

DATING, WAITING AND CHOOSING A MATE

PERSONAL WORD TO YOUTH LEADERS:

I hope that these lesson plans will give new insights to you and your students as you attack this fascinating but often confusing area of mate selection. Before you teach a lesson, prayerfully read it, search the Scriptures for yourself, revise according to your convictions, and think of illustrations of dating successes and failures that you know. Talk to godly friends, especially married people, to learn from their experiences and ask their insights.

Although the following insights are based on biblical teachings, the Bible never lays out a step by step guide for choosing a mate. Thus, I can't teach a rigid formula for mate selection and seal it with a "Thus saith the LORD." I know fine Christian couples who claim their romance began with "love at first sight" and proceeded quickly to engagement and marriage. My course to marriage was much slower. Realizing the gravity of this decision, I distrusted my emotions and cautiously looked for godly character. Others took a wife as arranged by their parents. The key is to look to the Word of God and follow His ways within the course He directs us. In these plans I hope to provoke thought, drive us back to the Scriptures, and let wisdom guide us in an area where too often emotion reigns as king.

Consider dividing discussion groups by sex. They tend to open up better.

Consider also designing a retreat to discuss this material.

IDEA! Have your pastor come in to share his ideas on love and dating with the group. If you have a doctor in your church, you may have him or her come in to share some specifics about venereal diseases and other related medical issues. Just make sure the doctor has a Scriptural view. Perhaps youth could write anonymous questions that could be given to the doctor the week before. And always, if you plan to share sensitive material, let your pastor know what you will be teaching.

Caution: Don't rush through this material! Some seem to define teaching as "Transferring notes from teacher to student, without going through the mind of either." To avoid this, allow youth time to discuss and think about the material. This first lesson might be covered in 2 or even three sessions, especially if discussions go well. Remember, our object is not to cover material, but to pass on God's principles of living.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU... IS DATING THE ONLY WAY? (DATING SERIES, PART I)

BIG IDEA: CHRISTIANS SHOULD EVALUATE MATE SELECTION PROCESSES FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE.

PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY HAVING A BETTER PERSPECTIVE ON THE MATE SELECTION PROCESS.

BIBLE STORY PREPARATION

Prior to this lesson, ask a student to acquaint himself with the story of Abraham's finding a wife for his son Isaac in Genesis 24. Have another student acquaint herself with the story of Jacob's quest for a wife in Genesis 27:46-28:5; 29:1-30. Ask them not to read the stories to the group, but to tell the story in their own words.

"THE DATING GAME" (SKIT)

This skit should be prepared ahead of time by four youth. To introduce it to the group, announce that they are a studio audience for the TV show, "The Dating Game." "Today's guests are (name the three girls and one guy.) The guy will be blindfolded before the girls come into the studio. One of these three girls will be the lucky winner of a date with the guy to beautiful downtown (give the name of a city which is currently the center of a war zone). His decision will be based on their answers to three questions he will ask." Blindfold the guy and bring the girls in. The guy will proceed to ask questions such as, "What kind of movies do you like?" "Describe your hair to me." "Do you ever have a problem with bad breath." Students should use their creativity with both questions and answers, adding plenty of humor.

One girl could be very gross, appearing very unkept, picking her nose and putting boogers in her hair, etc. She could give answers like, "My hair texture varies from month to month, depending on whether or not it is the month I bathe. Sometimes when I awake I look in the mirror and find that my sleeping has produced some fine hair art, which I like to leave in place for others to appreciate during the day." Another girl could be a snob who thinks she is a beauty queen, who is obviously disgusted with the gross girl. Another could be a girl who is spacey.

INTRODUCTION

After applauding appropriately for the actors, introduce the lesson. "The guy in the skit had the same problems that many of us face in choosing a mate: a limited field to choose from, inadequate knowledge of the person, and a system of choosing that sometimes frustrates us.

Yet deciding on a mate is perhaps our most important decision after salvation. We all long for a marriage that brings companionship, shared dreams, and a loving family. But too often the marriage will bring heartache, disappointment, and a home that resembles a war zone. Did you know that the single greatest cause of women's injury in the U.S. is beating by her husband?

Has it ever startled you how little preparation our education gives us for a successful marriage? We spend vast amounts of time learning math and language skills, but almost no time learning marriage skills. Yet, much of your future happiness will depend on your ability to successfully choose and relate to your mate.

The "romantic fantasy" still dominates most of our minds: One day you will meet Mr. or Miss perfect, will both fall desperately in love with each other, and live happily ever after in a state of marital bliss. But the facts paint a bleaker picture. In America, about 1 in 2 marriages end in divorce, turning people's romantic fantasy into a nightmare. And how many of the 50% who remain married have a decent relationship? The odds seem stacked against us. How can we choose a lifelong mate in a world where relationships don't last? The next four weeks will give us the opportunity to prepare for that second most important decision."

LET YOUTH PRAY SILENTLY FOR GOD TO TEACH THEM, AND FOR GOD TO USE YOU.

I. THE DATING GAME AND HOW PEOPLE PLAY IT

A. FINDING A MATE OLD TESTAMENT STYLE

How did people find a mate in Old Testament times? Let's first look to the Bible to see if we can find a prescribed system.

IDEA: Use a chart or your overhead to contrast these two Bible examples. As each student tells the story, write the details on one side, leaving room for the contrasting details of the other story on the other side. Example:

Isaac and Rebekah

1. A servant is sent to find a wife.
- 2.
- 3.

Jacob and Rachel

Jacob himself looks for a wife.

Have the appointed youth tell the story of Abraham sending a servant to find a wife for his son Isaac in Genesis 24. Now discuss the details of this process: for example, Isaac had never met Rebekah. The father trusted a servant with this mission. Prayer and God had a part. She watered the camels. Rebekah's parents let her go without ever meeting Isaac. Rebekah's wishes were consulted. Love came after, not before the marriage. Rebekah's brother negotiated the original terms of the marriage. A great dowry was paid for Rebekah. Isaac was forty years old. Is this the biblical pattern for mate selection?

Have the other youth tell the account of Jacob and Rachel in Genesis 27:46-28:5; 29:1-30. Ask the group to point out the details of Jacob's process of mate selection: for example, the girls seemed to have no say so in the process. Jacob's mother initiated the plan, while his father actually charged him to go. Jacob watered her sheep. He didn't naturally develop a relationship with those he had grown to know over time. Rather, he went to a far land for the express purpose of finding a wife. At Jacob's first meeting with Rachel, he kissed her. At Laban's first meeting with Jacob, he kissed Jacob!

Jacob worked 14 years for her. Love was a factor in his decision. Leah married someone who didn't love her. Jacob's honeymoon was with the wrong girl (Oops!) Neither Rachel nor Leah seemed to have much choice in the matter. And we see a polygamous marriage!

Now ask youth to enumerate the differences between the two accounts. It appears that the Old Testament gives no detailed picture of how the mate selection process should work in every culture. In fact, it's helpful to realize that most events should be seen as descriptive rather than prescriptive. Unless a teaching ("Fathers shall appoint servants to choose their children's mates.") backs up a historical example, we have no right to prescribe the example as normative for all Christians. In the Bible we see a variety of methods, with no one system prescribed.

We would assume, then, that we should evaluate today's options from a Christian perspective. Let's look at a few systems in use today:

(American Youth leader: This section can serve several purposes. First, if you assume

GENESIS 24

Vs. 4 - Abraham's native land was 450 miles away! (Give an example of how far 450 miles would take you from your city. Would you want to travel it by camel?)

Vs. 19 - Camels drink a lot, you know! In the summer, they may drink five gallons each per day. What might this show about her character?

Vs. 22 - These were impressive gifts, no costume jewelry.

GENESIS 27-29

The kissing of relatives was a proper greeting. They were not smooching at this first meeting!

Jacob is about 77 years old. "At no time in Israel's history were wives purchased. The custo-mary...dowry-money was regarded as proof of financial competence on the bridegroom's part." (Leupold, 794)

"Weak eyes" could refer either to vision or color. (Kidner)

that everyone is dating, you reinforce the idea that students who are not dating are losers. Yet, most students are not dating a lot. Second, our dating system is fraught with dangers and problems. For example, the perils of a 15 year old going steady seem to far outweigh the positives. Perhaps by backing up from our system and trying to evaluate it objectively, we can be part of a paradigm shift among Christian youth in America.)

B. LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE

1. The System

Okay, guys and girls, imagine I am an exchange student from India. The American dating scene is all new to me. Can you clue me in? How do young people in America find a mate? (Teacher: just add from the material below what the students don't mention.)

In this system, youth begin at a young age to get with members of the opposite sex and become romantically involved. Some parents, however, may forbid their children to date prior to age 16, for example. Before youth can drive, parents may drive their children to a school-sponsored dance. After the age set by their parents, they either single date or double date. If a couple hits it off well, they may decide to "go steady", committing themselves to date only each other, until the relationship breaks up.

Usually, a person will date several people (some popular youth will date scores of people) before they propose marriage to one. Some seldom date, due to being shy, never getting asked, or never meeting a person they really want to date. (Ask, "Am I on target? Have I missed anything significant about the system?")

IDEA! Rather than enumerating the pros and cons of each system yourself, why not present each of the three systems, and then divide youth into small groups. Have each group imagine that they are all parents of young children, and following World War III, are moving as families to a remote Hawaiian Island far from the toxic aftermath of the war. "As parents, you must decide what system of mate selection you will devise for your children. The children have no expectations of dating, since they are too young to have adopted America's (Slovakia's) system."

Have each group come up with as many pros and cons as they can for each system, and vote on the one (or a 4th creative alternative) they will adopt as a new society. They should report their analysis and conclusion back to the main group.

This exercise will help them to rethink a system that until now they have assumed as the only way to go.

2. An Evaluation

Let's evaluate the pros and cons of this system in small groups. Then,

report back your thoughts to the group.

(If they don't come up with some of these, mention some of the following, plus your own thoughts.)

Pros: a. A select group of youth get to know members of the opposite sex better.

- b. They probably learn some skills such as how to treat a member of the opposite sex.
- c. They may also learn some characteristics they want and do not want in a future mate.

Cons: a. Many youth want to date but either never or seldom participate because they are shy, are never asked out, or no one will go out when they ask. They feel let down and left out.

b. Some youth require counseling because their earlier negative dating experiences hurt their ability to relate to a new date. (For example, "No guys can be trusted.")

c. Church youth groups suffer because many youth are distracted from spiritual functions by their dating problems. Sometimes breakups are so intense that youth will no longer want to attend a group where their former date attends. Retreats can be complicated when...

"Sharon is mad at Sue because Sue is dating her former boyfriend. Jane is jealous because Benjamin sat with her friend Laura on the bus. Jane had to sit alone because Laura was her best friend but is now consumed with spending time with Benjamin."

And some come on the retreat with a primary motive being finding someone to date.

d. Pairing off alone provides a very tempting situation for youth to fall into immorality. Even otherwise dull youth seem to instinctively recognize that the back seat of a car can serve more purposes than carrying extra passengers.

e. Pairing off alone doesn't allow girls and guys to get to know each other in groups, where they can often better learn how a person relates to different types of people, thus exposing his or her true character.

f. Date rape is common on many campuses. One on one dates expose you to this danger.

C. LET YOUR PARENTS DECIDE

1. The System

In some countries, parents find and contract for marriage partners for their children. Sometimes the son or daughter can express their opinion, but usually there is no time for courtship. The romantic relationship, if it develops at all, must develop after the marriage.

2. An Evaluation

(Again, let the youth evaluate the pros and cons before you add your own thoughts.)

Pros: a. Love can be seen as something we choose and grow in, not something we fall into and out of.

b. Parents may have a more mature insight on a suitable partner than their children have.

c. It takes the pressure off the children.

Cons: a. A parent could make a poor choice because of social pressure or lack of insight.

b. A non-Christian parent may choose a non-Christian mate for their Christian child, resulting in a conflict of absolutes ("Obey your parents" versus "Do not be bound together with unbelievers").

D. GROUPS FIRST, DATES LATER

1. The System

This is closer to the pattern many Christian youth in Slovakia follow. Youth get to know members of the opposite sex through group experiences planned by the church or other organizations. When youth reach close to a marriageable age, for example, college age, they may begin to spend personal time with people they are serious about.

2. An Evaluation

Pros: a. All youth get an opportunity to mingle with members of the opposite sex.

b. Shy and unpopular youth don't feel left out of the dating game.

c. Youth groups don't suffer from the exclusive dating divisions.

ILLUSTRATION: While teaching at a Christian youth retreat in the mountains of Slovakia, missionary Steve Miller could hardly believe what he saw. During free time and game times, Slovak youth stayed in groups, playing or watching volleyball and other games. Guys were not trying to spend time with individual girls. Since the American dating game was not a part of this church's youth culture, youth had none of the distractions of making and breaking relationships. Girls were not jealous of other girls getting special attention, since no girl was getting special attention from the guys. Everybody seemed free to enjoy the retreat and get to know each other without the pressures and hard feelings associated with dating.

Josh McDowell and Dick Day (who have studied teen sex and dating extensively state, "We recommend that teens spend most of their dating time on double or group dates and avoid exclusive one-on-one relationships until they are older and seriously contemplating finding a person to marry." (Why Wait?, McDowell and Day, p. 348)

d. Youth don't face the early temptations of single dating. This is a great way to "Flee youthful lusts," since a church bus or carload of people isn't a very likely place to get pregnant!

e. The group setting helps you get to know people's character. You can see them relate to many other people besides yourself. You can observe their choice of friends.

Cons: I can't see any problems with this system. I recommend it. But since the Bible never says "Thou shalt never single date," I won't jerk you out of the car and spank you if you and your parents decide you can single date at a relatively young age. But I'm pushing group events. And by all means lay off pressuring your non-

dating friends to ask people out. Don't make them feel like social rejects for playing basketball with a friend on Friday nights. There's a lot more to life than dating, and the long run, he may have a lot less regrets.

II. DOWN WITH BORING DATES!

Most people in Europe and America will eventually date before they marry. If the purpose of dating is to get to know a person better, then people would do well to consider what types of dates would best serve this purpose. Many find themselves stuck in a rut, having the same type of date weekend after weekend, never progressing in the relationship. The answer? Creative dating! One survey found most students preferring a creative date over a traditional romantic date. (Again, we're pushing group and double dating.)

BRAINSTORM! Divide the youth into small groups. Assign them to come up with ten different kinds of dates that would be fun and help the couple to get to know each other better. Appoint a secretary to record the ideas. Afterwards, come back together to report your best ideas to the entire group.

Here are some ideas: Make and fly a kite together. Repair some old toys, wrap them up as gifts for orphans, and visit an orphanage to hand them out and play with the orphans. Visit some lonely people in a nursing home. Spend time with each set of parents, asking them questions (such as, "What have been some of the happiest times of your life?" "What's the craziest thing you ever did?" "What are some of the greatest lessons you have ever learned about life?") Play charades. Cook a meal for an old person. Play soccer with a small, floating ball in a huge mud puddle. Have a picnic in a park and think up interesting, open-ended questions to ask each other. ("What are 5 things you want most out of life?" "What bugs you most about people who turn you off?" "Who is the person you admire the most and why?")

CONCLUSION

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2a)

Today we have probably expanded our ideas about dating. It's hard to evaluate our own way of doing things because we usually think it is the only way. Now is a good time to think about your own life. Are your ideas of selecting a mate more based on your culture, or on your convictions? Is the world pressing you into its mold (Turn to Romans 12:2), or are you charting your own course as you follow God? I'll give you a moment to pray about it in conclusion.

PRAY PRAY PRAY

For homework, keep breaking out of the world's mold by talking with international acquaintances about how they select mates in their country. Or, talk to your parents, or even better, grandparents, about how people found mates during their generation. And what did they do on dates? Bring us back some fresh ideas next week!

UNDERSTANDING THE PASSAGE (Rom. 12:2)

A study of each word and even tense in this rich verse either opens new windows or leads to deeper questions.

"Conformed" means "be formed like, be conformed to, be guided by." (B.A.G.)

"Transformed" can mean "change in form." (B.A.G.) The Greek word, "metamorphoo", eventually became the English word, metamorphosis. The latter can help illustrate (not define) the former.

Both "conformed" and "transformed" are passive, which is not brought out in some English translations. The world is trying to shape us into its mold. We must resist.

Both words are also in the Greek present tense, which, unlike the English present, points to continual action, not time of action. So, we must continually resist, and continually be transformed. Sanctification is a process.

"Conformed" is imperative, which could either be translated "stop being conformed" (assuming readers have been conforming and should stop), or "do not be conformed." You must make the call by your understanding of the context.

"World", or "age" can't refer to every custom or style popular in the world. Jesus didn't shun all the food, language, and clothing of His culture. It must speak of the aspects of culture, especially attitudes and values (Johnson), which contradict Christian teaching. I get this, not from the passage itself, but from my broader understanding of Scripture. "Mind" is more than the seat of the intellect. It includes moral consciousness, our will (Hodge, Johnson).

Has our mind already been "renewed" at salvation (so translates Gspd., Wms., TCNT, Amp.) or is it continually being renewed (so Alf., Phi., Beck)?

Back to dating. Do aspects of our social norm appeal to our lust, selfishness, and desire for social status? Then don't conform. Be transformed!

***SHARPENING YOUR AX
APPLYING HISTORICAL NARRATIVE***

Many preachers seem to have never thought through a consistent method of applying historical passages of Scripture. Think about it. All Scriptures are inspired, but not every action of a biblical character should be emulated. For example, the Bible records Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all practicing deception. Does that mean that we should therefore practice deception? Clearly not, for the Bible clearly forbids deception.

But other times, historical sections record people telling the truth and standing for righteousness. Since the bible clearly commands us to live this way, we can use historical narratives to illustrate these truths.

But a third situation gets more fuzzy. The early church in Acts 4:32 pooled their personal belongings, having all things in common. Are all churches then obligated to follow this practice? I would answer "no", because this practice is not taught as normative in any teaching passage. What they did was good, illustrating for us the need to be generous and unified. But to require it of all "biblical" churches would be to get stricter than the Bible.

Summary:

- 1) Does the narrative illustrate a clear biblical teaching? Teach it boldly.
- 2) Is the practice in the passage neither commanded nor condemned for the whole church by teaching passages? Watch out! Some Old Testament prophets were denounced for saying "Thus saith the LORD" when He had not spoken. Don't teach boldly where God has chosen to remain silent. This seems to be where we stand when we look for a biblical pattern of mate selection. For a deeper analysis of teaching historical narrative, see J. Robertson McQuilkin's Understanding and Applying the Bible (Moody, Chicago), pp. 259-272.

DATING, WAITING, AND CHOOSING A MATE
SESSION II
ENDURING ENJOYING SINGLENESS

INTRODUCTION

Last week we began a series entitled "Dating, Waiting, and Choosing a Mate." Did any of you gather some ideas from international acquaintances, parents or grandparents that you want to share with us?

Although the choice of a mate is one of the most important choices any of us will ever make, apparently some people are going about it all wrong. About half of all marriages fail, and of the ones that stay together, few seem to maintain a growing, loving relationship. So, let's look to God's Word for principles to help us in this important process.

Last week we talked in part about some dangers inherent in the American dating system. Can any of you remember some of these dangers? (Get their answers. Perhaps they have reflected more during the week.)

One problem with dating is that people get it all out of perspective. In their minds, life will start the day they meet that special someone. Until then, they exist as pitiful half people, waiting for that other half to complete them. Preoccupied with looking for their mate, they miss out on the abundant life God has for them now. Remember, John 10:10, Psalm 84:11, and Psalm 37:4 apply to singles as well as couples!

I. THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS

"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD." (Prov. 18:22)

"But those who marry will face many problems in this life, and I want to spare you this." (I Cor. 7:28)

According to God's Word, neither marriage (Proverbs 18:22; Genesis 2:18) nor singleness (Matthew 19:10-12, I Corinthians 7) is second best. (You may wish to have youth read aloud several of these verses. We need this biblical balance.) Both are good and blessed of God. The key is to discern what God wants for you.

Some of you may be called to remain single for life. You may be card-carrying members of the "B.T.R. Club" (Bachelors Till the Rapture) or C.F.C.'s (Celibates For Christ). Either way, God has equipped you to handle life without a mate. So don't label a person "gay" just because dating seems to be a low priority to him. He may just have the ability, like the apostle Paul, to go through life single.

But all of us are called to singleness for at least part of our lives. And believe it or

not, there are some great advantages to the single life. The Bible lists some in I Corinthians 7. (Let a youth read this passage and have youth raise their hands when they hear a benefit of singleness.)

Here are some you may especially wish to reflect on:

BRAINSTORM! Divide into small groups. "Usually we daydream about the benefits of being married. But today I want you to daydream about the benefits of remaining single. Come up with as many benefits as you can in the next 4 minutes. Appoint a secretary to record the ideas and report back to the group." (Youth leader: Write down their better ideas as they share them. You can add these to your outline for the next time you teach this message! Tell the youth why you are taking notes. This encourages them that their ideas are significant, that we can teach one another.)

*Less worries and responsibilities

TIP: Humor adds a lot to a message. Don't read this to them. Become familiar enough with it that you can tell it. If your memory often fails you, highlight key phrases to keep you on track.

***ILLUSTRATION:** To better understand the tasks of parenthood, you need to reflect on the lifestyle change required for proper baby management. For example, as a single person, you probably value cleanliness. But caring for babies is nasty business. To understand the reason for this, I need to teach you some basics of baby anatomy.*

Not requiring a large brain for such functions as crying and sleeping, the cranial cavity is primarily filled with a large drool gland, which excretes a small but regular flow of warm liquid onto the face of the baby and the shoulder of the carrier. Depending on the makeup of the liquid, parents will always sport a white or yellow stain, prominently displayed at shoulder height on your best shirts or dresses.

Since infants are relatively immobile (except when they locate dangerous or disgusting objects on a floor), their muscles are not yet developed. In their place, a large, remarkably active intestine wraps throughout their bodies, depositing regular piles of poop in their diapers. The parent then changes the diaper, washing it out by hand in the nearest toilet. I never handled poop until I had a baby. I never smelled like poop till I had a baby.

Besides the drool gland and intestines, another large organ possessed by babies is the set of vocal chords. By some mysterious instinct babies sense when parents have just sat down for a meal, to read a paper, or to drift off to sleep. At that point, they automatically cry at one of their two possible volumes -- louder or loudest. I could go on. But you get the idea.

Don't get me wrong. Babies are wonderful. But, unlike dolls, they demand constant attention and you can't put them away in a drawer when you want to play with something else.

***Enhanced ministry opportunities**

The apostle Paul could have probably never impacted the world as he did had he been married. Single people can be available to minister at odd hours, travel extensively, and concentrate on ministry with a single minded devotion impossible for married people who take their family responsibilities seriously.

***Extensive personal freedom.**

Singles can spend their money and free time as they please. They have more leeway in choosing their friends.

ILLUSTRATION: Steve's path was strewn with spiritual land mines. It was Summer quarter at the University of Georgia and those Georgia babes were tanning their bikini-clad bodies all over the campus. "I wish I were married," was all Steve could think. But as he reflected on his discontent, he realized that if it were best for him to be married now, then he would be married. His conclusion? "It's best for me to be single and I need to be thankful for it." So Steve began thanking God for his singleness.

About that time, he saw an old station wagon passing by, apparently not air conditioned, since the windows were down in the sweltering heat. The mother, with a harried look on her face, was transporting her two rug rats (bouncing and screaming in the back seat). "Thank you God, that I'm single!" Steve said with gusto.

***Time for education and beginning savings (or paying off school debts!)**

Of course, there are advantages to married life as well. I don't mean to put down marriage (I Timothy 4:1-3). But we need to balance out this idea that singleness is always bad and marriage is always good.

Most seem little prepared for the responsibilities of managing a family and resolving the conflicts that inevitably arise in a long term relationship. They wait till they get married to realize how good they had it as a single.

ILLUSTRATION: Someone has well said "marriage is like a besieged fortress: those on the outside want in and those on the inside desperately want out."

God may lead you to remain single. If so, don't feel weird. You can accomplish much for the kingdom! Whether your singleness is temporary or permanent, try thanking God regularly that you are single, specifically naming the benefits. It will keep your perspective straight.

II. THE KEY TO HAPPINESS: CONTENTMENT

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” (Phil. 4:11)

IDEA! Find a popular song expressing the idea that we will never be happy till we find that perfect guy or girl, or that romantic love is all there is. Ask youth for ideas during the week. Songs often say things like, "I won't last a day without you." Find one, play it for the youth (you may wish to run off the words or put them on an overhead), and ask them to tell you in their own words what the lyric says or implies. Ask, "Is this the way most people feel?" After setting up the point in this way, Paul's attitude in Philippians 4:11 will seem all the more radical.

What we are saying is that we need to learn the secret of being content, whether married or single (Philippians 4:11). If you need to be married, God will bring it about in His time. But God's ways and timing are not ours, so we must learn to trust Him. By contentedly trusting God, we learn to:

***Avoid desperate decisions.** Those desperate to get married risk lowering their sexual standards to keep a relationship, or jumping into marriage prematurely. One lady said, "I'd rather be single and wish I were married than to be married and wish I were single."

"Contentment", in Phil. 4:11, can mean "independent" (Colin Brown), "content", or "self-sufficient" (B.A.G) Lightfoot quotes Socrates as using the same Greek word in a well-put answer. When asked, "Who is the wealthiest?" Socrates replied, "He that is content with the least, for contentment is nature's wealth." Chew well on that piece of meat!

***Have realistic expectations of marriage.** Some people are waiting for that special someone who will meet all of their needs, and bring purpose and fulfillment to their lives. But marriage usually doesn't transform unhappy people into happy people. And many of your unmet needs will remain unmet in your marriage. Don't expect a person to meet needs that only God can meet.

Marriage is about giving, not getting, and those who counsel engaged couples try to correct their unrealistic expectations. Learning to be content before marriage will help you be content during marriage.

***Avoid worry.** Some guys constantly worry that their girl will be swept off their feet by another man before they can marry her. But I Peter 5:7 says to “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*” It is so freeing to know that if this girl is for you, nothing in hell or heaven can thwart your marriage. And if this girl is not for you (and if it is best that you be married), just think, God has someone who will be even more suited for

you!

***Keep your focus on Jesus.** Some are so preoccupied with finding a mate that they miss what God has for them now.

ILLUSTRATION: One college student who wasn't dating anyone would occasionally plan a date with God. He'd go out somewhere on his own with his Bible and enjoy the sweet, uninterrupted fellowship.

Become obsessed, not with finding a mate, but with loving God and loving people.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5,6)

**Interpretive Points
Prov. 3:5,6**

Heart = Sometimes emotions, but more often intellect, understanding, discernment, reflection, will. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Acknowledge = ...being aware of and having fellowship with. (Kidner)

Paths straight = ...more than guidance, though it includes it. (Kidner). Leading them directly to the right end, removing all hindrances out of the way (Keil and Delitzsch). Used in Isa. 40:3 of clearing the highway in the desert (New Bible Commentary).

CONCLUSION

Have you been discontentedly focusing on the future, and missing some of what God has for you now? (Youth leader: If this lesson has convicted you of a discontented spirit, admit it to your group, and tell them you are coming before the Lord for help in this area as well.) Are you jealous of those who seem to attract the opposite sex better than you? Perhaps this would be a good time to come before the Lord and cast all your cares on the Lord, because He cares for you. (I Peter 5:7)

During our prayer time, give God total control of your dating life, and ask Him to help you to delight in your single life.

PRAY

Coming up: Next week we will talk about sex. I just wanted to warn you in case some of you were not interested in the subject. (A little dry humor!)

SEX, LIES, AND THE TRUTH *(DATING SERIES, PART III)*

BIG IDEA: CHRISTIANS SHOULD SAVE SEX FOR MARRIAGE.

PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY KNOWING THE DANGERS OF PREMARITAL SEX AND RESOLVING TO SAVE SEX FOR MARRIAGE.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS: You must judge how to handle sensitive material. My advice? Teach the morality of sex, not the mechanics of sex. Getting too graphic or detailed can distract students from the main purpose of this lesson. And if you have any doubts about presenting certain materials, get your pastor's input.

PASSAGES TO CONSIDER: Proverbs 2:16-19; chpt 5; 7:6-27; Mk. 7:21,22, Rom. 13:14; I Cor. 6:15-20, 7:1; I Thes. 4:3-6; I Pet. 2:11.

INTRODUCTION

***ILLUSTRATION:** Thousands of students packed out an auditorium to hear one of America's hottest Christian bands. After an energetic performance, a respected Christian speaker stood up to challenge students to keep themselves sexually pure. But before he could finish, a local university student jumped onto the stage, wanting to address the audience. The surprised speaker cautiously allowed the student to share this tragic story. While in college, he had gotten involved with a wild fraternity. At a party, his fraternity brothers set him up with a wild girl and they had sex. I believe it was his first time.*

But soon he began to experience some physical problems. He went to see a doctor and found, to his horror, that he had acquired Herpes Simplex II, a venereal disease that has no cure. He would not die of the disease, but he began to sob as he said that one day he would meet that person who was right for him, and he would have to tell her of this disease, which could effect her as well if they married.

It was just a casual encounter, but the consequences will last a lifetime. As we will see shortly, his story is not rare. How can we keep sex in perspective and avoid the pitfalls? Not everyone will heed this message. But some will, and it could save you a lifetime of regrets. And in the age of AIDS, it could save your life.

Pray.

Fortunately, God didn't create sex and leave us without an instruction manual. Today let's try to get His perspective.

I. SEX IS GREAT!

"Be fruitful and increase in number...." (Gen. 1:28)

Tip: Don't tell youth the main points before reading the Scripture! Let them read the Scriptures and help them draw out the conclusions. In this way, they will end the lesson convinced of what God says about sex, rather than what you think the Bible says about sex.

God created the first man and woman, and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:27,28). Before artificial insemination, the only way to multiply was by having sex. (Some commands are easier to obey than others!) Think about it. God created man and woman, and everything He created was good. In fact, "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

ILLUSTRATION: Contrary to some people's opinion, sex is not evil or dirty. One university student said that he was having a hard time seeing sex as something pure, because he had exposed his mind to so much garbage (porno) growing up. In a day when people's idea of sex has been warped by incest, rape, selfish relationships and pornography, we need to renew our minds as to the beauty of sex as God created it.

II. SEX IS FOR MARRIAGE. (I Corinthians 6:9,10; Heb. 13:4)

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (I Cor. 6:9,10)

God not only gave us sex, but He gave us the ideal setting for its practice: a relationship between one man and one woman, committed exclusively to one another for life. We call it marriage.

Some people at this point begin to object, "Hey, why would God burden us with all these commandments? What's wrong with a little sex before marriage? Isn't everybody doing it? In my school, it's embarrassing to be a virgin. Why would God create something and then limit us?"

Remember, "God is love", not Cupid. And God is for you, not against you. "No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" according to Psalm 84:11. If God created sex, then He, more than "Hustler" or "Playboy," has the best plan for your sex life.

INTERPRETATION NOTES I CORINTHIANS 6:9,10

"Fornication" = A broad term encompassing all sexual intercourse outside marriage.

"Adultery" = Sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his or her spouse.

HEBREWS 13:4

The Greek could be translated either "let the marriage bed be undefiled" (hortatory), or "the marriage bed is undefiled" (indicative). Either way, marriage and marital sex, when practiced scripturally, are refer-red to as honorable and undefiled respectively.

ILLUSTRATION: *If you think about it, everything in life has its ideal sphere of use. For example, I love to play tennis. (Teacher, you may want to choose a sport that you enjoy.) But I don't feel cheated when I limit my playing to tennis courts. Whenever I play in the living room I destroy things and my wife gets mad. Whenever I play on the Interstate I end up in the hospital.*

I have the most fun with tennis playing on a tennis court. As tennis was designed to be most satisfying on a tennis court, so sex was designed to be most satisfying in marriage. As Solomon put it in a rather steamy Bible passage, "...may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. may her breasts satisfy you always; may you ever be captivated with her love." (Proverbs 5:18-19)

God puts it clearly, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Hebrews 13:4)

So God says to limit sex to marriage. "But why," you may ask? "What's the big deal about a consenting guy and girl having sex before marriage? Why would God be so down on it?" In the next few minutes, we will look at some facts that will help you counter much of the fuzzy thinking that continues to fuel a sexual revolution that has brought only misery and heartache to many.

III. WHY SAY NO TO PREMARITAL SEX.

ACTIVITY! Divide into groups of 5 or 6 (preferably separating boys from girls). Appoint a secretary to record your ideas. Imagine your sister is considering having sex with her boyfriend. Come up with all the reasons you can to persuade her to say no. Then, have each secretary read the results to the entire group.

Now, let's look at a few of these reasons more in depth...

1. Because Sex Makes Babies.

Remember the underlined statement and you will go far in life. But some may say, "No problem, haven't you heard of "the pill?" Sure, the pill gives the best protection of any contraceptive against pregnancy, but it does nothing to protect you from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (S.T.D's.). That's why you hear so much about protecting yourself with condoms these days. But condoms don't promise 100% protection against pregnancy (or S.T.D's, for that matter.)

ILLUSTRATION: *In fact, 20 years ago the U.S. government rushed in to solve the teenage pregnancy crises by training students in how to use birth control. But after 20 years of such programs our newly enlightened unmarried teenagers are getting pregnant at a*

rate twice that prior to the government's "help!" (Focus on the Family, *How to Help Your Kids Say "No" to Sex*) And sixty percent of these pregnant teens will be pregnant again in two years.

ILLUSTRATION: Birth control methods can lower the odds of pregnancy, but none are 100% accurate. This is confirmed to me quite regularly as I hear stories of accidental pregnancies from "experts" on contraception, those who have been married and practicing contraception for some years.

Kenny Marks has a great song called "The Party's Over," about a girl who ends up pregnant and experiences the consequences. You could play it here, with words on the overhead.

The bottom line: If you want to avoid unintended pregnancies, save sex for marriage.

2. Because Multiple Partners Risk S.T.D.'s.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH! Divide into 3 groups and appoint a secretary for each group. Assign the following passages, one to each group: Proverbs 5:3-11; 6:26-35; 7:21-27. Direct the groups to read their passage and ask the secretary to record any consequences of premarital sex that they find. After allowing sufficient time, have each secretary read their findings to the entire group. Note that these passages were written over 2900 years ago! When will we ever learn?

A few years ago I saw a brochure responding to the explosion of S.T.D.'s entitled, "Suddenly, Sex is Dangerous." I thought, "Suddenly? Casual sex has been dangerous for thousands of years!"

STATISTICS AND INFORMATION ON AIDS AND STD'S

Want up-to-date statistics and information? Call the AIDS hotline: 1-800-342-AIDS. Also, call the National STD hotline: 1-800-227-8922 for free brochures and information. For information from a Christian perspective, contact Focus on the Family.

One of the consequences of "free" sex is the risk of acquiring Sexually Transmitted Diseases (S.T.D.'s). Let's take a closer look at this serious consequence.

Many people thought that the sexual revolution of the 60's would free us from outdated morals to experience love more fully. Thirty years later we can begin measuring the toll of the "free sex" experiment. To cite one example, the gonorrhea rate for teenage girls increased 400% (think: four times as much) from 1965 to 1987. (*Why Wait*, p. 25). Some freedom.

ILLUSTRATION: Even prior to AIDS, some authorities were calling STD's the worst

disease epidemic in our society. And get this: The Center for Disease Control estimates that one out of every 4 adults in America now has an STD! (STD Brochure, American Social Health Association)

And some STD's, such as Herpes Simplex II and AIDS, have no cure.

Over 103,000 people died of AIDS in the United States in 1993. (Teacher: It's usually better to find a way to picture a statistic than to leave it at a simple number or percentage. Perhaps find a nearby city or section of a large city that has a population of approximately 100,000. Say, "imagine every inhabitant of the city of _____ disappearing this year. That's the toll AIDS is taking.") In 1994, as many as 1,000,000 people in the U.S. had AIDS. And it's not just a homosexual problem. About 1 in 10 of these cases (and growing proportionately) were contracted by heterosexual contact. (Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia).

ILLUSTRATION: Rather than urging people to restrict sex to marriage, the government presently pushes condoms. But condoms don't offer 100% protection. The HIV virus is 1/25 the size of a sperm and can easily penetrate even the smallest gaps that exist in all condoms. That is why when 800 sexologists were asked to raise their hands if they would trust a thin rubber sheath to protect them during intercourse with a known HIV infected person, not one raised his or her hand. (Focus on the Family, In Defense of a Little Virginity) Other STD's, such as herpes, can also spread even when a condom is used. (See "Herpes" brochure, American Social Health Association)

CONCLUSION

If you had been a teen growing up in the 60's, you couldn't have foreseen all the misery that would be caused by free sex. You would have had two choices: go the direction everybody seemed to be going, and that even many experts were recommending, or to trust that God knew what He was talking about. Looking back, those who stuck with God won. Even when it seems that following God might keep you from the best, trust God. He cares.

PRAY

A Second, Closer Look At Those Teen Sex Statistics

Statistics about teen sex can be easily misconstrued to make teens believe that they are standing alone when they decide to say no. Although some surveys find over half of high schoolers (54 % of those fourteen through eighteen years old (McDowell, p. 23), although the most recent surveys show less than half) having experienced sex, this doesn't necessarily mean that half of all high schoolers are regularly having sex. Consider the following:

- 1) If you are talking to a group of 16 year old girls, encourage them that although it may appear that everyone is doing it, they are in the minority if they have had sex even once by that age (Atlanta Journal, 40% of 16 year olds.)
- 2) The term "sexually active" can be misleading. A "physically active" person is one who gets regular exercise, not one who has exercised at least once in his life. Yet, 20% of the teens reported as "sexually active" say they tried it only once (McDowell, p. 22). And a sexually abused student would also be considered "sexually active." Most of the 13 year old girls who have had sex have only had it involuntarily. (At. Journal)

What this all means is that, particularly with younger teens, very few are involved with a lifestyle of sex. And comparing virgins to non-virgins, not only is it wrong to say that "everybody's doing it." The most current stats confirm that "most youth have not even done it once."

These facts are important to understand. Sex ed. programs do us a disservice when they assume that most of the youth they teach are regularly having sex. One lady, in substitute teaching a female sex ed class, encouraged the girls to say "no" to premarital sex. After the class, some students said in relief, "You mean it's ok to wait!" Apparently, the former teacher had taught with the assumption that everyone was sexually active, thereby subtly making abstainers feel they were odd.

The fact that not everyone (often not even the majority) "is doing it" is powerful ammunition when influencing peer-driven teens.

SHARPENING YOUR AX USING HUMOR EFFECTIVELY

Ken Davis is a truly great communicator. He kept me and thousands of youth spellbound at a huge Christian gathering in Washington, DC. One of his greatest communication devices is humor.

According to Ken, "I believe that nothing softens hard hearts, breaks down walls of cynicism and opens doors for crystal-clear communication like effectively used humor." (How to Speak to Youth, p. 135) Some hints on using humor:

1) Assess your style of humor. I can't tell a joke. For some reason I can say the same words that another speaker used to put his audience in stitches, and my audience responds with a blank stare. Until I get some training, I never say, "Have you heard the one about...?".

However I do pretty well with dry humor (think Bob Newhart). I can tell a story or an illustration in a way that people can relate and often laugh.

2) Set it up appropriately. If you use the baby story, don't introduce it with "Here's something really funny!" If you fail to deliver, it will be hard to recover and continue the message. Better: "Do you want to know about family life? Let me tell you something about family life." If they enjoy it, great. But even if they don't laugh, you can end with, "I've exaggerated a little here, but any of you with infant brothers or sisters can relate. Do you have anything to add?"

3) Don't use humor in bad taste. If you mercilessly joke about fat people, some may laugh outwardly but hurt inwardly.

4) Be yourself. I visited a youth ministry that was considered one of the top in the country. A youth staff advised me, "to talk to a group of middle school kids, you have to be really gross and funny."

A week later I visited an equally successful ministry. The middle school teacher told me, "I'm not really very funny, so I don't try to be." Yet, he was real with his students and held their attention well.

5) Study humorous speakers. What makes them funny?

The content: Is the material funny because the subject did something embarrassing, surprising, made an unusual observation about the normal routine of life? Humor will differ from culture to culture and subgroup to subgroup.

The delivery: Look for the subtle grin, the pause, the expression of embarrassment, the hand motion, the recovery from a failed joke.

6) Get input from others. Ask some people to be brutally honest with you. "When I say something that ought to be funny, why don't people laugh?"

Much humor can be learned. But remember, be yourself. If it just isn't working, go back to what you do best.

SEX, LIES AND THE TRUTH (DATING SERIES, PART IV)

INTRODUCTION

Last week, I had you imagine that your sister came to you for counsel on whether or not to have sex with her boyfriend. During the lesson, I gave you lots of ammunition. Let's brainstorm in review. Tell me some reasons you remember from last week. (Put up last week's overhead if you need to.)

"But wait," you say. "I don't see people reaping these consequences. One in four adults have an STD? All I hear about is people bragging about all the fun they are having. The consequences just don't seem real." But remember three things that contribute to our delusion:

BRAINSTORM! Get ideas from youth as to why we don't hear about the consequences of premarital sex. If they are too shy to share before the whole group, put them in small groups.

- **The media doesn't tell us the whole story.**

Television and movies bombard us with extra marital sex scenes.

ILLUSTRATION: Each year the average person views 9,230 scenes depicting sex or implied sex. And 81% of the sex is outside of marriage (*Why Wait?*, p. 41). Now, we have just shown how many people are acquiring S.T.D's. But of the 92,000 sex scenes you have viewed over the past 10 years, how many of you have ever seen a show where a character picks up gonorrhea or herpes from their casual sex experience? (Get a show of hands from the youth.) Not even one? Does this strike you as odd? If 92,000 t.v. characters played in war scenes over the past 10 years and we never saw an injury, Roger Ebert and the rest of us would be crying out for some reality. We're not getting the whole story from television.

ILLUSTRATION: It would probably shock a lot of people into reality if James Bond were to develop a troublesome itch, visit a doctor, be diagnosed with herpes, and be warned to stop all sexual activity. But will it ever happen? Not a chance.

- **Our schoolmates don't tell us the whole story.**

The locker room bragging over recent conquests never seems to turn to the subject of venereal diseases. But apparently a lot of our classmates are suffering a private heartache that no one but their doctor will ever hear about. But what would you

expect? That after the diagnosis the captain of the football team displays a bumper sticker on his 4x4 that reads, on his backpack that reads: HONK IF YOU HAVE GONORRHEA! Or, become a card-carrying member of the "Herpes Club"?

- **Young minds resist believing tragic truths.**

Young people tend to believe that car wrecks and pregnancies and S.T.D's. happen to other people, not them. Psychologists have a name for it, "The teen fantasy." "Other youth may get pregnant, but not me." "Other youth may get S.T.D's., but not me. Hoods and greasy people may get them, but not me."

It's as if each month viruses hold a convention and compare pictures of potential hosts to see who they will infect next:

Virus #1: NO, NOT HER, SHE'S THE CAPTAIN OF THE CHEERLEADERS, HAS GOOD PARENTS, AND WASHES HER HAIR REGULARLY.

Virus #2: YEA, I DESPISE THE POPULAR ONES. SHOW ME A PICTURE OF A REAL LOSER!

"The Teen Fantasy" seems almost humorous. But it is real. And powerful.

ILLUSTRATION: Catch this: one teen mother of 3 children said that she still had sex without birth control. Her reason? She didn't think she would get pregnant!

STD's are scary. Some STD's, such as AIDS, can lie dormant with no symptoms for an extended period of time. People can be passing the disease on to people they really care about without even knowing it!

They are also serious. Their symptoms range from recurring sores, rashes, blisters and fatigue to blindness, paralysis, insanity, cancer, birth of a blind or diseased child, or death. This is not sensationalism. It is the truth.

But there is a way to insure not getting an STD. You see, these diseases are spread by sexual contact between multiple sex partners. Here's an example: In the March issue of Jane Magazine (not a Christian magazine), an article on sex quoted an astounding statistic. Women who have sex with more than one partner are 500 times more likely to get Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) than those who have sex with only one. (p. 90) The solution? Can you say MARRIAGE? If you save sex for marriage and stay faithful to your marriage partner, you have little to worry about. Do God's standards make sense, or what?

The bottom line: If you want to avoid STD's, save sex for marriage.

3. Because Premarital Sex Strains Emotions.

"Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.'" (I Cor. 6:16)

According to this passage, sexual intercourse is more than a simple physical experience. A bond, a new, permanent union of spirit or personality takes place. Surely making such unions with more than one person must take an emotional toll.

ILLUSTRATION: Dr. Francis Braceland, clinical professor at Yale and editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry reports that premarital sexual relations have "greatly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals." Sex is not simply a recreational thrill, like bungee jumping. It creates oneness, and when the relationship dissolves, emotions can go berserk. (Youth may think, "Yea, but this relationship will never dissolve. We're in love and this is the real thing." But "one study shows an average of five 'real loves' for kids between ninth grade and the second year of college.") (So Richards, Burns, p. 24)(Short says 3 to 5, Burns, p.17).

ILLUSTRATION: One study found that from 1974 to 1984, "guilt and remorse resulting from sexual involvement have doubled among teenagers." (Why Wait?, p. 26) Another "freeing" result of the sexual revolution.

The bottom line: if you want to avoid guilt and remorse, save sex for marriage.

4. Because Premarital Sex Can Harm Your Relationship as a Couple.

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (Rom. 14:19)

Over and over I hear stories of youth who give in to the pressure to have sex, thinking that it will strengthen the dating relationship. But often, the opposite happens. As one girl wrote:

"I thought Mike really loved me, but last night we had sex for the first time and this morning he told my girl friend that he didn't want to see me any more. I thought giving Mike what he wanted would make him happy and he'd love me more.... I don't know how I can go on."(Why Wait, p. 16)

Is strengthening your relationship with your boyfriend or girlfriend a concern? Consider what bringing in sex can do:

- a) Consume the relationship and cause a breakdown in communication.
- b) Cause mistrust.
- c) Lead to a loss of respect for both of you.
- d) Lead to bitterness.
- e) Lead to an unhealthy focus on the physical rather than focus on the relationship.

The bottom line: If you want a good dating relationship, save sex for marriage.

5. Because Premarital Sex Can Endanger Your Future Marriage.

Married couples who had premarital sex are...

- more likely to have extra-marital affairs. Women are twice as likely.
- tend to have less happy marriages.
- are more likely to divorce.
- are less happy with their married sex life.

I've never heard a married couple say that they wish that had experienced sex before marriage.

Bottom line: If you want the best sex, save sex for marriage.

6. Because Premarital Sex Can Distance You From God.

"...for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Heb. 13:4)

**HERMENEUTIC REVIEW:
TEACHING HISTORICAL
NARRATIVE**

Last week we discussed some limits on drawing truth from historical narrative. Here I use a historical narrative to teach the need to seek God above all else. The reason I can confidently teach this principle is that it is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. Mt. 22:37).

Note my tentativeness when I say "apparently...". Why do I do this? Because the passage does not explicitly state Joseph's motive. It merely gives his statement. I think I can assume, by what I know of Joseph's character, that this is the case. But I can't be dogmatic.

"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9)

I love the story of Joseph. In one scene fit for a soap opera, his boss's wife, Mrs. Potiphar, keeps pressuring him to go to bed with her. His response to her reveals something about his heart. He could have said, "What if you get pregnant?" or "Haven't you heard that Egyptian STD's are at epidemic levels?" Instead, his words reflected what may have been uppermost on his mind: *"How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?"* Apparently, Joseph didn't care as much what *his friends* thought as what *God* thought.

The greatest commandment is to love God, and to love people. Knowing all the consequences of premarital sex, don't ever fool yourself into thinking that premarital sex is a way to show your love. It's a way to satisfy your desires.

But what about your love for God? If a person you really care for starts pushing sex on you, who will get first place, God or your selfish date?

Bottom line: If you want to stay close to God, save sex for marriage.

CONCLUSION

You've heard the facts. So what will it be for you? In the back seat of a car, with emotions and hormones exploding, is no place to make a decision about sex. Now, with your head clear, you can set a standard that will help keep you through the tempting times. You've heard the clear teaching of God's Word. You've heard the truth about the consequences of premarital sex. What will you do with it?

Please close your eyes. It's just you and God. I challenge you to ask Him for His help in remaining pure until marriage.

But some of you may have your mind cluttered with regrets. Maybe it wasn't your fault. Or, perhaps you just didn't have all the facts. Whatever the case, you feel you have already blown it. The great thing about God is that His love for us is not based on our past performance. God is love. He feels the hurt you are feeling now. And His arms are open to forgive you of your past, take your sins as far as the East is from the West, and strengthen you to keep yourself pure for that future special husband or wife. Just ask Him. We call it "secondary virginity." From now on, you're keeping yourself pure.

(Give them a moment in prayer.)

***SHARPENING YOUR AX
THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF DISCOVERY***

John Milton Gregory's classic book, The Seven Laws of Teaching, should be digested by every aspiring teacher. Bruce Wilkinson, excellent teacher and founder of "Walk Through the Bible," reads this little book once a year.

One of Gregory's laws is "The Law of Teaching": "Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself." (p. 84) "As a rule" means that there are exceptions, such as the need to cover a large body of material in a small amount of time. But keep this important rule in mind as you prepare to teach. Whenever possible, have youth read Scriptures themselves and try to apply them to the topic at hand. This helps students realize that they can understand and apply the Scriptures for themselves. And if they see the obvious meaning of a Scripture for themselves, they more clearly sense the authority of the Word, not just the interpretation of their teacher.

Other benefits of self-discovery? Students will tend to understand and internalize principles better when they discover rather than merely hear. Also, a mid-lesson discussion can interrupt the daydreams that compete for their attention.

***SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(DATING SERIES, PART V)***

BIG IDEA: Christians should set appropriate, specific standards for their relationships with the opposite sex.

PURPOSE: Youth should come away from this study with a specific standard they intend to abide by with the help of God.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we talked about reasons to save sex for marriage. But it's one thing to believe this is true. It's quite another thing to live it out. Some of our guys have put together a skit that will remind you of some of the pressures you are up against.

SKIT

SCENE: HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM, DRESSING OUT FOR FOOTBALL PRACTICE.

TOMMY (ONE OF THREE FRIENDS WHO HAVE COME TO GET THE LOWDOWN ON DAN'S WEEKEND): "DAN, SO HOW DID IT GO WITH BEV FRIDAY NIGHT? DID YOU SCORE?"

DAN: "EXCUSE ME? DID YOU CALL ME DAN? I'M CASANOVA. I ALWAYS SCORE. YEAH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A WEEKEND WITH A HOT CHICK."

(TO JEFF, WHO HAS JUST ARRIVED AT HIS NEARBY LOCKER) "HEY JEFF, WHEN WILL YOU EVER GROW UP?" (EVERYONE LAUGHS) "IF I'M DAN CASSANOVA, YOU MUST BE JEFFRY MONK. WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE THE PLUNGE AND JOIN THE RANKS OF THE REAL MEN?"

JEFF (SHEEPISHLY): "OH, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE WHEN I FIND THE RIGHT GIRL."

DAN: "HEY, A GIRL I WAS WITH A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO TOLD ME SHE THOUGHT YOU WERE KIND OF CUTE. ("WHOOOOOO!" FROM THE CROWD) "WHAT SAY I SET YOU TWO UP?"

SKIT ENDS WITH JEFF STANDING THERE, NOT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY.

Applaud appropriately for the actors.

Ask the youth group, "Was this drama realistic? Do you think people in school face these kinds of pressures?" Today we will deal very practically with how to set and keep your standards, even when the pressure is on. Even if you have had sex, you may now see that it's time to stop and set your standard, saving yourself for marriage. In the next few minutes, we especially need God's help. Could someone lead us in prayer?

PRAY

To hold your ground against pressure like Jeff faced in the skit, you've got to have some standards that you have thought through. Also, you need to know how to respond to those who pressure us. See if you think the following points will help.

I. REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES

*“With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.
All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer stepping into a noose
till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.” (Proverbs 7:21-23; cr. 5:3-11; 6:26-35)*

Apparently, most people live in a dream world where they imagine they can (like t.v. characters) have sex and face no consequences. But last week we saw from the Bible and people's lives that there are many serious consequences.

Reflecting on last week's lesson, imagine that you are trying to convince me to say no to premarital sex. How many reasons can you give me? (Let individuals raise their hands to give input. Play “devil’s advocate”: “Nobody’s getting pregnant. I use protection.” “If so many people are getting STD’s, then why don’t I hear more about it? I don’t see an epidemic of STD’s around my friends.” Then, mention any from last week's outline that they might have forgotten.)

Most people are deceived into thinking they can handle fire without getting burned. But God gives us a different story. Concerning adultery, Solomon put it this way,

*Can a man take fire in his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?
Or can a man walk on hot coals,
And his feet not be scorched?
So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.
(Prov. 6:26-29)*

Overcome the deception by reflecting regularly on the reality of the consequences of premarital sex. When you guys are tempted by a great looking girl who has a bad reputation, don't think beauty, think venereal disease. Think ruining your future sex life. A good dose of truth can slap you back into reality.

When you girls are tempted to date popular guys with low standards, don't think love and romance and popularity. Think heartache, disappointment and regrets.

ILLUSTRATION: Bob Stone, with twenty five years of counseling experience, has yet to meet one person who wished he or she had gone further sexually while dating.

With the consequences vividly on your mind, you can begin to see premarital sex for what it is, a cheap, but costly imitation of the real thing. It's easier to avoid something when you see the consequences. Then you not only know it is wrong. You abhor, or hate (Rom. 12:9) the imitation while you look forward to the real thing.

Do you want to resist sex? First, remember the consequences. But there's something else you need to remember.

II. REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT ALONE

ILLUSTRATION: Elijah was having one of those days. A wicked woman who wielded great power in the government sent a messenger to him saying that Elijah was a dead man. He promptly tucked tail and ran for his life. A day's journey into the wilderness, he sat down under a tree and asked God to take his life.

Prior to this, Elijah had taken a courageous stand for God. But now he felt all alone. As far as he could tell, all his friends, relatives and countrymen had defected to serve other Gods, "and I alone am left." (I Kings 19:10) Do you ever feel that way regarding to sex? "I must be the only virgin left." I think this is one of the greatest ploys of the evil one. A part of God's encouragement to Elijah was to straighten out the statistics for him. Elijah was far from alone in his stand.

Somehow he had missed the fact that 7,000 others had not bowed to other Gods! (I Kings 19:10,14-18)

Seven thousand?! How could he have missed them all? Perhaps the same way we overlook all the ones who are resisting premarital sex. If your small cluster of friends are into sex, you tend to think that everybody is.

Listen. If you are a 15-year-old girl, and someone is giving you the line, "everyone is doing it," don't believe it.

Illustration: Surveys tell us that over 70% of 15-year-old girls have never had sex! And if you don't count the ones that had it forced on them, you're up to about 80% who have never had voluntary sex. That's more than 8 girls in every 10! And of the 20% who have had sex, how many had it only once, or had it with a boyfriend and later stopped after she decided it wasn't a good idea? Clearly few 15-year-old girls are into a lifestyle of sex. But like Elijah, many have been deceived into believing they are the only ones left!

Do you want to resist sex? First, remember the consequences. Second, remember you're not alone. But there is something else you would do well to face. Face people's motives.

III. FACE THE MOTIVES

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

In a good relationship, we try to assume that everything our friend does is from good motives. Yet, in a dating relationship, we need to be *“shrewd as snakes,”* (Mt. 10:16). God looks not only at people's actions, but understands their motives (Hebrews 4:12). To resist sex, it helps to understand the motives that guide people's actions.

ILLUSTRATION: Dave and Sherri have a good relationship, but Dave wants more. Dave says, “Don't you think it's about time that we really show our love for one another? I've never met anyone like you. I know you feel the same way about me.”

Hebrews 4:12

F.F. Bruce comments that this verse means “that the word of God probes the inmost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to light....”

And in many cases, the girl gives in. Why? Because she thinks Dave loves her and doesn't want to risk losing him.

But let's look at some facts that should make Sally think twice before giving in.

GUESS THE SURVEY! In a survey, guys were asked to give their reasons for having sex. Among the reasons they might have given were: (It would be best to have this on your overhead.) Love for the person, thinking “everybody else is doing it,” sexual gratification, curiosity, or peer pressure. Write down what you think are the top four, in the order they were given. (Leader, ask several to volunteer the order they gave. An activity like this can peak their attention to retain the results of the actual survey.)

ILLUSTRATION: Although many people talk about love in order to get sex, love often has nothing to do with it. This is how the Planned Parenthood pole came out. The reasons, in order of frequency given, were (reveal them one at a time.)

- #1 - Peer pressure.
- #2 - Curiosity.
- #3 - Thinking “everybody else is doing it.”
- #4 - Sexual gratification.

Only one in twenty guys gave their motive as love.

Yet, girls overwhelmingly responded that their motive was out of love for the guy. Girls need to reflect hard on this. A lot of guys talk about love in order to get sex. And a lot of girls give sex to try to get love. The guys get their gratification. The girls often get a broken heart.

Remember, the average person falls in love three to five times before she ever gets married. If your boyfriend insists on sex because "our love is the real thing," ask him if he is sure enough to propose marriage and commit himself to you for life before an ordained preacher. Ask him if he is ready to start taking care of babies. That ought to sober him up. (By the way, if your boyfriend is pressuring you to have sex, break up with him. I don't care if he holds the attendance record for Sunday School and has memorized the entire Greek New Testament. He's not living for God. And in all probability, you are neither the first nor the last of his sexual exploits.)

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, do you want to resist sex? (Perhaps have youth say these together with you in unison as you review them.) Remember the consequences. Remember you're not alone. Face the motives. These principles will give you the mindset you need to resist temptation. Next week we will move beyond what to think, and deal with what to do, to save sex for marriage.

Let's pray. "Father, give these students the knowledge and skills they need to stand against a temptation that has fallen many." To the students: pray now silently that God will help you to maintain moral purity from here on, no matter what your past.

SHARPENING YOUR AX THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIEW

Milton Gregory states, "No time in teaching is spent more profitably than that spent in reviewing. Other things being equal, the ablest and most successful teacher is the one who secures from his pupils the most frequent, thorough, and interesting reviews." (The Seven Laws of Teaching, p. 116)

Last week, you dished out a large bowl of provocative thoughts. During the week, they have been digesting it. Perhaps the events of the week challenged or underlined one or two points. A review gives students a chance to rethink the material from this fresh vantage point and lodge the concepts more securely in their minds.

A review can also help you evaluate your own effectiveness. If they remember very little, (don't expect them to remember your entire outline; hope and pray they absorb key principles) ask yourself why. You may need to reevaluate your teaching methods, or double your prayer efforts.

SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS (PART II) DATING SERIES, PART VI

INTRODUCTION

Last week we began talking about setting and keeping standards, in a world that's pressuring you into sex.

Some of you know the temptation. You've been there. You've gone too far. Now you desperately want to know how to keep from falling again.

Others of you may be sexually pure, but proud of it. "I'm too smart to fall for that stuff." Or, "I'm too close to God to fall for that." I want to especially warn you, many people smarter and godlier than you have fallen. (*"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* [I Cor. 10:12]) King David was so godly as to be called by God "a man after My own heart." But one time he got in the wrong place at the wrong time, let his guard down, and this man of God committed adultery, then murder to cover it up.

Solomon was considered the wisest man who ever lived. But he fell in this area. And it could happen to you, unless you heed some wise precautions.

PRAY

REVIEW: Last week we explored three principles to help you stand:

* **REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES** (Potential pregnancy, STD's, ruined relationships, etc.)

* **REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT ALONE** (If the people you hang around all brag about sexual exploits don't get the feeling you are alone by saying no to sex. Nationwide, 16 year old girls [for example] who are having sex are in the minority.)

* **FACE THE MOTIVES** (Especially girls, beware of guys who speak of love and push for sex. More likely, his motives have nothing to do with love. Remember the survey?)

These three insights give us the motivation to say no to premarital sex. But sometimes we need more than motivation. As one missionary said, "Given the right set of circumstances, I could fall (snaps his fingers) just like that." Ministers of all people have plenty of motivation to avoid illicit sex. They stand to lose their families, reputations, and career. But some fall. Sometimes we need more than motivation. We need practical how to's. This week, the how to's.

I. SET YOUR STANDARD

Christians should be committed to save sex for marriage. But how far physically are

you willing to go? Many of you have probably never set a specific standard short of going all the way. As we talk of setting standards, your temptation will be to set it as low as you can get away with.

Here are some good reasons to set your standards high:

- If you set them too low, you can easily light a fuse that you can't put out.
- God tells us to stay away from sexual passions (give specific passages), not just intercourse. Don't arouse a passion that you can't righteously satisfy. While holding a hand or a short kiss of respect could be justified as a way to express love and affection, I can't see any motive for touching a breast except to satisfy selfish passions. And it doesn't really satisfy. Rather, it leaves you dissatisfied, longing for more.

- Concentration on the physical can blur your real feelings for a person.

*ILLUSTRATION: Jim's girlfriend was out of town. "Wow, do I miss her," he constantly thought. But then he reflected more deeply. "What do I miss about her?" It wasn't sharing a good conversation or sharing their hearts that he longed for. It was sharing their lips! Jim realized that their focus on the physical had blurred his ability to see her as a person, and to discern whether or not he truly loved her. He didn't miss **her** so much as he missed her lips. And if you haven't noticed, lots of girls have lips!*

Example standards people have set:

- * "Don't unzip. Don't unbutton. Don't pull up. Don't pull down. Keep your hands to yourself. Keep your tongue in your own mouth!"
- * "We will not kiss until we are engaged."
- * "We will not kiss until we are married."
- * "I'll kiss, but only a kiss of respect (quick, short, and meaningful) rather than a kiss of passion."

Ideas for setting your own standards:

- Treat every person the way you would want someone else to be treating your future mate.
- Guys, treat girls the way you should treat your sister (I Corinthians 5:1,2).
Would you stick your tongue in your sister's mouth?
- To keep you from the temptation to set them as low as you think you can get away with, imagine this. You have a 15 year old sister who has come to you for advice as to how far she should be willing to go. What would you tell her? Should your standard be any lower than the one you advise for her?
- Imagine that Jesus is riding with you on your date (He is, isn't He?) and you are dropping her off at her house. How far do you feel comfortable going?
- Get input from your parents.

I would like for you to mentally set a standard right now. How far do you think God would want you to go? Remember, those of you who already have regrets in this area. You

have gone too far, even all the way. But don't let Satan discourage you that you have already blown it and there's no need to try to change now. God is a God of second chances (I Cor. 6:11, I Jn. 1:9, II Samuel 11). Ask His forgiveness for your past mistakes and ask His help in maintaining *secondary* virginity. This is a standard you'll keep from now on.

II. TAKE SOME WISE ADVICE. TAKE SOME WISE ADVICE. TAKE SOME WISE ADVICE

BRAINSTORM! Divide into groups of five and have them appoint a secretary to record their ideas. Imagine that you have a 15-year-old brother who has come to you with a problem. He has fallen into sex more than once and hates himself for it. He wants to stop, but keeps blowing it. What will you advise him?

If you have a hard time resisting sexual temptation, you're not alone. People have faced sexual temptation for thousands of years. Lets get some input from others who can teach us from their successes and failures. How can we resist sexual temptation?

A. SET YOUR STANDARDS BEFORE YOU ARE SWEEPED AWAY IN THE EMOTION OF THE MOMENT.

On a couch alone in a home with your girlfriend is no time to set your standards. Go home tonight to the privacy of your bedroom and prayerfully, with much thought, think through the standard you set today.

B. BEWARE OF "THE LAW OF DIMINISHING RETURNS."

Josh McDowell well stresses that once you reach a new level of intimacy, the old level will bring less fulfillment. The first time a guy hold hands with or puts his arm around a girl, he acts super cool, but inside his heart is racing and he is shouting "YEEEEEE HAAAAA."

Idea: Josh McDowell makes a great comedy routine out of this. Sit in a chair with an empty chair beside you. You are on your first date at a movie. You want to put your arm around your date inconspicuously, so you act like you are yawning. Once your arm is there, you don't dare move it, even though your arm is in deep pain due to the awkward position. Much delightful material can be made out of the fear of making that first phone call, the dread of meeting the father at the door, etc. In the next scene the guy confidently walks to the door, casually greets the dad, and holds her hand on the way out. His point is that, while holding her hand and putting your arm around her at first gives you a major high, if you move to major kissing, the hand holding will lose its zing and it will be difficult to back up to merely holding hands. His point? Keep from going too far the first time.

C. IF YOU ARE DATING, PLAN YOUR DATES.

Girls, if a guy asks you out, ask him what he wants to do, where he wants to go. Don't just hang out together. Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.

D. DATE ONLY A PERSON WHO HAS A GOOD REPUTATION.

Most guys look solely for a girl who is physically attractive, regardless of her character. But beware! *"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."* (Prov. 31:30)

Proverbs is filled with warnings about loose women. (Prov. 5:1-14; 6:23-35; 7:4-27). These girls may be attractive, popular, have delightful personalities, and much in common with you. But spiritual eyes can see a different picture.

*"Many are the victims she has brought down,
her slain are a mighty throng.
Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death."* (Proverbs 7:26,27)

Fools let themselves get emotionally involved with them. Is "fool" too strong a word? The Bible words to described the men who fall for such women: "naive, lacking sense" (7:7)

And now for a warning for girls.

ILLUSTRATION: In a study of 5,000 women college students, over one in four had been raped or sexually attacked since the age of 14. That's scary. But the really sobering part is this. In a Kent State study, over half (57%) of the women who had been raped had been raped by their dates. (McDowell, 22,23)

Don't just go out with anyone who asks you out. Better: get to know people in groups. Notice the kinds of friends people have. Do they have standards about issues like drinking and drugs? Are they committed to church and fit in with people there?

E. DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO REMAIN PURE. (II Tim. 2:22)

"Flee the evil desires of youth..." (II Tim. 2:22)

Is single dating too tempting? Then double date. Is double dating too tough? Take a bus! Remember what we said in session 1 about the benefits of getting to know people in groups. Single dating is not the only way.

Have you begun to go too far with your girlfriend or boyfriend and can't get it

under control? Break up.

F. DECIDE WHAT PLACES YOU WILL NOT GO.

“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Romans 13:14)

It just makes good sense. If you're serious about dieting, don't hang out at the sweet shop. If you're an alcoholic, don't walk past the night club. If you have any hormones at all, don't date at an empty house or park in a secluded place. The number one place teens fall into sex? At one of their homes between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Suggested Standards: Don't lie down together on a couch or bed. Don't go a place where you have no fear of interruption.

G. GIRLS ESPECIALLY, WATCH HOW YOU DRESS.

Most girls don't seem to understand how guys think. Guys are easily turned on in a moment by merely seeing a sensuously dressed girl. That's why almost all pornography targets guys. (So I am told. I don't survey the material myself!)

ACTIVITY: “So, how do I know what is sensual to a guy?” Legitimate question. Let's take an anonymous survey of our guys and see what they say. (If you only have a few guys, you may want to bypass this, since everyone would know who said what.) Give each guy a blank sheet of paper. Now, hold up some pictures advertising current girl's fashions. (Hold up some very conservative as well as other. No lingerie please!) Ask the guys two T/F questions for each picture. #1 *If an attractive classmate wore this, would it give you a problem with your thought life?* #2 *If you saw a classmate dressed like this, would you think she was sexually available, loose, or a tease?* If the group of guys is rather large, divide into small groups and let someone in each group tally the results. Then, present the results to the group, holding up the picture of each. Hopefully, this will demonstrate that some clothes cause more problems than the girls think.

H. HANG AROUND PEOPLE WHO SHARE YOUR STANDARDS.

“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.” (Proverbs 13:20)

If your friends brag about their sexual exploits and pressure you to conform, you've got the wrong friends. No wonder you think "everyone's doing it!" Find some people

who want to serve God. Get to know them. Find some things you have in common.

I. GUARD YOUR MIND.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” (Phil. 4:8; Cr. II Cor. 10:5; Mt. 5:28; I Thes. 4:3-7).

Do the movies you watch and the magazines you read pass Paul’s “think about...” test? Do you look at magazines in private you’d never bring to the kitchen table? The movies you watch, are they “pure”. If not, then don’t whine about your failure to control your thought life. It’s like your computer, “Garbage in. Garbage out.”

J. PURSUE GOD.

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (II Tim. 2:22; Cr. Gal. 5:16; Ps. 119:9)

The Christian life consists more of pursuing than fleeing. The number of songs with lyrics like "I can't go on another day without you" show that a large number of people need to get a life. There's much more to live for than dating. Pursuing God through prayer, personal Bible study, meeting with other sharp Christians, and seeking to impact your world, you can live a purposeful life. As you pursue God, your self image will be molded more by how God sees you than how peers see you. Those most susceptible to premarital sex are those with poor self esteem. Get a life outside of dating and you will be better prepared for the challenges of dating when they come.

CONCLUSION

Many of your friends are beginning to make some major mistakes in their sex lives. Could you look back over this list and star a few items that you would like to set as personal standards in order to save yourself till marriage?

PRAYER

***SHARPENING YOUR AX
USING EXEGETICAL INSIGHTS***

How much interpretive material should be used in your message? My answer: only as much as you need to make the passage understood. My pet peeve: teachers who delight in explaining in detail the origins of a word and the meaning of each of its parts, only to conclude that it means what was already obvious in my English version.

Watch how Jesus, Paul, and other New Testament authors use the Old Testament. If simply referring to a clear Old Testament text proved the point, they didn't bore us with the contextual and grammatical minutia.

I study a verse until I'm comfortable that I've grasped its meaning. Out of respect for the Word I dare not flippantly quote verses without doing my best to understand them. I may have pages of study notes. But come teaching time, my students will only hear insights that help explain or make the passage live. Usually, I find it adequate to simply read the verse in an accurate, understandable version.

***SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(PART III)
DATING SERIES, PART VII.***

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW: Last week we talked about how to hold onto your standards. It was so important, that if you apply it, it will could save you enormous heartache in your dating life. To review, imagine that I'm a friend of yours in your same grade. I've confided in you that I've been to a church retreat where I committed myself to moral purity. "But how do I pull it off?" I ask. "There are so many temptations out there. How practically can I keep myself from falling?" Either from last week or your own ideas, give me some counsel. (If they miss one or two that you feel to be strategic, remind them after they finish.)

Today we will get super practical, preparing you for a time when you might have to say "no" to someone. If you prepare yourself now, you will know what to say when the time comes.

III. LEARN HOW TO SAY NO.

Contrary to some public opinion, it is possible to say no to your sexual desires.

***ILLUSTRATION:** People have always had hormones. But in the late 1940s only 3 out of 100 sixteen-year-old girls had had sex. (Compare 40 out of 100 16 year old girls today. Over 13 times as many!) We've just allowed our culture press us into its mold.*

***ILLUSTRATION:** A survey was taken in an Atlanta school system, asking students what they wanted most out of a sex-education program. The number one, overwhelming response? "How to say no to physical involvement." (McDowell, p. 26)*

Let's look at three types of situations you may face.

A. A Group of peers laughing at your virginity.

Get ideas from your group. What would you say?

ILLUSTRATION: *I heard the story of one cheerleader who found herself in the pressure-cooker at a spend the night party. The other girls made light of her virginity until finally she responded, "In a few minutes in the back seat of a car, I can become what you are. But in your whole life, no matter how hard you try, you can never become what I am."*

That was some gutsy girl! Sometimes Jesus put people in their place. But sometimes, especially when we would like to persuade some others to change their course, other responses may be more appropriate.

ILLUSTRATION: *Once a guy with the rock group Stryper was asked with disbelief by a secular interview why he was not having sex. He responded that he didn't want to miss out on God's best around the corner by getting involved with something second best now. What a great response! You could put it this way: "I'm not down on sex. And I have the desires like anyone else. I just don't want to risk missing the best sex in marriage by having second rate sex now."*

With one out of four people reporting STD's and many people saying that their premarital sex hurt their performance in marriage, why take the risk?"

B. A person you are dating.

I'll give this from the girls perspective. If he is pushing for sex, he is not the type person you want to be dating. His mind is in the gutter, not on Jesus. Dump him. But some thoughts for those of you who will continue to date someone who keeps pushing for sex.

Your first response should be to firmly let him know your standard. "I'm not going any further than this." If you say no and he continues to push for sex, it shows he doesn't respect you. You shouldn't have to defend your standard to him. For a guy like this, you are probably neither the first nor the last of his sexual exploits, no matter what he may be telling you. Here are some comebacks to help you. Youth, help me out (let them give ideas before you give each answer.)

*** "But everyone is doing it."**

Answer #1: "Then you should have an easy time finding someone else to do it with."

Answer #2: "As you like to tell me, I'm not like everyone else."

*** "If you love me, you'll let me."**

Answer #1: "If you really loved me, you'd respect me."

Answer #2: "If you really loved me, you wouldn't risk hurting our good relationship by bringing sex into it. And you surely wouldn't want to risk good sex in a future

marriage, if we were to one day get married."

* *"But I can't help myself."*

Answer #1: "Then I assume you wouldn't be able to control yourself around your secretary after you get married."

Answer #2: "Quick, open your door and sprint around the car at the next redlight (Chinese redlight). (When the light turns green, drive off without him.)"

* *"But we're planning on getting married anyway."*

Answer: "So why harm our future marriage?" (Besides, from one third to one half of all engagements will be broken [Herbert Miles, p. 135]. You could be giving yourself to someone else's future mate. One counselor says that he has yet to meet one married person who wishes he had gone further while dating.)

* *"We need to see if we are sexually compatible."*

Answer: "Premarital sex does not help determine if we are compatible. In fact, it may hurt our chances of making it. Studies show that 75% of those who try each other out by living together before marriage end up breaking up. And for the ones who get married, some studies show that they have more sexual hangups than the ones who waited. Good sex often takes years to develop. A few tries before marriage is no indication as to how it will be five years into marriage." (Reference Why Wait, pp. 133-135)

CONCLUSION

In the past two weeks we've covered a lot of facts that are taught in the scriptures and illustrated through studies and statistics. But sometimes cold statistics fail to communicate that each statistic represents a real person, living a real life, like dear friend or a close relative. We began last week's lesson with a real person with a tragic message at a Christian concert. This week we'll end with a married man named Jim, as he talks to a nurse about his story.

"I got this pesky disease during college and have never been able to get rid of it. Every few months I get blisters, then they disappear, only to return again later. I wasn't too worried about it until my wife's last visit to her doctor for her yearly checkup. He says she has to have a repeat on her Pap smear because the first test showed cell changes on her cervix. He told her that cervical cancers could be caused by the Herpes virus, and he also told her she would be wise not to have any more children. We have only one child, Nurse, and I'm scared to death--let me add that all this has not done a lot for our marriage. If only I had known the consequences of the 'fooling around' I did when I was nineteen! Marge and I could have the happiest marriage in the world, except...Those moments of pleasure were

foolish, and the payment is unrelenting."

Remember, this guy is far from alone in living with an STD. One in six adults in the United States has genital herpes. One in four has some form of STD.

The stats and stories are heartbreaking, but the good news is this:

1 - Sex is great when practiced within marriage. Without the worries of STD's and illegitimate children, you can experience sex to the fullest. Commit yourself today to hold out for God's best.

2 - God is a God of new starts. If you have failed in the past, there is no better time to start over than now. Like the father of the prodigal son, God waits with open arms, ready to forgive and restore you.

3 - God's ways are best. The freedom offered by the world results in bondage. God thought up sex in the first place. And when He wrapped up this gift He didn't forget to include the instruction manual. The Bible gives us the way to experience the most fulfilling love life, but you can't have it without submitting yourself to Him. Would you consider tonight trusting your life to Christ?

TIME FOR SILENT PRAYER

HOMEWORK: Next week we will begin talking about how to find a mate. Between now and then, talk to your parents or other married people you respect about how they met and decided to get married. Ask for their advice on mate selection and bring some of their advice back for the group.

SHARPENING YOUR AX CONCLUSIONS

Too often, teachers hurriedly wrap up the lesson when they realize their time is out. “And may God help us to apply these truths to our lives.” But if you fail to give your students something specific to do with the lesson, they may leave with merely a fog of ideas in their mind. Remember, our goal is not to simply keep their attention (*hearers* of the Word), but to produce life change (*doers* of the Word).

Hints: 1 - Go back to your purpose statement. How can you best bring the students to live out what you have purposed? I almost put the illustration of Jim under my section on STD's. But I decided it would be more powerful clinching my purpose in my conclusion. What do you think?

2 - Practice your conclusion until you feel confident. Hendricks compares many speakers to desperate pilots, circling the airport trying to find a place to land. They keep saying, “In conclusion,” “To wrap things up,” but they keep plodding along, losing more momentum as they go.

3 - Consider saving the point that you want them to remember most, or that is most easily applied, till the end.

4 - If you want to end with an opportunity to receive Christ, end with a point that easily leads into the gospel. I.e., shows a great benefit of the Christian life, or the need to trust a power beyond ourselves.

5 - Some can't “land” their message because they can't transition into their conclusion smoothly. Plan your transitions well. I've highlighted mine in this lesson.

6 - Think hard about your youth. What temptations are they facing. What are their insecurities, their fears, their dreams? With your students in mind, pray that God will direct you to a way to pull it all together for them.

7 - I often get them thinking about application from the introduction. “Let's pray that tonight's lesson will go further than our heads and get into our lives. Pray that one or more points will stand out to you as we go through this message.” Encourage them to star the items most applicable to them though the lesson. Remind them, “Some of you need to star this item,” as you cover certain points. During conclusion time, you can have them write out the starred items in the “Action Points” section at the end of their student sheets. This approach gets them actively involved ~~in~~ actively seeking God's message for them.

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART 1) ***(DATING SERIES, PART VIII)***

BIG IDEA: CHRISTIANS SHOULD LOOK FOR GODLY CHARACTER AS THEY SEEK A HUSBAND OR WIFE.

PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY KNOWING THE IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING FOR INNER BEAUTY IN POTENTIAL MATES.

INTRODUCTION

Game: "The Mystery Bag." Bring a person up to choose one of two bags. Now have someone else volunteer to take the other bag. Mention that both bags look equally as appealing on the outside. "The contents of both of these bags are edible and both are used in various recipes. Now, at the same time, I want each of you to put your hand in your bag, without peaking, and show us what was inside." (In one of the bags, have milk chocolate. In the other, broken eggs or something else disgusting. Make sure the bags will not leak through. Bring a towel for hand washing!)

This game illustrates something very important about choosing a mate. Often what's outside doesn't tip us off to what's on the inside. And some of us rely too much on the outward appearance, not knowing what's inside. How can we keep from getting a raw egg of a husband or wife? Tonight we'll search for the answers.

Let's look to God for guidance as we discuss this incredibly important matter. PRAY.

I. LOOK FOR CHARACTER

***ILLUSTRATION:* If physical beauty alone could hold a marriage together, then many actors and actresses should have the ideal marriages. But do they? How many actors or actresses can you name that keep failing at marriage? (Let some youth share.) But their marriages seem to fare no better, probably worse, than the rest of the population. Actress Zsa Zsa Gabor, veteran of eight marriages (latest count by November, 1995), said that "getting married is just the first step toward getting divorced." (*People*, Nov. 13, 1995, p. 120). This observation makes me want to look beyond physical beauty in seeking a marriage that will last.**

Most people are so obsessed with beauty that they overlook the importance of character. But have you ever noticed how a pretty face can begin to look despicable to you once you find the person hurting your friends, being snooty, or being otherwise obnoxious in their character? Conversely, have you ever noticed how a person you never considered

beautiful became more lovely when you became better acquainted with his or her inner beauty? In this sense, beauty can indeed be in the eye of the beholder.

In this session, we will begin to look beyond beauty at the character traits that make for a good marriage. For it is primarily character that will make the difference between a marriage that is heaven, and one that resembles hell.

Have you ever written down what you are looking for in a mate? Writing a list of characteristics that are important to you can help you become more objective about a decision that people often give over totally to their emotions.

A. Write a Profile of Your Dream-mate.

Activity: (Hand out paper and pencils.) Write "My Dream Mate" on the top of your page. Now, write a description of the person you would like to marry. You can write any physical, spiritual, and character qualities that they think are important.

Are any of you willing to share with us what you are looking for? (Get their ideas, but be prepared for some fun input on this one!)

Now let's look at this issue of character in more depth. Be prepared to write down some additional characteristics as you find them.

1. Biblical Guidelines.

a. A Christian.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." (II Cor. 6:14; cr. I Cor. 7:39)

Missionary dating is dangerous. You may say, "but someone needs to reach them." True, but it shouldn't be through a dating relationship. Consider this:

- No one can control his emotions in a dating relationship. You can fall in love with a non-Christian as easily as a Christian. So don't date someone that you would not be willing to one day marry as they are now.
- Non Christians may often begin attending Christian meetings and even make spiritual decisions while dating a Christian. But it is almost impossible for either person to tell the difference between a genuine decision and a shallow decision that is clouded by the relationship.

OBJECT LESSON: Have half of your youth stand on their chairs. Each of the remaining youth should choose a "chair person" to stand by. Now, ask the higher youth to try to pull the lower youth up, while the lower youth tries to pull the higher youth down. Which is easier, to pull a person up to your level, or to get pulled down to their level? Get the point?

ILLUSTRATION: *Solomon was the wisest man in the world. He should have known better. He was also a spiritual man to whom God had twice appeared. He should have obeyed. But ignoring God's warning, he allowed himself to love women who served foreign gods (Ex. 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deut. 7:3,4; 17:14-17; I Kings 11:1-8; Neh. 13:26). In his old age, "his wives turned his heart away after other gods." (I Kings 11:4) He loved them. Perhaps he wanted to pull them up. But they pulled him down. We're no wiser than Solomon. Don't think it won't happen to us if we ignore his downfall.*

b. A Committed Christian.

***"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."* (Proverbs 31:30)**

There really shouldn't be any need for this second point. But some people define a Christian as someone who attends church, acts decent, comes from a Christian home, or prayed a certain prayer at a retreat. The Bible defines a Christian as a person who believes in Christ and has been born again (John 3). How then can I tell if a person has been born again? Ask yourself these questions, drawn from the description of a real Christian in I John. Does the person (let youth volunteer to read each verse. Ask them how the verse applies and how they can know if a person is living according to it.)...

- * obey God (1:6, 2:3)?
- * keep His Word (2:4,5)?
- * love people (2:9)?
- * not love the world (2:15,17)?
- * confess the Son (2:23)?
- * avoid sin (3:6)?
- * love God (5:2)?

Beware! Merely going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a french fry. Neither does an emotional prayer at a retreat, unless it reflects true faith and repentance.

ILLUSTRATION: *But spiritual life is important to a good marriage. About 4 in 10 first marriages in American end in divorce. But a 1986 publication claims that among couples who marry in the church and continue to attend church regularly, the divorce rate is one out of fifty. Add to the church attendance a prayer life at home and the rate becomes one in 1,105! Truly, couples that pray together, stay together!*

c. A person of character.

DISCUSSION: I want to divide you into two groups, virgins over here and non virgins over here. Just kidding! Rather: guys here and girls there. Each group needs to either divide up the verses or assign a reader. Here are the verses:

Girls can look at the characteristics for church servants and leaders mentioned in I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and Acts 6:1-3. Some of the same characteristics that make for a good leader in the church make for a good leader in the home.

Guys can look at Proverbs 31:10-31; Gen. 2:18.

Both groups can look at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22,23, and the love chapter (I Corinthians 13).

Write down the characteristics that you think are especially important. As one of you reads, others can comment on why you think certain characteristics are important. (If they respond well to this, let them take plenty of time. It is important for them to reflect on these characteristics. You can always extend the series another session to get in all the material.)

2. Wise Counsel on Character.

There is nothing wrong with noticing someone's physical beauty. When you find that special someone, physical attraction will probably be a part of God's way of leading you together. But we've got to look deeper than physical beauty.

Proverbs encourages us to get wise counsel from others. Since certain counselors talk to married people all day about their problems, why not ask them what characteristics are most important for a stable marriage? Norman Wright (Premarital Counseling, pp. 28-34) mentions the following characteristics:

- * Adaptability and Flexibility (the ability to adjust to change, accept differences)
- * Empathy (sensitive to the needs and hurts of others)
- * Ability the Work Through Problems
- * Ability to Give and Receive Love
- * Emotional Stability (accepts and controls emotions, expressing them without tearing down the partner)
- * Ability to Communicate (talking freely, communicating feelings, keeping the communication lines open)
- * Commitment (willing to share the adventure of life and work through the inevitable difficulties.)

In addition to Wright's list, here are a few characteristics that are especially important to me (Leader, you could emphasize scores of character qualities that God's Word sets forth. Which ones do you think are most important to emphasize? God may lead you to leave some of mine out, or to add others):

- * Selflessness (I Jn. 3:16) The desire to put other's needs before their own. (See Gen 2:18 – "A helper")

* **Doesn't Love Money** (I Tim. 6:6-10) One study found that over half of U.S. divorces came about primarily because of money. The opposite side of the money spectrum can be just as devastating to a relationship. Some people are too lazy to support their family. "If a person will not work," the Scriptures say, "neither let him eat." (And please don't marry him!)

* **Ability to Forgive.** Hurts and misunderstandings are common to the best of marriages. A person who refuses to forgive, keeping mental lists of past wrongs, can sour an otherwise great relationship.

* **Not Contentious** How many of you would like to live in the corner of a roof? How about a desert? There's something worse, according to the Bible. Look up Proverbs 21:9,19 and 25:24 to find out what. A contentious woman. She may be popular, beautiful, and rich, but unless you enjoy misery, don't touch her with a ten foot pole.

* **Wisdom** "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." (Proverbs 13:20; cr. 14:1) You certainly don't want a fool for your closest companion. (A good home project would be to read the book of Proverbs in a month, one chapter per day, and write down the characteristics of the wise and the foolish.)

* **Spiritual Zeal** For me, my spiritual life consumes my waking thoughts and guides my every decision. I wanted someone who could understand and share this life passion.

ILLUSTRATION: Christi, a strong Romanian believer, took this approach to finding a wife who shared his zeal for God. In Christi's own words, "...there is one way to simplify things. If you are thrilled with Jesus and start running to Him, don't look left or right (looking for a wife), but rather straight at Him, and run as hard as you can. Then, when you cannot run any harder, look left or right, to find the only person running in the same direction as you and who has the same goals." So as Christi sprinted after Christ, he noticed a girl named Anca running the same pace. They developed a friendship and later became engaged. (From Reach Out Ministries newsletter.)

Warning: Don't expect to find a person with all of these character traits. But by looking for character, you will be able to see the potential strong and weak points. It gives some objectivity to a decision which is often left to the whim of emotions. When you begin thinking about character, a red flag may go up in your mind when you see poor character. It doesn't necessarily mean the person is wrong for you. It just means, warning!

B. Learn to Discern Character.

It's one thing to value character, quite another to learn to spot it. How will you find out if a person has the character you think is important? Here are some ideas.

1. **Notice how he treats his family and other acquaintances.** Remember girls,

if he is infatuated with you, he will be on his best behavior to keep from losing you. But when emotional love takes the back seat to managing a household and cleaning poop diapers, he will probably treat you like he treats his parents, brothers, sisters, and friends. His relationship with others may show more about his character than his relationship with you. And remember, you'll never see him relate to others if you single date all the time. Do lots of group activities together.

Does he forgive people when they wrong him? Does he resolve conflicts, or just run from difficult relationships? Is he genuinely concerned for the welfare of others? Is he considerate of the feelings of his family and friends?

2. Don't fall into the monotony of simply watching movies and watching t.v. on dates. All you will find out is what kind of movies he likes. Rather, plan some times with your family, or participating in group activities. Then you see him relate to others.

3. Notice who his close friends are. If their morals stink, don't be surprised if they reflect a side of him that you haven't seen.

For a good reality check for those currently "in love", take a sheet of paper, divide it down the middle, and list on one side the positive points of the guy or girl and on the other side the negative points. If you see no negative, you need to open your eyes a little wider!

C. Take a Look at Yourself.

Ok, so some of you guys have telescoped in on a girl who has the looks of a movie star, the patience of Job, and the benevolence of Mother Theresa. *But let's give the girl the telescope and have her point it at you. Are you the kind of guy that the girl you are looking for would want to marry if she met you?* (Say these last two sentences slowly and pause after the question for a moment for reflection.)

You see, perhaps even more important than choosing the right person is being the right person. Someone has said, "go into marriage with your eyes wide open. Go through marriage with your eyes half shut." In other words, once married you will find all kinds of character flaws in your partner. And some may get worse! So the most important thing you could do as a result of this lesson is to look over your list of character and begin developing that character in your own life. Then you will have the patience, forgiveness, and fortitude to take the heat that others are not willing to take in order to make a marriage last for the long haul.

And one of the most important aspects is that of commitment. Do you take marriage vows seriously? Think about it. "For better or for worse. For richer or for poorer. In sickness and in health. To death do us part." Not "till my needs are no longer met. Not "till she is no longer young and beautiful." Not "till the feeling of love dries up." To death. In closing, let me illustrate what I mean.

An intriguing verse in this regard: Matthew 19:3-10. Jesus tells the disciples that excepting immorality, you have no grounds for divorce. The disciple's response? Then "*it is better not to marry.*" "It is what?!", I first thought. "What brought them to that conclusion?" But the more I reflected, I think they got the point. If a few years after marriage your dream girl packs on the pounds and gets an attitude, you can't break loose citing "Psychological Abuse" or "Incompatible Differences." You're stuck. You work out your problems and learn to get along. Period. For better or for worse, you are no longer two, but one. Marriage is serious.

ILLUSTRATION: Many people divorce because "my mate no longer meets my needs." In stark contrast to this attitude, Robertson McQuilkin gave up the presidency of Columbia International University to better serve his wife. Because of the ravages of Alzheimer's Disease, she can no longer provide the understanding, communication, and services that once defined their relationship. She can't even speak in sentences, much less cook a meal or share a good book or movie.

But Dr. McQuilkin doesn't consider his devotion unusually heroic. "It was a matter of integrity," he writes. "Had I not promised, 42 years before, 'in sickness and in health...till death do us part'?" So this brilliant Christian leader left a fulfilling, prominent career to feed, bathe and hold the hand of Muriel, who could no longer care for herself. That's what I mean by commitment in marriage. ("Living By Vows," Robertson McQuilkin)

CONCLUSION

A great marriage requires both commitment and character. This week, take your list and look for weak spots in your own character. Star one or two that you want to begin praying about and developing. Godly character is the best gift you could ever give your future mate.

Prayer.

Homework: Ask your parents and married relatives what character traits they think are most important for a successful marriage. Bring us back some ideas! (Youth leader, it may be a good idea to call some of the youth during the week to remind them to do this. Assignments like this are good in that they help youth learn to have meaningful conversation with and gain wise counsel from their parents.)

SHARPENING YOUR AX VARYING YOUR RATE

Try using variety in your rate of delivery, especially to emphasize certain strategic points. Teachers who drone on and on at the same rate and pitch induce more sleep than learning. But sometimes we click along at our fastest rate in order to get in all the material, unaware that our audience shifted their minds into neutral shortly after our introduction. We should have taken a hint when the guy on the back row fell sound asleep and collapsed onto the floor.

Haddon Robinson notes that "pauses are the punctuation marks of speech." (*Biblical Preaching*, p. 206) They give an audience time to reflect, feel your emotion, mentally respond, transition to a new point.

A well-timed pause can underline a point as powerfully as a shout. I point out a good place for one under point "C". For some time before this sentence, we have emphasized looking for character in another person. It will take a few moments for your students to make the mental transition to reflect on their own character. If you make no change in rate or voice, they may miss it completely.

Practice the sentence at different rates. Try a pause both before and after. Try saying the first part of the sentence at your regular rate and slowing down for the final part.

Remember, a pause seldom seems as long to the audience as it does to the speaker. But too long a pause can seem artificial. And resist filling in a pause with words like "and", "uh", "you know". Youth who appear to be taking notes are actually recording the number of times you use meaningless fillers. To get rid of these words, practice out loud with a tape recorder.

Try using slight pauses when you have completed a thought. Try saying your main points a little more slowly for emphasis.

By regularly recording your messages you can determine if varying between rapid, slow, and a well-timed dramatic pause or two would add interest to your presentation.

Some effective communicators speak slowly. Others speak rapidly. But both tend to use variety. Rule of thumb: "Proper rate is varied and rapid enough to show vitality and slow enough to assure distinct articulation." (Brown, Clinard, Northcutt, *Steps to the Sermon*)

As always, get input from others. Tell a couple of people to listen to your rate, to see if they think more variety would help. When you do change it, does it seem unnatural or bothersome to them? If so, why?

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART 2) DATING SERIES, PART IX

INTRODUCTION

Last week we began to talk about searching for the perfect mate. What did we say was more important than physical beauty? That's right, character.

Last week, I assigned you to ask your parents and other married relatives about which characteristics they felt were most important for a good marriage. Can some of you tell us what they said?

Today we'll move past character to look at other principles for finding that special life mate.

PRAY

II. FIND A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” “...and they will become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:18-25)

According to God's Word, one of the purposes of marriage is completeness. Marriage should provide wholeness, oneness, and fellowship. Perhaps the following questions can help a couple determine whether or not they will complete one another.

A. Are Your Personalities and Needs Compatible? If both of you love social functions, but one is outgoing and the other shy, your needs are complimentary. But if you hate social functions and your guy lives for them, your conflicting needs may lead to marital conflict.

If Mr. disciplined marries Miss compulsive, expect some conflicts. But under God's leadership, both may learn a new side of life.

B. Do You Have Some Common Interests? If you thrive on adventure (mountain climbing, taking risks in business, eager to travel and move to other lands as a missionary) think twice before dating someone whose idea of "living on the edge" is eating spaghetti without a napkin.

C. Do You Have Similar Financial Goals and Expectations?

If your idea of splurging is to order cheese Krystals instead of regular, beware of a girl who expects Red Lobster every Friday.

D. Do You Agree on the Basic Roles of a Husband and Wife?

Is the husband the head of the home? In what way? Is it okay for the wife to work while your children are small?

E. How Does the Relationship Feel? Are you comfortable around the person, like best friends? Does the relationship just seem right?

II. CONSIDER YOUR FEELINGS

“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

In some cultures, especially where marriages are arranged by parents, feelings may have no part in mate selection. There, a person commits himself to grow to love his wife. It's a choice, not a feeling. But in most Western cultures, the feeling of love is a big part of the mate selection process. Often it is overrated, eclipsing all spiritual and rational factors.

ILLUSTRATION: I know one man, a missionary, who "just knew" who he was supposed to marry several times. They problem was, none of the girls felt the same way! His feelings had deceived him. For many, "But we're in love!" answers with finality any objection to the relationship. But remember, one survey found the average person falling in love three to five times before marriage.

Yet, God often works through our feelings and desires, and we would be unwise to ignore them.

A. Are You Romantically Attracted ("In Love") to Him/Her?

B. Are You Physically Attracted? (The perception of beauty was noted in Gen 12:11; 24:15,16; 29:17.)

IV. BEFORE YOU BITE THE BULLET...

A. Get Wise Counsel (Prov. 12:15)

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.” (Prov. 12:15)

If you resist getting the opinion of others, could it be that you already know that others may disapprove of the relationship? Who are some key people you could get advice from?

1. **Family.** *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”* (Eph. 6:1) Even if your parents are not Christians, they know some aspects of you better than anyone else. Since the Bible tells us to obey and honor our parents, we should take seriously any input they have concerning our love lives.

2. **Friends.** If you and the person you date have mutual friends, these people may see an angle on the relationship that you can't see. Are your friends warning you about the relationship? Beware!

3. **Respected Christians.** Pastors often counsel troubled marriages. Their advice can be invaluable.

4. **Good Books.** Why not read what some experts on courtship and marriage say about the subject?

B. Make Sure of Your Timing.

Ask the youth. What are some examples of bad timing that would make marriage difficult?

1. **Too Early.** Seventy two percent of American women who marry between 14 and 17 get divorced.

2. **In the Middle of Rigorous Schooling.** One friend, upon application to a medical school, was asked if he was married. After responding "no", the interviewer said, "That's good, because married couples often have problems here." The problem was that the majority divorced before leaving the medical school. In a program that required 100% commitment, nothing was left for a marriage.

C. Check Your Motives.

The right motive is that you have discerned that God wants you to marry this person. What are some wrong motives people might use to get married? Make sure that other wrong motives are not clouding your decision, such as yielding to social pressure (you're not married yet!), escaping an unhappy home life, a fear of being left alone, a compulsion to rescue an unfortunate single person, being on the rebound from an emotional breakup, all your friends are getting married.

D. Pray Diligently

“Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.” (Prov. 19:14)

Only God knows whether that angel you want to marry will transform into a witch within 10 years.

***ILLUSTRATION:** Take the case of Dale. As a Senior in high school, Dale was voted most dependable, most intellectual, and most likely to succeed. Quite an accomplishment. He also played on the basketball and track teams. Girls, does he seem like the type guy you would like to marry? But who could have known that after high school he would experiment with drugs and damage his brain. From then on, he seemed confused and couldn't farm his family's land. When Dale's name made the headlines, it wasn't to note the great achievement his high school friends had predicted. Rather, he had shot 6 people, killing the police officer who had come to take him to a mental institution. And just think, girls, he could have been your husband.*

This is why we need a Shepherd who knows the future. God cares for you (I Pet. 5:7) and wants the best for you (Mat. 7:25-34). Pray for His wisdom and He will lead (James 1:5). As we trust Him, we need not panic or marry out of desperation. God loves us. As we trust Him, He will direct our paths (Prov. 3:5,6)

CONCLUSION

God has a good plan for our love lives. He is love and came up with the idea of marriage. We have seen over and over how His principles of sexual purity, character, and wisdom can lead to a better marriage. Could you close your eyes and tell God you want to trust Him with your love life?

Some of you may have seen through this series that God's ways are best. But you aren't benefiting from His leadership because you are living outside His will. Would you consider putting your life in His hands tonight? (Present the gospel and give an opportunity to pray.)

TRANSITIONAL STATEMENTS

How many times have you gotten hopelessly lost trying to follow the train of thought in a sermon? Often, the problem is not in the outline, but in the transitions from one point to the next. A good transitional statement will smoothly move you from one point to the next, tying them together.

My message notes usually consist of an outline with words and phrases that remind me of illustrations and points. But I often write out my transitional statements in their entirety and underline them. It's not that I will look down and read the statement when I speak. But I find that writing it out helps me to cement this important statement in my mind.

There are many ways to do transitional statements. The method I use here makes use of the effective teaching principle, "Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. And then tell them what you told them."

Avoid such transitions as, "Now for my next point," which successfully divides your outline, but distracts from your continuity. I underlined a couple of transitional statements in this lesson. Could others be included?

DATING, WAITING AND CHOOSING A MATE

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU...
IS DATING THE ONLY WAY?
(DATING SERIES, PART I)**

INTRODUCTION: *"The Dating Game" Skit*
"The Romantic Fantasy"

I. THE DATING _____ AND HOW PEOPLE PLAY IT.

A. FINDING A _____ OLD TESTAMENT STYLE.

"_____ Bites the Dust." (Genesis 24)

"_____ Bites the Dust." (Genesis 27:46-29:30)

B. _____, AMERICAN STYLE.

List the basics: _____

C. LET YOUR _____ DECIDE.

List the basics: _____

D. _____ FIRST, DATES LATER

List the basics: _____

BRAINSTORM!! *You are adults starting a new society. Which system will you adopt for your society and children, and why? List the pros and cons of each system.*

II. DOWN WITH _____

Survey finds _____ people preferring a creative date over a romantic date.

Ideas for creative dates:

CONCLUSION

"Breaking Out of the Mold." (Romans 12:2)

DATING, WAITING, AND CHOOSING A MATE
SESSION II
ENDURING ENJOYING SINGLENESS

REVIEW: DANGERS IN AMERICA'S DATING SYSTEM

I. THE _____ OF SINGLENESS. THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS. THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS

IS MARRIAGE GOOD? (Proverbs 18:22; Genesis 2:18)

IS SINGLENESS GOOD? (Matthew 19:10-12, I Corinthians 7)

BRAINSTORM: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS?

- **LESS _____ AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **ENHANCED _____ OPPORTUNITIES**
- **EXTENSIVE PERSONAL _____**

“STEVE AND THE BABES AT UGA”

- **TIME FOR _____ AND BEGINNING _____ (OR PAYING OFF SCHOOL DEBTS!)**

2. THE KEY TO HAPPINESS: _____ (PHIL. 4:11)

BY CONTENTLY TRUSTING GOD, WE LEARN TO:

- **AVOID DESPERATE _____**
- **HAVE REALISTIC _____ OF MARRIAGE**
- **AVOID _____ (I PETER 5:7)**
- **KEEP OUR _____ ON JESUS**

ACTION POINTS

**SEX, LIES AND THE TRUTH
(DATING SERIES, PART III)**

INTRODUCTION:

“A College Student Shares a Tragic Story”

I. SEX IS _____!(Gen. 1:28-31)

II. SEX IS FOR _____ . (I Cor. 6:9,10; Heb. 13:4)

III. WHY SAY ____ TO PREMARITAL SEX

A. Because Sex Makes _____

Condoms are not _____ effective.

The pill doesn't _____ against Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)

B. Because Multiple _____ Risk STD's

Scripture Search! Record the consequences of extra marital sex:

Proverbs 5:3-11; 6:26-35; 7:21-27.

There are now over _____ types of STD's.

In 1994, as many as _____ people in the U.S. had AIDS. About 1 in _____ cases were not contracted by homosexual contact.

ACTION POINTS:

**SEX, LIES AND THE TRUTH
(DATING SERIES, PART IV)**

Why don't we hear about all these consequences?

- *The _____ Doesn't Tell Us the Whole Story*
- *Our _____ Don't Tell Us the Whole Story*
- *Young Minds _____ Believing Tragic Truths*

Why say no to premarital sex? (Continued from last week)

- A. *Because Premarital Sex Strains _____*
- B. *Because Premarital Sex Can Harm Your _____ as a Couple
(Rom. 14:19)*
- C. *Because Premarital Sex Can _____ Your Future Marriage*
- D. *Because Premarital Sex Can _____ You From God. (Heb. 13:4,
Gen. 39:9)*
- E.

ACTION POINTS:

**SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(DATING SERIES, PART V)**

I. REMEMBER THE _____ (PROV. 7:21-23; CR. 5:3-11;6:26-35)

II. REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT _____ (I KINGS 19:10,14-18)

III. FACE THE _____ (MT. 10:16; HEB. 4:12)

Guess the survey!

Guys reveal why they have sex.

#1 - _____

#2 - _____

#3 - _____

#4 - _____

Only one in _____ guys gave love as their motive.

ACTION POINTS:

**SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(PART II)
DATING SERIES, PART VI**

INTRODUCTION: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”(I Cor. 10:12)

REVIEW: THREE PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU STAND

I. SET YOUR _____

Reasons For Setting _____ Standards:

_____ *of Standards Others Have Set:*

_____ *for Setting Your Own Standards:*

Here is the standard I am setting:

II. TAKE SOME WISE _____

A. Set Your Standards _____ You Are Swept Away in the Emotion of the Moment.

B. Beware of the Law of _____.

C. If You Are Dating, _____ Your Dates

D. Date Only a Person Who Has a Good _____ (Prov. 5:1-14; 6:23-35; 7:4-27)

In a Kent State study, over half (57%) of the women who had been raped had been raped by their _____.

E. Do Whatever it Takes to Remain _____ (II Tim. 2:22)

F. Decide What _____ You Will Not Go. (Rom. 13:14)

G. Girls, Especially, Watch How You _____.

H. Hang Around People Who Share Your _____.(Prov. 13:20)

I. Guard Your _____ . (Phil. 4:8; cr. II Cor. 10:5; Mt. 5:28; I Thes. 4:3-7)

J. Pursue _____ . (II Tim. 2:22; cr. Gal. 5:16; Ps. 119:9)

ACTION POINTS:

**SETTING (AND KEEPING) YOUR STANDARDS
(PART III)
DATING SERIES, PART VII**

REVIEW: “How practically can I keep myself from falling?”

I. LEARN HOW TO SAY _____

“What kids wanted most out of a sex education program: How to say “no” _____”

Three types of situations:

A. A Group of Peers Laughing at Your _____

“A Gutsy Girl”
“Stryper on Sex”

B. A Person You are _____

The challenge: “But everyone is doing it.”

The response: “Then you should have an easy time...”

“If you really loved me, you wouldn’t risk...”

The challenge: “But I can’t help myself”

The response: “Then I’d assume you wouldn’t be able to control yourself around...”

“Quick, open your door and sprint around the car...”

The challenge: “But we’re planning on getting married anyway.”

The response: “So why _____ our future marriage?”

The challenge: “We need to see if we are sexually compatible.”

The response: “_____ of those who try each other out by living together before marriage end up breaking up.”

CONCLUSION

“Jim tells his story.”

The good news is...

1. Sex is _____ when practiced within marriage.
2. God is a God of _____ starts.
3. God’s ways are _____.

**IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART I)
(DATING SERIES, PART VIII)**

INTRODUCTION

“The Mystery Bag”

I. LOOK FOR _____

“Zsa Zsa Gabor reflects on marriage”

A. Write a _____ of Your Dream-mate.

1. Biblical Guidelines

1

a. A _____ (II Cor. 6:14)

“An Incredibly Wise Man Bites the Dust”

b. A _____ Christian (Prov. 31:30)

About 4 out of 10 marriages end in divorce.

For those who attend church regularly: one out of fifty.

For those who also pray in the home: one in 1,105!

c. A Person of _____ (Girls see I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:1-3. Guys see Prov. 31:10-31; Gen. 2:18. Both see Gal. 5:22,23; I Cor. 13)

2. Wise _____ on Character

Adaptability and Flexibility, Empathy, Works Through Problems, Gives and Receives Love, Emotional Stability, Communicates, Commitment.

B. LEARN TO _____ CHARACTER.

1. Notice how he treats his _____ and other acquaintances.

2. Don't fall into the monotony of simply watching

_____.

3. Notice who his close _____ are.

A. TAKE A LOOK AT _____.

“From University President to Caretaker”

**IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART 2)
(DATING SERIES, PART IX)**

- I. FIND A HEALTHY _____ (GEN. 2:18-25)**
- A. Are Your _____ and _____ Compatible?**
 - B. Do You Have Some Common _____?**
 - C. Do You Have Similar _____ Goals and Expectations?**
 - D. Do You Agree on the Basic _____ of a Husband and Wife?**
 - E. How Does the Relationship _____?**

- I. CONSIDER YOUR _____ (PS. 37:4)**

“A Missionary Who ‘Just Knew’, Several Times!”

- A. Are You _____ Attracted?**
- B. Are You _____ Attracted?**

- I. BEFORE YOU _____**

- A. Get Wise _____ (Prov. 12:15)**

Family, Friends, Respected Christians, Good Books.

- B. Make Sure of Your _____.**

Too early? In the middle of rigorous schooling?

- C. Check Your _____.**

- D. _____ Diligently. (Prov. 19:14)**

“Would you girls like to snag Dale?”

ACTION POINTS

**THE SECRETS OF ATTRACTING AND KEEPING
YOUR DREAM MATE
(DATING SERIES, PART X)**

INTRODUCTION

“A Dating Disaster”

GOOD FRIENDS...

I. ...PUT THE OTHER PERSON _____.

- *Ask questions about their _____.*
- *Talk about things they are _____ in.*
- *Be _____.*
- *Never _____ or _____ your date, even in jest.*

II. ...WATCH THEIR _____ (AND SMELL!).

III. ...BRING OUT THE _____ IN THOSE AROUND THEM.

A. Be An _____ (Heb. 10:24,25)

B. Involve Her in Your _____ Activities. (Mt. 22:37)

“What if You Were Dating a Movie Star?”

IV. ...ARE GOOD _____

- *Don't talk too much.*
- *Comment on what the other person is saying.*
- *Listen behind the words for feelings.*
- *Repeat back some thoughts in your own words.*

II. WARNING: DATE _____!

- *Don't _____ (Phil. 4:6,7)*
“A Youth Solves the Worry Syndrome”
- *Don't be _____ and paranoid.*
- *Don't be _____.*
- *Don't _____ (Prov. 25:17)*
- *Don't get too _____, too soon.*

ACTION POINTS*Overhead***DATING, WAITING AND CHOOSING A MATE****GETTING TO KNOW YOU...
IS DATING THE ONLY WAY?
(DATING SERIES, PART I)**

*INTRODUCTION: "The Dating Game" Skit
"The Romantic Fantasy"*

I. THE DATING GAME AND HOW PEOPLE PLAY IT.**A. FINDING A MATE OLD TESTAMENT STYLE.**

"Isaac Bites the Dust." (Genesis 24)

"Jacob Bites the Dust." (Genesis 27:46-29:30)

B. LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE.

List the basics:

C. LET YOUR PARENTS DECIDE.

List the basics:

D. GROUPS FIRST, DATES LATER

List the basics:

BRAINSTORM!! You are adults starting a new society. Which system will you adopt for your society and children, and why? List the pros and cons of each system.

II. DOWN WITH BORING DATES!

*Survey finds most people preferring a creative date over a romantic date.
Ideas for creative dates:*

CONCLUSION

"Breaking Out of the Mold." (Romans 12:2)

ACTION POINTS:

DATING, WAITING, AND CHOOSING A MATE
SESSION II
ENDURING ENJOYING SINGLENESS

REVIEW: DANGERS IN AMERICA'S DATING SYSTEM

I. THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS. *THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS. THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS*

IS MARRIAGE GOOD? (Proverbs 18:22; Genesis 2:18)

IS SINGLENESS GOOD? (Matthew 19:10-12, I Corinthians 7)

BRAINSTORM: *WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SINGLENESS?*

- **LESS WORRIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **ENHANCED MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES**
- **EXTENSIVE PERSONAL FREEDOM**

“STEVE AND THE BABES AT UGA”

- **TIME FOR EDUCATION AND BEGINNING SAVINGS (OR PAYING OFF SCHOOL DEBTS!)**
- 2. THE KEY TO HAPPINESS: CONTENTMENT (PHIL. 4:11)**

BY CONTENTLY TRUSTING GOD, WE LEARN TO:

- **AVOID DESPERATE DECISIONS**
- **HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF MARRIAGE**
- **AVOID WORRY (I PETER 5:7)**
- **KEEP OUR FOCUS ON JESUS**

ACTION POINTS

**SEX, LIES AND THE TRUTH
(DATING SERIES, PART III)**

INTRODUCTION:

“A College Student Shares a Tragic Story”

I. SEX IS GREAT!(Gen. 1:28-31)

II. SEX IS FOR MARRIAGE. (I Cor. 6:9,10; Heb. 13:4)

III. WHY SAY NO TO PREMARITAL SEX

A. Because Sex Makes Babies

Condoms are not 100% effective.

The pill doesn't protect against Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)

B. Because Multiple Partners Risk ST.D's

Scripture Search! Record the consequences of extra marital sex:

Proverbs 5:3-11; 6:26-35; 7:21-27.

There are now over 25 types of STD's.

In 1994, as many as 1,000,000 people in the U.S. had AIDS. About 1 in 10 cases were not contracted by homosexual contact.

ACTION POINTS:

***SEX, LIES AND THE TRUTH
(DATING SERIES, PART IV)***

Why don't we hear about all these consequences?

- *The Media Doesn't Tell Us the Whole Story*
- *Our Schoolmates Don't Tell Us the Whole Story*
- *Young Minds Resist Believing Tragic Truths*

Why say no to premarital sex (continued from last week)...

- A. *Because Premarital Sex Strains Emotions*
- B. *Because Premarital Sex Can Harm Your Relationship as a Couple (Rom. 14:19)*
- C. *Because Premarital Sex Can Endanger Your Future Marriage*
- D. *Because Premarital Sex Can Distance You From God. (Heb. 13:4, Gen. 39:9)*

ACTION POINTS:

**SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(DATING SERIES, PART V)**

I. REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES (PROV. 7:21-23; CR. 5:3-11;6:26-35)

II. REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT ALONE (I KINGS 19:10,14-18)

III. FACE THE MOTIVES (MT. 10:16; HEB. 4:12)

Guess the survey!

Guys reveal why they have sex.

#1 - _____

#2 - _____

#3 - _____

#4 - _____

Only one in twenty guys gave love as their motive.

ACTION POINTS:

**SETTING (AND KEEPING!) YOUR STANDARDS
(PART II)
DATING SERIES, PART VI**

INTRODUCTION: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”(I Cor. 10:12)

REVIEW: THREE PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU STAND

I. SET YOUR STANDARD

Reasons For Setting High Standards:

Examples of Standards Others Have Set:

Ideas for Setting Your Own Standards:

Here is the standard I am setting:

II. TAKE SOME WISE ADVISE

A. Set Your Standards Before You Are Swept Away in the Emotion of the Moment.

B. Beware of the Law of Diminishing Returns.

C. If You Are Dating, Plan Your Dates

D. Date Only a Person Who Has a Good Reputation (Prov. 5:1-14; 6:23-35; 7:4-27)

In a Kent State study, over half (57%) of the women who had been raped had been raped by their dates.

E. Do Whatever it Takes to Remain Pure. (II Tim. 2:22)

F. Decide What Places You Will Not Go. (Rom. 13:14)

G. Girls, Especially, Watch How You Dress.

H. Hang Around People Who Share Your Standards.(Prov. 13:20)

I. Guard Your Mind. (Phil. 4:8; cr. II Cor. 10:5; Mt. 5:28; I Thes. 4:3-7)

J. Pursue God. (II Tim. 2:22; cr. Gal. 5:16; Ps. 119:9)

**SETTING (AND KEEPING) YOUR STANDARDS
(PART III)
DATING SERIES, PART VII**

REVIEW: “How practically can I keep myself from falling?”

I. LEARN HOW TO SAY NO

“What kids wanted most out of a sex education program: How to say “no” to sexual involvement.”

Three types of situations:

A. A Group of Peers Laughing at Your Virginity

“A Gutsy Girl”
“Stryper on Sex”

B. A Person You are Dating

The challenge: “But everyone is doing it.”
The response: “Then you should have an easy time...”
“If you really loved me, you wouldn’t risk...”

The challenge: “But I can’t help myself”
The response: “Then I’d assume you wouldn’t be able to control yourself around...”
“Quick, open your door and sprint around the car...”

The challenge: “But we’re planning on getting married anyway.”
The response: “So why harm our future marriage?”

The challenge: “We need to see if we are sexually compatible.”
The response: “75% of those who try each other out by living together before marriage end up breaking up.”

CONCLUSION

“Jim tells his story.”

The good news is...

1. Sex is great when practiced within marriage.

2. *God is a God of new starts.*
3. *God's ways are best.*

**IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART I)
(DATING SERIES, PART VIII)**

INTRODUCTION

“The Mystery Bag”

I. LOOK FOR CHARACTER

“Zsa Zsa Gabor reflects on marriage”

A. Write a Profile of Your Dream-mate.

1. *Biblical Guidelines*

1

a. A Christian (II Cor. 6:14)

“An Incredibly Wise Man Bites the Dust”

b. A Committed Christian (Prov. 31:30)

About 4 out of 10 marriages end in divorce.

For those who attend church regularly: one out of fifty.

For those who also pray in the home: one in 1,105!

c. A Person of Character (Girls see I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:1-3. Guys see Prov. 31:10-31; Gen. 2:18. Both see Gal. 5:22,23; I Cor. 13)

2. Wise Counsel on Character

Adaptability and Flexibility, Empathy, Works Through Problems, Gives and Receives Love, Emotional Stability, Communicates, Commitment.

B. LEARN TO DISCERN CHARACTER.

1. *Notice how he treats his family and other acquaintances.*
2. *Don't fall into the monotony of simply watching movies and TV.*
3. *Notice who his close friends are.*

A. **TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF.**

“From University President to Caretaker”

**IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT MATE (PART 2)
(DATING SERIES, PART IX)**

I. **FIND A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP (GEN. 2:18-25)**

A. *Are Your Personalities and Needs Compatible?*

B. *Do You Have Some Common Interests?*

C. *Do You Have Similar Financial Goals and Expectations?*

D. *Do You Agree on the Basic Roles of a Husband and Wife?*

E. *How Does the Relationship Feel?*

I. **CONSIDER YOUR FEELINGS. (PS. 37:4)**

“A Missionary Who ‘Just Knew’, Several Times!”

A. *Are You Romantically Attracted?*

B. *Are You Physically Attracted?*

I. **BEFORE YOU BITE THE BULLET...**

A. *Get Wise Counsel (Prov. 12:15)*

Family, Friends, Respected Christians, Good Books.

B. *Make Sure of Your Timing.*

Too early? In the middle of rigorous schooling?

C. *Check Your Motives.*

D. *Pray Diligently. (Prov. 19:14)*

“Would you girls like to snag Dale?”

ACTION POINTS

**THE SECRETS OF ATTRACTING AND KEEPING
YOUR DREAM MATE
(DATING SERIES, PART X)**

INTRODUCTION

“A Dating Disaster”

GOOD FRIENDS...

I. ...PUT THE OTHER PERSON FIRST.

- *Ask questions about their interests.*
- *Talk about things they are interested in.*
- *Be polite.*
- *Never cut down or demean your date, even in jest.*

II. ...WATCH THEIR APPEARANCE (AND SMELL!).

III. ...BRING OUT THE BEST IN THOSE AROUND THEM.

A. *Be An Encourager (Heb. 10:24,25)*

A. *Involve Her in Your Spiritual Activities. (Mt. 22:37)*

“What if You Were Dating a Movie Star?”

II. ...ARE GOOD LISTENERS

- *Don't talk too much.*
- *Comment on what the other person is saying.*
- *Listen behind the words for feelings.*
- *Repeat back some thoughts in their own words.*

II. WARNING: DATE BUSTERS!

- *Don't worry. (Phil. 4:6,7)*
“A Youth Solves the Worry Syndrome”
- *Don't be clingy and paranoid.*
- *Don't be controlling.*

- *Don't smother. (Prov. 25:17)*
- *Don't get too close, too soon.*