's future plans, knowing the parents if they're alive, and praying privately for God's will in the matter. After deciding it is God's will to get married, the couple prays together and then go to their parents to seek their blessings and finally to the pastor to seek his approval. After engaged the couple still avoids intimacy until marriage. Commitment comes before intimacy.

Someone might be thinking, *How old is this writer?* I'm under forty, and my wife, Sonia, and I proved that courtship could work in this modern age. We both were virgins when we married each other. So don't tell me that this is unrealistic. We never kissed or even held hands until we were engaged. It can work. We've been married for almost 18 years, and are still in love. 😊

Why people fall away from the Lord?

I've been pastoring for almost two decades, and I've noticed that the number one reason people are led away from God is because they get involved in a relationship which is not honoring God. People rarely fall away from God as a result of drugs, alcohol, or cults. Christianity is a relationship, so it stands to reason that an unholy relationship will be the number one cause of backsliding.

We are relational people. Our faith is based on a relationship with God. We need a relationship with God to fulfill us. Satan knows this, so he tries to replace your relationship with God with a wrong relationship with another. If he can succeed, you will discover that your relationship with God will suffer.

Dating is Satan's method of getting you distracted from God. As I said before, dating involves intimacy. Once a person develops intimacy, they can easily make each other out to be idols. The Romeo and Juliet syndrome takes place.

"Oh, I can't live without you! I need you! You are everything to

me!"

Like Romeo and Juliet you will begin to despise the advice of your parents and others who care for your spiritual well being. You will soon give more and more time to this person. You will begin to spend less time with your family and Christian friends. Before you know it, you rarely attend church.

"Who cares, I'm in love!" you say. Remember the end of Romeo and Juliet: they killed themselves! That is not exactly a romantic ending.

Satan tried it on me

Hey, I am a guy! I know what I'm talking about. Satan tried to get me involved in wrong relationships with different girls. Oh, they were so pretty! But they weren't born-again, Spirit-filled girls. I knew God had called me into the ministry, so I realized my choice for a wife was critical. None of the girls I liked were interested in being a preacher's wife.

Satan almost got me on several occasions. One girl, who was drunk at the time, said to me, "Tom, with you being religious and all that, and me being such a sinner, we would make a good couple." Yea, sure?

When I met Sonia at church, I asked her to play tennis with me. We saw each other every week at a nursing home that we ministered at together. We went out a couple of times. In all those months, we never saw each other as idols. We were simply good friends.

The trouble with many marriages is they are built on sex, not friendship. There is more to a marriage than sex. Yes, sex is fun, it has its place, but friendship is even more important.

Many argue that unless you have sex before marriage, you might not be satisfied with your spouse's performance. They say, "Better find out if you are compatible sexually before marriage than after marriage."

You know this argument is so lame. Common sense tells us that sex will be wonderful so long as you are in love with the person. It doesn't matter if they can do gymnastics in bed, what matters most, is if they love you. Sex is meaningful with someone you love. You can learn to perform better as you go along. That is part of the fun.

Get it out of your system

Another argument of the proponents of sex before marriage is this: if you wait until marriage to have sex, then you will always desire more; better to get it out of your system before marriage than to do it after marriage.

This argument is so ridiculous. I would argue just the opposite. Sex can be addictive. I'm more worried about playboys settling down.

Take for example a man who hates to shop. He decides to go to Wal-Mart and gets himself some overalls. Let me ask you this question: how long do you think he will keep his clothes? Remember he doesn't have many clothes. Yet, you and I both know he probably will keep those overalls for many years.

On the other hand, a woman who loves to shop will buy some expensive clothes and add them to her dozens of outfits. How long do you think she will wear them? Not very long.

You see you don't have to try on many clothes before you will be satisfied with what you bought. My wife loves to shop. She will take hours trying on different dresses to see which one she

likes. Finally, she decides on a dress, only to take it back later. On the other hand, I try on one pair of shoes, it fits, and I take it home. I will wear those shoes out until my wife encourages me to get another pair.

Trying on different people does not make it less likely that you will want to keep the one you picked. Actually, chances are you will more likely become dissatisfied with the person you married, because you know what others are like, and you might start to reminisce about the other guys you slept with. But someone who knows only one person, does not have anyone else to compare him with, and is more likely to be satisfied with their "one and only".

Fornication or Adultery

Modern dating has failed the church. The fact is divorce is just as high among Christians as it is with the world. I believe a major contributing factor to divorce is fornication.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (Matthew 19:9, KJV)

Notice two words Jesus used: **fornication** and **adultery**. Jesus gave the cause of divorce as being **fornication**. The result will be that the person will **committeth adultery**. Fornication is sexual sins committed before marriage. Adultery is sexual sins committed during marriage. You rarely have adultery until you first have fornication. Jesus placed fornication as the cause for divorce. Adultery is not necessarily the cause for divorce. Adultery usually was preceded by fornication.

During Jesus day, a prospective bride swore to her virginity. If she said that she was a virgin but after marriage the husband

finds out she had lied, then according to Jesus and the Law of Moses, the husband could legitimately divorce her.

I know what you might be thinking, *The past is the past*. Yes, I believe that, but what if the person claimed virginity when she was not a virgin. Then the person could not be trusted, and thus, Jesus said it was all right to divorce her because lack of trust.

The main cause of divorce is not what is happening during marriage but what happened before marriage. How you live as a single person, will eventually show up in your marriage. If you are a fornicator before marriage, you will more likely be an adulterer during marriage. If you remain pure before marriage, you will more likely remain pure during marriage. A sexually pure person is better prepared for marriage than a fornicator would be.

I know God can forgive and transform us. Mary Magdalene in the Bible proved that. I am not predicting that you will have trouble in your marriage if you messed up before marriage. At the same time, I would be lying if I told you that how you live as a single person does not have any bearing on your marriage, because it does.

As the Church, we try so hard to work on marriages in trouble, when we should be working just as hard on relationships before marriage. We should expect purity before marriage, just as we would expect purity during marriage.

Dating simply sets the stage for sin. And worse, I feel dating is so expected and sometimes, encouraged by the church, family and Christian friends, that we wonder why people fail sexually, and later, get disappointed when they fail in their marriage.

I know Christian parents who allow their teenagers to date. The

world expects teenagers to date, so parents feel like they must go along with the world. Listen, unless a person is ready for marriage, they should not be placed in a position to perform the duties of marriage. We are not called to go along with the world. We are to be holy—pure and simple.

It is crazy for young fifteen, fourteen and even thirteen-year-old people to date and experience intimacy. Dating is serious business. Yet it is becoming the norm for this age group to have sex.

The Dating Game

Sex is serious. The Bible says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor 6:18, ASV). We are not to play near fornication, but **flee** it. Let's face it: dating as it is practiced today, does not agree with this scripture. When people date, they are not fleeing fornication; instead they are flirting with it. They are seeing how close they can get to sex without actually doing it. That's not fleeing.

The scriptures also says, "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute (fornicator) is one with her in body? For it is said, "'The two will become one flesh' (1 Cor 6:16)." Fornication is similar to the act of marriage. When you fornicate you are acting as though you are married. You are one flesh during sex.

"But I'm not married." I know. That is what makes sex before marriage so serious. One flesh union should be reserved for a husband and a wife, not your boyfriend or girlfriend.

Modern dating has taken something very serious that God has made and turning it into a game. You've seen the *Dating Game*, and that sums up dating: it has become a game.

Dating has become a recreational activity. Yet, God says it is serious. Sex is *not* like playing sports or games. It is not meant to entertain you. It is meant by God to draw together two people who are in love and who have committed to spend the rest of their lives together.

Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. (Philippians 1:9-10 The Message Bible)

Real love is **not sentimental gush**. I know guys will say anything to get sex from their girlfriends. They will even use the famous "I love you" line to get what they want. But real love is **sincere**. Does the guy really love her? Is he ready to take responsibility for a child that they might conceive? Love must be sincere. Love is not selfish. If a person really loves someone, then he will make sure not to do anything, which might hurt her.

Love is **intelligent**. I know we usually do not associate love with intelligence. Hollywood makes love emotional. But God makes love intelligent. Okay, so you feel something for this guy, but use your head, not your libido.

Courtship places intelligence as a premium to a relationship, but dating places emotions as the prime indicator of a relationship. Courtship understands *real* love.

Dating is basically selfish. Does love motivate the guy who sleeps with his girlfriend when it will scar her emotionally and damage her relationship with God? Does love motivate the girl who leads a guy along then breaks up with him when she finds someone better?

Smart love looks beyond personal desires and the gratification

of the moment. It looks at the big picture: glorifying God and serving others.

The Wrong Cart

Dating is not an essential part of the complete teenage experience. You can serve God better without it.

I can hear some people say, "Hey, Pastor, you are throwing out the baby with the bath water. The problem isn't dating. It is self-control." Give me a break.

How can we expect to exercise self-control if we constantly put ourselves in compromising situations? As I wrote earlier, my wife and I were virgins before we got married. That is not to say we were not tempted. We were. The only time we had to repent before God was when we placed ourselves in a position we should not have. We were alone in her parent's van. They let us borrow it. After eating dinner, we headed back to Sonia's house, only to make a detour into the woods. Mistake! We almost fell. That was the only time we placed ourselves in that kind of position.

I can imagine couples constantly placing themselves in compromising situations. Sooner or later, they will fall. I'm sure Sonia and I would have eventually succumbed to fornication if we had constantly placed ourselves in that kind of position. But we didn't.

The problem is not lack of self-control. It is buying into the whole modern idea of dating. We are expected to be alone. We are expected to say no, when there are no safeguards that are in place. I'm suggesting that we place the safeguards in place. The best safeguard is to teach and expect our members to practice courtship.

When you go to the grocery store, the most important thing to do is to get a good shopping cart. Not one that has wheels constantly spinning around. You may want to go straight down the aisle, but if you are not real careful, your cart will veer off course into a can of tomatoes. You didn't intend to hit the cans, but you started off with the wrong cart.

May I suggest that dating is the wrong cart to begin with? It just doesn't work. Courtship will work.