

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

HEAR - (ROMANS 10:17; MATTHEW 7:24-27).

BELIEVE - (HEBREWS 11:6; MARK 16:15-16).

REPENT - (ACTS 2:38; 17:30; LUKE 13:3).

CONFESS - (MATTHEW 10:32,33; ACTS 8:36).

BE BAPTIZED - (ACTS 2:38; GALATIANS 3:27).

LIVE FAITHFULLY UNTO DEATH - (REV. 2:10).

UPON THE ROCK

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Volume 12 Issue 4

Letters to Young People

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Upon The Rock
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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

PLEASE READ FIRST

Dear Reader:

This issue of *Upon the Rock* is different from any issue we have ever published. First, it is a very personal issue for all of the writers who submitted articles (letters). Those who contributed to this edition have poured out their hearts for all to see as they spoke to those they love the most. I appreciate each writer who was willing to do this! Second, it takes a different approach than all of the other issues we have ever done in that rather than submitting articles as is normally done, each writer submitted letters to a specific person in their lives. Although there is a different approach you will notice that each letter is still biblically sound. Third, this issue was compiled specifically with young people in mind as you will see when you read the very first article. We realize that not all of our readers will be of the age we are specifically targeting with this issue, but still believe that everyone will enjoy this issue just the same, because those of us who are older will especially see the importance of these topics.

Our hope is that this special issue will be read by as many young people as possible. **PLEASE** get these into the hands of those who need it most. If you need more copies feel free to make them, or call us and we will try to accommodate your requests. **Parents, use this as a tool to talk to your children about these matters, or better yet, sit down after reading this issue and write your own letter to your child.** We only have one chance with the greatest possession God has ever given us. Let us do everything we can to help our young people.

Mark Reynolds

Finally, keep your body pure. Obviously, your father and I hope you will never taste alcohol or try smoking, but I am talking specifically here about waiting for sex until you are married. Sexual purity can be a difficult goal, however with the proper safeguards, you can remain chaste. As your parents, your dad and I will do everything we can to help you avoid the pitfalls that can lead to giving into temptation. First, avoid tempting situations, such as, being alone with a boy that you care about, and might be tempted with. This is a simple thing, but is virtually foolproof. Stay in the company of chaperones when with one from the opposite sex, and you will not be able to jeopardize your chastity. Second, surround yourself with people who think that premarital sex is **ab**normal and something to be avoided at all costs. These people will help you avoid giving into peer pressure that says “everybody’s doing it.” My sweet daughter, sex before marriage is NOT normal. God, the One who created the wonderful gift of sexual intimacy, set the guidelines for the marriage bed, and the marriage bed alone (Hebrews 13:4). Anything that goes against the things that God mandated is not normal. Please learn that now, and surround yourself with people who feel the same. Third, always remember that if a boy/man truly loves you, then he will want what is best for you. Any boy that would attempt to pressure you into doing anything that is bad for your body and soul is NOT the one for you. Find someone who wants to go to heaven just as much as you do, and together you can help each other get there. Rather than finding one you are having to always say “no” to, the right person will work with you so you can both please God while falling in love with one another.

May God bless you richly, my sweet angel!

I love you so much,
Mom

and conquer it. You must put on that spiritual armor that is spoken of in Ephesians 6:11, “so that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The greatest weapon in the Christian’s arsenal to triumph over evil is God’s Word (Ephesians 6:17). It is the sword of the Spirit.

Not only must you keep your heart pure, but you must keep your mind pure. In our world today, this is quite a task. The advances in technology have exploded in the last decade. Teen minds are inundated with images and words that are ungodly. Word and picture texts on cell phones, and internet websites can and do cause many a Christian to sin. It is imperative that you stand firm and not allow such unrighteousness to fill your mind. Not only is there filth found/shared in our technological gadgets like cell phones and computers, but media surrounds us with sinful sights and sounds. Movies, music, books, magazines and television are teeming with immorality. It seems as if we cannot escape the bombardment. Nevertheless, we must remember how the Bible instructs us to withstand the temptation to corrupt our minds with filth. We are to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). We are to shun evil by “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). Do not allow yourself to give in to these tempting forms of entertainment and time wasters. It is not worth losing your soul over! Fill your mind with Godly thoughts. Ask yourself before you watch that movie or read that magazine if it is something with which God would be pleased. If not, flee from it. Friends may think you are strange for not watching a particular movie or television program, but God said, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Be proud that you are not like the world! Protect your mind and keep it pure.

God Loves Young People

Jim Bullington

This very special edition of UPON THE ROCK is specifically aimed at **your heart**. It primarily consists of **LETTERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE**, each written from a personal and sometimes emotional perspective. In order to accurately hit our target, the articles and letters that are contained in this issue come directly from the heart of each writer. Love is an emotion that is centered in the heart and that finds reception in the heart. Without the heart, love could not exist. The tone of these articles is intended not only to tug at your heartstrings, but also to move you to love—to love God, to love yourself, and to love those around you.

As a writer and a regular contributor to this periodical, my prayer is that you will allow this edition to find its target in your life. For regular readers of UPON THE ROCK, you will notice a difference in this edition as we strive to meet the objectives just noted. However, we trust that you will also see that there is, even in this special edition, a biblical basis for all that is written.

Dear Young Person

Does this sound impersonal, maybe like a “To Whom it may Concern” greeting? If it does, I can only apologize, but I assure you it is not. Although I am older, you and I have much in common. It is that commonality to which I appeal. You see, I once too was young and I faced the same choices that you are now facing. My problem was not that I did not know what to choose; my problem was I just didn’t weigh the consequences of making wrong choices. The bad choices I made didn’t start out seeming like very meaningful choices; they were just tiny and insignificant matters; they were every day issues like what books to read, what words to say, what thoughts to focus on, what friends to

hang out with, what movies to see, whom I ought to respect, and several other seemingly ordinary matters. What I didn't realize was that these everyday choices would affect the way my entire life was being shaped. It is kind of like turning a boat on the lake just a tiny bit off course, but doing it several times. Though each turn is very, very small, the results are cumulative; we miss the destination by a mile. Life is like that; small choices that are but a baby step in the wrong direction lead to habits and lifestyles that totally miss the mark of what I can and should be!

The Secret of Success

Believe it or not, I know the "secret of success!" That doesn't make me wise or smart or a genius—it just means I am very fortunate. I am going to share that secret with you, and a simple secret it is. The secret of success is to always follow the path of love! No, not love like in the sixties when I was growing up with micro-buses, hippies, and flower children, but true, honest, eternal love. The love of which I speak is a love for God, a love for self, and a love for others. It is selfless in what it is willing to give in order to maintain that kind of love and the relationships that it births. That kind of love is the love of which the world in general knows very little. I am old and I am unknown to you by name or face, but I beg of you to listen to my counsel. My voice is just one of literally millions that are vying for your attention. So why should you listen to me? Simply because I know the secret to success and am willing to share it with you with no hope or intention of ever being thanked or repaid by you. It is a gift I offer; it is yours for the taking.

God is Capable of Love

To state this is to state the obvious to the student of the Bible. However, as a believer living in the seventh decade of my life, I have noticed a definite shift in how our culture depicts God and

it be your goal to keep your heart, mind, and body pure. If you reach that goal, your life will be full of joy, and that joy will follow you into your adult years. Beyond that you will receive the greatest joy of a crown of life that God has promised.

First, you must keep your heart pure. God tells us to hide His Words in our heart so that we will not sin (Psalm 119:11). In order to keep our hearts pure and protected from evil, we must know God's will for us. If one does not have that essential spiritual knowledge, she cannot overcome that constant daily assault from the evil of the world. Those pressures to use foul language, gossip, lie, cheat, etc. can only be overcome when we look to God's Word as "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). It is so wonderful to know that God knew there would be tribulations in our lives, and He gave us a self-help book to enable us to triumph over them! James tells us, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded" (James 4:7-8). If we look to and keep close to God and His Word, we can keep our hearts in a pure state.

How often should we be in study of God's Word, the Bible? Deuteronomy 6:6 explains that it must be a mainstay in our lives: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." As parents we are commanded to teach our children constantly. God expects parents to saturate their children with His Words. Why the continuous study of the Bible? It will enable you to meet evil head-to-head

As I close this letter I am reminded of a book that I have read to most of you through the years. The title of the book is “I am glad that I am your grandpa, let me tell you why.” Most of the times when I would read this book, you were sitting on my lap. I would give you a hug and you would give me a hug. Thank you for the hugs and I am proud to be your grandpa!

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To My Teenage Daughter

Mindy Reynolds

To My Wonderful Daughter:

You came into this world on one of the coldest days of the year, a frigid February evening. You were perfect in my eyes; healthy, strong, rosy cheeked and alert. You were pure and untainted by the world. How I wanted to keep you in this pure state forever. I knew eventually your purity would be compromised. The days were coming when you would experience first hand the evil in this world; temptation, peer pressure, filthy language, etc. Trying years, especially the teen years, were ahead of us.

Flash forward to the present. You are now 14 years old—a teen. No longer can I shield you from all the wickedness in this world like I did when you were a baby. I can, however, give you advice and guidance in combating the fiery darts Satan will hurl at you. I too have experienced those trying years, and I know personally the pain, temptation, and heartbreak that can ensue. I also know the joys that come with the adolescent years. May these years of your life, and the rest of your life, revolve around one thing...God. May

how we define love. Personally, my conviction that God is capable of love has only increased with time and maturity. It is my opinion that every act of God recorded in the Bible is an act that was ultimately motivated by love. I want to restate this so that it is not missed. **I believe that EVERY act of God recorded in the Bible was ultimately motivated by love!** These acts include the tender moments between God and those who loved Him as well as the violent moments that are recorded where He dealt with those who opposed Him or who in some way stood between Him and His plan to save all mankind. It is outside the scope of this short essay to defend this position, but as an informed Bible student, I want to set out this conviction at the very outset of this article and this edition of LETTERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

Love is...

Love is not the way it is currently depicted by our culture. However, I must hasten to clarify this statement because our culture depicts love in **every possible way!** In fact as I think about it, I conclude that our culture is totally clueless about love. We wouldn't know love if it bit us! We know what lust is. We have a definite handle on desire. We know about sex in every possible version and perversion. But, we don't know love! I happen to know that love involves respect; in fact, where there is no respect there can be no love. Never in my life have I witnessed a culture or a generation where respect of others was at a level lower than it is today! Typically we see value in human life only in regards to what it offers to us or others. When a human being has nothing to offer to society, society is more comfortable if that life simply ceases to exist. That is why abortion is freely offered to young and old alike; a baby is too much of an inconvenience so we just abort the embryo (very young child). The old and helpless are perceived as worthless and that is why euthanasia is on the rise along with assisted suicide. This trend will not stop; it will only increase as long

as we are befuddled over the concept of love.

Love is not the way it was defined by the brightest philosophers of ages past. However, it is interesting that it is almost universally admitted that such a thing as love exists. In almost every culture and in almost all generations, love has been acknowledged as a cherished emotion. But among the “thinkers” there is no consensus to just exactly what love is. Apart from such agreement, many of the discussions about love become a matter of semantics and personal opinions. Without an accepted definition, the argument becomes merely a verbal debate with no chance of agreement or substantive findings.

Let Someone Speak Who Knows

Who is this “someone who knows?” Well, I could say, “I know!” But, why would my opinion be any better than yours or any of the millions of other voices that might want to be heard? Just to put your mind at ease, I realize that my opinion would be no better than anyone else’s so I will refrain. However, this does not mean that there is no one qualified to speak. We will presently hear from someone who is imminently qualified to address this matter. This man is none other than John, the apostle of love.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” (1 John 3:1). “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3:16). “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God as sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but

money, but that really didn’t seem to matter with them. They were happy with the things that they had and never complained. As I reflect back in life and think of the good times that we had together. I think of our camping trips, fishing, Christmas, vacations, but most of all I cherish my quiet times with each one of them. It was those moments when we could really talk and share our thoughts and feelings. I cherish these times most.

As I write this letter to Tyler, Alex, Cassidy, Abby, Corinne, Emily, Elayna, and Case. I want you to know that your parents have brought me and Grammy great joy and great blessings. They have great love and respect for us and they show it in many ways. I am thankful that I am able to live close enough to watch your mom and dad raise you and be a part of your life. It is my prayer that you will always love and respect your parents as they did Grammy and me. (Ephesians 6:1-3) “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.””

I have been asked to write this letter and to have it published in this publication. There is a message I want to share with you that burns deep in my heart. I want you to know that I am loved beyond measure. That God so loved me that He gave His only Son for me. I want you to know that the God that so loved me loves you and gave His Son for you. I hope you will always put Him first in your lives. (Matthew 22:37-38) “Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ “This is the first and great commandment.” I know you are living in a very corrupt world. It is your choice if you are going to give into the pressures of the world. But you can be like Noah, Daniel, Abraham, Paul and be faithful to the Lord even when others are doing wrong. God said the majority will go the broad way that leads to destruction.

wives came and visited us and gave us some advice that we would never forget. She said, "God gave you this blessing don't allow it to take you away from God who gave her to you." We took this advice to heart and have tried to be faithful to the Lord. It was at that time when the elders asked us to work with the youth of the congregation. We started working with the youth and started conducting home Bible studies which helped us grow in the knowledge of our Lord. Our youth group was really growing and many people encouraged us in the work we were doing. The elders at Ecorse church of Christ were great examples of faithfulness that caused us to want to be more and work for the Lord. In 1969 I told one of the deacons that I wanted to preach. He told me that if I wanted to preach that he would see to it that I preached. I did not know at that time that he took out a second mortgage on his house and gave the money to the church, so I could attend the Memphis School of Preaching. Years later I found out what Winfred Wilson had done so that I could preach. Children, I am indebted to so many people who have helped me in my Christian life!

In 1970, I enrolled in the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee. We had never been to Tennessee nor knew anything about Memphis. We left our home in Michigan and all of our family. This was difficult for us because we were young, but it was the best two years of our lives. A lot of changes took place in our lives during these two years of school. It was in Memphis that we had our second child, Mark. It was a big change for us; we now had two that God had entrusted us to raise. Mark brought a lot of joy and happiness to our lives. Even though there were four years difference between Mark and his older sister, they played well together and loved each other. Mark would do anything for his sister. Then four years later Gary would come into our care. We lived in Tecumseh, Michigan at that time. He was a lot different from his older brother. He was quiet and very well behaved. We tried to raise all three of your parents to be Christians and to put God first in their lives. We didn't have much

that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7-11). "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16).

One more bit of testimony is offered by John; here it is: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Dear young friend, do you realize that if the world can convince you to refuse to read and heed the Bible, that you have surrendered your ability to know true love? You may search as did Solomon and exhaust all your resources, but until you allow God to speak to you through His word, it will all be vanity (nothingness)! Solomon discovered a common human purpose: "Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

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A Letter from a Mother to Her Son

Meredith Light

I am sitting in a lawn chair in our backyard. I am watching you happily dig and play in a pile of rocks and dirt. You fill your little dump truck and haul it to the other side of the pile and dump it out. You do this over and over again. You suddenly notice me watching you and look up at me and smile. "Hi, Mama!" you say. In your sweet little face I see so many things. I see happiness. I see purity, peace and love. I see one of the most precious blessings the Lord has ever bestowed upon me. But in my mind, I also picture an enormous clock with the second hand ticking loudly and moving quickly past the numbers. I can't believe it has been more than 2 years since you were born. Each day seems to pass more quickly than the last and I am reminded of what the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us about time. *"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, and a time to lose; A time to keep, and a time to throw away; A time to tear, and a time to sew; A time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."* Almighty God has given us a time for everything. Right now, in the days of your youth, is the time for me to establish your love for the Lord and your faith in Him.

God **knew** how quickly these precious years will go by. He wanted mothers and fathers to recognize the importance and the urgency in teaching our children about Him from the word "Go." *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your*

A Letter to my Grandchildren

Larry Reynolds

I write this letter at the age of sixty one years old. I have been married to your grandmother for forty two years. I first met your Grammy when she was eleven years old. A friend of mine told me that he had seen a pretty girl in varsity band. So I went to the band room to see this pretty girl. She walked in, I saw her brown eyes and a pretty smile. We liked each other in Junior high, we dated on and off in high school and I married her when she was seventeen. The date was November 5, 1966, I can remember that day just like it was yesterday. I remember when she walked down the aisle, how beautiful she was in her white dress and beautiful smile. We promised to love each other until death would separate us. I love your Grammy more today than I did the day I married her. The thing that I love most about Grammy is how good of a person she was and is. She was very popular in school but never compromised her beliefs. She had a pure heart and lived a pure life and that is what made me fall in love with your Grammy.

We rented a furnished apartment in Wyandotte, Michigan for eighty dollars a month. I worked for a copper and brass company in Detroit, Michigan and Grammy stayed home and took care of the house. We started going to church together and that is the best thing we have ever done. Grammy went to church as a little girl, but it was a denomination that taught error and I was a Christian but was unfaithful. Your Grammy was converted and I repented and became faithful to the Lord. We wanted to raise our children to be faithful to God and we knew that we had to set the example. Our first child was a little girl, we named her Donna. In a couple of weeks we took her to church and she cried and fussed about all the time we were there. The next week she did the same thing. So Grammy stayed home with her the next week. One of our elder's

to consider this in light of what Paul said and what our ultimate purpose in life is (fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When you are with the opposite sex, don't do anything you wouldn't do with your physical brother or sister. I know I just lost some of you there, but I would encourage you, if you disagree, not to get mad at me, write me off as some extremist nut, but take issue with me and prove from the Bible otherwise. Prove that physical or emotional intimacy outside of marriage is something the Bible encourages as a good thing.

It is very difficult for us to live for Jesus and not be influenced by our culture and our own desires, but remember that God said we are to deny ourselves and that we are called out of the world of darkness and into His light (Matthew 16:24; Colossians 1:13-15). If you've ever been in a darkened movie theatre for a couple of hours during the afternoon, you know that when you walk out into the light it is initially painful, blinding and you are tempted to shut your eyes, but if you continue to stay in the light and keep your eyes open, you can see much more clearly. The same is true of the sinful culture that we exist in. When the light of the Gospel is shined into this world darkened by sin our tendency is to close our eyes because it makes us uncomfortable. But Jesus said, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil...but whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God" (John 3:19-21).

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God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" Deuteronomy 6:4-9. I have been given the awesome responsibility and privilege (along with your daddy) of teaching you to love God and His word. **What an honor!** I get to be the one to "introduce" you to Jesus, so to speak. I cannot pass this responsibility onto your Sunday school teachers, the preacher or your grandparents. Nor would I want to. God has chosen **ME** to be your mama. Your first lessons in love, kindness, forgiveness, patience and humility will all come from me. I'm sure some days it will be more of a challenge than others to teach these lessons to you and some days, I'm sure, I will be re-learning them myself. I pray to God every day. I pray for you, about you, and because of you. I ask Him to help me show you His truths. I ask him to help me teach you by word and example (which, by the way, was very challenging when you colored on my white carpet with red lipstick!) And I ask Him to help prepare me for the years to come. I know the most challenging days for me as a mother will not be filled with diaper changes and nap schedules. I know the time is coming when you will think I don't know much of anything and you won't be very happy with some of the rules we will have in our home. You will struggle with whether or not to follow your friends or follow the Lord. When that time comes, please try to remember that I love you and that I am trying to accomplish the task assigned to me by God. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.* Also, try to remember the task He has laid out before you. *"Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." Colossians 3:20.* When you are struggling, I will make sure to leave this verse taped to a place where you will see it

often. And I will be praying for you. *“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes, But know that for all these God will bring you into the judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.” Ecclesiastes 11:9-10.*

It is difficult for me to imagine you as a grown man. I have so many hopes and dreams for your future. I want you to work alongside your Daddy one day on our farm. I want you to marry a Christian woman and have children of your own. I want you to be able to live comfortably. I want you to be a respected member of your community. There is one hope however, that trumps all the rest. It has been my “work in progress,” since the day you were born and will continue to be. Son, my greatest hope for you is that you would give your life to Christ—that you would become a Christian and remain faithful to Him all the days of your life. Remember, *“fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13.* Nothing you will ever do could make me more proud of you. I love you.

Love, Mama

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for life has never given themselves emotionally or physically to anyone but you?

Christians and Dating

“Although dating isn’t necessarily wrong, we’ve got to keep in mind that the system of dating as we know it grew out of a culture that celebrates self-centeredness and immorality. Just as a bar that sells alcohol doesn’t force anyone to drink and isn’t the cause of drunkenness, a bar is an establishment created so that people can have a place to drink and get drunk. You wouldn’t say that getting rid of bars would end alcoholism or everyone that goes to a bar is an alcoholic, but neither would you encourage a friend who was trying to quit drinking to hang out in bars. In a similar way, the system of dating can encourage the sinful desires of our hearts. No, dating doesn’t make us sin. And no, getting rid of it wouldn’t solve all our problems in relationships. But it would be foolish to pretend that dating itself isn’t at least part of the problem” (I Kissed Dating Goodbye by Joshua Harris).

Perhaps Christians have made the same mistake as the children of Israel did during their days in captivity. While in a strange land they were heavily influenced by the heathen nations around them. They partially spoke their native tongue, the language of God and partially in the pagan language of Ashdod (Nehemiah 13:24). Are we trying to live for the Lord part of our lives, while living according to the sinful world the rest of the time?

So what should young Christians do? Follow the advice of the apostle Paul to another young, single Christian named Timothy. Paul taught him to treat, “the younger (women) as sisters with all purity” (1 Timothy 5:2). Here is a simple formula to follow when you are with the opposite sex. I will warn you, when I tell you this you will be tempted to shout out loud “What! Are you Crazy?” But I ask you

Look how much things have changed in 50 years. During the days of courting, physical contact between boys and girls was shunned. Hugging, holding hands, kissing and certainly sex was not allowed until marriage. Couples might engage in these activities without their parents knowledge and consent, but it certainly would not be tolerated if known about. Go to the mall this Friday night and you are likely to see anything just short of sex taking place right out in the open and no one seems to think twice about it. Now before you decide I am a Puritan who wants to put Scarlet A's on people, consider the effects this may be having on our society. Do marriages last longer today than they did in the days of courting? Are there more unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and abortions in the era of dating or the age of courting? Socially, spiritually and physically, dating has not been a positive contribution to mankind, but an extremely negative one.

By the time the average American marries, they will have had 7 sexual partners if they are a man and 4 if they are a woman. Imagine on your wedding day if you stood at the alter ready to make a lifetime commitment to this one person, only to have 6 other women come and stand by your bride or 3 other men stand by your groom. How would it make you feel? Your spouse? Your family? But what if you remained sexually pure? How many serious, committed relationships will you and your spouse have been in? How many men will your bride have given her heart to and shared intimate details about her hopes, dreams, fears and secrets with BEFORE she even meets you. How many other girls will your husband have held hands with and in his arms, looking into her eyes, passionately kissing her lips and telling her I will always love you BEFORE he even knows you exist. We like to say the past is the past, but we all know that is not true. Jealousy, guilt, shame, fear and deceit follow us around for the rest of our lives. If we were to be completely honest, would you rather have that or know that the person you took to be your spouse

A Letter from a Father to His Daughter

Patrick Morrison

Your mother and I had been married for a little over two years when we received the news that we would be welcoming a new addition to our family. The home that we had formed when we were married was a joyous and happy one, with God at the center of our lives. Little did we know or understand that even greater happiness awaited us with your arrival. I had read the passages, and heard them many times in sermons and Bible classes, but it was not until I experienced first-hand the joy of fatherhood that I then understood the words of the Psalmist: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). The Proverbs writer tells us: "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers" (Proverbs 17:6). Thanks to the advancements of medical science, the doctors told us to prepare for the arrival of a baby girl, and so with eager anticipation, your mother and I began to make ready everything we thought we would need as we awaited your entrance into our lives. Know that even before you came into this world, many prayers were uttered on your behalf by friends, family, the church, and by your mother and me. On July 25th, 2002, God blessed us with the safe delivery of a beautiful, healthy baby girl. Your mother and I carefully selected the name you would wear, having already decided that all of our children would have Bible names. We named you Lydia, in honor of the great woman of faith of Acts 16, with the prayer and hope that you will exhibit the same saving faith, deep spirituality, and gracious hospitality as your namesake. After a few days in the hospital, we took the journey home as a family. To be quite honest, your mother and I were somewhat anxious, and extremely nervous as we reflected on the fact that we had no experience raising children, and now we were responsible for this new, precious life that God had entrusted to our care. The anxiety and nervousness gave way to exhilaration, joy, and thankfulness as we gazed into your face and held you

in our arms. Each passing day brought with it some new thing, some new expression or sound or action, as we watched you grow. As we have seen you grow physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, our love for you has also been growing. We have seen you grow from a tiny baby girl into a beautiful young lady of almost seven. All of the hours spent holding, rocking you to sleep, wiping away the tears, smiling at your antics, and rejoicing in your victories have given your mother and I time for reflection and prayerful consideration of what we want most for you as you journey through this life toward heaven. I want to share some of these things that we pray about often for you, as well as for those who will impact and influence your life.

Our prayer first and foremost for your life is that you will love God supremely and obey Him implicitly. There is not better life to be lived than a life that seeks to put God and His kingdom first (Matthew 6:33), and your mother and I would have no greater joy than to know that you are walking with God in truth (3 John 4). Though we try as best as humanly possible to set the right example for you in this regard, we sometimes fail, and we come short of what God desires of us as your parents. There will be other friends and loved ones along the way who will impact your life for good, and lead you closer to God. At times, they may also disappoint you and fail to be the right kind of example for you. But God will never disappoint you! He will always be there with you if you will walk with Him (Hebrews 13:5). You can always trust in God, and lean upon Him (Jeremiah 17:7). His way is always right, and you will never falter if you will always seek to walk in the steps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21). God loves you (1 John 4:10), and He desires that you love Him in return by obeying His commandments (John 14:15). We want to instill within you a deep love for God and the church. From the moment you came home from the hospital until now, you have been present for every worship assembly, Bible class, VBS, Gospel Meet-

than those who didn't. These guys became the "big man on campus" and it wasn't long before this trend made its way from the college campus to the high school hallways. Dating was, and is, informal, unchaperoned interaction between males and females with no specific commitment. The problem is, just because commitment isn't involved doesn't mean that attachment isn't. In most every relationship between young people, one person thinks they are committed and therefore gets emotionally attached, while the other is just looking for a good time. When it's no longer fun, or someone else more fun comes along, they break off the relationship and the other person is left hurting and grieving over the loss. This scenario plays out so often that "having your heart broken" is now almost considered a right of passage in adolescence.

Courting on the other hand was all about finding a suitable spouse. Males and females could only interact socially in settings that were chaperoned by the parents, and most often in the girl's home. This arrangement insured that the interaction was appropriate and that the parents could observe the character and conduct of the young man. Courting was not viewed as a social pastime done just to have a good time, but to determine if the two people were willing to make a commitment to one another to begin a life together and meet each other's needs. If the two people were willing to make such a commitment, they were permitted to begin a formal relationship together, with the understanding that it would end in marriage.

Tragically, in recent years dating has moved into a new and dangerous place. Although it was always about fun without commitment, in recent years it has become about physical intimacy without commitment. Hooking up, casual sex and friends with benefits are terms that are replacing dating, going steady and going out.

Young People and Dating

Brandon Britton

Although most of us don't realize it at the time, when we make the decision to go on a date with someone, we are making one of the most important decisions of our lives. It is almost a certainty that you will marry someone you date. With that in mind, every person you go out with is potentially your future spouse. Along with our parents, our spouses are the single greatest influence in our lives. What we do, where we live, how we think, who we spend our time with, what we believe, is all influenced heavily by our spouses. Knowing all of this should cause us to proceed with great caution and much serious thought when preparing to date.

The History of Dating

You might be interested in knowing that the history of dating as we now know it is really quite brief. Did you realize that dating was "invented" in the 20th century; roughly 80 years ago. However, it wasn't until the 1950's that dating really grew in popularity and practice. Why the 50's? World War 2 was over, soldiers came home, factory jobs on assembly lines were in abundance making it possible and necessary for people to buy cars, leave the farm and move into the suburbs. As a result, teenagers had free time, spending money and the means to go out without parental supervision, and thus dating became a fully ingrained part of our culture. So much so, that in 2009 we can't imagine a world without dating, but perhaps we should at least give it some consideration.

Courting vs. Dating

Initially dating wasn't about finding your true love, but about competition and popularity. On college campuses those young men who could afford finer things (nicer cars, better restaurants, more expensive clothes and gifts) had a much better chance of getting dates

ing, Bible Bowl, visitation meetings, etc., with the exception of the times you were sick. We make sure that these things are a priority in your life, because we love God and want to please Him, and because we love you and want you to live for Him. We pray that as you grow in your knowledge and understanding of God's word, that you will decide to obey the Gospel and become a child of God (Romans 6:17). The decision to become a Christian will be the greatest choice you will ever make!

Your mother and I are also praying for those with whom you associate. You are a friendly, outgoing young lady, and you easily make friends. We pray this will always be the case, and that you can influence many for good. We know that some of your friends will be from families who are not Christians, but our prayer is that your closest friends on earth will be those whose families are seeking to raise them in the way that we are trying to raise you. The choice you make regarding your friends is extremely important (1 Corinthians 15:33). If you surround yourself with friends who are trying to live right and do right then you will have a much easier time making the right choices. Above all, we are praying for that young man who will ultimately become your husband. We are praying that he will be a faithful Christian who is active in the work of the Lord, who will help lead you to heaven as he strives to be like Jesus. We are also praying for his parents, that they will strive to raise him in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and order his steps according to God's will (Judges 13:12). We are praying for you, that you will want to be the keeper of the home according to God's divine plan for the home (Titus 2:5). Your mother is a wonderful example of a Christian mother and wife, and I pray that you will carefully watch and listen to her so that you will be the same kind of wife and mother in your home.

We are also praying that our home will be a place of refuge and

happiness for you. We want you to grow up with happy memories of the times we shared together in our home. Not every moment will be pleasant, but we hope and pray that the lasting impression you have of your childhood home will be thoughts of joy, happiness, and togetherness, a place where God was always placed above all. We want you to see and to experience the reality that the Christian life is the happiest, most amazing life you could choose to live. Jesus came to give us the abundant life (John 10:10), and your mother and I pray that you can see that in our home. We want you to see that our home is a place where others are welcomed, where service to God is rendered at every opportunity. We want you to see that our home is a tool to be used to bring others to God, and to grow closer to one another as we try to live for Him. We try to make sure that our home is a safe-haven for you from the onslaughts of the world. We pray that our home is a place to which you will always want to return because of the happiness and godliness that pervades it. We love the joy and happiness that you have brought to our home, and pray that such will always be the case. When you, as well as others, look at our home, I want all to see a place where Jesus lives (2 Kings 20:15).

Lydia, our lives have been made fuller and happier because God brought you to us. Your mother and I love you with a love surpassed only by our love for God and for each other as husband and wife. Our hearts are full of thanksgiving, joy, and love as we are able to watch you develop into a beautiful young lady. As much as our hearts swell within us because you are our child, we want you to know the peace, joy, and love of being His child! Our prayer for you is that you will be a faithful Christian daughter, wife, mother, and friend, and that we will all be able to spend the ceaseless ages of eternity in heaven together when life here is no more! We love you!

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girl's teenage years, where she still loves her daddy just as much as she ever did, but now she does not want to kiss him in front of her friends. She has put down Barbie dolls and has started wearing makeup. It then goes to the scene of the girl's wedding day just before her dad walks her down the aisle, and records the conversation between the dad and his little girl moments before he gives her away: "She'll change her name today. She'll make a promise and I'll give her away. Standing in the bride's room just staring at her. She asks me what I'm thinking, and I say I'm not sure. I just feel like I'm loosin' my baby girl. And she leaned over and gave me butterfly kisses with her mama there, putting little white flowers all up in her hair. Walk me down the aisle daddy it's just about time. Does my dress look pretty daddy? Daddy don't cry. Oh with all that I've done wrong, I must have done something right to deserve hugs every morning and butterfly kisses at night." Oh it is going to be hard to give my daughter into your care, but when I do I hope and pray that it will be forever. I hope you and my daughter will not just recite vows that day, but I pray that you two will engrave them into your hearts vowing NEVER to break them.

Dear son, my daughter loves you, and so do I. As much as I hate the thought of my daughter leaving my care, I cherish the thought of someone who loves her just as much as I do caring for her for the rest of her life. I want to welcome you into our family. I realize I still have my daughter, and now I also have a son. Take care of my little girl.

Love,
Dad

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home of her own. That is the way God wanted it to be from the very beginning (Genesis 2:18-25). We also realize that we will no longer be the biggest influence in her life to help her get her to heaven...you will be! That is also the way God wanted it to be (Ephesians 5:22-25). My hope for you is that you will be everything a Christian husband should be, and lead my daughter and your family to heaven. I know you will not be perfect; how could I expect that when I, myself am far less than perfect. I do hope you will treat my daughter and hold her up with great respect in the way that is due a worthy woman (Proverbs 31). Do not belittle her, but revere her as an equal in your home as she walks by your side and submits to your leadership (Ephesians 5:25). It is an awesome responsibility to be the head of a home, but I believe you are up to it, or my daughter would not have chosen to be with you for the rest of her life. I am not ashamed to beg when it comes to things of great importance, and so now I beg you: **Please, please, please** lead my daughter and grandchildren to heaven. I cannot bear to think of eternity without them.

I want you to know, son, that although I have high hopes and expectations for you, I am going to make my best efforts to stay out of the things that parents/in-laws should stay out of. When you two disagree, it will be up to you two to make it right. When my wonderful daughter leaves our home, we are going to allow her the space to cleave unto you (Genesis 2:24). I cannot tell you how many times I have thought, and to be completely honest, have dreaded the thought of the day my little girl will leave my home to make her own. I still cannot listen to the song "Butterfly Kisses," without either becoming a blubbing idiot, or thinking of writing my congressman asking him to introduce legislation to have that song banned in the United States. The song traces the life of a little girl from the time she used to give her dad butterfly kisses as a little girl, and doing the things many girls do for their daddy. It then fast-forwards to the

A Letter to My Future Son-in-Law

Mark Reynolds

Dear Son-in-Law:

As I write this letter my oldest daughter is only fourteen years old; my other two girls are eleven and eight respectively; all of them still several years away from marrying, and have no idea who their husbands will be. So why write this letter now? I want to write this now to let you know, that although at this time I have no idea of your identity; I have been praying for you literally from the very first year of my daughter's life. She will tell you this same thing, that as long as she can remember, when we say our "goodnight" prayers I have prayed for the man who will one day marry her. Not only have we prayed fervently for you, but also for your mother and father as they are rearing you. I have several things I wish to convey to you in this letter. I hope to show you my feelings for my daughter and for you, my hopes in you, and I want to put you at ease about having me as your father-in-law.

Son-in-law, there is no way I can adequately put into words the feelings of love, pride, tenderness and adoration my wife and I have for the daughter you are marrying. We have never felt love like this before, and have no way of describing that love except to say that her well-being means more to her mother and me than our very own lives. I could write for days about the joy your wife-to-be has brought into our lives. She has made us laugh until we cried, she has made us proud with her many accomplishments, and she has made me a better person by her tremendous example. I mean this when I say that she is everything I would aspire to be myself. I look up to her, admire her, and aspire to be more like her. I cannot tell you how many times a week I have this overwhelming feeling and thought: "I don't deserve her." God has blessed me with a most precious gift,

and I do not deserve her. This has to be the sentiment of Psalm 127:3, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” I am sure that I am not the first father to believe this, nor will I be the last, but I believe that my daughter deserves nothing but the best in life. This is not meant to put undue pressure on you, in fact, just the opposite is true. If you make my daughter happy, and treat her the way she deserves, I will love you and honor you for the rest of my life.

Just as I have always had the highest of hopes for my daughter, I also have high hopes for you. Your bride’s mother and I have had one goal for our daughter above all others: We have always tried to direct her on the narrow path that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13,14). We realize that as parents, especially for the first several years in our daughter’s life, we have had the biggest impact on the spirituality of our child as she was in our home. We have tried ever to keep the cross of Christ before her eyes. We have studied the Bible in our home on a regular basis; we have taken her to every assembly at our home congregation. We have taken her to gospel meetings and lectureships all over this country. We have prayed with her daily, and talked with her about her greatest goals in life. We have been far from perfect as parents, but we have worked hard to raise the love of your life as God wanted us to. We have done our very best to keep her pure in so many ways. We have not let her watch movies and television shows that would corrupt her mind. We have not let her surf the internet without our being able to monitor the places she visits online. We have tried our level best not to allow her to be in situations where she would be tempted to give into fleshly temptations. In short we have tried to keep her pure in mind, body and soul. That has been our duty, our privilege and our blessing.

We realize, however, that she will be leaving our home to start a

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