

LOVE AND DATING

Week 6 - Happily Ever After

THE MAIN POINT

It's easy for students in their teenage years to fall hard fast in a dating relationship. The end goal is to find that happily ever after. These relationships always come up short in that regard unless they lead to a God-centered marriage relationship—the odds of which are slim in a high school relationship. Ultimately this week we will challenge students to discover the true joy and true love that are found only in a relationship with God. A good marriage will therefore be found when both people are moving toward a deepening relationship with Him—joyfully ever after.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Computer or Game Console with "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes" installed
- Printed Bomb Defusal Manual from "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes"
- (Alternate Activity) Everyone arrives with "Space Team" app downloaded

GETTING STARTED

Welcome everyone! We've come to the last meeting of our Love and Dating small group! Give me one highlight and lowlight from this week.

Here's one last reminder of our small group rules:

RULES FOR SMALL GROUP:

Commitment - Commit to being at every group meeting (make it a priority!)

Confidentiality - What is shared here stays here.

Be honest or be silent - don't make up an answer just to have one. Sometimes the most honest answer is no answer, so if you need to, just say pass.

Respect - for one another, their thoughts/ideas/opinions (no put downs).

ACTIVITY

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes (available on Steam, Nintendo Switch, Xbox, PS4, PC, and Mac)

In this game, one or more students will use the "bomb defusal manual" to help another student on the computer or TV screen defuse a bomb by working through puzzles. It's important to ensure that the students looking at the manual can't see the screen and the student working on the bomb can't see the manual. Students must work together to defuse the bomb before it blows up by talking to one another.

Space Team (alternate activity, free on iOS or android)

Have your students download the free "Space Team" app. You will all need to be connected to the same Wi-Fi network, or it gives the option to enter a password so that you will join the same round. This game is a cooperative group game in which you are all flying in a spaceship. Each team member has a different set of controls and will receive different computer commands on what buttons to push (for example: "engage the hyperloop!"). The catch is that you will get commands for buttons you don't have. Students will have to shout the commands out loud so that the person with the button will know what to push. Failure to push the buttons in a timely fashion will result in a crashed spaceship. Depending on your time and how good your team is, play a few rounds.

GOING DEEPER

Well that was crazy. It seems like this game wanted you to lose. It got more and more difficult until finally it blew up. It can also seem like the dating game is this way too.

- Take a guess. How many high school dating relationships lead to marriage in the United States?

Answer: 2% of North American new marriages are comprised of high school sweethearts.

Think about that for a minute. 2% of marriages in North America are high school sweethearts. This means that 98% of people getting married aren't getting married to the person they dated in high school.

- What do you think about this statistic? Does this mean that you shouldn't date in high school at all?
- If most high school relationships end, how should that change the way we date?

I don't mean to burst anyone's bubble. It's certainly *possible* for someone to have a great marriage with their high school sweetheart (including the author of this curriculum). We're just saying it's not likely. When we watch movies and TV shows about people who fall in love, the end game is always about getting that "happily ever after." So, we assume the same will be true for our high school relationships. We are tempted to try and beat the odds. "Yeah, but we're different!" we say.

- Has that ever been you? What happened?

What if I told you that ALL dating relationships end at some point in some way? In any dating relationship you're in, it will end in one of two ways: break up, or marriage until death.

- What do you think makes a relationship go the distance? What is the secret ingredient(s)?

Many of you come from home situations that are far from ideal. Maybe you've never seen a marriage go the distance. Or maybe you did, but that marriage was far from we'd call a "happily ever after."

- What negative things have you seen in relationships around you, those that are less than "happily ever after"?
- Have you ever observed a quality loving marriage that went the distance? What did you see?

What if there was a win/win scenario? What if either outcome (breakup or lasting marriage) resulted in good?

- What could that look like? In what way could a breakup be good?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NLT. Focus in on 12.

What this is saying is we need each other. This passage of Scripture is used a lot in weddings—especially that last part. Some will even make a special knot as part of their wedding ceremony to represent the three-strand cord. Most rope is made with three main strands braided together. The three strands in this scenario represent the husband, wife and God. That is to say if both the husband

and wife are connected and growing in their relationship with God together, their relationship is much stronger.

That's not to try and say that every marriage that lasts "til death do us part" lasts because they believed in God. But it is saying is that the three-cord bond is even better...and God wants us to have better.

Ok but that's a marriage metaphor. How does that apply to you and to dating?

What if in a high school dating relationship scenario, both you and the person you are dating are moving in the same direction—towards God. You are connecting with God and growing deeper in your relationship with Him together. You are applying God's protection and guidance to your relationship. What happens then if you break up? It's statistically very likely. Here's what will likely be true, if you have both been growing your relationships with Jesus during the time you've been dating. You will have few, if any, regrets because you will have kept your boundaries we talked about last week. It will likely be emotionally tough for a time. It doesn't mean you won't feel sad or heartbroken, but at the end of the day you will both walk away from the relationship better than you were found.

- What changes would you need to make in the way you date to create this kind of win/win dating scenario?

The caveat here is that you can't control what others do. You can only control yourself. It's possible that you could do everything the way God wants in a relationship and the other person still betray and hurt you. But even then, if your relationship with God is growing and you've maintained healthy boundaries that have allowed you to maintain strong friendships and strong relationships with family, you will have the love and support you will need to endure that heartache.

TAKE AWAY

At the end of the day, the reason most of us want to date is because we want to be happy. Dating is fun and can allow us to feel happiness! There's nothing wrong with wanting to be happy. I believe God wants that too! Happiness is not bad, but it is generally temporary and depends on our circumstances. Instead, we should look to gain joy. Joy is related to happiness. However, joy is much deeper. Joy is the thing that fills what can often feel like a hole in our hearts.

As humans we look to a lot of things to bring us joy & fill that hole in our hearts. Sadly, a lot of us look to a dating relationship to bring joy. We think if we just find the right person, everything will change. But, here's the thing, there is only one place to truly find joy.

True joy comes from God. Galatians 5 gives a list of “Fruits of the Spirit.” One of those is joy. This means if you lean on and trust God, joy comes from that relationship.

If you haven’t gotten anything out of this series except this one point, we will have won big time. There is nothing that can match the joy and fulfillment that is found in a relationship with our loving God. When we put our trust in Him, follow His lead, listen to His voice, and let Him pick us up when we fall, everything about our life is changed for the better—including our romantic relationships. We might not always experience happiness, but we will have lasting joy.

FEEDBACK

If you’ve enjoyed this series, have some ideas on how to make it better, or would like to share some stories of life change from this curriculum, email us at campuslife@yfc.net