

Click Here to
Buy it Now



Westminster
Bookstore

Starting Over

How Not to Screw Up
Your Next Relationship

William P. Smith



www.newgrowthpress.com

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27429
Copyright © 2009 by Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation
All rights reserved. Published 2009.

Typesetting: Robin Black, www.blackbirdcreative.biz

ISBN-10: 1-935273-01-9
ISBN-13: 978-1-935273-01-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smith, William P., 1965-
Starting over : how not to screw up your next relationship /
William P. Smith.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-935273-01-1 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-935273-01-9 (alk. paper)

1. Man-woman relationships—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Dating (Social customs)—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BT705.8.S65 2009

248.8'4—dc22

2009016565

Printed in Canada

16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09

1 2 3 4 5

So, your last relationship went sour. Maybe it was so fast and furious, with so much light and heat, that it burned itself out. Maybe you were engaged when one or both of you decided it wasn't going to work. Or, hardest of all, perhaps you were married when, sadly, everything fell apart.

Whatever happened, you are single again, and you've been thinking about or toying with the idea of getting involved with someone new. You might be attracted to someone right now, or perhaps you're just thinking about the possibility for the future.

You're a little nervous—you'd like to have a new relationship—but you're not sure, given your track record, how good an idea that is. Certainly the other person in your previous relationship had his or her share of issues, but in your more thoughtful moments you know you also had yours.

Because you've got issues to address, you've also got questions: Should you start something with someone else? Will you be toxic or nurturing this

time? What were you supposed to learn from your past experience(s)? How do you know you're ready to try again?

While no one can tell you exactly what to do, this booklet will help you think through your questions from God's perspective.

Do You Have More Confidence in God's Redemption or in Your Failure?

Four months after his fiancé broke their engagement, Todd said, "This was all part of the plan." For some people that would be a depressing statement of resignation. But Todd didn't see himself as a helpless victim of fate.

Instead, despite the many mistakes he had made in his relationship with his fiancé, he saw a very personal, active, powerful God redeeming those mistakes—in both of their lives. When Todd spoke of "the plan" he spoke with confidence in God's promise to use even Todd's failures for his good. He believed what God said: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares

the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11). And he believed that God was using all things in his life for his good (Romans 8:28).

Do you have a deep-seated confidence that Jesus’ mercy to you and his plans for you go deeper than your failings? People who are ready to move on to a new relationship know that their errors and missteps haven’t relegated them to plan B (or C, D, E . . . Z for that matter!). They know that, in some mysterious way, God wraps their mistakes back into his good purposes for them.

If you’re still struggling to believe that God will redeem your worst relational failures, then you’re not ready to move on. You need to know what good things God has brought out of your failed relationship before embarking on a new one.

Trusting Jesus, Loving Others

When a relationship falls apart, you may struggle with whether you can really trust another person again.

Maybe you learned some things about the other person that surprised you. Maybe he hid parts of himself from you or maybe you chose not to see who she really was. Either way, the reality feels the same—you've seen the darker side of humanity, and now you're not sure if you can give yourself to someone else after being so disappointed.

You've learned the hard way what Jesus already knew. The apostle John said that Jesus didn't entrust himself to people, because he knew what was inside of them (John 2:23–25). Yet, Jesus stands out as the most intensely relational person in the whole Bible. He enjoyed people, spent time with them, helped them, rebuked them, cared for them, served them, and wept for them. His knowledge of our true nature didn't hold him back from relating deeply with the people around him.

His entire ministry revolved around removing the obstacles to relationship with him. His life, death, and resurrection made a way for us to spend eternity with him. And so we look forward to the day when

the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven, and we will hear, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

Your friendship with Jesus is the best friendship you will ever have. Other friends might prove to be untrustworthy, but Jesus will never fail you. You can depend on his love and friendship. Trusting Jesus frees you to love, serve, help, and enjoy sinful humans without losing yourself in them or being walked on by them. One of the best things you can learn in the aftermath of a failed relationship is to trust Jesus’ unfailing love and ask him to help you love others as he has loved you.

Relearn the Gospel

As you spend time reflecting on God’s love for you and his good plan for your life, it is also very important to think seriously about your own relational failings. How you relate to others always reflects the state