

APRIL

Youth & 4



DATING-
and Teenage Morality
By Herbert W. Armstrong

Love, Marriage and Sex

DATING-

and Teenage Morality

The last article of a series by Youth 84's Editor-in-Chief.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

Dating procedures have undergone radical changes in the past 75 years. But has it been beneficial progress — or has dating become a lost art?

What about going steady? What about “necking,” “petting,” premarital sexual experience?

It's time to come truly up-to-date — *with the facts and with the TRUTH!*

Let's have reasons, for or against, that are rational and that *make sense!*

First, look at today's teenage world. Realize how it has *changed!*

NOT ONLY is a moral revolution in cyclonic progress around the world. There also is a teenage revolution. It is, of course, a large part of “the New Morality” as a whole.

Are today's teens really worse?

There are those who, in their self-confident uninformed optimism, assure us that today's adolescents are no different — and certainly no worse — than those of past generations. But the *facts* prove otherwise.

Human nature is the same. But we simply live in a *different world* today. The emergence of the phonograph, the automobile, the motion picture, radio and television and other productions

the downward plunge. There is a trend. It is an immoral trend. It is speeding up at accelerated pace. It is only natural for young people to follow the trend. They want to belong. It's time to face the facts squarely.

People are like sheep. They all follow the leader to the slaughter. But they don't *know* they are being led to the slaughter. They are just a little stupid. Yes, quite a little! But they still want to belong! It's natural to just go with the group.

From chaperons to “loving up”

Look how times have changed — and moral standards with them!

When my mother was of dating age, in the middle 1880s, chaperons were in vogue. She wore

long sleeves, high necks and skirts that dragged in the dust. When a young man began dating a young lady it was called “courting.”

A generation later, when I arrived at adolescence, the chaperons had disappeared. But in the earlier years of dating — after age 16 — caressing, today called “necking,” was not yet the general practice. Or if it was, I must have been highly ignorant.

I distinctly remember one incident — after I had passed 20.



Dating can be an art — fun and uplifting, filled with interesting conversation. (Photo by Nathan Faulkner)

of the machine age have brought new influences and changing customs. Human nature, adapting to changing times, expresses itself very differently today.

Some would hush up the naked **FACTS**. But the welfare of today's youth is at stake. Adolescents, drifting with the immorality tide, are speeding past their elders in

A date should be an event that adds to the mental, social, moral and spiritual character development of both boy and girl.

A girl I frequently dated and I were being driven to her home by a young man with his girl friend. In those days all cars were *completely* air-conditioned — they were open cars. It began to rain. We buttoned on the side-curtains.

To hold the curtain down, on my girl friend's side, I was obliged to stretch my arm over the seat behind her. I shall never forget the difficulty I experienced in keeping my arm far enough to the rear to avoid any contact with the back of her neck. I was terribly afraid she would think I was "fresh" if any part of my arm touched her!

Today's bold young people will get a real laugh at this. Yes, indeed — **TIMES HAVE CHANGED!**

Later I knew of an experience involving a young man about 21 whom I knew very well. He and a 21-year-old chum were double-dating two girl chums. The other couple had begun "loving up" as the younger generation then termed it. So this friend of mine began to fear he would be considered "slow," or behind the times. "Loving up" was then beginning to be considered the thing to do, after the first two or three dates. So this fellow began cautiously putting his arm around this girl's shoulder. She didn't shove it back. A date or two later, he worked up enough courage to kiss her. She made no objection. He remained very proper, otherwise.

The girl's father was dead, and her stepfather was a dealer in Buick automobiles. He and his wife often took the young couple out on Sunday afternoon rides.

Very few families owned automobiles in those days. The young people sat in the backseat, and his arm usually was around the girl's shoulders. There was no objection from her mother or stepfather. It seemed to be accepted as normal.

One night, sitting in a front-porch swinging seat, the girl began to tell this young man how much money her father had left her. It was not a fortune, but a few thousand dollars. She began suggesting what they might do with it.

"Wait a minute!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Just what are you getting at?"

"Why," she replied, "I thought we ought to begin to plan what we will do after we are married."

"*Married!*" he exclaimed, in sudden alarm. "Who said anything about getting married?"

"Why," she came back, equally surprised, "what have you been loving me up for, if we're not going to be married?"

The flabbergasted young man then explained that he had never indulged in "loving up" before, but had begun to feel out-of-date, supposing it was expected. The girl burst into tears, jumped up and ran into the house, slamming the door behind her. Next day the boy tried to contact her by telephone. Her mother answered the telephone.

"Lucille told me all about it," said the indignant mother, icily. "She never wants to see you again." And she never did!

But in those "loving-up" days, prior to World War I, girls were kept "decent." Actual sexual intercourse was "unthinkable." The girl who did submit to it "lost her honor."

Have times changed?

The question sounds ridiculous today. Full premarital coitus is the rule — except the word *premarital* is a little out of date. Even marriage is on the way out.

The teen influence

Few people stop to realize to what extent teenagers have taken

over. They pretty well dominate the world picture.

Isaiah foretold this day. Here is a portion of the prophecy: Speaking of our people — TODAY — in these very last days — God says: "And I will make *boys* their princes [Moffatt translates it, "I will make mere lads their leaders"], and babes shall rule over them . . . the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honorable . . . My people — children are their oppressors . . . the daughters of Zion are haughty . . ." (Isaiah 3:4-5, 12, 16, Revised Standard Version) — continue with Moffatt: ". . . holding their heads high as they walk, and ogling with their eyes, walking with their mincing steps . . ." (verse 16). And this latter expression, about ogling eyes, when properly translated, actually refers to painted eyes — makeup on the face, and sensuous manner of walking to arouse boys.

Now look at the facts!

WHO determines what is popular music today? The teens. Adolescents determine dancing trends, motion-picture themes, radio formats and even advertisements and most fields of entertainment!

What many do not realize is that this teenage influence on the whole society is *predominantly sexual influence*. There is much more intense preoccupation with sex during these years than in later maturity.

Therefore SEX became the basic formula for motion pictures — along with violence and crime, including murder.

Teenage morality and respect for decency have plunged to an all-time low. Many youths express the attitude that there is nothing wrong with illicit or promiscuous sex.

And WHY?

Take one typical example. A 19-year-old boy had been in a certain town only six months. He named to police 11 girls with whom he had engaged in illicit sex. Many from "the best" families. "You can 'make' almost

(Continued on page 24)

DATING- and Morality

(Continued from page 2)

any girl in town, on your first date," he said. In this particular scandal, which got into the newspapers, revealed facts were significant. Of all involved, not one had received any formal sex education — boys or girls. Every boy had engaged in premarital sex before age 15. Not one was close to either father or mother. The police chief exclaimed that it was too bad he was unable to take a horsewhip to the neglectful parents!

One of the mothers whitewashed herself of blame, saying: "You can't blame *me* for Janie's predicament! Why, you can rest assured she never learned a thing about sex in my house. The word was never even so much as mentioned!"

Teen sex and violence worldwide

The fast-growing surge of teenage immorality, drugs and violence is **WORLDWIDE!** Accompanying sexual promiscuity, news dispatches pile up an avalanche of reports of wreckage, destruction of property — especially schools — pillaging, arson, violence and often **MURDER!**

There are facts and statistics on teenage immorality and juvenile delinquency to fill an entire book many times over.

But **WHY?** What is the cause?

The world doesn't want to hear the true answer!

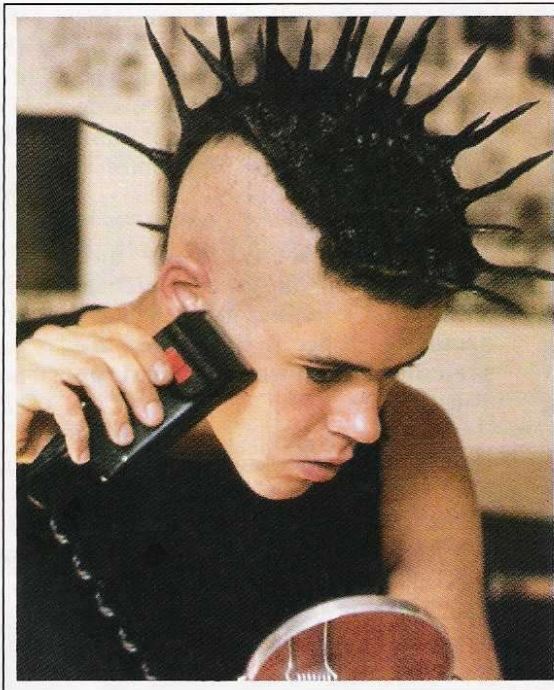
The world refuses to *face* the tragic **TRUTH!**

The **TRUE** answer is this: Something has been *taken away* from this earth that sorely needs to be restored! That "something" is knowledge of, respect for and obedience to **THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LAW OF GOD!**

But will *any* like that answer? Most want to go on rebelling against their Maker, trying to find some *other* solution to their

problems. *There is no other!*

Once there *was* peace, happiness, orderliness, joy, on this earth. You don't have to believe it, but it's **TRUE**. Angels inhabited the earth. The almighty **GOD** had placed a top-ranking archangel, Lucifer, to administer the government of God on the earth. Lucifer was a brilliant cherub. He sealed the sum total of wisdom and beauty. It went to his head. He became vain. Vanity gripped him. His mind swelled with resentment because he ruled only this earth — a mere speck in the universe — while **GOD** ruled all



The natural tendency to want to belong is seen in the strange styles adopted by some groups.

the universe.

A third of the angels followed him in warlike aggression to knock God off His throne, and take over the **UNIVERSE** rule. But they were driven back to the earth. Physical chaos struck the earth as a result of this stupendous mutiny. In six days God restored the earth, and created **MANKIND** upon it (Psalm 104:30).

God made man mortal, of material substance. But He gave man **MIND** power. When man chose to disobey God — to do evil

— his mind became hostile toward God. He imbibed Satan's attitude of **SELF** and rebellion. This became **HUMAN NATURE**. Human nature includes the *attitude* that had become Satan's (Lucifer's name now changed to Satan).

Human nature is a **PULL**, like the power of gravity, in the direction of vanity, greed, self-love and spirit of competition, hostility, indifference, resentment or hatred, toward others. That is man's natural attitude and tendency. It is a constant **PULL** on man in that direction. It is **THE WAY THAT COMES NATURALLY**. Because a subtle Satan, still on earth's throne, begins injecting that *attitude* during the first year of infant life.

Human nature — minus purpose!

Let's *understand* the real *basic* reason for these present problems. Basically, it is simply human nature.

Yet God endowed man with **MIND** power, capable of recognizing the error of this *WAY*, *if willing*. Adam could have obeyed God, resisted Satan and qualified to replace Satan as earth **RULER**, administering the **GOVERNMENT OF GOD**. But Adam disobeyed God, succumbed to Satan. His children have done so ever since.

Jesus Christ obeyed God, kept God's commandments, resisted Satan, never allowed what we call "human nature" to enter Him. He conquered the devil, and qualified to administer the world-ruling **GOVERNMENT OF GOD**. Then He ascended to heaven to officially receive this world **RULE**. The heavens have received Him **UNTIL** — notice it, Acts 3:19-21 — only "**UNTIL** the times of **RESTITUTION** of all things" — that is, the **RESTORING** of what had been taken away — **THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD!**

That time is almost upon us **NOW!** This very outburst of universal **VIOLENCE** is one of the signs! "As it was in the days of

Noah," said Jesus, "so shall it be" just before the days of Christ's return to RESTORE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and bring us PEACE! Just before the Flood, there was illicit sex and VIOLENCE! It was not thus 70 years ago. IT IS A TIME OF ILLICIT SEX AND VIOLENCE TODAY!

Can't we see the handwriting on the wall?

WHY all this violence — this immorality?

HERE IS THE CAUSE! HUMAN NATURE — WHICH IS VANITY — without any PURPOSE, and absence of parental training and discipline!

There is no sense of PURPOSE today. We are told we must adjust to living in a world of problems with *no solutions!* Nuclear war — the erasure of human life from the earth — appears to be just around the corner — liable to strike us any second.

Young people today are given NOTHING TO LIVE FOR! NO HOPE! NO FUTURE! They are more prosperous than ever before. THEY ARE BORED! They are *rebellious*. The spirit of REVOLT is in the air! They resent all AUTHORITY!

Yet VANITY within them seeks to exalt itself!

WHY do aimless, purposeless, bored, yet prosperous teenagers resort to violence? Said an article in *Reader's Digest*: "Boys explode into violence to prove they are grown up. Some, unable to succeed in school . . . seek status through hooliganism."

There it is — "TO SEEK STATUS" — plain VANITY, but minus any constructive or healthy PURPOSE!

Their parents have FAILED!

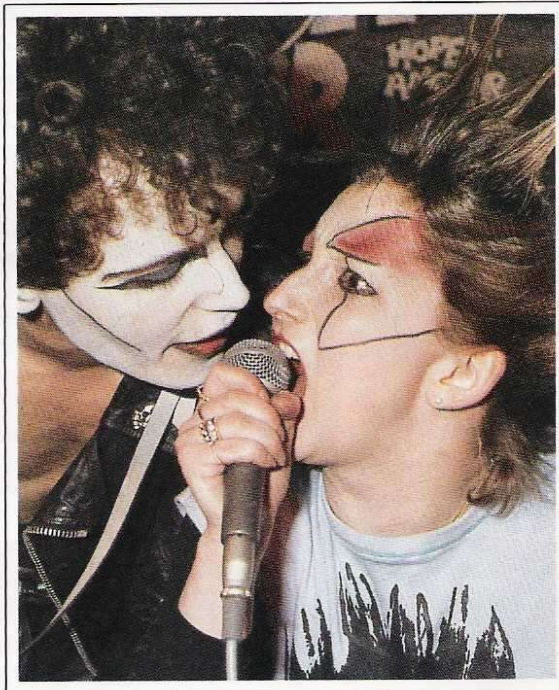
One father said of his boy in police trouble: "It isn't *my* fault! Why, I've always given him everything he wanted. I can't understand WHY he did this terrible thing!"

Yes, this father gave him MONEY. But he failed to give him right teaching, training, a PUR-

POSE in life, proper discipline, instilling in this boy a sense of responsibility and respect for authority! And he probably denied him love and true father-son companionship! Also he failed to teach him the TRUTH about SEX!

Teenagers need factual instruction

It is not exactly a paradox that millions of teenagers have had considerable sex *experience*, and yet possess little sexual *knowledge*. It is largely *because* of ignorance — or lack of right



Human nature expresses itself in the desire to go along with the group. (Photo by Peter Marlow — Sygma)

instruction in the right manner at the right time — that adolescents seek to satisfy curiosity by *experience*. And, of course, they are "sheep," and when it becomes a trend — when "it's being done" — human nature wants "to belong." So they go with the crowd — and parents know nothing of it.

Even when growing children and adolescents do receive some formal sex education, it is always presented from the physical, the material and, therefore, the sensual approach.

If teenagers had been *properly* taught what they *needed* to know about sex, from the very first and second years of their lives, by informed and loving parents, the frightful tragedies of teenage and premarital sex would have been reduced to the barest minimum.

Today, if you tell the average teenager that "necking" is WRONG — that it ought *never* to be indulged in — that it is a definite SIN — that it robs his or her future marriage of much of its possible joys, delights and blissful happiness — the young man or woman will probably look at you rather pityingly, wondering how you could be so naive!

He would probably *reverse* the truth and exclaim: "Why, *where have you been*, that you don't know the *facts of life* yet? WHY DON'T YOU GROW UP? This is the 20th century!"

Actually, it is the adolescent who is naive, ignorant and untaught in the TRUTH about the *facts of life!*

Going steady

The *basic* cause of today's immorality, of course, is HUMAN NATURE. Human nature is the basic cause of all violence, war, crime — all our troubles in this present evil world!

But, as stated in the beginning of this article, human nature expresses itself in different ways, and adapts itself to changing times.

Human nature is, simply, the subconscious *pull* of a *definite attitude* of mind. It is the attitude that became Satan's. It is the *natural* attitude implanted from infancy by the invisible Satan. It is the attitude of vanity — of *self-concern* — of lust and greed. It is the attitude of hostility to others, and resentment of authority over it.

Of course, the *self*, as explained before, *expands* into the "empirical self" — which includes those with whom individual self is associated, or connected. This may include one's

family, his club, his gang, his church, his country. Patriotism is an example of the "empirical self" expanded to include one's country. But patriotism is expressed in the form of loyalty to country, *as opposed to* OTHER countries. It includes an automatic hostility toward *other* countries — either passive or active. The Bible (Moffatt translation) classifies this as "party-spirit" (Galatians 5:20) and one of the "deeds of the flesh" — as opposed to the "fruit of the Spirit."

The natural tendency to want to *belong* is merely the expression of this phase of human nature. This leads to the desire to want to *go along* — with those one accepts as his peer group, team, gang or whatever. This nature expresses itself in young people by the natural *pull* to want to *go along* with the *teens*, as opposed to their elders. If the teens have a new custom, frowned on by their elders, then *self* associates with the teens, and feels automatic and *natural* (from human nature) hostility and resentment toward the opposing elders.

Now what about going steady? This started several years ago as an American custom. The custom spread. It is a new *way* started by those in the middle and late teens. But when 18- and 19-year-olds began going steady, 16- and 17-year-olds desired to emulate (Galatians 5:20) and to *go along*. Then 14- and 15-year-olds responded to the *pull* to *go along*, and today even the 12- and 13-year-olds are beginning to go steady.

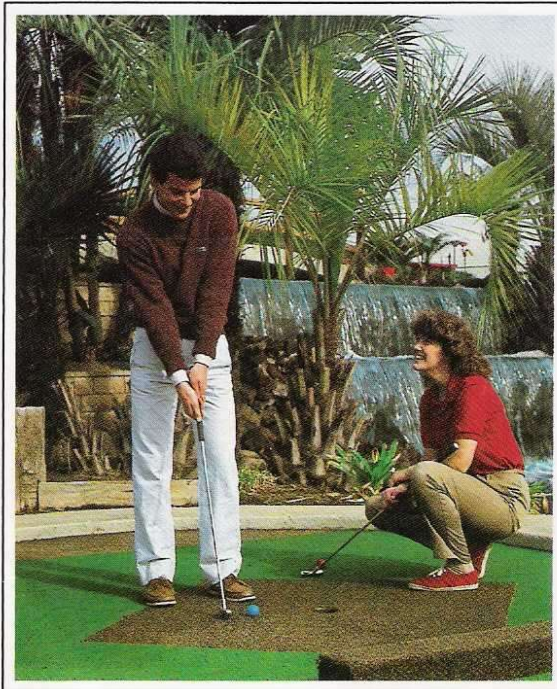
This subject has been discussed before in this series. Going steady brings familiarity, and familiarity breeds a certain contempt — in this instance, contempt for chastity, virtue and honor.

This going steady is simply the natural response to the *pull* of human nature. Human nature is essentially lazy. When a boy or girl goes steady he feels assured of dates. The boy is spared the

embarrassment of asking new girls for dates, and the possible humiliation of being turned down. The girl feels a sense of security, knowing she will have dates.

The very familiarity of steady dating makes it easier for the boy to make bolder advances in "necking," and then going on further into sexual intercourse. It makes it more difficult for the girl to say NO. It tends to lower bars of resistance, and increases the temptation to carry intimacies to the limit.

The FRUITS of going steady are



A well-planned, stimulating date is so much more rewarding! (Photo by Craig Clark)

definitely *not good!*

It is one of the most difficult things in the world to convince someone of the wisdom of doing what he *ought* to do, instead of what he *wants* to do. But yielding to what one *wants* to do is surrendering to human nature. It is traveling the road to sin. And sin is man's greatest enemy, inflicting on him every pain, heartache, suffering and anguish he ever experiences. It inflicts *unwanted* penalties. But, again, it is *wanted* for people to understand *why* they can't put their hands on

a red-hot stove and not get burned!

Going steady is not good — *for those who do it!*

Now what about "necking"?

Is "NECKING" wrong?

To even ask the question, "Is 'necking' wrong?" would sound rather silly to the average adolescent today.

WHY?

Because of *ignorance!* Because of wrong teaching, and a lack of *right teaching!* Because there are some of the *facts of life* they have not yet learned!

Is the Bible an out-of-date book? If it is, how does it happen that it so accurately foretells *today's* WORLD NEWS — so understandingly pinpoints human nature?

It says, "The carnal mind is *hostile* toward God." And that is certainly true. Where God says, "Remember," everyone immediately *forgets!* When Jesus said, "Think not I am come to destroy the law," everyone proceeded to think He *DID* destroy it! If God, in the Bible, said, "OBSERVE CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR'S AND EASTER," then *nobody would!*

GOD CREATED HUMAN-KIND *male and female*. GOD blessed humans with the wonderful God-plane marriage and family relationship.

GOD designed sex, to bring indescribable delights and joys with His blessing, IN MARRIAGE! In His great wisdom, GOD created men so that sex arousal and desire often takes place more rapidly than in their wives — and He designed women so that they are not physically or mentally *prepared* for actual coitus *until* arousal is brought about *by the love embrace — by caressing — by the love-talk and endearing words of the husband!* In other words, by "necking" and "petting."

There was vital PURPOSE in this!

Had God made women to be aroused by the same means and

the same quickness as their husbands, sexual intercourse in marriage *would seldom* — if ever — *be that supreme expression of LOVE* that God intended — in order to **BIND** and **HOLD TOGETHER** the marriage and the home and family! Marriage would be robbed of its blessings — of its supreme joys!

But when boys and girls engage in premarital lovemaking, called “necking,” “petting” and even “heavy petting,” it is **NOT** the love that binds more firmly that which **GOD** has bound for life.

It is mere sensual gratification. It is **LUST**, no matter what you wish to call it! **IT CHEAPENS, TARNISHES, CORRODES** the entire, wonderful experience God intended as a repeated lifelong experience **IN MARRIAGE!** And it detracts from, and robs the participants of the *full* happiness they might have had in a future marriage!

This lovemaking — this “necking” or “petting” — this caressing — is all a **PART OF, and actually the most important part of, SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IN MARRIAGE!**

A capital sin!

Therefore, when indulged in *prior* to marriage — or outside of marriage — **IT IS A CAPITAL SIN!**

Teenage **CUSTOM** does not determine what is **SIN!**

College-campus practices do not define right and wrong!

Acceptance by society does not decide what is **SIN!**

GOD ALMIGHTY HAS ALREADY DETERMINED WHAT IS SIN!

God does not allow humans to decide **WHAT** is sin — but He forces us to decide **WHETHER** to sin! He has called me to lift up my voice and show people **WHAT** is sin. That is what I am doing here. I did not devise that **LAW**, or set it in dynamic, *living*, if invisible **MOTION** — **GOD DID!**

How can you *prevent* the tragedy of a premarital pregnancy? How can you *prevent* the disgrace and terrible predicament of venereal disease? By knowing

when to stop? **NO!** By simply not starting the “necking” in the first place!

If it were **GOOD FOR** young people, God would have instructed them to engage in it. But **SIN** is not good for people — **SIN HARMS PEOPLE!**

In an earlier article we described how people are drawn into sin. It is explained in James 1:14-15: “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth **SIN**: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth **DEATH**.”

The temptation is not a **SIN**. Sin is when the **MIND** harbors the temptation — retains it — keeps *thinking* of it — keeps desiring it, **UNTIL** the desire conceives into the **ACTION** of **SIN**. How does one avoid sin? By **NOT RETAINING THE DESIRE!** By pushing it out of mind *immediately!*

But to *start* in the action of sin, and think you can “draw the line” — that you know “when to stop” is to **COMMIT SIN!**

The time to **PREVENT SIN** is before it starts!

This world’s society and its customs are based on human nature — which is to say, on **SATAN’S** ways — and are diametrically **CONTRARY** to God’s ways!

Go along with the crowd, and you are stumbling along with the other dumb sheep **TO THE SLAUGHTER!** Why be one of the **CROWD?** Why not stand out from the crowd of ignoramuses and weaklings, as one who has knowledge, wisdom and **CHARACTER!** Any old dead fish can float downstream but it takes a *live* one to swim *against* the current!

This is not prudish talk. It is not old-fashioned talk. It is intelligent, rational **UNDERSTANDING**, based on the instruction of the Creator!

What a shame that the adolescents of today were not taught properly by their parents from babyhood!

It is **THE GOD-REQUIRED DUTY** of every parent — a responsibility for which parents will be held accountable **IN THE JUDGMENT** — to *properly* teach

and inform their children of the **FACTS** of sex.

This teaching ought to begin while children are still small.

Dating, a lost art?

Has dating become a lost art? It would certainly seem so. Certainly there is no art to the manner of dating today.

It seems young people no longer know what to do with themselves on dates. Perhaps most dates today are spent either in a car, parked by the roadside in a dark and secluded spot, where the time is spent in “necking,” or in sexual intercourse, or else in a darkened motion-picture theater letting their minds drift with a ready-made daydream.

Dating is no longer stimulating mentally, upbuilding socially and intellectually beneficial. It tends not to build but to destroy character. Some dating, of course, is spent at various kinds of dances. Some of these may be invigorating physically and at least somewhat mentally. Some are downgrading and morally and mentally harmful — depending on environment and character and quality of participants.

In my dating days, I had a “system.” I was unconverted, and the motive undoubtedly, in part at least, was vanity. But I did try to date only top-level girls. Of course we sometimes went to the theater, occasionally to the motion pictures (it was during the “silent” days), occasionally to a dance — but never to a public dance. Public dances, then, were not in good repute.

But usually our date involved a walk, a scintillating and enlightening conversation, and possibly a soda or sundae at an ice cream parlor. I devoted considerable time in public libraries, in the philosophical or travel or biography departments, acquiring knowledge for interesting conversation.

On a first date I analyzed and sized up the girl. I didn’t know how a fellow “fell in love,” but I supposed it might happen unexpectedly in some mysterious way.

(Continued on page 28)

I Dare You!

(Continued from page 29)

more time with your parents, maybe writing them a thank-you note for nice things they have done for you.

What about school? How about that special report you've been putting off? Make it your goal to finish it. Life goals? How about seeing your career counselor this week?

Of course, goals are of no use unless you act on them. So act! Don't be too rough on yourself. You can't suddenly make brown eyes blue or become a genius

overnight! But you can develop a more positive attitude toward your goals. Keep trying. Review your progress regularly. Remember: God will help you, so don't forget to ask Him.

The first two letters of the word *goal* spell *go*. Go right now and write down some things you want to accomplish, and when you have achieved a goal or two, write and tell us about it. We will be interested, because it will mean growth in some area in your life. You'll be building character.

I dare you! Don't spend the rest of your life going around in circles. □

DATING

(Continued from page 27)

And I didn't want it to happen to me in the case of an unqualified girl. If my first-date appraisal of the girl indicated definitely that, should I "fall" for her, she would be unsuitable as a wife and the mother of my children, there was never a second date.

I was taking no chances on "falling" overboard with the wrong girl to the point I might be so blinded by love I would be unable to see it!

I remember one girl, pretty, attractive, good conversationalist. She got a second date. But then I discovered she was lazy, would not help her mother with dishes, making beds and housework. I never dated her again.

I dated two or three girls, frequently but not regularly or like going steady in any sense, who had absolutely *no* "sex appeal" for me whatsoever. There would have been no temptation to "neck" as teens call it today. Of one I said I would as soon have my arms around a cold iron lamp post. Yet I dated her on occasion because she was an unusually fine girl whom I respected highly and an interesting conversationalist.

Dating can and *ought to be* made a real art. Some thinking and planning ought to go into the preparation for a date. A date should be an event that adds to the mental, social, moral and spiritual character development of both boy and girl. Such a date is *so* much more rewarding, and leaves a far more palatable feeling afterward. In today's warped and perverted thinking I suppose that suggestion seems very old-fashioned and naive. But for those who have a little sense and understanding, it would be wise to heed it. □

The material printed in this series, and much more, is available in Herbert W. Armstrong's book, *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. Call or write for your free copy.

READER BY-LINE

'Why Me?'

By Shari Styer

Why me, God? I thought to myself as the doctor explained what I would not be able to do.

I had torn a muscle in my leg and it would take a month or more to heal up completely. In the meantime I knew I couldn't participate in my favorite activities — cheer-leading, skating, tennis and track. I would have to get treatments for my leg.

Why didn't God prevent this from happening to me? I sulked.

The second week I had been taking the physical therapy treatments, I met a cute boy in the waiting room who was about my own age. He had been in a car accident and had suffered the loss of both his legs.

He spoke to me about his accident in a friendly, positive tone. He told me of all the

adjustments he had made, including leaving his old school to go to a special school for the handicapped. He had to make new friends and accept how to deal with his handicap at the school.

He spoke to me with a serious note in his voice as he said, "I just thank God every day I'm still alive to enjoy the rest of my life."

After he left, I looked at my leg. It had been getting better the past few days.

I suddenly felt ashamed of myself. I now realized what I should have learned from my leg injury — an important lesson about being thankful for what I have. I learned that les-

son without a doubt. □

Editor's note: Shari Styer is from Burns, Tenn., and is 16 years old. If you would like to submit an article for the "Reader By-Line" section, send it to: "Reader By-Line," Youth 84, 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91129.



Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.