



Understanding Relationships as a Young Adult

Welcome to Week 10 of the Grad Experience. **Each week as we look at specific topics that are extremely present in your world today. Our goal is for you to spend some time discussing in a safe place, so you ask questions and develop a stronger viewpoint on each of them.** Even if they are not present in your high school right now, they will eventually be present on a college campus, workforce, or military ... or just in the general culture of the world you live in.

Our goal isn't for you to leave here each week with a definitive answer to some of life's tough questions when it comes to living life after high school, but to get you at least **thinking about the topic and determining how that connects with whatever faith you claim to have.**

Last week we looked at using wisdom to avoid some of the pitfalls that come your way in the young adult period of life.

This week we are going to start talking about relationships and how they completely change during this young adult period of your life. How do you navigate relationships and what steps you can take to avoid future hurt, pain, and baggage.

Let's preface this time with a statement: This isn't another sex/dating discussion that you have heard before, however, when you leave your parents' home, dating and relationships take on a whole new level of freedom and consequences.

How would you say our culture's view of dating and relationships differs from what you think a biblical view of this topic is?

- **What are some of the perceived "truths" about relationships that you see in our culture today? (share examples)**
 - **Culture today seems to expect you to "test drive" your relationships** instead of committing to a relationship that will bring glory to God.
 - **YOU ALL KNOW THIS ...**This often happens through cohabitation, sex before marriage, pornography, one-night stands and casual hookups, and lust.
 - Typically, no one goes into a relationship with the intentions to hurt the other person but it seems to be the normal result of the way many people handle relationships in our culture today.

Part of the reason we want to talk about this is because in this phase of life, you can take a more serious "long-term" look at relationships because there is a much higher possibility that one of these relationships could form into a life-long one.

**** DISCLAIMER:**

Let's just start by saying if you have made mistakes relationally or sexually in the past, this is not intended to be a guilt trip or a slap on the wrist. Everyone makes mistakes. No one is perfect.

- You are not defined by past sins or mistakes, or by the ways others may have sinned against you. Hear that—*your past does not define you.*

Our God is a redemptive God, and if you have repented and trusted in Christ, He has already forgiven you. *Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."*

When you step away from home (and relationships come into play) – it's like moving from a go-cart track to 6 lanes of traffic on I295. Except you're not in Florida, you're driving these multiple lanes on the crest of a mountain ridge. (POSSIBLY SHOW IMAGE)

As we go through this, **let's envision guardrails and not rules.** (WE TALKED ABOUT THIS LAST WEEK ABOUT USING WISDOM TO AVOID PITALLS OF LIFE.)

- Because let's face it, no one likes rules. You guys are all young adults, and we don't want to talk about "rules" more than using the wisdom of guardrails in relationships.
 - Here's why: Because guardrails keep you from plummeting down the mountain.

What do you think about this statement?

A relationship without guardrails is a relationship without convictions. AGREE OR DISAGREE?

When it comes to relationships post high school, what do you think are some good guardrails to implement? (write down on whiteboard) *Allow students to share.*

Let's talk through a few that we believe will help you in the coming years ahead:

1. Pursue Jesus consistently before pursuing another person.

Tell me your thoughts about this statement:

"If you are not faithful in the easy times of life, then you are more likely to be unfaithful in the difficult times."

How can pursuing Jesus be a good guardrail for your future relationships as a young adult?

Relationships become priorities in your life – especially romantic ones.

Where your heart is, this is where your priorities will be.

If a relationship with Jesus isn't your FIRST/MAIN priority, then a relationship with something else or someone else will be.

- Jesus doesn't take a 2nd place role in our lives.
- Yet He won't force Himself into your life either.

2. Build community with Jesus-followers as part of your inner circle of friendships.

We often gravely underestimate the power of community in our lives. We were not created to be alone; we were created for community, **particularly community with fellow believers.**

A relationship between a guy and a girl can sometimes tend to pull each away from their friendships.

- **A community of friends is a community of accountability.**
 - A romantic relationship that does not allow you to have community is an unhealthy relationship and toxic for you.
- God gives us community not to take us away from our significant other, but to sharpen us where we are.

What are your thoughts on dating someone who isn't a believer in Jesus?

It's not wise ... remember guardrails.

*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what **fellowship** has light with darkness? – 2 Corinthians 6:14*

What is Paul saying in this passage to the Corinthian church?

- This word “fellowship” means a close personal relationship. Paul isn't saying that we shouldn't be friendly to lost people, but he is stressing that those without the values of Christ shouldn't be in our inner circle of friendships or relationships ... especially romantic ones.

How many of you feel like you have an accountable community of friends that help you walk with Jesus? If you don't, that should be your first priority before dating in this time of life.

Have students read this next verse together:

*“But among you, **there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality**, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.” – Ephesians 5:3*

This word “hint” in the original language is just a continuation of the negative wording of “must NOT be” in other words, “there must not be even not any of sexual immorality.”

- It sounds like a lot of “nots” but that is the point ... Paul is stressing that we shouldn't even give off the impression of sexual immorality in our lives as followers of Jesus.

3. Stress “not even a hint” when it comes to your sexual reputation.

This doesn't mean be perfect NOR does it mean that you can change what others say or believe about you (even falsehoods), but it does mean that we can take steps to show to others that we have specific boundaries/guardrails in our lives.

How would you define what it means to live set-apart (or church-type word: sanctified)?

- (being declared holy, freed from sin, seen as morally right)
- The main definition is to be different from the culture or society around you.

How does being set apart help (or hurt) when it comes to temptation as an adult?

Have students read these verses:

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. – Matthew 26:41

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. – 1 Corinthians 10:13

We know this is a huge challenge in our society, especially as one observes culture's mantra of “do what makes you happy.”

- **This is not an attempt to give you another list of dos and don'ts** when it comes to your relationships. We do however want to inspire you to pursue a life of holiness—one centered on honoring the Word of God.

What's so dangerous about dating someone who doesn't share your belief in Jesus and desire to pursue Him? *Allow students to share, then discuss.*

- First and foremost, your value system is more than likely completely different.
- You may have different levels of boundaries when it comes to the physical part of a relationship.
- You may be dealing with different levels of physical experience before your relationship.
- Their influence over you (in a negative, non-spiritual way) can be incredibly strong.
 - **WHY? BECAUSE RELATIONSHIPS TAKE PRIORITY.** Your actions, decisions, language, emotions, wants and desires begin to echo and are affected by theirs.
 - **You always become who you spend the most time with.**

Relationships that are more focused on the physical over the spiritual and emotional are relationships that are destined to fail.

Quickly ... how can I pursue a "not even a hint" lifestyle when it comes to my morals?

A. Understand your weaknesses.

You can't change what you don't know needs to change.

- a. Are you convicted when you are tempted, and if so, what do you do about it?
- b. Also, it is important to note that a repentant heart should be shared within the relationship, not just displayed on one side.

We all have to identify the areas in our life which aren't being lived in a holy and honorable way.

Here's the problem: No one is immune to our weaknesses.

B. Know (or memorize) scripture that attacks your weaknesses.

- a. Nothing attacks sin like Scripture (*Matthew 4*—Jesus fought off temptation in the desert by quoting the Word of God).

There is nothing more powerful to do with temptation than to fight it with scripture.

- Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus is tempted
- He responds three different times, "*It is written,*" referring to Scriptures.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. - Psalm 119:11

- Pray and ask the Lord to break your heart for the things in your life that break His.

C. Avoid weakness environments.

- a. Maybe you've never been allowed to have the opposite sex in your bedroom at your house. How are you going to deal with living in a dorm room or apartment where anyone can come, go, or spend the night?
 - You can't avoid this place if you live there, but you need to avoid setting up the environment where your weaknesses grow stronger.
 - Are you willing to walk out of a party because the temptation is too strong?
 - Are you willing to unfollow that individual because the pictures they post are causing you to stumble?

- b. **None of these make you weird; it simply means that you're human, you're recognizing your temptation**, and you're taking proactive measures to put guardrails in place in your life to avoid falling. It means you are striving for purity and godliness.

This last one seems obvious, but it bears repeating ...

D. **Date only Jesus followers.**

I'm just asking an opinion. After high school, do dating relationships need to be more for connection and fun, or should you start focusing on dating someone who has the potential to marry?

Would you choose to date someone today that you would not choose to marry in the future? Why or why not?

- **If so, why would you date someone not currently moving in the same direction as you?**

What if I meet someone who isn't following Jesus, but you are interested in them ... be careful about falling for the lie that you can change them.

- **RECOMMENDATION: Let God change them before you even consider dating them.** State your boundaries and be friends only ... be careful!
- **We are not judges of another person's spiritual life, but through the fruit of a person's life, you can see where they are spiritually, and where they will lead you.**
- **Date someone whose life produces godly fruit.**
 - The one you date should spur you on and challenge you to fully lean into all that the Lord has planned for you, instead of leaning solely into them.
- Don't let culture tell you who to date. Allow the Holy Spirit to keep you grounded and accountable to the Word of God.

4. Take your time – no one says you must find a husband/wife in your early 20s. It's okay to go slow.

Our culture today pressures the idea of a love and passion that often ignores wisdom and follows its own desires through movies, social media, and what is expected from your peers.

Here's a tough question (or maybe tough) ...

How would you define the difference between lust and love? *Allow students to discuss.*

One way you can tell the difference between lust and love is typically "lust is fast" and "love is slow." In other words, lust doesn't like to wait, where love is patient (1 Cor. 13).

- Waiting can be difficult—no one will argue that point with you. But it's like working out and eating healthy. You know it is for your best interest for you to have a more fulfilling future and to be able to function the way you were created to.
- **Scars caused by sexual sin are some of the deepest scars, and if we're being honest, a lot of people have them. The Lord does not call us to purity with the intention of depriving us from something great, but rather to protect us and then bless us in the security of marriage.**

CLOSING REMINDER:

Remember:

- Pursue Jesus consistently.
- Find strong community with Jesus-followers.
- Take steps to protect your reputation.
- Take your time.

Prayer Request