

From woman to woman...

LET'S LOOK AT ROMANCE NOVELS

(BOOKS, TELEVISION, AND
MAGAZINES)



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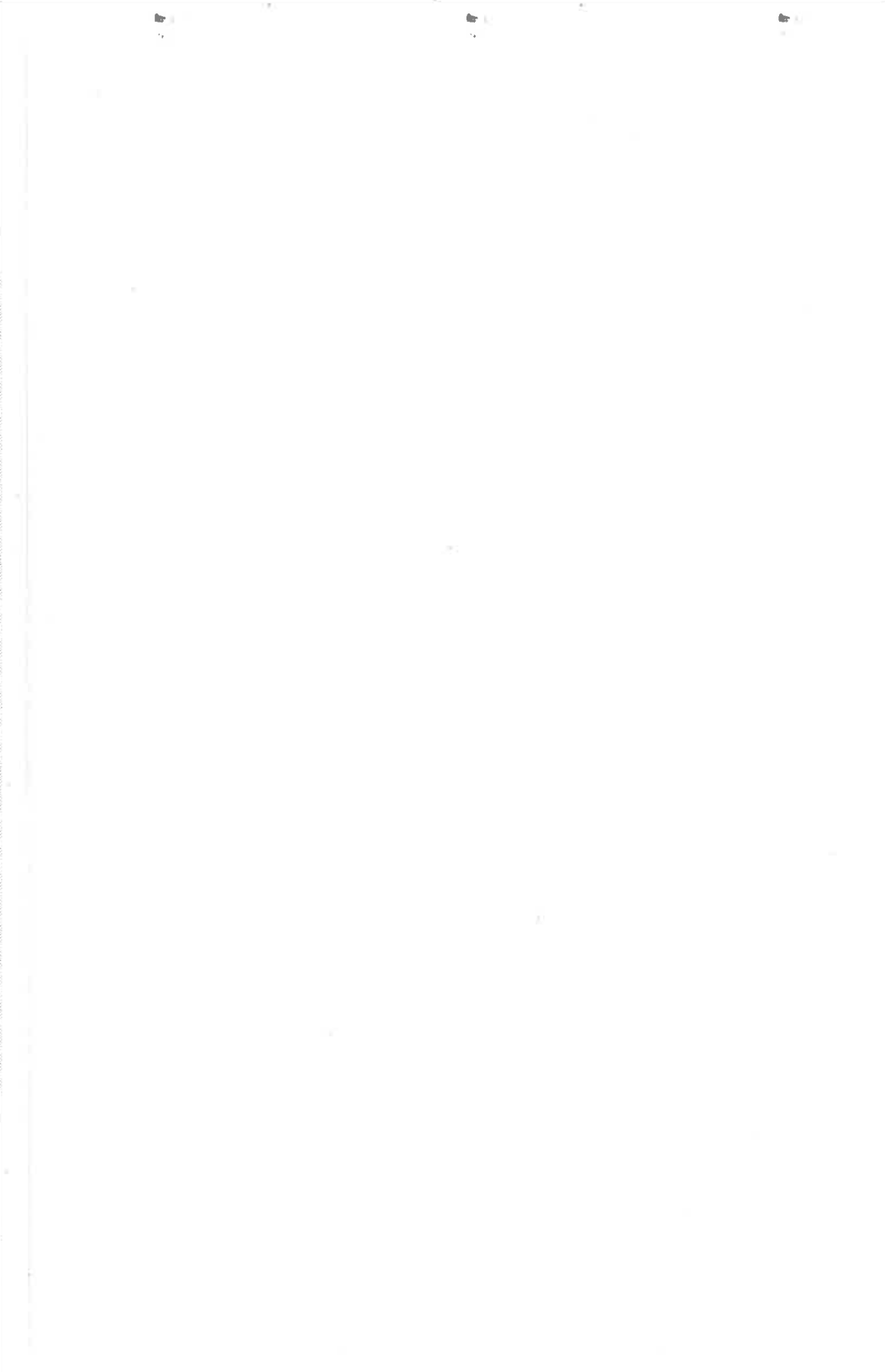
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INTRODUCTION

It is a part of a woman's God-given nature to be romantic. If it is a God-given quality, then it has to be all right to be romantic. But we have to use this gift in the right way. Let's look at romance novels and see if they are a God-approved way for us to enjoy being romantic.

1 Thessalonians 5:21,22 tells us to "*prove all things, hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.*" Let's use these verses as we look at this very common thing in the lives of many women now days. Let's examine what romance novels, whether books, TV or magazines, say about various topics related to love and life. As a standard for our thinking let's see what the Bible says about each topic and as a balance let's consider some real life observations and advice that marriage counsellors give in each area. I hope that with God's help this 3-way examination will give us the courage to "*hold fast that which is good*" and "*abstain from every form of evil.*"

WHAT IS LOVE?

Romance novels say:

Love is a blinding light, a sharp pain, an electrical charge.

Love is inescapable—a person has no control over love.

Romance is love.

"Love-at-first-sight" is love.

Sex is love.

The Bible says:

God commands us to love. We control our love. It does not come as a revelation or a miracle. 1 John 4:7; 1 Cor. 13; Tit.2:4; Eph. 5:25,28.

Sex is an expression of married love. Eph. 5:25-31; 1 Cor. 7:1-5.

"Sight-love" can be sin. Matt. 5:27-30.

Physical grace and outward beauty are vain. Prov. 31:30.

Observations:

The novelist's "blinding light, inescapable" love is based on physical appearance and sexual attraction. These are not love.

Even true love, based on knowledge of the person, has to be nurtured so it will grow and so that the difficulties and problems of life can be endured.

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Romance is only a part of love. It has to be nurtured or it can be easily forgotten after marriage.

Sex is much misunderstood and misused in the world. How can it be equated to love?

HOW TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE IN LOVE

Romance novels say:

A kiss will tell you if you are in love.

Having sexual relations will tell you if you are in love.

The Bible says:

A kiss excites sexual desire. Prov. 7:13.

Sex without marriage produces hate—2 Sam. 13:1-15; and downfall—Jud. 16:4-21.

Sex in marriage as an expression of love is beautiful. Song of Solomon.

Observations:

Kisses and sex are not love themselves, but are supposed to be expressions of love.

Premarital sex to prove "love" produces guilt and mistrust, a poor basis for marriage. Premarital sex often causes a troubled marriage later.

Love has to be built on a knowledge of the other person's character, abilities, personality, likes, dislikes and attitudes. Sex interferes with getting to know the real person.

HOW TO MEET SOMEONE TO LOVE

Romance novels say:

Blind dates are desirable.

Pick-ups are exciting and acceptable.

Mail-order brides are glamorous.

It's usual for lovers to meet in dramatic situations.

The Bible says:

Beware of the danger of "blind dates" and "pick-ups." Pro. 7:4-23; 22:14; 6:24,25.

Observations:

Blind dates and pick-ups frequently bring grief, danger and regret. No one should ever date anyone they do not respect and trust.
 A person should get to know possible mates in acceptable and sensible ways, in decent places through trustworthy people.
 Meeting in a dramatic situation could produce strong emotions that are easily mistaken for love. Dramatic meetings are rare in real life.

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

Romance novels say:

Men are usually handsome or strong or successful, or a combination of all 3.
 Women are usually beautiful and talented.
 Story characters are "all good" or "all bad."

The Bible says:

Even Satan fashions himself as an angel of light. 2 Cor. 11:14.
 A worthy woman has character and good works. Prov. 31:10-31.
 A woman's outer beauty is vain. Prov. 31:30.
 A woman's inner beauty is good. 1 Peter 3:1-6.
 Godliness is more profitable than physical strength. 1 Tim. 4:8.

Observations:

In real life, most men are not the handsome, strong, and successful people of books and the movies.
 In real life, most women are not outwardly beautiful nor do they possess many talents.
 Most people are ordinary, everyday folk, not movie stars.
 People are complex with both good and bad traits and habits.
 Successful marriage requires character. Each has to look inside the other person carefully. "Whom you marry can make or break you" has been proven over and over.
 Some people never marry because they are looking for a "story-book-perfect" mate.

COMPETITION IN LOVE

Romance novels:

Portray 2 men "in love" with 1 woman, or 2 women after 1 man, as if

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these were events usual in real life.

When one can't have his first choice, he makes a fast change to be "in love" with another.

The Bible says:

To be fickle, unstable, wavering, variable or doubleminded are not considered good traits to have. Prov. 5:6; Jas. 1:7,8; Eph. 4:14.

Observations:

Two after one is not usual but rather rare in real life.

A quick change of "love" and proposal of marriage is sexual attraction, not love. Everyone should beware of "love on the rebound." It is not love.

The marriage vows say, "forsaking all others" which includes ALL. It takes time to recover from a rejection of love.

IS LOVE ALL-POWERFUL?

Romance novels say:

Love does away with any obstacle.

Love ignores major faults, says they are unimportant in marriage.

Wide differences in background are not important.

Lovers often have nothing in common.

Lovers don't know each other's families or backgrounds.

Lovers go against parents opposition to the match.

People in love ignore advice.

It is common to marry expecting to reform the lover.

The Bible says:

Choose carefully whom you marry. 2 Cor. 6:14—7:1.

Abraham chose for Isaac. Gen. 24:1-9.

Esau made unwise choices. Gen. 26:34,35.

Marriage is between two human beings. Even the best marriages have problems to overcome. God gives help with problems. Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18,19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; and more.

Only a fool refuses to listen to advice. Prov. 12:15; 19:20.

Observations:

In real life, those who marry in spite of major obstacles, faults, or different backgrounds are in for many UNpleasant surprises. After, maybe even during, the honeymoon there will be trouble.

Love is not a magic wand. It's a poor beginning to go into marriage blindly "in love." Before marriage a couple must face up to the problems and discuss their goals. Marriage can be strained to the breaking point over faults or major differences of background and goals.

If there is opposition to the match, a person should weigh carefully the reasons for it. Those who ignore advice often say later, "I wish I had listened."

A person is asking for trouble and failure if he or she expects to reform the other after marriage. Usually a person's bad traits get worse after the wedding.

Those who believe what the romance novels say about the power of love suffer a high divorce rate.

Even without major obstacles to overcome, a couple has to work to make and keep the best of marriages successful.

REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

Romance novels say:

Marriage is a good way to escape poverty or other misery.

It's glamorous to get married a short time (hours, days, a few weeks) after first meeting.

Marriage for money or for convenience is OK. The couple always fall in love but each keeps his love a secret because of the business bargain they made. Their love is suddenly and dramatically revealed.

The Bible says:

Christian marriage is to be "*in the Lord*." 1 Cor. 7:39.

True love is willing to wait. Gen. 29:18-20.

Marriage is a special God-made, beautiful relationship to provide companionship and love, to fulfill needs, and to help one another through life. Gen. 2:21-25; Eph. 5:22-33.

Husbands and wives are commanded to love one another. Tit. 2:4; Eph. 5:25-29.

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Observations:

Marriage is not the answer to other problems of life. Those who marry to escape one misery will just enter another. Those who jump at the first opportunity to marry will live to regret it. It takes time to get to know the real person, more than a few hours, days or weeks.

Even Christians have to choose carefully from among Christians. Just being a Christian does not guarantee that the person would be a suitable mate.

Marriages for money or convenience are rare and lead to misery.

To escape misery, for money or for convenience are all false reasons for getting married and have a very high divorce rate. People who marry after a short period of knowing each other have an extremely high divorce rate.

IS MARRIAGE NECESSARY?

Romance novels say:

It is normal and all right for a woman to visit a man in his apartment alone.

It is normal and all right for a woman secretary to go on business trips with her male boss.

Fornication and adultery are OK if the two involved are in love.

Sex before marriage is good to prove love and compatibility.

It is good for a couple to live together to prove if they could be happy if they would get married.

Divorce for any reason is OK.

The Bible says:

Flee fornication. 1 Cor. 6:18.

Fornication and adultery are sin. Mk. 7:21-23; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8.

Sex without marriage is dishonorable. Gen. 34:1-7; 2 Sam. 13:1-19.

Marriage is honorable and to be undefiled. Heb. 13:4.

Living together is not marriage. Gen. 34:1,2,7,8,13,26,31; John 4:17,18; 1 Cor. 6:15—7:5.

Divorce is allowed only for fornication. Mat. 19:1-9.

Observations:

Many men and women have lost their virginity because they got themselves into situations where it was easy to commit fornication. Love affairs have become very common. The world says, "Do what makes **you** feel good. Fornication and adultery cause much suffering and messed up lives. Fornication destroys trust between two people. In living together without marriage there is no commitment and no security. Even if the couple marries, there are scars. It is tragically true that it's easy to get a divorce now days. There is real joy in coming to marriage pure and in keeping yourselves for each other always. Any sex act outside of marriage is destructive to the marriage, to the family, to the church and to society.

RICHES AND LOVE

Romance novels say:

Riches are able to solve all problems.
One lover is always rich.

The Bible says:

Riches are deceitful. Mat. 19:23-25; Mat. 13:22.
Riches are dangerous and unsatisfying. 1 Tim. 6:6-10.
Riches cause problems. Ecc. 5:12; Jas. 5:1-6.
Riches can not be trusted. Prov. 11:28; 1 Tim. 6:17.

Observations:

In real life few people are rich.
In real life money is **not** all-powerful.
In real life money causes more problems than it solves.
Money is a major cause of friction in marriages whether rich or poor.
If one of the couple is rich and the other poor before marriage, it easily causes extra problems, not less, after marriage.

CHURCH — RELIGION

Romance novels:

Portray mostly worldly and unbelieving characters.

Glorify the world over the church which is presented as only good for emergencies, weddings and funerals.

Treat Jesus as a "good man."

Say that religion in marriage is unimportant.

"Christian" romance novels:

Usually present the teaching of salvation by "faith only."

Have the woman converting the man she wants to marry.

Glorify the woman who teaches men's classes.

Portray a man converting a girl and marrying her immediately.

The Bible says:

The fool says, "*There is no God.*" Ps. 53:1.

The church is so important that Christ died for it. Eph. 5:25-30.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Mat. 16:16.

Christians are to marry "*in the Lord.*" 1 Cor. 7:39.

Christians are not to be "*unequally yoked.*" 2 Cor. 6:14—7:1.

God's way of salvation is more than "faith only." Acts 2:38;

Mk. 16:15,16.

"*I permit not a woman to teach ... a man.*" 1 Tim. 2:12.

Beware of false teachers. 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

Observations:

The drama of story-telling is a very forceful teaching tool, whether it be used for good or as a subtle destruction of a person's faith.

Most mixed-religion marriages end up having no religion at all or having much conflict about religion.

It is a very dangerous thing to have romantic interest in an unconverted person and marry soon after they have been converted. Many "convert" to get the other for a mate. Even a genuine new-convert needs plenty of time to prove himself (or herself) before a more experienced Christian begins to show romantic interest.

There are worse things than remaining single. A Christian must wait, pray, and accept God's will.

WORLDLINESS

Romance novels:

Accept as normal and desirable things in life:

dancing,
drinking,
smoking,
mixed swimming,
immodest clothes,
glamorous clothes.

The Bible says:

Lasciviousness (which includes dancing) is sin. Gal. 5:19-21. (Note: *"and such like."*)

Drunkenness is sin. Gal 5:19-21.

"Flee fornication." 1 Cor. 6:18-20.

Your body is the temple of God. 1 Cor. 3:16,17; 1 Cor. 6:18-20.

Do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:31.

Condemns immodest and showy clothes. 1 Tim. 2:9,10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6.

Observations:

Dancing causes sexual desire, not love. Many have lost their virginity or committed adultery at or after a dance.

Drinking destroys a person's ability to make decisions and the moral strength to say, "No." The world says you aren't in style if you don't drink and smoke. Drinking and smoking destroy a person's health and make him or her obnoxious to others.

The world says, "Be glamorous," "Show your figure," and "Clothes make a man." Crime against women increases when women wear scanty, immodest clothing.

WHAT LIFE IS LIKE

Romance novels:

Are always built around fast-moving events and high excitement, as if this were real life.

The Bible says:

Live a quiet, working life. 1 Thes. 4:11,12.

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Observations:

Real life is mostly routine and boring.

Real life has mountain tops but no one should expect to live on a high level of thrills and excitement all their life. You would die of exhaustion and become bored with excitement.

VIOLENCE

Romance novels:

Portray violence as a regular part of life.

Every story has at least one brilliant, dramatic, glamorous rescue. One of the people falls madly in love at that moment.

Soldiers and patriotism are glamorized.

The Bible says:

Christians are to be non-violent. Jas. 4:1-10; Mat 5:38-45; 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

Observations:

In real life, most people never personally experience either violence or a brilliant, dramatic rescue.

People who "fall in love" at such moments with the hero or person rescued are experiencing strong emotions of gratitude or pity and mistaking it for love.

THE ENDING OF THE STORY

Romance novels:

Always end happily. Either the hero and the heroine suddenly fall into each others arms with, "I love you," or the happy pair are married in a beautiful ceremony.

The Bible says:

God recognizes that the wedding is only the beginning and He gives rules and guidance to help through all situations in the marriage. Eph. 5; Tit. 2; 1 Pet. 3; 1 Cor. 7; and more.

Observations:

To be happy a couple has to keep their feet on the ground when they have stars in their eyes and prepare for marriage beyond the wedding. It's only the beginning of a long, sometimes hard, life-time ahead. Marriage is not all excitement. Sometimes it can get humdrum and boring. The couple has to work at it after the honeymoon in order to make it a success. Marriage never comes with an automatic "and they lived happily ever after."

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF READING OR WATCHING ROMANCE NOVELS?

Perhaps you have already observed some of the results in your own life. Here are a few I have found:

Romance novels are emotionally addictive for women. (Most men are disgusted by them.) As a result of this addiction a woman can waste considerable money to buy more and a lot of valuable time reading them and/or viewing them on TV.

Romance novels cause women to have false expectations in real life and to set false goals. These novels are a subtle classroom, teaching you to want things you can't afford, to desire things you can't have, even things you shouldn't have for your own good.

Romance novels cause dissatisfaction with life in general. Ordinary life becomes even more humdrum and boring by contrast to the unrealistically exciting life of the novels.

Romance novels cause you to be dissatisfied with your own husband. He's dull by comparison to the prince charmings in the novels and he will most likely never be rich. You may even begin to doubt his ability to make the right decisions.

Romance novels cause you to be dissatisfied with yourself. "Look at ugly me," you say. "Why can't I be slim, glamorous, beautiful and mysterious like other women?"

Romance novels teach you a false idea of what love is. Their influence causes much grief in the lives of those who are looking for real love but are using these false descriptions and false directions to try to find it.

Romance novels can cause a breakdown in your convictions against

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sin. The "school room" of the novel teaches: "It's OK to do anything that is socially acceptable;" "It's OK to do anything that makes you happy;" "If you're bored with your husband, find someone else who will fulfill your needs;" "Anything is OK as long as you are in love;" "Doing your own thing is fun;" "Why not? Everybody else is doing it."

Even religious novels, because they are advertised as "Christian" novels, can gradually dilute your belief in the necessity of doing things God's way. You could stop being disgusted by man's changes in God's way. You could begin to think, "But those people are so good. They can't be wrong."

Romance novels are fairy tales for adults but they are more dangerous because they are written as if they portray real life. They should carry a label:

WARNING: The contents can damage your thinking and your spiritual life. Read or view at your own risk.

ASK YOURSELF:

Can I make romance novels a part of my regular mental diet and still fulfill Philippians 4:8?

If I continue feeding my mind with romance novels, can I make the same promise as the psalmist to put "*no wicked thing before mine eyes*"? (Ps.101)

Have I prayed to ask God to help me to decide these things according to His will? Have I asked Him to give me the strength to resolve this in my life?

I hope that you will study and think about all these things. With all my heart I hope you will decide to "*hold fast that which is good*" and "*abstain from every form of evil.*"



