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Don't Date Naked

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Some of the names and details in the illustrations used in this book have been changed to protect the privacy of the people in the stories.

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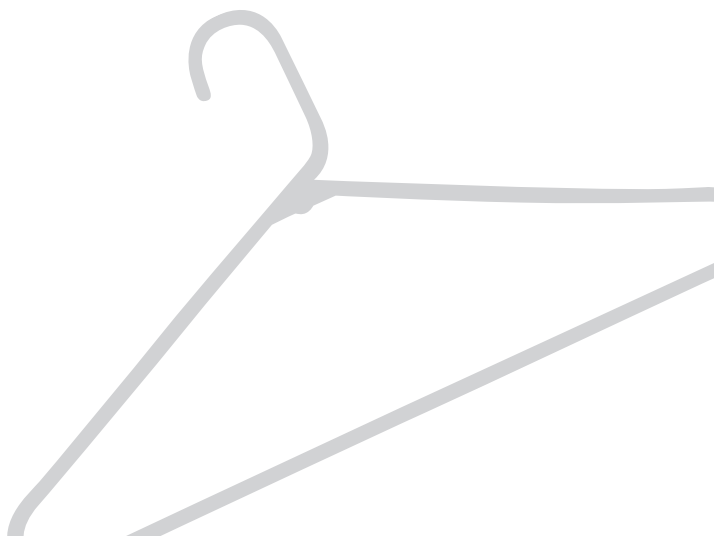
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INTRODUCTION



My brother, Greg, is five years older than I am and nearly my opposite in personality type. Throughout high school he was a party animal.

I was a total opposite. I lacked confidence around girls, and I averted my eyes lest my shyness be manifested by an inadvertent glance. I think I had kissed only one girl going into high school.

Greg, who headed for the University of Oklahoma following graduation, returned home that first Christmas feeling like a stud. He must have been pumping iron with the football team because he returned as a buff 160-pounder. He was also in great shape because he was playing a he-man's sport at Oklahoma—rugby.

Greg's love life wasn't too shabby, either. During his freshman year he had two girls on a string: a girl he had met at the dorms in Norman and a winsome young woman back home in Phoenix. *Talk about a dame in every port.*

As soon as he stepped inside the front door for his Christmas break, Greg was all over me. "Hey, are you taking anyone out?"

"No." I was a high school student still getting used to my new school.

"When are you going to start dating somebody?"

"I don't know." I wasn't liking this conversation at all.

"How come? Can't you find anyone good enough for you?"

"Leave me alone, Greg."

"No, I won't. Tell you what. Let's go out on a double date."

“You know that I’m not dating anybody.”

“Do you like anyone at school?”

Greg’s question caused me to pause. “Well, there’s this girl named Stacy. She sits next to me in geometry.”

“Then ask her out.”

“I’m not asking her out.” *I’m shy, doofus!*

“Yes, you are.”

“No, I’m not.”

“I’m giving you three days to ask her out on a date. If you don’t do it, I’ll . . .” Greg let the threat hang in the air. I knew my big brother could come up with something embarrassing.

On the third day I worked up enough nerve to approach Stacy in the school hallway.

“Um . . . um . . . Stacy?” I felt so embarrassed, but I knew that if I didn’t ask her out, Greg would tell her something terrible about me.

Then Stacy smiled, and I relaxed—but only for a moment. When I remembered what I was there for, my face turned red, and I could feel sweat forming above my lip. “Stacy, I was wondering . . . you probably don’t want to do this, and it would be okay if you said no, and I’m sure it won’t be any fun, but my brother’s back home from college, and he’s making me ask somebody out, so I thought I might ask you. What do you think? Do you want to do something on Saturday night?”

Without any hesitation Stacy replied, “Yeah, that sounds like it would be fun.”

Oh, no!

Instead of feeling really happy that I had nabbed a date, I felt totally stressed out. I would be going out on a double date with a modern-day Romeo!

A few days later we picked up our dates and drove to a nice steak house not far from our home. I sat in the back with Stacy, where we listened to Greg keep up a steady patter. I didn’t say a word because I didn’t *want* to talk: I was surrounded by people who were cooler and much

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better looking than I was, so I thought it would be better if I didn't call attention to myself by saying something stupid.

After we were seated at the restaurant, the hostess handed us our menus. We placed our orders and were directed to a generous salad bar. I followed Stacy through the line, but I still hadn't uttered two words. After piling my plate high with Caesar salad, I noticed some watermelon. I had to have some of that. I stabbed at a triangular piece with a fork, and when I lifted it up, I noticed that another wedge of watermelon was stuck to it. Stacy turned toward me as I tried to flick off the hanging piece of watermelon. I jerked my wrist to fling the fruit back onto the tray, but that second wedge of watermelon flew through the air and smacked Stacy in the forehead. For what seemed like an eternity, the fruit stuck to her forehead like a cold compress.

To my horror, the watermelon wedge slowly slid down the bridge of her cute nose before dropping to the floor.

"Stacy! I'm so sorry—"

"Michael, don't worry about it," she said, as she dabbed herself with a napkin. "I'm going to be okay." With that, Stacy kicked the offending piece of sticky fruit under the buffet table. "Well, I never did like watermelon in my salad anyway," she said.

That sealed the deal for me. Stacy was not only cool but also a bit crazy like me. I gradually came out of my shell, and we dated for several years. We had a solid, great relationship.

Sitting on a Park Bench

Dating, to play off a phrase uttered by Forrest Gump, is like a box of chocolates: You never know what you're going to get. In a similar way, you never know if a date will be a fun experience or something that makes you gag.

I grew up in a home where dating was not only part of growing up but

also an activity encouraged by my mom and dad. I dated steadily from my freshman year of high school until I married at age twenty-one. My parents never made me feel embarrassed about liking girls or wanting to go out with them.

“Wow! You’re interested in this new girl!” my dad would exclaim from the dinner table. “That’s cool, Michael. Let’s have her over for a swim and barbecue thing, or maybe we can take her out for some Mexican food with us. We’d love to meet her.”

That’s how my parents were. They *loved* meeting the girls I took out and hearing how my dates turned out afterward. They often said things such as, “I really like her,” or “She seems like a nice girl.”

We Still Love Dating

My wife, Amy, and I are all for dating, and in this book we’ll make the case for going out. We believe that dating will provide you with awesome life experiences, teach you how to talk and interact with the opposite sex, and help you mature into someone who will be ready to get married at the appropriate time.

It’s amazing what you learn about another person when you date, although many people do not reveal their inadequacies or their past when they’re dating. That’s a natural human reaction since none of us seeks rejection from the other sex. It’s called putting your best foot forward.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that dating has pitfalls, which we will also address. Hey, we know how painful dating can be: I can still remember getting dumped by a girl because she preferred to go out with the high school quarterback—and he was a second-stringer at that! As for Amy, she dated a young man for four years, and they even got engaged before she broke it off. Now that *hurt*.

Contrary to what some other voices say, those experiences don’t dampen our enthusiasm for dating—they just make us more aware of who

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we are and where God is leading us in our lives. To paraphrase something Tennyson once said, "It's better to have dated and lost than never to have dated at all."

Behind the Title

What do you think of our provocative book title—*Don't Date Naked*? I have to credit Jason Brawner, my best friend since my grammar school days, for coming up with it. *Don't Date Naked* is not meant to be taken literally, because never in our wildest dreams would we recommend that a couple date au naturel. The title is drawn from Ephesians 6, where the apostle Paul encourages us to put on the full armor of God so that we will be prepared to stand firm in the spiritual battles we face.

If you need to be reminded about the words in the Ephesians passage, here it is. Read it through with an eye toward the dating relationship.

Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the

Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.

Just as you wouldn't fight naked without the full armor of God, you don't want to date naked without God's protection. If you will allow us some poetic license, we'd like to paraphrase the Ephesians 6 passage for the dating relationship:

Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Don't date naked. Clothe yourself with all of the protection God has provided so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For when you date, you will face temptations and challenges that are beyond your ability to fight alone. You will need God's grace, love, wisdom, and power. You will need help from friends who are committed to your good. You will need a special wardrobe for the challenge.

So get dressed. Put on all of the clothing God has provided so that you will stand firm. Stand your ground, putting on the robe of prayer, which will cover you, submitting yourself and your future to God's plan. Next put on the sturdy belt of accountability, which will hold you to your goals. For shoes, put on honor so that you will be able to walk confidently, giving full respect to the people you date. In every dating situation you will need a commitment to purity as your shield to stop the fiery arrows of temptation aimed at you by Satan.

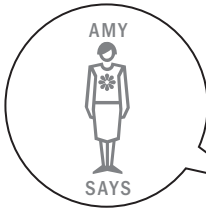
Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert, and be persistent in your prayers.

There you have it—the wardrobe for a successful dating relationship:

- Robe of prayer
- Belt of accountability
- Shoes of honor
- Shield of purity

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Throughout this book we'll talk more about how to dress for success in dating.



Michael and I understand that dating is controversial in some Christian circles. In recent years, a few authors have made the case for not dating at all—or at least not until the week before you get married. (We're exaggerating, of course, but we'll have more to say in the next chapter about those who say we should kiss dating goodbye.)

The focus in *Don't Date Naked* is to get you to think about why you date, who you should date, when you should date, and why you need to be thinking about where the dating relationship is going. We will do that through sharing some of our stories with you, warning you to avoid some mistakes we made, fielding some questions people have asked us, and at times, having some straight talks about tough issues. At the end of each chapter we've included some "Dear Mike & Amy" letters, specific questions dating people have asked us. You might even find your own story in one of the letters.

Every year in the conferences and seminars we lead, we meet thousands of people who are dating, and we hear some sad stories about poor decisions people have made—decisions that have serious long-term consequences. We want to help you avoid making those same bad choices. We promise to be honest with you, giving straight answers and advice. At times you will feel that we are in your face. That's okay, though. Sometimes that's what it takes.

Reading *Don't Date Naked* will help you:

- know what a godly dating life looks like;
- list personality qualities you want in the people you date;
- honor the person you're dating;

- stay pure by setting healthy physical and emotional limits;
- end a relationship when it's not right;
- think long term;
- dress for success in dating.

In the quest to find that someone special, you need to be thinking intentionally about the qualities that you would want to see in a potential spouse. If guys put as much thought into what type of person they would want to date and eventually marry as they put into researching their next set of wheels, there would be far fewer busted relationships and subsequent divorces. And if young women adopted a more calm and collected, eyes-wide-open approach, they wouldn't fall for the first hunk on the make.

Your late teens and early twenties are the time of your life for you to think about dating intentionally. Decisions about the people you will date could have lifelong implications, so you need to put more thought into this than the next CD player you're going to buy.

The fact that you're holding this book in your hands tells us you're serious about dating. Well, maybe *serious* isn't the right word since you're dating to have some fun and meet some interesting people. Or maybe it *is* the right word because you think you may have found the person you will marry. Wherever you are on the dating front, we're glad you're joining us.

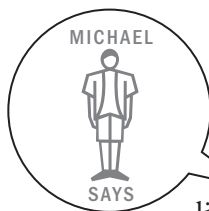
Just don't date naked.

1

let's hear it for dating

They are the hottest forms of “reality TV” out there—the dating shows like *Blind Date*, *ElimiDATE*, *Change of Heart*, *Taildaters*, *The 5th Wheel*, *Shipmates*, and *Dismissed*. When you stop and think about it, what can be more real than watching the sparks fly between a virile pair sexually attracted to each other?

These are not your parents’ dating shows, however, like the relatively tame *The Dating Game*, a ripe-for-parody effort that looked as if it was filmed on a cheesy set designed by a hippie coming down off a bad psychedelic trip. No, this rash of new half-hour shows is a whole new genre, filled with dirty talk and lots of sex.



I've checked out most of them, but when you've seen one, you've seen them all. The premise usually goes like this: a buff guy, confident and sure of himself to the point of arrogance, is on the hunt. He will be introduced to a motley and well-built foursome of vixens dripping with attitude, and he must choose one to make the Perfect Match. At least, that's what the produc-

ers would have us believe happens in this make-believe world where dudes can have anything they want.

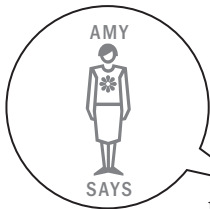
Everyone has roles to play. Guys are playboys, and girls are playthings. And they usually end up in a Jacuzzi, where tops and bottoms are flung off, and the sudsy talk revolves around sex. Trashy challenges are given: once on *Elimi-DATE*, the guy made the gals kiss each other if they wanted to reach the next level, but most of the time, the guy chooses the girl who lifts her shirt or performs a suggestive lap dance. These new dating shows are all about voyeurism and spying on the antics of sex-soaked guys and girls searching for love and acceptance in all the wrong places.

Some role models. Unfortunately, too many young people are influenced by this “reality,” convinced that these episodes reflect what dating is all about. That’s a shame because these “reality dating” programs give a very unreal and unhealthy picture of dating.

Amy and I believe that dating can be clean, wholesome fun, especially when it’s done with an attitude of honor. Dating teaches valuable lessons as well: social skills such as manners, the art of conversation, and respect for self-imposed and mutually agreed-on limits for physical expression. And finally, dating almost certainly allows the opportunity for you to get to know the person who could potentially become your husband or wife.

Not everyone agrees with us, however. In recent years there has been a move to embrace a philosophy of “no dating”—at least until you are spiritually mature and finan-

cially able to get married. These dating models, known in Christian circles as betrothal and courtship, have become more mainstream in the last decade. Amy will give us a closer look at what they are all about.



I have to admit that I hadn't heard of the word *betrothal* until just a few years ago, but what it means is that a couple must wait for God to impress on the guy's heart that a certain young woman—let's call her Missy—is the person he ought to marry. Once God makes that impression on the guy's heart, he is to pray about it. Once he feels that the impression has been confirmed by God, he then approaches the young woman and tells her that God impressed on his heart that they should marry.

Notice that I used a form of the word *impressed* four times in the previous paragraph, but those who buy into betrothal say that word a lot. Michael and I think the concept is flawed, and it's not because we don't think God can speak directly to people today. One of the problems is that betrothal is ripe for abuse. What is a young woman supposed to make of a young suitor who drops into her life and informs her that God told him that they should marry? Sometimes this happens even though the two people have never gone out on an official date. It seems to us that this is taking advantage of her emotions and vul-

nerability regarding *the* biggest decision she will ever make: *Whom should I marry?*

I've always wondered how I would have felt if some guy had knocked on my door and said that God told him we should get married. Michael and I don't see betrothal or arranged marriages working in our Western culture because individual freedom and choice are two of the bedrock values of our society. Betrothal and arranged marriages just don't work here, just as our dating practices wouldn't work in many other countries. When I was a student at Wheaton College Graduate School, I once had a class with a young man from India. He told me that his parents had arranged his marriage and that he and his wife were introduced to each other a month before they were married. When I expressed my surprise, he replied that he and his wife were raised in India's caste system, and that is how his culture did things.

"How long have you been married?" I asked.

"About ten years," replied my friend. "And we are happy."

I believed him, but I can hardly imagine my parents "arranging" my marriage, although there was a family joke growing up that I would marry Shannon Dobyms. (Don't laugh. Shannon is a boy's name.) The Dobyms family and our family were very tight, and they had a daughter named Samantha, who became my very best friend.

In high school, Samantha and I went out on double dates together. Whenever I dropped by the Dobyms's home to go out on Saturday night, Shannon, who was a

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few years older, would tease me by saying, “Aren’t you going to wait for me?”

“Yeah, and then we could be sisters!” Samantha would exclaim.

No offense to Shannon since he’s a cool guy, but I’m sure glad that no parental matchmaking ever happened or that Shannon did not feel “impressed” by God that we should get hitched.

No, I was raised by normal parents who allowed me to double-date as a freshman and “car date” a year later. Back then, betrothal was not on the radar screen for Christian families, and neither was the concept of courtship.

What is meant by *courtship*? In one of the popular models of courtship, a guy and a girl don’t date until they are spiritually and financially ready to get married—and when they do date, it’s under heavy parental authority. For younger people, this, in effect, means no dating in high school and the first few years of college—and possibly not until you’re established in some sort of a career track.

Here’s how courtship works in this model: If you’re a guy and you’ve had your eye on Missy for quite some time—and are spiritually and financially prepared to marry if you fall in love with her—then you approach her father (or her mother if the father is out of the picture) and announce your intentions. Both men pray about it, and if the father agrees that you are spiritually and financially ready for marriage, you are allowed to date the young woman. Usually the dating is done in the context of family

activities, like going to church or joining the family on a picnic at the lake, something like that. As for casual one-on-one dates with a movie followed by a Starbucks latté, forget about it.

This courtship model was the centerpiece of Joshua Harris's successful book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, an autobiographical account that urged young people to forego the dating scene entirely, just as he did. Published in the mid-1990s, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*'s influence has penetrated the Christian culture. We're constantly running into young people who say they've read it—or that their parents are insisting that they adhere to their wishes by following the courtship model.

We believe that courtship and betrothal are often based on parental fear. The No Dating sign gets hung across the front door because the parents fear that their child will meet the wrong person, suffer emotional trauma when the relationship ends, or become sexually involved. We don't deny that those are valid concerns for parents, especially for young teens starting to navigate the high school years. But once you get into college and your early twenties, you need to learn to make your *own* decisions.

Sure, some of those decisions will result in mistakes and regret, possibly even some lifelong pain. But our hope is that since you're reading this book, you're willing to listen to our advice so that when it comes time to make choices, you will make decisions that honor God, your dating partner, and yourself.

don't date *naked*



I remember the first time I picked up a copy of Josh's book, eager to find out if he really meant that we should kiss dating goodbye. Yes, he meant it. Josh wrote that it didn't make sense training for a long-term relationship—marriage—with a series of short-term dating relationships. He said it would be like practicing how to break up and that each time you experienced an agonizing breakup, you lost a part of your heart that could never be reclaimed.

That's a good speech, but Amy and I have a different perspective. Dating, like nearly everything else in life, has the capacity for good and evil. We, along with millions of others, have had extremely positive experiences in our dating relationships. We also checked into Heartbreak Hotel a few times. Does that mean that dating was bad? No.

Having said that, we agree with Joshua Harris about dating in more ways than you would think, but Amy and I think that it's okay to date *some* and go on group dates in your young adult years. The difference is that we think you should wait to date *seriously* until you are at an age at which you could marry.

The reason that dating is not all cut-and-dried is because dating is a fairly recent social phenomenon. Before the early part of the twentieth century, guys and girls didn't always date—it wasn't allowed by shotgun-toting fathers who put the fear of God into men wishing to "court" their daughters.

We are exaggerating, of course, but try to imagine what rural and city life were like in America before the rise of the Industrial Age. In a more rural America, education usually ended by the time a young man or woman reached the age of fourteen. If you were a guy, it was off to the fields, where hard labor awaited you.

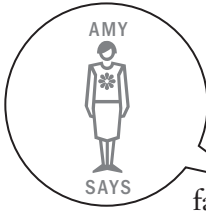
From sunup to sundown, you stared at the south end of a horse traveling north, and then you shared a bed with a pair of unbathed younger brothers. If you were a young woman, you milled flour and cooked and cleaned, and cared for the younger siblings. Who could blame someone for having the itch to get married and get out of the house?

Those who struck out on their own before marrying were ostracized. The word *bachelor* was pejorative in those days; to be single while of “marrying age” was a sign of laziness—you either couldn’t attract someone to marry or you lacked the ability to support a wife and family. Authorities harassed bachelors by running them out of town on a rail.

The courting scene began changing in a hurry during the 1920s—the Roaring Twenties. As families moved to the cities and something called “suburbs” popped up like marigolds following a spring shower, young people were expected to finish high school. Many more young people moved on to college. The ties to home and hearth were loosened, and the rise of cheap transportation (the Model T Ford) and cheap entertainment (the movies) gave

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young people the mobility and the opportunity to participate in informal, unchaperoned male-female activities without any sort of commitment.



For the first time in the history of mankind, the concept of modern dating emerged. So you see, dating *is* a fairly recent development—and it didn't take long for a new set of rituals to develop. Young men could seek whoever made their hearts quicken without nosy parents trying to “arrange” a match. Young women held the balance of power, however: they could pick and choose the person they wanted to date, although they no longer had a doting father screening out the bad apples. Without parental supervision, guys became more adept at pushing the physical boundaries, and couples experienced premarital sex in unprecedented numbers. As the number of out-of-wedlock pregnancies climbed, the phrase “shotgun marriage” became part of the lexicon.

Dating continued to evolve over the next fifty years, and when your parents came of age in the rock 'n' roll sixties and disco seventies, the doors were blown off. This became known as the era of “free love.” With fewer social constraints holding young couples back, it was common for a guy to meet a girl at a Vietnam peace demonstration, head back to her apartment, roll around in the sack, and then ask, “What did you say your name was?”

How ironic when she answered, “Chastity.”

“Free love” eventually gave way to the phenomenon of living together, which is where we are today. Between 1960 and 1997, the number of cohabiting couples went from fewer than 500,000 to 4 million—an eye-popping 800 percent increase, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹ These days, more than 50 percent of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation, according to University of Wisconsin researchers Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu.²

Michael and I work with young people at our church and speak to thousands of young people all over the country. It’s our goal to reverse the trend of living together and to instill godly ideals about what dating relationships should look like. When done right, dating can play a significant role in who you become and whom you eventually marry, which is why we feel so passionate about the issue.



Dating is fun, and during your late teens and into your twenties, it *should* be fun. I remember the time when I arrived on the campus of Baylor University as a freshman, ready to make friends and experience the college scene after attending a small K–12 Christian school in Phoenix. I wasn’t looking to sow any wild oats, but I was ready for something different.

During the fall quarter, the school held a “Howdy

Dance”—a mixer where the girls ask the boys out. When a popular girl asked me to be her date, I thought, *Wow, that's pretty cool*. I knew we wouldn't be marrying; we were just going out to have some fun. She and I agreed to go with a group to the Elite Café, the most popular eating establishment at Baylor, before the big dance. The Elite Café was one of those diner-type restaurants that serves comfort foods like meatloaf, baby-back ribs, country-fried steak, mashed potatoes, and soft dinner rolls by the basketful.

As raucous college kids often do, we guys decided to play a little game. We played Rock, Scissors, Paper to see who would be the first victim. Whoever lost had to stuff an entire basket of dinner rolls in his mouth. Each basket contained four or five rolls, each the size of a baseball.

Top ten **worst** Christian pick-up lines for guys



10. That's a nice Bible you have. What translation is it?
9. May I show you my promise ring?
8. Jesus said when you do something for the least of these, you do it for him. How about going out to dinner with me?
7. Would you like to be my accountability partner?
6. Have you been going to this church a long time?
5. Would it be a sin if you stole my heart?
4. Could I show you my video collection of Billy Graham Crusades?
3. What's the name of your Compassion child?
2. Have you seen my "What Would Jesus Do" bracelet?
1. Excuse me, but I think one of your ribs belongs to me.

Unfortunately I lost, so I began stuffing the rolls into my mouth, just like Paul Newman eating hard-boiled eggs in *Cool Hand Luke*. I punched two or three rolls down the hatch, chewed, and then tried to swallow the biggest clump of dough ever, but it stuck in my throat. I started doing some serious choking. Now, of course, I was humiliated.

My friend Brodie screamed out, “Look, Smalley’s choking!” Everyone panicked, and then Brodie began pounding my back. I remember thinking that I would die and that it was a horrible way to go. Out of sheer desperation, I took a big swallow and shoved the gigantic dough ball down my gullet, tearing up my throat in the process. I survived, but I couldn’t talk for the rest of the night. Needless to say, I embarrassed myself in front of the young woman who had invited me to the dance.

I didn’t go out with that young woman again, but I don’t think I left a piece of my heart with her. Our date was good, clean fun, and that’s what dating should be all about.

Amy and I have come up with six positive reasons why we think you should date:

1. *Dating should be a source of enjoyment and recreation.* Whatever you enjoy doing—going to movies, taking in a concert, going for a walk, exploring museums, participating in sporting events—do it with your date. As you are involved together in things you both enjoy, you

will get to know each other better and become more comfortable with each other.

2. *Dating is a big part of the socialization process.* You gain social confidence when you learn manners, how to be considerate of others, and how to carry on a conversation with a member of the opposite sex. Said in another way, dating teaches guys how to open car doors and quit chewing gum in public, and it allows girls to dress nicely and receive special treatment.

3. *Dating helps personality development and learning of gender roles.* Personal identity is developed through relationships with other people. Young men and women need to discover the kinds of roles they find fulfilling in a close relationship. This can be accomplished through interaction with the opposite sex.

4. *Dating involves learning about intimacy and serves as an opportunity to establish a unique, meaningful relationship with a person of the opposite sex.* God created us with a need for relationships. Think about it. When God created the world and assessed his work, he announced that everything was good except for one thing: it was not good for Adam to be alone. God wants us to have deep and meaningful relationships, and marriage, of course, is the deepest relationship two people can have. Every friendship is an opportunity to develop a mature relationship with another person, and when that friendship involves someone of the opposite

sex, you can learn about love and honor, sacrifice and tenderness.

5. *Dating helps you find that special person God has planned for you.* Yes, God knows who your future spouse will be, but you are still traveling on a journey in which you meet and form relationships with those of the opposite sex. Dating helps us narrow the field of eligible partners and gives us confidence that we are making the right choice.

6. *Dating can help prepare you for marriage.* We know that Joshua Harris and others may not agree with us here, but we are convinced that dating helps couples acquire the knowledge and skills for a successful marriage. For example, dating helps develop a better understanding of each other's attitudes and behaviors, understand how to get along, and practice discussing and solving relational problems.

Got the basics down? Good, because in our next chapter, we're going to talk about preparing a list of qualities that you would want to see in the person you would date seriously.

Dear Mike & Amy,



Two of my college friends—one a guy and the other a girl—are in courtship relationships (but not with each other). They are pressuring me not to date, trying to convince me that their way is somehow more biblical. They make me feel that I'm less of a Christian if I date in "nor-

don't date naked

mal" ways. I've prayed about this, and I do not hear God telling me to stop dating. What should I do, and how do I handle their pressure?

—**Confused**

DEAR CONFUSED,



PEER PRESSURE IS HARD TO FIGHT, ESPECIALLY IF YOU RESPECT THE OPINIONS OF THOSE WHO ARE PRESSURING YOU. PLEASE DON'T BUY INTO THE IDEA THAT ONE FORM OF DATING IS "MORE BIBLICAL" THAN THE REST. THE SCRIPTURES GIVE US GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIPS—SUCH AS HONOR, PURITY, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, AND GRACE. BUT THE BIBLE DOES NOT DICTATE *HOW* WE ARE TO FIND THE PERSON WE WILL MARRY, WHETHER THAT BE THROUGH DATING, THROUGH HAVING PARENTS ARRANGE MARRIAGES, OR THROUGH THE MODEL OF COURTSHIP.

HAVING SAID THAT, IF YOU SENSE THAT DATING IS FOR YOU, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN HEALTHY DATING RELATIONSHIPS AS A WAY OF FINDING THE PERSON GOD HAS CHOSEN FOR YOU. CONTINUE PRAYING WITH AN EXPECTANT HEART THAT GOD WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS. JUST BE CAUTIOUS NOT TO ALLOW FEAR TO RULE YOUR EMOTIONS. REMEMBER THAT GOD DIDN'T GIVE US A SPIRIT OF FEAR (SEE 2 TIMOTHY 1:7).

FEAR—EITHER OF YOUR FRIENDS' DISAPPROVAL OR OF MAKING MISTAKES—DOESN'T HAVE TO DRIVE YOU AWAY FROM DATING. EVEN IF YOU'VE MADE MISTAKES IN THE PAST, YOU AREN'T DESTINED TO MAKE THEM AGAIN. IF YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM DATING FOR A WHILE, GO AHEAD AND DO THAT. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM GOD'S DIRECTION IN THAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE. SEARCH FOR GOD'S BEST FOR YOU, NOT FOR ACCEPTANCE FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

—**Mike & Amy**

Dear Mike & Amy, 

I'm a twenty-year-old guy who wants to date, but I'm clueless about how to start. Some of my female friends think I'm not interested in dating, but that's not true. I like many of them, and some of them might even be good wives someday, but I'm scared to start dating because I'm afraid I'll be clumsy at it. Can you help me?

—Clueless

DEAR CLUELESS, 

YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT AS CLUMSY AS YOU THINK YOU ARE. WE ALL WERE NERVOUS WHEN WE FIRST STARTED DATING. IT SOUNDS AS IF YOU HAVE SOME GOOD FEMALE FRIENDS, THOUGH. WOULD YOU CONSIDER ASKING THEM OUT? MAYBE YOU COULD BROACH THE SUBJECT WITH ONE OF THEM; SAY SOMETHING LIKE, "WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR A LONG TIME, AND WE LIKE A LOT OF THE SAME THINGS. WOULD YOU CONSIDER GOING OUT WITH ME OCCASIONALLY?" IF SHE SAYS NO, DON'T FALL APART AND FEEL AS IF YOU ARE SOME SORT OF REJECT. YOU'RE NOT.

MAYBE SOME OF YOUR GOOD FEMALE FRIENDS COULD HELP YOU FIND SOMEONE TO DATE. ASK THEM FOR SUGGESTIONS. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED BY THEIR ANSWERS, BUT TAKE THEM TO HEART. YOUR FRIENDS MAY KNOW YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF.

OR, IF YOU HAVE FRIENDS WHO ARE DATING, ASK THEM FOR IDEAS. MAYBE YOU COULD EVEN DOUBLE-DATE. THEN TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER, AND ASK YOUR FRIENDS—GUYS AND GIRLS—TO COACH YOU THE DAY AFTER ON A FEW THINGS THEY MAY HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY AND THE THINGS THEY REALLY LIKED. GIRLS LOVE TO HELP AND WILL EAT THIS UP! AND THIS IS A GOOD WAY TO GET CLOSE TO YOUR COACH TOO!

—Mike & Amy

don't date naked

Dear Mike & Amy,



What if I don't know whether or not I want to get married? Can I still date for the sake of companionship? Or since dating is supposed to lead to marriage, should I not date at all?

—**Unsure about dating**

DEAR UNSURE,



WE ARE DESIGNED TO BE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS. WHO THOSE OTHERS ARE DEPENDS ON YOU.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE IN WONDERING WHETHER YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED. WE KNOW SEVERAL PEOPLE, FOR EXAMPLE, WHO ARE WARY OF MARRIAGE BECAUSE THEIR OWN PARENTS' MARRIAGES DIDN'T WORK OUT, AND THEY ARE SCARED OF MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES. THAT FEAR MAY NOT FACTOR INTO YOUR SITUATION, BUT YOU MAY HAVE OTHER FEARS THAT MAY LEAD YOU TO WONDER ABOUT WHETHER MARRIAGE IS FOR YOU.

WE ENCOURAGE YOU NOT TO LET FEAR KEEP YOU FROM DATING. CONTINUE DATING, BUT ALSO CONTINUE PRAYING ABOUT IT.

YOU ARE WISE TO QUESTION WHETHER IT'S ALL RIGHT TO DATE FOR COMPANIONSHIP. SINCE COMPANIONSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP ARE NEEDS WE ALL HAVE, AND SINCE THEY ARE NEEDS THAT HUSBANDS AND WIVES HAVE TOO, DEEP FRIENDSHIPS ARE A HEALTHY FOUNDATION FOR A DATING RELATIONSHIP.

BUT IF YOU ARE LOOKING JUST FOR FRIENDSHIP, BE CAREFUL NOT TO LEAD YOUR DATING PARTNER ON. BE UP FRONT WITH THE COMPANIONS YOU HAVE. GO DUTCH. DON'T FLIRT, AND DON'T GET PHYSICALLY AFFECTIONATE.

ASK GOD WHAT HE THINKS IS BEST FOR YOU AT THIS TIME AND IN THE FUTURE. BE WILLING TO HEAR YOU ARE TOO SELF-FOCUSED TO GIVE YOURSELF TO A RELATIONSHIP RIGHT NOW. ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE YOUR HEART IF HE WANTS.

—**Mike & Amy**

NOTES

Chapter 1: Let's Hear It for Dating

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census (1998), "Marital Status and Living Arrangement," (March 1997). See <<http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/p20-506u.pdf>>, as quoted in a footnote to Andrew R. Baker, "Cohabitation Fails As a Test for Marriage," *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* (May 2000); <<http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/HPR/May00/marriage.html>>.
2. Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu, "Trends in Cohabitation and Implication for Children's Family Context," unpublished manuscript (Madison, Wisc.: Center for Demography, University of Wisconsin, 1998), as quoted in a footnote to Andrew R. Baker, "Cohabitation Fails as a Test for Marriage," *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* (May 2000); <<http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/HPR/May00/marriage.html>>.

Chapter 5: Sex and the City

1. Lorraine Ali and Julie Scelfo, "Choosing Virginity," *Newsweek* (December 9, 2002): 61.
2. The Koop quotation and the comment about the sores are found in Kevin Leman, *Adolescence Isn't Terminal*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2002), 191-92.
3. *OB/GYN News*, 28:15 (1993), quoted in "Condoms Ineffective against Human Papilloma Virus," *Sexual Health Update* (April 1994): 1.
4. Kenneth L. Connor, "Powell's Reckless Remarks Put Young Lives at