

EP 212: Christian-ish Podcast: The Romance Recession

I have seen so much talk online about recession indicators, hence that the U.S. is going to officially be in a recession. And before you hop on and say, oh, the United States is already in a recession, can you look at the economy and see how much things are costing now and how hard it is to get a job? Particularly if you are a black woman, the unemployment rate for us is incredibly high right now. All of these other things that say the economy is in the trash, right? Well, there's a technical definition of a recession.

The U.S. has not hit it yet. And you may be wondering why I'm talking about money and recessions on a dating and relationships podcast. But the real recession indicator that is happening right now is the fact that particularly young adults are not dating because they are too broke.

So welcome to Confidently Cherished. My name is Keshia Rice. I'm a dating coach and a hypnotherapist.

And this is the podcast for women who have Bibles but don't necessarily have boundaries. And we're going to talk about this dating recession and also why I think it is more important now than ever to uphold your boundaries and your standards. So there's a report out that I saw that says that Gen Z is currently not placing a high priority on dating because it is too much of a financial burden.

So the survey was done from Bank of America. And it found that 53% of men and 54% of women ages 18 to 28 are spending \$0 a month on dating. So that is zero, zip, nada.

And the reasons for this are experts say that the pandemic has changed how we socialize, which I can definitely see that. Also, you know, just economic pressures in general have caused younger adults to pull back on spending. And that means pulling back on spending for everything, including dating.

So that means that a lot of younger adults are now placing a higher priority on being financially stable, on having some economic security before they find their romantic partner, before they get married, and before they start a family and have kids. So because of this, not only are they a little bit more hesitant to date, and by they, I'm talking about Gen Z. But they're also just not even when it comes to quote unquote free methods of communicating, they're more hesitant. So there was a report done last year from Hinge.

And it found that Gen Z is more likely 50% more likely actually, than millennials to wait to answer a message from a potential match, because they don't want to seem overzealous. And more than half have said that fear of rejection has kept them from pursuing a relationship. So because they're not dating both for financial reasons, and because of fear of rejection, experts are calling this a romance recession, a dating recession, or a sex recession.

And I have seen this a lot, there are a lot of studies talking about sex in particular, saying that fewer members of Gen Z are having sex compared to millennials or even Gen X. And while I do in some ways applaud that, because sex is serious, it comes with an emotional and a mental connection that should be taken lightly. I do find it a little sad that it is again, just just a sign, a lot of these, quote

unquote, normal, normal milestones in a young adult life, as far as having your first serious relationship, going out there, dating, figuring out what it is that you like and don't like, these things aren't happening. And I'm even seeing it in my business as well, where I'm increasingly meeting women who are now millennials.

So Gen Z is about, I know I'm going to be a little bit off on the years, but but Gen Z age wise is like around what, 18, 19, up to about 28, 29, somewhere around there. Whereas millennials are around 30 to what mid 40s at this point. And I am seeing an increasing number of millennial, particularly young millennial women coming to me, who've never been in a serious relationship.

And when I think about, you know, as I'm recording, this is 2025. And the pandemic happened in 2020. So five years ago, I'm definitely seeing the correlation.

And it's not necessarily unusual, because I have a lot of have a lot of clients who are very Christian. And because of that, you know, they grew up a little bit more sheltered and maybe didn't date through high school and college. That's not unusual.

But even those clients, when I started my business, even six years ago, they may not have been dating at 21, 22. But by 23, 24, 25, they were starting to put themselves out there and date, right. And now when you think about the pandemic being, you know, five years ago, you now have these women who were 24, 25, 26, who would have started to date.

And now they're in their 30s. And there was a delay in not going out and meeting people because of the lockdowns. And then after that, you know, there were economic consequences, people lost their jobs, people moved towns and were away from their social circles and all these different things.

And relationships just pursuing that aspect of their lives got put off more and more until now, again, is five years later, and it didn't happen. And I think that there are some definite downsides to this. Again, I, I know that you have young adults, young women in particular, who are not having certain milestones, reaching certain milestones in dating and relationships.

And I think that makes it more difficult to get married. Because, again, dating is where you figure out what it is that you like and don't like. It is where you have the experiences where you learn the importance of setting boundaries.

It is where you learn what your standards should be, what your deal breakers are. And I'm not a fan of that phrase, you have to kiss a few frogs to meet a prince. But to some extent, if you have not dated, you can't know what your frogs look like, right? You can't possibly know what it is that you truly like and don't like, you're only going by what people tell you, you should like and don't like. And that doesn't make for the best or healthiest of relationships. But at the same time, I think that there are a lot of upsides to this as well. And I think that there's something that my clients who are millennials, or even my clients who are Gen X could learn from this.

Because yes, Gen Z women are not dating as much as millennial women dated when we were their age. I'm a millennial myself. And they're not dating as much as Gen X was when they were in their 20s.

But at the same time, they are becoming much more deliberate about dating and relationships, especially in this economy, when you are spending money. And as a woman, you are always spending money. Even if you're not paying for the date, you're paying for clothes, makeup, getting your hair done, shoes, all that stuff.

You're paying to to look nice, right? And if you're going to spend that money, and more importantly, if you're going to spend that time, because time is more valuable than ever. They're being more deliberate with their choices. They're being a lot more intentional about dating, and not dating just for instant gratification.

They are being really purposeful and intentional about prioritizing compatibility and shared values. And that is something that is not just practical, but it's biblical as well, right? You know, there's, there's more than one passage in the Bible about the importance of spending your time wisely, of not squandering your resources. And about how there's a time and season for everything.

So I think taking this time to be very intentional about dating and relationships is really important. At the same time, because I'm going to go a little bit back and forth here on the downsides and the upsides, right? There's also a dating recession happening because a lot of Gen Zers feel like they're less desirable and less dateable because of debt from college or because of a low paying job, or being judged by a fear of being judged by potential partners. And that, I think is really holding a lot of young adults back.

And I see this all the time when I am on TikTok, about people joke about things like members of Gen Z being afraid to make small talk or having difficulties with things like making doctor's appointments, or calling customer service to settle a dispute. And people joke about it. But, and I hate to say, I hate to sound like kids nowadays, because it's not like I'm that old.

You know, there's, there's a three at the front of my age. But at the same time, yeah, technology has made it so, there are so many fears towards getting out there and doing things in person, because a lot of members of Gen Z have grown up with very little of that. Technology has made it so much more convenient to deal with things without having to talk to another human being.

But it also means that we are even more isolated than ever. And it means that there's a lot of social skills that were not learned. And you know, this is one of the things that I find when I am working with my clients to be the huge difference generationally.

When I am working with a woman who is a millennial, and she is having trouble with dating and relationships, for the most part, there are exceptions. But generally, we're working on things like she's had unhealthy relationships in the past. And we're working through figuring out what those patterns are, and showing her how to stand up for herself, how to uphold her boundaries, how to really communicate her needs, and how to recognize the unhealthy patterns that leads to her attracting those relationships.

Whereas a lot of times when I'm working with a Gen Z client, we're not talking about past unhealthy relationships, or at least not romantic ones, we might be dealing with past unhealthy relationships with family or friends, but not romantic ones, because again, they don't have any dating experience, they've kind of missed those milestones. And also, we're talking basic communication skills when we talk about dating in person, like how to go out, how to be outside and meet someone and have conversations with someone. Because they seriously lack those skills.

So yeah, dealing with these anxieties is a serious problem that I think, honestly, the way things have gone with again, talking about the pandemic and how things were on lockdown, the prevalence of things like virtual doctor visits and virtual schooling. And even, you know, even kids are back in school in person now, I know that. But at the same time, like, they're allowed to do things like virtual days when there's a snow day and things like that.

The fact that you can now get your groceries without interacting with another human being, because you have Instacart, right? And services like that, where someone can drop off your can go grocery shopping for you, drop it off, and leave it at your door. So you don't even have to interact with them there. These things are going to make it so much harder for young adults to learn social skills and for kids nowadays for Gen Alpha, to learn social skills.

I can only imagine what it's going to be like for me coaching when Gen Alpha reaches dating and relationship age, right? Because if you think there's a dating and sex and relationship recession happening right now, the rise of people talking to AI, the rise of again, people using technology to avoid human interaction is only going to get so much worse. The other thing about this is the rise in online dating itself. And on one hand, actually, before I say that, let me let me clarify, I am not a fan of online dating, but I am a fan of online meeting.

I definitely think that dating apps should be embraced and used, because it just expands your dating pool, it gives you more options. And also, there, there have been surveys that have made that have said that online dating is now the most common way that people meet their partners. So I definitely think you should take advantage of it.

At the same time, again, pandemic led to people spending much more time in online spaces, and less time in public third spaces, even, even church. Even, again, schooling, because some people chose to, some people ended up doing online schooling, for example, for college, and then chose to stay in online classes, and didn't go never set foot on a campus after the pandemic. All these places where you would normally meet people, there, there's this huge surge with remote work.

And I'm not knocking that, because my business runs remotely. I also freelance as a journalist, and most of my work nowadays is done remotely. So I'm not knocking anyone who gets a remote job.

But it does mean less humor, less human interaction. And it means that people are having a more difficult time with maintaining social ties. So you know, there was a study from Pew Research Center that found that adults under 30 were the likeliest to say that they use social media sites to stay connected to friends and family.

And again, talking about the positive and the negative of this, the positive is in some ways, I think this makes dating easier and safer. I tell this to all my clients, regardless of age. Again, if you are meeting someone online, then you want to take it off the app as quickly as possible.

You don't want to spend forever on an online dating site. That's how catfishing happens. But you don't necessarily have to have your first date in person.

Like I think a more natural progression nowadays would be to connect on an app, then have a phone call where you can hear their voice, and then set up some type of video chat. So FaceTime, Zoom, Riverside, any of those sites where you can talk face to face without being in person. And then that allows you to really that allows you to get a better sense of who this person is, before you take the steps of meeting them in person.

Because, again, you know, as a for your safety. And that doesn't mean dragging this on forever. I don't think that you should be spending forever on phone calls, one or two phone calls is enough.

And same with a video chat, one or two video chats is enough before you move to an in person date. But having those gives you that buffer gives you that amount of safety. And it also makes it easier if you're not feeling anything with this person, if you're not feeling any chemistry, it's so much easier to end it over a phone call, or over a video chat than it is to end it in person.

But at the same time, this goes back to the whole spending \$0 on dating, I think is also a cop out for people to avoid that whole fear of rejection, that they can talk to someone on their computer or on their phone for free, instead of paying money to go to dinner or coffee and then get rejected, or realize that even if it's not a harsh rejection, just realize that they're not compatible with this person. So I think the takeaways from this, because I know I've rambled for like 20 minutes. But I was, again, I was kind of digging through the numbers of the study and just was really fascinated by, by all of this.

But I think the takeaways from this dating recession that we're seeing is that if you are Gen Z, and you're listening to this, you need to get outside. And you need to figure out ways to improve your communication skills, improve your social skills, and to learn how to socialize in real life, and not with an AI, not with chat GPT, right? I think that you should also use this dating recession, knowing that other people in your age group are just as reluctant and as fearful of rejection as you are to really be intentional. And to really allow yourself to date in a way that is at your own pace, and not feel pressured by, say, your parents, other older adults, anyone else to hurry up and find a relationship.

Because this, I would say is one advantage, another advantage that Gen Z has over millennials like me. When I was a teenager, if you weren't in a relationship, if you weren't dating, you were a loser, right? There was something wrong with you. And you were inundated with that message all the time.

There were so many teen romantic movies, like 10 Things I Hate About You I can think of off the top of my head, Save the Last Dance, basically anything Julia Stiles was in. But there were so many teen romantic movies that made it seem clueless, that made it seem like all high school was was dating. And then there were TV shows, Sabrina the Teenage Witch, Gilmore Girls, Gossip Girl.

All of these were also, you know, the main characters were always dating and in relationships. And I am not seeing that as much with Gen Z. Like even now, I think of my nieces and nephews are teenagers. And even when I look at them, like, it's not like they aren't dating like they are.

But it doesn't consume as much of their time or their mind space as it did when I was in high school. Right? So I think that there's a blessing in that in the fact that if you want to take your time, be deliberate about dating, be more picky, you can do that with, I'm not saying no peer pressure, or no pressure, because parents be parenting, right? But you can do that with a lot less of the pressure that was around when I was in my teens. And when I was in my early 20s.

I also think that if you are delaying dating, and if you're waiting for, if you're waiting until you're more stable to do so, I applaud that as well. I might get canceled for saying this. But especially if you are a woman, your 20s are not for having babies.

And I dare say your 20s aren't necessarily for marriage either. Your 20s are for discovering who you are, what you want, and for really going hard and pushing aggressively for your goals. Once you get into your late 20s, and you're starting to approach your 30s, then yeah, there's a lot to be said for focusing more on dating and relationships.

And spending more time prioritizing finding the right partner to start your family. I mean, that bears out in my coaching, right? Most women who come to me are in their late 20s up into their mid 30s. Right.

And you're also seeing that statistically, the age of marriage has increased nationwide. Women are now getting married for the first time at around age 30. And in larger cities, it is into their 30s for the first age of marriage.

So yeah, this is a time for you to really go hard and aggressively at your goals. And if you are a millennial, as a woman, and you are not married yet, then I think this is now a time for you to really reflect on all the things you've accomplished in your single season, and be proud of that. Instead of being ashamed of not having the romantic relationship right now, this is the time to reflect on all the things that you managed to get accomplished in all the other areas of your life.

And this time to think about how you got there, how you can put that energy now towards, you know, dating in a romantic relationship. And also about how you have created a better space and environment now for that marriage and for those children. And I think the final takeaway that I see from this study, from this research, the Bank of America study, sorry, my mind blanked on who created this report.

But I think the final takeaway that I see from this is that I think it's time for us all in general to learn how to lower our expectations of the day to day. And I want to emphasize the day to day. Because I think you should have high standards for your life and for your relationships and for the people that you allow into your circle.

At the same time, back to this whole idea of millennial women being put under pressure to get married and pop out babies. I have seen so many clients come to me with this idea that every date

should be marriage robust, right? That if they go out and they hang out with their friends, and they don't meet a man that night, then the night was a waste of time. If they do meet a man and they go on a date, and that date turns out to be not great, they're not compatible, whatever, it was a failure.

And I think the way that I see a lot of younger Gen Z women, de-centering men and making romantic relationships less of a priority, I think that is very helpful to the women older or not, who are still centering romantic relationships. Because don't get me wrong, I believe that romantic relationships are beautiful. I wouldn't be a dating coach if I didn't believe in that, right? And I love my marriage, I love my husband.

But that is part of a full life that includes a bunch of other things as well. Marriage is not my identity, and it is not the only thing that I have going on in my life. And my husband is not my life, he adds to a great and beautiful life that I had before I met him and yes he definitely adds to it. He definitely contributes to it, makes it better, makes it sweeter. But I had a great life before he came along. I think that when we emphasize that, we emphasize building the life and making sure that our relationships in general romantic or otherwise are a part of that and not just all of that. We make ourselves happier, we end up less resentful of other people and our romantic relationships are that much more beautiful because we now have all of these things that we can share with another person.

So let me know what you think, are we in a romance recession and how are you being more intentional about building relationships in your life, let me know. You can find me on social media @keshiarice on Instagram, Tiktok and Youtube. If you're listening to this on Youtube, feel free to leave me a comment or leave me a review if you're listening to the podcast on where you're listening to the podcast and also if you want help creating this beautiful life and finding a romantic relationship that fits in with it, then I will be happy to help you with that. I will leave you the links in the shownotes or in the Youtube description to schedule a call with me and we can talk about working together. In the meantime, I will talk with you soon and love you so much. Bye.