

**Articles and Sermons :: Article for single (unmarried) Christians****Article for single (unmarried) Christians - posted by Giggles (), on: 2011/5/21 22:54**

Christian boy meets Christian girl

Christians are not like the world when it comes to dating and courtship. But in-depth interviews reveal a lot of confusion and anxiety among God's young men and women when it comes to forming relationships and finding a spouse

by Susan Olasky

'How do you meet guys?'

I ask a class of students in a figure drawing class at Parsons The New School for Design near Manhattan's Union Square. "In your classes?" The students, would-be artists and fashion designers who come from all over the world, laugh. In a school where nearly 80 percent of the students are female and many men are gay, their prospects are few. So they meet random men in Union Square or at Max Brenner's chocolate emporium. They start talking. They exchange phone numbers, a crucial step in what comes next, "digital flirting." They "text and text for weeks," liberated by the sense of remove that texting allows: "You're talking, but not really."

Many Christian students also prefer texting to face-to-face talking. But in 40 hours of comparing the boy-meets-girl ideas of secular students at Parsons and serious Christian ones in Alabama, Texas, New York City, and Virginia, I found a huge difference between the two groups. That difference is both comforting and confusing.

The classroom at Parsons has large windows along one wall to let in natural light. Easels around the room's perimeter allow the students various perspectives on the model who poses on a raised platform in the center. During a break from drawing, the students gather around the platform to answer questions about dating and marriage. The students come from all over—California, Costa Rica, Colombia, South Africa, Turkey, Russia, Bhutan, New York.

They embody the stereotype of a younger generation that sees nothing wrong with "hooking up" or cohabiting before marriage. Skeptical about the possibility of lifelong love, they readily list downsides to marriage. A few admit that they would like to marry—for friendship, to ward off loneliness, and for support—but even they see marriage as constricting, depriving them of freedom and the ability to focus on their careers.

Moving to New York expanded their opportunities: two Latina students, one from Colombia and the other from Costa Rica, both said they'd be married if they had stayed home. A 19-year-old from South Africa said, "I don't believe in marriage at all. . . . If your family is attached to the ritual and ceremony you'll want to do it," but otherwise "we don't think it's necessary." Her family agrees. Her dad has lived with his girlfriend for 16 years.

In general these students don't associate marriage with either childbearing or sex. It is one avenue among many to personal happiness, period. They see no right destination and no right way to get there. Anything that's mutually acceptable goes.

The serious Christian students—with homeschool, Christian school, or public school backgrounds—are different. They have a high view of marriage. Many of them, even high-schoolers in Fort Payne, Ala., talk about marriage theologically. They don't believe in divorce or premarital sex. But that's about all they agree on, because the path to marriage seems fraught with difficulty. High-school boys say, "Guys don't even know how to pursue in a manly or godly way"—and graduate students don't feel any more knowledgeable.

Some Christian students tell broken-hearted stories that seem timeless. Benjamin Barber, a junior at Patrick Henry College (PHC), said he was naïve when he arrived at the school. He grew up with only brothers and didn't have much experience with girls: "I thought boys and girls could be friends." But it didn't take long for him to develop an attachment to a girl that turned out badly: "I got hurt. You need to be careful and conscious or that will happen."

After a while he got up the courage to ask a second girl out. Things went OK, yet he concluded, "We both love Jesus but we want different things." Now he is skittish and doesn't know how "he'll jump back in." He's been wondering about that

for the past year and a half: "I don't make decisions I know will hurt."

Other Christian students tell fearful stories shaped by the past several decades of rampant divorce. The parents of Joshua Encinias, a student at The Kings College (TKC), divorced when he was 13: "It made me clam up . . . to believe that nothing matters. I was so strong-willed and angry." After the divorce, Encinias failed 9th and 10th grades. He weighed 400 pounds by the time he was 19.

God worked, and Encinias changed his ways and lost 200 pounds. At community college he won accolades and earned the grades that won him college admission. As he was deciding to move to New York, his parents got back together, remarrying a year ago. Now he says he's "biding his time," worried that he might be prone to making wrong choices because his parents did.

Encinias is looking for male role models and admits to watching a favorite professor "as a hawk." It's not that he's trying to map out a similar path, but he wants to see why this married Christian man with stellar credentials "has joy no matter what." Encinias doesn't want his fear to limit him: He is half-heartedly moving toward relationships and knows his decision is somehow "bound up with my parents."

Whether the reasons are old or new, many young men seem frozen, unsure of the right way to proceed. Many voices are trying to point the way, but one writer in particular has special influence: Josh Harris and his book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (2003) came up in nearly every interview I had. Even Christians who don't like the book feel forced to color within the lines Harris drew—"courtship" is best—because of his influence on so many of the other students in their social milieu. The book helped many Christians avoid the traps of secular practices like those at Parsons. But another result, according to many women, is both paralysis and pressure.

TKC student Catherine Ratcliffe says *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* shows well that "sexual purity is important," but it also led many of her classmates to "think we should never hang out unless we want to marry. In the 1990s, casual dating was the culprit. Christian couples will rush into relationships, saying, 'we intend to marry,' because they think they are not allowed to date unless they intend to marry."

Pressure, pressure, pressure. Ratcliffe says, "If girls do get asked out they think, 'We have to make this work. I might not get asked out for another 10 years.'" The "if" is big: Christian student after student in four states generalized to me: "Women don't get asked out."

Christian students at the University of Texas at Austin find a friendly haven at Hill House, an old home just off campus with books, comfortable chairs, and Bible studies. After one study, graduate student Stephanie Nestor told me that in the past year six of her friends have gotten engaged. In each case the guys had never dated before: "Guys want to be sure before they date that this is the one. In Christian circles, girls aren't getting asked out."

Nestor described a social scene focused entirely on group activities, where guys observe the women over time and then make a choice. That leaves most of the girls waiting. A conservative female seminary student concurred, "I am extremely frustrated by the dating process. I'm traditional. I believe in the man asking the woman out. Women don't get asked out."

Ellyn Arevalo, an assistant to UT professor Mark Regnerus (see sidebar), voiced her frustration: "You don't have to know you want to marry me to ask me out. . . . They don't ask me out. They don't ask anyone out. It is alternately frustrating and extremely painful. Your hands are tied."

Their hands are tied because they want the guys to initiate: "We want them to be initiators. But they are content with the way things are. . . . We want to be wanted. We want to know we're desirable. Christian boys are scared of girls who make advances."

The tension between dating and courtship takes place in an environment where "no one is rushing to make marriage a priority." In fact, many single Christians say their churches don't emphasize marriage in order not to offend singles—but it feels, Arevalo says, as though the church is saying, "Darn it, girl, why aren't you happy with this status?"

Daniel Evans, a male engineering graduate student, wandered in and asked if he could join the conversation. The woman pounced: "Are most Christian guys wanting to have their whole career figured out before they start relationships? Are guys turned off by independent girls?"

Evans put up a stout defense. He is annoyed at the pressure he feels. He's afraid that if he met and married a girl in the next few years, she'd expect him to work as an engineer. He wants to do that for a few years, but long-term he wants to be a teacher and coach. He thinks a wife would make it hard to switch to a less remunerative career.

Under pressure from the female grad students he went further: He's "no fan of casual dating." He wants to "make sure a s best I could" that he only asks out a girl if it's likely to result in marriage. He wants to be "fairly confident" and uses terms like selective to describe his process: "If and when I do get married, I want to enter into it with as few relationships as possible."

There's the dilemma. Some guys will only ask a girl out if there's a high degree of probability it will end in marriage. But some young women hate that pressure: "Saying yes to a date is not saying yes to a proposal." College senior Susannah Foote felt that pressure. She is coming off a failed relationship: "It would have ended earlier without all the pressure. . . . You can't hang out. You go from zero to 100, or people will talk."

While guys wait to find Miss Right, some girls "guard their hearts." College freshman Alexandria Nogy didn't date in high school because she didn't see the logic of it. Dating for recreation: No. Investing time with marriage as the end goal: Yes, "otherwise it doesn't lead to anything productive." Maintaining "emotional purity" isn't easy, and sometimes girls get into heart relationships despite their best efforts to monitor their thoughts.

PHC student Hannah Farver invested: Now she is "coming off a failed relationship" and a realization that some of what she formerly preached about courtship doesn't work. Since she didn't believe in "casual dating," she had to be either emotionally separate from the guy, or engaged to him: "If you are dedicated to emotional purity, you are afraid. You either risk nothing or you risk everything." We talked about which Jane Austen book captures what she's trying to say: She suggested *Half Sense and Sensibility* (because of Eleanor's emotional reserve), and *Half Persuasion* (the waiting and waiting), but "without any chance of a happy Austenish ending."

Those who advocate courtship take pains to say that some people have carried it too far and made it legalistic. Brett Harris, one of Josh Harris' younger brothers, is 22 and a PHC junior. He's thoughtful as he critiques contemporary American culture's corrosive effect on relationships.

First, he defends guys who don't initiate. They have real fear of rejection, he says: "They give their heart, and girls spit on it and throw it away." He sees a bigger problem with guys afraid to commit because they are overwhelmed by all the choices. There will always be someone more beautiful, more godly, more intelligent: "We can get caught up in the comparison game." With the choice of a date tantamount to a choice of a mate, Harris says there might always be a better spouse "out there," so people are afraid to settle: "Girls may say they are waiting for a guy, but they are waiting for a particular guy to take initiative."

To get that particular guy to take notice, Nestor and Arevalo at the University of Texas say that girls often resort to "tricky girl things," meaning they find out if a guy is going to be at a particular activity, and then make sure they are there. They find out what time he's arriving, and happen to arrive at the same time: "They end up a default stalker and feeling pathetic."

Or as Catherine Ratcliffe explained, "We feel we are intelligent women with deep thoughts . . . mature and competent in how we handle our relationship with God, and our academics, but in relationships, it's like the Disney Channel." She observes the pressure to have "intentional romance" and concludes, "Now we just need romance."

How do some couples navigate dating/courtship obstacles and make it down the aisle? What can churches do to help them persevere? That's the subject of part two, in the next issue.

from: <http://bit.ly/kDS294>

Re: Article for single (unmarried) Christians, on: 2011/5/22 2:27

Interesting article. But it lacks one thing, one MAJOR thing: it never once mentions the HOLY SPIRIT.

This is the problem with the "Christian" church today in America. Failure to pray, failure to let the Holy Spirit guide or lead, and failure to spend time in the Word. Thus, no spiritual power or maturity. What is wrong with us??

Jacob allowed God to lead him to his future bride, and he was more than happy with God's choice.

I have been to singles groups across several denominations and the one thing that stands out like a sore thumb is the total immaturity and carnality of the "christians" there. I witnessed a cattiness and competitiveness among the single women; the one thing in every group was that at least one or more of them was after some guy in the group and hence very jealous towards any other woman that appeared the least bit attractive. Oh the jealous hatred, self-pity and backstabbing that went on! It was PATHETIC. I could not tell any difference between the people claiming to be christians inside the church and the UNbelievers outside of church. I found myself much better off hanging out with NON-christian singles where the atmosphere was much more welcoming, friendly, non-competitive, less hateful.

Stay out of "christian" singles groups. It's just not worth it. Every one of those groups will eventually splinter because of worldliness like this, and I have seen it happen every time. It is Guaranteed. Instead focus on serving God and prayer. Let Him lead you to whomever. Maybe He doesn't want you to marry in the timeframe you think you should. I look back on my life and I am so very glad for every person I asked God for who God denied me; every one I desired would have made me miserable.

Re: Article for single (unmarried) Christians - posted by jimmyhudson, on: 2011/5/22 9:21

From the daily devotional, Abiding In Christ (The Essence of Christianity) by Reimar Schultze.

LET GOD CHOOSE

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he (built He into) a woman and brought her unto the man.
Genesis 2:22

Genesis is the book of beginnings, and Genesis is the book of patterns. In this book, God lays down the pattern for worship, for work, for rest, for morality, for love, for marriage, and for the family.

Let me ask you, how many dates did Adam have with Eve before he knew that she was the right one for him? Again, let me ask, how much input did God request from Adam as to what he wanted in a woman? Did God ask Adam what type of disposition, hair color, personal interests, height and weight he wanted in a wife?

God made Eve and He brought her unto Adam! That is the first symphony in man's history of the marriage song. could it be any more beautiful than that. Isn't God still able to do this, and to do it right? Can't God still be trusted to bring a faithful soul a mate? Or has He lost His touch and interest in bringing a man and woman together?

Indeed, God still has an interest in choosing a wife for a man, but man so often makes his own choice out of personal interests, physical attraction, and worldly wisdom. How pitiful is this dating process in America; a young man trying this girl and that girl, and then another girl, to see which best pleases the dreams and aspirations of his Self-life; always leaving behind tears of disappointment and a broken heart.

Since we are born of the Spirit, AND IF (Capitalisation not in original) we walk in the Spirit, indeed, we will do as Adam did: we will wait for God to choose for us. we will stop dating relationships that lead nowhere, and we will trust God that He will do as He did at the first with Adam, that He will bring the right one to each of us.

Here is a testimony of a couple I know:

<http://howascotsman.blogspot.com/2008/09/how-scotsman-found-his-dream-woman.html>

Keith Daniel has some good sermons on this type of thing

<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/singlefile.php?lid=17989&commentView=itemComments>

It is a SERIOUS thing to marry out of Divine Order. It would be better to never marry than to go into a union which isn't led of God. But can we expect God to come into our lives only when it suits us?

We cannot expect God to bring us our ideal mate unless our lives are truly on the altar, seeking only his will through self denial?

But seek ye first (continually) the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Assuming it is God's will for you to marry see. One cannot ignore Scriptures such as 1 cor 7, Matt 19:12.

Re: , on: 2011/5/22 14:41

And then there is christianmingles.com. Does not the scriptures say what God has joined together? I agree that it is best to wait upon God and enjoy him. The psalmist said delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Also no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. If one truly desires a helpmate from God then pray and wait upon him to provide. The word tells us that he even knows our needs before we ask him. I believe the results of waiting on Jesus are far more lasting than eharmony.com.

Re: Article for single (unmarried) Christians - posted by Veronica226 (), on: 2011/5/23 15:28

I agree with jimmyhudson and martyr. God will bring the man He wants me to marry into my life and He will tell me that He wants me to marry him.

Even my "atheist" bro-in-law thinks dating is ridiculous and my sister was the first and last woman he ever dated.

I noticed in the article that some of the girls seemed frustrated that they weren't getting asked out. Why? If Christ is all you need, why are you upset that you aren't being asked out? That to me says that these young "christians" are not getting their fulfillment from God. They still think a man will fulfill them!

Two years ago I said, "God I don't care if you make me wait 30 years to be married." Last year I said "God I don't care if you make me wait 50 years to get married." And this year I can honestly say, "God I don't care if you never let me marry!" I am perfectly happy being single the rest of my life.

Again the problem is looking for fulfillment everywhere and in everything BUT God.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/5/23 16:46

Quote:

Stay out of "christian" singles groups. It's just not worth it. Every one of those groups will eventually splinter because of worldliness like this, and I have seen it happen every time. It is Guaranteed.

I cry for your cynical spirit. I think you probably need to learn to forgive somebody... and soon.

I am part of and help lead a thriving singles ministry in my church. Is there some immaturity in it? Without a doubt. But immaturity in the body of Christ is not confined to singles ministry. The description you painted of singles ministry is rather unfortunate, because it does not accurately reflect the condition of the singles ministry I am a part of. Our people are a very loving group, and we strive deeply to grow together as a community of believers with some unique needs. We have our conflicts from time to time, but I am thankful the only real problems we have to address from time to time are things that are rather petty in nature. Gross immorality or abusive relationships almost never exist in our midst.

Many of our singles are not wasting their time in frivolous relationships. They are actively serving the Lord, ministering to the needs of the saints and the community at large, and bearing much fruit in their lives. And from time to time, some of them strike up some powerful relationships together, and even get married. This Spring/Summer, we have at least 4 couples who are getting married.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/5/23 17:06

Quote:

God made Eve and He brought her unto Adam!

This is true. But Eve would've been made according to the desires God put in Adam.

Quote:

Let me ask you, how many dates did Adam have with Eve before he knew that she was the right one for him?

We live in a fallen world now full of flaws. Eve would've been created without any flaws, and is the only perfect woman ever created. But all of the potential spouses we court now will have considerable flaws. We need time to consider and explore things such as looks, character, spirituality, mutually shared interests, goals, finances, family history, etc, etc. To do these things, we need to "court" or "date" people. Not in any reckless manner of course.

Quote:

a young man trying this girl and that girl, and then another girl, to see which best pleases the dreams and aspirations of his Self-life

There is nothing wrong or carnal about looking for a mate that best pleases one's self. Marriage is designed by God to be mutually self-gratifying.

Quote:

always leaving behind tears of disappointment and a broken heart.

Life is full of disappointment and broken hearts. Not "dating" because you fear disappointment and a broken heart is not hinging but fear at work. Genuine love often takes risks. And with such risk, there is always the possibility that things may not work out as one would hope.

Quote:

we will wait for God to choose for us. we will stop dating relationships that lead nowhere, and we will trust God that He will do as He did at the first with Adam, that He will bring the right one to each of us.

This is an illogical false choice. Who are we to say God cannot use the dating/courting process to lead one by the Spirit? In fact, I believe He does. I've known many happy God-fearing couples who were led together by the Holy Spirit in the dating/courting process.

I've also known some miserable people who believe the Holy Spirit put them and another person together... but somewhere along the lines, forgot to tell the other person that.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/5/23 17:15

Quote:

God will bring the man He wants me to marry into my life and He will tell me that He wants me to marry him.

It is fine to believe this, but, I'm pretty sure it's without Scriptural precedent. The only Scripture I know of where God told anybody to marry anybody else is when He told Hosea to marry a prostitute. Help me out if you know of any other Scriptures where God has done this. God didn't even tell Adam and Eve to get married. They just did.

Biblically speaking, so far as I can tell, most of the courting processes we see in Scripture either 1) involved an arranged marriage or 2) somebody thought somebody else was attractive, and decided that they wanted to get married.

Quote:

That to me says that these young "christians" are not getting their fulfillment from God.

This has an allure of spirituality to it, and I understand where it comes from, and in part, I agree. But let's be Biblical here, shall we? When Adam was in Eden, and felt lonely, God didn't turn to Adam and say, "Hey Adam, Guess what? I'm all you'll ever need! You are complete in me!" No... God is much more practical than that. He brought Adam a wife. And likewise, when Paul dealt with the Corinthians, he didn't tell them to simply channel their sexual urges into being fulfilled in Christ. He said if you are burning, get married.

Just some observations...

Re: , on: 2011/5/24 20:38

Quote:

-----Two years ago I said, "God I don't care if you make me wait 30 years to be married." Last year I said "God I don't care if you make me wait 50 years to get married." And this year I can honestly say, "God I don't care if you never let me marry!" I am perfectly happy being single the rest of my life. Again the problem is looking for fulfillment everywhere and in everything BUT God.

Veronica,

This is so refreshing to hear. A couple years ago I decided I do not WANT to marry anymore. I told myself I would be content now with just a nice house with a garden and a dog or two, some fish, and friends to visit--and would open my doors to visiting missionaries and possibly homeless person if God would give me a big enough home...(no, it hasn't happened yet either)

Whatever the case, when I look around at all the divorce and unhappy marriages, what am I missing?

Re: , on: 2011/5/24 20:49

Quote:
-----It is fine to believe this, but, I'm pretty sure it's without Scriptural precedent. The only Scripture I know of where God told anybody to marry anybody else is when He told Hosea to marry a prostitute. Help me out if you know of any other Scriptures where God has done this. God didn't even tell Adam and Eve to get married. They just did. Biblically speaking, so far as I can tell, most of the courting processes we see in Scripture either 1) involved an arranged marriage or 2) somebody thought somebody else was attractive, and decided that they wanted to get married.

Jimmy,

Jacob prayed and God led him via Providence to Rachel. Also, via Providence, God arranged for Esther to be the wife/queen of King Ahasuerus.

Nonetheless, it is incorrect to say that there were any "arranged marriages" in scripture. Technically speaking, "arranged marriages" are marriages which are arranged by the parents of the bride. This is done only in authoritarian cultures. When God arranges a marriage, He (being Creator) already (presumably) created the person for that purpose and role in which He places them. God is really the only one who has the right to select one's spouse, as He does it best. But even when He does so, the people feel as though THEY are the ones who made the choice; God made the presentation and they agreed! :) When Samson chose a wife (or lover) without God's input and against God's commandments, look where it led him.