



WEEK 2

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.

THE BIBLE

I Corinthians 10:23-24; Psalm 139:13-14
Ephesians 5:31-32; Philippians 2:3-4

WHAT?

WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 2 OF THIS SERIES

VIDEO | *When Harry Met Sally* Couple Interviews

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play 1:20-2:07 of [this clip](#). You'll return to this video each week of the series.
- As demonstrated by this guy, relationships can be a little messy sometimes. That's why we're spending this month talking about love, dating, and what God has to say about our relationships.
- To get us started, I want to have a quick discussion.

DISCUSSION | Just for fun? Or for a purpose?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Split your students into groups of 2-4, based on whoever they are sitting near. After each question, prompt, or instruction, ask a few students to share what they wrote or discussed with the entire group.
- First, make a list of five things you do just because they're fun. This could be anything from playing basketball to scrolling Instagram.
- Now make a list of five things you do that may or may not be fun, but (more importantly) you do them for a purpose, like exercise, or practice an instrument, or study.
- Now combine with a group near you and compare answers.
- Together, talk about how would you describe the difference between the things on your first ("just for fun") list and your second ("for a purpose") list?
- On which list would you write, "dating?" Your "just for fun" list or your "for a purpose" list? Why?

LAST WEEK

- If you were here last week, you know we kicked off this series on love and relationships. We said that, unfortunately, the Bible doesn't really give us any specific dating advice, but it does give us a lot of incredible wisdom that we can apply to dating.
- Here's what we discovered last week: that if we want to have the best relationships possible, we should start where Jesus started—with loving God, because loving God helps us love people better. That includes everyone from your mom, to your best friend, to the person you're dating. In other words, **staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.**
- Today I want to look more closely at dating. Based on our conversations last week, I know you have questions about what a great dating relationship should look like, so let's talk about that.

DISCUSSION | What questions do you still have about dating?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.
- Today, we're going to talk about dates, the difference between "going on dates" and "dating exclusively," the purpose of dating, and . . . well, what to do if you end up on a date like this . . .

VIDEO | Worst Dates

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play a brief video of funny first date stories. You might show part of [this clip](#) from Jimmy Fallon or (if you're up for a little editing, since the entire clip isn't appropriate), you could show 0:47-1:48 of [this clip](#).
- Clearly, these dates weren't going anywhere good. So let's talk about how to date in a way that actually is going somewhere. Let's talk about how to date with purpose.

SO WHAT?

DATING IS ALLOWED, BUT NOT ALWAYS GOOD FOR YOU

DISCUSSION | How do you know when a dating relationship isn't going anywhere good?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.

DISCUSSION | How can dating as a teenager be a bad thing?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.

DISCUSSION | How can dating as a teenager be a good thing?

- Dating as a teenager can definitely be a bad thing. But it can also sometimes be a good thing. Surprise! Maybe you were expecting to hear "dating is always bad" at church, but I do actually think dating as a teenager can sometimes be a good thing. What do you think?
- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 10:23-24

- Let me read to you a passage of Scripture I find really helpful when trying to navigate this subject. Like we said last week, the Bible doesn't address dating specifically, but it does give us all sorts of wisdom and instruction that we can (and should) apply to dating.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 10:23-24.*
- In this passage, Paul is challenging believers to make choices that honor God and others. (Sounds a little bit like that passage we read last week, doesn't it?)
- I believe dating falls into the same category as the things Paul was talking about here. It's not all-bad. It's not all-good. It's how we do it that makes all the difference.

DISCUSSION | What's one example of a time when dating might technically be allowed, but isn't beneficial?

- *Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.*
- So how might dating be one of those things Paul was talking about that is technically allowed, but not always good for you? Here are some examples.
 - You might be allowed to date, but you know dating isn't good for you *right now*. (Maybe you came to that conclusion after last week's conversation.)
 - You're dating someone right now, but they don't treat with the respect you deserve.
 - You're dating someone, but you know it's more about what you get out of the relationship than your love for the other person.
- In all of these cases, sure, dating may not be "wrong." But is it "right"? Is it helpful, beneficial, or good for you?

THE PURPOSE OF DATING

PROP | White Board

- In order to answer that question, I think we need to get clear on something: the purpose of dating.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Set up a white board or large pad of paper.*

DISCUSSION | What do you think the purpose of dating is?

- *Give your students a few moments to share and discuss. Write down their thoughts.*

DISCUSSION | How do you think the world's purpose for dating might be different from God's purpose for dating?

- *Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.*

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 139:13-14, Ephesians 5:31-32

- Sure, maybe having fun and getting to know people is one benefit to dating, but ultimately, the purpose of dating is to find a partner, right?
- I see dating like three steps: casual dating, exclusive dating, and marriage.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a fresh white board or sheet of paper, write all three of those steps in a line, with arrows pointing to each next step.*
- First, there's casual dating—it's the phase of dating where you're open to talking and spending time with people you might be interested in. Sometimes that's a formal date, but other times it may just be a period of time where you're getting to know each other.
 - The Bible doesn't say anything about this, but here's what it does say. *Read Psalm 139:13-14.*
 - God created you uniquely. He knows exactly who He created you to be, but you're still figuring that out. Whenever you decide to start casually dating, keep this in mind.
 - As you explore potential relationships, you'll learn more about who you are and who you're not. You'll learn what you want in a partner and what you don't. But if you already have a clear idea of who God created you to be, this process will be so much easier for you. Pay attention to who God created you to be.
- Next, there's exclusive dating—the phase where you've decided one of those people you were interested in has potential. In this phase, you're looking to see if this person is really someone you could see yourself partnering with in all of life. You might ask yourself some big questions, like "Does this person share my love for Jesus? Will we help each other grow in our faith? Can I see us growing together for a lifetime?" If you can . . .
- The next step is marriage. Maybe you're thinking, "I am too young to think about this!" But that's exactly the thing I want you to consider.
- You might think you're too young for marriage, but **the purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.** Marriage is where it all leads. So if you're going to date, do it with marriage in mind.
- But what's the purpose of marriage? I'm glad you asked. Here's what God has to say about it. *Read Ephesians 5:31-32.*
- The purpose of marriage is to experience a connection and oneness with another person that is similar to the kind of connection and oneness we're meant to have with God. The purpose of marriage is to experience God and His connection with us in a new way.

NOW WHAT?

SO . . . CAN I DATE?

DISCUSSION | Right now, are you allowed to date? Do you think dating is, or could be, beneficial for you right now?

- Maybe you're wondering, "So . . . can I date? Even if I'm not ready to get married?" Yes. But it's up to you to answer the question we posed a few minutes ago. "But is it good for you?" It may be allowed, but it may not be beneficial.
- So are you allowed to date right now? Do you think dating is, or could be, beneficial right now?
- *Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.*

DISCUSSION | Read Philippians 2:3-4. How can you date in a way that is others-focused instead of self-centered?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.
- If you do decide to date, here are a few tips.
 - **FOCUS ON BUILDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP.** When you're dating someone, keep the goal in mind. Sure, you want to have fun, but you're also trying to determine if this person you like will actually be a good partner. So date in ways that intentionally build your relationship. If most of your time together is spent staring at a screen, not speaking, or being physical, you're not building the relationship.
 - **DATE IN GROUPS.** If you want to date, but you don't want to get sucked into a physical relationship or an overly serious relationship too soon, that's great! That's wise. Date in groups.
 - **SET GOOD BOUNDARIES.** If you wait until you're alone to decide where your boundaries are, it's already too late.
 - Set physical boundaries. Know in advance what you will not do, be clear about it, and don't let anyone pressure you to do otherwise.
 - Set emotional boundaries. Guard your heart. It has been made carefully by your Creator. Treat your heart and yourself with respect and love.
 - **DATE A JESUS-FOLLOWER.** If you are committed to following Jesus, date someone who shares that commitment. This isn't about following a religious rule. It's about aligning yourself with someone who shares the goals and values that are most important to you. Date someone who makes you want to love Jesus more.
 - **DATE WITH PURPOSE.** As you date, don't date blindly. Ask good questions. Seek wise counsel. Be honest with yourself and others.
- And if you decide not to date right now, that's great! Dating can be pretty overrated. If you can enjoy your middle or high school years surrounded by friends as you discover more about who you are and who God is to you, that's a good thing. There's no need to complicate your life before you're ready.

DISCUSSION | If you're dating someone right now, what's one way you can begin to date with greater purpose?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.

DISCUSSION | If you're not dating anyone right now, what can you do now to make sure your future dating relationships happen on purpose?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.
- Whether you're dating or not, whether you'd like to date or not, and whether you think you'll start dating soon or not, here's what I hope you remember from this conversation: **the purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.** So date wisely.