



**Date Like
You Know
What You're
Doing**

Michael
Johnson

Your DatePrep Guide

Full Book Introduction

This excerpt does not represent the
actual formatting of the book.

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Future Marriage University
188 Front Street Suite 116-17
Franklin, TN 37064



www.FMUniversity.net

Introduction:

Is This Book for You?

I'll never forget when I was in my early 20s and my mom gave me a marriage book for Christmas. Not a dating book, like this one, but a *marriage* book. And I didn't even have a girlfriend!

"I get it, mom. You want grandkids."

Regardless, I read it over Christmas vacation, and within thirty days I was dating the woman I eventually married. And I'm really glad I did. (Both read that book and married that girl!)

But enough about me. How about you? Would you like to avoid heartbreak, rejection, and regret? Or beyond avoiding bad things, would you like to truly succeed in your dating life? And by "succeed," I don't just mean eventually get married, but do so with great memories to look back on and an amazing future to look forward to?

If you just answered that last question with a "Heck yeah," then this is the book for you.

Let's face it. Relationships are hard. And a dating relationship? It's like a long division problem you have to solve by hand. One wrong calculation and you're not coming up with the right answer. And discerning where you went wrong can be like trying to find a needle in a love shack ... or love in a haystack ... or whatever mixed metaphor you want to use.

Should You Read This Book NOW?

In hindsight, I realize I was given an incredible opportunity that one Christmas. That was the moment I began preparing for the most important earthly relationship in my entire life. And since I read that book at a time when I didn't have love chemicals flooding my brain (inhibiting clear thinking), and I didn't have a relationship to defend (persuading me to ignore wise counsel), I actually internalized much of what that book had to offer. I drank in the wisdom as if I somehow knew it might come in handy.

And it did! Which is why after ten years of marriage, I sensed God asking me to go back and reread that book with the goal of figuring out how to trick other people into doing what my mom tricked me into doing. That led to the founding of our organization, Future Marriage University (FMU), and me writing this book for you.

Will you begin dating the person you'll end up marrying within thirty days of reading this book? Or are you already dating them? Or maybe you've met them, but haven't begun dating? Perhaps they're a friend you've known for years but have never seen in "that way." Or on the other hand, you may very much see them in "that way," but you've been friend-zoned. For now.

I don't know those answers. What I do know is that I'm praying for the day when ten years after your wedding you remember this book, and you praise God you read it now.

My Dating Life Before I Read That Book

Truth is, I didn't date at all in high school. It never comes as a shocker when I share this at live events, where people can see what I look like. In this one respect, I am incredibly Christlike, as Jesus had, "no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2b ESV).

But the reasons behind my high school datelessness weren't solely due to my appearance or my social awkwardness. I also held high standards. And not just about a girl's looks, but about her love for Jesus.

By my teens, I had already developed a relationship with God that was intensely real to me, and I had little interest in dating a girl who couldn't relate to my passion for Jesus. Sadly for me, St. Louis, where I grew up, wasn't the proverbial buckle of the metaphorical Bible belt. So in the end, there were only two girls I mustered up the courage to ask out in high school. And they both said, "No."

They actually said, "I'd really rather just be friends." And one of them told me that three different times—in one phone call.

That said, a major paradigm shift took place when I left for college. A Christian college. Suddenly my dating prospects changed for the better. Like for the really, really better.

It was as if the scales fell from my eyes, and I looked and I saw that it was good: gorgeous, godly girls everywhere! In fact, I went out with more than 30 different college coeds my freshman year alone.

You may not believe that number. I don't know that I would believe it if I were you, but three words simply explain how a guy like me could go out with over 30 different girls in one school year: favorable gender ratio. In other words, I was practically the only date option for many of the girls I dated. There simply weren't many men asking.

You might think, “Bummer for them,” but I was a fun date. I could be funny too, and I liked to be creative. In fact, my dating life included a red convertible Cadillac with a car phone (before there were cell phones), a private plane flight, a secret agent adventure across campus videoed live (back when video cameras sat on your shoulder instead of in your pocket), a candlelit dinner at McDonald’s, and a moonlit picnic on the 50-yard line of my college stadium (until gunmen ran us out).

So, what's your dating story? Are you waiting for your dating life to begin? Are you enjoying the time of your dating life? Are you dating, but hating it? Or have you sworn off dating altogether?

The Purpose of This Book

Wherever you are in your journey, I'd like to empower you to grow spiritually and date wisely so you can marry well.

To accomplish that end, this book offers you love education. We call it LoveEd for short and it's the missing link between the sex education kids get when they're young and the premarital counseling couples only get after they believe they've already found “the one.”

And don't be frightened by the “M-word.” *Marriage!* Fear not! Unlike the book my mom gave me, this is a *dating* book, not a marriage book. However, as with any successful endeavor, you have to begin with the end in mind. The ultimate goal, if you will.

So what do you want to be the ultimate goal of your dating life?

- Just dating?
- Just getting a significant other?
- Just making out?
- Just moving from dating partner to dating partner?
- Just moving in together?
- Just getting engaged?
- Just making it to the wedding day?

How about this ultimate goal: a life-giving, lifelong marriage that blesses the world as much as it blesses the two of you. If that's a mission you can accept and get excited about, then you want to keep reading!

Even cooler, as you discover how relationships work and how they don't, you will learn how to avoid as much heartbreak, rejection, and regret as humanly possible.

Don't Just Follow These Principles

All of that to say, it's not my intention with this book to define exactly how Christians are supposed to date. There are clear truths—crystal clear truths—I will share from scripture that you should treat as the gospel truth because they are drawn from God's Word. But the rest of the words are mine.

So, on the one hand, don't approach this study as if it's going to give you all the perfect answers and remove every opportunity for failure. It is only a guide. I don't know everything. I certainly don't know you and the intricacies of your relational gifts and challenges.

On the other hand, I urge you to not discount everything you don't like in this book. Wisdom is often unpleasant and discipline often unwelcome. However, in addition to drawing many truths from scripture, there is something to be said for spending 18+ years studying the topics of sex, dating, and relationships. And something else to be said from looking at these topics from the perspective of 29 years of marriage and 25 years of parenting.

All of that said, I don't want you to just follow a set of principles. I want you to follow a *person*: Jesus Christ.

So, are you in? Then let's do this thing! But first, two more suggestions for getting the most out of this book.

Pass On What You Have Learned!

I urge you to share with other wise individuals what makes sense to you in these pages because LoveEd is for sharing. So I pray you will help those you care about, *not* judge them in your heart or talk about them behind their backs.

No one needs the Dating Police or the Courtship Gestapo, but everyone needs a good friend who wants the very best for them and desires it enough to tell them when they may be making mistakes they will regret their entire lives.

In the end, I hope you'll dig into this book with the intention not only of changing your own dating life but also changing the dating lives of those you care about.

Everything's Better with Friends

Speaking of your friends, all of the content of this book came out of an 8-week LoveEd class I've taught for years, and so I encourage you to get some friends together and go through this book as a group study.

Simply read the appropriate chapters for each week and discuss. To take your study to the next level, you'll find a link at the end of each section of the book to unlock and access exclusive content including group study questions and applicable videos and blog posts.

About the Author

Michael Johnson is the President and Dean of Dating at Future Marriage University (FMU), a 501(c)(3) non-profit ministry co-founded with his wife, Julie.

The mission of FMU is to empower students and young adults to grow spiritually and date wisely so they can marry well. To accomplish this, FMU offers love education (LoveEd for short) through classes, blog posts, videos, social media, and speaking engagements (and now this book). Michael has a blast sharing practical, Biblical truth on sex, dating, and relationships, to inspire and lead the wise individual to prepare for their future marriage like a successful career: intentionally, intelligently, and in advance.

The first thing Michael ever wrote was “My Darling’s Moving From Missouri,” a stirring love song he penned when he was only nine and didn’t even have a “darling.” And he never got one until college, but that turned out to be for the best, both for Michael and all those other potential “darling” girlfriends. Michael and Julie have known marital bliss since 1993, raised five children together since 1995, and lived in the Nashville area since 2001.

For more LoveEd resources, booking inquiries, or info about FMU, check out their website:

www.FMUniversity.net