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Internet Dating Services — “An Unprecedented Social Experiment”

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The current issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* features Lori Gottlieb’s fascinating report on the rise of online dating services. In “[How Do I Love Thee?](#),” Gottlieb traces the development of the online romance and match-making services and offers perceptive insights.

As Gottlieb explains, the emergence of online dating services opened the door for a huge market to develop:

Enter eHarmony and the new generation of dating sites, among them PerfectMatch.com and Chemistry.com. All have staked their success on the idea that long-term romantic compatibility can be predicted according to scientific principles –and that they can discover those principles and use them to help their members find lasting love. To that end they’ve hired high-powered academics, devised special algorithms for relationship-matching, developed sophisticated personality questionnaires, and put into place mechanisms for the long-term tracking of data. Collectively, their efforts mark the early days of a social experiment of unprecedented proportions, involving millions of couples and possibly extending over the course of generations. The question at the heart of this grand trial is simple: In the subjective realm of love, can cold, hard science help?

Of course, some of the “science” behind these services doesn’t appear very cold or hard. The worldview represented by many of these services is deeply rooted in humanistic psychology. The basic assumption is that compatibility — measured and evaluated by various factors, depending on the service — is the key to marital happiness. Christians must wonder, however, if compatibility — however described and measured — is really the key to a faithful and fulfilling marriage that glorifies God.

According to this article, millions of Americans are signing up for love on these sites — nine million at one service alone. If nothing else, this reveals a deep hunger on the part of many Americans. This is a big development that will require Christians to think clearly and carefully.

AND FURTHERMORE: The magazine also offers an online interview with Lori Gottlieb available [here](#).

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