

Date with Purpose

For teens ages 12–14 · about 45–60 minutes · Moral Issues for Teens · Relationships & Identity · game **Honor or Cross the Line?** · built on **1 Thessalonians 4:3, 2 Timothy 2:22, and 1 Corinthians 6:18**

Your students live in a culture that treats dating like entertainment — swipe, flirt, prove feelings, repeat. Friends say, "It's just hanging out," or "Everyone's further along than you." Some feel left out; some feel pressured; some already crossed a line they wish they hadn't. This session reframes dating with biblical purpose: you date who you might marry, so every date is a chance to honor God, build character, protect purity, and practice sacrificial love — not fool around and hope for the best.

Before you teach anything, pray.

Some students have never been asked out; some are secretly dating; some carry shame from physical compromise. Ask the Spirit for dignity without graphic detail and clarity without crushing hope. You are teaching purpose and boundaries — not mocking romance or shaming kids who need a fresh start.

The heart of the lesson

Dating is not random. It is a season to develop Christlike character, observe someone's walk with God, and build friendship toward a possible marriage covenant. That means dating is as much about *you* becoming trustworthy as it is about evaluating someone else. Bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33). Christians take seriously the call to marry in the Lord and to date believers who share their convictions — not because God is anti-fun, but because shared faith shapes every hard decision ahead.

You date who you might marry — honor God on every date.

Culture confuses lust and love. Lust is selfish and impatient; biblical love is patient, kind, and sacrificial (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). Real love protects the other person's body and conscience — it does not pressure, manipulate, or say, "Prove it physically." God's will for your sanctification includes abstaining from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Paul does not whisper that command — he names it as God's will for your life. When passion rises, Scripture says flee — don't flirt with what God told you to run from (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:18).

Decide your boundaries before the date — not in the back seat under pressure.

Wise teens decide standards ahead of time: public places, group settings early on, no secret compromises, no fooling around "just a little." Proverbs asks whether you can scoop fire into your lap without being burned — the answer is no. If a student has already crossed a line, 1 John 1:9 still offers repentance, honesty with God, and a new start from today. Grace is real; so is the standard.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you **abstain from sexual immorality.**"

2 TIMOTHY 2:22

"So **flee youthful passions** and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18

"**Flee from sexual immorality.** Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body."

How the session flows

- 1 Purpose, not pastime.** Hook with dating toward marriage and character. ~7 min
- 2 Love vs. lust.** Teach honor, believers-only, boundaries ahead of time. ~12 min
- 3 Play the game.** "Honor or Cross the Line?" two-team showdown. ~12–15 min
- 4 Quiet honesty.** Reference card, private reflection. ~5 min
- 5 Worksheet.** In class or take-home reinforcement. ~15 min
- 6 Close with courage.** Prayer and a clear standard. ~8 min

You'll want a screen for the game, printed reference cards and worksheets, pens, and a leader ready to discuss dating pressure without crude jokes or exposing students who aren't dating yet.

Leading it, part by part

Purpose, not pastime

Ask: what do people your age think dating is *for*? (Fun, status, proving you're liked, finding a spouse, copying movies.) Land the biblical frame: dating is a time to grow in godliness and learn someone's character — because you date who you might marry. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3 briefly. God's will is not vague; holiness includes the body.

Love vs. lust

Contrast two voices. Lust says, "Get what you want now." Love says, "I will protect your conscience and wait on God's timing." Cover three practical pillars. **Date believers:** shared faith matters when temptation hits (2 Corinthians 6:14). **Boundaries ahead of time:** decide before the moment what honors God — public settings, no secret rule-breaking, flee when passion rises (2 Timothy 2:22). **No fooling around:** 1 Corinthians 6:18 is not embarrassed language — flee means run, not negotiate.

Be pastoral: not every student is dating. Affirm that waiting on God's timing is wise. For students already compromised, offer hope through repentance and adult help — not gossip, not shame theater.

Play the game

Run "Honor or Cross the Line?" on screen — twelve to fifteen minutes. Rounds sort honoring choices from line-crossing ones, drill key verses, and work real scenarios (pressure, non-Christian interest, regret). Bridge afterward: every card asked whether this choice *honors God on the date* or crosses the line.

Quiet honesty

Hand out the reference card. Promise plainly that nobody is collecting it. Give five quiet minutes for students to circle where they are and what boundary they need. Protect the silence.

Worksheet

Verse fill-in, T/F, lookup, sort honor vs. cross the line, one scenario, one "this week" action. The reference card addressed the heart; the worksheet reinforces Scripture on purpose and purity.

Close with courage

Pray for wisdom before the next invitation — text, date, party, or pressure moment. Invite students to memorize the line: *You date who you might marry — honor God on every date.* Offer leaders for

follow-up. Make honoring God sound like loyalty to Christ, not missing out on love.

Take it further

Discussion questions for small groups or a follow-up week:

- What is the purpose of dating from a biblical view? How is that different from "just for fun"?
- How does 1 Thessalonians 4:3 shape what God wants for your body and relationships?
- What does it mean to flee youthful passions? (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Why does Paul say flee sexual immorality — not manage it? (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- How is biblical love different from lust? (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)
- Why should Christians seriously date other believers? (2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 15:33)
- What boundaries should be decided *before* a date instead of under pressure?
- What should a student do who already crossed a line they regret? (1 John 1:9; tell a safe leader)

A final word

Romance is not the enemy — purposeless, godless dating is. Your students will get another text, another "everyone's doing it," another chance to honor or cross the line. Give them Scripture, give them the game, give them the card, and trust the Spirit to make "you date who you might marry" sound not restrictive but *wise* — and honoring God on every date sound like the love that actually protects the heart.