





Dating to Matrimony

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Foreword

Foundations for Living is a ten-unit elective for high school students, providing the biblical basis and historical development of the Christian worldview. Fundamental truths and principles from the Bible are used to apply the Christian worldview to a range of contemporary issues from family life to art, music, and politics.

Gathering all of a student's education into a unified whole, this course assists contemporary teenagers in recognizing the value of Christian truth. As teenagers discern the differences between Christian and non-Christian worldviews, they will be better equipped for their new adventures in life beyond high school.

Foundations for Living contains the following units. The specific unit you will be studying next is highlighted below.

Unit 1 – What Is a Biblical Worldview?

Unit 2 – Presuppositions

Unit 3 – The Doctrines of the Bible

Unit 4 – God's Creation

Unit 5 – The Family

Unit 6 – The Bible and Marriage

Unit 7 – Dating to Matrimony

Unit 8 – Christian Education

Unit 9 – Art, Music, and Politics

Unit 10 – Putting It All Together

NOTE: All vocabulary words appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used in the text. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the Glossary.

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Dating to Matrimony

Beginning in the mid- to late teens, a young person faces unfamiliar situations. These are the years of transition from childhood to adulthood. Before this time, a child may have few or no serious concerns. Days are spent attending school, playing, helping at home, eating, and sleeping, and include very few significant responsibilities. Serious circumstances that require maturity are left to the parents.

Adolescence brings entirely unfamiliar situations and experiences. These include concerns about the future, finances, changes in appearance, popularity, driving an automobile, and a host of other matters. Among the most significant of these new situations are relationships with the opposite sex. For the first time, the fact that a person is of the opposite sex becomes not only noticeable, but also of utmost significance. Beginning in the teenage years, relationships outside the family between males and females become much different than they have been previously. This change is part of God's plan. You should not consider it abnormal or inappropriate; however, it does bring with it new responsibilities and the need for a new level of maturity.

In this unit, we will examine the adjustments necessary for building good and proper relationships between young men and women. We will look specifically at the subjects of dating, courtship, and engagement. Each of these relationships requires significant adjustments in the attitudes and actions of everyone concerned.

The Worldviews Presented in this Unit



Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you should be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC®.

When you complete this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

- Be aware of some of the aspects of popular dating.
- Understand the differences between dating and courtship.
- Learn about the importance of preparing for Christian marriage.
- Discover the importance of the engagement period.

The Worldview Tree

Before you read your first section, we would like to introduce you to the “Worldview Tree,” a recurring visual metaphor that will unify and explain the entire curriculum. It teaches that our actions do not occur randomly; rather, they are the natural results of our beliefs and presuppositions. Therefore, what we believe and think truly does make a difference! This is how it works (see the opposite page for the chart).

The Worldview Tree illustrates how a **culture** develops within a particular **civilization**. This process begins in the soil with **presuppositions**, which move up a root system into the trunk of the tree. Once above ground, the **worldview** affects one’s perspectives on life and directs one’s choices. These choices manifest themselves in a variety of activities, which are repeated over time as an ongoing **heritage**, passed from one generation to the next.

There are four successive steps that lead to a developed culture. The first step is **believing**, followed by **thinking** (or, in the case of Postmodernism, **feeling**). The process moves to **seeing**, and this leads through choices to **doing**. These steps of human progress illustrate how internal ideas lead to external actions.

Each time a Worldview Tree is displayed, its structure remains essentially the same, while its content follows the information in each unit and is represented by the **roots** (boxes in the lower portion of the ground) and the **fruit** (which are located on or near the tree). This content demonstrates how a variety of topics all follow a similar path of development from foundational beliefs (roots) to behavior (fruit).

There are two basic worldviews, God’s and Man’s. **God’s Worldview** is depicted with bright green leaves and healthy red fruit. **Man’s Worldview** is depicted with dull brown leaves and decaying purple fruit. Within **Man’s Worldview**, there are two variations: a single tree represents a single worldview and multiple trees represent a plurality of sub-worldviews (as with Postmodernism, which will begin in Unit 4). Each Worldview Tree asks a thought-provoking question and provides space for your answer.

Historically, these two worldviews (God’s and Man’s) developed over four periods of time as depicted in the pullout chart and provide a picture of the ongoing differences between the Christian and non-Christian perspectives on the origin, history and destiny of humanity.

WORLDVIEW TREE LOCATIONS

Contemporary Christianity	38
Postmodernism	39

Believing



THINKING
FEELING

Civilization: Locations that display worldviews

Fruit: Resulting behavior



Culture: Activities that express a worldview

Roots: Foundational beliefs

Worldview: A comprehensive view of life

Presuppositions: Beliefs that develop a worldview

▶ **Seeing = Doing**

I. DATING vs. COURTSHIP



Recreational Dating, an American Pastime

In our society, dating is a type of socialization between a young man and a young woman. This practice cannot be found in Scripture. This approach, used for the purposes of boys and girls getting to know one another, building a relationship with one another, or maintaining a commitment to one another, is a modern American invention. Although dating is now common in other countries, especially those in Western civilization, it began in the United States. American servicemen who were serving in foreign countries were greatly responsible for the introduction of the concept of dating to other countries. To this day, many cultures have not adopted this practice.

In other countries, a variety of methods is used for matching a man and a woman for marriage. In some of these countries, the parents of the bride or the groom arrange the marriage. The couple to be married sometimes does not even see each other until the wedding

day. This is very common in Muslim countries. In other cultures, brides are actually bought for a price. This “price” is called “bridewealth,” and it may consist of land, livestock, or money, depending upon what the father of the prospective bride determines to be the appropriate value of the daughter he will “sell.” In some of the more primitive African tribes, a prospective groom has to work for the father of the bride for several years in order to earn her as his wife. We read of this type of arrangement in Genesis 29:16–28, when Jacob met Rachel’s father, Laban:

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give

her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

Obviously, such customs are very rare in our culture. There are two primary reasons for this. First, many of the countries where such customs are practiced are single-culture societies. These countries do not have the diversity in religion and politics that are found in the United States. In these countries, many of the matters determining compatibility are in place before any con-

sideration of marriage. It has already been established that both the man and the woman are of the same religion. These cultures have also clearly defined their roles of husband and wife. While in our culture dating is a means used to learn about one another's religion and roles, many cultures do not consider them necessary because possible variations in such matters simply do not exist.

Secondly, and closely related a previous point, is that in some of these cultures the matching of personalities is not considered essential. While we consider the personal interaction between husband and wife to be of utmost importance, some other cultures do not even consider it. While we consider our emotional and psychological needs when selecting a spouse, these cultures do not consider this as one of the essential elements in a marriage. While the husband and wife both have clear-cut responsibilities in the marriage, providing personal companionship is not necessarily one of those responsibilities.

Culture and society expect the husband to associate with other men for his emotional and/or intellectual companionship; the wife associates with other women to meet that need for herself. In some cultures, society does not consider the needs of women at all. It is expected that a woman's fulfillment will come strictly from bearing children and serving her husband.



Answer the following questions.

- 1.1 Define adolescence: _____

- 1.2 What is one of the most significant new situations during adolescence?

- 1.3 What are some of the reasons young people date? _____

- 1.4 How did other countries learn about the American custom of dating? _____

1.5 What are some practices that are used by other cultures to match a husband and wife? _____

1.6 What did Jacob have to do in order to have Rachel as his wife? _____

1.7 What are some of the differences between our culture and those where dating is not practiced?

As addressed in Unit 6, there are many factors in our culture that determine the compatibility necessary for a successful Christian family. We recognize that the psychological satisfaction of each partner is an important factor that often contributes to the success or failure of a marriage. Because of the great diversity in our culture, it is important that a young couple have the opportunity to get to know one another in order to determine their compatibility. However, is our popular system of dating the best way to accomplish this? A more important question is, “Does our popular system of dating comply with scriptural instructions concerning the relationship between men and women?”

The truth of Scripture never changes; however, the application of the truth may vary from culture to culture. This is an important principle and one that presents us with some challenges as we attempt to be faithful to God’s teachings within our particular culture. It has been approximately two thousand years since the Bible was completed, and many things have changed during those years. We have seen some of the greatest changes in the structure of the family and the relationship between young men and women.

During biblical times, boys and girls were often married just after reaching **puberty**. This means that marriages sometimes took place during a young person’s early or mid-teens. The logic was simply that after puberty, one was able to conceive children, and this was the primary factor in determining if one was ready for marriage. However, people also recognized that these young people had much to learn about being responsi-

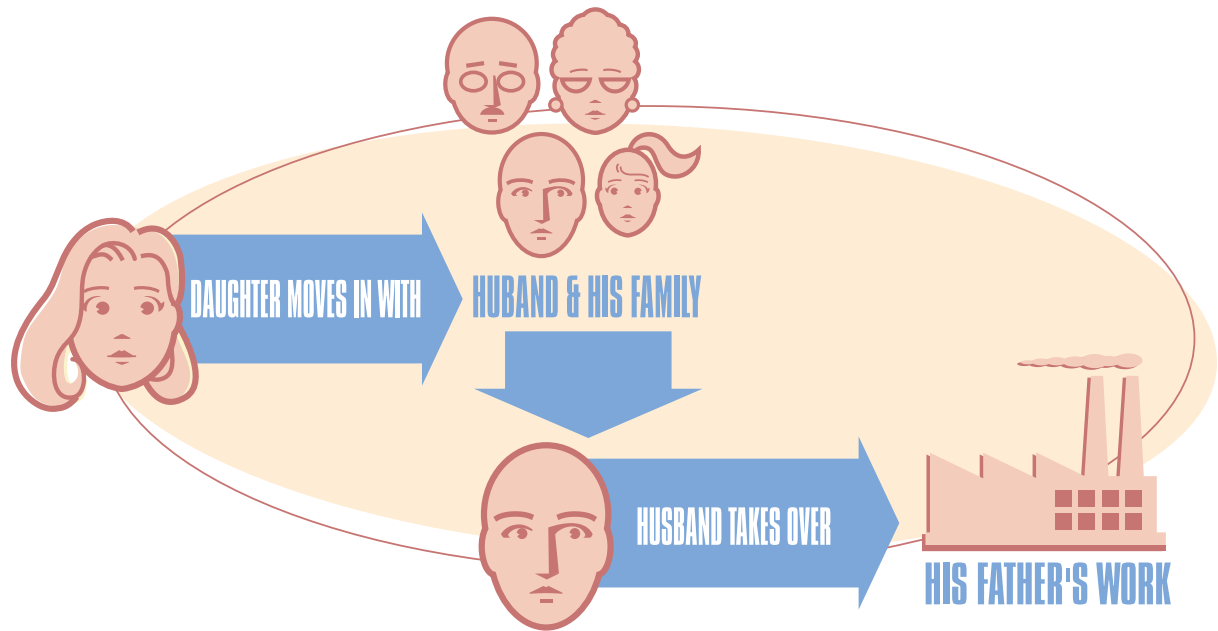
ble adults. In our culture, this recognition is what keeps young people from getting married even though they have reached puberty.

In ancient times, it was possible for married young people to continue to learn and become mature adults because of the family and economic structure of that culture. A family supported itself through a family business that the father managed. If the father was a farmer, herdsman, carpenter, or merchant, his son was expected to learn the family business and one day take his father’s place as head of the business.

When a teenage boy and girl married, the household of the groom received the bride into the family—she became part of her new husband’s family. The young couple continued to live in the home of the boy’s family. There, the father would train the boy to manage the family business, while the young bride would receive training from the boy’s mother concerning her role as a wife and mother.

Over a period of years, the roles would gradually change. As the young couple matured, they would assume greater responsibilities in both the home and the family business. When the boy’s father and mother grew older, the son and his wife would take over his parents’ responsibilities and care for them. Upon the father’s death, the son would become the head of the family and the business.

This system provided security for the young married couple as well as the aging parents. The young couple knew they would be trained and cared for dur-



In ancient cultures, marriage perpetuated the family's identity

ing their early years of marriage, and the elderly parents knew that they would, in turn, be cared for when they grew too old to provide their own living. A young couple marrying and immediately moving out to start a family was not a normal part of that culture. If this took place at all, it would likely have been the act of a rebellious young couple.

This has radically changed in our culture. Now it is normal for a married couple to leave the homes of their parents and begin their own lives. Couples are not expected to get married simply because they have reached puberty, but when they have reached a maturity level where they can “make it on their own.” Family businesses are rare, and even where they do exist, there is no guarantee that the children will one day operate them.

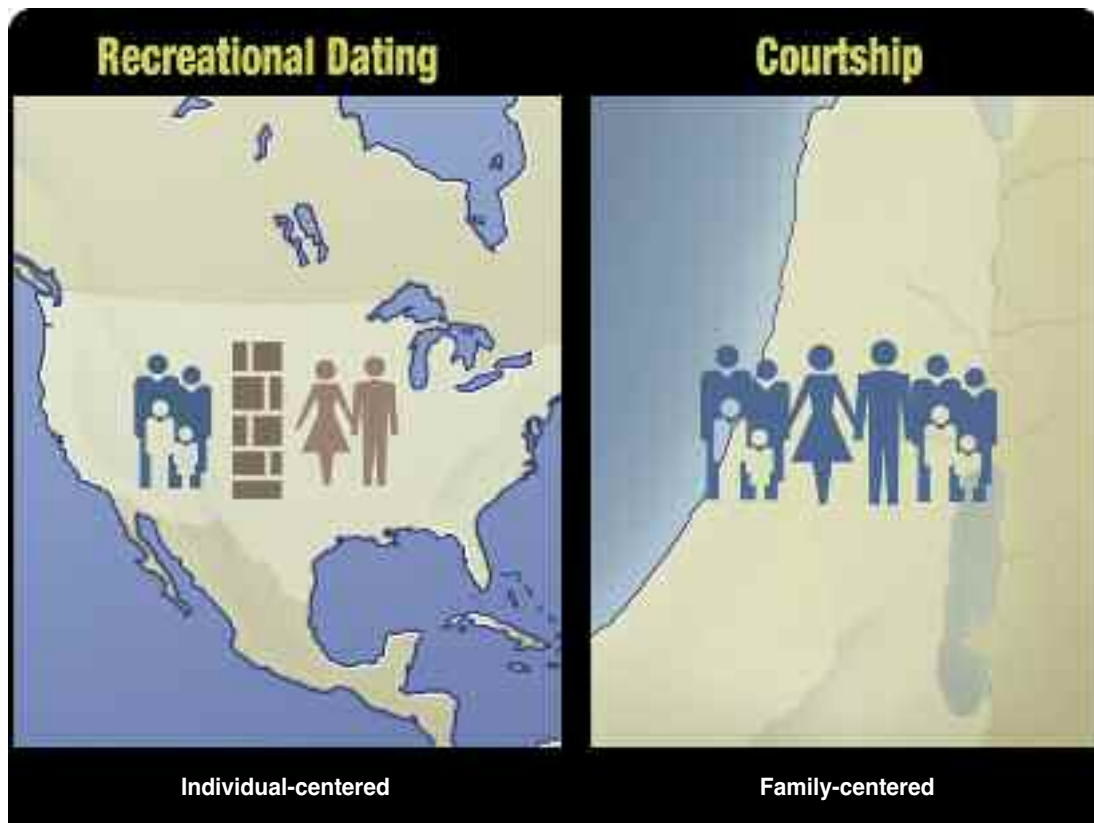
Advanced education should also be a factor to consider before getting married. It is a goal of most parents to see their children graduate from high school. This typically takes place around age eighteen. Most young people are not ready for marriage until this minimal educational requirement is completed. Without at least a high school diploma, it is very difficult to find gainful employment; without the ability to support a family, young people are not ready to get married.

In recent years, many have elevated this requirement to graduating from a college or other institution

of higher learning. For many young people, it is now a goal to complete at least four years of college before marriage, because someone with more education can find better employment. Since most young people are no longer taught a business or craft by the husband's family, they are expected to complete school in order to learn how to provide for themselves. This is because part of being ready for marriage is being able to “go out on your own.”

Because of these and many more changes in our culture, young people need a period of time to get to know one another. Once they are married, society and family consider them to be on their own; therefore, a young couple must be as certain as possible that they have married the right person. The system used by most young people in this country is dating. The theory is that it is necessary for young people to have the opportunity to test their personalities with many different people in order to determine with whom they will be happiest.

As a trial and error system, however, dating frequently brings about negative results. Dating has also become so commonplace in our culture, that the original intent of finding a possible marriage partner is often not even part of the equation. Dating has become a part of the recreational life of young people rather than a practice with long-term goals in mind.



Recreational dating is random dating where partners choose each other without any thoughts of emotional involvement. The primary purpose is recreation—play, fun, and good times. This type of dating often begins as early as junior high school and may continue through college. In our culture, such dating is often unsupervised by adults. Young people are simply to learn as they go—by trial and error.

Dating often determines a young person’s social status among his/her peers. If one does not have a dating partner, he or she feels left out of many social activities and may not fit in with the popular crowd. In addition, the popularity of one’s dating partner often determines a person’s social status. The more physically attractive or popular one’s partner, the higher he or she is on the social ladder. If one is not dating, or is dating someone whom others consider unattractive or unacceptable, he or she may not feel welcome in certain social circles. Often this causes great insecurities among young people. Those who may not even want to date may feel compelled to do so because of these expectations.

The argument in favor of dating is that it allows young people to meet members of the opposite sex in order to determine their compatibility. It is assumed that such “trial and error” relationships will help young

people discover with whom they feel most comfortable, as well as help them learn more about themselves. Dating a variety of people may certainly accomplish this, but the premise is based upon the false theory that “the end justifies the means.” We want to discover with whom we are comfortable, and we want to learn more about ourselves, but that does not mean dating is the best or the only way to accomplish this.

Fire is extremely hot, and extreme heat will cause pain as well as damage to our skin tissue. Anyone able to read this statement already knows this is true. Some readers know it by experience—they have been burned by fire. However, other readers know it without such a hard lesson. Others have learned this, not through having been burned, but by learning about the properties of fire and heat.

Imagine a parent holding a child’s hand over a fire and justifying such action by arguing that the child had to learn that fire is hot. The child would certainly learn that truth, but that does not justify what the parent did. It is a parent’s duty to teach a child; it is also a parent’s duty to use the best method to teach. We want to find out with whom we are compatible, and we want to learn more about ourselves, but we want to learn these things in the best possible way—not in a way which might cause us much harm.

Another problem with an argument in favor of dating is the assumption that everyone who dates is doing so in order to find a compatible person to marry one day. If this were a valid reason for dating, the argument may have a somewhat stronger basis, but we know that reason is rare among most young people.

Modern dating is primarily for recreational purposes. Young people date because it is the norm. Its primary purposes are having fun and fitting in. In order for a conclusion to be valid, its premise must also be valid. The conclusion that dating is the means by which we find a compatible spouse is not valid because none of its premises are valid. This does not imply that if one dates, he or she will never find a compatible spouse, but simply that dating does not guarantee the finding of a spouse. In addition, the finding of a spouse is seldom the primary purpose of young people who date.

We have looked at what seem to be two extremes: (1) the marriage of young couples barely past puberty, as in biblical times, and (2) the modern practice of recreational dating. The first seems particularly odd because it is so different from what is considered normal in our culture. It has also become impractical—adolescents in our culture are not mature enough to be married, nor are they able to provide an adequate living for themselves. However, does this mean we have no choice but the second option?

The answer to the above question is no. To answer yes would be saying that in this matter Scripture has no practical solution. Scripture does have practical solu-

tions for every area of life, including the relationship between young men and women.

Let us approach this subject from a different angle. If someone were to ask, “Can you justify the modern practice of dating from Scripture?” we would have to answer no. Neither the Old nor New Testaments present us with a **precedent** for dating. A precedent is an act or instance capable of being used as a guide or standard in evaluating future actions. Biblical precedents are valuable in determining what actions we should take. We can search Scripture in order to determine whether God supports a particular course of action. In the matter of dating, can we find it practiced by God’s people in Scripture? Again, the answer is no. We find no biblical precedent to support the modern custom of dating.

If we profess Scripture to be God’s revealed Word for faith and practice, we should be able to refer to it in support of all we do. Because our culture is so different from the culture of two thousand years ago, it may be difficult to find specific verses to support some of the activities we are involved in today. However, we ought to be able to conduct all our activities in a manner that demonstrates obedience to the principles of God’s Word.

The Bible speaks of actions, but it also addresses attitudes. Does the modern practice of dating exemplify scriptural principles concerning the relationship between young unmarried couples? We will attempt to answer this question.



Answer true or false for the following statements.

- 1.8 _____ The psychological satisfaction of each married partner is an important factor in the success or failure of a marriage.
- 1.9 _____ Young people need the opportunity to get to know one another in order to determine their compatibility.
- 1.10 _____ The truth of Scripture varies from culture to culture.
- 1.11 _____ Marriage during biblical times often took place shortly after puberty.
- 1.12 _____ During biblical times, young couples continued after marriage to learn how to become mature adults.
- 1.13 _____ During biblical times, the young groom usually moved into the household of the bride’s family.

- I.14 _____ During biblical times, a young married couple moved out of their parent’s homes and began their own families.
- I.15 _____ In our culture, many do not consider young people ready for marriage until they have completed their formal education.
- I.16 _____ Dating is the system used by most young people today to get to know one another.
- I.17 _____ Modern dating is a foolproof system for finding a future marriage partner.
- I.18 _____ In our culture, the only purpose young people date is to find one’s future marriage partner.
- I.19 _____ Dating is often an important factor in determining a young person’s social status.
- I.20 _____ Not having someone to date causes some young people to be insecure.
- I.21 _____ Dating is the only way we can find out whether or not we are comfortable with someone of the opposite sex.
- I.22 _____ In order to learn that fire is hot, one must touch it.
- I.23 _____ It is a parent’s duty to use the best possible methods to teach a child.
- I.24 _____ Scripture has practical solutions for every area of life.
- I.25 _____ Biblical precedents are valuable in determining our proper course of action.
- I.26 _____ We should be able to use scriptural principles to support all our actions.
- I.27 _____ The Bible addresses actions, but not attitudes.


Negative Tendencies in Dating



The Bible addresses not only our actions, but also our attitudes; it tells us how we should act, as well as how we should be. As we have already learned, being created in the “image and likeness of God” means that we are to reflect or demonstrate the attributes of God. These include, but are not limited to, attributes such as love, holiness, righteousness, and faithfulness. Our actions are the result of what is in our heart. In other words, one who is holy performs acts of holiness; one

who is faithful performs acts of faithfulness. Whether we make the choice to date or not, we must be conscious of the dangers this practice has in relationship to our actions and attitudes.

Following are seven negative tendencies that dating can produce. These are adapted from Joshua Harris’ book entitled *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (1997, Multnomah Publishers, Inc., Sisters, OR).

 ***Dating leads to intimacy, but not necessarily to commitment.*** Harris points out the emotional and physical harm that can result when young people make themselves emotionally and physically vulnerable, and later discover that one or both of them were not ready for a serious commitment. He points out that modern dating has developed into a “product of our entertainment-driven, ‘disposable-everything’ American culture.” Harris also informs his readers that “intimacy without commitment awakens desires—emotional and physical—that neither person can justly meet.”



Dating tends to skip the “friendship” stage of a relationship.

Here Harris discusses the tendency for dating to interfere with developing friendships rather than promoting such relationships. His argument is that, even though one may ask another on a date strictly to build a friendship, the one asked out typically considers dating to be a practice that encourages romantic expectations. Often if couples initially date with intentions of developing a friendship, eventually one or both develop different expectations.



Dating often mistakes a physical relationship for love.

Harris’ concern in this point is about “the early introduction of physical affection” between two young people. Although both may not intend their relationship to lead to inappropriate physical contact, dating often places the couple in situations where temptation may be too difficult to resist. Because of their attraction for one another, young people often mistake their feelings for true love. In today’s culture, love and sex are often indistinguishable. In movies and television, unmarried couples that do not intend to marry often participate in sexual activities. Society and the entertainment industry portray such relationships as being normal and acceptable.



Dating often isolates a couple from other vital relationships.

Young couples often feel they have no need for relationships with others; they become totally focused on one another. When one of them desires to form friendships with other young people, jealousy results. The couple expects one another to be very devoted to the dating relationship.



Dating, in many cases, distracts young adults from their primary responsibility of preparing for the future.

A common situation is one where a young person has always planned to attend a particular college after graduation from high school. During their junior or senior year, they meet someone and begin to date. Going away to college would mean breaking off the relationship. Too often such a situation causes a young person to become confused about his or her goals, and thus change his or her plans for the future. Harris also points out that “maintaining a relationship takes a lot of time and energy.” Studies, work, and plans for accomplishing future goals are often set aside in order to maintain the relationship. Often, after the dating relationship discontinues, young people realize that they have lost much time that they could have used more productively.



Dating can cause discontentment with God’s gift of singleness.

Harris points out that “God gives us singleness—a season of our lives unmatched in its boundless opportunities for growth, learning, and service—and we view it as a chance to get bogged down in finding and keeping boyfriends and girlfriends.” Sadly, many young men and women consider themselves incomplete unless they have someone they can call their boyfriend or girlfriend. Rather than enjoy the time God has given them as singles, they experience feelings of discontentment because they are not involved in a dating relationship. God wants us to be content in whatever situation He places us. The pressure to have someone we can say is “ours” can keep us from realizing what wonderful gifts God has for us, even when we are alone.



Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating another person’s character.

While dating, young men and women put on their most charming personalities. They look their best and act their best, wanting to make a good impression on the person they are dating. There is pressure to drive a nice car, wear nice clothes, be popular in school, have a great personality, and “be a lot of fun.” However, none of these traits really tells us the true character of a person. According to Harris, couples “need a strong dose of objective reality! They need to see each other in the real-life settings of family and friends.”

In *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, Joshua Harris displays a profound understanding of the modern dating scene. He writes out of personal experience, situations he has witnessed among his peers, and principles presented by Scripture.

As we have stated, Christians should exemplify traits such as love, holiness, righteousness, and faithfulness. Though one’s intentions to demonstrate such characteristics may be good at an early age, such traits require certain maturity. Christian young people may desire to maintain godliness in all situations, including their relationships with those of the opposite sex; however, they may lack the maturity to carry out those desires. Scripture tells us that we should do our best to avoid temptation. When Jesus taught His disciples the Lord’s Prayer, He included the line, “and lead us not into temptation.” The more we avoid temptation, the less we fall into it.

It is an indisputable fact that dating places young couples in situations that include

numerous temptations. Dating creates many situations that could cause them to stumble into behavior they will regret later. Among such temptations are those that involve inappropriate sexual contact. We cannot deny that a young couple that spends much time alone together is going to face many more tempting situations than those who are not alone. However, this is not the only compromising situation that arises in a dating relationship. Sins such as jealousy, discontent, and the failure

to be actively involved in doing God's will are among the many other temptations faced by dating couples.

The Bible is not simply a book of rules and regulations. It is not God's purpose to forbid life's enjoyable things. The opposite is true. God's Word does not take away our "good life;" instead, it points the way toward something far better. God does not take away—He replaces. He replaces the bad with the good, the worldly with the heavenly, and the old with the new.



Fill in the blanks in the following statements.

- I.28 The Bible addresses not only our _____, but also our attitudes; it tell us how we should _____, as well as how we should _____.
- I.29 Christians are to reflect or demonstrate the _____ of God.
- I.30 Dating leads to _____ but not necessarily _____.
- I.31 Intimacy without commitment awakens _____.
- I.32 Dating is a practice that usually encourages _____ expectations.
- I.33 In today's culture, _____ and _____ are often indistinguishable.
- I.34 When a couple dates, each one often becomes totally _____ on the other.
- I.35 Maintaining a relationship takes a lot of _____ and _____.
- I.36 God gives us _____—a season of our lives unmatched in its boundless opportunities for _____, _____, and _____.
- I.37 Rather than enjoying the time of singleness God has given them, young people often experience feelings of _____ when they are not involved in a dating relationship.
- I.38 Dating creates a(n) _____ environment for evaluating another person's character.
- I.39 Couples need to see each other in the real-life settings of _____ and _____.



Answer true or false for the following statements.

- I.40 _____ A certain level of maturity is necessary to exemplify godly traits.
- I.41 _____ Jesus taught His disciples to pray that they not be led into temptation.
- I.42 _____ Dating does not place young people in situations that include numerous temptations.
- I.43 _____ Dating can cause young people to face several compromising situations.
- I.44 _____ The main purpose of the Bible is to present us with rules and regulations.
- I.45 _____ God's Word points the way toward a better life.

Courtship, a Relationship with a Godly Purpose

If recreational dating is not the best practice for young Christians, what is? How do young Christian couples get to know one another? How do they meet and get to know someone they may one day marry? If not dating...what?

In order to answer that question, we must first consider what sort of relationships God would have us develop. In Scripture, we find several kinds of relationships that include interactions between males and females. We read of the relationship between children and their parents, friends, church members, **betrothed** couples, and married couples. According to the Bible, these relationships involving people of the opposite sex are the only ones we may consider appropriate. Some other relationships addressed in Scripture are considered improper and even immoral.

There is simply no biblical precedent for the modern practice of dating; therefore, it is important that young people learn to adopt a Christian attitude on proper biblical relationships rather than focusing their attention and energies on dating. The word *betrothed* is a legal term signifying a type of engagement. When a woman was betrothed to a man, she was legally his for the purpose of marriage.

The first relationship young people experience is the relationship they have with their parents. Their primary objective in this relationship is to honor their father and mother. This objective is not to be neglected simply because they have become a teenager. Dating is a practice that may lead toward sneaky and/or dishonest behavior. Arguments between parents and their children may arise concerning the age at which one may begin dating, or whom parents allow their children to date. Dating also causes disagreements about curfew times or what sorts of activities are allowed.

At times, young people are dishonest about whom they are with, where they have been, and in what activities they have been involved. Even parents who wish to be trusting become anxious or suspicious once their children begin dating. Parents often spend many late hours hoping that their children are safe and not involved in some sort of inappropriate behavior.

In an effort to avoid confrontations, teenagers are sometimes tempted to lie about their activities. Dating becomes the grounds upon which many young people

attempt to prove their independence from their parents. Rather than desiring to honor their parents, they turn their attention to breaking away from their parents' authority. Instead of understanding their parents' concerns, they interpret parents' questions as an infringement on their newfound independence. When examining what sort of relationship a young couple develops, a primary consideration must be whether the relationship honors their parents.



Honoring parents is a lifelong process

Young people can learn much about themselves, as well as others, by developing friendships. Rather than looking at someone of the opposite sex as a possible date, adolescence can be a great time to nurture friendships with many people. When friendship, rather than dating, is the focus, there is much less pressure. People who desire to become friends are also more honest and transparent with one another. They discover one another's interests, tastes, likes, and dislikes because they are not under the pressure of trying to impress each other.

A sincere friendship without the competition, jealousies, rejection, and other



Courtship encourages the maintenance of quality relationships

emotional complications of dating can fulfill many needs experienced by young people—needs such as companionship and acceptance. During friendship, young people will discover what they have in common. They can enjoy fun and fulfilling relationships with one another without experiencing many of the heartbreaking emotions.

As we have previously mentioned, a key element in the life of any Christian is contentment. We are to be content in whatever situation God places us. Too often people believe they can find contentment if they achieve something else first. For some it is a lot of money, the right job, or the opportunity of living in the right location. Regretfully, many young people believe they would be content if they had someone to date. Later, they often realize that dating provides some temporary satisfaction, but eventually it leads to even more discontentment.

As Christians, we must learn to be content with what God has for us at any time, no matter what our situation. True contentment does not come from what we own, how we feel, or even whether or not we are dating someone. It exists in a sincere relationship with Jesus Christ. In such a relationship, we find true acceptance and security. With Christ, we understand that we are never alone and that He always loves us.

It is inevitable that young people will eventually become attracted to one another in a manner beyond friendship. This is both natural and good if handled in a way that does not deter us from being the kind of peo-

ple God wants us to be. After all, God placed within us the attraction for someone of the opposite sex. When this takes place, there are several points to consider. First, we must ask ourselves the reason for this attraction. Often the attraction is strictly physical—a boy finds a girl physically attractive or vice-versa. Although such attraction may be strong, one must realize that not much can be learned about a person from their appearance alone.

Before acting strictly on physical appearance, one must attempt to discover what that other person is really like. For Christians, it is especially important that we know whether or not someone is a believer, and if so, the depth of that relationship with Christ. Beyond this consideration are the other matters of compatibility that we have previously addressed.

Secondly, young people must realistically consider their age and level of maturity. For example, a fourteen-year-old boy who finds a thirteen-year-old girl attractive must be aware of their ages and realize their relationship with one another is not to be on the same level as the relationship between two young people in their late teens or early twenties. This point is especially difficult to convey, because people normally do not consider themselves to be immature, except in retrospect. In other words, it is not until we are older that we realize how immature we were when we were younger.

A good, open bond between young people and their parents is of utmost importance in making decisions

concerning the type of relationship that is appropriate. God has given parents the responsibility to “train up their children.” Children who honor their parents will respect the responsibility their parents have and will depend on them to provide good counsel.

It should not be at all unusual or awkward for a teenage boy to say to his father, “Dad, there’s a really cute girl at school, and I think I like her. What should I do?” When such communication does not take place between parents and their children, the children will seek out advice from other sources—sources which do not necessarily have their best interests in mind and who lack the maturity necessary to make wise decisions. Nevertheless, even without such advice, a young

Christian person must always maintain relationships that Christ considers decent and appropriate.

The best way to maintain **propriety** in a relationship between a boy and girl is in the presence of Christian company. Group activities, such as youth group and family functions, will help young people maintain an appropriate relationship. Such activities also place young people in environments where others can truly get to know them. In such surroundings, one does not feel compelled to put on facades in order to impress one’s date. Young people are more likely to be themselves around their families and groups of friends with whom they are comfortable.



Answer the following questions.

- 1.46 What are some of the relationships between members of the opposite sex that are addressed in Scripture? _____

- 1.47 What is betrothal? _____

- 1.48 What is the first relationship young people experience? _____

- 1.49 What is the primary objective of young people in this relationship? _____

- 1.50 What are some possible negative results of dating? _____

- 1.51 What sort of relationship, other than dating, produces much less pressure? _____

- 1.52 When a Christian is considering a prospective spouse, what is a key element that must be true of that other person?

- 1.53 What is one of the best ways to maintain propriety in a relationship between a boy and girl?



Review the material in this section to prepare for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your understanding of this section. Any items you miss on this test will show you what areas you need to restudy.

SELF TEST 1

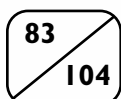
Answer true or false for the following statements (each answer, 2 points).

- I.01 _____ The transition from childhood to adulthood brings about unfamiliar situations.
- I.02 _____ It is inappropriate for a Christian to find someone of the opposite sex attractive.
- I.03 _____ We can find the practice of dating in both the Old and New Testaments.
- I.04 _____ The modern practice of dating began in the United States.
- I.05 _____ In some countries, men purchase brides for a price.
- I.06 _____ The emotional and psychological needs of a spouse are not taken into consideration in some cultures.
- I.07 _____ Young people who are dating should get to know one another in order to determine their compatibility.
- I.08 _____ The truth of Scripture changes from culture to culture.
- I.09 _____ During biblical times, young couples often married shortly after puberty.
- I.010 _____ During biblical times, the groom usually moved into the household of his bride.
- I.011 _____ In our culture, young married couples are expected to make it on their own.
- I.012 _____ Dating is necessary so that young people can test their personalities with as many different people as possible.
- I.013 _____ A young person's social status among his/her peers is often determined by who he/she dates.
- I.014 _____ If we profess Scripture to be God's revealed Word for faith and practice, we should be able to refer to the Bible to support our actions.
- I.015 _____ The Bible addresses our actions, not our attitudes.
- I.016 _____ Dating may cause young people to find themselves in situations with temptations that are difficult to resist.
- I.017 _____ It is God's purpose to take away enjoyable things in life so that we will love Him.
- I.018 _____ Dating sometimes becomes the grounds upon which young people attempt to prove their independence from their parents.
- I.019 _____ In order to be content, we should strive to get what we want.
- I.020 _____ God places within us the capability to be attracted to someone of the opposite sex.
- I.021 _____ We can discover what a person is really like by their physical appearance.
- I.022 _____ Except in retrospect, people do not normally consider themselves immature.
- I.023 _____ When children do not communicate with their parents, they often seek counsel from other sources.

- I.024 _____ The best way to maintain propriety in a relationship between a boy and girl is to pray together when they are alone.
- I.025 _____ Young people are more likely to be themselves around their families and groups of friends with whom they are comfortable.
- I.026 _____ In some countries, bridewealth is the payment price for a wife.
- I.027 _____ Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rebekah.
- I.028 _____ During biblical times, after marriage young people continued to learn what was necessary to become mature adults.
- I.029 _____ A couple's educational background may affect their compatibility.
- I.030 _____ It is a parent's duty to teach a child using the best possible methods.
- I.031 _____ Everyone who dates is seeking a compatible person to marry.
- I.032 _____ Scripture gives many precedents supporting the modern system of dating.
- I.033 _____ Dating tends to skip the friendship stage of a relationship.
- I.034 _____ Dating may place young couples in situations that cause them numerous temptations.

Underline the correct word in the following sentences (each answer, 4 points).

- I.035 The time of development from childhood to adulthood is known as (**adolescence, maturity, notoriety**).
- I.036 Dating was brought to foreign countries by American (**salesmen, missionaries, servicemen**).
- I.037 Before marriage, young people must realistically consider their age and (**position in society, taste, maturity**).
- I.038 A (**prophecy, precedent, revelation**) is an act or instance capable of being used as a guide or standard in evaluating future actions.
- I.039 The Bible addresses our (**opinions, preferences, attitudes**) as well as our actions.
- I.040 Joshua Harris' book is titled *I Kissed Dating* (**Hello, On the Lips, Goodbye**).
- I.041 Dating leads to (**marriage, intimacy, friendship**), not necessarily to commitment.
- I.042 Dating often mistakes a/an (**spiritual, intellectual, physical**) relationship for love.
- I.043 Dating can cause discontentment with God's gift of (**singleness, grace, marriage**).



Adult Check

Score

Initial

Date