

## ABOUT THIS SERIES

When it comes to faith and dating, students often feel there isn't much guidance. While the Bible doesn't specifically address dating, God's word provides plenty of clarity on how to treat and love others. In this series, we'll see that as we learn to apply those commands to dating, this complex topic becomes much simpler when we date and love others God's way.

**LEADER NOTE:** This series is not about pressuring students to date or shaming past choices, but about helping them see God's heart for healthy, Christ-centered relationships.

### WEEK 1 – Christ-Centered and Respectful

**TEXT:** Philippians 2:1-5

**BIG IDEA:** Just like all relationships, dating is meant to reflect Christlike love and respect.

**SUMMARY:** **Christ-centered dating isn't selfish or about seeking its own way; it seeks to honor God and the other person. Today's message is about what it looks like to respect God and the person you're dating.**

**Optional Interactive Element:** Anonymous Q&A submission system.

### WEEK 2 – Healthy Boundaries

**TEXT:** Proverbs 4:23

**BIG IDEA:** Boundaries in dating are about valuing one another as children of God.

**SUMMARY:** Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart." This is a call to be intentional about what you allow into your life. The goal of boundaries is not to ruin fun; it's to help us experience life as God designed it while protecting everyone involved. In this message, we want High Schoolers to know that boundaries include emotional, physical, digital, and spiritual. We want them to know that you don't set up boundaries because you're scared, but because you value your relationships with God, yourself, and others.

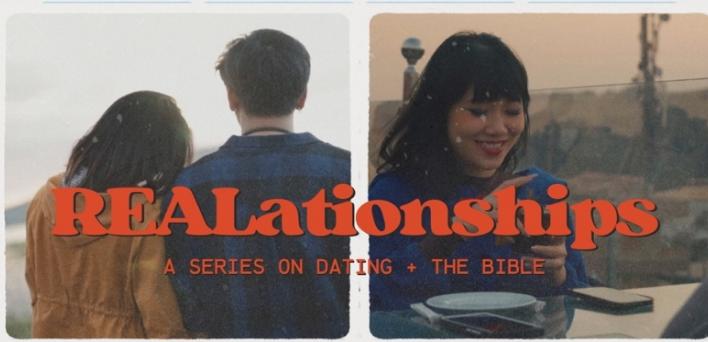
**DEFINITION OF BOUNDARIES:** Boundaries are decisions we make ahead of time that help us honor God and protect people

### WEEK 3 – REALationships Help Us Grow

**TEXT:** Proverbs 27:17

**BIG IDEA:** The best relationships challenge us and make us become more like Christ.

**SUMMARY:** A dating relationship centered on Christ will make you better, not hurt you or leave you with long-term scars. The purpose of dating isn't "chemistry"; it's character. In this message, we want to challenge students to consider choosing the person they will date and eventually marry not by feeling but by their ability to help one another grow in Christlikeness.



## PARENT EMAIL:

Hi Parents,

We wanted to take a moment to share about an upcoming teaching series in our High School Ministry called **REALationships**. Over the next 3 weeks, this series will focus on dating and relationships from a **biblically rooted, age-appropriate, and Christ-centered perspective**.

High school is a season where dating, attraction, and relational decisions become more real and more influential. Rather than avoiding those conversations, our desire is to help students think wisely and faithfully about relationships in light of Scripture.

Throughout this series, we'll be teaching on:

- How Jesus' way of life applies to dating, not just friendships or church settings
- Why healthy boundaries are an expression of love, value, and wisdom
- How the people we choose to date and spend time with shape who we are becoming

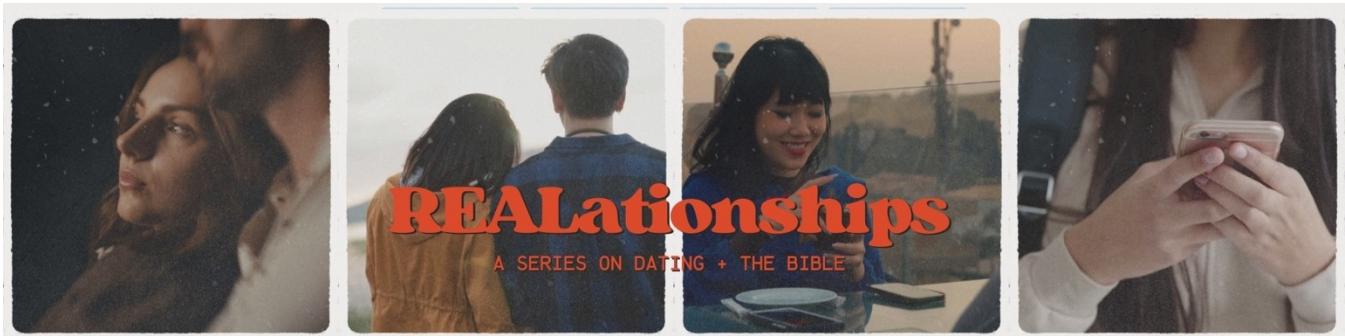
We want to be clear about our approach.

This series is **not about pressuring students to date**, nor is it about shaming past choices or prescribing rules. Instead, we're focused on helping students understand God's heart for relationships and how following Jesus shapes the way we love, pursue, and treat others.

When dating is discussed, it will be done honestly and directly—but always with **care, reverence, and biblical clarity**. We'll emphasize themes like character over chemistry, wisdom over impulse, and direction over perfection.

Our hope is that this series would **support and complement the conversations you're already having at home**, giving students a framework to think about relationships that honors God and values others as image-bearers.

If you have any questions about the content of the series or would like to continue the conversation, we'd love to connect with you. Thank you for trusting us to walk alongside you as you disciple your students.



WEEK 1 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
Just like all relationships, dating is meant to reflect Christlike love and respect.	Philippians 2:1-5

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

Christ-centered dating isn't selfish or about seeking its own way; it seeks to honor God and the other person. Today's message is about what it looks like to respect God and the person you're dating.

**LEADER NOTE:** This series is not about pressuring students to date or shaming past choices, but about helping them see God's heart for healthy, Christ-centered relationships.

### HOOK / STARTING IN SCRIPTURE

- Revisit Philippians 2:1–5 from the previous week
- Highlight Christlike humility, selflessness, and putting others first
- Establish that Jesus models one way of living for all relationships

### TENSION: DOES THIS APPLY TO DATING?

- Question the idea that some relationships are “different”
- Paul does not give different standards for different relationships
- Jesus models one consistent way of love in all situations
- Key idea: Feelings do not cancel Jesus’ way of life

### TRANSITION: SETTING UP THE SERIES

- Introduce REALationships as a series on applying biblical wisdom to dating
- Clarify that the series is not pressuring students to date
- Emphasize preparation over participation
- Key truth: Dating doesn't create new rules—it reveals what we believe about love

### TENSION: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT DATING?

- Cultural dating messages emphasize self-focus and feelings
- Feelings become the authority instead of Scripture
- Students can date someone and still treat them selfishly
- Philippians 2 confronts selfish dating mindsets

### APPLICATION: WHAT CHRIST-CENTERED DATING LOOKS LIKE

- Focus on motivation before behavior
- Key questions:
  - Why do I want to date?
  - What am I hoping to get from this person?

- Am I willing to put their good above my desires?
- Christ-centered dating values:
  - respect over pressure
  - clarity over manipulation
  - honesty over games
  - boundaries over impulse
- Key statement: The goal of dating isn't chemistry—it's character

---

### **PASTORAL CLARITY: GRACE & DIRECTION**

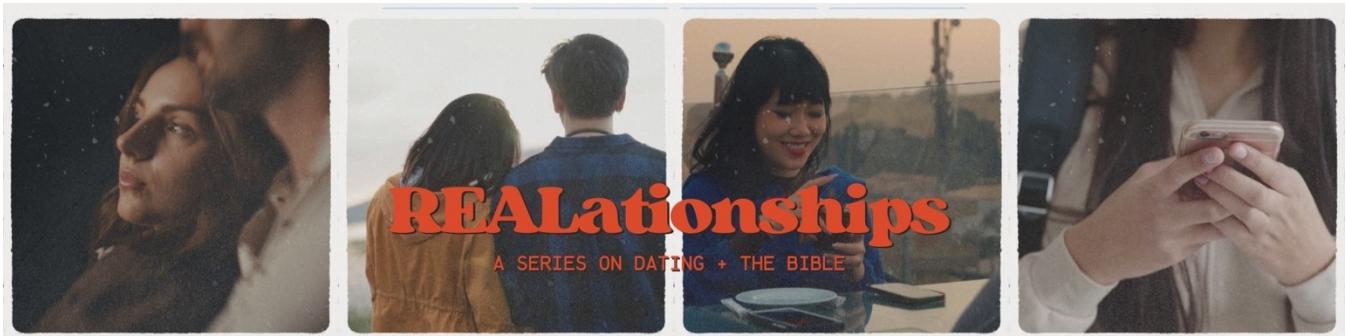
- Not about pressure, shame, or perfection
- Emphasize grace and growth
- Jesus invites students to let His way shape this area of life

---

### **LAND THE POINT**

- Dating reveals, not replaces, faith
- If Jesus is Lord, He gets a say in dating
- Christ-centered dating reflects Christlike love and respect

---



WEEK 1 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
Just like all relationships, dating is meant to reflect Christlike love and respect.	Philippians 2:1-5
<b>ABOUT THIS WEEK</b>	
<p>Christ-centered dating isn't selfish or about seeking its own way; it seeks to honor God and the other person. Today's message is about what it looks like to respect God and the person you're dating.</p> <p><b>LEADER NOTE:</b> This series is not about pressuring students to date or shaming past choices, but about helping them see God's heart for healthy, Christ-centered relationships.</p>	

#### HOOK: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5 NIV

- Hey everyone and welcome!
  - Before we get going, who was here last week when we closed out our series called "Follow me"?
    - That series was all about discipleship and what it actually means to call ourselves followers of Jesus.
    - And we talked about how following Jesus has implications on our relationships.
    - We read Philippians 2:1-5. As a matter of fact, let's read that again...
- READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5 NIV
  - Here, we see Jesus' way modeled for us and expected of us:
    - Paul describes a life shaped by:
      - Humility
      - Selflessness
      - Looking out for others
      - Not seeking your own way.

#### TENSION: DOES THIS APPLY TO DATING?

- But today I want to ask you a question we really didn't sit with last week:
  - Does that way of living apply everywhere, or are there areas of life where we quietly think, "This is different"?
- Notice what Paul doesn't do here:
  - He doesn't give different standards for different relationships.
  - He doesn't say...
    - ... Treat your parents with respect, but if you're dating someone, then you can do whatever you want.
    - ... Treat your small group leader like this, but treat your friends like that...
- Paul is teaching something to us that Jesus modeled.
  - Jesus didn't model multiple versions of love. He modeled one way of living. In all situations.
- Why do I bring this up? Because this means that the way Jesus calls us to live doesn't stop applying when feelings get involved.

#### TRANSITION: SET UP THE SERIES

- This week, we are starting a series of talks called “REALationships,” and we’re doing this because we know that some of you are in the place in life where you’re at least interested and starting to become interested in dating.
  - Now, while the Bible doesn’t talk about dating in particular, I hope you have already been able to see that the principle’s the Bible teaches – like the one in Philippians 2, shouldn’t only be true of us some of the time.
    - But instead, we want to see how we can apply biblical wisdom to an area of life that can be just flat out confusing.
- Now! Hear me say this: The purpose of these next few weeks is not to encourage you to date, but rather to prepare you.
  - Let’s be real: for some of you, the more we talk about this stuff, the more you’re ready to get out there and put it into practice. That’s not the point! This is about preparing you and helping you fix your eyes on Christ long before a guy or a girl comes along so that you can honor God when that season of life comes.
  - Because here’s some truth for you: Dating doesn’t create a new set of rules, it reveals what you already believe about love.

#### TENSION: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT DATING?

- And unfortunately, I think for most of us, dating starts off with the wrong mindset of selfishness:
  - For a lot of us, dating isn’t think about the others person. It’s a way to have our own needs met.
- Most dating advice—whether it comes from culture or even other students—sounds like this:
  - “Follow your heart.”
  - “Protect yourself.”
  - “Get what you need.”
  - “If it feels right, it must be right.”
- And the problem isn’t that feelings exist. The problem is when feelings become the authority.
- Here’s the tension:
  - You can date someone and still treat them selfishly.
  - You can be attracted to someone and still fail to love them well.
- Philippians 2 confronts that way of thinking.
  - Christ-centered love:
    - doesn’t ask, “*What can I get?*”
    - asks, “*How can I honor God and value this person?*”

#### APPLICATION: WHAT CHRIST-CENTERED DATING ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

- So what does it look like to apply Philippians 2 to dating?
  - It starts with motivation, not rules.
    - Ask yourself:
      - *Why do I want to date?*
      - *What am I hoping this person gives me?*
      - *Am I willing to put their good above my desires?*
- Christ-centered dating:
  - chooses respect over pressure
  - clarity over manipulation
  - honesty over games
  - boundaries over impulse
    - We’re going to talk about all of these in the coming weeks, by the way.
- And here’s a line worth sitting with: The goal of dating isn’t chemistry—it’s character.
  - Dating should help you become more like Jesus, not slowly pull you away from Him.
- That’s why the way you date matters just as much as who you date.

#### PASTORAL CLARITY: GRACE AND DIRECTION

- Let me say this clearly.
  - This isn’t about:
    - pressuring anyone to date
    - shaming past decisions
    - pretending mistakes don’t happen

---

- This is about direction, not perfection.
  - Philippians 2 isn't a standard we meet on our own. It's a way of life Jesus invites us into—with grace. Wherever you are right now, Jesus is inviting you to let His way shape this area too.

#### LANDING THE POINT:

- Dating doesn't sit outside your faith. It reveals your faith.
- If Jesus is Lord of your life, He also gets a say in how you love, how you pursue, and how you treat the people you date.
- Christ-centered dating reflects Christlike love and respect—just like every other relationship.





### TODAY'S MAIN POINT

Christ-centered dating seeks to honor God and value the other person.

### TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE(S)

Philippians 2:1-5

### TEACHING GOAL

This week, students heard that dating is not an exception to following Jesus, but an application of it. While the Bible doesn't talk about dating directly, Scripture clearly shows us how followers of Jesus are called to treat others—with humility, selflessness, and respect. This discussion helps students process how Jesus' way of living applies to dating and relationships in an honest, age-appropriate way.

### Let's Break the Ice

- Where do you think most people learn what dating should look like?
- What makes dating feel confusing or complicated for people our age?

### Transition:

Culture gives us a lot of messages about dating—but today we're asking what Scripture says about how we treat people we're interested in.

### Bible Study

**Read Together:** As a group, read **Philippians 2:1–5 (NIV)**.

### Discussion Questions:

- What words or ideas stand out to you in this passage?
- How does Paul describe the mindset of Jesus?
- What does humility look like in everyday relationships?
- Why do you think Paul's instructions apply to dating even though dating isn't mentioned?

### Make It Real:

**Leader Note:** Keep this focused on **heart posture and character**, not behaviors or rules.

- How does dating sometimes become more about what we get than how we treat the other person?
- What does it look like to value someone as a person, not a prize or a source of validation?
- Why do you think it's harder to live out Philippians 2 when feelings are involved?
- How could following Jesus change the way people approach dating?

## **Discipleship Moment**

### **Christ-Centered Dating Reflection:**

Invite students to silently reflect on these questions:

- Why do I want to date?
- What am I hoping a relationship gives me?
- Am I willing to put someone else's good ahead of my own desires?

Encourage students to pray:

"Jesus, help me love others the way You've loved me."

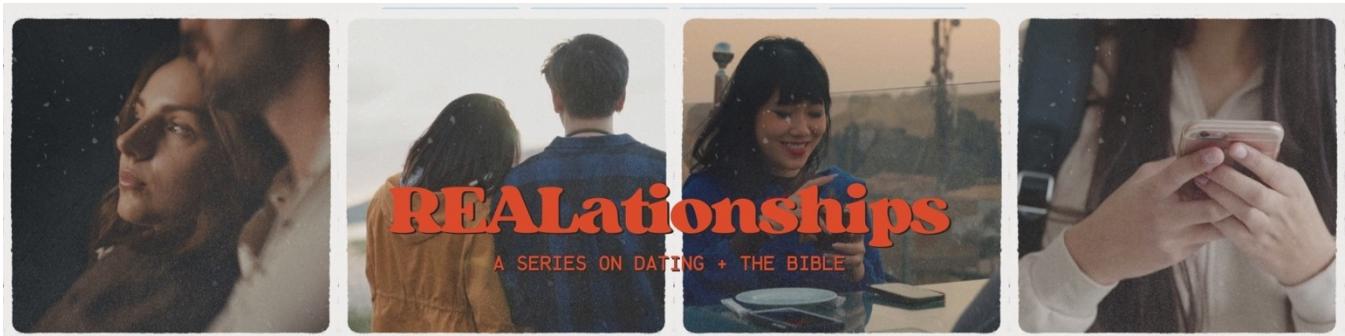
---

### **Share Requests:**

Invite students to share prayer requests or praises.

### **Group Prayer:**

Pray that God would shape students' hearts to reflect Jesus' humility and love, and help them honor God and others in every relationship.



WEEK 2 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
Boundaries in dating are about valuing one another as children of God	Proverbs 4:23

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

Students will understand that boundaries are wise, intentional decisions made ahead of time to honor God and protect themselves and others emotionally, physically, spiritually, and digitally—and that boundaries are an expression of love, not a lack of it.

#### HOOK (2–3 Minutes): Why Boundaries Get a Bad Reputation

- Boundaries are often seen as restrictive or joy-killing
- Especially in dating, boundaries can feel unnecessary or outdated
- Introduce the idea: boundaries aren't about fear—they're about value

#### SCRIPTURE (4–5 Minutes): Guard Your Heart

- Read Proverbs 4:23
- Biblical understanding of the “heart” (desires, decisions, direction)
- God’s call to guard the heart is about protection, not control
- What we allow close to our hearts shapes who we become

#### TRANSITION: Boundaries Are About Value

- Boundaries reflect how much we value:
  - our relationship with God
  - ourselves
  - the other person
- Boundaries communicate that relationships matter too much to be careless

#### TENSION (4–5 Minutes): What Happens Without Boundaries

- Most people don’t plan to cross lines—they fail to decide ahead of time
- Feelings often become the authority in dating relationships
- Without boundaries:
  - relationships move faster than wisdom
  - confusion and hurt increase
  - faith is slowly compromised
- Truth: boundaries don’t ruin relationships—lack of boundaries does

#### APPLICATION (5–6 Minutes): What Healthy Boundaries Are

- Definition: boundaries are decisions made ahead of time that honor God and protect people
- Boundaries apply to:

- emotional connection
- physical affection
- digital communication
- spiritual influence
- **Boundaries prioritize wisdom over impulse**

---

#### **PASTORAL CLARITY: Boundaries as an Act of Love**

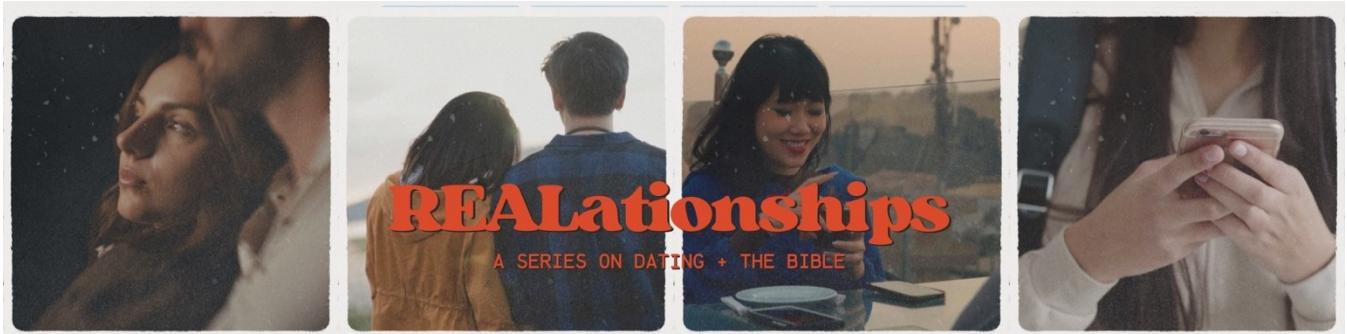
- **Boundaries are not about control or immaturity**
- **Healthy love honors boundaries**
- **Pressure against boundaries reveals important truths about a relationship**

---

#### **LAND THE POINT (2 Minutes)**

- **God calls us to guard our hearts because everything flows from it**
- **Healthy relationships are built intentionally**
- **Boundaries protect what matters most**

---



WEEK 2 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
Boundaries in dating are about valuing one another as children of God	Proverbs 4:23

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

Students will understand that boundaries are wise, intentional decisions made ahead of time to honor God and protect themselves and others emotionally, physically, spiritually, and digitally—and that boundaries are an expression of love, not a lack of it.

### OPENING: WHY BOUNDARIES GET A BAD REPUTATION

- Let me start with a question: What would you say is the opposite of the word “boundary”?
  - Maybe you think
    - Freedom?
    - Do or go wherever you want?
    - Unrestricted?
    - Rules?
    - Restrictions?
    - Things that ruin fun?
- If we’re honest, maybe not everybody, but some of you may think this same way when it comes to boundaries in dating.
- Boundaries often get framed as something Christians do because they’re scared or God is boring.
- But what if boundaries aren’t about fear at all? What if they’re about value?

### SCRIPTURE: PROVERBS 4:23 – GUARD WHAT MATTERS MOST

- READ PROVERBS 4:23**
- When the Bible talks about your heart, it's referring to your...
  - Emotions
  - Desires
  - Thoughts
  - Decisions
  - Direction
- So when God says “Guard your heart”, He’s not trying to control you, He’s trying to help protect you.
  - Because what you allow close to your heart shapes who you become

### TRANSITION: BOUNDARIES ARE ABOUT VALUE, NOT FEAR

- Here’s the shift we need to make:
  - You don’t set boundaries because ...
    - You’re scared of messing up
  - We set boundaries because
    - God values you

- You are called to value others
  - Relationships are powerful
- Establishing boundaries is our way of saying, “This matters too much to be careless with”.
  - That includes emotional boundaries:
    - Physical
    - Digital
    - Spiritual

#### TENSION: WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

- Most people don’t plan to cross lines, they just don’t decide to avoid them ahead of time.
  - And when emotions, attraction, and pressure show up, decision-making gets blurry.
- When boundaries aren’t established beforehand, feelings become the authority.
  - And feelings are real, but they are terrible leaders.
- Without boundaries...
  - Relationships move faster than wisdom
  - People feel used or confused
  - Breakups hurt more than they need to
  - Faith slowly gets pushed to the side
- Boundaries don’t ruin relationships; lack of boundaries does.

#### APPLICATION: WHAT HEALTHY BOUNDARIES ACTUALLY ARE:

- Boundaries are decisions we make ahead of time that help us honor God and protect people.
- Healthy boundaries ask meaningful questions:
  - What helps me follow Jesus well?
  - What protects my heart and the other person’s?
  - What keeps this relationship honest and clear?
- This might include:
  - Emotional dependence
  - Physical affection
  - Texting and late-night conversations
- Boundaries are not about:
  - Controlling someone
  - Manipulating outcomes
  - Proving maturity
- They’re about choosing wisdom over impulse.

#### PASTORAL CLARITY: BOUNDARIES ARE AN ACT OF LOVE

- Let me be clear...
  - Boundaries mean
    - You care deeply enough to take action
    - You respect the other person
    - You want what’s best, not just what feels good
- If someone pushes you against your boundaries, that tells you something important about the relationship.
- Healthy love honors boundaries. It doesn’t pressure past them.

#### LAND THE POINT:

- God doesn’t ask us to guard our hearts because He wants to limit us.
- He asks us to guard our hearts because everything flows from it.
- Healthy relationships don’t happen by accident. They’re built through intentional, loving boundaries.

#### LEADER NOTES:

- Be specific without being graphic
- Emphasize value over restriction
- Normalize discomfort—growth often feels awkward
- Avoid “how far is too far” framing

---



---





### TODAY'S MAIN POINT

Healthy boundaries are an expression of love, wisdom, and value.

### TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE(S)

Philippians 4:23

### TEACHING GOAL

Last week, students talked about how dating is an application of following Jesus and how Christ-centered dating seeks to honor God and value the other person. This week builds on that foundation by helping students understand **why boundaries matter**. Boundaries are not about fear or restriction—they are about valuing relationships, guarding our hearts, and choosing wisdom before emotions take over.

### Let's Break the Ice

- What's a boundary you have in your life that actually helps you?
- Why do you think boundaries sometimes get a bad reputation?

#### Transition:

Just like guardrails on a road, boundaries are meant to protect what matters—not ruin the journey.

### Bible Study

**Read Together:** As a group, read **Philippians 4:23 (NIV)**.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What do you think the Bible means by “heart” in this verse?
- Why do you think God tells us to guard our hearts “above all else”?
- How can what we allow into our hearts shape our decisions and relationships?

### Make it Real

*Leader Note:* Keep this about **intentionality and wisdom**, not drawing lines or enforcing rules.

- Why do you think people often wait until the moment to decide boundaries?
- How do emotions and attraction make boundaries harder to keep?
- What are some areas where boundaries matter in dating besides physical ones? (emotional, digital, spiritual, time, expectations)
- How can boundaries actually help relationships stay healthy and honest?

## **Discipleship Moment**

### **Wise Boundaries Reflection:**

Invite students to quietly reflect on:

- One area where they need to decide boundaries ahead of time
- One relationship where clearer boundaries might bring health, not distance

Encourage this prayer:

"God, help me value You, myself, and others enough to choose wise boundaries."

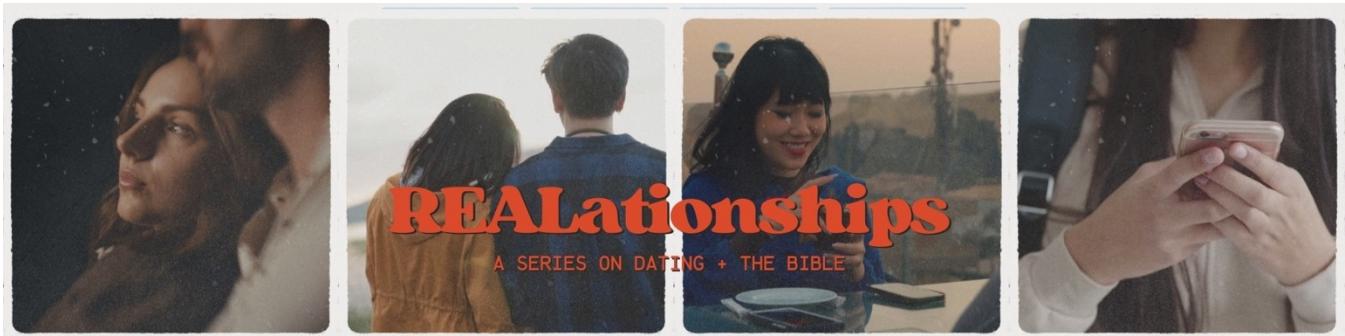
---

### **Share Requests:**

Invite students to share prayer requests or praises.

### **Group Prayer:**

Pray that God would give students wisdom to guard their hearts, courage to set healthy boundaries, and trust in His design for relationships.



WEEK 3 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
The best relationships challenge us and help us become more like Christ.	Proverbs 27:17; Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

Students will understand that dating relationships are formative, not neutral, and will be challenged to pursue relationships that help them grow in wisdom, character, and Christlikeness rather than pulling them away from Jesus.

#### HOOK (Dating Is Directional)

- Lighthearted reflection on how people pick up habits, styles, and language from others
- Truth: We become like the people we spend time with
- Relationships shape us whether we realize it or not
- Key idea: Dating isn't neutral—it is directional
- Transition question: Is this relationship helping me become more like Jesus?

#### SCRIPTURE: THE BIBLE ON INFLUENCE

- Proverbs 27:17 – Relationships are meant to sharpen and shape us
- Growth often requires friction and intentionality
- Proverbs 13:20 – Walking with the wise leads to wisdom; influence is certain
- 1 Corinthians 15:33 – Bad company corrupts good character
- Key truth: Scripture never treats relationships as neutral

#### TENSION: CHEMISTRY VS. CHARACTER

- Dating decisions are often driven by attraction and chemistry
- Chemistry matters but cannot sustain a relationship
- Feelings are powerful but unreliable leaders
- When feelings become the authority, character becomes the casualty
- Scripture calls us to pursue wisdom, not emotion

#### TRUTH: WHO YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH MATTERS

- Quote from Jonathan Pokluda on changing playmates and playgrounds
- Who you spend time with and where you go shapes who you become
- This aligns with Proverbs and Corinthians
- Dating accelerates the direction you're already headed

#### NOTE ON DATING & FORMATION

- Dating is practice, not just participation
- Dating shapes communication, conflict, intimacy, and spiritual influence

- Christ-centered dating should:
  - strengthen faith
  - challenge character
  - promote Christlikeness
- A relationship that pulls you away from Jesus is misdirection, not love

---

#### APPLICATION: CHOOSING GROWTH-ORIENTED RELATIONSHIPS

- Evaluate relationships with honest questions:
  - Does this relationship help me follow Jesus more closely?
  - Does it encourage wisdom or excuse compromise?
  - Am I growing in Christlike character?
- Healthy relationships are not always easy or perfect
- Dating should never cost your walk with Jesus

---

#### PASTORAL CLARITY

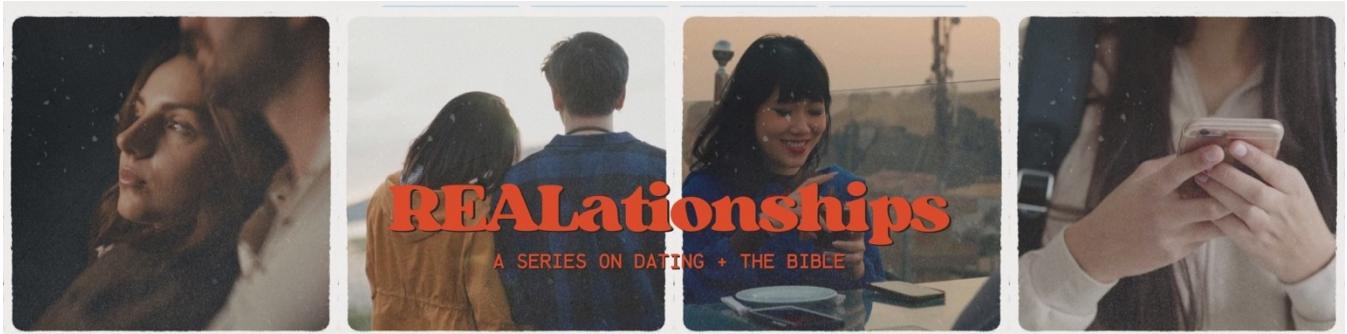
- Not about shame, perfection, or pretending
- Growth takes time; wisdom forms through intentional choices
- Jesus invites students to choose direction over drift
- God cares deeply about where students are headed

---

#### LAND THE POINT

- Proverbs: walk with the wise
- Corinthians: bad company shapes character
- Core truth: relationships form who we become
- The best relationships help us become more like Christ

---



WEEK 3 MAIN POINT	MAIN BIBLE VERSE(S)
The best relationships challenge us and help us become more like Christ.	Proverbs 27:17; Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

Students will understand that dating relationships are formative, not neutral, and will be challenged to pursue relationships that help them grow in wisdom, character, and Christlikeness rather than pulling them away from Jesus.

#### HOOK: DATING IS DIRECTIONAL

- Have you ever looked back at an old photo of yourself and thought, “*Why did I dress like that?*”
- Or did you hear an old song and immediately remember the people you used to hang out with?
- Or maybe you’ve caught yourself saying something and thought, “*Wow... I definitely picked that up from someone.*”
- Here’s why that happens:
  - We become like the people we spend time with.
    - It’s not dramatic.
    - It’s not intentional.
    - It’s just true.
- And that’s actually what we’re talking about today — not just dating, but influence.
  - Whether you realize it or not, the relationships in your life are shaping you.
- Which leads us to something important: Dating isn’t neutral.
  - Every relationship you’re in is shaping you in some direction.
    - The question isn’t *if* it’s shaping you — it’s *how*.
- Dating has a way of revealing:
  - what you value
  - what you tolerate
  - what you prioritize
- So today we’re not asking, “*Do I like this person?*” We’re asking a better question: Is this relationship helping me become more like Jesus?

#### SCRIPTURE:

- The Bible is incredibly clear about the power of influence.
  - READ Proverbs 27:17
    - That verse tells us relationships are meant to *shape* us.
    - Sharpening requires friction.
    - Growth isn’t always comfortable — but it is intentional.
  - READ Proverbs 13:20
    - Notice the certainty.
    - Not *might* become wise.

- Will become wise.
- And then Paul puts it even more directly in 1 Corinthians 15:33:
  - Scripture doesn't treat relationships as neutral.
  - They either move us toward wisdom — or toward compromise.

#### TENSION: CHEMISTRY VS. CHARACTER

- Most dating decisions are driven by:
  - Attraction
  - Chemistry
  - how someone makes you feel
- And chemistry matters — but it's not enough.
  - Chemistry can spark a relationship. But only character can sustain it.
  - Feelings are powerful, but they're unreliable leaders
  - If feelings become the authority, character usually becomes the casualty.
- That's why Scripture never tells us to "follow our heart." It tells us to pursue wisdom.

#### TRUTH: WHO YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH MATTERS

- There's a pastor named Jonathan Pokluda, and he claims that besides the Gospel, the single most consistent piece of advice that he gives young people who are going through an identity crisis or who can't seem to stay out of rough situations is this:
  - "Change your playmates and your playground. Where you go and who you go with is half of the battle in life. If you want to change your life, change where you go and who you go with. That's going to be half of the battle."
- This isn't just a smart guy talking...
  - That lines up perfectly with Proverbs and Corinthians.
    - If you want to grow spiritually, your relationships have to move you in the right direction.
    - Dating doesn't just reveal your heart — it accelerates whatever direction you're already headed.

#### NOTE ON DATING AND FORMATION:

- Whether you realize it or not, dating is practice.
- The person you date is someone you're practicing:
  - communication with
  - conflict with
  - emotional intimacy with
  - spiritual influence with
- That's why dating isn't just about *now*. It's shaping *later*.
- A Christ-centered dating relationship should:
  - strengthen your faith
  - Challenge your character
  - help you grow in Christlikeness
- If a relationship consistently pulls you away from Jesus, that's not love — that's misdirection.

#### APPLICATION: CHOOSING GROWTH-ORIENTED RELATIONSHIPS

- So how do you evaluate your relationships honestly?
- Ask questions:
  - Do I follow Jesus more closely because of this relationship?
  - Does this person encourage wisdom or excuse compromise?
  - Am I becoming more patient, humble, and faithful... or less of those things?
- This doesn't mean every relationship is easy or comfortable. And it doesn't mean that every relationship is perfect, because people are broken.
- Dating should never cost you your walk with Jesus. It should strengthen it.

#### PASTORAL CLARITY:

- This isn't about shaming, pretending, or expecting perfection.
  - Growth takes time and wisdom develops through formation.
- Jesus is inviting you to choose intentional direction.

---

- Wherever you are right now, He cares about where you're headed from here.

**LAND THE POINT:**

- Proverbs tells us to walk with the wise
- Paul warns about the power of bad company.
- God reminds us that relationships shape character
- The best relationships help us become more like Christ.





## WEEK 3

THE BEST  
RELATIONSHIPS  
CHALLENGE US AND MAKE  
US BECOME MORE LIKE  
CHRIST.

### TODAY'S MAIN POINT

The best relationships help us become more like Christ.

### TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE(S)

Proverbs 27:17  
Proverbs 13:20  
1 Corinthians 15:33

### TEACHING GOAL

In the final week of REALationships, students are invited to reflect on the **direction** of their relationships. Scripture makes it clear that relationships—especially dating relationships—are not neutral. They shape our character, influence our faith, and play a major role in who we are becoming. This discussion helps students evaluate relationships through the lens of growth, wisdom, and Christlikeness.

#### Let's Break the Ice

- What's something about you that changed because of the people you spent time with?
- Why do you think influence is often subtle but powerful?

#### Transition:

The Bible doesn't treat relationships as neutral—they shape who we become.

#### Bible Study

**Read Together:** As a group, read **Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)**.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean for iron to "sharpen" iron?
- Why do you think sharpening requires friction?
- How can relationships help us grow—even when it feels uncomfortable?

#### Leader Add-On:

Briefly reference:

- **Proverbs 13:20** – Walking with the wise leads to wisdom
- **1 Corinthians 15:33** – Bad company corrupts good character

Ask:

- What do these verses teach us about influence and direction?

#### Make it Real

**Leader Note:** This section is about **evaluation, not elimination**.

- *How do relationships influence our faith and decision-making?*
- *What are the signs that a relationship is helping you grow spiritually?*
- *What are the signs a relationship might be pulling you away from Jesus?*
- *Why do you think dating relationships can intensify influence more than friendships?*

## **Discipleship Moment**

### **Wise Boundaries Reflection:**

Invite students to silently reflect on:

- One relationship that helps them grow closer to Jesus
- One area where they may need more wisdom or discernment

Then ask:

- How can you be the kind of person who helps others grow in their faith?

Encourage this prayer:

“Jesus, help me choose relationships that lead me closer to You—and help me become someone who points others toward You.”

---

### **Share Requests:**

Invite students to share prayer requests or praises.

### **Group Prayer:**

Pray that God would give students wisdom in dating and friendships, courage to choose growth over comfort, and grace as they learn to follow Jesus in their relationships.