



Fall 2025 Marriage Study | Week 13

Dating Before Marriage

Opening Icebreaker (5 minutes)

- “What’s one dating lesson you *wish* someone had taught you as a teenager?”
- “What’s the funniest dating rule or saying your parents gave you?”

Leader Notes:

- Set tone: “*Our goal is not to control our kids’ future relationships, but to disciple them toward clarity and Christlikeness.*”
- Remind: parents can pass if something feels too raw or personal.

2) Scripture Foundation (6–7 minutes)

Read aloud:

- **Proverbs 4:23** — guard the heart
- **1 Thessalonians 4:3–4** — God’s will is purity
- **1 Corinthians 10:31** — do all for God’s glory
- **Colossians 3:17** — every word/deed under Jesus

Prompt:

- “How do these verses shape the *purpose* of dating?”
- “What dangers come when our kids see dating as entertainment instead of discernment?”

Leader Notes:

Tie back to your **Bottom Line**:

- The prize of marriage is intimacy.
 - The prize of dating is clarity.
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3) Helping Kids See the Aim (6 minutes)

Mini-teach (1 min): Culture says dating is about *fun, drama, and romance*. Scripture says dating is about *clarity and discipleship*. Our job as parents is to prepare kids to want the right prize and protect them until they're ready to pursue it.

Discussion:

1. How can we communicate the difference between clarity and intimacy without sounding like killjoys?
2. What age/stage signals a child may be *ready* to begin discerning marriage?

Application: Write down one sentence you could use with your teen/pre-teen to frame dating biblically.

4) Nine Commitments for Parents to Model & Teach

Cluster A — First Things First (Love / Community / Conduct) (10 minutes)

- **Love God first** → Teach rhythms of worship, devotion, service *before* romance.
- **Lean on counsel & community** → Normalize mentors, church family, parents as part of discernment.
- **Pursue Christlike conduct** → Train kids to treat the opposite sex as brothers/sisters in Christ first.

Questions:

- What family rhythms show our kids that Jesus is first?
- How can we model “dating in the light” (accountability, shared conversations, not secrecy)?
- What language should we *avoid* so our kids learn to speak honorably about peers?

Parent Coaching Tip: Share how mentors protected *you* at critical points — kids need to know accountability is a blessing, not a burden.

Cluster B — Protection & Purity (Boundaries / Purity / Guarding Hearts) (10 minutes)

- **Practice wise protection** → Teach kids that guardrails = love, not paranoia.
- **Guard purity** → Be specific: set clear rules about places, times, media, tech.
- **Guard hearts** → Coach kids not to overshare emotionally or over-promise covenant words too early.

Questions:

- How do we explain purity as more than “don’t do this”—but as a whole-life posture?
- What family boundaries can we put in place early (curfews, group dates, phone checks)?
- How do we help kids balance honesty with emotional pacing (clarity before intimacy)?

Parent Coaching Tip: Write a “family dating rule of life” with your kids before dating begins (curfew, spaces, accountability, checkpoints).

Cluster C — Clarity & Order (Family / Honesty / Priorities) (10 minutes)

- **Respect family boundaries** → Teach kids that parents are partners, not obstacles.
- **Be clear about intentions** → Encourage them to speak honestly and not play games.
- **Keep Christ first** → Remind them no human relationship should replace devotion to Jesus.

Questions:

- How do we keep parental authority from feeling like control?
- What’s a kind way to coach our kids to define relationships without pressure?
- How can we lovingly intervene if a relationship seems to pull them away from Christ?

Parent Coaching Tip: Give your kids language: “*I care about you, but I’m not ready to talk about forever yet.*” Honesty is kindness.

5) Practicals: Family Discipleship Plan (5 minutes)

Prompt: Dating conversations shouldn't begin when romance does—they should start early, in safe family dialogue.

Action (individually or pairs): Write 3 discipleship practices you'll commit to as a parent:

- Regular family conversations about relationships.
- Inviting mentors/grandparents to speak in.
- Setting tech/accountability guardrails now.

Share 1 with the group.

6) Navigating Decisions (4 minutes)

Slow, Stop, Step Forward Framework:

- **Slow** when: child feels rushed, mentors raise concern, rhythms wobble.
- **Stop** when: convictions break, boundaries collapse, Christ is displaced.
- **Step Forward** when: clarity grows, counsel affirms, purity holds.

Prompt: Which of these three is hardest for you as a parent—slowing, stopping, or releasing to step forward? Why?

7) Closing & Prayer (3–4 minutes)

Read Psalm 37:5 aloud

“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.”

Prayer:

- For parents: courage to disciple with both clarity and compassion.
- For kids: joy in Christ, wisdom in relationships, protection in purity.
- For families: to raise children who see dating as discernment, not entertainment.

Optional Homework (15–30 minutes this week)

1. **Write a Family Dating Covenant:** Draft simple guardrails and commitments with your kids before dating begins.

2. **Mentor Connection:** Identify 1–2 trusted adults you'll invite to speak into your child's future dating life.
3. **Tech Guardrails:** Set phone/media boundaries and accountability early.
4. **Practice Conversations:** Roleplay with your teen how to set boundaries kindly or define the relationship honestly.
5. **Prayer Journal:** Pray Psalm 37:5 with/for your child three times this week.