



the dating dilemma

SAMPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Some young adults today are either focused on school or driven by their careers—or maybe both. Many live a life focused on relationships—friendships and dating. It is difficult for Christians to understand dating from a Biblical worldview, while living in the 21st century. How do Christian young adults date in today's world? How do Christians hold onto their values and standards while dating? This study looks at some practical ways for Christians to be successful in their dating life.

Before the Date: What Should I Expect?

This discussion will examine possibilities of how young adults should biblically approach dating, and provide tips to prepare for the first date.

Before the Date: Who is the Perfect Date?

This discussion will challenge the group to make dating decisions based on more than how a person looks.

During the Date: How Far Should Can I Go?

This lesson will enable young adults to create a plan that outlines their physical intimacy boundaries before marriage.

After the Date: Will I Ever Find the Right One?

This lesson will examine how a Christian adult can handle singleness, and understand what God says about married life versus single life.

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Session One

Because this is a discussion and not a traditional lesson, your job as the leader is not so much to teach, as it is to steer the discussion in the right way. Encourage questions and don't shoot anyone down. Even if what they say sounds absurd to you, let the group discuss it and come to a conclusion. If someone feels discouraged, he or she will not be as willing to participate next time (and neither will others). So be open to others' opinions. Asking questions that are true and real will lead to deeper answers and a deeper faith.

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BEFORE THE DATE: WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles
- YouTube video (optional)
- One computer with Internet access per 4 people (Wi-Fi is the best idea; if you don't have it, suggest meeting at a coffee shop or other free Wi-Fi zone)
- A new journal for each participant
- Pens/pencils
- Student handout

LESSON OBJECTIVE

This discussion will examine possibilities of how young adults should biblically approach dating and provide tips to prepare for the first date.

CONNECT

Choose from one of the following CONNECT activities:

1. Select a free video clip from the internet about a dating service. Be careful to watch the entire video for content before showing the group. You might want to search for "crazy dating video." After showing the video to the group, ask volunteers to share stories about their craziest date.
2. Be prepared with your own story or ask someone ahead of time to share one of his or her dating disasters (try to keep it light and funny). Afterward, ask volunteers to share their own.

In addition, instruct each person to draw a vertical line in his or her journal, creating a two-column entry. In the first column, ask each person to write how he or she prepares for a date. Instructions for the second column will be given later in the session.

CONSIDER

Begin the CONSIDER section by saying: *Now that we've shared some of our worst dating moments, let's talk about how to get ready for dating. We're going to talk about how to get ready physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Maybe you've never thought about getting ready emotionally and spiritually for a date, but they both are important.*

Provide copies of the handout "Before the Date: What Should I Expect?" to each group member. This will help group participants stay on topic throughout the discussion.

Physically

Use your best judgment as you approach this topic. Know your group before you jump into discussion. Some people have been taught from a very young age to look modest and appropriate. Some women may have learned (through the media, mostly) one must look a certain way in order for guys to like you. Try to learn what each person believes by starting with these questions:

Conduct a word search on the term *dress* or *modesty* on a Bible website such as www.biblegateway.com or www.crosswalk.com. Share what you discover with your study group.

- *What were you taught about how you should dress when you were young?*
- *What message do you get from the media about how you should dress?*
- *Is there a big difference? If so, why do think there is a big difference?*

There is no passage in the Bible that specifically tells us what to wear when we are on a date. But there are many passages that speak about people wearing appropriate clothing for what they are doing. Kings wear royal purple, angels dress in white, and soldiers dress for battle.

Physical appearance is a big deal for some, especially guys. Research and common sense tell us men are immediately drawn to the physical, much more so than women. Discuss:

- *Knowing this, what is the Christian woman's responsibility as she chooses her clothes for a date?*
- *What kind of attention should her dress get?*
- *What is the man's responsibility in regards to his reaction to how a woman is dressed?*

Ask participants to divide into groups of three or four and have each group look up, either in their physical Bible or their virtual one (see Internet addresses in sidebar), passages that would affect their answers to these questions. (Some good references are 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Corinthians 12:22-24; and 1 Timothy 2:8-10.) [How to dress for a date is not specifically addressed, so these verses can serve as the foundation for the principles that will guide our standards.]

- *What does it mean to dress appropriately for a date?*
- *How does our dress affect how our date will look at us?*
- *Is it okay for a Christ to look sexy?*
- *Can you be sexy and modest at the same time?*

Emotionally

The Bible says many things about emotions. Proverbs 14:30 says a peaceful heart gives life, but envy rots the bones. Ephesians 4:31-32 tells us to get rid of bitterness and wrath and anger. Instead we should be kind to each other with forgiveness in our hearts. Galatians 5:19-21 tells us to get rid of sins like hatred, discord, jealousy, and fits of rage. These verses implore Christians to be aware and in control of their emotions. This would also hold true for dating.

Just like many men are drawn to the physical, many women are drawn to the emotional. Ask group members: *What is meant by the "emotional" aspect of dating?* Dating contains many aspects, but the emotional side may be the most important to the woman. This is why women appreciate it when men do thoughtful things—like buying flowers and writing love notes. Ask:

- *If women shouldn't dress a certain way to attract a man, should a man act a certain way to attract women?*
- *Is it good to plan an emotionally stimulating date? Is it a sin for a man to manipulate a woman's emotions? Why or why not?*
- *It has been said that most affairs start emotionally and then turn physical. Why is that? How can we protect ourselves from these instances?*

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- Are emotions the biggest motivating factor in deciding if a person wants to date someone? What about for the second and third date?

Spiritually

We've talked about the attractions for men and women on a date. Certainly men and women both care about a physical and emotional connection, but men are more physical and women are more emotional. So, what about the spiritual?

Too often, the spiritual side is not immediately seen or discussed. *We can't help but notice what someone looks like or if we both think something is funny. These things are automatic. Single people do not typically judge someone's spirituality automatically, though.* This attitude is common: If the physical and emotional are there, and we connect, only then will we worry about our faith—wrong move. Discuss: *Shouldn't the other person's faith be something we know before we start dating? Why do we think that the physical and emotional must be great first?*

It's all about being real. Dress up, but you should be able to recognize each other if you bumped into each other one day at lunch. Be nice, but you shouldn't be fake, only to change when the relationship becomes serious. It's the same thing concerning your faith—be real.

Ask group members:

- What are some ways to prepare spiritually for a date?
- We need to find our love and acceptance in God before we look for it in other people. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Does it need to be modified?
- Read Matthew 22:37-38. Why do you think it is important to be secure in our relationship with God before we get serious with someone we are dating?
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. Are we dating for God's glory, or ours?

COMMIT

During this time of commitment, ask group members to write in the second column of their journals how they should prepare for a date based on the tips from this session. Give them five minutes to think about this and to journal their thoughts.

Ask a few volunteers to share things that have come to mind during the session. Encourage accountability among your group and remind them that everything shared should be confidential. Introduce the topic for the next session. Encourage each participant to pray for one another and think about dating issues for the next discussion time.

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Student Handout 1

BEFORE THE DATE: WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Physically

What does it mean to dress appropriately for a date?

How does our dress affect how our date will treat us?

Is it okay to look sexy?

Can you be sexy and modest?

Emotionally

Is it good to plan an emotionally stimulating date? Why or why not?

It has been said that most affairs start emotionally and then turn physical. Why is that? How can we protect ourselves from these instances?

Are emotions the biggest motivating factor in deciding if a person wants to date someone? What about for the second and third date?

Spiritually

What are some ways to prepare spiritually for a date?

We need to find our love and acceptance in God before we look for it in other people. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Does it need to be modified?

Read Matthew 22:37-38. Why do you think it is important to be secure in our relationship with God before we get serious with someone we are dating?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. Are we dating for God's glory, or ours?

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