Leader's Guide and Student Handouts for

SEX, LOVE, & RELATIONSHIPS

STRAIGHT TALK ON TEEN SEXUALITY

The four-part video curriculum series
and this guide by
Pam Stenzel

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Introduction to Series

The topic of teen sex, its consequences, and the arguments over the solution are everywhere. You cannot possibly work with students and not have sex and relationships be the number one most desired topic to discuss, and the one around which there seems to be the greatest confusion. As a counselor and speaker to youth for the past 12 years, I have seen the problems associated with early sexual involvement go from bad to worse, and the misinformation to young people go from worse to even more terrible. My desire with this series is to help you, the teacher, not only disseminate good information, but build healthy discussion and an ongoing dialogue with your students on these topics.

When I first began to speak to students on this topic in church settings in the late eighties, youth workers were reluctant to deal with the topic of sex on their own. Helpful materials with enough substance were lacking or non-existent, and they typically chose not to deal with the issue. One youth pastor, after I offered to share with his students at a Wednesday evening meeting, attempted a graceful retreat by stating, “Oh, we dealt with the ‘sex thing’ at a retreat last February. We don’t need to talk about that again!” I have thought of that comment so often over the last 10 years. I have since spoken to over 500,000 students across the nation, and with the tremendous amount of feedback I get from them, both in person or via mail and e-mail, I am amazed at how hungry they continue to be for guidance on this topic. If I had this fledgling youth director in front of me today, I would remind him that MTV, Hollywood, and the recording industry are not going to stop talking about sex today just because they “handled it” yesterday. They will continue to disseminate their brand of sex education to the minds of our youth daily. It’s time we spoke up.

I trust that this series will be tool, a weapon in your arsenal, against the onslaught of lies that have been hurled at our teens. Please note that certain activities and handouts have been geared to junior high and others to high school. Please use your own discretion as to the maturity level of your students. Please take advantage of the resources I have listed in the last section. Many of these organizations, including my own, would love to assist you with additional materials as you have need in the future.

I would like to express my appreciation to you for your concern and your vital ministry with today’s youth. Please know that as you prepare your heart for the upcoming weeks of discussing sexuality with your students, that my prayers are with you. With God’s help, we can make a difference in the lives of our youth.

Because of Him,

Pam Stenzel
**Program One Objectives**

One of the most important decisions a young person faces today is the decision about how he or she will deal with sex and relationships. The pressure on this generation to become sexually active is great, and to make it worse, the consequences are far greater than they have ever been in prior generations. These students are facing an epidemic of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Sometimes the messages they receive are confusing, fragmented and conflicting. It is difficult to sort through the information and make good choices. It is imperative that students begin to think deeply about all the issues surrounding this choice — physically, emotionally and spiritually. They need to begin to separate fact from fiction and make good choices that will protect them for a lifetime.

In Program 1 we introduce the concept of responsibility for sexual choices, encouraging each student to accept responsibility not only for the choice s/he ultimately makes, but for involvement in the process of making that choice, thinking through each alternative and its potential outcome.

Program 1 is an extensive look at the physical consequences of sex outside of a mutually monogamous marriage. Pregnancy is one of those consequences, and with it comes tremendous responsibility for a myriad of difficult choices. It is important to focus on long-term consequences and not just immediate outcomes.

STDs are another physical consequence. The permanent scarring, both physically and emotionally, of these diseases is taking its toll, especially on women. Students are usually misinformed or uninformed when it comes to STDs. The purpose of the information given is to give students an understanding of the most common STDs, their long-term consequences, and how to avoid coming into contact with these diseases.

It is important that the student understands that the only 100% effective way of preventing a sexually transmitted disease is to limit sexual activity to one uninfected partner for life. Although a condom may reduce the risk of contracting some of these diseases, it does not eliminate the risk, and sexual activity with a partner who may have been exposed or is carrying one of these diseases is dangerous.
Statistical Documentation

PREGNANCY

A rise in the rate of teens giving birth is one reason the U.S. spent $21.5 billion last year on families headed by teen mothers, a new report says.

The 1.7 billion increase over 1988 spending represents a 9% jump in welfare costs to support teen mothers and their children.


“I began my research into adolescent childbearing burdened with adult preconceptions,” Dash wrote in When Children Want Children: The Urban Crisis of Teenage Childbearing, the book about his experiences. He continued: “I assumed that the high incidence of teenage pregnancy among poor, black urban youths nationwide grew out of youthful ignorance both about birth control methods and adolescent reproductive capabilities….I was wrong on all counts.”

“They had wanted to get pregnant, they confessed, sometimes playing the sexual aggressor to lure bashful boyfriends into bed, sometimes deceiving them into thinking they were using birth control.”

“They were well-versed in sex education, and those who didn’t want children didn’t have them,” says Dash.

“These girls became mothers to be affirmed as women,” says Dash. “In my estimate, it was not a wise decision, but it doesn’t have anything to do with sex education. It has to do with the poor academic education they were receiving.”


SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

A major epidemic of sexually transmitted disease has developed during the last 35 years. In the 1960’s syphilis and gonorrhea, both easily treated with penicillin, were the only important STDs. Today there are over 20 significantly prevalent diseases with 12 million newly infected persons each year. It is estimated that 1 in 5 Americans between the ages of 15 and 55 is now infected with a viral STD. This does not include the bacterial diseases such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, which are at very high levels. Tragically 63% of these infections occur in persons under age 25.


An unprecedented epidemic of non-marital pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases in adolescents currently exists. Though they make up less than 10% of the population, teens contract approximately 25% of the STDs in America. One in four sexually active youth acquire an STD annually.


Every year more than 12 million cases of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) are reported in the United States. These infections result in billions of dollars in preventable health care spending. In addition, the health impact of STDs is particularly severe for women. Because these infections often cause few or no symptoms and may go untreated women are at risk for complications from STDs, including ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, infertility, chronic pelvic pain, and poor pregnancy outcomes.

Office of Women’s Health Fact Sheet, Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, Document #102002, July 18, 1997.

CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States. We are only beginning to realize the importance of this disease. It causes an estimated 4 million infections annually, primarily among adolescents and young adults. In women, untreated infections can progress to involve the upper reproductive tract and may result in serious complications. About 75% of women infected with chlamydia have few or no symptoms, and without testing and treatment the infection may persist for as long as 15 months. Without treatment, 20-40% of women with chlamydia may develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). An estimated 1 in 10 adolescent girls of reproductive age are infected.

Office of Women’s Health Fact Sheet; Centers For Disease Control and Prevention; Document #102002; July 18, 1997.

Infections due to chlamydia trachomatis are among the most prevalent of all sexually transmitted diseases. In women, these infections often result in serious reproductive tract complications, such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, and ectopic pregnancy. In addition, infected pregnant women can infect their babies during delivery. Furthermore, chlamydial infections facilitates HIV transmission. While surveillance of chlamydial infections is improving, it remains incomplete in many areas of the country. A combination of factors limits documentation of the incidence and prevalence of genital chlamydial infection: large numbers of asymptomatic persons who can be identified only through screening, limited resources to support screening.
activities, variable compliance with public health laws and regulations that require health care providers and laboratories to report cases to local health authorities.


PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE

PID refers to upper reproductive tract infection in women, which often develop when STDs go untreated or are inadequately treated. Each year, PID and its complications affect more than 750,000 women. PID can cause chronic pelvic pain or harm to the reproductive organs. Permanent damage to the fallopian tubes can result from a single episode of PID and is even more common after a second or third episode. Damage to the fallopian tube is the only preventable cause of infertility. As much as 30 percent of infertility in women may be related to preventable complications of past STDs.

One potentially fatal complication of PID is Ectopic pregnancy, an abnormal condition that occurs when a fertilized egg implants in a location other than inside the woman’s uterus — often in a fallopian tube. It is estimated that ectopic pregnancy has increased about five-fold over a twenty year period. Among African American women, ectopic pregnancy is the leading cause of pregnancy related deaths. The economic cost of PID and its complications is estimated at $4 billion annually.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Office of Women’s Heath, Document # 102002, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997.

The preponderance of the scientific evidence demonstrates that condoms are equally poor in preventing the transmission of some STDs. They do not reliably reduce tubal infections or the infertility which may be the result of those infections.


HERPES

Genital herpes is a disease caused by herpes simplex virus (HSV). The disease may recur periodically and has no cure. Scientists have estimated that about 30 million persons in the United States may have genital HSV infection. Most infected persons never recognize the symptoms of genital herpes; some will have symptoms shortly after infection and never again. A minority of those infected will have recurrent episodes of genital sores. Many cases of genital herpes are acquired from people who do not know they are infected or who had no symptoms at the time of the sexual contact. Acyclovir is a drug that can help to control the symptoms of HSV, but it is not
a cure. HSV is frequently more severe in people with weakened immune systems, including people with HIV.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Office of Women’s Health, Document # 102002; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997.

Sexually transmitted genital herpes poses a grave threat to newborn babies. If a woman delivers vaginally during her first outbreak of genital herpes, her baby has a 40 to 50 percent chance of becoming infected. If the baby becomes infected, s/he has a 60 percent chance of dying. Infected babies who survive have a 50 percent chance of being severely brain damaged. Herpes is a horrible infection for a baby and a terrifying infection for a pregnant woman because of the potential for infecting her baby.

If a woman has a recurrent herpes outbreak at the time she delivers, there is a five percent chance of the baby becoming infected — still a frightening prospect for the parents and the doctor. Even though this is a low percentage, doctors usually recommend that pregnant women who have a herpes outbreak at the time of delivery have a cesarean section.


HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

Human papillomavirus is one of the most common causes of sexually transmitted disease (STD) in this country. It is estimated that as many as 40 million Americans are infected with HPV, and the incidence of this disease appears to be increasing. More than 60 types of HPV have been identified by scientists. Some types of the virus cause common skin warts. About one-third of the HPV types can be spread through sexual contact. Several types of HPV lead to genital warts, the most recognizable sign of genital HPV infection. Certain other types of HPV have been closely associated with the development of cervical cancer and other genital cancers.

Like many STDs, HPV infection often does not cause visible symptoms. One study sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) reported that almost half of the women infected had no obvious symptoms. Because the virus can remain latent in the skin, infected persons may not be aware of their infection and the potential risk of complications.

Genital warts (condylomata acuminata or venereal warts) are caused by certain types of HPV. They are spread by sexual contact with an infected partner and are very contagious. Approximately two-thirds of persons who have sexual contact with a partner with genital warts will develop this disease, usually within 3 months of contact. It is estimated that as many as one million new cases of genital warts are diagnosed in the United States each year.

In women, the warts occur on the vulva, labia, inside the vagina, on the cervix, or around the anus. In men, genital warts usually appear on the tip of the penis; however, they also may be found on the shaft of the penis, on the scrotum, or around the anus. Genital warts can also devel-
op in the mouth of a person who has had oral sexual contact with an infected person. Genital warts often occur in groups and can be very tiny or can accumulate into large masses on the genital tissues. Left untreated, genital warts may eventually develop a fleshy, cauliflower-like appearance. In other cases, they may disappear. However, because there is no way to predict whether the warts will grow or disappear, people who suspect that they have genital warts should be examined and treated.


Concern about HPV has increased in recent years after several studies showed that HPV infection is associated with the development of cervical cancer. Approximately 25 types of HPV can infect the genital area. These types are divided into “high risk” and “low risk” groups based on whether they are associated with cancer. Infection with a “high risk” type of HPV is one risk factor for cervical cancer, which causes 4,500 deaths among women each year. No cure for HPV infection exists.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Office of Women’s Health, Document # 102002, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997.

Human papillomavirus grows best in moist areas of the body. It is commonly a genital growth that grows better in women than in men, often growing in the vagina or on the cervix of women. The virus is mixed with the sexual secretions of men and women and can grow on moist skin. That is why it is so easily spread even by genital contact that does not need to include penetrative sex. That is also why it is not usually contained by condoms. Most experts agree that condoms do little to protect against this, the most common STD.

Genital HPV has a particular affinity for young women. During the teenage years bodies seem to be more susceptible to this disease than during adulthood. For example, in one study, an evaluation of nearly 800,000 pap smears of women of all ages revealed that nearly one-fourth of the abnormal smears were from women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. Most of the teenagers had sexual intercourse before the age of fifteen. More than half had more than one partner. Susceptibility of teenage bodies to this infection coupled with sex at a young age with multiple partners seems to lead directly to a high rate of infection.

HIV/AIDS in the United States — The AIDS epidemic has been monitored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) since the first reports of AIDS cases in 1981. As of December 31, 1996, 581,429 cases of AIDS had been reported to CDC by state and local health departments: 573,800 adults/adolescents and 7,629 children under 13 years of age. Approximately 223,000 adults/adolescents in mid-1996 were living with AIDS, which represents a 10% increase in AIDS prevalence compared to mid-1995. The increase, however, reflects stable AIDS incidence and declines in AIDS deaths. Improved survival among persons with HIV/AIDS is occurring in response to improvements in medical care and increased availability of antiretroviral therapies as well as prophylaxis for opportunistic infections.

Since HIV infection is not uniformly reported throughout the United States — only 26 states report known adult/adolescent cases of HIV infection — estimates of HIV infection are limited and difficult, and they do not precisely and fully reflect the epidemic. Through 1996, more than 216,000 persons were living with AIDS. However, this cumulative number of persons living with...
AIDS underrepresents the number of living persons who have been infected with HIV disease because most infected persons have not yet progressed to AIDS, and many persons infected with HIV have not been tested or diagnosed. CDC estimates there currently are approximately 650,000 to 900,000 Americans infected with HIV.

**HIV/AIDS among Adolescents & Teens** — There is a health crisis among America’s youth. New hope in the treatment of AIDS has overshadowed the fact that the epidemic continues, and that the rate of AIDS reported among young Americans continues to escalate.

In young people more than any other group, HIV is spread sexually. Two groups of young people at risk for sexual exposure to HIV account for approximately three-quarters of the adolescent epidemic: men who have sex with men (MSM) and women infected through heterosexual sex.

More young people are having sex in their teen years than ever before. In the mid-1950s, just more than a quarter of young women under 18 had had sexual intercourse. In 1968, 35% of young women and 55% of young men had had sexual intercourse by age 18; by 1988, those numbers rose to 56% and 73%, respectively. In 1995, nearly 4 in 10 ninth graders reported having had intercourse, and by 12th grade this was almost 7 in 10. About 25% of 12th graders reported they were currently abstinent (during the three months prior to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey), and another quarter (23%) said they have had sex with four or more partners.

- One in four new HIV infections occurs in people under the age of 22.
- One half of all new HIV infections occur in people under the age of 25.
- AIDS is the sixth leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds.
- Based on current trends, an average of two young people are infected with HIV every hour of every day.
- In 1995, about 25% of sexually active high school students reported they used alcohol or drugs at last sexual intercourse. Male students (33%) were significantly more likely than female students (17%) to report that they used alcohol or drugs during last sexual intercourse.
- The percentage of American youth who are taught about HIV in school increased 59% between 1989 and 1995; however, condom usage rate increased only 17% during this time period.
- Both female and male college students are at high risk for HIV infection because of high numbers of sexual partners and lack of consistent use of safer sex precautions.

Data source is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Reprinted from the *World AIDS Day 1997 Resource Booklet* with permission from American Association for World Health.

**CONDOM EFFICACY**

Condoms are widely promoted for preventing sexually transmitted diseases, with an implicit message that a properly used condom will ensure that you are safe from STDs. A literature review shows that little solid evidence supports this belief.

A large amount of evidence indicates that BMC (barrier method contraceptives, including condoms) reduce the risk of gonorrhea and HIV transmission, but the results are — at least in quantitative terms— less consistent for other diseases.


We often hear that if you’re going to have sex, use a condom. The implication is that condoms will keep users safe from pregnancy and disease. We all know that condoms are not a 100% guarantee. Yet, most probably think that condoms are at least 98% effective in preventing pregnancy and disease. But, as the research shows, this just isn’t true.

* Condoms can break, leak, slip off, or slip down, jeopardizing safety.
* To maximize protection, condoms must be used correctly at every sexual encounter.
* Condoms are not used consistently by most adolescents and young adults.
* About 15% of couples who rely on condoms to avoid pregnancy will still get pregnant within a year.
* Condoms do not eliminate the risk of acquiring an STD.
* Condoms do appear to reduce the risk of HIV infection by about 55 - 90%.
* Condoms do appear to reduce the risk of gonorrhea by about 40 - 60%.
* Condoms appear to provide less protection against some other STDs.
* Females are at significantly greater risk of acquiring STDs and resulting health complications than males.
* The data are inconclusive as to whether condoms provide protection against some STDs, such as chlamydia.
* Condoms appear to provide little, if any, protection against HPV, one of the most common STDs in America today and one that causes cervical cancer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People Exposed</th>
<th>Sexual Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting Tested and Treated

Any students who think that they might be at risk for having contracted an STD need to seek medical help as soon as possible. Students sometimes feel that they are better off not knowing, and this is a dangerously false assumption. Many of the diseases can be treated, if not cured, and treatment is important to future health and well-being, especially for young women. They also need to know their infection status in order to notify both past and future partners. It is unfair to use ignorance as an excuse to continue to infect and hurt others.

The number one fear for a teen in regards to testing is whether or not the test will be confidential. Although the fear of telling parents is common, we suggest that they be encouraged to do so. In most cases the fear is not for their physical safety (in 12 years of counseling teens, I have never lost one client to death by parents), it is typically loss of trust, not wanting to hurt or cause pain to a parent or parents. This young person, however, needs the help and ongoing support that family can give, and when parents who care about their student are left out of the process, not only is medical help inadequate, but ongoing emotional and spiritual help are usually non-existent. The best setting for testing is your own family physician and/or Obstetrician/Gynecologist. When given care in a physicians office, and giving that physician the freedom to contact you for results, treatment, follow-up exams, and on-going care, he or she will help to ensure that the young person is getting good care.

If they absolutely will not get family involved, you may contact your county health department. They will typically be listed in the government section of your local phone book under headings such as Health and Human Services, Health Department, Public Health or Family Services. They would be able to give you information on free and confidential testing in your community. Please make sure you communicate to the student clearly that if they choose this route, their ongoing care is in their hands. The clinic will not be able to notify them for follow-up because of the confidential nature of the testing. They are responsible to keep appointments, take prescriptions correctly, and return for any and all retesting that is deemed appropriate.
1. Pass It On

The object of this simple opener for the group session is to give the students a firsthand awareness of how diseases are spread, as well as giving them an opportunity to get acquainted, and maybe, if they all know each well already, to get the “chit chat” out of the way before you begin.

Prior to the class, obtain enough 3 x 5 cards for each student and leader. On the back, in an inconspicuous place, on certain cards you will (ahead of time) write an STD. In order to make it as close as possible to real stats, the diseases should be written as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability</th>
<th>STD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 out of 15</td>
<td>Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 out of 15</td>
<td>HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 out of 15</td>
<td>Herpes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 out of 15</td>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 out of 15</td>
<td>HPV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pass out a card to each participant as they enter or at the beginning of the class.

Explain to everyone that they must now go to four people and ask them a few simple questions. If this is a group of students who are unfamiliar with each other they can answer questions such as, Your name? Your school? Your grade? Your favorite color? If they all know each other well, you can be a little more creative: Your favorite food? Your pick for the Superbowl/ World Series? Was O.J. guilty?

After they exchange the information (they do NOT need to write answers on cards) they are then to show each other their 3 x 5 card. If they are both blank, they can move on to the next person. If one has a disease, the person with no disease must now write that disease on his/her 3 x 5 card. If both parties have diseases and they are different, each must write the others disease on their card. If both have the same disease, they can move on to the next person. In other words, their cards must look identical before they move to the next encounter.

After four encounters they may sit in their seats and wait for everyone to finish up. After everyone has completed the exercise spend a few minutes discussing.

* What were your feelings when you had to write a disease on your card?
* How did you feel about going to the next person knowing what was on your card?
* Is anyone in the room disease free?
* What did you have in the beginning and what do you have now?
Opening Activity Options

2. How Many Partners Have You Slept with? (or, Sleeping with the Enemy)

The following is an illustration that you are sleeping not just with that partner of the night, but in terms of STDs, with their partners and their partners’ partners, etc.

You are the narrator and illustrator of this talk. You will pull people from your audience to help drive the point home that it can happen to any of us.

Intro: “I am going to need the assistance of several people from the class today to demonstrate a point that might not have crossed your minds yet. May I have one girl and one boy volunteer to start this illustration?”

(Ask both student’s names) “Pretend, for a moment, that Bob and Sally have just returned from the doctor’s office and it has been determined that Sally is not pregnant.”

(Look at students and ask) “I’ll bet you sure are relieved, aren’t you?”

(Look back at the classroom) “Sally has never had sex with anyone except Bob. (With emphasis) Sally was a virgin prior to this time. (Pull two more girls from the class) Now, unknown to Sally, Bob has had sex with two other girls. Yes, you guessed it, these (point to new students) were the two girls.”

(Pull up four more boys) “One of our new girls had sex with two of these boys and the other new girl had sex with the other two boys.”

(Pull up four more girls) “The last four boys we brought to the front of the class have each had sex with one of these four girls. After this we have lost track of the history of any further sexual partner involvement.”

Now you as the narrator will go through the ranks of the sexual partners (not the first two that came up front, but any others). You can randomly tell the class that before any of these individuals had sex with those standing in front of the class, one had herpes (Make sure you point directly at each individual or call them by name), another had chlamydia, another had gonorrhea, and pick one of the last boys to have had AIDS.

(Look at the first boy and girl that you had brought to the front of the class) “Did you realize, Bob and Sally, that in terms of STDs, you both have had sex with each of these people? So you see, you thought Sally may have been pregnant, but instead you both may have AIDS. Is pre-marital sex worth it?”
Discussion Starters

1. Has your view of God and His boundary for sex been altered? Strengthened? Stayed the same? Confused?

2. How has the responsibility of possibly bringing another human being into the world affected your thoughts about your sexual choices? Are you emotionally, financially and spiritually ready for that responsibility? (Take note of the different responses of guys and girls and discuss those with the group.)

3. Have your views on abortion, parenting, and or adoption been challenged, changed, strengthened?

4. What new information did you learn about STDs today? Will this new information affect the way you evaluate your sexual decisions and/or those of your current and future relationships?

5. Discuss the possible feelings you might have in finding out you have a STD. How would you tell your partner? Your future partners?

6. Do you think a person might lie to a potential partner about their past? Would this effect your decision to engage in sex with someone if you could not be sure of their sexual history?

7. How would finding out that your were unable to have children effect your outlook on life, future plans, goals? How would you tell a potential partner/spouse that you were infertile?

8. What would an important plan of action be if one had exposed themselves to the risk of an STD? (Discuss the importance of early and frequent testing if a student is engaging in sexual activity.)
Keep the Spark Alive!

Keeping the “spark” ignited in any relationship takes creativity and effort. The problem with most relationships is getting into ruts and doing the “same old thing.” This boredom is what causes many young couples to experiment sexually too soon.

DIRECTIONS: 1) Read the following letter from a girl who decided to take creative steps to keep the romance alive; and 2) then write down 10 ways you could show someone you cared without resorting to the “physical” stuff!

“My boyfriend and I have set limits on our relationship: no lying down, no petting at all. We tried to think of ways to be creative in expressing our love. We’re still learning, but here are a few ways that we’ve found bring intense satisfaction — much more than we’d ever found from frustrated and unfulfilled physical expression.

1. He gave me a rose for no special reason.
2. We’ve written poems for each other. We’ve also just shared classical poetry, love poems by the great poets. Sometimes they say what you’re feeling but could never express.
3. Singing to each other.
4. Shopping together. Any couple who can shop for four hours together without getting grumpy or irritable has definitely learned a lesson in getting along.
5. Working on hobbies together.
6. Spending time with other couples.”

List 10 ways to show you can care

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Sex is more than just a physical act involving hormones. As human beings we are made in the image of God and are unique from other creatures. Our deep need and capacity for intimacy is one of those things that make us unique. Our sexuality involves more than just the body; it involves our emotions, personality and soul (1 Corinthians 6:18). This means that it can damage more than just the body when it is abused. The victim of childhood sexual abuse is damaged to the core of their being, not just their bodies. Restoration involves the whole person.

The evidence of pain from past sexual experiences is all around us. From the halls of divorce court, family counselors and pastors’ offices, to the hallways of our school campuses. It is normal to desire close, satisfying relationships. Sometimes in our quest for an intimate relationship, however, we bypass the important steps to achieve that intimacy, and we are actually propelled further away from true intimacy and bonding.

In this program we will explore the powerful bonding ability of sexual relationships and the lack of bonding when it is abused. We will also discuss the importance of trust in a marriage relationship and the integrity upon which that trust is built.

It is important that before students decide to date, they take the time to determine the purpose of dating, the standards that they will personally hold in a dating relationship as well as the guidelines they will follow in choosing whom to date. It is time that we took a radical look at what teen culture sees as the purpose and goal of dating and rethink the way we are going to go about finding a lifelong partner.

It would be good for students to spend some time developing their own dating philosophies and guidelines. If they would then share them with their parents/close family and discuss their goals and seek their input as well, that would be invaluable.
1. “Let’s Understand Each Other” (High School)

OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this exercise is 1) to foster communication between the sexes; 2) to utilize communication skills (i.e. good listening skills, feedback, conflict resolution, owning feelings, etc.); and 3) to better understand the differences, perceived and real, between the groups and the way they relate.

DIRECTIONS: Split the group into smaller groups by gender. Have each group respond to the following statements. Each group will appoint a spokesperson to report their group’s responses to the larger group for discussion. Students should be careful to respond RESPECTFULLY to each other and should practice good communication skills by using phrases such as “I hear you saying...”; “It sounds as if you are feeling...”; and “I feel...when you...because....”

1. The one thing I understand the best about the opposite sex is...
2. The one thing I understand the least about the opposite sex is...
3. If I could change one thing about guys, it would be...
4. If I could change one thing about girls, it would be...
5. In romantic relationships, girls are best at...
6. In romantic relationships, guys are best at...
7. In romantic relationships, girls are least capable of...
8. In romantic relationships, guys are least capable of...

2. “Describe Your Dream Date”

Have the students begin class by responding to the question, Describe your dream guy/girl? Divide your chalkboard/overhead in half and write the guys’ responses on one side, girls’ responses on the other as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cute</th>
<th>trustworthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good cook</td>
<td>loyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smart</td>
<td>good looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nice hair</td>
<td>sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of humor</td>
<td>puts God first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loves God</td>
<td>virgin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virgin</td>
<td>good listener</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When all the responses are on the board, turn the question around and ask: Why would a girl/guy like that want you?! If we want good character qualities in the person whom we choose to spend our lives with, we ourselves need to be working on these qualities. We attract who we are.
Discussion Starters

1. What is the purpose of dating? Describe a typical “date.” Does this description succeed in meeting the purpose and goals you suggested for dating?

2. Do you expect marriage to last? What are the odds of marriage lasting today, and what do you think is necessary for a couple to make love last?

3. How important is trust in your relationships? What are things that you can do to either build or destroy trust in current relationships and for the future?

4. How would you go about talking to your date about boundaries? When? Where? How?

5. How would you handle a relationship in which your boundaries were not being respected? What would this lack of respect tell you about this person? Your relationship?


7. Read one or both of the enclosed articles by Joshua Harris — *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* and *Rethinking the Dating Game* — and discuss your thoughts about his perceptions.
BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Marry Your Best Friend!

Contrary to popular opinion, most of marriage is not spent in bed! The thing that makes a healthy, lasting, intimate marriage are some of the same things that make a good friendship: for example, good communication, caring, shared interests, etc. Take some time to evaluate your best friendships and begin to develop some thoughts about what would make a great marriage.

1. My favorite thing to do with friends is…

2. I like to talk with my friends about…

3. I felt the closest to my friend when…

4. When I feel down, I need my friend to…

5. When I feel happy, I need my friend to…

6. I trust my friend because…

7. I show my friend I care by…

Conclusion: In light of these answers, list some qualities in a healthy relationship that you should look for in a “dating” relationship that might lead to marriage. What type of personal characteristics are you looking for in that special someone? If you are currently dating, does this relationship reflect those characteristics?
I Kissed Dating Goodbye
by Joshua Harris

If you’re frustrated with the dating scene, maybe it’s time for a new attitude!
When I was a kid, my mom taught me two rules of grocery shopping. First, never shop when you’re hungry — everything will look good — and you’ll spend too much money. And second, make sure to pick a good cart.

I’ve got the first rule down, but I haven’t had much success with that second rule. I seem to have a knack for picking rusty grocery carts that make clattering noises or ones with squeaky wheels that grate on your nerves like fingernails on a chalkboard.

But by far the worst kind of cart you could pick is the “swerver.” Have you ever dealt with one of these? This kind of cart has a mind of its own. You want to go in a straight line, but the cart wants to swerve to the left and take out the cat food display.

The shopper who has chosen a swerving cart can have no peace. Every maneuver, from turning down the cereal aisle to gliding alongside the meat section, becomes a battle — the shopper’s will pitted against the cart’s.

WHAT’S HAPPENING?
Why am I talking to you about shopping carts when this article is about dating? Well, I recall my bad luck with grocery carts because many times I’ve experienced a similar battle of wills with dating. I’m not talking about conflicts between me and the girls I’ve dated. I mean that I’ve struggled with the whole process. And based on my experiences and my exploration of God’s word, I’ve concluded that, for Christians, dating is a swerver set of values and attitudes that wants to go in a direction different from the one God has mapped out for us. Let me tell you why.

SELF-CONTROL ISN’T ENOUGH
I once heard a youth minister speak on the topic of love and sex. He told a heart-rending story about Eric and Jenny, two strong Christians who had actively participated in his youth group years earlier. Eric and Jenny’s dating relationship had started out innocently — Friday night football games, youth group parties and rounds of mini-golf. But as time went by, their physical relationship slowly began to accelerate, and they wound up sleeping together. Soon afterward they broke up, discouraged and hurt.

The pastor telling the story saw both of them years later at a high school reunion. Jenny was now married and had a child. Eric was still single. But both came to him separately and expressed emotional trauma and guilt over past memories.

“When I see him, I remember it all so vividly,” Jenny cried.

Eric expressed similar feelings. “When I see her, the hurt comes back,” he told his former youth pastor. “The wounds still haven’t healed.”

When the youth minister had finished telling this story, you could have heard a pin drop. We
all sat waiting for some sort of solution. We knew the reality of the story he told. Some of us had
made the same mistake or watched it happen in the lives of our friends. We wanted something
better. We wanted the pastor to tell us what we were supposed to do instead.

But he gave no alternative. Evidently the pastor thought the couple’s only mistake was giving
in to temptation. He seemed to think that Eric and Jenny should have had more respect for each
other and more self-control. Although this pastor encouraged a different outcome — saving sex
for marriage — he didn’t offer a different practice.

Is this the answer? Head out on the same course as those who have fallen and hope that in the
critical moment you’ll be able to stay in control? Giving young people this kind of advice is like
giving a person a cart that swerves and sending him into a store stocked with the world’s most
expensive chinaware. Despite the narrow aisles and glass shelves laden with delicate dishes, this
person is expected to navigate the rows with a cart known to go off course? I don’t think so.

Yet this is exactly what we try in many of our relationships. We see the failed attempts
around us, but we refuse to replace this “cart” called dating. We want to stay on the straight-and-
narrow path and serve God, yet we continue a practice that often pulls us in the wrong direction.

**DEFECTIVE DATING**

Dating has built-in problems, and if we continue to date according to the system as it is today,
we’ll more than likely swerve into trouble. Eric and Jenny probably had good intentions, but
they founded their relationship on our culture’s defective attitudes and patterns for romance.
Unfortunately, even in their adulthood they continue to reap the consequences.

The following “five habits of highly defective dating” are some of the “swerves” dating rela-
tionships often make. Maybe you can relate to one or two of them. I know I can!

1. **Dating leads to intimacy but not necessarily to commitment.**

What’s really the point of most dating relationships? Often dating encourages intimacy for
the sake of intimacy — two people getting close to each other without any real intention of mak-
ing a long-term commitment.

Deepening intimacy without defining a level of commitment is dangerous. It’s like going
mountain climbing with a partner who isn’t sure that he wants the responsibility of holding your
rope. When you’ve climbed 2,000 feet up a mountain face, you don’t want to have a conversation
about how he feels “tied down” by your relationship.

In the same way, many people experience deep hurt when they open themselves up emotion-
ally and physically only to be abandoned by others who proclaim they’re not ready for “serious
commitment.”

An intimate relationship is a beautiful experience that God wants us to enjoy. But He has
made the fulfillment of intimacy a byproduct of commitment-based love. You might say that inti-
macy between a man and a woman is the icing on the cake of a relationship headed toward mar-
riage. And if we look at intimacy that way, then most relationships are pure icing. They usually
lack a purpose or clear destination. In most cases, especially in high school, dating is short-term,
serving the needs of the moment. People date because they want to enjoy the emotional and even physical benefits of intimacy without the responsibility of real commitment.

In fact, that’s what the original revolution of dating was all about. Dating hasn’t been around forever. At the turn of the 20th century, a guy and girl became romantically involved only if they planned to marry.

If a young man spent time at a girl’s home, family and friends assumed that he intended to propose to her. But shifting attitudes in culture and the arrival of the automobile brought radical changes. The new “rules” allowed people to indulge in all the thrills of romantic love without having any intention of marriage.

For Christians this negative swerve is at the root of dating’s problems. Intimacy without commitment awakens desires, emotional and physical, that neither person can justly meet.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:6 the Bible calls this “defrauding,” ripping off someone by raising expectations but not delivering on the promise. Why arouse a hunger that we can’t righteously satisfy? It’s as though we’re promising something we can’t provide — until we’re married.

Intimacy without commitment, like icing without the cake, can be sweet, but it ends up making us sick.

2. **Dating tends to skip the “friendship” stage of a relationship.**

Jack met Libby on a church-sponsored retreat. Libby was a friendly girl with a reputation for taking her relationship with God seriously. Jack and Libby wound up chatting during a game of volleyball and seemed to really hit it off. Jack wasn’t interested in an intense relationship, but he wanted to get to know Libby better. Two days after the retreat he called her up and asked if she’d like to go out to a movie the next weekend. She said yes.

Did Jack make the right move? Well, he did in terms of scoring a date, but if he really wanted to build a friendship, he more than likely struck out. One-on-one dating has the tendency to move a guy and girl beyond friendship and toward romance too quickly.

Have you ever known someone who worried about dating a longtime friend? If you have, you’ve probably heard that person say something like this: “He asked me out, but I’m just afraid that if we start actually dating, it will change our friendship.”

What’s this person really saying? People who make statements like that, whether or not they realize it, recognize that dating encourages romantic expectations. In a true friendship you don’t feel pressured by knowing you “like” the other person or that he “likes” you back. You feel free to be yourself and do things together without spending three hours in front of the mirror making sure you look perfect.

The premise of dating is “I’m attracted to you; therefore, let’s get to know each other.” The premise of friendship is “We’re interested in the same things; let’s enjoy these common interests together.” If, after developing a friendship, romantic attraction forms, that’s an added bonus.

Intimacy without commitment is defrauding. Intimacy without friendship is superficial. A relationship based only on physical attraction and romantic feelings will last only as long as the feelings last.
3. Dating often mistakes a physical relationship for love.

Dave and Heidi didn’t mean to make out with each other on their first date. Really. Dave doesn’t have “only one thing on his mind,” and Heidi isn’t “that kind of girl.” It just happened.

They had gone to a concert together and afterward watched a video at Heidi’s house. During the movie, Heidi made a joke about Dave’s attempt at dancing during the concert. He started tickling her. Their playful wrestling suddenly stopped when they found themselves staring into each other’s eyes as Dave was leaning over her on the living room floor. They kissed. It was like something out of a movie. It felt so right.

It may have felt right, but the early introduction of physical affection to their relationship added confusion. Dave and Heidi hadn’t really gotten to know each other, but suddenly they felt close.

It’s so obvious we love each other, Heidi thought. But did they? Just because lips have met doesn’t mean two people are right for each other. A physical relationship doesn’t equal love.

Focusing on the physical is plainly sinful. God demands sexual purity. And He does this for our own good. Physical involvement can distort two people’s perspective of each other and lead to unwise choices. God also knows we’ll carry the memories of our past physical involvement into marriage. He doesn’t want us to live with guilt and regret.

Physical involvement can make two people feel close. But if many people in dating relationships really examined the focus of their relationships, they’d probably discover that all they have in common is lust.

4. Dating can cause discontentment with God’s gift of singleness.

On my brother’s third birthday, he received a beautiful blue bicycle. The miniature bike was brand-new, complete with training wheels, protective padding and streamers. I thought he couldn’t ask for a better first bike, and I couldn’t wait to see his reaction.

But to my disappointment, he didn’t seem impressed with the present. When my dad pulled the bike out of its large cardboard box, my brother looked at it a moment, smiled, then began playing with the box. It took my family and me a few days to convince him that the real gift was the bike!

I can’t help but think that God views our infatuation with short-term dating relationships much as I did my brother’s love for a worthless box. A string of uncommitted dating relationships is not the gift! God gives us singleness as a season of our lives unmatched in its boundless opportunities for growth, learning and service, and we view it as a chance to get bogged down in finding and keeping boyfriends and girlfriends. But we don’t find the real beauty of singleness in pursuing romance with as many different people as we want. We find the real beauty in using our freedom to serve God with abandon!

Dating causes dissatisfaction because it encourages a wrong use of this freedom. God has placed a desire in most men and women for marriage. Again, dating causes dissatisfaction because it gives single people just enough intimacy to make them wish they had more. Instead of enjoying the unique qualities of singleness, dating causes people to focus on what they don’t have.
5. **Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating another person’s character.**

Although most dating relationships don’t head toward marriage, some — especially those among older, college-age students — are motivated by marriage. People who sincerely want to find out if someone is potential marriage material need to understand that typical dating actually hinders that process. Dating creates an artificial environment for two people to interact. As a result, each person can easily convey an equally artificial image.

In the driveway of our house we have a basketball hoop that we can adjust to different heights. When I lower the hoop three feet from its normal setting, I can look like a pretty good basketball player. Dunking is no problem. I glide across the pavement and slam the ball down every time. But my “skill” exists only because I’ve lowered the standards. I’m not playing in a real environment. Put me on a court with a 10-foot hoop, and I’m back to being a white boy who can’t jump.

In a similar way, dating creates an artificial environment that doesn’t demand a person to accurately portray his or her positive and negative characteristics. On a date, a person can charm his or her way into a date’s heart. He drives a nice car and pays for everything; she looks great. But who cares? Being fun on a date doesn’t say anything about a person’s character or ability to be a good husband or wife.

Part of the reason dating is fun is that it gives us a break from real life. But our priority shouldn’t be to get away from real life; we need a strong dose of objective reality! We need to see each other in the real-life settings of family and friends. We need to watch each other serving and working. How does he interact with the people who know him best? How does she react when things don’t go perfectly? When considering a potential mate, we need to find the answers to these kinds of questions — questions that dating won’t answer.

**OLD HABITS DIE HARD**

These habits of defective dating reveal that we can’t fix many of dating’s problems by merely “dating right.” I believe that dating has dangerous tendencies that don’t go away just because Christians do the steering. And even those Christians who can avoid the major pitfalls of premarital sex and traumatic breakups often spend much of their energy wrestling with temptation.

If you’ve dated, this probably sounds familiar to you. I think that for too long we’ve approached relationships using the world’s mind-set and values, and if you’ve tried it, you might agree with me that it just doesn’t work. Let’s not waste any more time battling the swerving cart of dating. It’s time for a new attitude!

Rethinking the Dating Game

by Joshua Harris

If you want to rethink the way you date, the best place to start is with a new attitude. Here are five ways of rethinking your approach to dating. Use them to help make your relationships with the opposite sex part of God’s great plan for your life.

1. Every relationship is an opportunity to model Christ’s love.
   Bethany, an outgoing freshman at a Christian college, had a reputation as a bit of a flirt. Unfortunately, much of her interaction with guys focused on attracting attention to herself and getting a reaction from the guy she liked at the time. Bethany invested more energy in getting a guy to like her than she did in challenging his faith to grow.
   But when Bethany changed her perspective and realized her friendships with guys were opportunities to love them as Christ does, she took a 180-degree turn from a flirt to someone who demonstrated honest, sincere love. She learned to treat guys as brothers in Christ, not potential boyfriends.
   The world will know we follow Christ by the way we love others. That’s why we need to practice love as God defines it — sincere, servant-hearted, and selfless.

2. My single years are a gift from God.
   Michael was 21 years old and had a personality that matched his good looks. As the intern for his church’s youth ministry, he had more than enough opportunities to meet and get to know Christian girls. Although he wasn’t in a hurry to get married, he had developed a pattern of dating one girl after another. Although Michael hadn’t done anything immoral, his pattern of short-term dating robbed him of the flexibility, freedom, and focus of singleness. He felt he was incomplete without a girlfriend.
   But when Michael adopted a new attitude that viewed singleness as a gift, he learned to be content with friendships with girls. As a result, Michael removed the clutter that short-term relationships added to his life. With his extra time and energy, Michael was able to pursue more effective ministry and deeper friendships with people of both genders.
   Until we recognize God’s gift of singleness, we’ll probably miss out on the incredible opportunities it holds. Maybe you can think of an opportunity you could take advantage of if you decided not to date right now. While you’re still single, you have the freedom to get out in the world and use your gifts. You have the flexibility to go wherever God leads you. No other time in your life will offer these opportunities.

3. I don’t need to pursue a romance before I’m ready for marriage.
   Jenny was 17 and had dated a guy from her church for over a year. They were both strong Christians and they wanted to marry each other someday. The “someday” part was the problem. Realistically, they knew it would be a few years before they could get married. Both had specific
things they wanted to accomplish before they took that step.

The old attitude would say that intimacy feels good, so enjoy it now. But a new attitude recognizes that if two people can’t make a lifelong commitment (and that’s what marriage is), they really shouldn’t be pursuing romance. Even though it wasn’t easy, Jenny told her boyfriend they needed to limit the time and energy they invested in each other. Trusting that God may bring them back together when the time is right, they decided to step back and make their relationship less serious. They wanted to hold off on emotional intimacy until they felt ready to team it with a lifetime commitment. Though they struggled with the separation, missing the closeness they once enjoyed, they knew in the long run — whether they marry each other or someone else — they made the best choice for both of them.

God has made each of us with a desire for emotional intimacy. He doesn’t expect us to ignore that longing when we’re single, but I believe he asks us to have the patience to wait for the right person to come along. In the meantime, our desire for emotional intimacy can be quenched through close relationships with family and meaningful, non-romantic relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters.

4. I can’t “own” another person.

Sarah and Philip were both seniors in high school and had gone out with each other for six months. Their relationship had become fairly serious. In fact, they might as well have been married. They rarely did anything apart. They monopolized each other’s weekends, drove each other’s cars, and knew each other’s families almost as well as their own. Their physical relationship was fairly serious, too. Even though they hadn’t had sex, they constantly struggled with going too far.

The old attitude says we can “play marriage” if we really love someone. But the new attitude says it’s a mistake to make a claim on another person’s time, affection, and future when you aren’t married.

Eventually, Sarah and Philip realized they needed to end their relationship. By staking a claim on each other, they’d forgotten about their individual growth. They’d used a lot of time and energy they could have used helping others and preparing for the future. They’d planned their lives around each other without knowing whether they’d get married someday. And in reality, if they are like most high school couples, each of them will probably marry someone else.

Even if Sarah and Philip had limited their physical relationship to holding hands, they had still made unnecessary claims on each other’s spiritual and emotional lives. They needed to obey God and rethink a relationship that had them “owning” each other.

Are you making emotional, spiritual, or even physical claims on someone? Ask God to show you whether you need to re-evaluate a current relationship.

5. I need to avoid situations that could compromise the purity of my body or mind.

Jessica, 16, was unfortunately very naive. Even though she was a virgin and had committed to saving sex for marriage, she placed herself in compromising situations with her boyfriend —
Rethinking the Dating Game, continued

doing homework at her house when her mom was gone, going on hikes on secluded trails, ending their dates in his parked car. Had Jessica been honest with herself, she’d have admitted she liked the excitement of these situations. She thought it was very romantic, and it gave her a feeling of control over her boyfriend who was willing to go as far as Jessica would let him.

But when Jessica took on a new attitude, she said that purity consists of more than remaining a virgin. When she honestly examined her relationship with her boyfriend, she realized she wasn’t heading in the direction of purity. To get back on course, she had to drastically change her lifestyle.

First, she ended the relationship with her boyfriend because it was based primarily on physical attraction and not much else. Then she vowed that in the future, she’d stay out of situations that might tempt her to compromise her values.

Where, when and with whom you choose to spend your time reveals your true commitment to purity. Do you need to rethink your real desires? Do your relationships move you toward purity or further away?

Choosing to rethink the dating game doesn’t mean rejecting friendship with the opposite sex, companionship, romance, or marriage. We can still pursue these things; we just choose to pursue them on God’s terms and in his time. When we let God change our attitudes about dating, we’ll discover it’s well worth the effort.

God’s desire is to give us the best. He created us and designed every part of us, including our sexuality. Satan, the Great Deceiver, since the beginning of time has sought to distort and abuse the gift of sexuality. In the Genesis 3 account of original sin, the deciever comes to Eve with the same two lies he continues to use today. The first is “Did God really say...”, an attempt to question God’s plan and design. The second lie is “God’s holding out on you. He doesn’t have your best interest in mind.” This lie is designed to make us question God’s goodness and his love for us. When we begin to believe these lies and question God’s plan (one man, one woman - “leave and cleave”: Genesis 2:24), and/or His goodness, the results are disastrous.

The right thing at the wrong time, is still the wrong thing. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says that there is a time and a season for everything under heaven, and in verse 5 it states, “a time to embrace and a time to refrain.” Part of acknowledging this great gift from God, is knowing how to control it.

Our bodies are His temple, we are His vessels. I Corinthians 6:18-20 states clearly that we must “Flee sexual immorality; all other sins are outside the body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.” The Greek word for body is all encompassing, not just the physical but the spiritual part of who we are. Paul goes on to state that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit and therefore we are to honor God with our bodies. The True Love Waits movement by students nationally has been more than a bunch of kids saying they won’t have sex until marriage. It has been about students making a commitment to be pure, to be clean vessels through whom God can do His work. It has been a movement of true holiness, which literally means to be “set apart,” to be “consecrated.” God is calling His people “to come out from among them and be Holy...” (Isaiah 1:16, 17). It has been a call to His Bride throughout history, and these students are hearing that call.

When you begin to take God seriously, to take a stand for purity and holiness, the enemy will come in with a vengeance. He would love to destroy your testimony and your usefulness in the kingdom, and one way of accomplishing this is through sexual sin. James 1:12-15 is a description of the sin cycle and its end result — death. We will look, however, at the two key words in verse 14: “dragged away” and “enticed.” Both are hunting and fishing terms in the Greek and give a graphic illustration on how we can be lured and baited into sin.

We will also look at the amazing grace of God. There is hope if you have been biting bait. It is desperately important that every student understand that God wants nothing more than for them to come home, repent and start new. All of Scripture points to a right relationship with God. That is why Jesus came and offered himself as a sacrifice for us.
“I Told You So…”

Prior to this session, have a very talented baker (just kidding, talent may not be necessary), bake up a batch of tantalizing chocolate chip cookies. In the process of making these cookies however, make sure that the chef adds an ingredient that will make these cookies unique — very hot (with an emphasis on the very) tabasco sauce. You should be able to do this without changing the look of the cookie (hint: use extra salt and less sugar). These cookies need to look good, just taste bad.

Place the sabotaged cookies on a tray in your classroom with a very clear and visible sign asking the students not to eat these cookies. As students come in, do not say anything or reprimand the students who might be tempted to disobey your posted sign, but do watch for reaction in case any student would decide to ignore the warning.

If no one disobeys, it will be more difficult to get the discussion going, but at the beginning explain that you had the students’ best interest in mind when placing that sign on the tray of cookies, because the cookies were deceiving; they looked good and looked as if they would please, but really would not.

Suggestion: You may want to bring some “good” cookies to give to students after class. There is a time for everything — good things come to those who wait.
1. What is your understanding of God? Do you see him as a loving Father? A Judge? A distant, uninterested being? A king, dictator or tyrant?

2. How does your view of God affect your behavior?

3. Read I Corinthians 6:18-20. What does it mean to you that your body is “God’s temple”?

4. Have you ever been “lured” or “baited”? In what ways do we all face the same temptations? How are they unique to us?

5. How have you handled temptation in an effective way in the past? What are some good ideas for handling temptation in the future?

6. What does it mean to be forgiven? Read 1 John 1:9 and discuss forgiveness. Do you have to “feel” forgiven to be forgiven?

7. Read Practical Ways to Handle Sexual Temptation (p. 36), and write down some of your goals for your relationships, present or future. Take this information home and share it with a parent or caring adult.
There’s a Hole in My Sidewalk
An Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

I
I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am... I am helpless.
It isn’t my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don’t see it.
I fall in again.
I can’t believe I am in this same place.
But it isn’t my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in... it’s a habit... but,
my eyes are open,
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V
I walk down another street.

Portia Nelson, 1989
There’s a Hole in My Sidewalk

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Practical Ways to Handle Sexual Temptation

1. Be absolutely convinced and fully aware of the consequences if you fail to limit your sexual partners to one mutually monogamous relationship for life.

2. Write out your decision about sex. Put a reminder of this decision someplace where you will see it and remember this commitment you’ve made to yourself and your future.

3. Develop self-esteem — believe in yourself! If you realize you are a person of worth, with opinions of great value, you can develop a confidence in what you think and how you act.

4. Practice assertiveness. Everyone has the right to make decisions concerning his or her own body, especially when one’s health is at stake. It is also important to realize that the mind and heart can control the body’s urges!

5. Communicate your boundaries to your date. Make sure you talk together frequently about these important issues.

6. Don’t date individuals who are disrespectful of you and your boundaries. If you’re being pressurized, step back and reevaluate this relationship.

7. Plan your dates. Make sure you have packed your date with fun and positive things to help you get to know each other better. Too much time with nothing planned can get you into trouble.

8. Avoid alcohol and drugs! Alcohol and drugs deaden the mind and the ability to think and decide clearly. You could come away from your “good time” with a great deal more than you bargained for!

9. Limit the amount of and time spent on physical involvement. Don’t spend excessive amounts of times “making out” or “exploring.” This will only lead to frustration and regret. Keep it short and sweet!

10. Find a good friend with the same resolve about sex. Make sure you have someone you can talk to. The two of you will be able to help each other through the “pressure” times and come away with a valuable and strong relationship.
After one of my talks with students, a young man came up to me and said, “If God didn’t want me to have sex before marriage, why is it so hard?” The answer to that question can be found in James 1: 2. “Count it all joy when you face trials and temptations, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature....”

Each of us faces temptation and times in life when we are forced to make choices. These times of testing are opportunities for growth.

One of the biggest obstacles to maturity is “the blame game” — constantly pushing aside personal responsibility for our own actions and blaming others. It is important that students begin to be aware of the amount of time they spend playing the blame game, and that until they take ownership of their past failures, they will never grow.

We will discuss the process of maturity with 4 empty chairs. We will hallmark the various stages of development and show the parallels between physical, emotional, and spiritual maturity.

Chair #1 (Birth - 3) “What I want, when I want it, with no thought to consequences.”

Chair #2 (Early Elementary) “Rewards and punishment.”

Chair #3 (Early adolescent) “What is everyone else doing? — ‘peer pressure.’”

Chair #4 (Maturity) “Decisions based on core personal values — what is right and what is wrong.”
Opening Activity

You may want to open today up with one of the skits in the appendix and some review and discussion of the concepts leading up to this lesson.

Discussion Starters

1. Have you changed your view of the testing times, the temptations you face consistently? How do you “count it all joy”? 

2. Can you think of times in your life when you made decisions and operated out of each of those “chairs”? Give examples (details are not necessary just general principles).

3. How important is “what everyone else is doing” to you? How does your peer group effect you negatively and/or positively?

4. What do you think the future holds for Christians who are truly trying to live their faith in the world today? Do you envision a time in your life when standing for your faith will cost you something big? How do you consider that you are preparing for that possibility?
Dear Brian:

Although you’re only in middle school, I think it’s important to talk to you about some issues you’ll be facing very soon. You probably hear your friends talking about sex or may be wondering about it yourself.

I’ve seen a lot of my friends get hurt, both physically and emotionally, by having sex outside of marriage. Many of them have sex because they think it’ll make them a man or strengthen their relationship. However, all of them get hurt or they hurt others. One friend got a girl pregnant, and another guy now has a sexually transmitted disease. He probably passed it on to his girlfriend. If she gets a disease, she may not be able to have children in the future. Both of them could contract AIDS and die.

Sometimes I have sexual desires, but I don’t have sex even though I have these desires. I often channel my sexual energy into playing basketball or go in-line skating. It’s not always easy, but it’s better than getting a disease or getting a girl pregnant.

You may think to yourself, “Why wait for marriage to have sex when marriage is no guarantee that a relationship will stay together?” I have often thought that myself, especially since our parents’ marriage ended in divorce. However, Brian, in an ideal marriage two people make a lifetime commitment to love one another even during the times when one spouse doesn’t love back. In marriage, two people are supposed to suffer, bear and endure hard times together. Our father didn’t want to do this with mom. Therefore, Brian, it’s not that marriage is the problem; it depends on the two people getting married.

Right now it’s important to get to know girls. We have the rest of our married lives to get to know them in a sexual way. I don’t like the idea of my future wife having sex with someone in high school or college. I want to be able to trust my future wife and know that she doesn’t have some type of sexually transmitted disease. I intend to postpone having sex until marriage, and I hope you will too.

Your Big Brother

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Additional Resources

1. Enclosed skits and handouts

2. Joshua Harris book and audio “I Kissed Dating Goodbye.” Strongly recommended for further discussion on program 2 and for getting the students to develop a “dating philosophy” for which they can take ownership. Available from Straight Talk (Rt. 1, Box 135, Heron Lake, MN 56137, phone: (507) 793-2500, e-mail: pstenzel@compuserve.com) or your local Christian Booksellers.

3. Program 4 - Veggie Tales Video - “Rack, Shack & Benny.” A fun and very powerful retelling of the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. If you have never used these kid’s videos with junior and senior high, you will be pleasantly surprised. They’re a bigger hit with the teens!

4. Additional help and resources from STRAIGHT TALK:

   A. Pam Stenzel is available to speak to your community or youth event. Pam speaks in both public and parochial schools nationwide. She currently speaks to approximately 250,000 students each year. For more information and a promotional packet call Maximum Impact at 1-800-786-8283.

   B. “The Threshing Floor” by Jeremy Erb. This unique, yet very insightful and thoughtful, Bible study on the book of Ruth asks students to sift through the lies and choices facing them in the dating world. A great follow up for your senior highers. Jeremy Erb earned a B.A. in History from Minot State Univ. and is currently finishing his Master of Theology degree. He is also the Senior High Youth Pastor at Mid-Cities Bible Church in Bedford, Texas, and is a seven-year youth ministry veteran. “The Threshing Floor” (both leader and student guides) are available through Straight Talk, Rt. 1, Box 135, Heron Lake, MN 56137, phone: (507) 793-2500, e-mail: pstenzel@compuserve.com.

   C. STRIVE (Students Together Radically Instilling a Vision for Excellence) is a new peer helping ministry begun by Straight Talk. We are training students to impact their peers in their own communities through skits, testimonies and peer counseling. We have a manual for leaders and a weekend workshop that will help you get a peer team going in your community. We believe it is absolutely essential that students have positive role models and that the students who are making positive life choices be given an opportunity to influence their friends. We are training high school students to go into junior high and middle school setting to impact the younger students as well. For more information, please contact Straight Talk, Rt. 1, Box 135, Heron Lake, MN 56137, phone: (507) 793-2500, e-mail: pstenzel@compuserve.com.
SKIT

Scene begins on a patio where Sarah is alone, leaning against the railing. Sarah is putting on a party but has left the festivities to think. Sarah is looking off into the distance in meditation as she is accompanied by a friend.

FRIEND: Hey, what's up? Why aren't you inside? It's your party!

SARAH: I don't know, I guess I just don't feel too much like partying (still looking out)

FRIEND: (Puts hand on Sarah’s shoulder) Hey, do you wanna talk about it? Tell me what’s going on.

SARAH: I can't, you just wouldn't understand. I don't mean that in a bad way. I just don't want to plague you with my problems.

FRIEND: (Stepping up beside her and placing arms around her) Well, can I at least try and cheer you up?… Jake is inside and lost to Mike in some drinking game and now can't find his right shoe. It's so funny seeing this drunk guy walk around asking everyone for his shoe and not knowing why people are laughing at him… and then there's…

SARAH: If you don’t mind, I appreciate your efforts, but I would just rather be alone right now.

FRIEND: OK, sure, but please talk to me sometime. It’s never good to keep things locked up inside.

SARAH: Sure. Thank you for understanding.

FRIEND: You bet. (Turns and walks away slowly)

SARAH: (To herself quietly, in a very sarcastic yet pathetic manner) Imagine that, Jake losing his clothing?!

FRIEND: Hey there, I heard that. What’s that all about? I thought you and Jake broke up?

SARAH: What? Oh, it’s nothing, seriously. I was just thinking out loud.

FRIEND: No way kiddo. I know quite well when my best friend is feeling angry, and that was definite animosity flowing. (Chuckles to herself/himself)

SARAH: (Chuckles also) Things just happened between Jake and me which I wish maybe wouldn’t have, that’s all. Nothing too important.

FRIEND: Nothing too important? Well then, why am I just hearing about this guy now if it’s nothing too important. Last time I knew you, you could at least tell me about the “little things.” Now seriously, what the heck is making you feel so down?

SARAH: Do you remember two months ago when… Oh, forget about it. It really is nothing.

FRIEND: No, no, I want to know. You have to tell me what is going on. I can’t take not knowing what is making my best friend miss her own party.
S K I T

Skit, continued

SARAH: OK, then, like I was saying, do you remember two months ago when Jake took me out to dinner for our anniversary?

FRIEND: Yeah, but...

SARAH: Well, we went back to my house afterwards. Josh (whoever plays “FRIEND”), my parents were out of town. (Pause) Jake had told me many times that he loved me, and I thought that this was the only to keep his love.

FRIEND: What does that mean? Why would you need to keep his love if he had told you many times? And what was the only way?

SARAH: We, um, we, we had sex, all right! (Impatient yet quiet, so as not to be overheard) Many girls had been recently paying attention, and I didn’t want to lose him. I kept on asking myself why he would want to stay with me, with so many girls prettier and more popular always flirting with him.

FRIEND: I understand now, Sarah. I am so sorry. I know how hard it must have been for you. I mean, after breaking up so soon. And then for Jake to start dating Jennifer.

SARAH: I just sit and think to myself of what things were like before. I gave him everything, and he just threw it back in my face. (Pause, thinking more) Although now, I think about what is going to happen to Jennifer after he has his way with her. It just isn’t fair.

FRIEND: Sarah, I don’t really know what to say except that I am here for you.

Sarah: Thanks. I guess I knew that you always would be. It has just been so hard for me to talk about this. I hope you understand.

FRIEND: I understand. But what are you going to do now? You know, if you are legitimately worried about Jennifer, it may be best if you spoke to her. I know that the past cannot be undone, but you might be able to have an impact on the future.

SARAH: You might be right. But... no... I am just not quite sure yet. I think I am going to need more time.

FRIEND: Sarah, Jennifer may not have much more time.

Sarah: (Looking inside and sees Jennifer) OK, I guess you’re right. Look, there she is now. I don’t know what I am going to say. This is going to be rough.... Hey Jennifer, you got a minute?

[Exeunt, Friend looks satisfactorily off in the distance as Sarah proceeds to walk towards Jennifer.]

By Joshua Eric Casteel
© Peer to Peer
SKIT: THE GIFT

The Gift
by Morgan Leverett

JILL: (holding nicely wrapped gift, pacing, looking around) Man, when’s he going to get here? I’ve been waiting and waiting to give him this gift.

BRIAN: (approaches, checking out her gift) Hey, Jill! Whatcha got there? It looks pretty nice. Could I have it?

JILL: Oh… no… I don’t think so. I’m saving it to give to someone special and you’re not him.

BRIAN: Are you sure? Let me see the card on top (Tries to grab the card off the gift. JILL snatches it back.) Be cool, it’s OK. I’m not going to open it. (Flirts, smiles) Please? I just want to touch the bow.

JILL: Well… OK, I don’t suppose it would hurt to just touch it. But just the bow. Nothing else. (Brian touches the bow, then pulls it loose.)

JILL: Hey, wait, stop! I only said… (as he takes it out of her hands)

BRIAN: I just want to hold it a while. Nobody will ever know. It’ll be OK, Sweetheart (smiles, charming, pleading).

JILL: Well… I guess… maybe…

BRIAN: You know what? That is a really beautiful present; You’ve done a great job wrapping it — you are very talented!

JILL: Really?

BRIAN: Yeah. And you know, the guys at school would think you were really cool if you’d let me open your gift — just a little — just a peek.

JILL: Mmmm… I don’t know.

BRIAN: What? Don’t you trust me? Come on. You know how much I like you. (Jill looks flattered.) If you really liked me, you’d let me look.

JILL: Of course I like you. You’re good looking and you’re nice to me.
BRIAN: Well, I’m just gonna leave if you’re not even going to let me take a peek!

JILL: (Trying to please Brian, assures him she trusts and likes him.) No! No! Don’t leave! OK… OK… I guess it wouldn’t be bad if you just took one look (Brian takes a quick look in the box, seems unimpressed).

BRIAN: Wow (half-heartedly, then says unenthusiastically) That was great (after opening the box, gives it back to Jill and walks off the stage) See ya.

SHAWN: (Two years have passed. Shawn enters and seems very happy to see Jill. He hugs her and has a nicely wrapped gift which he holds out to Jill.) Jill, we’ve dated for a long time now and tonight is our wedding night. I’m proud that I can give this special gift to you. It’s my virginity.

JILL: (Looks sad and guilty, shows Shawn her opened, somewhat beat-up gift. Shawn looks excited at first, then when he sees the gift, he looks disappointed.) Here’s what I have for you, Shawn. Sorry it’s been opened and is a little tattered.

SHAWN: Thanks… I think. (Looks sad and confused.)
SKIT: THE WEDDING SCENE

The Wedding Scene

SCENE: Bride & Groom, center stage, facing each other, hand in hand, looking lovingly at each other.

GROOM: I, John, take you, Jane, to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, foresaking all others, from this day forward, as long as we both shall live.

SCENE: One by one during his vows, girls begin to step forward, taking their place behind or beside the GROOM. The BRIDE doesn’t notice at first, then she tries to ignore them and listen to the GROOM. But it is becoming harder and harder. Two of the girls are obviously arguing about where to stand. Both want to stand closest to John.

SHERI: …I should stand closest ‘cause he likes me best.

SUZI: Well, I’ve known him longer.

JANE: I, Jane, take you, John, to be my lawfully wedded husband, to have…

SUZI: I want to see the ring. John, can I try it on?… Wow, you never gave me anything so nice.

SHERI: (Peeks over JOHN’s shoulder to see the ring) Me neither — the only thing he ever gave me was herpes.

SUZI: (Looks proud) I gave him that — and he’ll have it the rest of his life. It’s the gift that keeps on giving, you know.

JANE: (Tries to take back the situation) To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, forsaking… all… John, what’s going on?

JOHN: (Obviously distressed, also trying not to be distracted) Oh, don’t pay any attention to them. They’re nobody… keep going.

JANE: (Still distracted, tries to smile lovingly) O.K., um… (mumbles first part of vow again to find spot) Oh, yeah, forsaking all others from this day forward, to take (SHERI straightens JOHN’s tie, his eyes turn toward her, he slightly smiles. JANE is startled) thee as… John!
SKIT: THE WEDDING SCENE

The Wedding Scene, continued

JOHN: Oh! (attention back on JANE) Jane, I’m sorry. I didn’t know it was going to be like this. I’m sorry. I didn’t think they’d be here…

JANE: “They’d be here?” John, who are these women?!

JOHN: (Forcibly steps past the girls towards his BRIDE, trying to keep them behind him) Jane, I’m sssorry… (tries to find the words) These… are… the, well, all the other girls that I have had s…. well, have slept with.

JANE: What?! (Pulls away, horrified)

JOHN: Jane, I didn’t want you to see this. You are the only one that I love. You are the one I want to spend the rest of my life with. They don’t mean a thing, I swear to you!

JANE: (Softening a little, yet hurt) Well, they obviously mean something. They’re here, at our wedding! (Looking past him, girls have backed off slightly, are standing in a cluster; some watching, some whispering) You mean you never loved any of them?

JOHN: (Looking back) I guess I thought I did, at the time. But once I started going out with you, then I knew that I truly loved you. They are nothing like you, Jane, nothing like us. I tried to get them out of my life completely. I ripped up their pictures, erased their phone numbers from my book and all that; but for some reason, they show up every now and then at the most inconvenient times.

JANE: Yeah, I’d say this is a pretty inconvenient time.

JOHN: But Jane, I’ve waited my whole life for you.

JANE: Is that what you call waiting? (motioning to the girls, turns and leaves)
Dave’s Top Ten List of Bad Date Ideas

10. When her idea of a “double date” is to have two guys escort her to the party.

9. Your date locks his keys in the car and instead of using a hanger to get the window open, he uses a baseball bat.

8. She stops talking about herself only long enough to talk about her favorite nail polish color.

7. A guy asks you to dinner and a movie. He shows up at your door on his bicycle with a sack lunch.

6. The only thing you have in common is the same area code.

5. When your date tries to impress your parents by burping three choruses of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.”

4. You find out that 16 girls in your class have his name tattooed on their tush.

3. He comes to your door, and you can smell the beer on his breath before you open the door.

2. She forgets your name 13 times during the first half hour of your date.

1. She thinks “going dutch” means wearing wooden shoes and picking tulips in the park.
Mommy said the day would come when I’d meet the man for me
But where was mom… when I was too blind to see
He did everything right and passed the test and swore he’d never leave
But after that night, I never spoke to him again
I can’t believe he convinced me to believe in him, in us
Why was I so stupid? I hate myself for that
Now he’s gone, and with him me, and all for love’s substitute
To fill the void where I was at

The gas ran out, I think that’s what I told her
Last night on the road with a moon hung bright
Yet my crafty plan didn’t display the man I wish I would have been
I was so smooth, so debonair
Whispering in her ear and toying with her hair
Yet I know well, to cast a good spell, one must speak to the craving ear
Oh, I said everything alright, how I loved her
And the fruits of my toil came to me as easily as I had hoped
But now I see, it was bigger than merely me
For I have seen the pain in her eyes
When the words fell short, I felt I had to resort
It never mattered at whose expense
Now I merely drift from person to person on
And try to fill the void of an ever hoped for union
God, why me, and why didn’t she, they protest
I’m just as lost, I don’t want to pay the cost of giving myself that day

Joshua Eric Casteel

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