

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - RELATIONSHIPS

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

The point of this Club isn't to tell middle schoolers not to date until they are older; rather to help them think through relationships through the lens of Romans 12:2. We want to preemptively talk through boundaries and help them think through all of the things surrounding relationships so they know how to answer and where they stand when they start feeling all of the things.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

We would encourage you to be communicating with parents throughout the year but especially throughout this series. Truth is that some parents will want you to discuss these topics with their student while others won't and it's good to give them a heads up on the content. We would encourage you to send out or post to social media the letter to the parent explaining why we are having these conversations with some aid for continued discussion at home (Parent Letter Sample is enclosed in the curriculum folder).

At Home Discussion Starters for Relationships:

1. What do you think the point of dating is in middle school?
2. Why do you think that relationships are so important for middle schoolers?
3. What would the ideal middle school relationship look like?
4. What are you comfortable doing with the person you're dating in middle school?
5. What are some characteristics you want in the person you are going to date?
6. What are some of your characteristics that you think may make others want to date you? What are some things you need to work on to be the best version of you for others to date?

Note: We would also recommend taking a look at *Global Youth Culture US Report 2021*

<https://onehope.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/US-GYC-Report-3.pdf> with your leaders, focusing on the relationships section to catch up on some important stats before this week.

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week

- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us
- If you have a leader that feels passionately about dating (especially if you have any HS student leaders), prep them to lead this wrap up
- Our ultimate goal would be that each ministry leader walks away with an appointment with a different student each week of this series

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice their shocked faces, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this".

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Projection & Sound System for Media
- Bell or Something to Pick Up (for Welcome)
- 3+ Hula Hoops
- Post-It Notes & pens for each student during the Response

WELCOME

Welcome to Campus Life! We are continuing our "Better Choices" series today and man, I am telling you- these are some of my favorite conversations all year! Every week we are going to start this series with a friendly

little competition between a leader and one of you! *[Consider making a deal like if students win the majority of the challenges at the end of the series, they'll get a pizza/donut party etc.]* This week we are going to start with trivia so who thinks that they can get more questions right than _____? *(call up one student and the leader that you already discussed this with)*. I'm going to ask a trivia questions and whichever of you ring the bell (or pick up something) first, gets to answer. If they get it wrong, the other person will have a chance to answer. Whoever gets the most out of five wins and is one step further to winning this series!

1. On a traffic light, where is the green light located? [Bottom]
2. What is Captain America's name? [Steve Rogers or Sam Wilson would be accepted]
3. Which hand holds the Statue of Liberty's torch? [Left]
4. How many curves does a standard paperclip have? [Three]
5. What is a group of lions called? [Pride]

CROWDBREAKER

HULA HOOP HOT POTATO

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Hula Hoops

DIRECTIONS: In a minute, but not yet, everyone is going to stand in a circle holding hands with the people next to them. A leader is going to go around and place hula hoops between some of you and when the music starts, you have to work your body through the hoop and pass it to the next person without letting go of the other person's hands. You want to go fast because whoever is touching the hula hoop when the music stops is out! (You can stop when you get down to two people or stop at any time before).

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **FAMILY GAME** and **PIN HEAD** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **3 IN 5** and **REVERSE CHARADES** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

Man, that hula hoop got passed around so much; TBH, that game reminds me a lot of watching all of you guys date (burn!). Throughout the three years I'll see all of you, I see so many of you getting passed around

and just passing one another around like meaningless hula hoops. Before we start talking about better choices in relationships, here's a comical little video showing a bit of what I'm talking about:

MEDIA

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - IF ADULTS DATED LIKE MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What did you think about the video? Are there pieces of it that you are like yep that's true?!
- 2) What would the ideal middle school relationship look like?
- 3) What do you think the point of relationships are in middle school?
- 4) On a scale of 1-10, how important is dating/how much thought space does it take up for you?
- 5) What are the top three characteristics that you want in someone you're looking to date?
- 6) What do you think the top characteristics are that the opposite gender is looking for in someone to date?
- 7) What are some limits you personally feel should happen in middle school relationships?

GOING DEEPER

- 1) What could some consequences be for your future self if you just date whoever and do whatever in middle school?
- 2) Why do you think God gives us some limits to live by within relationships?

WRAP UP

Let's be honest, relationships are really important for many middle schoolers and others won't care about dating or being in a relationship until later. No matter which of these categories you fall in, you're okay: We aren't going to stand up here today and tell you not to date, instead we want you to just make Better Choices in your relationships.

Remember that we are focusing on Romans 12:2, "Don't conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" meaning to not just make the same choices everyone else does - instead be different because you have thought about what God wants for you. There's a lot to cover in talking about relationships so we are going to break this topic down into three areas where you have to decide to live by the patterns of this world or to make a better choice.

1. Relationships make me feel loved VS. I love myself so relationships are just a bonus

- So much of middle school is filled with drama, loneliness, insecurity and just wanting to feel like you're good enough or loved so it makes a lot of sense why so much of middle school would also be filled with dating even if it is super short-term relationships with the only thing different than a friendship being that your Insta handle now sports their initials and your anniversary date. Being in a relationship in order to feel like you're enough or that you're loved or to even just look less alone or cooler aren't real great reasons to be in a relationship. They are also the reason so many of us can get stuck in this cycle of always dating someone and needing to find a new boyfriend or girlfriend because we only know how to feel love when someone else is available to text us when we are insecure, pump us up for our next big game or give us someone to hang out with on a Friday night. I'd like to challenge you that maybe the better choice in middle school is to take time to figure out how to love yourself. In the Bible, there is a chapter that is often called "the love chapter" because it gives us all of these qualities of love - "love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NLT) The Bible is also big on saying that you should love others the way you love yourself but in turn that shows us that we aren't really capable of truly loving others in that patient, kind, not rude or jealous way until we first know how to love ourselves with that kind of love. To put it bluntly, if you are just in a relationship to feel better about yourself, then you're just using that other person instead of actually loving them no matter how many times you say you love them in your good night FaceTimes. I'm not saying you can't have relationships in middle school, I just want to challenge you to spend more time learning how to love yourself than learning how to get someone else to say that they love you. The patterns of this world would say that relationships make you feel loved, but the better choice is loving yourself and letting relationships be a bonus.

2. What happens in middle school stays in middle school VS. What happens in middle school is a staircase for high school and beyond

- I've seen too many middle schoolers treat middle school like it doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, like you can hold as many hands, send as many nudes, say I love you to as many people, kiss as many people and beyond and it doesn't really matter because, after all, it's just middle school. 1 Corinthians 10:13 challenges this by saying, "I am allowed to do anything but not everything is good for me" (NLT). The patterns of this world would tell you that you can do whatever you want to do in a relationship whether you're in middle school or not, but I want to challenge you to look at it like a staircase. Before you're ever in a relationship or even just catching feelings for someone, you're at the bottom of the staircase: Everything you do with someone once you're in a relationship is like taking a step up - holding hands, saying I love you, sending nudes, kissing, making out and everything else. It's probably true that your first time doing each of those things, it takes a little bit of time but the next relationship, you are way more likely to just pick up from where you left off the last time. You'll rarely go back down the staircase; you'll just gradually and then not so gradually move up the staircase so what you do in middle school plays a big part in where you'll go in relationships as you get older. Even if it's something as simple as turning to relationships to make you feel better, you'll probably continue that pattern when you're older until you take the time to learn how to love yourself. The patterns of this world would tell you that what

happens in middle school stays in middle school, but the better choice would say that middle school is just a stairstep.

3. Thinking about boundaries is uncomfortable VS. Boundaries are a necessary part of a relationship

- This is really just an extension of the second point, but it's important enough that I thought it deserved its own number! If you get awkward thinking about boundaries, then you're not ready for a relationship. Let me say that again for the people in the back **IF YOU GET AWKWARD THINKING ABOUT BOUNDARIES, THEN YOU'RE NOT READY FOR A RELATIONSHIP.** Statistics would show that more and more middle schoolers are going further physically and emotionally than ever before so this point is especially important. Every relationship (even a friendship for that matter) needs to have boundaries- We've already talked about emotional boundaries a little bit when we talked about not letting relationships be your sense of love for yourself but it's also important to think about physical boundaries and you guys are at the perfect age to start thinking about them. Before you're ever in a relationship, you need to know what you're okay with and what is crossing the line for you. You're never going to set a boundary in the heat of the moment when things start moving in a relationship - you're always going to move right up that staircase because things feel good, you feel like this may be the thing that really makes you feel loved or you're maybe even afraid of what the other person will say if you say to stop. Your parents may help you with some boundaries - maybe they say that you are only allowed to go on group dates with your boyfriend or girlfriend or that you're only allowed in family rooms with them and never in your bedroom or that doors have to be left open, etc. But you can't depend on your parents for all of your boundaries. What are you okay with? Maybe you write one set of boundaries for your middle school relationships and make some changes in high school or that your boundaries change the longer you're with someone; maybe it's all the same list but you have to spend some time thinking about boundaries. Are you okay saying I love you? Is there a certain time of night that you stop texting your significant other (Truly nothing good happens after 9pm in a relationship so stopping texting/snapping/dming after 9 is always a good rule)? Are you okay with holding hands? Kissing? We sometimes hear that the Bible only says to not have sex before we are married but more than that, it often says to steer clear of sexual immorality which can mean a lot of things. A good baseline is to draw a boundary around anything that causes those feelings of wanting more for you or the person you're in a relationship with. The patterns of this world would say do whatever you want in the moment, but the better choice is to think through your boundaries ahead of time.

I want to leave you with the why - a lot of times we can see the Bible or God as a long list of things that we shouldn't do but have you ever thought about why? God created relationships and even all of the physical stuff within relationships because he knew the power and goodness that they could have but gave them some boundaries to keep them good. In the same way, God created fire - for warmth, for light, for flames to cook over but gave it some boundaries. Think about it, a fire in a fireplace is great but what if it leaves that fireplace and spreads to the rest of the living room? Then it's a disaster, right? This is why God also put boundaries around relationships - as long as they are for the right reasons and have physical and emotional boundaries,

they can be really good BUT if they get out of that context, then they create disaster for our lives. God puts boundaries around these to protect us. He doesn't just say to keep sex for marriage because he wants to withhold something, but because physical relationships (even things before sex) releases different chemicals that bond us to that person and makes us feel attached to that person even after we break up. God wants to protect us from that heart break. So, don't conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed in the way that you do relationships even as a middle schooler.

RESPONSE

Right now, leaders are coming around to give everyone a post-it note and a pen. On the post-it notes, I want you to write down something that stuck out to you from this wrap up; a question you have or even use this space to think through some of your boundaries going forward in a relationship. For some of you, this wrap up maybe struck a nerve and you want to talk more about it - maybe you're stuck in a cycle of needing a relationship to feel loved; maybe you feel like crap because it doesn't seem like anyone wants to date you; maybe you've already gone further in your boundaries than you'd like in the future or you just want to talk about something totally not on this topic. Also write down your name and phone number on the post-it and a leader will reach out to you to hang out this week. When you're done, just put the post-it notes on the wall by the door.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | BETTER CHOICES: SCREEN TIME

We all struggle with too much screen time on our phones/laptops/TVs. Come ready to learn together and hold each other accountable!

2 WEEKS | BETTER CHOICES: YOUR BODY

We will look at the different topics of self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse.