

AM I READY?

This 5-week series is about developing a healthy, Christian perspective on guy-girl relationships. We start off by asking one of the most important questions: Am I Ready?

This week you'll need:

- Large sheet of paper and a texta
- A sheet of paper and pen for each person

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- If you found \$50 on the footpath what would you spend it on?
- What's your favourite season of the year and why?
- What do you think would be the best thing about dating you?
- What's your high and low of this year so far?

INVOLVE

Divide your large sheet of paper in to two sections: 'healthy' and 'unhealthy'.

Going around the group, ask each person to share one thing they have seen displayed in a relationship around them that fits into one of the two categories. For example, 'A guy telling a girl who she is allowed to talk to' or 'boyfriend/girlfriend couples who never spend time apart' or 'couples who spend time every week praying together'.



RELATIONSHIPS 101



AM I READY?

DISCUSS

Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

NEW CHRISTIANS

- What do you think about marriage? Do you want to get married? Why/why not?
- What do you think this verse is about?
- This verse implies that a wife/husband could distract us from living fully for God. In what ways could a boyfriend or girlfriend distract you from living fully for Jesus?
- These verses outline some responsibilities that married people have to each other. Which ones stand out to you most?
- What sorts of messages do you think the world gives young people about marriage and relationships with people of the opposite sex? How do these compare to what the Bible says?
- Do you think a person can be totally satisfied being single for their whole life?
- Some people suggest you should not enter a relationship until you know you don't need one. What do you think they mean by that? Do you agree? How can someone get to that point?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you in this passage? What does this verse tell us about relationships?
- The Bible seems to say some conflicting things about relationships i.e. (1 Cor 7:32-35 versus Proverbs 18:22 and Genesis 2:18). Based on these verses, how do you think God would want us to approach marriage?
- Do you think it's okay to date someone you know you would never want to marry?
- What qualities do you look for in a boyfriend/girlfriend? To what extent are these influenced by Jesus? To what extent should they be?
- Describe what you think the perfect Christian relationship looks like.
- What are you looking for in a future husband or wife? Is it okay to ask God for these things?





AM I READY?

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

OR

Take time to take a quick 'relationship readiness inventory'.

- Write a list of any past traumas and destructive or hurtful relationships. Tick any items on this list that still cause you a lot of pain, or are unresolved.
- How well do you think you know and understand yourself? Give yourself a score out of 10.
- How healthy do you think your self esteem and self acceptance is? Give yourself a score out of 10.
- Can you state your most deeply held values? Name at least five.
- Do you know what you can't live with or without in a relationship? Name a couple of each.
- Are you clear on your life goals? Write down a couple of goals that you do not want to be diverted from.
- Do you know your strengths and weaknesses? What are your 3 greatest strengths and 3 greatest weaknesses you bring to relationships?

Take time to look over your answers and think realistically about whether you are ready to be in a relationship. Pray together for any areas that are weak or that you were unable to answer.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Create a helpful atmosphere before people arrive – put some music on, have a few snacks available, have something for people to do when they arrive.
- Are there any other young people in your church who you'd like to see join the group? Ask some group members to invite them during the week.



LUST

Lust is one of those issues where so many people struggle -- but no-one is prepared to talk about it. This week is about creating an environment to start some of those conversations.

CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions:

- What's your favourite thing about being Australian?
- Who's one person you know who you would like to be like when you are older?
- What food do you hate with a passion?
- What's the most memorable moment or lesson you've ever had at LIFE group?

DISCUSS

Have someone from your group read the following to scriptures out loud.

Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- What does it mean to look at someone lustfully?
- In what ways can lust lead to pain or hurt?
- Do you think lust is an issue for many young people? Why/why not?
- In what ways have you struggled with lust in your own life?
- How do you think the ideal Christian man/woman deals with lust?



RELATIONSHIPS 101





LUST

QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you most in these verses?
- In Matthew Jesus says that lust is as bad as adultery. What do you think this verse means?
- Why do you think that lust is such a big deal to God?
- What do you think are the number one struggles young people face with lust? How have you battled personally with these?
- How often do you feel guilt or shame because of your thought life? How do you think God would want us to respond to these feelings?

INVOLVE

Explain to the group how powerful it can be to have your whole life group supporting you, holding you accountable and praying for you.

Explain that you are going to take some specific time tonight to do this.

One at a time, ask people to share one thing they would like prayer for and support in with the issue of lust. They might want to be set free from feelings of shame, to give up a habit or they might need to make some hard changes to a relationship they are already in.

After each person shares, have the whole group gather around them and place their hands on them. Encourage as many people as possible to pray for each person.

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

LEADER'S NOTES

- The topic this week has the potential to make us as leaders uncomfortable, but the reality is that conversations about sex, pornography, masturbation and more are commonplace in high schools already. You might be the only uncomfortable person in the room! Often topics like this have been 'taboo' in church circles, but young people have real questions and real issues that they want to talk about. If we're not prepared to deal with them within the safety of a life group, where else in the church can a young person turn for advice? It's important that we as leaders set a culture where it's ok to talk about these things (in an appropriate environment).
- Remember, trust is a 2-way dynamic. Sharing your own journey could help young people open up about their own.
- Is anyone missing from your group tonight? Don't forget to ask for volunteers to follow them up.



INFLUENCERS AND ROLE MODELS

Many of our views on relationships, dating and marriage are drawn from influences around us. This week we talk about them and try to identify some healthy relationship role models.

This week you'll need:

- A pen and piece of paper for each person

CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions.

- Did you make any New Years resolutions this year? What were they?
- If you were a cartoon character which one would you be and why?
- How have you worshipped God with your time lately?
- Name one older person (a celebrity or someone you know) who you look up to? What do you like about them?

INVOLVE

Hand each person a pen and paper and ask them to make a list of the top five people or things that influence their views about relationships with those of the opposite sex. Lists might include things like friends, parents, siblings, movies or magazines. Ask them to be as specific as possible.

Ask your group to keep their lists for later.

DISCUSS

Ask for a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 6:14 out loud.

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?

QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- What do you think this Bible verse is saying? Why do you think the Bible tells us to avoid being bound together with people who are living apart from God?
- In what ways do you see people around you changing based on who they hang around with?
- Do you think it is okay to be friends with not-yet-Christians? Why?
- Do you think it is okay to date someone who isn't a Christian? Why?
- Have a look at the 'influencers' you listed a moment ago. How many of them are providing you with positive, godly messages? Look at your list again. Which things would/wouldn't you sacrifice for purity?



RELATIONSHIPS 101

Life.



INFLUENCERS AND ROLE MODELS

QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you most from this Bible verse?
- Why do you think the apostle Paul would give this advice to Timothy – a young man who wants to please God?
- Is it surprising to you that the Bible warns against being bound to people who are not yet saved? What do you think this means?
- How do you think God expects us to see people saved if we only share close friendship with people who are already close to Jesus?
- Have a look at the list of ‘influencers’ you created earlier. Choose one positive, godly influence and explain how that influence has shaped your understanding of sex and relationships.
- Look at your list again. Choose one negative influence and explain how it has had an unhelpful or destructive effect on your understanding of sex and relationships.

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they’ve learned or been challenged about.

AND/OR

Ask everyone in your group to select some ‘healthy relationship heroes’ – one person or a couple who they look up to and who they know will influence them positively. Have each person commit to meeting up with their hero(es) this month to ask them to pray for them and be available to answer questions and share advice.

LEADER’S NOTES

- How’s the atmosphere in the room? Is it relaxed and inviting? Do people feel comfortable when they arrive?
- Are you developing leaders within your group? Check out the LIFE leadership handbook for some simple ideas on how to start.





BOUNDARIES

Put the fence right on to the edge of the cliff, and if you trip you'll have a long and painful fall. Set the fence back a little bit, and the consequences of any mistakes are a lot less severe. This week is about having wisdom as we set relationship boundaries.

This week you'll need:

- A large sheet of paper and a texta

CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions.

- How's your week been so far? Rate it out of 5.
- Which actor would you choose to play you in the movie of your life and why?
- Who have you served this week? In what way have you demonstrated selflessness?
- What have you learned about life recently?

DISCUSS

Ask for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:22.

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- What do you think this Bible verse is saying?
- Make a list of everything you consider to a 'youthful lust'. How can we 'flee' from these things? Can anyone think of any helpful tips or advice?
- When you come across one of the things on our 'youthful lusts' list, what is your normal first reaction? Why do you think this is, and how do you think we can start to change this?
- From this verse, and the other Scriptures we've looked at in recent weeks, how would you summarise God's attitude to lust?
- Paul doesn't just tell Timothy to run away, he tells him to run towards some things. Why do you think it's important not just to run 'away' from something, but to run 'toward' something else? What does this look like for our everyday lives?





BOUNDARIES

QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you most from this verse?
- Have you had relationship boundaries in the past? What were they? Were you able to stick to them, and were they helpful?
- Do you know of any boundaries that other Christian couples have? What do you think of these?
- Note that the Bible doesn't say 'run from youthful lusts', it says 'run from anything that *stimulates* youthful lusts'. What do you think is the significance of this extra word? What kinds of things should we be running from then? Where should we set our boundaries with these things?

INVOLVE

Put a large piece of paper in the middle of your group.

Challenge your group to create their own list of boundaries, covering every aspect of romantic relationships - intimacy, touch, finances, dependency, etc. Also talk about what boundaries should be in place before you start a relationship, and boundaries after a relationship ends.

The catch is though, that the group is only allowed to write a boundary down when everyone agrees with it.

This activity serves dual purpose - it should help people think critically about boundaries, but it should also help develop skills in persuasion, compromise and in how to handle healthy debate.

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

OR

Challenge your group to spend time everyday this week asking God to give them wisdom regarding relationships and boundaries.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Don't forget to set aside some time to ENJOY – have supper, play a game, or just chill!
- Is anyone missing from your group tonight? Don't forget to ask for volunteers to follow them up.



A FRESH START

Regardless of how good or bad our relationship history has been, God's grace can wipe the slate clean. Finish this series by having your group make a commitment to purity to God and each other.

This week you'll need:

- A pen and piece of paper for each person

CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions.

- Have you bought anything in the past 2 weeks? What was it?
- What has been your biggest frustration so far this year?
- Where's your favourite place to go to relax?
- On a scale of 1-10, how happy are you with things at school/work at the moment? Why?

DISCUSS

Ask for a volunteer to read Romans 3:22-24 out loud.

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- Ask your group to explain what they think the Bible verse means. Alternatively, you can work sentence-by-sentence and paraphrase the Scripture into everyday language.
- How do we ask God for forgiveness? What do you think we need to do?
- Present to your group this scenario: You've just asked God for forgiveness and a fresh start from a sin that you've been struggling with. But a month later you find yourself back doing the thing you promised you wouldn't do again. What should you do? What shouldn't you do?



RELATIONSHIPS 101





A FRESH START

QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you the most from the passage we've just read?
- Verse 22 says 'We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.' What do you think 'faith' means in that context? Do you think you're going well with living out that kind of 'faith' at the moment?
- The Bible promises unlimited grace and forgiveness, but it also challenges us to leave our old lives of sin behind. How do we balance these two concepts?

INVOLVE

Create some space for personal reflection. Have your group sit quietly and think back along all the topics that have been covered during this series. Ask your group to spend a few minutes thinking about what God has been challenging them about. What is God saying to them? What changes do they think he wants them to make? You may need to prompt your group with the topics from the previous weeks.

You might want to use some tools to help facilitate this time – e.g. background music, or giving everyone paper and a pen. Decide based on what you think will most help your group engage and stay focused.

Finish with a time of prayer together thanking God for his promise of a fresh start through faith in Jesus. Together, declare Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour, and ask for the Holy Spirit's help to walk in purity.

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

AND/OR

As a group, come up with a covenant for changes that people would like to make as a result of this 5 week series. You could do this either by going around the circle and having everyone share one personal thing, or by writing out a group covenant that everyone agrees with. Some things you might want to include are:

- Changes in thoughts/attitudes
- Changes in words and/or actions towards the opposite sex
- Lifestyle changes (i.e. change T.V. watching habits, stop purchasing certain magazines, etc).

Make sure that as a group you decide how you will keep each other accountable to the promises you've made. When will you ask each other? Where? Will the group enforce any rewards or consequences to help with their accountability?





A FRESH START

LEADER'S NOTES

- Theological note:
 - * This week is all about grace - God's promise that our salvation has nothing to do with our ability to 'be good' and is solely about trusting in his amazing sacrifice. Take into consideration how your group reflects this grace - are people sitting in judgement on the struggles of others, or is your group genuinely caring and cheering each other on?
- Try to block out some time in your calendar this week to pray for each of the members of your group.
- This week why not take a couple of photos of your group together? Get some silly ones that show your sense of fun. Not only can you use this as an icebreaker but you can print these off and use them as postcards for the future. If someone misses a couple of weeks send them the postcard letting them know they have been missed. It's always nice to get mail and the picture is a good visual reminder of the fun they have with the group.

