**“I Kissed Dating Hello” by Kris Swiatocho**

Recently, I was sent a [link to this article](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-dramatic-implosion-of-i-kissed-dating-goodbye-is-a-lesson--and-a-warning/2018/11/14/eeecd65c-e850-11e8-bbdb-72fdbf9d4fed_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ef1c243fc67d)  in which Christine Emba, Columnist, for *The Washington Post's* *Opinions* section, commented on the recent news story involving Joshua Harris and his book, “*I Kissed Dating Goodbye,*” in which he is now retracting the book’s content (which sent the strong message that dating was wrong) to the point of stopping future publications. While he does not regret telling teens and young adults to wait until marriage to have sex, or to focus on the importance of building friendships, he is now saying dating is a good thing for Christians, and I agree!

Personally, I never stopped “dating,” but I did stop accepting dates from anyone that I didn’t feel at least enough of an attraction to that I would consider dating exclusively and eventually, possibly marrying. You do need to date to see if you want to marry them, or at least spend time with them beyond a basic friendship.

However, like most evangelical Christians, I too got caught up in the extreme messaging by pastors and leaders during the “I Kiss Dating Goodbye” era: that you should not date unless he/she is the “one,” that there is no dating in the Bible--there is only friendship or courtship for marriage, and that you should not be like the world and date to please the flesh. As a result of this philosophy, many Christians stopped dating to the point that even today, Christians are not dating very much. There is an underlying fear that if a guy asks a girl out, he must be thinking she’s the “one” and as a woman, I also would have been pretty sure that he was “the one” for me. When the last guy asked me out, I was already thinking of my china pattern and where to register for the shower and wedding gifts. Lol. Focusing on dating as a way to build opposite sex friendships without the pressure of worrying about marriage is the healthy way to relate.

Because of these extreme messages about dating and confusion over what “a date” really means, most Christian men today are not asking women out. While Christians do understand the need to be intentional in dating—dating for a purpose, men also need to be able to ask women out, without worrying about marriage during the early stages of dating. They should be allowed to say, “hey, I would like to get to know you better”...simply enjoying the date and time together. Women, too, should be able to focus on developing the friendship and not become anxious about whether “he” could be the mate God has for her.

So, what do we tell folks today? Should we continue the message of not dating as in Joshua Harris’s book or should we embrace dating (pun not intended, lol) again? I say embrace dating again, but with some healthy changes:

* I would spend extra time getting to know someone without dating them first. I would be intentional in building a friendship that is beyond the basics. You know, those basics of seeing them occasionally at church or work or school.
* I would seek to ask harder questions so that you can evaluate whether you want to date them (because you do want to be married one day).
* I would see them in different situations with others. How do they interact with family and friends (both yours and theirs). How do they respond with waitstaff at a restaurant when the food has been delayed or there is a problem with the check? How do they act when they think no one is looking?

I do believe dating should be purposeful in the Lord, but dating is also where you find out about another person to see if you want to marry them. There are things you won’t be able to learn by just asking questions until you do date. Dating is also the time you can say no, and change your mind. Are there scars sometimes, broken hearts? Sure, but it’s also a time you can learn about yourself so that the next time you are smarter. Dating teaches you about communication, love, respect and responsibility.

So, get out there, allow the Lord to lead you to the next person to date. Enjoy getting to know them better, first as a friend and then date, date, date.