

Billy and Grace met through a mutual friend. From the first time they lay eyes on another they seemed to be the perfect match. Grace was everything that Billy had ever wanted. She was beautiful, outgoing, caring—she was always there when he needed her. For about six months the two were inseparable. Billy could hardly think of anything but Grace, but now three years have passed. Billy still enjoys the comfort and familiarity of being with Grace, but for some reason the sparkle is gone. In fact, Billy is not really sure he finds her attractive anymore—like he did at first—in fact, he’s beginning to resent all the time she wants to spend with him. One night when Grace asked if they could define the nature of their relationship, Billy lost it and began yelling, “We’re together aren’t we?” “Why is that not enough for you Grace?” It’s clear that Billy isn’t ready for commitment and at this rate it’s unclear if he’ll ever be ready.

I’m pretty sure most of you guys either have known about a relationship like that or were in one similar to that at one time or another. I think the one thing we can agree on here is that it was not a good place to be. You know reader—there sure are a lot of Billy’s walking this earth today. And Grace—well she isn’t a girl at all—Grace is the Church—you know the one Jesus died to establish (Matthew 16:18).

Would we tolerate a relationship like the one in the first paragraph? I doubt we would, but that is precisely the type of relationship many offer the church today. It’s the type of relationship where we set the terms—where there is no commitment on our part and expectations from us; at the same time a relationship that we want at a beckons notice to meet all our needs and satisfy our desires.

What I am trying to say in a nice way is this—STOP DATING THE CHURCH! It’s time to stop dating the church and enter into a committed relationship with Christ and the church. When we you look into the religious landscape of today, you’ll find countless believers—but not many belongers. So here’s the purpose for this article. I want you to look in the mirror and see what you see. Then I want you to open God’s Word and read James 1:21-25. Could it be that you are a “church dater” and didn’t even realize it? Could it be that you are one who wants something from the church, but is unwilling to commit to the church?

Dear reader you have a great choice right now. We can go through life and refuse to commit to the church and refuse to fall in love with her. We can continue to defy God’s divine wisdom, His divine purpose, His eternal plan and view the church as a burden. Or you can decide right here and now to stop dating the church, fall in love and commit yourselves fully. When you do this—you’ll find it not to be something that is a burden—you’ll find it is a gift. It doesn’t tie you down—in fact it sets you free and anchors us against the storms of life. Will you do that? I hope and pray that we all can and will.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes