



Sunnyside Light

September 2019 Newsletter

Pastor's Paragraphs

Events

September 19

LOVES

5:30p

Cheddars

September 21

Sunday School Picnic

4:00p

Sedgwick County Park
Shelter 1

Young life Testimony

"Life was full of darkness," she recalled, "and I felt like I was in a million pieces that were flying away in a wind that I could not control."

Catherine was grieving the deep loss of a close friend while her peers enjoyed the best week of their lives around her.

"I would laugh some with my friends," she said, "but when things got quiet, an intense hopelessness surfaced in me. I did not have many words."

Thankfully, there was a Young Life leader who cast a soft light across Catherine's canvas and stood steady with her in the swirling wind.

"Mitzy sat with me when I had no words. She listened to me talk in circles about things that didn't make sense. She cried when I couldn't. She didn't leave my side."

Mitzy's faithful friendship made all the difference for Catherine. "The last day of camp, Mitzy and I went for a walk. She said she would be with me through the hardness, every step of the way." One year later, Catherine confirms that Mitzy kept her word. "Today I am anchored in God's truth because of my Young Life leader. Today I laugh wildly and fly freely because of Mitzy."

Thank you for supporting this mission. Thanks to friends like you, tens of thousands of kids will spend a week at camp this summer with a devoted leader like Mitzy. Better yet, those kids will return home with those leaders who continue to walk with them and share with them the unfailing love of Jesus. Thank you for giving countless kids like Catherine the opportunity to fly freely in His love.

Sunnyside Baptist Church

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And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

1 John 5:14

Birthdays

6 - Sarah Goerzen
7 - Gary Lanning
12 - Ryan Sauerbrey
16 - Stephany Hand
16 - Cami Tafesse
18 - Connor Goerzen
22 - Scott McLeland
30 - Rick Larson

Anniversaries

1 - Ted and Melissa Burns

Prayer Requests

Pastor Joel & Bethany Schroeder
Steve Brecheisen - Continued battle with cancer
Gordon Hwang - Recovering from two
emergency angioplasties and one stent implant
Kevin Turner (Avery's Dad) - Cancer

Ongoing prayer concerns: Elaine Yokum, Glennys Nichols,
Marge McIntosh, Ellouise Nulik, Betty Suntheimer, Gwen White, Kris Cox,
Davey Mann, Gwen Rich, Scott McNay, Jon Farley, Wes Bush

Special Interest Missionaries & Ministries:

Union Rescue Mission
Rev. Gordon & LeAnne Hwang
Young Lives
International Mission Board



Ladies Out Visiting
and Eating Somewhere

Loves will meet on September 19th at
5:30p. The place of meeting will be at
Cheddar's West (11711 E 13th St N,
Wichita, KS 67206).



Light Bits from Sunday School

Saturday September 21

4:00-7:00pm

Sedgwick County Park

Shelter 1



Enter off 13th Street & veer left
Sunnyside has Shelter 1 all day!

Fried Chicken & Beverages
will be provided by church

Please bring a side dish to share

	21st Street	
R i d g e		W i c h i t a
R d	+	Z o o
	13th Street	

**Come, bring friends, and family to
enjoy this outing.**

Seating is limited ~
lawn chairs recommended!

Sign-up sheets on bulletin board across
from the office

We eat at 5:00



The Tragedy of Joshua Harris: Sobering Thoughts for Evangelicals

Albert Mohler

The evangelical world has been roiled by the headlines concerning Joshua Harris. First came the news of his divorce, and then came the news of his departure from the Christian faith. It's hard to imagine more sobering news.

We have to go back to 1997 with the release of a book entitled, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. The book was by Joshua Harris and it became an evangelical publishing phenomenon, eventually selling 1.2 million copies. The central thesis of the book is that evangelicals have been flirting with disaster by their involvement in the dating culture. Harris spoke of his own experience and prescriptively began to outline a shift from dating to a model of courtship.

This represented a significant evangelical cultural pushback in the 1990s to the sexual licentiousness of the culture in general and the fact that a very loose dating culture had indeed brought a great deal of sin and grief to so many young people. Harris effectively called for an end to the entire system of dating among adolescents and young adults. Instead, he pointed to a more ecclesial and family-based model of courtship.

And of course, one of the issues we have to face here is that when you have a popular book with this kind of influence, you sometimes have people who take the argument even further. The push-back against the dating culture grew radical, and many evangelicals reveled in the radicalism of the movement.

It's helpful in this case to go back to the biography of Joshua Harris. He is one of the seven children of Gregg and Sono Harris, and they were very influential long before Joshua Harris emerged as a young author. They were mostly influential within the burgeoning homeschool movement of the 1970s and '80s and beyond, and they and their movement were located in the Pacific Northwest.

That's not an accident. The homeschooling movement in the United States in its modern phase really is traceable to that part of the United States and to a very interesting duality. The homeschooling movement took root within the cultural left and the cultural right at almost the same time, although the cultural left really beat the cultural right to the movement.

In one sense, it was conservatives who learned from the liberals about the model of homeschooling. Among liberals, the movement really began as an extension of the radicalism of the 1960s, a pushback against institutionalized forms of learning and a basic anti-authoritarianism. Conservatives began to observe the liberal homeschooling movement and recognized there was a real opportunity here for conservative Christians especially. This was a part of the Jesus People—that youth revival that began on the west coast in the 1970s.



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The Christian homeschooling movement was a blend of Jesus People grown into parents, celebrating the Bible's radical vision of sex, marriage, and parenting. The movement was marked by a simple Biblicism and grew into very clear prescriptive principles.

Conservative Christian parents were also consciously rejecting the liberalization and secularization of the public schools, and the liberal sex education agenda that marked public education. Joshua Harris was born into this movement, was incubated within it, and was raised by parents who were already influential within it.

I Kissed Dating Goodbye, Joshua Harris's 1997 book, became one of those very important signal moments in American evangelical culture. It represents, like the explosion of homeschooling itself, a rejection of the dominant model, whereby young people began to develop romantic relationships. It was also steeped in concern about the danger of the hyper-sexualized culture. He followed up *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, with another book entitled *Boy Meets Girl: Say Hello to Courtship*, published in 2000. He became lead pastor of a Maryland mega church in 2004, and he continued in that role until 2015. He also established a series of conferences that were known as *New Attitude*.

In 2015, he resigned from the church and indicated that he was moving back to the Pacific Northwest, in this case to Vancouver, British Columbia, to study at Regent College and to give attention to theological education. He said in a statement at the time that he had been living effectively backwards. He had gone into ministry before his theological education. He said that he was going to resign from ministry, and the very fact that he made that announcement the way he did indicated that perhaps even more fundamental changes were afoot.

In 2016, he released a statement in which he apologized to those he described as hurt by the purity culture and the approach that was taken in *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. He shortly thereafter had a leading role in a film which was released, also critiquing the book that he had written and effectively withdrawing its argument. The obvious question that arose from the film and from his statement in 2016 is what was left of Harris' understanding of sex, and for that matter, of Christianity?

But then came the blockbuster social media posts of July. First, in the middle of the month, Harris and his wife Shannon jointly released on their own Instagram accounts this statement: "We're writing to share the news that we are separating and we'll continue our life together as friends. In recent years, some significant changes have taken place in both of us. It is with sincere love for one another and understanding of our unique story as a couple that we are moving forward with this decision. We hope to create a generous and supportive future for each other and for our three amazing children in the years ahead. Thank you for your understanding and for respecting our privacy during a difficult time."



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The news was eventually clarified that the couple is divorcing. The announcement simultaneously made on Instagram follows a recently developed form, especially when it comes to celebrity, high profile divorces. The announcement seemed to be orchestrated in this way in order to make the announcement, and then as quickly as possible to move on.

But moving on takes a whole new significance when just a few days later, Harris also posted on Instagram, "My heart is full of gratitude. I wish you could see all the messages people sent me after the announcement of my divorce. They are expressions of love, though they are saddened or even strongly disapprove of the decision." He continues, "I am learning that no group has the market quartered on grace. This week, I've received grace from Christians, atheists, evangelicals, exvangelicals, straight people, LGBTQ people, and everyone in between. Of course," he says, "there have also been strong words of rebuke from religious people. While not always pleasant, I know they are seeking to love me. There have also been spiteful, hateful comments that angered and hurt me."

The next statement is most important, "The information that was left out of our announcement is that I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is deconstruction, the biblical phrase is falling away. By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian. Many people tell me that there is a different way to practice faith and I want to remain open to this, but I'm not there now."

The next paragraph was also very important: "Martin Luther said that the entire life of believers should be repentance. There's beauty in that sentiment regardless of your view of God. I've lived in repentance for the past several years," he wrote, "repenting of my self-righteousness, my fear-based approach to life, the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to parenting to name a few, but," he continued, "I specifically want to add to this list now. To the LGBTQ+ community, I want to say that I am sorry for the views that I taught in my books and as a pastor regarding sexuality. I regret standing against marriage equality, for not affirming you and your place in the church, and for any ways that my writing and speaking contributed to a culture of exclusion and bigotry. I hope you can forgive me."

Those were the most important sections of the posting, and the most important line is where he said that he had undergone a massive shift in regard to his faith in Christ. He said, again, "The popular phrase for this is deconstruction. The biblical phrase is falling away. By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian." Those are absolutely stunning words. They would be stunning and incredibly troubling coming from anyone, but from the former pastor of a mega-church and from someone who has had a very significant influence in the evangelical world, this is truly a milestone event. It also demands a good deal of thinking and very honest reflection on the part of American evangelicals.



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Many people have obviously wondered, "How did this come out of the blue?" But it didn't really come out of the blue. There had been troubling signs for some time indicating that Joshua Harris was in a very significant worldview and spiritual transition.

This was made also very clear in an interview that was made with the liberal magazine *Sojourners*. The interviewer was Sandi Villarreal and this was also published at *Sojourners* just about the time that he made the announcement of the divorce from his wife. It was before his announcement that he was also divorcing himself from the Christian faith. In this interview, very interestingly, Joshua Harris indicates the extent to which he has separated, not just from the argument of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, but from the superstructure of biblical Christianity and, most particularly, its revealed sexual ethic.

He raised questions about what he called the "purity culture," of which he had been very much a part. He also raised questions about complementarianism, but these were basically in order to repudiate his previous beliefs. What wasn't at all clear—and still isn't clear—is exactly what would replace his teachings of the past. In the interview, one of the most interesting and important moments comes when Villarreal says, "You say in the documentary that there are a lot of people who want you to throw out everything that was kind of the basis for your book." She continued, "But I'm curious when you say 'everything,' do you mean your belief in Christianity as a whole or about premarital sex in general? I'm curious what you include in that."

Joshua Harris responded, "I think that there's a push by some people to say being sex positive means — the kind of the historical sexual ethic related to sex outside of marriage, related to homosexuality, is basically laid aside, and embracing a healthy view of sex means just accepting all that as fine within the Christian tradition."

He continued, "I do think though that, for me, in that change of interpretation of such a fundamental level when it comes to sexuality, it's just hard for me to ... In a way it's almost easier for me to contemplate throwing out all of Christianity than it is to keeping Christianity and adapting it in these different ways."

That's truly stunning. It's incredibly revealing. In this interview that came before his announcement of his departure from Christianity, Harris said that when he came to rethink the biblical sexual ethic of historic Christianity, he said he understood then—and this is crucial for us to understand—that at that point it was easier for him to contemplate throwing out all of Christianity rather than transforming Christianity or reformulating it in order to develop a new sexual ethic.

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He understands that there is no halfway house, and in that sense, it's intellectually honest of him to understand that theological liberalism, which seeks to maintain some claim upon Christianity while repudiating its biblical truth claims, is unsustainable. There's intellectual honesty in that. But there is incredible spiritual and theological tragedy in the announcement that anyone has departed from the Christian faith and that raises basic theological issues. Can one be a Christian and then at some point not be a Christian?

Can believers lose their faith? Can one ultimately fall away if one was genuinely regenerate? The answer is no. The Bible is very clear about that. Once one has been regenerated by the power of Christ, once one has become a genuine Christian and been united to Christ, nothing can separate us from Christ, not even our own sin. Reflecting the Bible, the historic Protestant confessions make very clear the biblical truth that, even though after conversion and coming to faith in Christ, after regeneration, one may sin, indeed will sin, and may even grievously injure the church, it is impossible for one who has been truly regenerated to then fall back away from Christ and to be severed from him.

There may be even some who sin by repudiating Christianity, but if they ever were genuinely Christian, they will return by repentance at some point, and that is a gospel promise. If persons do continue in their repudiation of Christianity, then we have to remember the text 1 John 2:19, where we are told that, "They went out from us, because they were not of us," which is to say they never were truly Christians. They were pretend believers.

Jesus also speaks to this in Matthew 13 in the parable of the four soils. There are those who show signs of life, but they eventually go away. Jesus makes very clear they never were true Christians, and yet you also have to understand that means there could even be some who had risen to influence in the church—the New Testament is clear about this—who would later fall away, but they went out from us because they were not of us.

Evangelicals should ponder what this tragic headline news tells us about our susceptibility to a consumer culture and also to a celebrity culture. That's always a danger. It's impossible to have some level of influence without some level of celebrity, but we must test everything by the Scriptures. And we also have to understand as the early church had to come to know, that there are some who appear to be believers and even have influence, even are pastors, but eventually fall away. That has to be acknowledged.



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There's something else of extreme importance in this case, and I say this as president of a theological seminary and a Christian college, but this is just emphatically important. There has to be theological depth. The only way that we're going to be able to sustain a biblical sexual ethic and the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is by serious biblical content, serious biblical knowledge, deep theology, apologetics, biblical theology, a deep understanding, celebration of, and embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ, understanding that gospel, the true gospel, the biblical gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ against all superficial pretenders and also against false theologies, including any form of legalism that can creep in.

The purity culture that Joshua Harris says he now rejects is something we have to look at very closely as evangelicals, understanding that there has been a certain legalistic bent in that purity culture among some who've made something of a religion of sorts out of I Kissed Dating Goodbye or any form of other legalism. They have sometimes also unintentionally subverted the gospel by elevating that kind of legalistic ethic.

But at the same time, the Bible upholds its own purity ethic. The Bible reveals God's intention for us in our gender, in our sexuality, in marriage, and in all sexual expression, and the Bible also holds up the fact that the only legitimate sexual expression is within marriage as the holy covenant of a man and a woman before God.

But we have to be very, very careful at this evangelical moment that the recognition of the danger of legalism does not turn into some form of antinomianism. The fact is that the original purity culture is found within the gospel itself. It's found within the Scriptures, within God's revealed Word, but it doesn't indicate that we are born pure. To the contrary, it indicates that we are born sinners, and the answer to our sin is not legalism, but rather it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But once we have come to know Christ as Savior, then we are called to obey all that he has commanded, and Christ has commanded, even as he affirmed what God's intention was from the beginning, that sexual expression be limited to the covenant union of a man and a woman. We also have to remember that even though the world hates that restriction, it is not only God's revealed Word, it is also God's good will. It is his plan for human happiness, human wholeness, human flourishing.

The headlines concerning Joshua Harris—indeed, concerning both Joshua and Shannon Harris—are deeply humbling to American evangelicalism. They should be very sobering. They should make us pray for the Harrises and for our churches. They should lead us to a deeper understanding of the gospel and exultation of the gospel of Christ and simultaneously, an introspection concerning our biblical fidelity and the depth of our commitment to Christ and to biblical Christianity. But this heartbreaking headline also reminds us that we can place our trust in no sinful human being, but in Christ alone, the one who alone is worthy of our trust.



September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 5:45p Dinner 6:30p Bible Study 7:45p Choir Practice	5	6	7
8 9:30a Sunday School 11:00a Worship	9	10	11 5:45p Dinner 6:30p Bible Study 7:45p Choir Practice	12	13	14
15 9:30a Sunday School 11:00a Worship	16 6:30p MOVES	17	18 5:45p Dinner 6:30p Bible Study 7:45p Choir Practice	19 5:30a LOVES	20	21 4:00p Picnic
22 9:30a Sunday School 11:00a Worship	23	24	25 5:45p Dinner 6:30p Bible Study 7:45p Choir Practice	26	27	28
29 9:30a Sunday School 11:00a Worship	30					

