

## Dating With Purpose: Courtship

Jonathan Landis

4/9/06

God has awesome plans for each young person. He has a beautiful future in store for them that will walk in His ways.

### **Jeremiah 29:11 NIV**

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Unfortunately many people miss out on God's best, because they settle for less. God's standard is a standard of purity. I believe that with God's help, with the help of parents, and this church family each young person can and will continue to make the right choices and live for God. Young people need our support. They are in an intense battle that tries to steal their purity.

Today may be the hardest day to be a Christian teenager. The temptations are flaunted more openly. Today's music, TV, and most of all other people are throwing sex in front of our faces all the time. Even TV commercials about Dentyne Ice are selling sex. It's chewing gum!!! But no matter what the temptations I am fully convinced that there are those in this generation that are living purely and will continue to. There are also those in this generation that may be struggling with purity issues, but will make the right choice and change the direction of their relationships. There are even many teenagers in this community that do not know what purity is... they feel they can never be cleansed... **ASK but how many of you know that our God restores lives???**

He takes the battered and broken... the sinners, you and me. He cleans us up and makes us new.

### **2 Cor. 5:17 NIV**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

I believe however that God desires to keep people pure in the first place. God does repair broken vessels, and make things new, but God's desire is that teenagers would make the right choices and would remain pure until marriage. God wants the best for young people. **He wants to save them from the hurt and heartache that come with learning things the hard way.**

**Let me show you some stats:**

"Census data have revealed that about one out of every three children born in the U.S. these days is the child of an unwed mother." -Barna.org 3/6/06

That's a lot of baby's being born to mothers who have no committed father. Where is the commitment???

44% of American's ages 18-35 have lived with someone of the opposite sex during their single life. Barna.org

That's a lot of young Americans who have lived with someone without making a commitment. Where is the commitment???

37% of marriages ended in divorce in 04'. And if you think that the church has better stats... think again. 35% of evangelical Christian marriages today end in divorce. That's more than a third of marriages for Christians and atheists alike.

Why is it that so many American marriages end in divorce???

There are a lot of factors I'm sure. Perhaps a small amount of those divorces are unavoidable, but I think that a lot of it comes down to a lack of commitment.

### **Where does this lack of commitment come from???**

I believe that the dating culture of America is leading to a lot of these problems. A lot of what we call "dating" is practice for divorce. People get together, then break up, then get together with someone else... then break up. I'm not someone that will tell you dating is always wrong, because it's not in every situation. But dating the way our culture approaches it has gigantic flaws.

### **One of Those Flaws Is Dating Without Purpose:**

When people date without having a purpose for their relationship it is a recipe for failure.

#### **1 Evidence of Lack of Purpose: Dating Too Young**

Most people start dating way too young. There are a lot of kids now that are walking around with a boyfriend or girlfriend at 11 years old. WHY??? Do you think that an 11 year old is going to get married??? How about a 12 year old???? 14? 16? Maybe...

#### **2 Things usually happen when you date to young.**

1. You end up really liking each other. Naturally things progress and you want to take it to the next level, but you aren't old enough... you're not ready for marriage, so that leaves the door open to let down your purity, little by little. Eventually you give in to high emotions and raging hormones... and lose your innocence. Often youth fall into sin, and mess up their relationship with God, because they had no purpose or direction in the relationship. They started dating too young.

2. Eventually after you've spent some time dating. You become attached emotionally, and for one reason or another you break up.

There is a small chance that you can start dating at a young age, be very careful to keep yourselves pure, remain with that same

date until you are both ready and get married and live happily ever after... but it's very unlikely. How many years can a boyfriend and girlfriend continue to grow in love for each other, and never give in to physical attraction??? It can happen, but it is a rare thing that a couple dates from 12 or 14 all the way up until marriage.

The two common outcomes of dating too young are:

1. Giving In to Sin
2. Breaking Up With Each Other

What is too young??? It varies based on the person, but there is a good rule to follow. **If you are not ready to consider marriage, then you are not ready to date.**

Whether a couple is too young, or even if they are old enough to consider a serious relationship, a purposeless dating relationship is a recipe for heartache.

What happens when a person goes out with someone and breaks up with them?? Then goes out with someone else, and breaks up with them. Over and over and over again, they date many people without clear direction.

**Illustration:** Rose- Have one boy (or girl) hold the rose. Have many girls (or boys) come up and each take a peddle from the rose until all that is left is the stem.

Sometimes that's what people do with their hearts. They just keep dating and dating, and their heart is given away a piece at a time... until they're left with something shriveled up and hurting.

### **Proverbs 4:23 NIV**

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

The problem with America's dating is that it has a selfish foundation. People usually date to have a good time, or because it makes them feel good, instead of taking relationships seriously. Most dating relationships lack PURPOSE and COMMITMENT.

As Christians we should pursue romantic relationships very differently than the world does. The purpose of a member of the opposite sex is not simply to have a good time. We should take it seriously, because true love looks out for the good of others, and for God's perfect plan for us.

### **DATING GOD'S WAY (COURTSHIP)**

Courtship is a relationship intended to build toward a healthy marriage. It is like dating because it involves a man and a woman, but unlike dating, it is based on responsibility. Courtship is based on understanding COMMITMENT.

**1 Friendship First:** When people jump right into a romantic relationship they don't see the person as they really are. Our vision gets clouded by emotions, and we often refuse to see things in that person that would immediately set up a red flag when we're in our right mind. Get to know someone first as friends. Watch them in real life, dealing with real situations. Find out who that person is really like. Would you even consider spending your life with that person??? If not... go no further. If so, consider taking the next step only after carefully waiting and praying for God's direction.

**2. 4 GREENLIGHTS** (From Joshua Harris's "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" Pg. 212 and 213)

#### **1. Green Light #1: God's Word**

Based on scripture is marriage right for you and the person?

Example from Scripture:

**2 Cor. 6:14 NIVa**

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

Is that person a Christian? Is their faith strong? Is your family going to live for and serve God.

**2. Green Light #2: You're Ready for Marriage**

Are you really ready to be a husband or wife? Are you spiritually mature and emotionally stable? Are you ready financially?

**3. Green Light #3: The Approval and Support of Your Parents or Guardians, Christian Mentors, and Godly Christian Friends**

"If you think you're ready for marriage, but no one else who knows and loves you agrees, you should probably reconsider." Everyone may not agree, but you definitely want those Godly people you look up to in agreement. If someone you respects, who loves you, and loves God has reservations, take what they say seriously. Be open to Godly advice.

**4. Green Light #4: God's Peace**

**Col. 3:15 NIV**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Example: I actually ended a relationship and cancelled plans to go to a Technical School because I didn't have peace in my heart about it. At the time I was friends with Tara. Immediately after I cancelled my own plans... God began to show me His better plans. I have the amazing privilege of spending my life with Tara. She is

more than I could ever ask for. If I hadn't followed the peace of Christ in my heart I would have missed God's best for me.

### **3. Define the Purpose of the Relationship: Pursuing Marriage**

Don't take it lightly. When beginning a courtship, it has a clear purpose. The purpose is to find out: **Are we or aren't we right for each other???**

### **4. Guys: Honor Her Parents.**

You need to respect them and earn their trust... because they are the ones that are responsible for her now. They are the ones that have a right to give her to you for you to care for.

### **5. Build the Relationship in "Real Life Settings"**

This is where you seek to win each others hearts. You seek to build your relationship, and find out more about each other. You grow in love for each other, while at the same time keeping away from tempting situations. Look for chances to include each other in everyday things. What do you like to do???. Do it together. Hang out. Spend time. When you are both confident that you are ready for marriage, it's time to "pop the question."

### **6. Save the Physical Stuff for Marriage**

Physical purity isn't just "not having sex." It's a lot more than that. One thing leads to another when it comes to physical contact. We shouldn't "see how far we can go" and still keep from having sex. God wants us to set much higher standards.

Purity starts as a conviction of your heart. You believe that God called you to remain physically pure until marriage. Then it's important that you back up that belief by making choices constantly to avoid temptations.

Prayer: Lord Help us to make Godly choices in our relationships. We ask you that you would give the young people in this church

the strength and determination to live purely before You. We ask that you would help us as a church to continue to encourage Godly choices. I ask that you would give parents a special anointing to help their teens to set a standard and live it out. I ask that you would be glorified in all of our relationships, and that You would be the center of them. In Jesus name, Amen.