

LOVE AND DATING

Week 5 - How Far Is Too Far?

THE MAIN POINT

Last week we looked at God's design for sex and challenged them to trust Him. In order for students to follow Jesus in this area, it's important to have a conversation about boundaries. Today we're going to talk about what healthy boundaries look like, why they're important, and how to establish them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Masking tape

GETTING STARTED

Welcome students back and take a few minutes to let them share how their week has been going. If you're having a hard time getting them to share, ask for one high point and one low point from the past week.

After a few minutes of sharing, remind them of the 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).

Thank you for being a part of this group. We've definitely talked about some tough things. To recap, last week we talked about God's design for sex. We talked about how God designed it for the context of marriage. We talked about how even if we've messed up or sinned, God can forgive. The God who created us and loved us knows what's best. Our response is to trust Him even if it's difficult. If you, like me, made a commitment to trust God in everything, that means we will trust His word when it comes to sex.

When it comes to what is ok/not ok physically in a relationship, it can be difficult to figure out where to draw the line. When we look at music, tv, movies, and social media it seems like everyone is having sex after barely knowing each other. So how do we find the right boundaries?

Before we start the discussion, let's see what some of our experiences in relationships have been.

ACTIVITY

Before the students arrive, tape a line on the ground using the masking tape. (Note: If it's better for your location to do this as a "stand up if" or "raise your hand" activity, that's totally fine.)

Ask the students to stand at least 2 steps away from the line on either side. When you read off a prompt, they should step to the line if it is true about them. Remind students that what is said and done here stays here. Also, it's encouraged for the leader to be vulnerable and play the game as well with the students.

I have been attracted to someone in a romantic way

I have held hands with someone in a romantic way

I have been in a dating relationship

I think I have been in love with someone

I set boundaries for myself (as far as kissing, touching, etc.) when in a relationship

I have violated the boundaries I set for myself in a relationship.

I have felt uncomfortable with things that happened in a romantic relationship

I have felt pressured by someone to go further physically than I wanted to.

I know a friend who completely abandoned and neglected their friendships in favor of their significant other.

I have been that friend who neglected their friendships in favor of my significant other.

GOING DEEPER

Thank you all for being honest during that activity. It's interesting to see that a lot of us have experienced similar things when it comes to relationships.

- Why do you think it might be important to set boundaries in a relationship?
- Last week, we talked about God's design that sex should only happen in marriage. If that's the case, what should be allowed before marriage? What boundaries should be set in our lives in order to help us follow Jesus in this area?

One reason I think boundaries are important is because everyone has value.

Let's take a look at Genesis 1:27

Next let's check out Psalm 139:13

So God didn't just create mankind, but he actually takes the time to make each and every person!

- If we are made in the image of God, how do you think others (including people you're in a relationship with!) should be treated?
- Do you or someone you know have an experience in the past where someone treated you and your personal boundaries without any respect? How did it make them/you feel?

It sounds like setting good boundaries is pretty important! Everyone has boundaries whether they want to admit it or not. As we said last week, the God who created us knows and wants what's best for us. For this reason, establishing boundaries to help us follow His example is the best move. He invented DNA and leaves and the air you breathe. I think He might know a bit more than you and I about all this.

By the way, boundaries don't necessarily just have to do with the physical/sexual aspects of a relationship. By a show of hands, how many of you know someone who got into a dating relationship and completely neglected everything else in their lives? They neglected their friendships, their family, their faith, God, and sometimes even hobbies and interests. Maybe that's been you.

What often happens is a relationship like this will break up and you're left feeling alone and empty. You've abandoned your support system for this one person and they're now gone.

- Have you seen this happen to someone or been in this situation? What was it like?

It seems like there needs to be some emotional/relational boundaries as well as physical ones. Proverbs 4:23 says "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life."

- What does it look like to guard your heart? Why is that important?
- What kind of physical boundaries do you think someone should set in a relationship?
- What kind of emotional and relational boundaries should someone set in a relationship?
- What about sticking to your boundaries? Is it important to stick to them? Why or why not?
- Have you ever set a boundary for yourself and then broke it?

Next, ask one student to stand up and be a volunteer for a minute.

I think a lot of times our approach to boundaries is kind of like this. Let's pretend for a minute that the line on the floor is the boundary we set. *Ask the student to get as close to the line as they can.*

- How many of you try and get as close to the boundary as you can without going over when it comes to things like kissing, hugging, cuddling, sex, etc. (let's be real here)?
- What do you think the problem could be with taking that approach?

As they are giving their answers walk next to the student standing by the line and give them a little bump over the line.

Hey! I thought you weren't supposed to cross that line! What happened?

All I did was give you a tiny little bump. You're saying you couldn't stop yourself from crossing the line with just that little itty bitty bump? Hmm...maybe that's kind of like real life. *Ask the student to take a step back from the line.*

Ok so what happens if you're a little way back from the line and you accidentally go a little too far? (you're still not past the line).

Nice, so now that we know a bit more about why boundaries are important and how to stick to them:

- How do you think you should set boundaries?

Here are some tips from our friend Andy Stanley in his book [The New Rules for Love, Sex, and](#)

Dating: It's really important to establish your own boundaries before you're in a relationship with someone. Reason being, it's a lot more difficult to think clearly and make wise choices on boundaries when you're smitten in love with someone. Stanley also recommends three questions to help you decide what your boundaries will be:

1) If your future love is out there somewhere wrestling with this same question, how would you want him or her to answer it?

2) What level of physical involvement would lead you to lie about your past?

(Stanley 175)

- So if one person is ok with something, but the other person is not, where do you think the boundary should be set? (This is a good place to talk about not pressuring someone to do something they don't want to/consent)

Good stuff, so once we have our boundaries set, what are some practical steps we could take to keep those boundaries (aka stay a little way back from the line)?

TAKE AWAY

I hope the main thing you learned today is that everyone needs to be treated with respect because they are made by God and in the image of God! That's gives everyone some pretty significant value! When it comes to relationships a big part of respecting the other person is setting good boundaries early on in the relationship without trying to pressure them to do anything they don't want to.

Here's some good news: you don't have to do this alone. If you said yes to a trusting relationship with Jesus, He's with you every step of the way. God gives us his Holy Spirit to live inside of us. That means He is literally always there when we are feeling weak or tempted. You can ask Him for help in making your boundaries and for helping you keep them. Your heart determines the course of your life. Guard it with God's help.

See you next week!