

DATING, MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY

by Richard Horne

**Grades 9-12
Year 1
Quarter 3**

TEENS AND THEIR PARENTS

Lesson Aim

To help teens understand the intellectual changes that have occurred since puberty and how these changes will affect their obligation to honor their parents.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 4:17 - “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”

Lesson Background

Social science and biblical teaching indicate that young adults think differently than do children. This thinking sometimes brings them into conflict with older adults to whom they are accountable. Specifically, this thinking change includes the ability to reason and think in the ideal and abstract. Teens are able to picture what an ideal parent, school, church, teacher, etc., is or should be like.

For example, a guy is able to idealize what the perfect girlfriend is like. Soon, however, in his interactions with the one he thought to be this ideal, he discovers she has feet of clay. He may then lose interest and look for another who is not so human. Over the course of years, through these kinds of experiences, a young person is brought along the path of maturity with realistic views of people and relationships and how to adapt to them. In the beginning, however, there may be considerable internal conflict that may find expression in words and actions toward others with differing, less than ideal, opinions - such as parents, teachers, youth leaders, etc. This lesson is to help you help these young people recognize

the legitimacy of differing opinions in non-moral areas and the continuing need to honor those, especially parents, with whom they do differ.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by sketching for the students the differences that occur before and after puberty in the area of thinking. You may wish to use the illustration above. Young children are more literal and less able to think abstractly, but, from puberty especially, this higher level of thought is more and more possible. Have students suggest areas in which these changes of thinking may cause them to come into conflict with parents or others who are authorities in their lives. Such areas may include things like independence in activities with friends, independence with money, fairness of discipline, freedom to choose friends or kinds of friends, time when the student should be home at night, what parents, church, or school should be like, fair and reasonable homework assignments, work responsibilities at home, nature of youth group activities, what the ideal boyfriend or girlfriend should be like, what clothes to buy and wear, or the use of leisure time (the Internet, social media, TV, books, music, movies, etc.).

Appoint a recorder or someone to write on a chalk board the group's suggestions for two examples in each of the above areas where young people's opinions and parents' opinions may differ. All of the opinions should be morally right, but ones where differences exist in matters of judgment. For example, a young person may think his maturity entitles him to have the privilege of being out until twelve o'clock Friday night, while his parents may think eleven o'clock is the legitimate limit for someone his age.

Have your students read Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-3 and lead the group in talking about the following. Tell them to assume that their parents are unreasonable in every one of the areas listed above. What are some of the things that will be true of a young person's response to his or her parents (assuming that he or she does wish to have a response that is pleasing to the Lord and not one that will result in his own harm due to the Lord's displeasure), even though he or she disagrees with them? List specific qualities on the board that would be able to be seen or heard by parents that communicate this "honoring" through differing responses.

Have your students write, privately at first, a response that they think is respectful to one of the above areas in which they have differed with their parents. Then allow those who are willing to do so to share their ideas with the class, and discuss whether or not these responses fit the biblical requirement of honor and respect.

Next, present the students with the following scenario: Suppose your friend's parents are totally and truly unreasonable. They will not even talk about issues once they have given a decision on a matter of opinion that does not involve a moral issue like sexual suggestiveness or truthfulness. What counsel would you give your friend that keeps the Fifth Commandment in mind? For example, your friend's parents will not let him go to any overnight events your school or church group is having, regardless of the number and quality of chaperons present. He is a junior or senior in high school and has just become a Christian. He has come to you for advice because the class trip is coming up. This trip is always a highlight for the group. Everyone truly looks forward to it and it has a positive reputation of being both socially and spiritually encouraging. Your friend knows, even before he asks, that the answer will be "No!", but he wants your advice. What advice can you give? What can your friend do or say and still be respectful? Let your students think about this and talk about it for a few minutes. Remind them that they are the counselors. They have to say something; their friend is looking for help.

The object of the next exercise is to get the young people to take the place of their parents. Tell each student to pretend that he or she is the parent of a young person of his or her own age and sex. Remind them that when parents put restrictions on their teens, they usually have reasons that they think are good ones. Have them go over the parent rules they said were matters of opinion earlier, and list possible reasons why they as parents might want such rules for their son or daughter.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by turning again to Ephesians 6:1-3. According to these verses, do your parents have to be respectable to deserve your respect? Read Luke 2:41-51 for further insight into this matter. How does the example of Jesus help us to answer this question? What do these passages indicate is the most basic reason why children should honor their parents? Will this reason ever disappear? What about after they die? Ask your students to list three actions, expressions of speech, or attitudes they can exhibit today to communicate an honoring disposition toward their parents.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

TEENS AND THEIR PARENTS

Since puberty you have been thinking in a way that differs from your childhood mental abilities. This will naturally bring you into some encounters with others that put you and them at odds on many issues, some more serious than others. While your thinking capabilities have changed, your responsibility to honor your parents and those over you in rightful authority has not.

1. In each area below, teens and parents often develop different ideas about what is acceptable. List two examples of how you and your parents may differ in each of the areas below:

Independence in activities with friends

Independence with money

Fairness of discipline

Freedom to choose friends

Right to be out until ___ o'clock at night

What your parents should be like

What your church should be like

What your school should be like

Fair and reasonable homework assignments

Work responsibilities at home

Youth group activities

What an ideal girlfriend or boyfriend is like

What clothes to choose

Use of leisure time

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2. Beside each of the areas in exercise #1, list a reason or two that you (assuming the place of a parent with a teen of your age and sex) would have for holding opinions that your parents may hold that differ from yours.

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3. List three actions, expressions of speech, or attitudes that you can exhibit today to communicate an honoring and respectful disposition toward your parent(s), especially in areas where you and your parent(s) have had some tension or disagreements.

MARRIAGE - GOD'S CUE CARD FOR DATING

Lesson Aim

To help students understand that their dating practices and values influence and are influenced by their view of marriage.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 4:18 - "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."

Lesson Background

Dating is not mentioned in the Bible. This doesn't mean that there can be no place for it, but it does mean that relationships with the opposite sex in any dating relationship must be consistent with and not violate any of the principles the Scriptures give for relationships in general and for male and female relationships in particular.

While there may be several legitimate motives for dating (commonly given ones are: getting to know the other person, developing social skills, having a good time, etc.), the fact of the matter is that from the middle high school years, most young ladies have the matter of marriage on their minds in some conscious way when thinking about guys or a special guy. Most guys do not give the same attention to marriage in high school in their thinking and dating experiences. But in both cases, the more dominant motives for dating seem to be the fun of the relationship and the enjoyment of the romantic feelings that come with it.

These romantic feelings can be in or out of control for girls or guys. They can be wholesome or immoral and can complement a God-honoring relationship or lead a couple into moral compromise, sin and harm.

Marriage is the only form of romantic relationship that the Bible speaks about for young men and women. Any other relationship between men and women, young or old, in which romance plays a part, must keep the marriage relationship in view. What God says about it is to be true of marriage, not pre-marriage. In this sense, sound ideas about dating will be derived from the biblical ideas a young person has about marriage. Like an actor who takes cues from other actors or teleprompters, the fellows or girls who want their dating to be a healthy part of their lives will follow the cues of marriage to be sure their lines are right for the part of their lives they are living as young, single adults.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce the lesson by asking students to write when they think girls begin thinking about marriage and, then, when guys begin thinking about it. The thinking you are interested in focusing upon is of a more semi-serious type. When they date or think about the opposite sex, at about what grade do some scenes or thoughts about marriage readily come to mind? Responses vary, but generally girls tend to acknowledge that they **begin to** think this way somewhere in 9th - 11th grades. Guys think like this, usually, sometime later, in college or later years.

Ask them why they think this difference exists. Of course it's difficult to know exactly, but the question gets them thinking about the difference, and that's the point. Perhaps the difference is related to sex differences between guys and girls - a relational, nurturing orientation that women clearly possess in contrast to the more achievement, production orientation of most men. Then ask them the following questions: How could this difference be exploited or misunderstood by a guy and/or a girl? How could a guy take advantage of a girl knowing that her thoughts are probably more serious than his about marriage when they are both 16 or 17? How might this difference make a girl more vulnerable to guys' talk of "love"? How could this difference make a guy insensitive and set him up to hurt his girlfriend's feelings? How could it set a girl up to misread a guy's intentions and take him more seriously than he intends to be taken?

Because guys and girls are different, they will think differently about marriage. In each of the areas below, have the class imagine and "role play" some different **extreme opinions** that a girl or guy may have. Role play with one guy and one girl on an imaginary date when these **extreme opinions** may show up.

For example:

One girl has the "extreme opinion" that women in marriage should never express an opinion, but should always only carry out what their husbands want without expressing any doubts about it if they have some. In the role play you might have a guy trying to get his date to select something from a menu, but she refuses to make any choices. She insists that he make all the decisions.

The point of role playing these extremes is to demonstrate that the ideas we have about marriage roles and ideas do affect the way we relate to each other in dating, usually not in this extreme way, but to some degree. Therefore, it is wise for teens to be knowledgeable about marriage as God has designed it, not just as we have witnessed it in our own and our friends' families.

Other areas for “**extreme**” role plays:

Girls’ extreme ideas:

- “It’s my responsibility to make him happy.”
- “Men and women are both equally the leader in marriage.”
- “All men want is sex.”
- “Christian men are not tempted by sexiness.”

Guys’ extreme ideas:

- “Men aren’t emotional.”
- “It’s the girl’s responsibility to keep the limits on how far we go physically in our relationship.”
- “Men are God’s leaders and must make all the decisions.”
- “Women are just too emotional. Men are more objective.”

Close this lesson by having the class read Ephesians 5:33 and I Peter 3:7 and come up with a definition of “respect.” Both the husband and wife are commanded to respect each other in these passages.

What will that mean in a marriage? List 10 examples.

What will that mean in dating? List 10 examples.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the way we behave has very much to do with the way we think. The way we relate to one another before marriage has very much to do with our ideas about what is important after marriage. Dating takes its cue from your idea about marriage. The next few weeks we will be exploring some general parameters, or boundaries, that God has designed for marriage so that your ideas can be patterned after God’s. This will lead to true security in your relationships (Proverbs 1:33; Matthew 7:24-29)

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT MARRIAGE - GOD'S CUE CARD FOR DATING

Think about your parents' way of handling each of the following areas. Then think about your own way of handling the same kind of things. Are there similarities? differences? How do your patterns measure up with what you think God wants for a mature man or woman?

1. Decisions about spending money

2. Ways of arguing and concluding an argument or disagreement

3. How your parent(s) solve problems when there is conflict with another person

4. Their way of expressing affection to each other

5. How they handle criticism

6. How they handle hurt feelings

7. Their view of being honest and totally truthful

8. Their willingness to deny themselves for the sake of their spouse

Pray for your parents and for yourself. Regularly include this kind of self-evaluation as part of your devotions. Examine your own patterns and seek the wisdom of God to make them more like Christ's.

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE

Part I

Lesson Aim

To help the young people recognize the naturalness of the desire to have a relationship with the opposite sex and to see that this is God's idea and that the desire is different from a need.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:18 - "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"

Lesson Background

The parameters of the marriage relationship send cues to young people about dating. In this lesson we will look at one of them. Next week we'll look at several more and then the week after that the balance. The entire acrostic B.O.N.D.E.D.P.P.G. may be used to refer to the **BONDED** People Pleasing **God**.

In this lesson the key thoughts to be communicated are:

- That marriage is the basic unit for intimate relationship with another human being. All of us desire such a relationship. That is because of our being created in God's image, not because of sinfulness. Sin has taken its toll, to be sure, but the basic desire is a created one.
- One effect of sin is to distort this desire and longing for relationship into what we commonly call a "need." Many morally wrong and unwise actions have been taken to satisfy the feelings of longing

for relationship that are considered “needs.” We need to distinguish between desire and need to keep even the **basic** relationship in its proper perspective.

Lesson Procedure

B: Marriage is the **BASIC** unit for intimate human relationships.

Compare Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 2:18. The same God authored both. How can you explain the “good” and “not good” phrases? (Let the students kick ideas around for a few minutes. Ask them, “How do the two chapters seem to compare to one another?” Don’t be afraid to take time with this part of the lesson; these two chapters are basic to any discussion of marriage and dating and will be referred to frequently throughout the quarter.)

Answer: Chapter 1 is a summary of all creation including the creation of male and female (1:27). Chapter 2 is going back and zeroing in on the specific creation of the man and woman. 2:18, therefore, is occurring when the job is still incomplete and 1:31 is after the job is done.

According to Gen. 1:27, what is “Man?” The name “man” is applied to whom?

Answer: Male and female = MAN (compare 5:1-2). MAN is a generic term composed of male and female. It is as though the image of God in which man was created is wider than any one sex and that it takes a unit of male and female to reflect God’s image most fully. Clearly, there are sex differences by creation. Whether this hypothesis is accurate or not is not certain, but it is true that the unit, MAN, is a male-female unit.

Implications:

- What is the more basic, fundamental state therefore, singleness or marriage?

Answer: Marriage of a male and female is the more basic.

- Does this mean that singleness is a state of sinfulness?

Answer: No. Neither is singleness an inferior state. There are some situations when it is even preferable to the married state as, for example, the concern about persecution that Paul raises in I Corinthians 7:25-35. There he notes the “present crisis” (verse 26). This is the historical situation of persecution in which Christians found themselves. He says here that this set of circumstances gives legitimacy and greater desirability to singleness so that faithfulness to the Lord in these pressure situations may not be hindered.

- What does this imply about homosexual relationships?

Answer: The basic unit is male and female, not male and male or female and female. More of this will be covered later under the N (natural) parameter.

- The male-female unit at creation was not simply a live-together arrangement. It was created by God to be all that the marriage relationship was intended by Him to become. Genesis 2:24 uses the phrase “one flesh” to summarize their relationship. This phrase is used throughout the Bible to picture the marriage relationship.

- While the male-female relationship is basic to human relationships, is it a “needed” relationship? “Need” here is intended to mean something that is indispensable to living, something that one cannot live without.

Answer: There is no question that without a close relationship with others there would be a great sense of loss or lack in a person’s life. We were created to be in relationship with others. But “need” is the key word. Does God intend for anyone or anything to fill the “need” for a relationship that humans have other than Himself?

Relationships with others are nice, pleasant, fulfilling, satisfying, enjoyable, and even supportive of human life in its most basic ways (food, shelter, safety, etc.). But are they necessary for being all that God wants me to be? Psalm 27:4, Luke 10:42 and Philippians 3:13 stress “one thing” that is needed - a relationship with God through his Son. Romans 8 stresses the same. The love of Christ is a permanent, dependable factor for the Christian. “Who can separate us from the Love of Christ?” (Romans 8:35).

People have suffered as believers with Christ in prisons, lions’ dens, pits, fiery furnaces, and have had their lives snuffed out by other people in the most torturous ways. Have their “needs” been unmet? Not at all! “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37).

The point of all this is that while we desire relationships with others, we must never use that desire and longing as an excuse for upsetting God’s priorities for us. Our “need” is for Christ, first and last. It is to know Him and to have Him satisfied with our lives.

But if we follow the popular understanding of the world and look for people to meet our “needs,” we will be temporarily satisfied, at best, and ultimately disappointed. No other human being was intended by God to do what He alone can do. Other people can make our lives enjoyable and delightful, but if we look to them to meet our needs we will either be disappointed or treat them in ways to manipulate them till we feel our needs are being met. We will see more of this later when we come to the **D.A.T.E.** and **W.A.I.T.** lessons toward the second half of the quarter.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by having students identify six things teens think they “need” today. Ask them to suggest ways they have seen people change their lives in order to meet their “needs.” These behaviors can be good ones or bad ones. The point is they are trying to meet a longing they have for relationships somehow.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE - Part I

This week be alert to the word “need.” What are some of the “needs” that people seem to build their lives around trying to satisfy? In your TV viewing, in the music you listen to, and in what you observe in school and with your friends, look for clues about what people seem to think they need. Write down all the “needs” you observe, where you observed them, and whether you believe these “needs” to be real or imagined.

“NEED”

WHERE OBSERVED

REAL OR IMAGINED?

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE

Part II

Lesson Aim

To help teens see that marriage is God's idea for satisfying the natural longings for a relationship that we all have, and to understand the reasons why other "alternatives" aren't simply different, but are a "perversion" (Romans 1:27).

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:24 - "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh."

Lesson Background

Prepare for this lesson by a careful study of the passages in the New Testament in which Genesis 2:24 is quoted (Matthew 19:4-6, I Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 5:31). Note the contexts in which this "blueprint" for marriage is cited. The point of these texts is to show the comprehensiveness of the principles of Genesis 2:24 for sexuality, marriage, and divorce.

In addition, study Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 and Romans 1:26-27. These key texts address the issue of homosexuality. In our age in which this sad distortion of God's sexual intent for man is so popular, our young people must frankly discuss it and see it from God's perspective.

Lesson Procedure

Last week we explored marriage as the most **BASIC** relationship for a man and woman to experience human intimacy. Review last week's lesson by asking your students the following questions:

- Do you need to be married to be fulfilled?

Answer: No.

- Why or why not?

Answer: Keep in mind the difference between “need” and desire that we stressed last week.

Did you pick up the “need” concept in people's thinking this past week? What are some examples you heard or saw?

1. Marriage is **ORDAINED** as the usual pattern for intimate relationships

“Ordained” means “decreed.” God has determined that your longing for a relationship with another person be most fully satisfied in the marriage relationship. He has created you and given you a personality that longs for the quality of a relationship that He intends to be satisfied uniquely in marriage. In Genesis 2:24, God brought Adam and Eve together and established their union as a pattern.

God's values are the norms or standards for the following aspects of marriage:

- a definition of marriage
- the significance of marriage
- the roles of the marriage partners
- the dynamics of the relationship (such as sex, communication, etc.)
- long-term and short-term goals and objectives for the relationship, service, accumulation of wealth, family planning, etc.

List each of the items in the preceding paragraph on the board. Ask students to suggest some of the ways a marriage in which the partners use non-biblical norms or standards for each of these areas might be different from a marriage where the partners seek to follow God's pattern.

God's Word speaks about every one of these areas, doesn't it? His word is practical. It has to do with everyday living in areas that affect us in the most personal way. His Word is not just “pie in the sky, by and by.” It does deal with the matters of eternity, but it also deals with the important matters of relationships now.

To reinforce this “practical” nature of the Word of God, have each student look up the “blueprint” passages cited above in the Lesson Background. Then have each teen, perhaps in groups of two or three, examine the contexts of each passage and report on what they discover.

Because God has ordained marriage, this should lead to a confident versus a “minefield” mentality. Some kids and adults avoid the idea of marriage or having a family because they think it is like walking through a minefield. They see the exploding relationships all around them, feel the shock waves and smell some of the smoke from many of their own families and conclude that it is risky business to get married or have a family.

Proverbs 1:33 says, “. . . whoever listens to me will live in safety.” “Safety” here is a word that means “confident” or “secure.” Wisdom is the speaker and affirms that her students live and make decisions with confidence. There is no insecurity for the one who trusts the wisdom of God for his life and relationships. What we see in our modern world is merely the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 7: 24-27. The house built on the sand collapsed with the storms of life. Storms will come to each teen and to each adult, but lives built on the wisdom and teachings of the Lord Jesus will stand through them all. [NOTE: This is an excellent place to turn your attention to unbelievers in your class. The collapses in families all around them, and maybe their own family, is all the security they have to look forward to if they turn their backs on the wisdom of God in His Word. In addition, your own enthusiasm about the security that the believer has with the wisdom of God can be a great strengthening agent for some of the weaker believers in your class. Some come from homes where their parents profess Christ but the shock waves are still felt. They need to be encouraged that while none of us will be perfect this side of heaven, yet God has ordained marriage for sinners to be a rich blessing in His people’s lives. When it’s not, it’s because we’ve abandoned or modified the wisdom of God and pursued some other “wisdom.” (Colossians 2:8,20-23).]

2. Marriage is the NATURAL relationship for intimacy

In Genesis 2:18, God said, “. . . I will make a suitable helper for him.” The word “suitable” means “corresponding to” or “counterpart to.” On its most elementary level this is referring to genital sexuality - physiology - but this does not exhaust its meaning. The point is that God did bring animals across Adam’s path. He had already been in the garden as a worker. But neither of these were adequate complements to his incomplete nature. He was created with a longing neither work nor “man’s best friend” could satisfy. So God created the suitable helper, a woman, for him.

What are the implications of all this for homosexuality? Have the class look up the following passages and list descriptive terms that show God’s feelings about homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13 (detestable, death penalty); Romans 1:26-27 (shameful, unnatural, indecent, perversion). These indicate that homosexuality is contrary to the **Instruction of God**.

We also see that it is contrary to the **Image of God** (Genesis 1:27; 5:2). God is plural, creating man as plural. Unity for God is with the three different persons of the Godhead: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . .” (Genesis 1:26). Man’s unity is to involve the coming together of diverse elements.

Genesis 2:18 and 24 also show us how it is contrary to the **Intention of God**. God displayed His intention by the pattern He began and commanded in verse 24.

None of this means that the homosexual person is beyond hope. He or she has chosen a lifestyle contrary to God’s will and will experience His displeasure, often in this life and, certainly, in the life to come. Have the students look up I Corinthians 6:9-11. Verse 11 indicates that some of the Corinthians were homosexuals before their conversion, but God healed them through the saving work of Christ.

There are no known “causes” of homosexuality. There are factors that make it easy for someone to **choose** to live in this way (such as a domineering mother or a betraying father), but they are his or her choices. Once the pattern becomes established, homosexuality, like any other habit, can be very difficult to change, but it can be changed. Often the assistance of a Christian counselor is necessary to help a guy or girl restructure his or her thinking and behavior patterns so that they begin to experience their sexuality as God intends. [NOTE: These words of hope need to be brought to your class, both because some of them may have some of these struggles and because they may know others who do. Homosexuality is not the rare thing it once was in our culture. With the disappearance of a Christian consensus of morality, this and many other harmful distortions of the beauty of sexuality abound. By talking about these things frankly, your kids will

get a sense that you may be approached on these delicate and sensitive matters. Seek the Lord's compassionate spirit as you approach these issues so that you are perceived as being as gentle as He was. You want to avoid being the judgmental scribe or the ridiculing Pharisee.]

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE

Part III

Lesson Aim

To help teens think about the marriage roles and consider some of the implications of these for their roles in dating and their expectations for their future partners.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 5:22,25 - “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

Lesson Background

This lesson leans heavily on your understanding of key passages of Scripture. Begin preparing early by using a recommended commentary to gain a thorough understanding of the texts. The bottom line of the lesson is that the teens should recognize the God-created differences in the husband and wife roles. In addition, they need to see that those differences are different, but not inferior or superior to one another as the world’s stereotypes depict them.

Lesson Procedure

Marriage is a **DESIGNED** relationship. God has designated different roles for the husband and wife in the marriage relationship. Begin the class by asking what the differences are between the husband and wife roles. List the students’ suggestions in two columns on the board under “husband” and “wife.” After some suggestions have been made, ask them, “Is the wife **inferior** and the husband **superior** in the

relationship?” Let them kick this around a while. Try to be reflective of their judgments and not evaluative at this point. “Let’s see what God’s Word teaches about this.”

Have the group read Genesis 2:18-25 together. “What can be said about the roles of husband and wife from this passage?” Some observations:

Note the timing of this narrative, before sin occurs in chapter 3.

- The woman’s created role is one of a “helper,” suitable or exactly corresponding to what the man “needs” for God’s creation to be complete and good (Genesis 1:31; see also the Lesson Background from lesson 3, in which the differences between chapter 2 and chapter 1 were discussed).
- The man is to be the one who is “helped” or, to use Paul’s language in the New Testament, the “head.”

Have two groups of students read Proverbs 31:10-31 and Ephesians 5:22-33. While reading them, they should make two columns under the headings “husband” and “wife.” In each column, have the groups list qualities that reflect the “head” or “helped” role and the “helper” or “counterpart” role. The Proverbs passage will have much about the husband by *implication*. What kind of man must he have been for his wife to have functioned as she did?

After the groups are finished, have them read the qualities for each person while you or a student copies them on the board. Ask the students what general observations can be made about the roles of the husband and wife. Their suggestions might include some of the following:

- both do a variety of things
- both must think
- both use independent judgment in areas
- final authority rests with the husband
- the Proverbs 31 woman clearly keeps her variety of functions subordinate to the responsibilities she’s accepted as a wife and mother
- the husband is responsible for the spiritual nurture and growth of his wife

When the students have finished, write these summary statements on the board with arrows pointing to the qualities and functions that seem to suggest each of them.

Read I Corinthians 11:3. How does it correct the stereotype about Christianity that women are regarded as inferior to men? Help the students to see that Christ, the man and the woman all are spoken of as having a “head” in this verse. “The head of Christ is God.” This does not mean that He is inferior to the Father, only that they have different roles in their function as the Lord God. The context is the matter of roles in the church of the man and woman. Paul’s point is that the roles are different, but his statement clearly forbids the conclusion that that means inferiority, since Christ has a head, too. Yet He, as the Son of God, God Himself, is not inferior to the Father. Husband and wife, too, have different roles, but that does not suggest any inferiority.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE - Part III

What are the limits of a guy's authority in dating? How much "submission" should a girl practice in a "going together" relationship? Steve and Marsha began going together two months ago. They are both high school juniors and Steve drives. When it comes to deciding what Marsha should believe about her friends, what she should wear, whether or not she should go to the basketball game and whether she should keep her Saturday open for Steve, he tells her. Both of them are Christians and Steve takes the headship of Ephesians 5:25 very seriously. Marsha comes to you feeling smothered. What would you counsel her to do or say?

DATING CUES FROM MARRIAGE

Part IV

Lesson Aim

To help students compare the level of commitment that is appropriate in “going together” relationships with that of marriage.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:24-25 - “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.”

Lesson Background

This lesson develops the concept of marriage as a covenant. You may want to study Malachi 2:13-16 and Proverbs 2:16-17 in a commentary. A biblical covenant had three key features. These are developed in the lesson and these should be your focus with your class. By clarifying these it should become apparent that there is a significant difference between the level of commitment that is legitimate in premarital relationships in contrast to marriage.

Lesson Procedure

Read Genesis 2:24-25. The marriage relationship is **EXCLUSIVE**, which means that it belongs to just two people - a husband and wife. What does this mean for communal relationships (several people just living in a commune together as one big happy family, everyone enjoying intimate relationships with any

other member when they want them)? [You might want to refer to the Jim Jones cult in Guyana, South America, or have a student do a little research on the group before class for a report.]

What do you think this passage does not mean when it says “leave?” Compare Exodus 20:12. Is this a geographical move? an emotional coldness? What is intended? Let the students try to come up with what “leaving” means. If they need help, ask the following:

- Can a person not leave and live on the other side of the world? How? Help them to see that he can be so emotionally attached that everything he does may be with a view to what mom and dad would like for him.
- Can someone not “leave” and his parents even have died? How? The same reasons apply here. Instead of the relationship with his or her new spouse being the primary relationship and unit for decision-making, any decisions to be made or opinions to be had are with reference to what mom or dad would have wanted.

Ask the students if they can think of any situations they’ve come across in their lives in which it seems one partner in a marriage had not *left*. What were some of the effects on the marriage relationship?

Ask each student to write his own definition of “leaving” without any consultation with each other. After a few minutes have them read their ideas and construct a group definition on the board. It should include the idea that leaving is establishing an adult relationship with parents in which the parents are no longer the primary point of reference for decisions and opinions. (Parents still need to be honored and respected, but the newlyweds are no longer under their parents’ authority. The new couple is an authority unit on their own, under God.)

Ask the following questions to help the students apply the principles of this lesson:

- Should a young couple move in with one of their parents for the first couple of years of their marriage while they finish college? Show the students that if they do, there are dangers to their authority as a separate marriage unit. What do they have to guard against? This doesn’t mean such a move is always wrong. It may be wise or unwise depending on the situation, but it is clear that the young couple must be alert to the dangers of mom or dad sincerely, and lovingly, but nevertheless unwisely giving advice, putting pressure on their son or daughter for certain decisions, expecting you to spend excessive time with them “since you’re here,” etc.
- In what sense is it right for a couple who are dating to expect the other person to be dependent upon him or her? How would it be wrong? Think of some situations. (Examples: a parent’s and a boy or girl friend’s opinions differ about what to wear, where to go to church, what friends to be with, what time to come in, what movies are acceptable, how much time to spend together, etc.).

If a guy or girl urges you to “leave,” that is to be more responsive or pay more attention to his or her wishes than those of your parents, what could this suggest about his or her respect for your parents and even God’s authority? Explain. Help students to see that without thinking about it, such a person is really disregarding the parents and, ultimately, God’s authority. It is God who has made the family unit and established parents to be in charge of their children. When a child matures and moves away from home, assuming full responsibility for himself or herself, at that time he or she is no longer under the parental authority God placed him or her under as a child. A boy or girl friend who urges you to disregard your parents’ wishes is urging you to do something that is harmful to you, dishonoring to your parents and disobedient to God.

Suppose you did marry a person who urged you to disregard your parents' rules and standards about physical intimacy or time together, clothing, activities, etc. What possible seeds of doubt about their commitment to your marriage relationship could their premarital disrespect have planted? Could their earlier behavior plant any questions in your mind about how completely they will honor their marriage commitment? After all, he did not honor God's design for the family relationships you had with your parents. Why should he honor God's design for your marriage relationship now?

Read Genesis 2:24 again. What do you think God means by "cleave" or "be united to" his wife? In the marriage relationship there is a holding to, a joining, a union with each other that is unique. This union occurs between no other people on earth. The idea of commitment is a relationship that is so thorough that the two are called "one flesh."

The words "cleave" or "be united to" refer to the covenant nature of marriage. Look up Malachi 2:13-16 and Proverbs 2:16. A covenant is a contract or agreement. The difference with this one and other human ones is that God determines the nature of it since He is the creator of the marriage bond.

There are three components to a covenant. The following illustration may be helpful:

Bill is selling his car. Ann indicates an interest. She looks at it, takes it for a drive and says she wants it. She and Bill go to a notary public (an official who can legally put a seal on the title, making the transfer of ownership official) where she gives him the \$3000 he is asking and then has the notary fill out, sign and seal the proper documents. She then puts the new temporary tags on the car and off she goes in her very used car.

A biblical covenant has the same three core components in it that this Bill and Ann deal has in it. What do you think they are? Make sure the students see that the sale of the car involves the intention to enter an agreement with the terms of the deal, witnesses, and an exchange of all that is required for the transaction to occur (money in this case). The biblical covenant of marriage has the same three features:

- There must be an intention to enter the relationship under God's terms - total giving of one another to each other (emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, physically, etc.). How is this intention usually expressed? This is done most frequently in a proposal and acceptance and engagement period.
- To follow the biblical pattern, there need to be witnesses to your entering the marriage covenant. Where do the witnesses come into the picture of a couple's marriage covenant? Normally the guests at the wedding are the witnesses to the public statement that the two of you are no longer available for this covenantal relationship with anyone else.
- To complete the transaction there is an exchange that must occur in the marriage covenant, too. What is the transaction that God requires and says represents the complete and total giving of myself to my partner? The sexual relationship represents total giving of myself to my partner. It is a statement that "I am totally, permanently and unconditionally yours." More will be said about this part of the relationship next time.

Use as many of the following summary application questions as time permits:

Suppose two young people in college who say they are going to get married after graduation anyway decide to move in together in the coed dorms or just spend weekends together. Are they married? No, they are not. Where are the witnesses? Where is the intention to accept the full set of responsibilities that God has said go with the terms of the exchange? They want the privilege of the covenant without the full

responsibility of the covenant terms. Sex is a statement that I am totally, permanently and unconditionally yours. This couple is not unconditionally or totally giving themselves to each other. They still are under their parents' authority, still dependent on others for their tuition, support, etc. and, as stated above, have not followed the biblical pattern of having witnesses to verify their exclusive giving to each other.

What other motives can such a young couple have? They may be quite committed to each other and strongly desire the giving and receiving of physical intimacy. They may also only want to justify their desire to have sexual relations now and not to wait until later. Some may even genuinely think that their intentions are really all that are required. After all, sincerity and the feelings of intimacy are all that are required by the world's standards for sexual involvement. The fact is, while they may truly be committed to each other, God has nevertheless joined the other condition of public commitment, with witnesses, as the precondition to the exchange of sexual relations. It is here that the legitimacy for the statement that "I am totally, unconditionally and permanently yours" may be established.

What are some ways to test a guy's or girl's seriousness about keeping covenants they enter? Some comments may be made about how they keep their word, contracts they enter, bills they pay, etc. These are good, but the best way is to examine a partner's relationship to his or her parents. Ask your students why this is true. The family, parent-child relationship is a God-designed set of relationships. God has placed children in the relationship and has given them the obligation to honor their parents. If a boy or girl shows no respect to this relationship that God Himself has designed and established, what confidence can someone have in his or her dating partner's willingness to honor the relationship that he or she has a choice to make with you - a mere creature of God?

SEX - DELIGHTFUL IN MARRIAGE

Lesson Aim

To show students that sex is really God's idea and that within the bond of marriage it is enjoyable and exhilarating - delightful.

Memory Verse

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

Lesson Background

For this lesson and lessons 9-13 you may find Josh McDowell's *Why Wait?* and other books in the *Why Wait?* series helpful sources of background and illustrative material. Frankness (but not crudeness) is necessary with high school young people. Their friends, TV, music, commercials, magazines, etc., are explicit about sexual things. We must demonstrate that God is quite explicit, too, but for their benefit. God is not a "cosmic bogeyman." He isn't trying to spoil kids' fun by denying sex to them. Instead, as architect of our personalities and one who cares for His creatures, He has sketched the wise parameters for sex to be a blessing to us and not a curse. The world is chasing the fantasy of Hollywood and its disciples, but the people who follow that fantasy almost always experience the brokenness, disillusionment, and tragedy that come with breaking God's law in this life and, unless they turn from their sin to Christ, always experience the judgment of God for eternity.

Lesson Procedure

There are many false ideas about sex. Some are religious and some are popular in the non-religious world. Write the following verses on the board and have students look them up and discuss what false idea they think each corrects or condemns.

- I Corinthians 7:2-5 - My sexuality is not primarily for personal gratification but for my marriage partner - it is even called a “duty” in these verses. What a duty!
- Genesis 1:28 - Sex is God’s idea. “Be fruitful and multiply” has only ever been by sex. Cloning hasn’t existed among humans except in science fiction. Clearly sex is not the first sin. God commanded reproduction before sin entered the world in Genesis 3.
- Ecclesiastes 2:1,8,10,11 - Sex and intimacy are not the source of happiness. Solomon found out that “everything is meaningless” when it is an end in itself. God created sex to be beautiful and meaningful its proper context - the covenant of a godly marriage. In every other type of encounter it becomes disappointing.
- Proverbs 5:18-19 - “Rejoicing” here is in the clear context of the sexual experience of a husband and wife. God is not bashful in putting these inspired words into print. Sex is a beautiful, God-intended experience for married couples. Note also, the “breasts” here are singled out as part of the marriage act of sexual intimacy. “Petting” is also God’s idea, but it belongs in marriage alone. Out of these boundaries, it too produces sad effects, as we’ll see later.
- Song of Solomon 4:1-7 - This love-making passage pictures Solomon and his bride on their honeymoon. It is a beautiful, delicate, poetic description of the intimacy of a couple freely giving themselves to each other on their wedding night. Notice that the lovemaking experience here is without reference to children. The experience is for the two of them to express their love to each other. Also, the same truth is seen in Proverbs 5:18-19 and the I Corinthians passage above.
- Genesis 2:24 - Sex is not the key to marriage. It was never intended to be what *creates* a good marriage. As it turns out it is an *expression* of oneness, not the creator of it. As two people leave and cleave they become one flesh. Oneness here is referring to more than bodily oneness. That is included, but total unity and spiritual, emotional, intellectual unity is what is reflected in the idea of oneness as well.
- Hebrews 13:4 - If a person is spiritual, that does not mean he or she will have no interest in sex before or during marriage. The interest is to be controlled for the benefit of my marriage partner (consider the I Corinthians 7 verses above) and to be gratified in marriage alone, but sex in marriage, “the marriage bed,” is “honorable,” the writer of Hebrews says.
- Proverbs 5:11 and I Corinthians 6:16-18 - Focus upon the words “groan” (NIV) and “sins against his own body.” What parts of our personality are included in any groaning we do? Our thinking, emotions, and even our bodies are included. That is part of Paul’s point in I Corinthians 6. It is not just the body that is involved in sex. It is not just physiological. The entire personality is involved, unlike any other kind of sin.

In two columns on the board or on a chart list the following common, false ideas about sex:

Secular ideas about sex

- It is primarily for personal gratification.

Many believe that sex is “for me.” Anything is permissible sexually, as long as it makes me feel good or “meets my needs.” This generally includes any kind of sex with others of the same or opposite sex, children, [and in some cases, sex with non-consenting partners, i.e., rape] and certainly masturbation or self-stimulation [also called auto-eroticism]. The point is that if it makes me feel good, it is acceptable. There is no question that God has designed sex to be pleasurable for both male and female, but God’s intended way for our personal enjoyment of it is as we seek to express love to our marriage partner. It is not for my personal, even solely private, gratification. I experience the fullest pleasure when I and my marriage partner are both committed to giving ourselves totally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, etc., to each other. Sex that seeks personal gratification takes. God’s fulfilling brand gives.

- Sex is the source of happiness and the key to marital happiness.

These two are closely related and may be separated for discussion but really are saying much the same thing. Many believe that if the marriage is going to be happy you must be certain sex is good with your partner first. Therefore you need to sleep together before you are married. Others follow this thinking to the sad conclusion that if your marriage loses its happiness you either need to have sexual relations with another partner [or partners] on the side or simply trade your partner in, like you would an unsatisfactory car or worn-out shoes, for a new one. After all, sex is the key and if sex is right then the relationship will be right. This is exactly backwards. Sexual problems are the number two kind of marital difficulties in this country. That is incredible considering all of the sexual laxness that is practiced here. In more than 95% of the cases, marriage counselors often acknowledge, the reasons for the problems are not sexual at all. They are relational. Because of their anger, guilt over past sexual exploits, bitterness, resentment, jealousy, relationship insecurities, doubts and distrust rooted in premarital sexual intimacy, etc., sex becomes disappointing because the two, or one of the two, cannot give sexually to the other freely. So much emotional and psychological energy and distraction is going on in one or both partners that they can’t give love to their mate. Sexual problems are almost never sexual. They are relational.

- Sex is physiological only.

When I engage in sex it is just my body that’s involved. After all, I’m just a more highly-developed animal on the scale of evolution, so why not act like the animals we see in the back alley - sex when you want it, with whom you want it, in the form you want it? The guilt, memories, doubts and mistrust in a partner to whom men and women later commit themselves are proof enough that sex is more than physiological. The whole person is involved. As one teen said, “Not having to unravel all the problems that come with premarital intimacy is reason enough for me not to create them in the first place.”

Religious ideas about sex

- Sex is the first sin.

This argument often goes as follows: The Genesis story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit is an allegory. It merely disguises the real sin of the first couple because people back then didn't talk about things like this. Their first sin was really sex. Eve seduced Adam. That was the "eating of the fruit." Of course this is both contrary to the explicit teaching of Genesis 1:28; 2:24 and the many Old and New Testament references, often very frank, explicit ones, to rape, homosexuality, premarital intercourse and adultery. The Bible veils nothing about this intimate relationship. The Song of Solomon is especially open about the intimacy of this husband and wife in chapters 4 and 7. Is this argument rooted in someone's guilt about sex? In the idea that sex is sinful and dirty and not to be mentioned or practiced? Or in the idea that the celibate life is more holy than the marriage relationship? All of these are wrong.

- Sex is not to be enjoyed, or at least not to be enjoyed if you are really spiritual.

These are related. Again the unbiblical idea behind these is that there is something dirty or sinful about sex - or at least the pleasurable feelings that come with it. "If you have to have sex to have children, all right, but don't enjoy it. Merely tolerate it." This is nonsense. It is probably also a near physiological impossibility - at least for men. This much is certainly true - it is not natural not to want to enjoy the pleasurable feelings of sex. Such a denial is a denial of the created person God has made us. Song of Solomon 4 and 7, Proverbs 5:18-19 and Hebrews 13:4 don't even mention children as a reason for having sex. The context in all three includes enjoyment and delight in the marriage experience of sex. There is no restraint placed on sexual pleasure anywhere in Scripture except to keep the experience within the boundaries of the marriage covenant. Scripture makes the very opposite clear.

- Sex is only for having children.

Again, the passages about the pleasurable aspect of sex mentioned under the last statement help to dispel this error. Children are an important part of marriage, but they are not the only reason for a couple's sexual relations.

Conclusion

Conclude your lesson by going over the biblical concept of sex. It is *an expression of oneness*. It can't create oneness. It was never intended to do that. It expresses it and, in marriage, reinforces and strengthens oneness and unity. Two people in a marriage relationship that is patterned after God's design will have an enjoyable sexual life together - what Hollywood fantasizes about but that their multiple marriages and divorces, suicide, psychotherapy and drug patterns shout that they don't have. Don't be deceived by the false advertising of the world (Ephesians 5:3-7).

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SEX - DELIGHTFUL IN MARRIAGE

This week each student should try to detect as many of the false ideas about sex as possible from the radio, TV, Internet, social media, friends, magazines, books, etc., to which they will be normally exposed. Give each of them a 3X5 card in class and ask them to put it in their wallet or pocketbook and make a note of the things they hear and the sources from which they hear them throughout the week. They should bring these with them to class next week.

THE P.P.G. PARAMETERS OF MARRIAGE

Lesson Aim

To help students recognize the permanence of marriage, the prophetic or testimonial impact of marriage, and the normally expected pattern of having children in marriage.

Memory Verse

Matthew 19:9 - "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Matthew 5:37 - "Simply let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no,' 'no'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Exodus 20:16 - "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

Lesson Background

In this lesson the permanence of marriage should take the bulk of your time. Ultimately permanence is rooted in the Ninth Commandment, which prohibits lying. When the marriage covenant is entered into, a commitment is made. To break that commitment at any time is against God's law and Jesus' interpretation of it in Matthew 5.

The testimony or prophetic aspect of the marriage relationship is one that some have related to the identity of the husband and wife with Christ and His church. They've said that married partners are a picture of Christ to people in the world who may not otherwise hear the Gospel. This is drawn from Ephesians 5:22-

33. This is certainly true, but it is not really the teaching of Ephesians 5. The point of the mention of Christ and His Church in Ephesians 5 is for the husband's and wife's benefit. They are given models after which to pattern their marital roles. Other passages that speak of the believer's testimony are better for this teaching.

Finally, the generating feature of marriage is addressed. Including children in their plans is not an option for the couple who are taking God's pattern for the marriage relationship seriously. There are providential hindrances in some cases, such as impotency or infertility, but married couples must be sure all their plans are biblically principled and not patterned after the reasoning and self-indulgence of this world.

Lesson Procedure

1. Marriage is Permanent

What do you think Jesus meant in Matthew 5:37? Are there occasions in which it is permissible to give your word and not keep it? How about if someone tricks you and you give your word? To give your word do you have to "swear on a stack of Bibles," "cross your heart and hope to die," etc.? What is involved making a promise according to Jesus' teaching? The bottom line is that if I give my word, i.e., say I will do something, I am obligated to do it. This is true even if I am deceived or tricked, unless other authorities interpose to stop it, such as parents, law safeguards and processes, etc., or unless the thing I am giving my word to do is morally wrong to begin with, such as hurting someone, lying for someone, etc. [You need not say any of this at this point in the lesson. Let the kids come to these conclusions after your study. This can serve as a summary.]

Have students read Joshua 9:9-19, II Samuel 21:1 and later Psalm 15:4b. In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites. God's people, under godly, but in this case neglectful, Joshua, made a promise, an illegal treaty with the Gibeonites. In the Law they were prohibited by God to do so with any Canaanites, but because of their carelessness they broke that commandment here. Make sure the students notice that there was deception here, and that Israel didn't pray and seek God's wisdom about the situation. Notice, too, that Joshua and the elders knew that their word was binding and that to break it, even because of trickery, would be worse for them and would involve bearing false witness.

Four hundred years later David was king. But his predecessor, Saul, had many Gibeonites killed, breaking the oath of Joshua. God's displeasure came on all the people because of it. The only cure was for justice that required the lives of many of Saul's remaining family.

What lessons can the students learn from this? Ask them to consider the following example:

Suppose you go to college and meet a young man or woman, develop a deep love for him or her and the two of you decide to get married. All the way through your courtship and engagement your partner says he's a Christian. Now that you're married he tells you that he just said that to please you. Does this nullify the covenant for which you have just given your word? [The marriage covenant is permanent. Therefore, in any dating or engagement relationship, much more than your partner's word should be examined. Are there sound evidences that a person loves Christ and has a relationship with Him? These evidences convey much more than his or her word.]

Suppose, in the situation above, you discover that your partner has AIDS the day after you've first had sexual relations for the first time on your honeymoon. You used a birth control method that could have

prevented the disease from being passed along to you in your first love-making. But what about the future? Can you divorce him or her? Suppose he or she knew about the condition but kept it private until now? Your new mate said he truly loved you and didn't want to lose you so he kept it a secret. [The response again is that divorce is not permissible. You are married. The covenant has been entered into by you willingly, with witnesses, and you have made the "exchange," i.e., consummated the marriage in sexual relations. The time to determine all these matters, even life-threatening ones, was before the marriage, not after it.]

You need to test the "covenantal integrity" of your partner before you are married. In other words, you need to examine carefully the person with whom you are making your covenant. One goal of the dating and, especially, the engagement relationship should be to get to know your partner inside-out, in ways other than sexual ones. You need to study their goals, hopes, fears, dreams, worries, weaknesses, strengths, loves, dislikes, likes, habits, things they avoid and patterns they have cultivated, reactions, defenses, openness and closedness, etc. Some suggestions for this will come in the twelfth lesson when we are talking about dating.

It is also important to test your potential partner's integrity when he or she gives his or her word. How seriously do they intend to keep their word? Ask your students, "What is the place you can best examine to determine if your possible partner has a strong record of keeping his or her word - being trustworthy?" Your students may mention contracts they've entered, agreements they've made, etc., but two more easily observable telltale indicators are their relations to their parents and their fulfillment of responsibilities they have at school. If the trustworthiness in their relationships in either of these areas is suspect (e.g., keeping their word to their parents about where they are going, what they are doing, who they will be with, what time they did this or that, fulfilling assignments they've accepted, willingly or unwillingly, completing commitments they've made, being responsible to authorities God has put in their lives, etc.), areas in which God has placed them, then there is good reason to doubt their sincerity and willingness to respect God's command to keep their marriage commitment as well. This they will enter by their choice. If they don't fulfill the responsibilities of positions that God has directly given to them, why should anyone think that they will fulfill the marriage responsibilities that another human being entrusts to them?

2. Marriage is Prophetic

What are the qualities you'd want to see in someone to whom you would want to go for advice to solve some problems you're having in your marriage relationship? What would such a person be like? To what kind of person would you probably not want to go? List the student suggestions on the board. If the marriage scenario is too removed from them, ask them about the kind of people they'd go to if they were having serious problems in their relationship with their parents. List the character qualities on the board. List the ones that wouldn't be appealing, too.

Read Matthew 5:13-14 and I Peter 3:2. What are these saying about the life of the Christian individual? How about the married couple? Is the same true of them? Make sure your students understand that the good works or testimony of an individual child of God is a prophetic statement (prophetic doesn't mean a forecast of the future, but an authoritative statement from God about what is true). Married couples and families make these prophetic statements, too. Their testimony or reputation as those who are experiencing the benefits of God's wise counsel and power will be supported or undermined by their marriage and family relationships.

What are some of the "prophetic statements" that a young couple who profess to be Christians are making if their marriage and family life are *not* patterned after God's wise principles? They communicate to others that God's Word isn't all that important, that God is for Sunday and not the rest of life, that God is largely irrelevant to this life and only for the future, and that Christianity is just one of many sources for happiness - and not a very good one at that.

What are some of the “prophetic statements” that a young couple who profess to be Christians are making if their dating life is patterned after God’s wise principles? their marriage and family life?

3. Marriage is a Generating Relationship

Are children an option for the Christian marriage? (Don’t answer this just yet. Let the students kick some ideas around for a while.) List on the board reasons your students suggest as to why their culture chooses not to have children or to have a very limited number. Suggestions will include career involvement, threat to retirement, an evil world, restricted freedom, a financial drain, a pain in the neck, uncertain outcomes with them, etc.

Have the students read Genesis 1:28. What are the implications of this verse for family planning? Help students to see that the normal, natural course of events according to God’s design is for married people to expect to have children. They are a normally expected part of life. It is abnormal, by God’s intent, for a couple not to plan for children to be part of their lives. Consider also Genesis 9:1-7. Here the same command is given, but after the flood to sinful people.

Have students consider that it has only been in the last century that contraception has been popularly available by devices, medications or surgery. Does this suggest anything about God’s intention for having children, even in a world in which sin exists? Sex, God’s creation, has had, by His design, the largely unpredictable but natural outcome of conception. His design was not accidental. Isn’t His intention for His creatures to reproduce clear even by the frequent and natural outcome of pregnancy after sexual relations?

Generally, in our culture, for whom are those most concerned who wish not to have children or wish to limit severely their family size? For the most part, they are concerned only for themselves - their futures, careers, freedoms, pleasure, retirement, material prosperity, comforts, avoidance of possible failure with child rearing, freedom from heartache they have caused their parents, etc. In some cases fear of raising kids in the modern world, too, is a motive. That shows at least some concern for others, but is it a legitimate fear?

Are the problems in our world today a legitimate reason for not having children - for their sakes? “I don’t want to bring a child into this messed-up world.” Read Proverbs 1:33; 3:21-26; 4:12; 8:32-36; Matthew 7:24-27. What is the theme of them all? Security and confidence come with following the wisdom God has provided for His people in living, deciding, and relating to others. Many view having children and even marriage like walking through a minefield. It is a dangerous and probably fatal choice. After all, they think, “I see the destruction all around me. I hear the explosions in families, feel the vibrations and see the tattered lives and broken, hurt people. I even smell the smoke, some of the tragedy is so close. Who wants to commit suicide or involve others in this kind of pain and destruction?” All of this truly happens, but that should not surprise us. The Scriptures tell us that if we build lives upon the sand the storms will destroy them. Just because people don’t have children does not mean they won’t experience storms. They will. Storms come to all people. They always have. Job said, “as sparks fly upward, so man is born for trouble” (Job 5:7), and, “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). But the believer has the confidence that in the unavoidable troubles that come with life to everyone, he has the wisdom and power of God to face them with confidence. Security comes to the believer, not because of secure circumstances (there are only mirages of secure circumstances; in this life, all is tenuous), but because the all-knowing, sovereign God has determined none of those shall be fatal to His people and has given them the wisdom to live soundly and confidently in the midst of this troublesome life.

Use the promises of God here, in the lives of your students, to show them the hope and confidence that belongs to Christians alone. David said, “He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights” (Psalm 18:33). “You broaden the path beneath me so that my ankles do not turn”

(Psalm 18:36). Threats to family life have always existed. Trouble is not unique with our modern world. But God's promises have always been solid bedrock for the child of God. Families who build on these may build with confidence.

A caution: Just because a person is a Christian does not mean he will build solidly. He must still apply the wisdom of God. Some of your students may come from professing Christian families or have professing Christian friends whose families are a wreck. This is because they have not built on the bedrock of God's wise counsel for their lives.

**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT THE P.P.G. PARAMETERS
OF MARRIAGE**

Read Psalm 18 as part of your devotions this week. This is a psalm of victory through battle. David, the author, as a child of God, was not kept out of battle but was given victory in it. List the verses or phrases from the psalm that shows the confidence that the believer can have in the midst of battle.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVES IN DATING

Lesson Aim

To help young people assess their own dating motives and to understand those of a partner.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:35a - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Ephesians 2:10 - "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Lesson Background

Young people, and older ones, are often motivated by the longing they have for close, accepting relationships with others and also a sense of importance or worth - the feeling that their lives matter. Ultimately, as our memory verses show, this longing is fulfilled in Christ - alone. Every effort to satisfy these longings (often misnamed "needs") on a human level will result in depression, manipulation, anger, frustration, anxiety or some other unhealthy and destructive response. We were not created to have any people, work, entertainment or anything else, other than God Himself, fill these longings. When we look to others to meet these "needs," we program our relationships for failure.

Teens often date to get the sense of these feelings of love and acceptance or feelings of importance and worth. They are, in effect, using other people to satisfy their own feelings of inadequacy. It isn't wrong for young people to have good feelings when with other people - even feelings of love and worth. But it is

wrong for them to manipulate others by anger, feigned depression or problems, pressure, lying, tender words, sex, compliments, flattery, or anything else to get them.

The motives God says should dominate people, even young people who may be romantically interested in each other (meaning a special, personal, warm and caring interest that one person has in another of the opposite sex), must be to serve the other person and love him or her in accord with God's intentions. It is fine to receive love and care back. But it is not right to condition my love and care on how much love and care I get back. That is a form of manipulation. "I'll show affection and love to you as long as you are giving me what I desire." Loving our neighbor as ourselves isn't to happen only if we are loved romantically by our neighbor (girl or boy friend).

A book that will be invaluable for you for this and the next three lessons will be the first several chapters of Lawrence Crabb's *The Marriage Builder*. They focus upon relationships in general, not simply the marriage relationship.

Lesson Procedure

We are beginning the first of four lessons about dating today. We'll follow the acrostic **D.A.T.E.** **D** is **DECIDE whether you will use or serve your partner.**

There are two styles of dating (and relationships in general) that are possible: one is a using, manipulative style in which you treat a person the way you do in order to get something from him or her; the other is a serving, caring style in which you treat a person as you do because it is good for that person. In the first you are concerned about what you can get. In the second you are looking for what you can give to your partner for his or her best interest.

Read the list of quotations below and have the students determine which ones seem to be more a "user" style and which seem to be a "server" style. Then have them explain why they have answered as they did. What makes you think that a guy or girl who'd say this would be either the user or server?

"I need you!" (user)

"You look kind of down. What's wrong?" (server)

"You make me feel so good." (user)

"I think you were disrespectful to Mrs. Streptococci in class." (server)

"You understand me so well." (user)

"I feel so important when I am with you." (user)

"What have you been doing in your devotions lately?" (server)

". . . but you can still call me from where you're babysitting. Your mom doesn't have to know." (user)

"If you love me, you'll really show me your love." (user)

"I love you so much, and I just want you to know how I feel." (user)

"I don't think so, because that could hurt you and me and it would be displeasing to God." (server)

Next have the students look up the two memory verses for this week's lesson. What does Romans 8:35a have to do with the longings for love that we all have? You should refer to the material in the Lesson Background here to describe the two longings. Explain that we were created with longings for close relationships and when those are not experienced from the God-planned sources (our parents), the hunger for the feelings of love and acceptance often drive a boy or girl into ways of living that give them the feeling. For example: premarital sexual intimacy, for a girl, is often begun because she longs to be held and have the

feelings of being loved and valued. For some reason she's been unsatisfied with these at home. How is she being deceived by her feelings? (Make sure your students understand that it is probably not she who is being valued at all when in the arms of her boyfriend. She is being deceived by the "feelings" of love and being used to gratify a guy's lusts. Biblical, real love would not exploit her and use her.) What is she to do with this ache and longing for love? She must admit her ache, not cover it over, but then entrust herself to the love of Christ. He alone loves perfectly. Any love and care she receives in this life will only be imperfect anyway. She must acknowledge His love and seek Him to make her to be satisfied with Him until, and if, in His providence He brings a man into her life who will supply her longings for a man's love. Her longings are not sinful. They are creaturely. In other words, they come quite naturally because God created us to experience them. But while they are longings, they are not needs. We don't need them to exist. We'll miss the satisfaction and good feelings that come with such a close, romantic, loving relationship, but we can live and enjoy the life that God intends for us without such companionship. We can be satisfied with Him in this life and we will be satisfied with Him in the life to come.

It is only as each of us commit ourselves to His love that we can be free from manipulating others to get the feelings of love from them. We must recognize that His love alone is what we need. All other love is nice but not necessary. We will be free to love others genuinely when we do not need to be loved by them as a condition for our love. Imagine two people entrusted to the love of Christ and freely loving each other without regard to how they are loved by each other. Wow! They will be forgiving of each other, will not hold grudges, will seek each other's good in what they say, in how they settle disagreements, in what they plan to do together and even in their approach to their sexual lives. They will live lives of giving, not taking - two people giving to each other totally. That is God's plan.

Next have the students look up Ephesians 2:10. The significance and importance a Christian has stretches from eternity and into eternity. He has been created unto good works. No other person can have this confidence. If all the people in the world turn against me and I'm thrown into a lion's den, a fiery furnace, a pit by my brothers, stoned by other people or imprisoned, God's purposes for me have been ordained from eternity and will be accomplished. Even death can't take my worth and importance from me. I need nothing except God to be pleased with my life. His purposes are the real ones. His "well done, good and faithful servant" is all I need to hear. And when He is finished with me, He'll take me to be with Him.

Imagine a boy, Pete, whose father has always been dissatisfied with him. Nothing he'd do could please him. He is starved for a sense of worth, a feeling that he can do something right and important. He meets Lisa. She compliments him on something he did in class. She tells him that he must be very intelligent. She's gotten his attention. Now he asks her out. They go miniature golfing. She compliments his skill and his thoughtfulness. Whatever her motives, he is feeling good about this relationship. Why? There has been nothing immoral happening. But is it a good relationship? Why or why not?

Lead the group in sharing some of the kinds of manipulation they have seen in boy-girl relationships. How could anger be manipulation? jealousy? a depressed look? a silent treatment? sexiness? flirting?

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by reading Psalm 73:25-26. What could anyone, human being or demon, take from the psalmist to put him in a position of need?

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVES IN DATING

This week keep your eyes open for manipulative strategies that people use to get others to respond to them in some way. Pay attention to your own ways of relating to others. Are there any common manipulative things you do? Take a few minutes each day to write down examples of manipulative behavior you observe in yourself or others.

WHOM SHOULD YOU DATE?

Lesson Aim

To help your young people **ASK** two important questions about any people they date or are dated by.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 13:20 - "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm."

II Corinthians 6:14a - "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."

Lesson Background

Many of us have an inflated idea about how powerful we are. We think that we can change people in areas that do not suit us. In accord with the idealism of youth, young people often think that they can date unbelievers and make them Christians. Others naively take the word of guys or girls who claim to be Christians, and even though their lives don't bear out their professions, they believe they will date them and change them. Sadly, in both cases the opposite is much more the rule, and change of the unspiritually-minded person is the exception. Young people, though, point to the exceptions as though they are the rule. "Well, my friend at school dated a non-Christian and he got saved." The Scriptures are clear with their warning about close relationships of any kind with unbelievers. That is the context of II Corinthians 6:14-17.

This week we continue using the **D.A.T.E.** acrostic. In this lesson a focus is on both the profession and fruit that young people need to look for in a dating partner. Two questions will help them answer the general question of this lesson:

ASK, “Is this relationship really wise?”

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by asking your students to discuss the following questions: How would you determine whether you should date or keep dating someone? What would you look for? What do you think God wants you to look for?

Then have the class turn together to II Corinthians 6:14-17 and read the passage together. Explain each of the rhetorical (i.e., obvious) questions that Paul asks in verses 14-16a, then ask, “What is his point?” Make sure they understand that the believer and unbeliever are coming at life from two entirely different perspectives. Everything they do is for different reasons and motives. Therefore any relationship that the believer and unbeliever can have can only be a surface one at best. They can never be in agreement in the deepest and most meaningful ways. They are aligned with different gods (Ephesians 2:1-3) and, as these verses indicate, are living for completely different purposes.

From these verses, what is the basic question that a Christian contemplating a dating relationship needs to ask? Your students should be able to figure out that they must ask, “Is he or she a Christian?” While that is the basic question, it is critical for you to ask it knowing what evidences to look for. From each of these passages, identify the qualities that we are told are evidences of truly being a Christian: John 7:24; 10:27; I John 2:3-6; Romans 8:5-8; II Corinthians 5:17; I John 3:14-15; 5:3; John 6:47.

There is another question to **ASK**, however. The basic question is, “Is he or she a Christian?” But the most discerning question, in our age, is “Is he or she wise?” Have the students turn to Proverbs 13:20. Ask them, “What is wisdom?” Help them to see that wisdom is making decisions with which God is pleased. It means we have to think. God does not save people and then expect them to put their minds into neutral or turn them off. He wants His people to think.

Next turn to Proverbs 4:5,7. How important does God say wisdom is for young people? Make sure they understand that the fool in Proverbs is not necessarily an outwardly wicked person. Nor are they intellectually stupid - idiots. They are simply people who live their lives without regard to God and His will for their lives. The wise person makes decisions that he consciously thinks will keep God pleased with his life, decisions that are in harmony with God’s principles in His Word. The fool makes decisions without any serious thought about God and His will. The fool may be a nice person. He may go to church and Christian school, but God is a kind of add-on to his life. He lives his life and then he also tips his hat respectfully to God. But he does not try to make the decisions of his life on a daily basis with God’s principles for living in mind. Of course, a fool may also be a more aggressively and outwardly rebellious person. But don’t be fooled by his apparent outward goodness. It’s his regard for God and His will in his life that determines whether he is a fool or wise person in God’s estimation.

A young person that you date is wise if he or she encourages you to make wise decisions - that is, to make decisions that you know keep God pleased with you. Have the kids determine which statements seem to be made by wise and unwise partners and explain why. What may each statement tell about their partner’s motives?

- “We won’t go all the way, that’s what God doesn’t want. We’re just showing our love for each other in this other way.”
- “I know my parents have told me I wasn’t allowed to be back here alone with you, but we are mature.”
- “I would like to go with you, but my folks have said the mall is out of bounds and I’d know even if they wouldn’t.”
- “Your parents don’t have to know that you called from the babysitting job.”
- “It is tough, but I don’t want either of us to do anything together that we might be ashamed of later.”
- “Call me at Julie’s after school. I’m not allowed to call you or have you call me at home.”
- “If we go there with Steve and Barb is there any chance our testimony will be affected?”
- “I think if you care about me you’d spend more time with me and not so much with your friends.”
- “I know you have that physics test tomorrow, but you know I just want to talk to you so bad.”
- “Bill, I would like to spend the time with you tonight and my exams are all done, but you’ve got some important ones coming up. You study. We’ll get together when we’re all done.”

The above list represents some wise and foolish statements in the areas of sex, parents, friends, and school. Have your students come up with others they have heard that may indicate that a guy or girl is wise or foolish in these areas and in the ones below: your work (employer); a difficult-to-get-along-with teacher or hard subject; a sick relative; a family vacation; difficult brothers or sisters; your mom’s or dad’s rules at home; ambitions for the future.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by asking your students to think about themselves and their dating partners. Are they wise or foolish? He who walks with the wise becomes wise. Companions of fools are harmed. Have students describe ways they have seen young people harmed by developing close relationships with “foolish” people.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

WHOM SHOULD YOU DATE?

This week keep in mind wise and foolish kinds of people. Make a note of the kinds of statements guys and girls make to each other that you think may betray the kind of person that would use this kind of statement frequently. [Caution: We all make foolish statements at times. Don't be everyone's judge this week, putting them into a "wise" or "foolish" category because of one statement you overhear. This review exercise is just to make you aware of the kinds of statements that could betray such a person.]

THREE S.T.E.P.S. TO AVOID IMMORALITY

Lesson Aim

To impress upon students the importance of avoiding sexual immorality in their dating relationships.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 22:3 - “A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.”

I Corinthians 6:18-20 - “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.”

Matthew 5:28 - “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Lesson Background

There are five steps that you will be covering this week and next. Each of these five steps or practical suggestions is intended to be a frank, specific point of discussion. Young people get the message very strongly and clearly from many sources that “. . . sexual intimacy or casualness about intimacy is no big deal. Everyone is doing it.”

Of course everyone isn't doing it, but many are. Sadly, even 40%-60% of evangelical church young people are involved in out-of-bounds sexual intimacy (by most studies of young peoples' sexual involvement - church and unchurched).

If you are using the book *Why Wait?*, by Josh McDowell, develop illustrations about situations and their outcomes that relate to the **S.T.E.P.S.**

This week you will cover **S.T.** and **S.** Next week you will cover **E.** and **P.** It would be good for you to read over next week's lesson as you prepare for this week to help keep the full range of the two lessons in view.

Lesson Procedure

1. Watch **SEDUCTIVE Situations** (in which the slide into immorality can unintentionally occur)

Most young people don't go out on a date with the intention of getting into trouble sexually. Some do plan to get involved or try to seduce their dating partners into involvement, but most do not. It happens often because the two young people are attracted to each other and the natural created desire of a guy and girl (not necessarily sinful desire) is to be close, to hold, to communicate affection physically. That is creaturely. In our culture, of course, there is an encouragement to allow these creaturely desires to express themselves whenever they arise and with whomever they arise if they are in agreement.

There is no other area of life, of course, where just doing what you feel like doing when you feel like it is acceptable. Ask the students to think of areas where no one just does what he feels like doing when he feels like it without thinking. Answers such as crossing the street, taking medicine from the cabinet (you look at the labels first), and driving through an intersection should come readily to mind. In our culture, however, when it comes to sex - the core of our personalities that affects all of us emotionally, intellectually, psychologically, socially, spiritually - we are encouraged just to do what we feel like doing without regard to timing in our lives. There is some caution now being urged due to AIDS and other STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), but that caution isn't so much about when it is all right to get sexually involved, only how.

God says intimacy is wonderful. He says that He wants His creatures to enjoy it. It is His idea. But it must be practiced within His boundaries if it is to be the gift God intends it to be. Avoiding seductive situations will help you guard yourself against putting yourself into situations in which your creatureliness, because of sin, takes over and moves you over these boundaries. You will want to cross the boundaries if you begin to get close to them. We're made with sexual desire and our sin has twisted our sexuality so that we will look for ways to satisfy our desires at our expense, our partner's expense and God's law's expense.

The verse from I Corinthians 6:18 says, "Flee from sexual immorality . . ." Someone has said that, while there is not much dignity in running from anything, there sure is safety. And the consequences of sexual intimacy out of God's boundaries are serious to all involved (more of that in Lesson 13).

What are some situations in which it may be easy to slide into immorality? What are some situations you know of in which kids in school have found themselves that have led to one form of intimacy or another? If the students do not come up with the following on their own, lead them into discussions of these areas:

- Any situation in which alcohol is served. What is the first thing a man does when he invites a woman into his apartment on TV? He offers her a drink. Why? Alcohol lowers inhibitions and resistance. It gives a false sense of security.
- Any lie-down situation: picnics; in front of the TV; in a reclining position in the front or back seat of a car; back of a van; on a sofa. This position is tailor-made for intimacy, so avoid the position.
- Situations of aloneness; being left alone in a rec room, living room or house. Some couples I know have frankly asked their parents to find an excuse to walk through their den or rec room every 10 or 15 minutes just to keep them on guard against themselves. Sadly some parents think they will teach their children that they don't trust them if they do that. Truthfully, they shouldn't trust them. That is, they may trust their sincerity, but not their emotional maturity. Some forms of maturity come with age and experience. Emotional maturity is one of those forms.
- Being together without any plans. Resist it. Know where you will be and with whom you will be and what you will be doing. It is a safeguard. Being together without anything to do except be together invites both of you to show affection in acceptable ways at first and then, because of the way we are made, in more intimate ways.
- A girl's dress, more than that of a guy, can be seductive. Guys become aroused sexually by their sight, the things they see. And what they see doesn't have to be much. Date rape on college campuses, and increasingly among high school young people, occurs because of guys who often say (rationalizing) that ". . . she had it coming because of the way she dressed. She was teasing me." (No guy is ever justified in any kind of rape regardless of how flirtatious a girl is or how sensually she dresses.) But girls should be aware of how their dress does affect guys. [You may want to ask the guys at this point what kind of girls' dress is especially provocative or sexy. You could have all the students write anonymously on a 3x5 card, just identifying whether they are male or female. Ask them to list specific girls' clothing that is provocative and sexy (that is, clothing that advertises a girl as having a sexually desirable body). Then read the responses to illustrate your point. You are focusing on girls' clothing because it is the guys who are stimulated by sight much more than girls.]

2. **TAKING Clothes Off is Out!**

The **T** is "taking." The point of this is to urge your young people to make commitments to keep their clothes on when they are in situations with the opposite sex. In other words, to be specific: snaps stay snapped, hooks stay hooked, zippers stay zipped, and buttons stay buttoned. The way you go out is the way you remain. If young people commit themselves to these simple rules, it is rather difficult for them to get into too much trouble sexually.

3. **SIGHTS and SOUNDS Need to be Carefully Monitored**

Begin this section by reading this quotation from Josh McDowell's book, *Why Wait?*.

Boy meets girl. Boy and girl find each other attractive and want to know each other better, so they set aside an evening. Do they talk and discuss? No. They spend twenty dollars to sit side by side in a movie theater and stare at the screen.

On the screen: Boy meets girl. Boy and girl find each other attractive and want to know each other better, so they set aside an evening. Do they talk and discuss? No. They remove their clothes and have sex to the sound of violins. The movie has a happy ending.

After the movie, real-life boy and girl still want to get to know each other. On top of that, their hormones are roaring. They have just been surrounded by a movie that said, “Sex is a great way to get to know someone.” Their minds reel with flashes of skin, beautiful music, and happy endings. They look deeply into each other’s eyes and have sex in the car.

Boy thinks girl is easy. Boy dumps girl. Girl wonders what went wrong.

What is the point of this story? Make sure students understand that the things you listen to and the things you watch can erode your resistance to sexual temptation by making it all seem so right, natural, even loving.

Commit yourself to never being in a dating situation in which sexually suggestive movies, music, videos or behavior of any kind are present. When you find yourself in some situation like that, do not stay behind. Ask your date to leave immediately and be frank about why as soon as possible. Your date’s reaction will tell you volumes about his or her values. How? If he or she is not as disturbed as you are about what’s going on, it may be an indication about the direction he or she is interested in having your relationship go.

TAKE TWO MORE S.T.E.P.S. TO AVOID IMMORALITY

Lesson Aim

To discuss practical strategies for avoiding sexual immorality in dating relationships.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 22:3 - “A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.”

I Corinthians 6:18-20 - “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.”

Matthew 5:28 - “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Lesson Background

This week you will conclude the **S.T.E.P.S.** acrostic. The material this week is sensitive and specific. Be sure you are well-acquainted with the information here and comfortable with it both personally and biblically.

If you are not sure about the wisdom of one of the exercises, edit or adapt it to meet the needs you believe your young people have. To detect how much detail you think you should go into in this lesson, you might ask your students how many of them have friends who've been involved sexually, have had friends or relatives whom they know have been out of bounds sexually, even if they haven't had intercourse, and have read novels or seen TV, movies, or read articles that have had sexually intimate scenes pictured or strongly suggested or described.

If your students have had any of these experiences or acquaintances, the judgment of this writer is that this information is not coming too soon. Given the cultural casualness about sexual intimacy, much of this should probably have been covered with junior high young people in fairly explicit terms - even though formal dating may be some time in the future.

Lesson Procedure

1. Watch Your Sexual EXCITEMENT Level

The most frequently-asked question about physical intimacy is, "How far can we go?" The Scriptures are not silent about this. They spell out a principle that is both very easy to apply and very difficult to apply. It's easy because it's easy to understand and easy to practice if you commit yourself to practicing it now, while you have your head about you and can think without your physical desires contaminating your ability to choose wisely. In the other hand, it's difficult because if you don't commit yourself to apply it now, while you're not in the physically pressuring situations of intimacy, when you do get close to them or enter them, the temptations are so powerful that you, like many others, may just not want to practice them at that moment. Intimacy feels good, and the feelings can override good judgment.

A good illustration of this principle may be taken from white-water rafting. Rafters don't wait until they are in the pull of the rapids to position their craft properly for a safe and fun ride through a series of rapids. If they wait, once the pull of the rapids begins to draw the raft, they will have less and less control over steering the raft. The result is that they may be upset in a hydraulic or swamped by a wave, both potentially dangerous situations. Instead, in anticipation of the rapid, a good guide will position the raft before it begins to be controlled by the rapid. In this way shooting the rapids becomes a fun, safe experience. Dating can be the same, depending upon precautions that you take and decisions you make ahead of time - before you get into the forceful pull of your own body hormones. Proverbs 22:3, one of the memory verses, urges this kind of decision-making.

Next have the students look at I Corinthians 7:1, which says, "It is not good for a man to touch a woman." This is the King James and New American Standard Version translation. The NIV is a little freer with its translation, reading, "It is good for a man not to marry." The NIV translators seem to be translating with the wider context of the persecution of believers (verse 26) in view. But the more literal translation, "not to touch a woman," may help us think about "how far we can go." What does Paul mean? Does he mean literally no physical touching between unmarried people?

Have the students turn to I Corinthians 16:20b. There the Corinthians are told to greet each other with a holy kiss. Ask what the difference between these two kinds of touch is. Your students should be able to see that the chapter 16 touching is that of affection, involving a show of genuine care and love for a brother or sister. It's like the kiss you give your grandmother, your dad or mom, your brother or sister, even your dog. This kiss is not one of passion; that is, it is not stimulated by sexual feelings of pleasure.

Now what about the chapter 7 touching? Verses two and three make it clear what kind Paul has in mind. Read these verses. This is a touch of passion that Paul is forbidding. Any touching that tends to arouse me sexually or that I want to do because of the feelings of sexual pleasure I'm getting is out of bounds before marriage.

Is it possible for a guy and girl to kiss or hold hands affectionately without it being passionate? Yes, probably in many cases, but not necessarily all. On the other hand, how quickly does a touch of affection turn into a touch of passion for a guy?

Here you may want to ask the guys, especially athletic, macho types, to share what they think. Put it this way: "You have come back from your senior banquet with your date. You have been getting to know each other over the past few months. Tonight seemed like a beautiful crescendo in your relationship. The banquet was delightful. You have both had a wonderful time talking and sharing together with each other and your friends. The two of you walk from the car to your door. The moon is full, the honeysuckle bushes are pouring their sweet fragrance into the air, the sky is bright with the shining stars. As the warm breeze drifts over the two of you, you stop at the door step. You turn toward each other and he draws you close to him and places a gentle kiss on your lips. Is it possible for this to be a kiss of affection?" Now ask the guys, "How long, fellows, could you continue to kiss her before this kiss of affection turns into a kiss of passion?" Let the students give their estimates. If any of them says more than a few seconds, actually time an imaginary kiss so they get a sense of how long their kiss would be. Usually the point is clear. A kiss lasting more than a second or so quickly moves from being motivated by affection to being motivated by the feelings of pleasure that come from it. Those feelings can't be eliminated, even from a kiss of affection with someone you care for, but they are not the controlling factor in the beginning. They very soon become the controlling factor for a young man.

At this point you may wish to talk briefly about the difference in sexual arousal of young men and young women. A guy's sexuality lies very close to the surface. It doesn't take much for him to be aroused. Sight and touch do it very quickly. A girl's sexuality lies below the surface more. She is more slowly aroused sexually, and can, therefore, usually keep her head more easily and for a longer time in potentially tempting situations. While a guy zooms to high-gear arousal, a girl can be back in low gear. But that won't last long. If a young lady is with a guy who is zooming along, she has got to put the brakes on, politely if possible, but firmly and even impolitely if he persists. So, a kiss may begin affectionately, but soon moves into forbidden territory in a guy and not long after in a girl, too - the territory of passion. In marriage, passion and affection are a beautiful experience for the couple. It's God's idea for things to be this way. He made us and knows how to fulfill us in every way - including sexually.

What about other kinds of touching? Put a label on each of these. Are they affectionate or passionate?

- sitting, lying, walking with arms around each other for an extended time
- long embracing
- "making out" or heavy, prolonged kissing
- French kissing
- light petting, i.e., stroking each other above the waist, especially fondling the breasts
- heavy petting, i.e., stroking each other's genitals, even to the point of orgasm
- oral sex, i.e., stimulating each other sexually by mouth-to-genital contact
- anal sex
- sexual intercourse

Clearly all of these are calculated to arouse sexual feelings. These are not primarily shows of affection. The Matthew 5 teaching of Jesus reinforces this. Looking to lust on a man or woman is immorality, Jesus said. If looking to lust is immorality, certainly touching that is motivated by lustful feelings is also immorality.

If a young man or woman is interested or pressuring about any of these passionate forms of intimacy, knowing that affection is no longer ruling his end of the relationship, what does this tell you about how he probably is thinking about you? You are a means to satisfy his lusts and sexual feelings. He could just as well be with any other willing person at that point. What he is interested in is sexual feelings - not you as a person.

2. Include Your PARENTS in Your Dating Experiences - Tell More Than You Have to Without Being Asked

Trust is created by openness. What happens when you walk down the hall and see a couple talking, and when they spot you they stop talking? What do you think? Often we're tempted to think that they were talking about us, aren't we? People who are closed, uncommunicative, and private cause suspicion. Trust is built on willingness to communicate good and bad things.

What happens if when you do something wrong at school, with the car, at work, etc., you confide in your parents about it? At first they may get upset, because they care for you and care about what happens to you, but with a little time, often just minutes, they come to greater trust in you. Why? If you are willing to tell these negative or difficult things, you are not going to hide other problems from them and they will feel they can trust you, so that if there are serious problems they will be able to help you. Parents care about their kids. They don't want them to get in over their heads in any area. So if kids are open with their folks and their folks feel that they are being kept aware of what is going on in their lives, they'll usually be inclined to trust them more. More trust means more freedom and privileges in the long run. Lack of trust means restriction and parental control.

Commit yourself ahead of time to talk to your parents in detail about all you do on your dates - what goes right and what goes wrong. It will be a step to help you avoid immorality and will be a way of teaching your parents to trust you.

ESTABLISH GOD-HONORING DATING GOALS

Lesson Aim

To help students establish positive goals for their dating experiences.

Memory Verse

Mark 12:30-31 - “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”

Lesson Background

This lesson represents the **E.** in the **D.A.T.E.** acrostic. Within the context of dating goals, this lesson will present another acrostic, **W.A.I.T.**, that probably should be given much more time than this lesson alone. **W.A.I.T.** is an adaptation of many of the principles from Josh McDowell’s book, *Why Wait?* Your own familiarity with this material will enable you to illustrate lucidly, in the words of teens themselves, many of these points.

To keep the overall perspective you should summarize the **D.A.T.E.** acrostic very briefly. This lesson focuses upon **ESTABLISHING** goals for dating - the positive ones to love God and neighbor, which include waiting for sex until marriage.

You may wish to use the “record” activity in the **WRONG** section of the **W.A.I.T.** lesson. If you do you may need to have one of your students give you a CD or recording of a popular rock group that has recorded sexually suggestive titles and songs. Listen to them first to make the notes you need.

Lesson Procedure

God's two great commandments include loving Him and loving our neighbor. Read the memory verse. Could this be used to sketch goals for dating? How?

If dating partners want to practice their love for God, they could: spend time in the Word together; spend time praying before and after a date together; worship in one another's churches together; talk about personal devotions with each other; serve together, in nursery, in Sunday School classes as helpers, as part of visiting teams, in calling youth for youth meetings, etc.

If dating partners want to practice their love for their neighbor, they could: clean an elderly person's cellar, garage, or attic together; take a single parent's child to a ball game, a park, or swimming; write to missionaries and report to the church together; ask your church deacons for a project around the church building that the two of you could work on, etc.

Sadly, many young people get into serious trouble sexually because they have no constructive plans that help them enjoy their relationship with each other and at the same time honor God and show love to their neighbor. The fact is, we can get to know someone much better by working with them for a period of time than by just sitting and talking with them or playing games with them. Activities such as parties and games are fine to enjoy together, but really getting to know how someone feels about work, attitudes about helpfulness, patience, handling pressure, failure, disappointment, frustration, etc., are things that come out more through the activity of service together than just through talking, and certainly more than by "parking."

Before dating someone, or early in your dating experience with a guy or girl, what kind of "goal" questions could you ask yourself to help keep your dating experience with him or her on track? Some good answers might be, "What are his goals?" and "What goals do I have for this relationship?" They should be God-honoring ones that enable you to fulfill the two great commandments.

Another way to fulfill these two great commandments is to *wait* for sexual intimacy until it is God's timing. The next part of this class will give you four reasons to **W.A.I.T.:**

W - WRONG - Wait because sex before marriage is wrong!

This is evident from our previous classes, but you must be aware that in our age it is not cool to say things are wrong or right. They are "wrong or right for you," it is said. This opinion, that it's really up to you to determine what is right or wrong, is rooted in the culture that doesn't like to believe that there is a God who has determined that there are rights and wrongs. So to them, right and wrong are whatever you want them to be, or, in some cases, whatever will hurt someone else.

But God has determined that there are rights and wrongs and sex outside of marriage is one of the wrongs. God is not some cosmic killjoy who has made us sexual creatures and then forbids us to enjoy it. Sex is His idea. But He, as Creator, has set the boundaries so that we can enjoy it without regret, guilt, pain and tragedy. God also gives us many reasons in Scripture, by the illustrations of the many terrible consequences that sexual immorality has, why we must say NO to sex before marriage. These we will sketch shortly, but the primary reason for saying no is because God says it's **WRONG!**

Have students read Ephesians 5:3,5,6. What are some of the phrases in these verses that a soap opera on TV violates? What are some of the phrases in these verses that popular situation comedies violate? If you have a rock CD or recording, what are some of the ways the vocalists violate this passage? What is the

result of all this violation according to Paul? Likewise, Hebrews 13:4 teaches that sex is not bad - unless it is outside of God's law. Then it brings His judgment.

A - AFTERMATH - Wait because of its aftermath!

The word "aftermath" comes from Old English. It meant "the second crop of grass." Once the first crop was cut for the cows, the second would spring up quite naturally. Like our lawns in spring, one cutting doesn't do it. There would be more to follow. That's the way it is with sexual intimacy. There is an aftermath. Indulging in sex once is not simply a once-and-for-all act. There is a personal aftermath that is coming - either disease, unwanted pregnancy, emotional and psychological effects or spiritual effects.

Disease: There are 27 STD's (sexually transmitted diseases) today in contrast to two in the sixties. One new one is discovered every 9 or 10 months. Thirty-three thousand people are infected every day. Some have no known cure and some, such as AIDS, can be fatal.

- AIDS: number of cases has risen exponentially since discovery in 1981; no sure prevention other than abstinence; doesn't show up for up to 6 years and is almost always fatal.
- Chlamydia: This is the #1 STD. It can be passed on to babies; can result in infertility; pregnancy problems; infection of eyes, lungs and even death of a mother and baby.
- Genital herpes: There is no known cure; discomfort and sores can show up at any time in one's life; long-term ill health; sterility; tubal pregnancies; pain.

Unwanted pregnancy: three of every four pregnancies will be unintentional this year. Sadly, many will seek abortion. This is murder of a preborn child. See Psalm 139:13-16 if you have any need to develop this area in your students' minds. There are three options for a pregnant woman in our culture: keep the child, place the child for adoption, or seek an abortion. The third of these is presented as a quick fix, but in reality it is not. All three are difficult choices, but the sin of murder and the guilt and psychological trauma that come with taking another life does not come with either of the first two. One research report from the University of Minnesota on the long-term effects of stress from abortion (5-10 years later) found:

81% were preoccupied with the child
73% had flashbacks of the abortion experience
69% had feelings they reported as "craziness"
55% had nightmares about the abortion
35% perceived visits from the aborted child
23% had hallucinations related to it

[72% of these women said they had no religious beliefs at the time of their abortions and 96% said, in retrospect, that they regarded abortion as taking a life or murder. (Data from McDowell's *Why Wait?*)]

Emotional and Psychological effects: Read Proverbs 5:11. Focus upon the word "groan" again. Ask "what parts of your personality are involved in any deep groaning that we would do?" Students should see that it involves thinking, feeling, the physical body - our whole person. Some of the effects include these: (after each have the students suggest why)

- Guilt: According to Romans 2:14, the works of the law are written on the heart - the conscience; in Psalm 32:3-5, David speaks of his guilt from his immorality with Bathsheba.

- Regret: I cannot give my mate what is uniquely his or hers - only used property.
- Mistrust/suspicion/insecurity: about why a guy or girl is interested in me or whether I can trust him or her.
- Fear: How will this affect my future? What will my kids think? Will my spouse trust me? Will God punish me for this in the future somehow?
- Depression/disappointment: There is no hope for me - I've spoiled myself. I only have second best to offer a mate. See I Corinthians 6:9-11; it is true that *there will be effects*, but your life is not over; God can forgive and help you recover for usefulness and beauty in future relationships - note especially verse 11.
- Detachedness: Sex seems to be a promise of the "closeness" that we all long for with someone. But that's a false promise. Sex brings closeness when the relationship of marriage is right, when there is unity and oneness between two people. Experiencing sex without that oneness sets young people up to be disappointed and just to go through the motions - not expecting God's richness. This can become a habit, with repeated sexual encounters, and cripple the richness of sex later with a partner you do want to enjoy complete spiritual, emotional and physical oneness with.

Spiritual effects (for the Christian): Read Hebrews 12:4-11. This passage deals with God's discipline of His rebellious people. Have your students read it and identify some of the ways God deals with disobedience in His children. How serious could this dealing become (see I Corinthians 10:1-11)? In I Corinthians 6:9-10, the unbeliever's judgment is more permanent - he will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

I - INTERFERENCE - Not waiting results in interference in interpersonal relationships

A distorted view of guys, girls and sex itself: "All guys want is sex . . ."; stated by a girl who had been molested as a young girl and had boys make advances toward her in junior high; sex may lose its significant meaning as mentioned in the psychological reason of disappointment and detachedness above; guys may come to think of all girls as objects for their own pleasure or as seductive and not to be trusted.

Hindered relationships with parents: instead of openness, there may be hiding (Why?); instead of relaxation and confidence when you are around them there may be worry (Why?); instead of honesty there may be deceit and dishonesty (Why?).

Jammed or contaminated communication in romances: suspicion (Is he telling me everything? I know there are things about my past I've hidden because I am ashamed of them. Is he doing that too?); nagging or interrogating - trying to get the "whole story" of what he's done or she's done while away from you on a trip, visiting friends, etc.

Reserve and distraction with a spouse: Have you ever tried to concentrate on homework when you've just had a major emotionally upsetting situation such as your parents were fighting or splitting up; someone died or was diagnosed with a serious illness; your dad lost his job or you might have to move; you just failed a test and fear you might not get accepted in a particular college? Concentration is difficult with emotionally draining things going on in your mind, isn't it? Nothing can be more dampening to one's passion with a spouse he truly loves and wants to give himself to than to have to fight mental battles each time the sex act is approached. This is one reason why sex is the second leading problem in marriages today. The emotionally and psychologically draining guilt, fear, etc., interfere with the concentration that comes

with giving and loving in intimate ways. McDowell quotes one teen as saying, “Not having any bad memories to interfere makes it worth waiting for.”

T - TESTIMONY - Not waiting will ruin your testimony or reputation

What does Ephesians 5:3 have to do with testimony? “Don’t even let it [sexual immorality] be named among you,” Paul says. Think of the televangelists of the past or an unfaithful pastor, parent, etc., you know of. Can you trust them without question when they speak about relationships, or really about anything? Why not? They betrayed the trust of people and kept truth hidden and even tried to cover it up or excuse it. How can I be sure they won’t do the same again? We must forgive people who betray our trust, but that does not mean we will trust them in the future.

Read Proverbs 6:30-35. Have your students compare the thief and the adulterer. The latter’s shame “will never be wiped away . . .” There is something unique about this sin in the minds of people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, have the students read I Corinthians 6:11. You must conclude with hope of forgiveness to these young people. Some of them may have been out of bounds themselves, or perhaps they feel troubled for someone they know who has been. This passage in I Corinthians indicates that among these Christians some had been involved in the variety of sins listed but that they were washed, cleansed, and forgiven. God will forgive truly repentant young people. This doesn’t mean the effects of their sin will automatically disappear. A girl who gets pregnant or a guy who contracts a disease will be forgiven if they turn to the Lord with sincere repentance and faith. But the child the girl is bearing and the infection (even with deadly AIDS) the guy has gotten won’t disappear. The same is true with all the other aftermaths that we’ve talked about. Two things are true: God will forgive, and God will use these ugly things in the life of someone who has broken His law but who has turned back to Him. Ephesians 2:10 and Hebrews 9:14 hold out the hope that His people are designed for His purposes and when He is finished with them, He’ll take them. Before ending class, invite any who would like to talk to you further about their personal needs to speak with you alone or call you.