



---

A 4-WEEK SERIES ON

# WISDOM

IN RELATIONSHIPS  
AND  
DATING

FROM OUR ANNUAL *TEACHING STRATEGY*

---

BY TIM & TASHA LEVERT



---

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All aspects of Grow Curriculum and Strategy (including all images, language, resources, and related products) are owned by Stuff You Can Use. Stuff You Can Use gives permission to the organization that purchased this resource to download, print, and use its components for its use only. No part of Grow Curriculum and Strategy may be copied, shared, resold, or republished outside of that organization in any way, except in the case of brief quotations or product reviews that credit and link back to Grow Curriculum and Strategy ([growcurriculum.org](http://growcurriculum.org)). Reproducing any of this material or incorporating it into a new work that does not follow these guidelines (including a blog post, podcast, video, or other resource) is a violation of U.S. copyright laws. Stuff You Can Use is a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for us to earn fees by linking to Amazon.com and affiliated sites.

---

## ABOUT THIS SERIES

"We're meant to be." It's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love—as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, and favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—is *that* how relationships are meant to be?" In this 4-week series, you'll give students a better lens for evaluating their current and future dating relationships as you help them see that the secret to a relationship that's "meant to be" is to **stay close to Jesus, date with purpose, know who you're looking for, and keep sex in the right context.**

## THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

### WEEK 1

This week, you'll push students to consider how the way they God will impact the way they love others.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.
- **THE BIBLE:** Matthew 22:36-40; Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9-17.
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** A Poll, Question, Discussion, Video, and Story.

### WEEK 2

This week, you'll help students see that dating is more than just something we do for fun—it has purpose.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** The purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.
- **THE BIBLE:** I Corinthians 10:23-24; Ephesians 5:31-32; Philippians 2:3-4.
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** An Video, Discussion, another Video, and a Prop.

### WEEK 3

This week, you'll challenge students to compare who they're looking for *and* who they are with God's Word.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.
- **THE BIBLE:** II Corinthians 6:14-15; Proverbs 1:5, 3:1-35.
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** A Video, Story, Activity, Question, Discussion, and Response.

### WEEK 4

This week, you'll challenge students to choose God's design for sex instead of the world's approach.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** Sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive.
- **THE BIBLE:** Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 5:28; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 4:23-27.
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** A Video, Prop, Another Prop, Story, and Prayer.

## NOTE:

Because this series deals with the subject of sex, be sure to communicate extra well with parents before you get started. We suggest filming a series preview video for parents as well as posting your teaching notes and discussion questions online in advance for them to look at.

## HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES

Every ministry is different. Whether you're teaching middle schoolers, high schoolers, teenagers with special needs, or all three, here's how to hack this series to fit your unique and diverse audience.

### MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

**HACK #1: Over-communicate with parents and your leadership.** Before you begin this series, review your curriculum with your boss and some key parents of middle schoolers to make sure you're all on the same page about what you're teaching. Make adjustments as needed. Then communicate (and re-communicate) with parents. Send emails. Post your outlines online. Film a video. When addressing the topic of sex, do everything you can to not take the parent of a middle schooler by surprise.

**HACK #2: Ask them to submit their questions.** Your middle schoolers probably have some questions about sex and dating that they're way too embarrassed to ask anyone out loud. Those questions could range from, "How do I get my crush to like me?" to "What's a condom?" to "Do you get pregnant every time you have sex or just sometimes?" (These are actual questions from middle schoolers, by the way.) During Week 1, invite students to ask all of their questions anonymously, maybe by dropping index cards in a bucket. Then address as many of those questions as possible throughout the series.

### HIGH SCHOOLERS

**HACK #1: Get their opinions.** Don't assume you understand the opinions or experiences of your high schoolers when it comes to sex and dating. Throughout this series, look for ways to gather their feedback through polls or anonymous submissions. By letting them know you value their opinions, and by engaging with those opinions during your series, you'll create a conversation instead of a lecture.

**HACK #2: Organize a panel.** High schoolers are more capable than middle schoolers of wrestling with ambiguity and people's complicated stories. To wrap up this series, you might consider creating a panel of people from your church or community who are willing to share their stories and answer questions. Be sure to include a variety of ages (from teenagers through senior adults), in a variety of situations (single, dating, celibate, married, divorced), from a variety of backgrounds and experiences (virgins, virgins until marriage, newly celibate, and sexually active within the context of marriage). Once your panel has been assembled, prep your participants with practice questions, vet their stories, warn them that teenagers can sometimes ask some unpredictable questions, and make sure you're all on the same page as it relates to the principles and advice you want to give your high schoolers.

### TEENAGERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**HACK #1: Focus on friendship.** The foundation of any healthy dating relationship is friendship—that's a great reminder for any teenager! So go ahead and remind all of your teenagers that "friending" comes before "dating," keeping in mind that your teenagers with certain special needs may have more difficulty with dating, or may begin to date later, than some of your other students. Normalize this by reinforcing the idea that dating is not a requirement for the teenage years and that healthy friendships are just as valuable (if not more valuable) as a dating relationship.

**HACK #2: Teach Gary Chapman's "The Five Love Languages."** Since our conversations about love, dating, and sex can sometimes focus primarily on what not to do, don't forget to provide clear language for what your students should do. Especially for your students with special needs, it's important to help them understand how we build relationships with one another through the languages of quality time, words of affirmation, physical touch, giving gifts, and acts of service, since these are all ways we can

show one another love, affection, and respect, both in romantic relationships and platonic friendships.

***Do you have more ideas for how to hack this series to better connect with middle schoolers, high schoolers, or students with special needs? Share your ideas in the Made By You section of the Grow website!***

## HOW TO PREP FOR THIS SERIES

### WHAT TO GET

If you want to try every Building Block mentioned in this series, here's what you'll need to buy, borrow, Google, or dig for in your storage closet . . .

#### WEEK 1:

- [This video clip](#), or something similar

#### WEEK 2:

- [This video clip](#), or something similar
- A brief video clip like [this](#) or [this](#) (but only if you're up for a little editing, since the entire clip isn't appropriate)
- A white board or pad of large paper and markers

#### WEEK 3:

- [This video clip](#), or something similar
- A white board or pad of large paper and markers
- Blank paper and pens for every student

#### WEEK 4:

- [This video clip](#), or something similar
- A table and tablecloth
- Two bowls
- A bag of kale
- A small carton of ice cream and an ice cream scoop (fun toppings are optional)
- A few assorted hand weights

### WHAT TO CUSTOMIZE

You know your students better than we do, so you'll probably want to customize a few things.

- **Sermon or Hybrid Teaching Guides:** Add your own stories, jokes, and any pop culture references that make sense for your group.
- **Small Group Guides:** If you make changes to your Sermon or Hybrid Teaching Guides, make sure your small group questions reflect those changes.
- **Graphics:** We've created a number of slides for you already, but we've also provided a blank slide in case you need to make your own.
- **Emails:** For every series, customize your weekly volunteer emails and your monthly parent email.

### WHAT TO PRINT

When you're done customizing, be sure to print . . .

- **Small Group or Hybrid Teaching Guides:** One for every small group leader or teacher, plus a few extras (just in case).

---


## WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

To make sure your volunteers and parents are prepared and in the loop . . .

- **Volunteer Emails:** We've written one volunteer email for every week of this series. After you've customized them, send them at least a few days in advance.
- **Parent Emails:** We've written one parent email for this series. After you've customized it, send it at least a few days before you begin this series.
- **Social Media:** We've also written some helpful social-media-sized posts for your parents and volunteers to go along with this series. You can find them in your **Parent** and **Volunteer Communication Guides** for this series. Use them wherever you communicate online.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

# TIM & TASHA LEVERT

 [tashalevert.com](http://tashalevert.com) & [broomtreecounseling.com](http://broomtreecounseling.com)  
 [instagram.com/timlevert](https://www.instagram.com/timlevert) & [tashalevert](https://www.instagram.com/tashalevert)  
 [twitter.com/timlevert](https://twitter.com/timlevert) & [tashalevert](https://twitter.com/tashalevert)



Tim and Tasha have been in youth ministry since 1992, although they look much too young to be so experienced. They've both earned PhD's (Tim's is in adolescent spiritual formation and Tasha's is in counseling) but please don't call them "doctor." They prefer to be called "Grandmaster T" and "Skinny Lady," respectively.

Tim is currently the High School Pastor at Hope Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, while Tasha does online counseling through Broomtree Counseling. Plus, Tim and Tasha are both writers, speakers, and worship leaders.

Outside of ministry, Tim and Tasha have been married for almost 25 years (should we repeat that "they look much too young" line again?) and originally met through a "set up" over a lunch of chicken and dumplings. Today, they have four teenagers, so they go through a lot of Ramen noodles.

Tim and Tasha's favorite hobbies are spending time as a family, playing music together, and crushing people at whatever game they're currently playing. They have a dog named Tobasco, once ate goat stew in Haiti, and if they had to quit their jobs in ministry to become professional street performers, they would try to make it as interpretive dancers who perform exclusively to love ballads of the mid-80s. If they could hang out with any celebrities in the world, Tasha would want to hang out with Bob Goff, while Tim would want to hang out with Justin Bieber. Sounds like a pretty weird double date.

If you'd like to connect with Tim and Tasha about youth ministry, board games, or why they love their home state of Louisiana so much, reach out! They'd love to chat.

**ALSO!**

This series was edited by Elle Campbell, April Diaz, Lynne Howard, Addison Roberts, and Nik Walborn. This series' *Hacks for Teenagers with Special Needs* were written by Regina Robinson. The graphics for this series were designed by Josh Gosney.



# WEEK 1

## SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 22:36-40  
Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9-17

## WHAT?

## WE'RE STARTING A NEW SERIES

### POLL | What do you think about dating?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a live digital poll with a service like [polleverywhere.com](http://polleverywhere.com) so students can participate in the poll anonymously and you can show the results on-screen. You could either give students a few moments to respond to the questions when you begin teaching or you can provide instructions for how to participate before the service begins so you have time to review the results. Use this poll as an opportunity to learn about your students, so ask straightforward questions you want to know the answers to, like: Have you ever dated someone? Are you dating someone right now? At what age were you allowed to get your first boyfriend or girlfriend? What do you think is a good age to start dating? So far, has dating made your life better, worse, or neither? Get creative!
- Today we're starting a four-week series about dating and what it means to be "meant to be" in our relationships. But first, let's take a look at those survey results. *Show and talk about the results.*

### QUESTION | What's your favorite on-screen romance and why?

- Give a few students a chance to respond.
- In most of those examples you just gave, I think it would be appropriate to say those couples were all definitely "meant to be."
- That's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love, isn't it? It's as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. But you can't exactly use those relationships as models for your own, can you?



### QUESTION | What unrealistic dating advice do those movies give us?

- If we took these movies or TV shows literally, we'd have to do some pretty crazy things in order to get a date or fall in love. What's one way your favorite movie romance is totally unrealistic?
- *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- Our favorite movies definitely paint some unrealistic expectations of what love and dating is like in the real world. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, or maybe our favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—I'm confused. Is *that* how relationships are meant to be?"

### DATING IS . . .

- There are three reasons we're going to spend an entire month talking about dating.
  - **DATING IS COMPLICATED.** It can be easy to look at someone in a happy, healthy relationship and think they were just "meant to be." Maybe that's true, but it's also true that love is pretty complicated for the rest of us.
  - **DATING IS HARD TO TALK ABOUT.** It seems like everyone has an opinion about dating and none of those opinions are the same. It's hard to know who to talk to and which opinions to trust.
  - **DATING IS CONFUSING.** You probably have some questions about dating, right?

### DISCUSSION | What are some questions you or your friends have about dating?

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

### VIDEO | When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews

- I get it! When I was your age, I had the same kinds of questions.
- It seems like every movie tells us that love is something you just fall into, doesn't it? Like if it's "meant to be," you'll just know! Kind of like these ridiculously adorable couples . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the first 1:20 of [this clip](#). You'll return to this video each week of the series.*

## SO WHAT?

### STORY | Talk about your experience with dating in middle or high school.

- I think we'd all agree that a relationship like those relationships we just heard about would be the goal, right? We all want to find someone we're madly in love with, who sticks with us no matter what, and who we can grow old and maybe start a family with. We want a partner.
- But . . . how do we find that special someone? How will we know when we've found them? And what do we do in the meantime, before we're ready to really "settle down"?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give your students some insight into your experience or state of mind on this subject when you were their age. Were you dating? Did you want to date? Did you get turned down by your crush? What were your biggest worries, problems, or questions about love? The point of this story is to be relatable, not to point to your teenage years as a perfect model of teenage relationships.*



## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DATING

- Looking back on my teenage years, there are definitely things I regret about the way I saw and handled my relationships. I would have loved a dating instruction manual.
- Unfortunately, I don't have a dating instruction manual to give to you. I wish I could tell you God gave us one, but to be honest, the Bible doesn't really give any specific advice about dating.
  - Dating wasn't really a thing when the Bible was written.
  - Back then, people got married really young—like, right after puberty.
  - Most marriages were arranged by people's parents.
  - And neither Tinder nor ChristianMingle.com had been invented yet.
- So the Bible doesn't really have anything to say about dating specifically. But Jesus did give us a guiding passage about relationships that I want to take a look at together.

### SCRIPTURE | Matthew 22:36-40

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 22:36-40.*
- I know, I know—at first glance, this passage has nothing at all to do with dating. It's not like Jesus said, "The greatest commandment is to wait until you're sixteen to date and also not to have sex before marriage!" But hang with me for a second. I think you're going to see that this passage actually has *everything* to do with dating.
- In this conversation, Jesus said that loving God is the most important thing you can do. But then He follows it up by explaining that loving God is connected to loving people. I think it's safe to assume Jesus was talking about all people—including the people we choose to date and marry.
- So before we go any further with this conversation about love and relationships with people, I think we need to start where Jesus started: with the most important kind of love and relationship there is. Let's start with our love for, and relationship with, the God who created us.
- If we don't first love God well, we'll never be able to love people (or date them) well.

### SCRIPTURE | Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9

- Let's see what else the Bible has to say about relationships.
- **GOD EXISTS IN COMMUNITY:** *Read Genesis 1:26.*
  - God has always existed as one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - God is a relational God.
- **GOD MADE US TO EXIST IN COMMUNITY:** *Read Genesis 2:18.*
  - We were created in God's image, designed to reflect Him and His character.
  - Just like He is a relational God, we are relational people and have a deep longing to live in a way that is connected with other people.
- **GOD MADE US TO EXIST IN COMMUNITY WITH HIM:** *Read John 15:9.*
  - Sometimes we make the mistake of ignoring this part of our design. We try to fill the need in our hearts with a relationship with a person, rather than a relationship with our Creator.
  - We are designed to crave relationships with other people, but a relationship with Jesus, your Creator, is the first and best way to satisfy your need for connection. Then let your other relationships follow. That's why Jesus said to love God before He said to love others.
  - **Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.**

## NOW WHAT?

### DISCUSSION | What do you think?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss the following statements.
- I'm going to give you a few statements to think about. Then I want to hear if you agree, disagree, or aren't sure what you think, and why.
  - If you're hoping a guy or girl will satisfy your loneliness, then you will always feel alone.
  - If you're not at peace with God without a boyfriend or girlfriend, then you won't be at peace with God if you have one.
  - If you want a great dating relationship, then you've first got to be okay with not having one.

## ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

- I could give you all of my personal opinions about dating and relationships, but I don't think that's going to be all that helpful for you. I believe the best questions lead us to the best answers. So instead of giving you the "right" answers, I want to give you good questions.
- Based on what we've talked about today, I think there are three big questions I would encourage you to ask and talk about in your small groups:
  - **IS THIS THE RIGHT TIME FOR ME TO DATE?** Do you think you're old enough? Do you think it's the right time in your life? At this moment, do you believe you can make wise dating decisions based on Biblical values? The answer to all of those questions may be "yes," but that's not for me to say. That's something for you to examine honestly.
  - **DO I EVEN WANT TO DATE?** The world we live in makes dating seem mandatory—like if you don't have a boyfriend or girlfriend, or you haven't checked certain things off your relationship "To-Do List," that you're missing something. But I'm here to tell you that's not true. There is nothing wrong with not wanting to date right now. If you want to focus on you, your friends, and your relationship with God, that is totally okay.
  - **HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I'M READY?** I'm not sure there's one answer to this, but here are a few thoughts. If you're okay with not dating, you might be ready to date. If you're clear about what boundaries you will not cross, you might be ready to date. If you're prepared to say "no" if someone wants to push you past those boundaries, you might be ready to date. If you're prepared to handle a break-up, you might be ready to date. But here's the most important one: if you already have a healthy and growing relationship with Jesus, you might be ready to date.
- Again, if you showed up tonight because you wanted some clear guidelines and instructions on how to date well, I'm sorry if I disappointed you. This subject can be unclear and confusing, but I hope that over the next few weeks we can get some clarity together.
- This week, though, there's one thing I hope we've made really clear: loving others well starts with loving God well. So in preparation for a month of these conversations about love and relationships, I want to challenge you to take a few steps closer to the God who created you and wants a relationship with you. Because **staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.**

# WEEK 1

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



### THIS SERIES

"We're meant to be." It's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love—as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, and favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—is *that* how relationships are meant to be?" In this 4-week series, you'll give students a better lens for evaluating their current and future dating relationships as you help them see that the secret to a relationship that's "meant to be" is to **stay close to Jesus, date with purpose, know who you're looking for, and keep sex in the right context.**

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.

#### THE BIBLE

Matthew 22:36-40  
Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9-17

- What has your experience with dating been so far?
- What questions do you have about dating?
- Do you think it's true that loving people well starts with loving God well? Explain!
- Read John 15:9-17. How could being connected to God influence the way you date?
- Which of these three statements do you find most challenging? Why?
  - 1) If you're hoping a guy or girl will satisfy your loneliness, then you will always feel alone.
  - 2) If you're not at peace with God without a boyfriend or girlfriend, then you won't be at peace with God with one.
  - 3) If you want a great dating relationship, then you first must be okay with not having one.
- On a scale of 1-5, how lonely do you usually feel without a boyfriend or girlfriend? How at peace with God are you? How content would you be without a boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Do you think it's the right time for you to date? Why or why not?
- Do you want to date right now? Why or why not?
- How do you think you'll know when you're ready to date?
- This week, what's one way you plan to prioritize loving God over loving a guy or girl?



# WEEK 1

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 22:36-40  
Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9-17

## WHAT?

## WE'RE STARTING A NEW SERIES

### POLL | What do you think about dating?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a live digital poll with a service like [pollev.com](https://pollev.com) so students can participate in the poll anonymously and you can show the results on-screen. You could either give students a few moments to respond to the questions when you begin teaching or you can provide instructions for how to participate before the service begins so you have time to review the results. Use this poll as an opportunity to learn about your students, so ask straightforward questions you want to know the answers to, like: Have you ever dated someone? Are you dating someone right now? At what age were you allowed to get your first boyfriend or girlfriend? What do you think is a good age to start dating? So far, has dating made your life better, worse, or neither? Get creative!
- Today we're starting a four-week series about dating and what it means to be "meant to be" in our relationships. But first, let's take a look at those survey results. *Show and talk about the results.*

### DISCUSSION | What's your favorite on-screen romance and why?

- Give a few students a chance to share and discuss.
- In most of those examples you just gave, I think it would be appropriate to say those couples were all definitely "meant to be."
- That's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love, isn't it? It's as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. But you can't exactly use those relationships as models for your own, can you?

### QUESTION | What unrealistic dating advice do those movies give us?

- If we took these movies or TV shows literally, we'd have to do some pretty crazy things in order to get a date or fall in love. What's one way your favorite movie romance is totally unrealistic?
- *Give a few students a chance to share and discuss.*
- Our favorite movies definitely paint some unrealistic expectations of what love and dating is like in the real world. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, or maybe our favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—I'm confused. Is *that* how relationships are meant to be?"

### DATING IS . . .

- There are three reasons we're going to spend an entire month talking about dating.
  - **DATING IS COMPLICATED.** It can be easy to look at someone in a happy, healthy relationship and think they were just "meant to be." Maybe that's true, but it's also true that love is pretty complicated for the rest of us.
  - **DATING IS HARD TO TALK ABOUT.** It seems like everyone has an opinion about dating and none of those opinions are the same. It's hard to know who to talk to and which opinions to trust.
  - **DATING IS CONFUSING.** You probably have some questions about dating, right?

### DISCUSSION | What are some questions your friends have about dating?

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

### DISCUSSION | What questions do you have about dating?

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

### VIDEO | When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews

- I get it! When I was your age, I had the same kinds of questions.
- It seems like every movie tells us that love is something you just fall into, doesn't it? Like if it's "meant to be," you'll just know! Kind of like these ridiculously adorable couples . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the first 1:20 of [this clip](#). You'll return to this video each week of the series.

## SO WHAT?

### STORY | Talk about your experience with dating in middle or high school.

- I think we'd all agree that a relationship like those relationships we just heard about would be the goal, right? We all want to find someone we're madly in love with, who sticks with us no matter what, and who we can grow old and maybe start a family with. We want a partner.
- But . . . how do we find that special someone? How will we know when we've found them? And what do we do in the meantime, before we're ready to really "settle down"?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students some insight into your experience or state of mind on this subject when you were their age. Were you dating? Did you want to date? Did you get turned down by your crush? What were your biggest worries, problems, or questions about love? The point of this story is to be relatable, not to point to your teenage years as a perfect model of teenage relationships.

### **DISCUSSION | What has your experience with dating been so far?**

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

## **WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DATING**

- Looking back on my teenage years, there are definitely things I regret about the way I saw and handled my relationships. I would have loved a dating instruction manual.
- Unfortunately, I don't have a dating instruction manual to give to you. I wish I could tell you God gave us one, but to be honest, the Bible doesn't really give any specific advice about dating.
  - Dating wasn't really a thing when the Bible was written.
  - Back then, people got married really young—like, right after puberty.
  - Most marriages were arranged by people's parents.
  - And neither Tinder nor ChristianMingle.com had been invented yet.
- So the Bible doesn't really have anything to say about dating specifically. But Jesus did give us a guiding passage about relationships that I want to take a look at together.

### **SCRIPTURE | Matthew 22:36-40**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 22:36-40.
- I know, I know—at first glance, this passage has nothing at all to do with dating. It's not like Jesus said, "The greatest commandment is to wait until you're sixteen to date and also not to have sex before marriage!" But hang with me for a second. I think you're going to see that this passage actually has *everything* to do with dating.
- In this conversation, Jesus said that loving God is the most important thing you can do. But then He follows it up by explaining that loving God is connected to loving people. I think it's safe to assume Jesus was talking about all people—including the people we choose to date and marry.
- So before we go any further with this conversation about love and relationships with people, I think we need to start where Jesus started: with the most important kind of love and relationship there is. Let's start with our love for, and relationship with, the God who created us.
- If we don't first love God well, we'll never be able to love people (or date them) well.

### **DISCUSSION | Do you think it's true that loving people well starts with loving God well? Explain and give an example.**

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

### **SCRIPTURE | Genesis 1:26, 2:18; John 15:9**

- Let's see what else the Bible has to say about relationships.
- **GOD EXISTS IN COMMUNITY:** Read Genesis 1:26.

- God has always existed as one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God is a relational God.
- **GOD MADE US TO EXIST IN COMMUNITY:** *Read Genesis 2:18.*
  - We were created in God's image, designed to reflect Him and His character.
  - Just like He is a relational God, we are relational people and have a deep longing to live in a way that is connected with other people.
- **GOD MADE US TO EXIST IN COMMUNITY WITH HIM:** *Read John 15:9.*
  - Sometimes we make the mistake of ignoring this part of our design. We try to fill the need in our hearts with a relationship with a person, rather than a relationship with our Creator.
  - We are designed to crave relationships with other people, but a relationship with Jesus, your Creator, is the first and best way to satisfy your need for connection. Then let your other relationships follow. That's why Jesus said to love God before He said to love others.
  - **Staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.**

### DISCUSSION | Read John 15:9-17. Based on this passage, how could being connected to God influence the way you date?

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

## NOW WHAT?

### DISCUSSION | What do you think?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss the following statements.
- I'm going to give you a few statements to think about. Then I want to hear if you agree, disagree, or aren't sure what you think, and why.
  - If you're hoping a guy or girl will satisfy your loneliness, then you will always feel alone.
  - If you're not at peace with God without a boyfriend or girlfriend, then you won't be at peace with God if you have one.
  - If you want a great dating relationship, then you've first got to be okay with not having one.

### DISCUSSION | Which of these three statements do you find most challenging? Why?

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

### DISCUSSION | On a scale of 1-5, how lonely do you usually feel without a boyfriend or girlfriend? How at peace with God are you? How content would you be without a boyfriend or girlfriend?

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



## ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

- I could give you all of my personal opinions about dating and relationships, but I don't think that's going to be all that helpful for you. I believe the best questions lead us to the best answers. So instead of giving you the "right" answers, I want to give you good questions.
- Based on what we've talked about today, I think there are three big questions I would encourage you to ask and talk about:
  - **IS THIS THE RIGHT TIME FOR ME TO DATE?** Do you think you're old enough? Do you think it's the right time in your life? At this moment, do you believe you can make wise dating decisions based on Biblical values? The answer to all of those questions may be "yes," but that's not for me to say. That's something for you to examine honestly.
  - **DO I EVEN WANT TO DATE?** The world we live in makes dating seem mandatory—like if you don't have a boyfriend or girlfriend, or you haven't checked certain things off your relationship "To-Do List," that you're missing something. But I'm here to tell you that's not true. There is nothing wrong with not wanting to date right now. If you want to focus on you, your friends, and your relationship with God, that is totally okay.
  - **HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I'M READY?** I'm not sure there's one answer to this, but here are a few thoughts. If you're okay with not dating, you might be ready to date. If you're clear about what boundaries you will not cross, you might be ready to date. If you're prepared to say "no" if someone wants to push you past those boundaries, you might be ready to date. If you're prepared to handle a break-up, you might be ready to date. But here's the most important one: if you already have a healthy and growing relationship with Jesus, you might be ready to date.

### DISCUSSION | Do you think it's the right time for you to date? Why or why not?

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

### DISCUSSION | Do you want to date right now? Why or why not?

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

### DISCUSSION | How do you think you'll know when you're ready to date?

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

### DISCUSSION | This week, what's one way you plan to prioritize loving God over loving a boyfriend or girlfriend?

- Give your students a few moments to share and discuss.
- Again, if you showed up tonight because you wanted some clear guidelines and instructions on how to date well, I'm sorry if I disappointed you. This subject can be unclear and confusing, but I hope that over the next few weeks we can get some clarity together.
- This week, though, there's one thing I hope we've made really clear: loving others well starts with loving God well. So in preparation for a month of these conversations about love and relationships, I want to challenge you to take a few steps closer to the God who created you and wants a relationship with you. Because **staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.**



## WEEK 2

### SERMON 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.
- Specifically, 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

- 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.

## 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.
- 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.*

### 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?

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

# WEEK 2

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



### THIS SERIES

"We're meant to be." It's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love—as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, and favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—is *that* how relationships are meant to be?" In this 4-week series, you'll give students a better lens for evaluating their current and future dating relationships as you help them see that the secret to a relationship that's "meant to be" is to **stay close to Jesus, date with purpose, know who you're looking for, and keep sex in the right context.**

### THIS WEEK

#### 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's the worst first date story you've ever heard or experienced?
- How do you know when a dating relationship isn't going anywhere good?
- How can dating as a teenager be a bad thing? How can it be a good thing?
- How do you think the world's purpose for dating might be different from God's purpose for dating?
- What's one example of a time when dating might be allowed, but isn't beneficial?
- Are you allowed to date? Do you think dating is, or could be, beneficial for you right now?
- Read Philippians 2:3-4. How can you date in a way that is others-focused instead of self-centered?
- If you're dating right now, what's one way you can begin to date with greater purpose?
- If you're not dating anyone right now, what can you do now to make sure your future dating relationships happen on purpose?
- What questions do you still have about dating?



# 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.



## WEEK 3

### SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.

### THE BIBLE

II Corinthians 6:14-15  
Proverbs 1:5, 3:1-35

### WHAT?

## WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 3 OF THIS SERIES

### VIDEO | *When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play 2:08-3:24 of [this clip](#). You'll return to this video each week of the series.
- I'm not totally sure what a "good melon" looks like, but I love the way these couples seemed to have just "known" they were right for each other.
- That kind of thing doesn't happen very often though. It's not every day that you meet someone with a real-life "love at first sight" kind of story. For most people, figuring out if the person you're interested in or already dating is the "right one" for you is a pretty long and confusing process.
- For the last couple of weeks, we've been talking about dating and relationships. First, we said that if we want to have great dating relationships, we need to start by loving God well because staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.
- Last week, we talked about how you can know if you're ready to date or not. We said a big part of it comes down to understanding that the purpose of dating isn't just to have fun—it's to lead toward marriage. So be intentional with your dating.
- But today I don't want to talk about *how* you date. I want to talk about *who* you date.

### STORY | **Talk about your journey toward finding "the one."**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Whether you're married, single, or dating, share a personal story with your students about your journey toward trying to find someone you love. It could be a story with a happy ending or a break-up ending. The point is that you give students a little insight into your personal life.*

## SO WHAT?

### ACTIVITY | Designing the Perfect Partner

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Using a white board or pad of large blank paper, brainstorm the qualities of the perfect boyfriend or girlfriend.*
- Finding the perfect person for you is no easy task, but it's made extra complicated by the fact that the world around us is sending us so many messages about who that "perfect person" is. Sometimes it's hard to tell dreams from reality.
- Let's take a minute and describe the "perfect" boyfriend or girlfriend, based on the world's standards. What would you include?

### QUESTION | How reasonable is this description?

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

### QUESTION | How do you think these values line up with God's values?

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

## WHO GOD SAYS (NOT) TO DATE

### SCRIPTURE | II Corinthians 6:14-15

- The Bible gives lots of general guidance about the type of person you should be *and* be looking for, but there's one specific passage I want to look at right now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Corinthians 6:14-15.*
- Ouch. These are intense words from Paul, the author of this book. If you're a Jesus-follower, Paul says not to team up with someone who doesn't believe like you.
- Maybe that seems harsh, but the apostle Paul (the author of this passage) isn't suggesting that you judge, or ignore, or feel superior to someone who doesn't believe like you do. He's just saying not to team up, partner with, or tie yourself to them in an intimate way—and this is never more relevant or important than when we're talking about dating.
- Dating is already pretty difficult and complicated, even when you both share the same values. It's nearly impossible if you don't.
- Now if you're thinking right now about a certain really cute guy or girl who doesn't know Jesus, you might also be thinking, "Well, if we start dating, I can help them get to know Jesus." Uh, yeah, that hardly ever works. But if you're considering it, here are a few things to think about . . .
  - If they started coming to church with you, how could you be sure their interest in God was authentic?
  - If you date and then break up, what do you think might happen to their faith afterward?
  - If your motive is to truly introduce them to Jesus, why couldn't you do that as a friend?
- I understand the temptation, but I also know that it's messy. And since (like we learned last week) the goal of dating is to lead toward marriage, is that really something you'd want to risk?

### DISCUSSION | Why would the Bible give us this instruction?

- What do you think? Whether you like it or not, why do you think the Bible tells us, as Christ-followers,

to not become relationally tied with someone who isn't also a Christ-follower?

- Give your students a few minutes to share and discuss.
- If dating leads to marriage, could you imagine spending the rest of your life with a partner who didn't agree with you regarding the most important area of your life?
- Maybe this feels like a heavy subject, but dating is a big deal.
- 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.

### SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 1:5

- Let's take a look at another passage of Scripture. This is from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs are short, memorable guidelines for living wisely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Proverbs 1:5.
- When it comes to our dating relationships, we absolutely must continue to grow in wisdom.
- Our relationships impact us, our faith, and our futures deeply. We can't make decisions about them based purely on feelings or attraction. We must use wisdom and discernment.
- When it comes to your dating life, you can show wisdom and discernment by thinking carefully not only about how you date, but who you date as well.
- **Dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.**

## NOW WHAT?

## KNOW WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- If you want the kind of relationship that feels "meant to be," there are a few things you need to know. You need to know . . .
  - **WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.** Like we've said, **dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.** Set high standards for the kind of person you want to be with and then keep those standards. Don't settle. Be honest about what you're looking for. If your list is superficial, work on your own heart. Here are a few non-superficial things to consider:
    - You are compatible spiritually. That means you are on the same level and support each other's spiritual growth.
    - You are compatible intellectually. When you talk (and you should do that often), it means you feel challenged and energized by your conversations with them.
    - You are compatible emotionally. That means you both feel understood, supported, and free to be honest with each other about how you feel.
    - You are compatible socially. You're not embarrassed by them when you're with your friends or family.
    - You are compatible physically. That means you set healthy boundaries and learn to express affection in ways that don't compromise those boundaries.



- **HOW TO BREAK UP.** This isn't fun to talk about, but it's important. Even that brand new, sparkly, exciting relationship you just started has a pretty good chance at someday coming to an end. Think about it. Every dating relationship ends in one of two ways: marriage or a break-up. You only need one successful dating experience. So don't settle too early—break-ups are okay. Here's how to do it well . . .
  - Be personal. Break up face-to-face. Not via text. Look them in the eye. Don't ghost them. Treat them with the respect they deserve as someone who is loved by God.
  - Be kind. Tell the truth, but speak with love. Don't give them a fake reason for ending it. Once you break up, stop texting, calling, and liking their pics. It may not have to last forever, but it should last for a season. Be kind during and after the break-up. Only speak positively about your ex, even if they're being a total jerk. Take the high road.
  - Be respectful. Keep things private, but not secret. Privacy is how you honor them by not sharing details with anyone who doesn't need to know. Secrecy is keeping the details from everyone, including the people you trust—don't do that.

## WHO YOU NEED TO BE

- It's important to know who you're looking for, but it's even more important to be the kind of person worthy of the person you're looking for. If you want the kind of relationship that feels "meant to be," then you need to be someone who . . .
  - **LOVES GOD.** Like we learned a couple of weeks ago, a relationship with Jesus will make any relationship better. Love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Follow His commands. Pursue wisdom and Christlike living.
  - **LOVES YOU.** Like we talked about several times this series, God created you uniquely. If you want a healthy relationship with someone else, you need to have a healthy relationship with yourself and the identity that God has given you. If you are insecure, lonely, or unhappy with who you are, a relationship will not fix it. Only you and God can fix that. If you're not healthy without someone, you won't be healthy with someone.
  - **LOVES OTHERS.** Dating is not all about you. It is a partnership and a relationship with another person—a person made in the image of God, loved, and cherished by Him. If you are walking into a relationship focused primarily on what you can get out of it, you shouldn't be in the relationship. Be someone who loves others, even more than yourself.

## RESPONSE | A Letter to You

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song, "God, I look to You" by Bethel Music during this response time.
- For the next few moments, I want us to reflect and respond to God about this last part of our conversation. Being in a romantic relationship is not the ultimate goal of life, but being in a relationship with God, your Creator, is. So spend a few moments writing a letter to God about who you are and who you are becoming. Ask God to help you find rest in your relationship with Him, no matter what. Remember, the best relationships come from staying close to Jesus. Use this time to move closer to Jesus.

# WEEK 3

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



### THIS SERIES

"We're meant to be." It's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love—as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, and favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—is *that* how relationships are meant to be?" In this 4-week series, you'll give students a better lens for evaluating their current and future dating relationships as you help them see that the secret to a relationship that's "meant to be" is to **stay close to Jesus, date with purpose, know who you're looking for, and keep sex in the right context.**

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

Dating on purpose means  
you know who you're looking for.

#### THE BIBLE

II Corinthians 6:14-15  
Proverbs 1:5, 3:1-35

- **Do you believe everyone has one "soul mate"? Why or why not?**
- **How do you decide whether or not you're attracted to someone?**
- **How do you decide whether or not you might like to date someone?**
- **Have you ever dated someone who didn't share your faith? What happened?**
- **Read Proverbs 3:1-35. List 10 qualities or behaviors you should look for in a partner.**
- **Which of these qualities do you have? Which do you need to develop?**
- **Which do you think is the most difficult to find: someone who is compatible with you spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially, or physically? Why?**
- **Which of those five areas is most important to you? What about least? Why?**
- **What is your biggest worry or question about breaking up with someone?**
- **What's your next step toward identifying the person you're looking for? What about becoming the kind of person someone else might be looking for?**



# WEEK 3

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.

### THE BIBLE

II Corinthians 6:14-15  
Proverbs 1:5, 3:1-35

### WHAT?

## WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 3 OF THIS SERIES

### VIDEO | *When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play 2:08-3:24 of [this clip](#). You'll return to this video each week of the series.
- I'm not totally sure what a "good melon" looks like, but I love the way these couples seemed to have just "known" they were right for each other.
- That kind of thing doesn't happen very often though. It's not every day that you meet someone with a real-life "love at first sight" kind of story. For most people, figuring out if the person you're interested in or already dating is the "right one" for you is a pretty long and confusing process.
- For the last couple of weeks, we've been talking about dating and relationships. First, we said that if we want to have great dating relationships, we need to start by loving God well because staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.
- Last week, we talked about how you can know if you're ready to date or not. We said a big part of it comes down to understanding that the purpose of dating isn't just to have fun—it's to lead toward marriage. So be intentional with your dating.
- But today I don't want to talk about *how* you date. I want to talk about *who* you date.

### DISCUSSION | Do you believe everyone has one "soul mate"? Why or why not?

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

**DISCUSSION | How do you decide whether or not you're attracted to someone?**

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

**DISCUSSION | How do you decide whether or not you might like to date someone?**

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

**STORY | Talk about your journey toward finding "the one."**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Whether you're married, single, or dating, share a personal story with your students about your journey toward trying to find someone you love. It could be a story with a happy ending or a break-up ending. The point is that you give students a little insight into your personal life.*

SO WHAT?

**ACTIVITY | Designing the Perfect Partner**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Using a white board or pad of large blank paper, brainstorm the qualities of the perfect boyfriend or girlfriend.*
- Finding the perfect person for you is no easy task, but it's made extra complicated by the fact that the world around us is sending us so many messages about who that "perfect person" is. Sometimes it's hard to tell dreams from reality.
- Let's take a minute and describe the "perfect" boyfriend or girlfriend, based on the world's standards. What would you include?

**DISCUSSION | How reasonable is this description?**

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

**DISCUSSION | How do you think these values line up with God's values?**

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

**WHO GOD SAYS (NOT) TO DATE**

**SCRIPTURE | II Corinthians 6:14-15**

- The Bible gives lots of general guidance about the type of person you should be *and* be looking for, but there's one specific passage I want to look at right now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Corinthians 6:14-15.*
- Ouch. These are intense words from Paul, the author of this book. If you're a Jesus-follower, Paul says not to team up with someone who doesn't believe like you.
- Maybe that seems harsh, but the apostle Paul (the author of this passage) isn't suggesting that you judge, or ignore, or feel superior to someone who doesn't believe like you do. He's just saying not to team up, partner with, or tie yourself to them in an intimate way—and this is never more relevant or important than when we're talking about dating.

### **DISCUSSION | Have you ever dated someone who didn't share your faith? What happened? What did you learn?**

- Give your students a few minutes to share and discuss.
- Dating is already pretty difficult and complicated, even when you both share the same values. It's nearly impossible if you don't.
- Now if you're thinking right now about a certain really cute guy or girl who doesn't know Jesus, you might also be thinking, "Well, if we start dating, I can help them get to know Jesus." Uh, yeah, that hardly ever works. But if you're considering it, here are a few things to think about . . .
  - If they started coming to church with you, how could you be sure their interest in God was authentic?
  - If you date and then break up, what do you think might happen to their faith afterward?
  - If your motive is to truly introduce them to Jesus, why couldn't you do that as a friend?
- I understand the temptation, but I also know that it's messy. And since (like we learned last week) the goal of dating is to lead toward marriage, is that really something you'd want to risk?

### **DISCUSSION | Why would the Bible give us this instruction?**

- What do you think? Whether you like it or not, why do you think the Bible tells us, as Christ-followers, to not become relationally tied with someone who isn't also a Christ-follower?
- Give your students a few minutes to share and discuss
- If dating leads to marriage, could you imagine spending the rest of your life with a partner who didn't agree with you regarding the most important area of your life?
- Maybe this feels like a heavy subject, but dating is a big deal.
- 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.

### **SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 1:5**

- Let's take a look at another passage of Scripture. This is from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs are short, memorable guidelines for living wisely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Proverbs 1:5.
- When it comes to our dating relationships, we absolutely must continue to grow in wisdom.
- Our relationships impact us, our faith, and our futures deeply. We can't make decisions about them based purely on feelings or attraction. We must use wisdom and discernment.
- When it comes to your dating life, you can show wisdom and discernment by thinking carefully not only about how you date, but who you date as well.
- **Dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.**

### **DISCUSSION | Read Proverbs 3:1-35. Based on this passage, list 10 qualities or behaviors you should look for in a partner.**

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

## DISCUSSION | Which of these qualities do you have? Which do you need to develop?

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

## NOW WHAT?

## KNOW WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- If you want the kind of relationship that feels "meant to be," there are a few things you need to know. You need to know . . .
  - **WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.** Like we've said, **dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.** Set high standards for the kind of person you want to be with and then keep those standards. Don't settle. Be honest about what you're looking for. If your list is superficial, work on your own heart. Here are a few non-superficial things to consider:
    - You are compatible spiritually. That means you are on the same level and support each other's spiritual growth.
    - You are compatible intellectually. When you talk (and you should do that often), it means you feel challenged and energized by your conversations with them.
    - You are compatible emotionally. That means you both feel understood, supported, and free to be honest with each other about how you feel.
    - You are compatible socially. You're not embarrassed by them when you're with your friends or family.
    - You are compatible physically. That means you set healthy boundaries and learn to express affection in ways that don't compromise those boundaries.

## DISCUSSION | Which do you think is the most difficult to find: someone who is compatible with you spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially, or physically? Why?

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

## DISCUSSION | Which of those five areas is most important to you? Least? Why?

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

- **HOW TO BREAK UP.** This isn't fun to talk about, but it's important. Even that brand new, sparkly, exciting relationship you just started has a pretty good chance at someday coming to an end. Think about it. Every dating relationship ends in one of two ways: marriage or a break-up. You only need one successful dating experience. So don't settle too early—break-ups are okay. Here's how to do it well . . .
  - Be personal. Break up face-to-face. Not via text. Look them in the eye. Don't ghost them. Treat them with the respect they deserve as someone who is loved by God.

- Be kind. Tell the truth, but speak with love. Don't give them a fake reason for ending it. Once you break up, stop texting, calling, and liking their pics. It may not have to last forever, but it should last for a season. Be kind during and after the break-up. Only speak positively about your ex, even if they're being a total jerk. Take the high road.
- Be respectful. Keep things private, but not secret. Privacy is how you honor them by not sharing details with anyone who doesn't need to know. Secrecy is keeping the details from everyone, including the people you trust—don't do that.

### DISCUSSION | What is your biggest worry or question about breaking up?

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

### WHO YOU NEED TO BE

- It's important to know who you're looking for, but it's even more important to be the kind of person worthy of the person you're looking for. If you want the kind of relationship that feels "meant to be," then you need to be someone who . . .
  - **LOVES GOD.** Like we learned a couple of weeks ago, a relationship with Jesus will make any relationship better. Love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Follow His commands. Pursue wisdom and Christlike living.
  - **LOVES YOU.** Like we talked about several times this series, God created you uniquely. If you want a healthy relationship with someone else, you need to have a healthy relationship with yourself and the identity that God has given you. If you are insecure, lonely, or unhappy with who you are, a relationship will not fix it. Only you and God can fix that. If you're not healthy without someone, you won't be healthy with someone.
  - **LOVES OTHERS.** Dating is not all about you. It is a partnership and a relationship with another person—a person made in the image of God, loved, and cherished by Him. If you are walking into a relationship focused primarily on what you can get out of it, you shouldn't be in the relationship. Be someone who loves others, even more than yourself.

### RESPONSE | A Letter to You

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play the song, "God, I look to You" by Bethel Music during this response time.
- For the next few moments, I want us to reflect and respond to God about this last part of our conversation. Being in a romantic relationship is not the ultimate goal of life, but being in a relationship with God, your Creator, is. So spend a few moments writing a letter to God about who you are and who you are becoming. Ask God to help you find rest in your relationship with Him, no matter what. Remember, the best relationships come from staying close to Jesus. Use this time to move closer to Jesus.

### DISCUSSION | What's your next step toward identifying the person you're looking for? What about becoming the kind of person someone else might be looking for?

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





## WEEK 4

### SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive.

### THE BIBLE

Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 5:28  
1 John 1:9; Proverbs 4:23-27

### WHAT?

## WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 4 OF THIS SERIES

### VIDEO | *When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play 3:25-4:12 of [this clip](#).
- I have been loving these adorable stories of couples who have been in love for, like, ever.
- For the last few weeks, we've been exploring what it means to have a dating relationship that's "meant to be" according to God's design.
- First, we said that if we want to have great dating relationships, we need to start by loving God well because staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better. Next, we talked about how you can know if you're ready to date or not. We said a big part of it comes down to understanding that the purpose of dating isn't just to have fun—it's to lead toward marriage. And then last week, we talked about being wise with *who* you date.
- Today we're going to finish this series with a conversation that most of you in this room have either been waiting for or totally dreading—maybe a little bit of both. Today we're going to talk about sex.

### PROP | *Kale and Ice Cream*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before you teach, set up a table on stage. You may want to drape a tablecloth over the table so you can hide your props underneath it until you're ready to use them. As you teach, set two bowls onto a table in front of you. In one bowl, place a large handful of kale. In the second bowl, place a few scoops of ice cream. Feel free to decorate the ice cream with sprinkles and whipped cream for an added effect.

- But first . . . I want to talk about kale. And ice cream.
- If you've spent some time around church, you might have a certain impression about God's plan for sex. You might think of it like a bowl of kale. "Everyone says it's good for me. I mean, yeah, it's a little plain . . . a little hard to chew . . . and it kind of tastes like dirt. But it's good for me—I think."
- At the same time, the rest of the world talks about sex like they talk about ice cream. "It's amazing! It's exciting! It's so delicious! It makes me happy! I'm going to post about it on Instagram!" (Ice cream. I mean they post about ice cream.)
- Sometimes when you're trying to follow God's plan for sex, you might wonder if you're stuck eating kale while everyone else is eating ice cream. But the truth is just the opposite.

## SO WHAT?

### SEX HAS THREE DIMENSIONS

- God created sex. God created humans to enjoy sex in a way that honors Him.
- The world's understanding of sex is pretty upside down. It's often a purely physical thing.
- But God's plan for sex goes beyond just physical intimacy. God's plan for sex involves intimacy on three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. And it's fantastic!
- In our culture, sex is reduced to being one dimensional (physical). When people have sex outside of God's design, they might experience temporary pleasure but still feel unfulfilled and shameful.
- We're told a Biblical understanding of sex is old-fashioned, but I believe following God's design for sex will allow you to enjoy sex at a much more significant level—not just physical pleasure, but with emotional and spiritual fulfillment too.
- So it's kind of like God is the one giving us ice cream—but ice cream with all the health benefits of kale, and none of the dirt flavor.
- Here are three things God's plan for sex is all about . . .

## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT TRUST

### SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 3:5-6

- You can't talk about dating without some discussion of sex, but sex isn't the only thing we're going to talk about today. We're also going to talk about some creative date ideas and how following God's plan for your dating life really comes down to trust.
- One of the best-known passages of Scripture is a passage about trust.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 3:5-6.*

### PROP | Hand Weights

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *From underneath the table, remove a few weights of different sizes and weights. As you teach, lift the weights in a simple curl, starting with the lightest and moving to the heaviest.*
- "With all your heart" might seem like a big request, but trust is like building a muscle. You have to work it out for a muscle to grow. You start by trusting God with tiny things in your life and then, over time, you become able to trust Him with more—like His plan for your sex life.

**STORY | Talk about a time when you either struggled to trust God's plan for your relationships or when you decided to trust Him with it.**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story (or have another adult tell a story) about your experience with learning to trust God with your relationships, future marriage, or sex life. You might talk about a big mistake you made, what you learned from a failed relationship, or how someone else's story inspired you to choose God's plan for your sex life. Be transparent and authentic, but be sure to share a story that is appropriate and that your audience can identify with.

## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT LUST

**SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:28**

- God wants you to trust Him. But He also wants you to guard yourself against lust.
- If "lust" isn't a word you use in your everyday life, here's what I mean by that: lust is a desire to do something that you can't do in a Godly way.
- Maybe lust doesn't seem like that big of a deal, but check out what Jesus says about it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 5:28.
- Wow. According to Jesus, even looking at someone who is not your husband or wife with lust is the same as actually committing the act you're thinking about committing!
- Pornography is a huge problem.
  - There are so many reasons why it's harmful, but here are two: porn ruins lives because it only shows one dimension of sex (the physical aspect) and because it disrespects a person who is loved by God and made in His image.
  - If you are feeling stuck in a pornography habit, I need you to know two things: first, it's sin. But second, you can ask for help anytime, including today, from God and people you trust.
- Maybe you're thinking, "But I can't help it!" Well, Martin Luther once said, "You can't keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."
  1. **LOOK AWAY.** Whether it's someone in person, on TV, on social media, or on the internet, choose to look away.
  2. **DON'T LOOK BACK.** Sometimes we're blindsided by lust before we realize what we're doing. When you find yourself in that situation, stop.
- In both your online and off-line life, one lustful glance can quickly progress into something more.
- Your tendency may be to ask, "How far is too far?" But we think a better question is this: "What will help me stay closest to Jesus?"
- This matters to God and it should matter to us. Because here's what's true: **sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive**, but God's plan for sex will never harm you.

## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT GRACE

**SCRIPTURE | 1 John 1:9**

- This kind of stuff is hard to talk about, which means many of us enter our middle or high school years with very little guidance or information on what healthy, godly dating and sexuality look like.
- Because of that, I know many of you in this room are in very different places when it comes to sex and dating and relationships . . .

- Some of you have never had a boyfriend or girlfriend, while some of you have had several.
- Some of you may have never even looked at pornography, while some of you may have developed a habit.
- Some of you may be virgins, some of you may not be, and some of you may not be sure which category you fit into.
- No matter which of these descriptions you identify with, here's what I need you to know: you are so loved. You're loved by the people in this room and you're loved by the God who made you.
- There is not a single thing you could ever do, or that you've ever done, that will could God love you any less than He already does. He loves you. Period.
- If you've sensed today that there are aspects of your life that don't line up with God's plan for you and your relationships, here's a second thing I need you to know: there are no "points of no return" with God. God always forgives and restores. You are never beyond His reach.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read 1 John 1:9. Then read it again, slowly, for emphasis.*

## NOW WHAT?

### YOU HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE

- Sex is a powerful thing.
- When sex is kept in its proper context (the context designed by God, our creator) it can be seriously fulfilling and seriously fun. It's designed to be not just a physical act, but an emotional and spiritual connection too.
- But when sex is taken outside of its proper context, it can be seriously destructive. For both us and the people we date, sex outside of God's plan can damage our physical bodies, our emotional well-being, and our spiritual health.
- So you have a choice to make. Do you want to experience the amazing, fulfilling power of sex within God's plan? Or the destructive power of sex outside of that plan?

### PRAYER

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Spend some time in prayer with your students. Allow them to pray silently, but guide them with a few prompts. You may want to start by thanking God for the gift of sex in its proper context, then move toward a time of confession, and then close with an opportunity to make a commitment to godly sexuality. Don't make this a public commitment; simply let students have this conversation with God on their own.*
- No matter where you're at with this subject, I hope you remember how much you're loved. We want to see you experience all that God has for you because what God has planned is good.
- My hope and prayer for you is that you'll build your muscles of trust and faith in God so sex can be what it's been meant to be—seriously fulfilling, not seriously destructive.
- If you want to experience the goodness of God's plan for sex, trust Him, run from lust, and let God's grace redeem you from any past mistakes.

# WEEK 4

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



### THIS SERIES

"We're meant to be." It's how all of our favorite movies, songs, and books talk about love—as if the secret to an amazing relationship is a little bit of destiny, a whole bunch of feelings, and a tiny dash of magic. So it makes sense, when we observe the not-so-perfect, real-life relationships modeled by our friends, parents, and favorite celebrities, that we might start to wonder, "Wait—is *that* how relationships are meant to be?" In this 4-week series, you'll give students a better lens for evaluating their current and future dating relationships as you help them see that the secret to a relationship that's "meant to be" is to **stay close to Jesus, date with purpose, know who you're looking for, and keep sex in the right context.**

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

Sex can be seriously fulfilling  
or seriously destructive.

#### THE BIBLE

Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 5:28  
1 John 1:9; Proverbs 4:23-27

- **How often do your friends or peers talk about sex? What do they say?**
- **What's one question most people your age have about sex?**
- **Explain the difference between God's plan for sex and the world's approach to sex.**
- **How do you feel about God's plan for sex?**
- **How can sex outside God's design can be destructive physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?**
- **Do you think the consequences of sex outside of God's design are different or the same for guys and girls? Why do you think that?**
- **Read Proverbs 4:23-27. How can you put this passage into practice with sex and dating?**
- **Why do you think it can be so difficult to turn away from sexual sin?**
- **If you need help escaping a sexual sin, what should you do?**
- **What sexual boundaries have you set, or do you need to set, to stay close to Jesus?**
- **Instead of talking about what you *can't* do, let's talk about what you *can* do. Let's brainstorm some fun date ideas together.**



# WEEK 4

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

Sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive.

### THE BIBLE

Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 5:28  
1 John 1:9; Proverbs 4:23-27

### WHAT?

## WE'RE BACK FOR WEEK 4 OF THIS SERIES

### VIDEO | *When Harry Met Sally Couple Interviews*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play 3:25-4:12 of [this clip](#).
- I have been loving these adorable stories of couples who have been in love for, like, ever.
- For the last few weeks, we've been exploring what it means to have a dating relationship that's "meant to be" according to God's design.
- First, we said that if we want to have great dating relationships, we need to start by loving God well because staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better. Next, we talked about how you can know if you're ready to date or not. We said a big part of it comes down to understanding that the purpose of dating isn't just to have fun—it's to lead toward marriage. And then last week, we talked about being wise with *who* you date.
- Today we're going to finish this series with a conversation that most of you in this room have either been waiting for or totally dreading—maybe a little bit of both. Today we're going to talk about sex.

### DISCUSSION | **How often do your friends or peers talk about sex? What do they say?**

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

### DISCUSSION | **What's one question most people your age have about sex?**

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

## **DISCUSSION | How would you explain the difference between God's plan for sex and the world's approach to sex?**

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

## **DISCUSSION | How do you feel about God's plan for sex?**

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

## **PROP | Kale and Ice Cream**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before you teach, set up a table on stage. You may want to drape a tablecloth over the table so you can hide your props underneath it until you're ready to use them. As you teach, set two bowls onto a table in front of you. In one bowl, place a large handful of kale. In the second bowl, place a few scoops of ice cream. Feel free to decorate the ice cream with sprinkles and whipped cream for an added effect.
- We're going to talk about sex today. But first . . . I want to talk about kale. And ice cream.
- If you've spent some time around church, you might have a certain impression about God's plan for sex. You might think of it like a bowl of kale. "Everyone says it's good for me. I mean, yeah, it's a little plain . . . a little hard to chew . . . and it kind of tastes like dirt. But it's good for me—I think."
- At the same time, the rest of the world talks about sex like they talk about ice cream. "It's amazing! It's exciting! It's so delicious! It makes me happy! I'm going to post about it on Instagram!" (Ice cream. I mean they post about ice cream.)
- Sometimes when you're trying to follow God's plan for sex, you might wonder if you're stuck eating kale while everyone else is eating ice cream. But the truth is just the opposite.

## SO WHAT?

## **SEX HAS THREE DIMENSIONS**

- God created sex. God created humans to enjoy sex in a way that honors Him.
- The world's understanding of sex is pretty upside down. It's often a purely physical thing.
- But God's plan for sex goes beyond just physical intimacy. God's plan for sex involves intimacy on three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. And it's fantastic!
- In our culture, sex is reduced to being one dimensional (physical). When people have sex outside of God's design, they might experience temporary pleasure but still feel unfulfilled and shameful.
- We're told a Biblical understanding of sex is old-fashioned, but I believe following God's design for sex will allow you to enjoy sex at a much more significant level—not just physical pleasure, but with emotional and spiritual fulfillment too.
- So it's kind of like God is the one giving us ice cream—but ice cream with all the health benefits of kale, and none of the dirt flavor.
- Here are three things God's plan for sex is all about . . .



## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT TRUST

### SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 3:5-6

- You can't talk about dating without some discussion of sex, but sex isn't the only thing we're going to talk about today. We're also going to talk about some creative date ideas and how following God's plan for your dating life really comes down to trust.
- One of the best-known passages of Scripture is a passage about trust.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 3:5-6.*

### PROP | Hand Weights

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *From underneath the table, remove a few weights of different sizes and weights. As you teach, lift the weights in a simple curl, starting with the lightest and moving to the heaviest.*
- "With all your heart" might seem like a big request, but trust is like building a muscle. You have to work it out for a muscle to grow. You start by trusting God with tiny things in your life and then, over time, you become able to trust Him with more—like His plan for your sex life.

### STORY | Talk about a time when you either struggled to trust God's plan for your relationships or when you decided to trust Him with it.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have another adult tell a story) about your experience with learning to trust God with your relationships, future marriage, or sex life. You might talk about a big mistake you made, what you learned from a failed relationship, or how someone else's story inspired you to choose God's plan for your sex life. Be transparent and authentic, but be sure to share a story that is appropriate and that your audience can identify with.*

## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT LUST

### SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:28

- God wants you to trust Him. He also wants you to guard yourself against lust.
- If "lust" isn't a word you use in your everyday life, here's what I mean by that: lust is a desire to do something you can't do in a Godly way.
- Maybe lust doesn't seem like that big of a deal, but check out what Jesus says about it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 5:28.*
- Wow. According to Jesus, even looking at someone who is not your husband or wife with lust is the same as actually committing the act you're thinking about committing!
- Pornography is a huge problem.
  - There are so many reasons why it's harmful, but here are two: porn ruins lives because it only shows one dimension of sex (the physical aspect) and because it disrespects a person who is loved by God and made in His image.
  - If you are feeling stuck in a pornography habit, I need you to know two things: first, it's sin. But second, you can ask for help anytime, including today, from God and people you trust.
- Maybe you're thinking, "But I can't help it!" Well, Martin Luther once said, "You can't keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

1. **LOOK AWAY.** Whether it's someone in person, on TV, on social media, or on the internet, choose to look away.
2. **DON'T LOOK BACK.** Sometimes we're blindsided by lust before we realize what we're doing. When you find yourself in that situation, stop.

- In both your online and off-line life, one lustful glance can quickly progress into something more.
- Your tendency may be to ask, "How far is too far?" But we think a better question is this: "What will help me stay closest to Jesus?"
- This matters to God and it should matter to us. Because here's what's true: **sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive**, but God's plan for sex will never harm you.

### DISCUSSION | What's one way sex outside of God's design can be destructive physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?

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

### DISCUSSION | Do you think the consequences of sex outside of God's design are different or the same for guys and girls? Why do you think that?

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

### DISCUSSION | Read Proverbs 4:23-27. What's one way you can put this passage into practice when it comes to sex and dating?

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

## GOD'S PLAN IS ABOUT GRACE

### SCRIPTURE | 1 John 1:9

- This kind of stuff is hard to talk about, which means many of us enter our middle or high school years with very little guidance or information on what healthy, godly dating and sexuality look like.
- Because of that, I know many of you in this room are in very different places when it comes to sex and dating and relationships . . .
  - Some of you have never had a boyfriend or girlfriend, while some of you have had several.
  - Some of you may have never even looked at pornography, while some of you may have developed a habit.
  - Some of you may be virgins, some of you may not be, and some of you may not be sure which category you fit into.
- No matter which of these descriptions you identify with, here's what I need you to know: you are so loved. You're loved by the people in this room and you're loved by the God who made you.
- There is not a single thing you could ever do, or that you've ever done, that will could God love you any less than He already does. He loves you. Period.
- If you've sensed today that there are aspects of your life that don't line up with God's plan for you and your relationships, here's a second thing I need you to know: there are no "points of no return" with God. God always forgives and restores. You are never beyond His reach.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read 1 John 1:9. Then read it again, slowly, for emphasis.

**DISCUSSION | Why do you think it can be so difficult to turn away from sexual sin?**

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

**DISCUSSION | If you need help escaping a sexual sin, what should you do?**

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

NOW WHAT?

**YOU HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE**

- When sex is kept in its proper context (the context designed by God, our creator) it can be seriously fulfilling and seriously fun. It's designed to be not just a physical act, but an emotional and spiritual connection too. It's powerful!
- But when sex is taken outside of its proper context, it can be seriously destructive. For both us and the people we date, sex outside of God's plan can damage our physical bodies, our emotional well-being, and our spiritual health.
- So you have a choice to make. Do you want to experience the amazing, fulfilling power of sex within God's plan? Or the destructive power of sex outside of that plan?

**DISCUSSION | What sexual boundaries have you set, or do you need to set, in order to stay close to Jesus?**

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

**DISCUSSION | Instead of talking about what you *can't* do, let's talk about what you *can* do. Let's brainstorm some fun date ideas together.**

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

**PRAYER**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Spend some time in prayer with your students. Allow them to pray silently, but guide them with a few prompts. You may want to start by thanking God for the gift of sex in its proper context, then move toward a time of confession, and then close with an opportunity to make a commitment to godly sexuality. Don't make this a public commitment; simply let students have this conversation with God on their own.
- No matter where you're at with this subject, I hope you remember how much you're loved. We want to see you experience all that God has for you because what God has planned is good.
- My hope and prayer for you is that you'll build your muscles of trust and faith in God so sex can be what it's been meant to be—seriously fulfilling, not seriously destructive.
- If you want to experience the goodness of God's plan for sex, trust Him, run from lust, and let God's grace redeem you from any past mistakes.



# PARENT COMMUNICATION GUIDE



## INSTRUCTIONS

### WRITE AN EMAIL

If you haven't already, head to the Teaching section of your Grow downloads to get your Parent Email for this series. That email should include . . .

- Upcoming news and announcements.
- A look at what you're teaching.
- A helpful video, article, or resource.
- A survey or feedback question.

### BROADCAST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you have your monthly email written, you can repurpose the content in that email on your social media platforms. For parents, we recommend creating a **Facebook page to broadcast information** and a **Facebook group to start conversations**.

In addition to what we've provided in your Parent Email for this series, there are a few more things you might want to broadcast on social media while you're teaching this series (along with some of the graphics or videos we've provided). Just copy from the next column, paste into your favorite social media scheduling tool (like [Buffer](#)), and go!

Hey parents! We're starting a new series on dating this week called Meant to Be. This series will include a conversation about S-E-X, so check your email for the details!

Week 1 of Meant to Be is in the books! Here's the recap: staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.

This week in our series Meant to Be, we talked about how the purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.

In Week 3 of Meant to Be, here was our big idea: dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.

It's our final week of Meant to Be! It's been a great conversation with your teenagers. Here's where we left things: sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive.

### START CONVERSATIONS

Since communicating with parents isn't only about broadcasting information to them, don't forget to start a conversation or two during this series too. Whether it's in a private Facebook group, a GroupMe thread, or an in-person meeting, ask parents for their feedback, thoughts, and ideas about how this series is impacting their kids.



# VOLUNTEER

## COMMUNICATION GUIDE



### INSTRUCTIONS

## WRITE AN EMAIL

If you haven't already, head to the Teaching section of your Grow downloads to get your Volunteer Emails for this series. They'll include . . .

- Upcoming news and announcements.
- A look at what you're teaching.
- A helpful video, article, or resource.
- A practical tip or quote.
- A survey or feedback question.

## BROADCAST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you have your monthly email written, you can repurpose the content in that email on your social media platforms. For volunteers, we recommend communicating through an app like GroupMe or a **private volunteer Facebook group**.

In addition to what we've provided in your Volunteer Emails for this series, there are a few more things you might want to broadcast on social media while you're teaching this series (along with some of the graphics or videos we've provided). Just copy from the next column, paste into your favorite social media scheduling tool (like [Buffer](#)), and go!

Hey team! We're starting a new series on dating this week called Meant to Be. This series will include a conversation about S-E-X, so check your email for the details!

Week 1 of Meant to Be is coming up this week! Here's where we're headed: staying close to Jesus makes every relationship better.

This week in Meant to Be, we're talking about how the purpose of dating is to lead toward marriage.

In Week 3 of Meant to Be, here's the big idea: dating on purpose means you know who you're looking for.

It's our final week of Meant to Be! It's been a great conversation so far. Here's where we're leaving things this week: sex can be seriously fulfilling or seriously destructive.

## START CONVERSATIONS

Since communicating with volunteers isn't only about broadcasting information to them, don't forget to start a conversation or two during this series too. Whether it's in your private Facebook group, a GroupMe thread, or an in-person meeting, ask your volunteers for their feedback, thoughts, and ideas about how this series is impacting the students they're leading.