

# **Courtship and Marriage, Joshua Harris-style**

*-submitted by Janet Billson*

In his book, *I KISSED DATING GOODBYE*, Joshua Harris describes why as a teen he gave up dating. It was because he believed that dating relationships are inherently unhealthy. Well, you may ask, "How else do I go about meeting and marrying the person of my dreams?" Harris, now happily married, suggests a series of steps that people can take to explore whether a friendship with someone of the opposite sex should lead to courtship and perhaps marriage. When we meet someone special, he says, we should first seek a deeper friendship. Although romance may seem more exciting, "it can also foster illusion and infatuation, obscuring the true character of each person." Instead of dropping regular routines in order to spend time together, the couple should "find activities that pull [them] both into each other's world of family, friends, work, . . . and ministry." During this period of deepening friendship, flirting and "love talk" should be avoided. Both parties should then consult parents and trusted advisors about the advisability of moving beyond friendship. These mentors can help ask the hard questions, like: "Am I mature enough to marry?" "Am I able to support a wife?" Or, "Am I attracted to his looks or to his character?"

As you consider your choice for a life partner, four "green lights" can help identify whether to stop the relationship or keep on going. First: Is this person a Christian? Second: Do you have a realistic vision of what life-long marriage is all about? Third: Does your romance meet with the approval of parents and godly friends? If you think you're ready for marriage, but no one else does, that's a red light, and you may need to reconsider. And fourth: Do you have a sense of God's peace about your plans? Or do you feel apprehensive? If all the lights are green, Harris writes, the man should tell the woman, "We're growing closer in friendship . . . and with your permission, I want to explore the possibility of marriage. I'm ready to be tested by you [and] your family. My desire is to win your heart." then a couple agrees to move forward, they enter into a time the author calls "principled romance," the testing and heart-winning stage of courtship. They ought to look for activities that allow them to spend time together among family and friends. They may also spend some limited time alone together in appropriate settings. After that, it's time to fish or cut bait: To get engaged, or perhaps break off the relationship.

The proposals in this book may sound Victorian, but they indeed offer a refreshing contrast to today's secular approach to dating and marriage. While Joshua Harris is still very young - in his early twenties -- he has achieved some remarkable insights into love and courtship. And this book helps us understand why the Song of Solomon warns us "not to awaken love until it is ready." Love too soon may bring grief instead of the joy God intends. You might want a copy of *I KISSED DATING GOODBYE* for your teens. It could help them avoid awakening love until the right time - and it can prepare them for true love that is, as Solomon puts it, "better than wine."

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