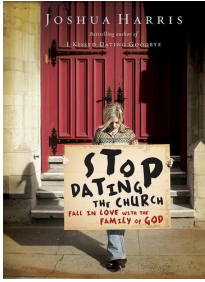
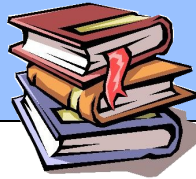


Library News

By Dan Benson



Book Review: *Stop Dating the Church* by Joshua Harris

Stop Dating the Church: Fall in Love with the Family of God by Joshua

Harris is a short, easy-to-read book with a deep, perhaps hard-to-grasp message – God created the church to be the central instrument for accomplishing His will. He loves the church deeply and we should too.

The title has to do with how many Christians approach church – like consumers choosing between Target or Wal-Mart. We tend to “date” the church, refusing to commit to a long-term relationship, ready to dump her if she’s too clingy or not pretty or entertaining enough. It’s not a serious relationship.

The basis for committing, Harris says, is that God has committed Himself to the church.

“The church was actually God’s idea – not some plan or program invented by humans. In fact, the church is the only institution God promised to sustain forever,” Harris writes. God is head-over-heels in love with us in the church. We’re His bride. In fact, Harris notes that Scripture tells us (in Eph. 5:31-32) that God invented romance to give us an image of His love for

the church, “so that throughout our lives we could catch a faint glimmer of the intense love Christ has for those He died to save.”

Harris explains the beauty of the church, our need for the church, what commitment to a church involves, how to look for a church and how to make Sunday the best day of the week.

Harris makes it clear he’s talking about committing to a local church. For instance, many of Christ’s commands make it quite evident that you cannot follow God outside of being part of a local church. How can a person “submit to one another” (Eph. 5:21), “encourage one another” (Heb. 3:13), “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) or just “love one another” (John 13:35) if he is not part of a local community of believers?

This is something to remember as we strive toward becoming “a Gospel-centered community that seeks to glorify God by loving Him wholeheartedly,” as Friedens’ mission statement says. Just like in marriage, commitment to the family of God involves risk. But the rewards are great, Harris points out. The imperfect, often befuddling and sometimes frustrating church is God’s plan “for glorifying himself and extending his reign.” As a result, “this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about *even among the angels!*” (Ephesians 3:10, The Message).

Why would anyone not want to be part of something so glorious?

“Stop Dating the Church” is available in the Friedens library.

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