

LOVE AND DATING

Week 1 - Why Date?

THE MAIN POINT

There is so much advice out there about dating... much of it is of very little value. Many of our students lack the guidance and wisdom to handle dating relationships in a healthy way. Though the Bible doesn't specifically address dating in the way we see it in the modern world, there is so much wisdom from God's Word that we can share with students. In this small group series, students will have an open forum to discuss dating, receive lots of wisdom about relationships, and learn how God's love is ultimately what will most fulfill our lives.

This opening meeting addresses the "why" of dating. Why date? What is our motivation? What are some good and bad reasons to date? Is dating even a good idea at all?

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Perfect Man/Woman" Poster board(s)
- Markers

GETTING STARTED

Welcome!

Over the next few weeks we will be discussing dating relationships. It seems like everyone in high

school/middle school is dating. How many of the dating relationships around you are healthy and good? (discuss)

Dating can be fun, but it can also be messy and hurtful. We hope this group will be a safe place for us to process the world of dating and receive some strong wisdom about dating. You can expect it to be fun, but also challenging... We believe there is a lot of really good and helpful conversations in the weeks ahead. However, in order for this group to be a success, we need to make sure a few ground rules are in place...

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

On a poster board (or 2), draw a cartoon man and/or woman. Label it the "perfect man" or "perfect woman."

Instruct the group to think of what they look for in a person they're hoping to date. Ask for one of your group members to be the writer. As the group shouts out answers and examples of the perfect man/woman (such as good looking, honest, trustworthy, athletic etc.), have that person write them all down. Have fun with it!

GOING DEEPER

Wow this person seems really cool! We're going to come back to this poster we made later, but for now let's talk about dating in general. Dating can sometimes seem like the center of the school universe. Everyone at school is talking about who's dating who, who cheated on who, who "likes" who, who's "talking," who's "talking" to more than one person, hearing the latest "tea" about so and

so's relationship, and on and on. How much of that is good? Maybe you're in a relationship right now, maybe you've been in one and it ended really painfully, maybe you'd like to be in one. There's so much pressure around dating, and everyone seems to think they know the answers as to how it should be done.

Discuss:

- What does the dating world look like at your school? What percent of the students at your school would you say are in some kind of relationship?
- What are the stages of a relationship in your school? Help us old people out. What's the difference between "talking" and "dating?" How does one move from "talking" to "dating?"
- What percent of the dating relationships you observe at your school or in your friend group are healthy relationships?
- What does a healthy dating relationship look like? Does it look anything like the poster we made earlier?

Proverbs 14:15-16 says "only simpletons believe everything they're told! The prudent carefully consider their steps. The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence."

Let's be honest. A lot of what we see in the dating world involves plunging ahead with reckless confidence. Am I right? Some of you have been really hurt by someone you dated. Maybe you've even really hurt someone that you dated. There's a lot of advice on the internet and from well-meaning friends that just isn't good. Dating can be a lot of fun and can be really good. But it can also be dangerous and painful too. More often than not, dating ends up being painful when we just jump in--or plunge ahead with reckless confidence. That's why we're having these meetings and these discussions. So let's work together over the next few weeks to carefully consider our steps. Wouldn't it be so much better in our dating relationships if we walked carefully and cautiously like the wise?

A great place for us to start is the "why" of dating. What's the purpose of it all? The truth is, if we don't get the purpose right, we most likely won't get any of it right.

Discuss:

- What do you think? What is the purpose of dating?
- What could be some bad reasons/motivations for dating?
- What are some of the motivations you've had for dating?
- -What could happen if someone dates with bad motives/reasons?

We all have seen what happens when someone in a relationship is in it for the wrong reasons.

Selfishness creeps in. Sometimes a person will depend on their significant other for social status, for attention, to help them resolve poor self-image issues, just because they're lonely or bored, or because they just want sex. When the core purpose of the relationship is selfishness, the foundations are weak and people get hurt.

- Have you ever seen this happen? Experienced it yourself?

On the other hand, there could be a genuine desire to get to know someone more, to learn how to care for someone else unselfishly, to have quality fun companionship, and for all of that to eventually lead to a lasting and loving marriage with a happily ever after. If we're honest, we all want that right? That sounds awesome! But how? How do we get that?

TAKE AWAY

I believe in God. If you believe in God like me, then you probably believe that God created everything and everyone. Logically then, God also created people with the desire for and ability to have relationships. We were made for each other--not just in the romantic sense. God made us with connectedness in mind--to be connected with Himself, with our friends, our family, and yes, our romantic relationships as well. God created all of it. It's a gift. We can also assume that if God made relationships, he knows how relationships should be done.

There are a ton of self-help books out there and articles online about how dating relationships should be done. Personally, I'd like to skip all of that and instead learn from the One who made the universe, invented DNA, put water molecules together, loves us unconditionally, and created relationships. My challenge to you this week is that you would be willing to dive into this group and learn from the Master about relationships. If you're on the fence about what to believe about God, we just ask that you hear us out. If you come in with an open mind, I can almost guarantee you will be surprised by what you learn. Have a great week! See you next time.

RESOURCES

We heavily consulted 2 works along with the Bible in the creation of this series. Highly recommend you check these out!

-[The New Rules for Love, Sex, and Dating](#) by Andy Stanley

-The Four Loves by C.S. Lewis