


NEW EDITION

# JOSHUA HARRIS

Bestselling author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*



8 Great  
Courtship  
Conversations



b o y m e e t s g i r l

s a y h e l l o t o c o u r t s h i p



boy meets girl

JOSHUA HARRIS

Multnomah Books

BOY MEETS GIRL

published by Multnomah Books

© 2000, 2005 by Joshua Harris

International Standard Book Number: 978-1-59052-167-0

Cover photo by David Sacks

Interior design and typeset by Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture references are from:

*The Holy Bible*, New International Version © 1973, 1984 by International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House

Also quoted are:

*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation (NLT) © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

*The Message* © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

MULTNOMAH and its mountain colophon are registered trademarks of Random House Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission.

For information:

MULTNOMAH BOOKS

12265 ORACLE BOULEVARD, SUITE 200

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80921

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Harris, Joshua. Boy meets girl : say hello to courtship / by Joshua Harris.

p. cm. ISBN 1-59052-167-6

1-57673-709-8 (pbk.)

1. Single people—Religious life. 2. Courtship—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Courtship. 4. Dating (Social customs)—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4596.S5 H36 2000 241'.6765—dc21 00-011254

*To my bride, Shannon.  
This book is the fruit of your  
encouragement, humility, and sacrifice.  
I love and cherish you.*

---

# Contents

---

For the Boy and Girl...*an introduction* . . . . . 7

## Part 1: RETHINKING ROMANCE

1. What I've Learned Since I Kissed Dating Goodbye  
*From Waiting to Knowing—A Personal Story* . . . . . 13
2. Rediscovering Courtship  
*A Return to Purposeful Romance* . . . . . 24
3. Romance and Wisdom: A Match Made in Heaven  
*Why You Need More than Just Intense Feelings* . . . . . 33
4. Tell Me How, Tell Me Who, Tell Me When!  
*How God Guides You to the Right Thing  
at the Right Time* . . . . . 54

## Part 2: THE SEASON OF COURTSHIP

5. More than Friends, Less than Lovers  
*How to Grow and Guard in Friendship,  
Fellowship, and Romance* . . . . . 73
6. What to Do with Your Lips  
*Practical Principles for Great Communication* . . . . . 87
7. If Boys Would Be Men, Would Girls Be Ladies?  
*How to Embrace Your God-Given Role  
As a Man or Woman* . . . . . 103

8. Courtship Is a Community Project <i>How to Gain Guidance, Support, and Strength from Your Church and Family</i> . . . . .	121
9. True Love Doesn't Just Wait <i>How to Be Passionately in Love and Sexually Pure</i> . . . . .	140

### Part 3: BEFORE YOU SAY "I DO"

10. When Your Past Comes Knocking <i>How You Can Face Past Sexual Sin and Experience God's Forgiveness</i> . . . . .	171
11. Are You Ready for Forever? <i>Ten Questions to Answer Before You Get Engaged</i> . . . . .	196
12. That Day <i>Living and Loving in Light of Eternity</i> . . . . .	210
Courtship Conversations: <i>Eight Great Dates</i> . . . . .	223
Notes . . . . .	241
Acknowledgments . . . . .	245
About the Author . . . . .	247

For the Boy and Girl...

---

## AN INTRODUCTION

When I was single and twenty-one years old I wrote a book called *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. It wasn't your typical book on relationships. It encouraged singles to be radically committed to honoring God in their relationships—even if it meant dumping the dating game. It was my own story of learning to trust God and wait on romance till I was ready for commitment.

To my astonishment, God provided a publisher willing to print my oddly titled book. To everyone's astonishment, the book actually sold. It turned out that many people besides me were rethinking romance. I have received thousands of e-mails, postcards, and letters from singles of all ages from all over the world who wanted to share their stories, ask questions, and get advice.

As the letters poured in, I realized that while God had graciously used my book to help some people, it had also raised a lot of questions. For example, if you don't date, how exactly do you end up married? One girl wrote: "I want to avoid the pitfalls of our culture's approach to romance, but how do I get close enough to a guy to decide whether I want to marry him? What comes between friendship and marriage?"

*Boy Meets Girl* is the answer to these questions—ones I

eventually had to wrestle with myself when I felt ready to pursue a girl with marriage in mind. It's a book about courtship, or what I like to call romance with purpose. It is filled with stories of ordinary people who are choosing to honor God in the real-life details of their love lives—from the agonizing questions about the timing of a relationship, to challenges like communicating well and remaining sexually pure when you're deeply in love.

Here's what you'll find in the book's three sections.

*Part One* defines the basic principles of courtship. We'll see how when we allow wisdom to guide our intense romantic feelings, our relationships are blessed by patience, purpose, and a clear grasp of reality. One couple's story will help us realize when we're ready to start a relationship and with whom, and we'll see how God intends to use this process to make us more like Him.

*Part Two* jumps into the practical issues of what to do as the season of courtship unfolds. We'll learn how to grow closer, but still guard our hearts in important areas like friendship, communication, fellowship, and romance. We'll get specific about our roles as men and women. We'll look at the importance of community during this time. Then we'll talk honestly about sexual purity and how we can prepare for a great sex life in marriage.

*Part Three* helps couples who are getting more serious to move toward marriage in a God-honoring way. We'll see how God's grace can help us face sin from our past. We'll ask some tough questions before engagement, including the all-important one: "Should we go forward together into marriage, or should we call our courtship off?" Finally, we'll



be reminded that God's grace is our ultimate source of confidence for joining our hearts and lives in the vows of marriage.

As an added feature, you'll find a section at the back of the book called "Courtship Conversations: Eight Great Dates," developed with the help of my editors and friends, David and Heather Kopp. Our purpose has been to suggest activities and conversations that will help you get to know each other better, consider a possible future together, honor God in your relationship, and have plenty of fun.

Whether you're currently single, casually seeing someone, or in a serious relationship, I hope you'll take the time to read and wrestle with the ideas in this book. There's a good chance they will stretch your thinking and challenge your assumptions in healthy ways.

If you are in a relationship, I encourage you to read this book as a couple. Many have used this book to help understand how to grow their relationship and to set a clear course for deeper commitment.

As a single man, I wrote *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* to challenge the world's approach to romance. Today, as a married man, I write *Boy Meets Girl* to celebrate God's way in romance. I've seen just how good it is. And I want you to know that as you entrust your dreams of finding true love to His care, you will too.

*part 1*

---

RETHINKING  
ROMANCE

## Chapter One

---

# WHAT I'VE LEARNED SINCE I KISSED DATING GOODBYE

## *From Waiting to Knowing— A Personal Story*

**T**he clock read 5:05 P.M. Shannon's workday was over. She enjoyed her job at the church, but she was ready to go home and unwind.

She began her familiar end-of-the-day routine: tidied her desk, shut down her computer, straightened a picture on her bookshelf, got her coat from the closet, and said her good-byes. "Bye, Nicole," she said to the girl in the office beside her. "See you tomorrow, Helen," she called to the receptionist.

She walked through the quiet lobby and pushed open one of the heavy glass doors. The winter wind tugged at her as she made her way across the nearly empty parking lot. She climbed into her worn, navy blue Honda Accord and shut out the cold.

She lifted her keys to the ignition, and then paused. There, alone in the silence, the emotions she had kept at bay during the day came rushing in. Tears welled up in her eyes. She leaned her forehead against the steering wheel and began to cry.

“Why, Lord?” she whispered. “Why is this so hard? What am I supposed to do with these feelings? Take them away if they’re not from You.”

I used to watch from my window as Shannon walked to her car at the end of each day. My office looked out over the parking lot. *What is she thinking about?* I wondered. I longed to know more about her—to go beyond our polite conversations as casual friends and coworkers and really get to know her.

But was it the right time? My heart had been wrong so many times before. Could I trust my feelings? Would she return my interest?

From my vantage point, Shannon Hendrickson seemed happy, confident, and oblivious of me. I was sure she liked another guy. As I watched her drive away, I whispered my own prayer. *What is Your will, God? Is she the one? Help me be patient. Show me when to act. Help me trust You.*

How could I know that the girl in the navy blue Honda was crying as she drove away, or that I was the cause of her tears?

*Three months later.* There I was, a twenty-three-year old, but my hands were acting like they’d never dialed a phone number. I gripped my cordless phone as if it were a wild animal

trying to escape and tried again.

*You can do this*, I assured myself.

The phone rang three times before an answering machine picked up. She wasn't home. I gritted my teeth. *Should I leave a message?* The machine beeped, and I took the plunge.

"Hey, Shannon, this is Josh...uh, Harris."

I was sure my voice made it obvious how nervous I felt. I'd never called her at home before, and I had no excuse related to work or church for doing so now. "Um...could you give me a call when you get a chance? Thanks." I hung up, feeling like a complete idiot.

For sixty-four agonizing minutes I analyzed whether or not the message I had left sounded cool and collected. Then the phone rang. I took a deep breath and answered.

It was Shannon.

"Hey, thanks for calling me back. How's it going?"

We chatted for a few minutes about her day and did our best to have a natural conversation, even though we both knew that my calling her was the most unnatural thing in the world. I finally got to the point and asked if she could meet me the next day after work at Einstein's, a local bagel shop. She said she could.

Before we hung up, I offered an ambiguous explanation for the rendezvous. "I need to talk...about a guy I know who's interested in you."

## A Change of Perspective

My phone call to Shannon might not seem like a big deal to most people, but for me it was monumental.

Why? Because I had quit dating. I know that sounds strange, so let me explain. I had come to believe that the lifestyle of recreational romance was a detour from serving God as a single. So while I kept my social life, my female friends, and my desire to get married someday, I stopped dating.

This new perspective was anything but characteristic of me.

I had always been a flirt who lived for the thrill of romance. For me, rejecting the dating game was a seismic shift.

My change of perspective began after I broke up with a girl I'd been going out with for two years. Our relationship was an area of my life that I had refused to submit to God. When it ended, He began to show me just how selfish I was. I'd used her to satisfy my own sinful desires. Even though we never went all the way, I'd led her into a sinful physical relationship. I had hurt her. I had broken a lot of promises.

For the first time, I really began to question how my faith as a Christian affected my love life. There had to be more to it than “don't have sex” and “only date Christians.” What did it mean to truly love a girl? What did it feel like to really be pure—in my body *and* my heart? And how did God want me to spend my single years? Was it merely a time to try out different girls romantically?

Slowly and in spite of my resistance, God peeled away layer after layer of wrong thinking, wrong values, and wrong desires. He changed my heart. And as my heart changed, I saw that my lifestyle had to change too.

I wrote about my experience in my first book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. I wanted to challenge other singles to reconsider the way they pursued a romance in light of God's Word. “If we aren't really ready for commitment, what's the point of

getting into intimate and romantic relationships?" I asked. "Why not enjoy friendship with the opposite sex but use our energy as singles to serve God?"

The main point of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* was: "If you're not ready for marriage, *wait* on romance."

But now, five years later, I was asking the question, "How can you know when you *are* ready for marriage? And once you're ready, what should you do?"

This is why my phone call to Shannon was such a big deal. I'd reached a point where I felt I *was* ready to pursue marriage, and I was deeply attracted to her. What now? I had experienced God's faithfulness as I *waited* on romance; now I was stepping into the unknown believing that He would continue to be faithful as I *pursued* romance.

The guy who had "kissed dating goodbye" was about to "say hello to courtship."

The next evening I arrived early for my meeting with Shannon. Einstein's Bagels is a favorite lunch spot in Gaithersburg, but in the evenings it's all but empty. I chose a lonely table in a back corner of the restaurant. It was slightly dirty, so I asked the server to wipe it off. Everything needed to be just right. I went to the bathroom and checked my hair. "Oh, whatever," I finally said to the mirror.

Back at the table I waited and fidgeted in my seat. I worried about whether I should prop my feet up on a chair. Would it make me look more relaxed? No, it's too casual. How about one foot? No, that looks like I'm wounded. I finally decided to leave both feet on the floor.

Nervous energy washed over me every time I thought about the conversation I was about to have. I couldn't believe

that I was doing this—that in only a few minutes she would be sitting across from me.

## Shannon's Awakening

Shannon Hendrickson and I had been friends for about a year. We worked in the same office. She was a secretary and I was an intern. The first thing I noticed about Shannon was her eyes—they were a bluish, greenish, gray color, and they sparkled when she smiled. The second thing was how tiny she was. Exactly five feet tall, Shannon defines the word *petite*. I liked that. Since I was only five foot six myself, a girl who actually looked up into my eyes was a rare find.

I caught my first glimpse of her on the Sunday she got up in church and shared the story of how she'd become a Christian. Two and a half years earlier she'd had no interest in God. At the time she'd just returned to Maryland from college in New Hampshire, where she'd lived the typical party life. It was an empty life lived for herself—a life ruled by sin. Back home, she threw all her energy into her dream of becoming a professional singer. Soon a move to Nashville seemed the next sensible step up the ladder of stardom. That's just the kind of person she was. Her parents had gotten divorced when she was nine, and her dad had raised her to be self-reliant. She would set her sights on a goal, and then do whatever was needed to get there.

Before heading to Nashville, she wanted to take a few guitar lessons. She asked around about a teacher, and a friend referred her to a guitarist named Brian, who was looking for students. What Shannon didn't know was that Brian



was a Christian and was looking for opportunities to share his faith. Her guitar lessons would turn out to be soul saving.

After a few weeks of lessons, Brian told Shannon how Jesus had changed his life. She listened politely but said she could never live like he did. "I respect you, but that's not for me."

"Do you think you're going to heaven?" Brian asked gently.

"I think I'm basically a good person," she responded.

But her confident rejection was an act. She couldn't get Brian's questions out of her head. What if there was a God? If He existed, would she be willing to live for Him?

Shannon secretly began to study Christianity. She read the book of Romans, which described her not as a "good person," but as a sinner in need of a Savior. She visited a Christian bookstore and asked for something that would help a person explore the claims of Christianity. "It's for a friend," she explained. She left with Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter*, which gave historical proof for Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

God was drawing Shannon. He was whittling away at her pride and independence and awakening within her a longing for Himself. One night, alone in her room, she repented for her sinful and self-centered life and believed on the Savior she now knew had died for her.

## Something Better

Growing up, I always hoped that when I saw the girl I was going to marry, it would be love at first sight. As it turned out, my chance for a "love at first sight" moment went right over my head.

On the Sunday I heard Shannon tell her story, I happened to be interested in a girl named Rachel. In fact, I was sitting next to Rachel's mother that morning. When Shannon finished speaking, Rachel's mom leaned over and noted what a "cute girl" Shannon was, a remark that I now find very ironic.

God had set me up.

As I sat there next to the mother of *my* plan for my future, God was parading *His* plan for my future right in front of my eyes. He had mapped a course for me that was more wonderful than anything I could come up with on my own, and He was making sure that in the days to come I would never question that this good plan had originated in *His* mind.

Three months later Shannon and I wound up working together at the church office. We hit it off right away, but I wasn't thinking about anything beyond friendship. When someone asked me if I was interested in her, I thought the question was silly. Shannon was a terrific girl, I said, but not the kind of person I envisioned marrying. Besides, our backgrounds were too different. She was a new Christian from a broken home. I'd probably marry someone who had been homeschooled and raised in the church like I had—someone like Rachel.

But over the next six months my plans for a future with Rachel began to unravel like a cheap sweater. I remember the afternoon I found out that she liked another guy. Rachel and I had only been friends, and she hadn't led me on, but it still hurt. I needed to talk to God. I shut my office door; but that didn't seem private enough, so I squeezed myself into my small office closet and pulled the door shut.

There in the darkness I started to cry. I wasn't mad at Rachel; I wasn't bitter. I cried because I knew God was behind it all. He was the one who had closed the door on a relationship with Rachel, and He'd done it for my good. I was overwhelmed by the thought that the God of the universe was willing to be involved in the details of my life—that He'd be willing to reach down and shut a door that He didn't want me to walk through.

Still crying, I began to thank Him. "I don't understand, but I thank You," I said. "I don't understand, but I know You are good. I don't understand, but I know You're taking this away because You have something better."

That day was a turning point. I stopped trusting in my own carefully laid plans and asked God to show me His.

## Change of Heart

Around that time I began to see Shannon in a new light. Her kindness to others and me caught my attention. She had a passion for God and a maturity that belied her short time as a believer. How can I explain it? She just began to pop up in my thoughts and prayers. I looked forward to the chance to see her and talk. What I learned about her through our interaction and from what I heard from others impressed me. I saw that all the reasons I had for why I wouldn't be interested in her were shallow. God was changing my heart.

All this had made the months leading up to my phone call torturous. I went through the "I shouldn't be distracted by this" phase. Then the "I *am* distracted by this" phase. And finally, the "I'm going to fight this" phase, in which I swore

to stop journaling about her and mapped a new course around the office so that I wouldn't walk past her desk ten times every hour—something I found myself doing “unintentionally.”

I was living with my pastor, C. J., at the time. Since my mom and dad lived far away in Oregon, C. J. and his wife, Carolyn, had become like a second set of parents to me. I told them about my interest in Shannon. Their counsel helped keep me on track: “Don't let impatience get the upper hand. Be her friend, but don't communicate your interest until you're ready to start a relationship that has a clear purpose and direction. You don't want to play with her heart.”

It wasn't easy. I would swing between the conviction that I needed to conceal my feelings and the urge to send her signals just to find out if there was any mutual interest. I could trust God better if I knew she liked me, I argued. But deep down I knew this wasn't true. I needed to be a man—a non-committal testing of the waters wouldn't be fair to her.

I started seeking the advice of the most trusted people in my life—my parents, my pastor, and people from our church who knew Shannon and me well. Was I prepared spiritually and emotionally for marriage? Could I provide for a wife and family? Was this God's time for me to pursue a relationship? My prayers kicked into high gear.

Instead of subsiding, my feelings grew. My circle of counselors gave me nothing but encouragement to pursue a relationship. I didn't know if Shannon and I were supposed to be married, but I felt that God was directing me to take the next step.

## Corner Table

The corner table at Einstein's was it. The countless prayers and conversations had led to this moment. After months of keeping my feelings hidden from Shannon, I was about to make them known.

Shannon walked through the door right on time. She seemed calm. I walked to the front to greet her, and then we got in line to order something. I looked up at the menu on the wall and acted like I was studying it, but food was the furthest thing from my mind.

"Are you hungry?" I asked her.

"No, not really."

"Yeah, me neither. Something to drink?"

"Sure."

We both ordered Sprites and sat down.

Now there was no delaying the inevitable. I needed to say what I had come to say.

"You may have already figured this out," I began. "That guy I wanted to talk to you about—you know, the one who's interested in you? Well...it's me."