

Dear Guys: A New Way to Date

Pre-emptive

I wrote the original “Dear Guys” blog post for a few reasons. It has become exceedingly often that I see my friends, both in and out of the church, jumping from relationship to relationship, many of whom aren’t even old enough to get married.

Then, when I read the Bible, I see that the way we view dating doesn’t really line up with what the Bible has to say. How has dating become simply recreational? I mean, why else do most young adults date? To have fun or to fit in, right? I could be wrong.

Man-Made

In the beginning (yes, I’m quoting Genesis), God created man. God then recognized that it was not good for man to be alone. We can all agree on that one, I think. No one likes being alone. It’s no fun—but what did He do about it?

He created marriage. He didn’t create dating, He didn’t create courting. He created marriage.

So, where did dating come from? Well, not the Bible. Dating is never mentioned in the Bible, not once. Simply because we created it, it’s man-made.

No, I’m not saying that dating is a sin or that dating is evil. That’s not what this is about. What I am saying is that if we look to the Bible for specific answers on dating, we’re not going to find them. That’s not a problem, though, because the Bible has a lot to say about marriage, and when we figure out why God created marriage, we will figure out a lot about dating in return.

Believe it or not, God designed marriage to display His love.

Marriage allows us to encounter and experience the love of Jesus more than any other thing in the world. It is deeply spiritual and deeply biblical. It is designed by God to point us to God.

How does marriage display Jesus' love? Let's see what the Bible has to say (I told you I would be pointing us back to the Bible a lot):

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Eph. 5:22-33).

Let me paraphrase that: Jesus married the church (Christians, you and me). The church is His literal bride. He laid His life down for the church. Husbands should love their wives in the same way that Jesus loved the church, and vice versa. Marriage was designed to display the love that Jesus has for the

church. It's the closest thing to experiencing the kind of love that He has for us—a sacrificing love, a serving love, a selfless love.

You know what that tells me? Marriage isn't really about us; it's about God. Why else would God create marriage? I mean, God knows that it's still possible for us to love one another and reproduce with one another outside of marriage, but He designed marriage for something more than that. He designed marriage to reveal to us who He is.

Simply a Gateway

Knowing that marriage is deeply spiritual and deeply biblical helps me out a lot. It tells me that marriage isn't designed to make us happy; it's designed to make us holy. And since God didn't create dating, we did, it doesn't really model Jesus' love like marriage does, and it doesn't really provide any of the things that the gift of marriage does either.

When we figure out what marriage is biblically, we figure out what dating is biblically as well. What is that exactly? It's a gateway to marriage. Dating is simply a gateway to marriage. When dating is anything more or less than that, it becomes a shallow attempt to provide for us what only marriage was designed to provide for us.

That's really the foundation that I wanted to lay out for my book: Dating is *only* a gateway to marriage, a precursor to marriage, a preemptive to marriage, and if it is anything other than that, it's not biblical. Dating wasn't created to replace marriage. Dating wasn't created to gain experience at marriage. Dating was created to be a road that *ends* in marriage.

"Dating with no intent to marry is like going to the grocery store with no money. You either leave unhappy or take something that isn't yours."

Cole Ryan is an up-and-coming Christian writer. You can find him on his blog () or on Twitter (@KingCohl) just about any time of the day. The preceding is the first chapter of his new eBook, Dear Guys: A New Way To Date, available now for just 99¢ wherever eBooks are sold.