

# THE DATING GAME [ d a t i n g ]

## THIS WEEK

Society and the media pressures teenagers to date at a young age—and to experiment with physical intimacy. These pressures are making an impact on Christian youth today—when they date, who they date, and how to handle social and sexual issues. This TalkSheet provides a forum to discuss dating and how to handle it from God's perspective.

## OPEN

To quickly break the ice with your kids, you may want to share a humorous anecdote from your own dating history or ask several of your leaders to share stories of their own (changing names to protect the innocent!) Then have the group vote and give an award for the worst date story.

Or you can also find funny dating stories from magazines (almost every teenage magazine has them) and compare these. You kids may be able to find some of their own examples in magazines or from personal experience. Have them write out their experiences on paper and read them out loud (anonymously, of course!).

## THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Your kids will have different ideas on this! List them on a whiteboard, in case you want to refer to them later.
2. This forces your kids to assess their priorities and their values, because they're limited to three choices. You may want to tally up the votes for each trait to find out what the group thinks is most important. Ask your adult leaders to give some input as well.
3. Use this activity to let the group argue and debate the issue. You may want to divide them into groups, give them time to formulate a case for their position, and then let the teams state their case. Encourage them to use the Bible for support and to share any verses they found relating to the issue.
4. Dating isn't mentioned specifically in the Bible, so your kids will practice applying the Bible to modern life. Have them share their interpretations of each verse, then give your own comments to a passage or two along with a practical application.

## THE CLOSE

Dating is a huge part of the teenage life. There's so much pressure to date—but it's okay (and healthy!) to not date. Communicate that dating is about building healthy relationships with others—it's not about who dates the most or gets the most "action" on dates. Dating doesn't have to be romantic—it can simply be having fun with others and building relationships. Ask your group why some people feel that they're a loser if they don't date. Why or why not? Why is there so much emphasis on dating?

You may also want to talk about the pressures of physical intimacy that come with dating. What is good or bad about dating someone for a long time? How do teenagers in general handle sexual relationships in general? How is this different among Christian kids?

Finally, you may want to close in prayer with your group. Challenge them to ask God for wisdom and self-control in their dating. Point out that God is in control of their relationships and expects them to be respectful towards the other person who they are with. Challenge them to start praying now for their future husbands and wives, asking God to prepare the other person for them and their relationship.

## MORE

- Cases of date rape and physical abuse are on the rise. You may want to discuss safe ways to date without getting in a bad situation. Point out that date rape is a crime—no one, under no circumstances, can force another person into sex. What are ways to protect themselves from becoming a victim? Encourage them to meet the person if they don't feel comfortable riding in the same car and to date in social places where there are other people. Finally, communicate that if they are ever hit, pressured into sex, or raped, they must find a trusted adult to talk to—you, a pastor, teacher, counselor or parent. For more information, visit the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network ([www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)) or National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (<http://ncasa.org>).
- What does our society say about dating? There are articles on the Internet and in several teenage magazines (such as *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Mademoiselle*) on dating. Ask your kids to find some statistics, questions and answers, or articles on dating and the risks involved. Then discuss the articles and what happened. How can Christians handle situations like this? How can your kids encourage their friends and peers to date in healthy ways?