

"The variety of perspectives gathered here will help you sharpen your thinking, clarify your convictions, and pursue integrity and godliness as you seek healthy, mature Christian relationships."

—ALBERT Y. HSU  
author of *Singles at the Crossroads*

"*5 Paths to the Love of Your Life* shows there is no 'one size fits all' in this adventure, and we are shown illuminating points of comparison and contrast among the options. This book details in clear language the ways serious believers may think about the paths to marriage."

—BEN PATTERSON  
campus pastor, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California

"Biblical, practical, contemporary. Those three words came to mind as I read *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*. Pastors, youth workers, parents, and single adults will find it an invaluable resource on the difficult questions surrounding dating, courtship, and marriage in the twenty-first century. Get ready to have your thinking stretched and challenged."

—DR. RAY PRITCHARD  
senior pastor; author of *An Anchor for Your Soul*,  
*Discovering God's Will for Your Life*, and *He's God and We're Not*

"Dating is an issue of Christian controversy—and for good reason. This fascinating new book brings together some of the most important thinkers and writers on this issue, producing a dialogue that will stretch the mind and encourage Christian thinking. Read this book—it's sure to become a focus of much conversation."

—R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.

president, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

"Recent books on courtship and dating have raised some difficult questions about the proper approach Christians should take for finding a life partner. This book lays out the major views and unpacks their scriptural arguments. If you're trying to understand all the views and think carefully through their biblical merit, here is the book you are looking for."

—JOHN MACARTHUR

pastor, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California;  
president, The Master's College and Seminary

**DEFINING YOUR DATING STYLE**

**5**  
**PATHS TO**  
**THE LOVE OF**  
**YOUR LIFE**

**LAUREN F. WINNER | DOUGLAS WILSON | RICK HOLLAND**  
**JONATHAN LINDVALL | JERAMY & JERUSHA CLARK**  
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# THE COUNTERCULTURAL PATH

# 1

*Lauren F. Winner*

IN HER RECENT NOVEL *THE OUTSIDE WORLD*, TOVA MIRVIS DESCRIBES the acquaintanceship, engagement, and marriage of two young New Yorkers, Tzippy and Baruch. I know *acquaintanceship* is an awkward noun, but I use it because no other word will do. What Tzippy and Baruch have is not quite a romance. They don't exactly date, but they don't quite court, either. The match they make is not quite arranged, nor can it be mistaken for the match Monica and Chandler made on *Friends*.

Tzippy and Baruch are orthodox Jews, straddling—as many real-life, nonfictional Christians straddle—two different schools of premarital sociability. There's modern-day romance on one hand, and then there's the traditional way of doing things.

In some corners of the orthodox Jewish world, the traditional way of doing things is called *shidduch* dating (*shidduch* literally means “match”). *Shidduch* dating is not entirely unlike contemporary Christian courtship; when one is of marriageable age, friends, relatives, and other folks in the community begin thinking up suitable mates. If the parents approve and the young man and woman themselves are willing, the couple goes out for a first date, the goal of which is not to flirt or practice coquetry but to get to know one another with the speed and precision of a laser so they can each ascertain whether the other might be an appropriate

marriage partner. If things seem promising, there is a second date and a third, and after a fairly short time, a decision is made—either the couple gets engaged, or they call it quits.

Tzippy goes on an unusually long string of *shidduch* dates arranged by friends, relatives, and fellow synagogue-goers before she finally meets Baruch. Her dates are “arranged through an elaborate circuitry, transmitted by connections once, twice, thrice removed.” (The dates generally comprise a Diet Coke and conversation in a hotel lobby, lobbies being popular orthodox dating spots because they are so public that something untowardly intimate or sexual couldn’t possibly happen.) By her forty-second *shidduch* date, Tzippy

felt as if she were drowning. . . . It used to sound easy. How hard could it be to determine compatibility? . . . The main objective was to discover if there was potential for marriage. Do you want to live in New York or in Israel? . . . Would you allow a television in your home? Do you go to the movies? The yeses would be tabulated against the nos and a decision would be made as to whether the person sitting across the table was The One.<sup>1</sup>

Date number forty-two is a bust, and Tzippy decides to leave New York for a year to study in Jerusalem. There, she spies the son of her mother’s college roommate, a boy she hasn’t seen since childhood. Baruch, too, is studying in Israel for a year. Tzippy begins, in very un-orthodox fashion, to follow him around Jerusalem until they finally meet face-to-face. Instantly smitten, they know they can’t simply start dating; they must recreate that “elaborate circuitry” *post facto*. So they contact

friends and friends of friends who arrange a *shidduch* date, and that date is followed by a whirlwind courtship. Soon enough, Baruch and Tzippy are engaged, and not long after, married.

*The Outside World*, though set in a community of orthodox Jews, beautifully captures all that is appealing and all that is problematic about dating for a religious person in any religious community in contemporary America. There is something very compelling about the *shidduch* system. As Tzippy muses,

The rabbis assured them that their way of getting married was so much better than in the outside world. Here, people gave advice about which college to go to . . . even which nursery school to choose. . . . But when it came to marriage—the most important decision of all—you were supposed to rely solely on your feelings.<sup>2</sup>

*Shidduch* dating offers an attractive alternative to the unrealistic romanticism and palpable sexuality of modern American dating. And yet even for Baruch and Tzippy, a little modern-day romance creeps in. Even in their modest, regimented, almost cloistered world, Tzippy's and Baruch's feelings manage to dictate, or at least shape, their choice. Their eventual courtship can be called *shidduch* dating, but barely. After all, Tzippy pursued Baruch through the streets of Jerusalem. They chose each other.

The novel encapsulates many of the questions Christians are asking when they debate, analyze, and consider dating. What is the place of one's family and community in matchmaking? How can one date in a way that is conducive to chastity? And what about those pesky emotions?