

Dating and Love



Dating and Love

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To all those who shared their presence, support, guidance, and faith during those turbulent and joyful adolescent years:

- my mom; dad; and brothers, Craig, Robert, and Keith
- my high school community, Fr. John Leonard, Chris McDermott, David Nemetz, and all the other people who made Saint John Vianney the special place it was
- my own teens of tomorrow, Christopher and David, and my wife, Mary, to whom I dedicate page 57

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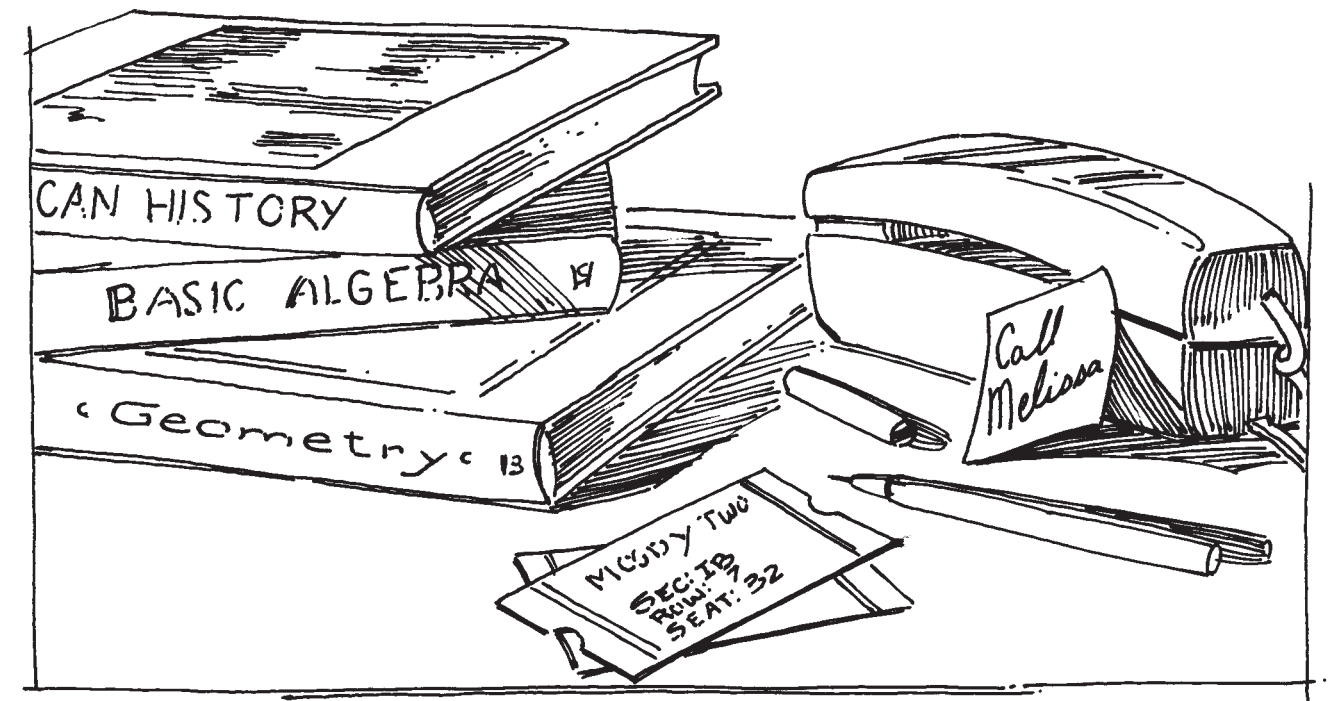
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Introduction



An Overview of This Course

If you were to survey any group of young people concerning the issues and questions young people are faced with each day, you would undoubtedly hear the term *relationship* expressed often and in a variety of ways. Young people are consumed with the intricacies and development of their own relationships, whether they involve friends, dates, or parents. Nowhere is this intense interest more evident than in dating relationships. Because sexuality is one of the most potent forces shaping adolescents, it is not surprising that other-sex relationships are of prime importance to them.

Dating serves several important developmental functions for young people. First, their individual sense of sexuality is nurtured as they begin to relate on a different level with both males and females. During the prepubescent years, children most often associate with same-sex friends. Once puberty begins, young people are increasingly drawn, both culturally and socially, to interact with the other sex, either in groups or in one-on-one relationships.

Second, dating helps young people develop their self-identity. The primary question young people are asking throughout the adolescent years is Who am I? Dating helps them answer this question. Through relationships, especially dating relationships, young people begin to see themselves through

another's eyes. Through direct and indirect feedback from the other sex, young people begin to see some of the unique and varied gifts they have to offer as well as some of the areas that they need to alter in order to mature.

Third, dating helps young people, by trial-and-error, to identify the different qualities and characteristics they might want in a future spouse.

Dating and Love recognizes the uniqueness of each person. The young people who take this course will vary greatly in all of these ways:

- sexual involvement
- level of self-control
- understanding of their sexuality
- experiences with positive adult role models
- physical and emotional development
- dating experiences

Be especially sensitive to the diversity of dating experiences the young people bring to the group. Most of the young people taking this course will have done some dating, but those who have not can still fully participate in and benefit from this course. During the few activities in which the young people are asked to reflect on current or former dating relationships, encourage those who have not had the opportunity to date to base their reflections on current or past friendships or on a dating relationship of someone they are familiar with (such as a sibling, a friend, or even a TV character). You can also emphasize to the group that no one will be forced to share anything that makes him or her uncomfortable. This should help dispel a young person's fear that the rest of the group will "discover" that he or she has not begun dating.

It is important that the Christian community does all it can to assist the young people with their questions and concerns about dating relationships and to provide them with an environment where a healthy and positive view of relationships and dating is offered. If it does not then someone or something else may provide the kind of help and environment that are not as positive.

The goal of *Dating and Love* is to assist the young people in looking at all the dating issues they experience and to assist them in developing positive physical, emotional, social, and spiritual expressions of affection and signs of interest that are both life-giving and healthy. This course presents the following topics in an integrated learning experience:

- Session 1, "Beginnings: Looking for Love," encourages the young people to begin identifying the qualities and characteristics they would like in a dating partner.
- Session 2, "Growing Close: The Freedom of Limits," explores various types of dating experiences and guides the young people toward an understanding of appropriate physical expressions within dating relationships that reflect Christian values.
- Session 3, "Relationships: At the Crossroads," teaches the young people about the pattern that most relationships go through and encourages them to talk about the issues and conflicts that occur in dating experiences. Such discussion challenges them to make decisions about the future of particular relationships they might be in.

The sessions in *Dating and Love* run 2 hours each and are meant to be taught one a week for three consecutive weeks. Avoid extended breaks between sessions because they might interrupt the flow of the course. The three sessions might also be combined and adapted for use as an overnight or weekend retreat experience. The section Using This Course as a Retreat gives more details on the retreat option.

The session activities are designed for a group of about ten young people. However, the activities can be easily adapted for smaller or larger groups. If you need assistance adjusting the activities for a different group size, contact your program coordinator.

You need not be an expert on relationships or sexuality to teach *Dating and Love*. Each session gives guidance on how to address the topics to be covered. You may wish to supplement or adapt this course to fit your particular situation and to meet the needs of both the young people and the parents of your parish. Additional resources are listed at the end of this introduction.

Background for This Course

The Adolescent and This Course

In teaching this course, be especially aware of the different perspectives that males and females have on the other sex. Generally speaking, females tend to emphasize a more relational and emotional connection with the other sex, whereas males place

greater emphasis on the physical and visual elements of a relationship. This generalization should not be used to box either gender into certain behaviors or feelings, but it should be noted and understood by both you and the young people taking this course. It should also not be used as an "excuse" by either gender to ignore or overlook inappropriate behaviors or remarks.

These different perspectives will likely come out during the session 1 activity Looking for Someone to Love. Be prepared to bring out the differences noted above, as well as the warnings about stereotyping or dismissive behaviors.

In order to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect, stress the importance of listening to one another and of refraining from hurtful remarks or put-downs. When necessary, remind the participants of these rules. Even a brief cruel remark can ruin the experience for a young person with an already precarious self-image. By making it clear in the first session what comments are inappropriate, you can set a positive tone for the rest of the course.

Self-esteem and Sexuality

Many young people today see dating as a measure of their self-esteem and social worth. Is there anything more painful during adolescence than to be turned down for a date? Is there anything more joyful than to be asked out on a date or for someone you ask to say yes? Adults may not want young people to place all their self-esteem eggs in this type of basket, but young people will nonetheless use their ability (or inability) to get dates as a benchmark of their self-worth.

One of the tasks of adults who minister to young people is to help them get past this method of measuring self-worth based on *other's* opinions or decisions. We can show them the value of developing self-esteem from *within* based on personal decisions, accomplishments, and gifts.

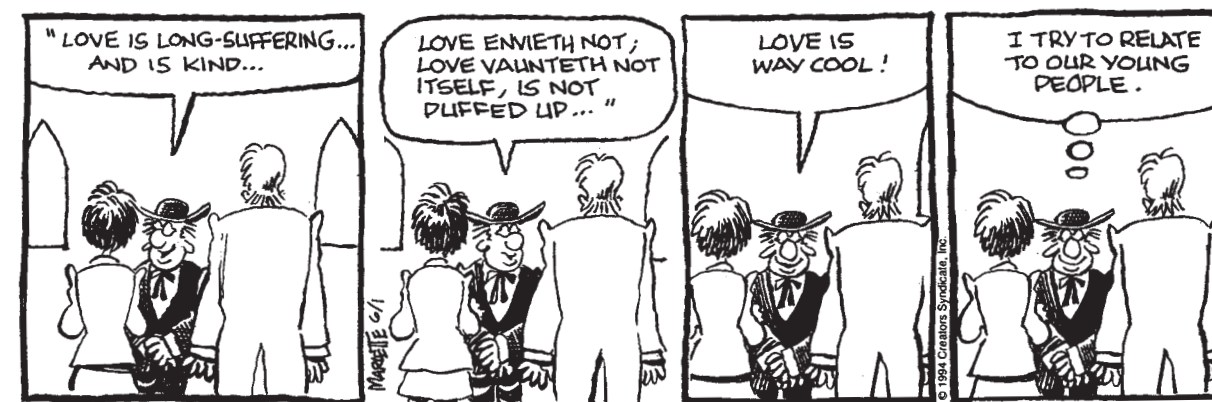
Connected to young people's search for self-esteem and identity through dating relationships is their need to belong, to be connected with others. The peer group is one of the major forces in their life. The need to be accepted and recognized by peers is a powerful and potent motivator (both positive and negative) for young people. We can help them experience new and positive ways to meet their needs for belonging, acceptance, and closeness with peers.

Many adolescents go to great lengths, including having sex, to feel connected to others their age. In the oftentimes agonizing search for closeness, young people can confuse acceptance with sex and intimacy, or love with infatuation. One of the prime challenges and opportunities for people involved in ministry with young people is to help the young people clarify the distinctions between love, intimacy, infatuation, and manipulation.

Most studies today on adolescent sexual involvement show that young people are becoming more sexually active and at an increasingly earlier age. A Guttmacher Institute report entitled *Sex and America's Teenagers* indicates that Americans are having sex earlier and marrying later. Young men are usually sexually active nine years before marriage; young women are usually sexually active six to seven years before marriage. (*Youth Update*, September 1994)

We do not need to look far for explanations for these facts. Movies, television, music, and other media—all of which include many popular role

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models—typically portray sex as casual and recreational. The messages conveyed by the media, and in turn espoused by malleable young people, are “Get all you can get” and “Casual sex is okay.”

Even so, young people seem to yearn for something different from what society offers them. One major newspaper reported that nearly 80 percent of fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds favor abstaining from sex before marriage (*USA Today*, 7 April 1994). Although this may seem to contradict what other research is indicating about young people’s sexual activity, it may well be an accurate reflection of their longing for more positive and less sexually pressured expectations in their relationships.

No matter how one chooses to view the current state of teenage relationships and sexual activity, the bottom line is for adolescents to assume responsibility for their actions and recognize the healthy and unhealthy patterns and behaviors in dating relationships. When an individual is able to assume responsibility for herself or himself, an increase in self-awareness occurs. This awareness often leads to an “other awareness” that enables the individual to make decisions that are not simply self-centered. Growth in this level of other awareness will eventually lead the young person into the development of mature love relationships.

Parents and Adolescents

The adolescent first learns how to relate to the other sex by identifying with the relationships of his or her parent or parents. This model may range from a positive and healthy husband-wife relationship to a dysfunctional or nonexistent relationship between spouses. Whatever the model, it becomes the frame of reference that a young person brings into dating relationships.

For example, a boy whose father abuses and degrades the boy’s mother may degrade or physically abuse his girlfriend. Fortunately, most young people grow up in safe and generally positive home environments. But it is important to remember that some of the young people we encounter may be from dysfunctional homes.

Although peers have increasing influence over a young person’s *behavior*, parents remain the number one influence over their child’s *values*. In fact, it is the values that parents express through their behavior that stand the test of time and are brought with the young person as she or he changes, grows, and develops into an adult. The values that are nurtured

in the home will carry the young person into future relationships and dating experiences. The actions and values the parents espouse and embody are powerful signals to the child about what is right and what is wrong. Parents must communicate values through *actions* rather than simply through their pronouncements and commandments. Adolescents are keenly aware of hypocrisy.

Parents of young people may indeed be hungering for help as their children move through the teenage years and start experiencing the trials and tribulations of dating. The parish needs to reach out to the parents of teenagers and offer them some guidance, support, and training.

The Theology of This Course

“God is love and . . . lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in [God’s] own image, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the *vocation*, and thus the . . . responsibility, *of love* and communion.” (United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2331)

Thus begins the *Catechism’s* discussion of relationships and love. It says that people, formed in the very likeness of God, are challenged to love and relate to others as God loves and relates to them. We know how God relates to us because the Bible is filled with various stories of relationships—between God and people and between individuals and groups. From the earliest stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, we see God calling people to enter a relationship of fidelity and commitment with God. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Sarah, Ruth, David, and hundreds of other figures from the Hebrew Scriptures model the type of relationship God is calling each of us to. We also see through these very real people of old that attempting to remain faithful to this understanding of human relationships is not without its failures and difficulties. However, no matter how much we have failed in remaining faithful in our relationship with God, God does not fail us; there is always an opportunity for reconciliation and unity.

Through the person of Jesus in the Christian Testament, we are shown what it means to really love others in a relationship. Jesus models for us, through his relationships with both women and men, that love is much more than sexual expression or physical fidelity. Rather, love is marked by the gifts of

presence, attention to the other, humility, joy, challenge, and trust. Throughout Jesus’ public ministry, he demonstrated a love that was other-centered, selfless, and giving. This Christian ideal of love is perhaps best summed up by Saint Paul: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

Christian love, as modeled and embodied by Jesus, challenges us to mirror the “God-ness” that is within each of us in all the relationships that we enter. This is certainly true for dating adolescents, many of whom have a tendency (as well as cultural approval) to seek self-pleasure and momentary gratification at the expense of the other. Although it is true that human love cannot be *totally* other-centered, we are always being challenged to make sure that our intentions, desires, and choices take into account the other person in the relationship, along with his or her feelings, expectations, and needs.

These words by the Catholic bishops of the United States indicate the direction that responsible and faith-centered relationships should travel:

Genuine love does not promise constant enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness. While hoping for a measure of reciprocity, some degree of mutuality in love relationships, a person whose love is true is willing to go the extra mile, to turn the other cheek, to be committed in bad times as well as good. Self-giving and sacrifice, fidelity, courage, patience, kindness, forgiveness, hope, perseverance—these are some of the virtues reflective of true love, whether one is married, single, or celibate. Each person is called to live chastely, sexually responsible in his or her distinct vocation and life-style. Chastity is evident when one practices self-control, modesty, and temperance, all grounded in a deep respect for oneself and others. (*Human Sexuality*, pp. 26–27)

This is the model that Jesus held up to those who walked with him in the past and holds up to those who choose to walk with him now. It is the model that catechists, adults, and parents are challenged to hold up to young people. In choosing to walk with Jesus, we are also challenged to “walk his talk” and to model life-giving and chaste relationships as well. In fact, the *Catechism* tells us that

“Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his [or her] particular state in life” (no. 2394). (For a fuller and richer discussion of chastity, see sections 2331–2400 of the *Catechism*.)

This Course and Evangelization

In *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization*, evangelization is described as “the initial effort by the faith community as a whole to proclaim through word and witness the Good News of the Gospel to those who have not yet heard or seen it, and then to invite those persons into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the community of believers” (National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry [NFCYM], p. 3). Evangelization is also the ongoing witness of the community of believers and, as such, the basis and energizing core of all the ministries in the church.

The Horizons Program is grounded in a commitment to evangelize young people effectively. Each course reflects that commitment in both content and methodology. All the courses, even those on topics that do not appear overtly “religious,” explore the connection between the lived experience of the young person and Jesus’ proclamation of the Good News. All the courses employ strategies that actively engage the whole person, demonstrating that religious education can be not only informative but life-giving and even fun! In other words the Horizons Program tries to *be* “good news” not just proclaim the Good News.

Dating and Love attempts to be faithful to the principles of effective evangelization. It sees teaching and evangelization as going hand in hand: How can the “good news” of dating relationships and love be preached to young people? How can the young people and their parents be sustained in their attempts to live in relationships that proclaim the Good News of love as Jesus modeled it for us? The most fundamental principle of evangelization you can employ as a catechist is to commit yourself in Christian love to the young people in your course and to share your own faith as it relates to the topic of dating and love.

In addition to encouraging evangelization within its own structure, *Dating and Love* can also provide opportunities for one-on-one evangelization. Its topic touches young people where they are and is immediately applicable to their life. In exploring

the dynamics of dating, love, infatuation, and sexuality, a young person may need to reach out to a compassionate adult for direction, reassurance, advice, or care.

Effective evangelization regarding dating relationships occurs only when we stand firm in our Catholic Christian values and beliefs. However, we must take this stance within the context of the larger culture, not above it. To separate ourselves and our formation efforts from the real situations and experiences in today's world only serves to alienate the young people we seek to reach. The model Jesus presented throughout his life was to be a part of his culture but not predetermined or dominated by it. He is, as always, the model we are called to emulate as bearers of the good news about relationships and love to young people.

On Teaching This Course

A Video Resource for Teachers

The information presented in this section identifies the elements requiring special consideration when leading *Dating and Love*. The creators of Horizons developed an informative video to prepare teachers to lead any of the courses. The video is accompanied by a guide that summarizes the content of the tape, offers additional tips for teaching adolescents, and invites the teacher to track her or his experience with the program.

Both the video for teachers and its companion guide are included in the resources developed for coordinators of the Horizons Program. Contact the program coordinator in your parish for further information.

Preparing Yourself

The teacher's level of comfort with the content of *Dating and Love*, with young people, and with the task of modeling and upholding Christian dating relationships and appropriate expressions of sexuality plays a key role in the course's success. Due to the short length of the course, it is essential that you be fully prepared before each gathering. It is equally important that you be fully present to the young people throughout the teaching process. What the participants gain from this course de-

pends, in part, on the manner in which you teach the material and on how comfortably and compassionately you are able to share it with them.

Examine your own dating relationships. The most effective way to teach a course on dating and love is to first examine and reflect on your own dating patterns and relationships, including your own sexual involvement within those relationships. Such reflection may also bring up other issues concerning love and sexuality, such as beliefs, attitudes, desires, hopes, fantasies, fears, and hang-ups.

This preparation step is important because you cannot begin to teach what you have not yet experienced and reflected on yourself *in light of the Catholic Christian faith*. The goal of this course—to present a healthy, holistic, and Catholic Christian view of dating and relationships—will be more fully achieved if you spend time reflecting on your personal experiences. The following questions suggest some angles from which you can examine and reflect on your own views on dating relationships:

- How were male-female relationships modeled within your own family when you were growing up?
- What types of dating relationships did you find yourself attracted to as a teenager? Why?
- What were some of your most difficult adolescent dating experiences?
- What were some of your most life-giving and joyous dating experiences as a teenager?
- How did you choose to express your sexuality within dating relationships? What were your values? Were you true to them?
- What conflicts or disagreements did you have with your parent(s) regarding dating as a teenager?
- If Jesus approached you today, what would he say to you about your current views and beliefs regarding dating, relationships, sexuality, and love?

Your clear and honest answers to these questions will enable you to share more effectively what your faith teaches about dating relationships and love. Perfection in action and attitude regarding these answers is not required, however. If it were, no one would be qualified to teach this course. The only requirement is that you be *aware* of and *honest* with who you are. Once you have critically examined your own experiences in light of the Gospel message, you will be ready to help the young people do so as well.

Preparing the Learning Environment

Create a good physical atmosphere. You will need a physically comfortable space with sufficient room for the participants to move around. Some sessions require the participants to spend reflection time alone. It will be easier for them to resist the temptation to visit with other participants if they have enough room to separate from one another. Comfortable furniture and living-room lighting will help create a homey feeling. A flip chart or an easel with a pad of newsprint will be helpful for many of the activities. The traditional classroom arrangement is the least desirable situation. If such a room is your only option, try using music, candles, icons, or other sensory devices to create a more inviting environment.

Preparing the Material

Before each session read through the session plan and try to picture the processes happening in your group. You may need to make some adjustments based on your knowledge of the participants and the physical setting. Some of the activities will require preparation. This could range from copying a simple list onto newsprint to creating game pieces or finding pictures. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include brief periods of teacher input. Some of these presentations are informational, but most are intended to bring closure to a part of the session so that the participants might understand the connections between life and faith, between themselves and God. The session plans offer guidelines for these brief talks. Spend time putting these presentations together so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants. Where it is helpful and appropriate, do not be afraid to share parts of your own story with the young people.

Sharing Your Own Story

Every course in Horizons connects elements of the Christian faith with the life experiences of young people. As an adult you have much to share from your own life that will be of value to the young people. Your willingness to share your experiences will enrich this course. It will also send the message that telling one's personal story in the group is okay. When you share your experiences with the young

people, you show that you trust them enough to speak from your heart. And without saying it, you also invite them to do the same.

Some commonsense guidelines can help you share your story in a way that adds to the understanding of the participants but does not distract them from their own life story:

- Be brief and to the point. Remember, the young people are there to reflect on their own life story, not yours.
- Talk about your experiences as a teenager without preaching or moving into the fatal "When I was your age . . ." mode.
- Share only the things that adolescents are emotionally prepared to handle.
- Be realistic. Talk about your struggles, triumphs, and growth over the years. This will let the participants know that self-knowledge is indeed a process. Do not mislead them into thinking that adults have all the answers. It is also unfair to suggest or imply that adolescents have no answers.
- Be honest and sincere. The young people will see through you if you are not, and your effectiveness as a teacher will be diminished.

Using This Course as a Retreat

When choosing whether to use the material in *Dating and Love* in a retreat format, it is important to weigh both the strengths and limitations of this type of structure.

Advantages

The common components of a retreat—community building, prayer, faith sharing, open and honest discussions, sacramental celebrations, and individual reflection and journal writing—are well suited for the issues and insights offered in *Dating and Love*. A retreat that includes one or two overnights lets participants get away from the pressures and stresses of everyday life and, therefore, gives more focused attention to the topic. The retreat format will likely provide more time for addressing the specific concerns and interests of the young people regarding the topic of dating, relationships, and love. And the retreat process offers young people a unique opportunity to develop community and share faith with others their own age.

If you choose to adapt this course for a retreat, design the flow of the retreat so that it covers the three main sessions in their designated order. One recommended format looks like this:

Day 1

Arrival and group-building activities
 Session 1: “Beginnings: Looking for Love”
 Meal break
 Session 2: “Growing Close: The Freedom of Limits”
 Meal or snack break
 Celebration of reconciliation
 Games or sing-along
 Lights-out

Day 2

Meal
 Morning prayer
 Session 3: “Relationships: At the Crossroads”
 Meal break
 Celebration of the Eucharist
 Cleanup and departure

Be flexible with your planning so that you are able to cover the material most suitable for your group’s particular needs. You may even want to offer the option of participants inviting their girlfriends or boyfriends to attend, as a way of allowing the material to be discussed and integrated in a relevant and timely manner.

Disadvantages

Doing this program on a retreat does have some drawbacks. First, a retreat is a make-or-break experience, and the facilitator must be familiar with the specific dynamics and logistics inherent in a retreat atmosphere. All the organization, lesson planning, and session preparations need to be done before the retreat, thereby increasing the workload immediately before this one event.

Second, a retreat requires appropriate space, preferably away from the parish community of the young people. Additional resources such as bedding, food, shower facilities, and extra adult supervision and participation are also needed. All these elements mean a higher program cost, which may or may not be affordable to all the participants, possibly requiring the parish to assist financially.

Third, a retreat may be difficult to schedule. Young people today lead such hectic and busy lives

that you may not find a weekend when all participants can attend. In addition, many retreat facilities book up quickly, oftentimes a year in advance, limiting the availability of certain peak times such as the fall and early spring.

If you use a retreat format, also schedule a follow-up session where some of the questions and insights from the retreat can be discussed once the young people have had an opportunity to return to “the real world.” Focus on how they have experienced any changes in their own ways of thinking about and expressing themselves in relationships.

Special Preparation Needs

Although the full preparation needs are spelled out in each session of this course, you may need to give special attention to arranging additional adult assistance. Some of the activities would benefit from having both male and female teachers—for example, the activities that require the group to be split up by gender. You may wish to team teach the whole course with a partner of the other sex, or you may choose just to recruit someone to assist during certain activities, such as Looking for Someone to Love in session 1. Another adult might help with or provide balance for the Physical Intimacy Timeline activity in session 2 and the presentation on the relationship cycle in session 3. Be sure to read over these sessions and decide what your specific needs may be regarding further adult assistance.

This Course and Total Youth Ministry

Additional Youth Ministry Program Suggestions

The Horizons Program includes a manual entitled *Youth Ministry Strategies: Creative Activities to Complement the Horizons Curriculum*. It contains a variety of activities and strategies organized into thematic categories and cross-referenced according to the courses in the curriculum. It includes suggestions for shortened and extended programs, off-site events, intergenerational gatherings, parish involvement, and prayer and liturgical celebrations.

This valuable resource can enhance the young people’s experience of the Horizons Program and help your parish fulfill a commitment to total youth ministry. Contact your program coordinator about the availability of the manual.

Parish Program Connections

A religious education curriculum is, ideally, just one component of a total parish program in which all those responsible for the formation of young people work together with the entire parish to meet the holistic needs of youth. *Dating and Love* can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences.

For example, the contents of *Dating and Love* could be integrated into the regular youth group meetings or activities. Related topics could include what to do on a date, common problems or misunderstandings between males and females regarding dating, what nurtures or harms relationships, how to handle sexual pressures and come-ons, or developing ideal dating scenarios. A speaker could be brought in to talk about relationships and loss or about date rape and couple violence or about how relationships are portrayed in the media.

Other ideas for integrating the topic of dating and relationships into the total life of the parish include the following:

- celebrating the relationships of young people that do exist within the parish by holding special blessings of young couples around significant relational moments in their life such as before the homecoming dance, prom, or the Sadie Hawkins dance, or on Valentine’s Day
- visiting a teen pregnancy home or a maternity ward
- inviting an engaged couple or a newly married elderly couple to talk about their dating experiences
- conducting a sacramental celebration of reconciliation, with emphasis on healing the brokenness and hurt within that is often experienced by young people who have ended a relationship or who have gone too far sexually in a relationship

Youth ministry involves not only what the parish does for the youth, but also what the youth may be able to do for the parish. Young people who have participated in *Dating and Love* could address some of the junior high classes on the issue of dating and

what the younger adolescents can expect, both good and bad, as they enter the older adolescent years. In fact, some of the lighter activities taken directly from the course, such as The Dating Game (session 2) or What Price Is Right? (session 3), could be facilitated by the young people with the junior high youth.

Family Connections

Dating and Love recognizes that parents are indeed the primary educators and models for their children. With this in mind, suggestions for family interaction and follow-up are placed at the end of each session to assist the parents and young people in coming together in their home to purposefully discuss the topic of dating and love.

A second way to help minister to the needs of parents at this stage in their family’s growth is to offer a separate forum just for the parents. This forum could include a speaker on adolescent development who addresses some of the concerns, fears, and struggles that parents of teenagers may be experiencing. Often, parents simply need to know that they are not alone in their struggles, that their teenager is indeed “normal,” and that resources and people are available to support them. This type of program could even be held at the same time as one of the course sessions for the young people if someone other than the teacher facilitates it.

Goals and Objectives in This Course

Why Use Goals and Objectives?

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of their intended goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Horizons Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways:

Goals. Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator’s manual for the Horizons Program provides the goals for the entire curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

Objectives. Objectives are statements that define how to get to the intended goals. They name the specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. Each course supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of Dating and Love

Goals

The goals of *Dating and Love* are as follows:

- That young people understand the dating relationship as a continuation of a process of self-discovery as well as the beginning of the search for a compatible and lifelong companion
- That they recognize the differences between mature love and infatuation and that they discuss appropriate physical expressions of affection in a dating relationship
- That they realize that most dating relationships come to an end, and that they acquire the skills to bring healthful closure to such relationships

Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the goals of *Dating and Love*:

Session 1 “Beginnings: Looking for Love”

- To assist the young people in differentiating between love and infatuation and in understanding how elements of each exist within most relationships

- To examine characteristics that each gender seeks in an other-sex relationship
- To prayerfully reflect on the various relationships found in the Scriptures and to encourage the young people to begin modeling their relationships after those that recognize the presence of God within them

Session 2 “Growing Close: The Freedom of Limits”

- To invite the young people to examine the positive and negative outcomes of dating relationships
- To engage them in a discussion of the physical and emotional pressures young people commonly experience within dating relationships
- To help them develop healthy Christian responses to the sexual and emotional pressures they might experience on a date

Session 3 “Relationships: At the Crossroads”

- To help the young people understand the common cycle of relationships, specifically as it relates to dating relationships
- To increase their awareness of some of the problems and issues adolescents encounter in dating relationships
- To encourage them to use Christian values and principles in dealing with personal struggles and issues that may develop within dating relationships

Suggested Resources

The following materials may be helpful to the teachers of and participants in this course.

For Adults

- Carver, Kathleen, editor. Resource packet for *True Love Waits*. Washington, DC: NFCYM, 1994.
- Doolittle, Robert. *Searching Young Hearts: Adolescent Sexuality and Spirituality*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1993.
- Sawyer, Kieran. *Sex and the Teenager: Choices and Decisions*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990.
- United States Catholic Conference (USCC). *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: USCC, 1991.

For Young People

- Auer, Jim. *Responsible Sex: What Every Teen Should Know*. Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Publications, 1992.
- Clark, Chap. *Next Time I Fall in Love*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1987.
- Kelly, Molly. *Chastity: The Only Choice*. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1993.
- Lickona, Judy, and Tom Lickona. *Sex, Love, and You*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1994.
- Short, Ray. *Sex, Dating, and Love: The Questions Most Often Asked*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.
- . *Sex, Love, or Infatuation: How Can I Really Know?* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990.

Video

- Forliti, Rev. John. *Catholic Values and Sexuality*. Dubuque, Iowa: Brown/ROA Publishing, 1990. Four videos. Available from Brown/ROA Publishing, PO Box 1028, Dubuque, IA 52004-1028. Call 800-922-7696.
- Kelly, Molly. *Teens and Chastity*. Villa Maria, PA: Center for Learning, 1991. Two 30-minute segments. Available from the Center for Learning, Box 910, Villa Maria, PA 16155. Call 800-767-9090. Molly Kelly, a national speaker and author on chastity and teens, talks about the reasons for choosing chastity and other topics regarding sex and sexuality. A complete program guide is available for the facilitator.

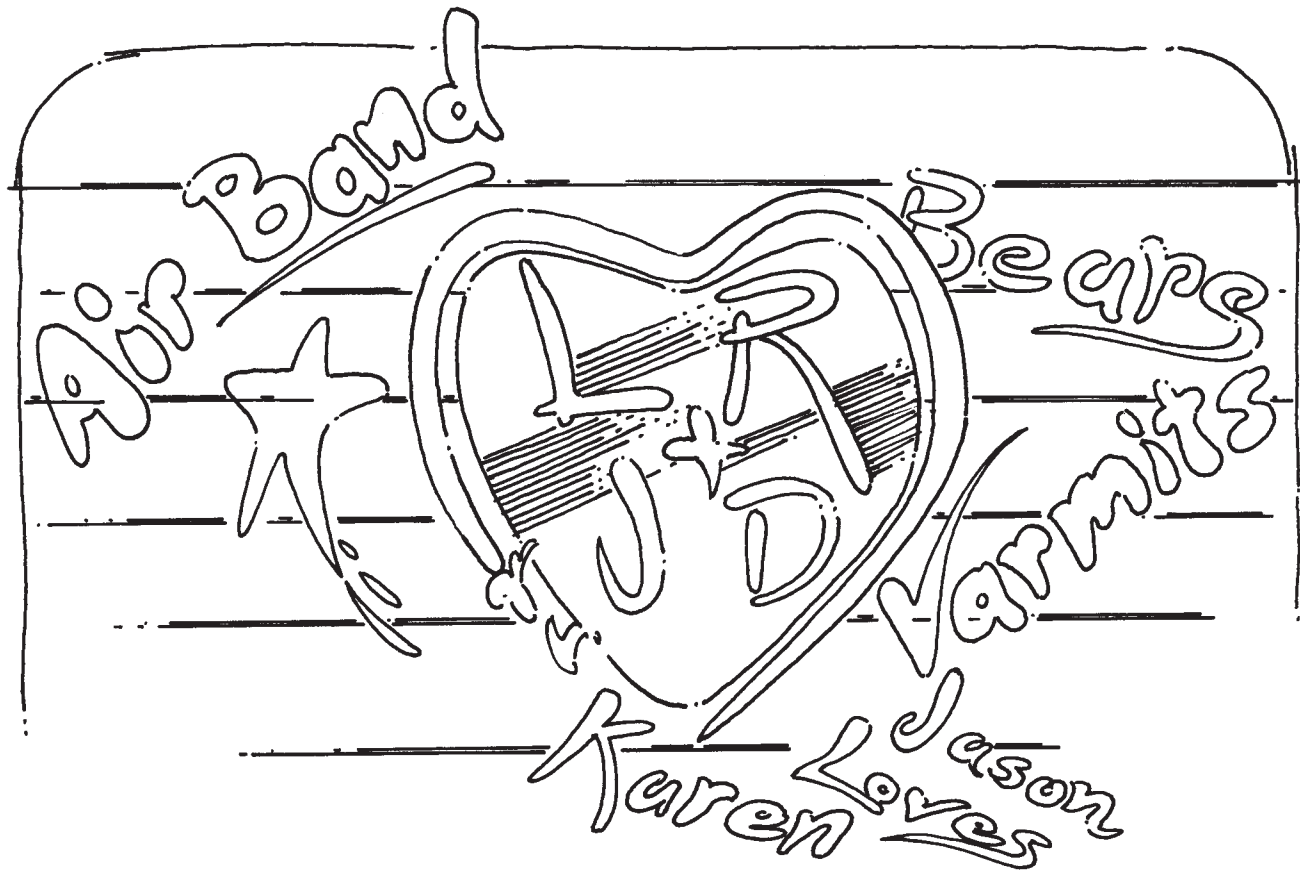
Myers, Bill. *Fast Forward: The Great Mate Race*. Dallas: Priority One Publishing, 1993. 30 minutes. Available from Priority One Publishing, Box 796009, Dallas, TX 75379-6009. Call 214-423-3800. This is a quick-paced, informative, and entertaining video hosted by two young adults who explore the topic of dating and the problems and joys associated with it. A facilitator’s guide comes with the tape to help direct discussion of it.

Sawyer, Kieran. *Choose Life, Choose Love: Sex and Catholic Youth*. Allen, TX: Tabor Publishing, 1991. Two 45-minute in-service segments; six 20-minute teen segments. Available from Tabor Publishing, 200 East Bethany Drive, Allen, TX 75002. Call 800-822-6701.

Youth Specialties. *Edge TV: Edition 2—Sexual Choices*. Colorado Springs, CO: Youth Specialties and Navpress, 1991. 18 minutes. Available from Navpress and Youth Specialties. Call 800-366-7788. This is a series of clips of interviews with youth and young adults who openly discuss some of the sexual challenges and choices they have encountered. Issues include sexual involvement, homosexuality, pornography, lust, and masturbation. The interviews also include the young people’s grappling with the challenge of their faith in light of their physical urges and temptations. A discussion and activity guide is available with this video.

SESSION 1

Beginnings: Looking for Love



Objectives

- To assist the young people in differentiating between love and infatuation and in understanding how elements of each exist within most dating relationships
- To examine characteristics that each gender seeks in an other-sex relationship
- To prayerfully reflect on the various relationships found in the Scriptures and to encourage the young people to begin modeling their relationships after those that recognize the presence of God within them

Session Steps

- a welcome and an icebreaker (15 minutes)
- a discussion exercise about the other sex (30 minutes)
- a dialog of the results of step B (30 minutes)
- a break (10 minutes)
- a handout and presentation about different relationship levels (20 minutes)
- a Scripture search and closing prayer (15 minutes)

Background for the Teacher

Early adolescence is commonly a time for falling in love. With the onset of puberty, young people experience a rise in hormonal levels and many physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes. When such changes are combined with young people's natural tendency toward relationships and their own search for identity, it is no wonder that young people begin experiencing both the joy and the agony of infatuation and love in their relationships with the other sex. Helping young people understand this potentially tumultuous time of life will go a long way toward helping them understand the many dimensions and characteristics of dating experiences and relationships.

One common difficulty for young people is differentiating between real love and beginning love, or infatuation. Infatuation is the feeling most young people experience in their budding relationships. It is marked by a possessive, romantic, head-in-the-clouds feeling that many young people, as well as some adults, commonly mistake for "the real thing."

This session helps you explain to your class the critical difference between love and infatuation. Many young people find it difficult to personally apply the distinction to their own relationships, not wanting them to be interpreted as puppy love or some other immature, childish notion of love. Even though the young people may not be developmentally capable of experiencing mature love, it is important not to demean or put down the real emotions and feelings they experience in their dating relationships.

One intent of this session is to assist the young people in beginning to see dating relationships along a continuum, or ladder, where each step or rung that is taken brings a couple to a higher and deeper level of awareness, other centeredness, and openness. In viewing dating relationships this way, the young people may be able to see that achieving a "love" relationship is something that does not occur in a two-week or six-month relationship. This may enable them to see that the primary goal of dating at their age is to develop one's personal identity and relational skills, not to go steady, fall in love, and get married.

The activity Reaching for Relationships illustrates these insights by inviting the young people to delineate the characteristics that define each step of a relationship. They are then invited to plot dating relationships along a ladder provided in a handout, enabling them to view the progression of relationships with the other sex.

The ladder image is used in the next activity as well, which invites the young people to look at the various levels of relationships found throughout the Scriptures. The session closes with a prayer experience that encourages the young people to invite God to be present to, and part of, their current and future relationships.

Preparation

✓ Materials Needed

- pencils and paper for everyone
- newsprint and markers for each small group
- a watch or a clock
- masking tape
- a copy of handout 1-A, "Reaching for Relationships," for each person
- seven Bibles
- two copies of handout 2-A, "Dating Game Questions," from session 2
- a tape or CD player, and reflective music
- a candle and matches
- snacks (optional)

✓ Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step A.* Set up the room in a warm and inviting manner. Prepare a sheet of newsprint with the phrases from step A.
- For steps B and C.* If you have recruited another adult to assist you when you split up the group, review the procedures with that person.
- For step E.* Draw the ladder from handout 1-A on newsprint.
- For step F.* Mark one of the scriptural passages listed, in each of seven Bibles.

Opening Teacher Prayer

Lord of love, instill in me a sense of peace and of purpose for this upcoming session. Allow me to be open to you as you speak and work through me. Comfort my nervousness and help turn it into an enthusiasm that speaks of you and of your great love for each of us.

Allow me a sense of humor to laugh off my mistakes and the capacity to celebrate the moments when everything goes just right. And when it is all over, remind me that you were with me every step of the way . . . just as you promised. Thanks! Amen!

Procedure

Welcome and Icebreaker: The Guess Test (15 minutes)

Before the session. Write the following phrases on a sheet of newsprint:

1. the person who has the most brothers and sisters
2. the person who last saw a movie in a theater
3. the person who is taller
4. the person whose middle name is the longest
5. the person whose birthday is closest to today
6. the person who has moved most often
7. the person who has the least amount of money with her or him now
8. the person who has been a member of the parish the longest
9. the person who can spell *catechesis* [have everyone write it down on their paper]
10. the person who has scored the best on this quiz

1. As the young people enter, greet them warmly and ask them to be seated in a circle. Begin the session by introducing yourself and explaining why you chose to spend this time with them. Be genuine and sincere. You may want to offer a brief and perhaps humorous synopsis of your own early dating experiences, concentrating on some of your own awkward feelings and actions. This is a wonderful way to begin creating an atmosphere in which the young people will feel comfortable sharing the good, the bad, and the funny.

2. Invite the young people to pair up with and introduce themselves to someone *they do not know or do not know well*. They should pair up with someone of the other sex if possible.

Once the young people are gathered in pairs, hand out paper and pencils and explain that you want to begin this course with a little quiz. Tell the young people that you will read ten statements and that everyone is to write the name of the person in their pair (either their own name or their partner's) to whom they believe the statement applies *most accurately*. They should do this without talking to their partner or to anyone else.

Begin reading the statements on the newsprint that you prepared before the session (do not display the newsprint yet).

3. After all ten statements have been read, hang up the newsprint so all can see it and allow the pairs to score their "Guess Tests" by giving themselves ten points for each correct guess (if both people in the pair fit a phrase exactly the same, e.g., both have one dollar in their pocket, each person gets ten points). Allow about 5 minutes of conversation for this. Then invite each person to briefly introduce his or her partner to the rest of the group.

4. When all are introduced, ask the group how this activity is like dating (finding common interests, judging by appearances, getting to know the other person better, etc.). Explain to the students that for this session, they will be looking at the qualities persons of each sex want in a dating partner. They will also discover some of the feelings and experiences couples undergo in the beginning stages of relationships.

Discussion Exercise: Looking for Someone to Love, Part 1 (30 minutes)

This activity has the potential to take up a whole class session. Keep a close eye on the time. It works best if you have two rooms so that the groups can work separately.

1. Explain to the young people that one of the biggest steps in dating is the first one—finding the "right" person to ask out. Tell them that to take this first step, they will find it helpful to know their

own expectations in a dating partner as well as to develop an understanding of the other sex. This activity helps them do these things. Read over the following process and explain it to the group before beginning.

2. Divide the group by gender. Have each group brainstorm a list of desirable qualities in a dating partner and record them on newsprint. Tell the groups to each place an asterisk (*) by the top five qualities they want in a future spouse. Note that this may take some simple voting by the group members, but stress that they should not take too long in coming to a decision.

Then they should develop a list of five questions (*not* simply yes-or-no questions) the group wishes to ask the other sex about dating and other-sex relationships. These should be written down on a separate sheet of newsprint, with space left after each for a response. The resulting chart will be exchanged with the other group as soon as the questions are developed. Direct the groups to go to separate rooms to complete their tasks, telling them they have 10 minutes. Try to have one adult of the same sex as the group members join each group to facilitate the activity and to keep the young people on time. If this is not possible, make frequent trips back and forth, reminding them of the tasks and time. Assist each group as needed.

3. After each group receives its questions from the other group, it should develop a group response to the five questions and select a spokesperson to share the answers when both groups come together for part 2 of this activity. Allow 15 minutes for this.

Encourage the groups to be honest and open with their lists and questions, but stress that everything should be stated respectfully. They should avoid the temptation to use put-downs or stereotypes.

There will undoubtedly be a lot of humor, some sexual innuendo, and stereotyping going on as the groups complete the activity. Such comments often point to more serious concerns or questions that individuals or groups have regarding the other sex. Assist the group in restating such observations as respectful questions, answers, or characteristics. This not only demonstrates your openness to their concerns but also places the emphasis of this activity on attempting to understand and appreciate the other sex and the dynamics of teenage relationships.

Discussion Exercise: Looking for Someone to Love, Part 2 (30 minutes)

1. Bring the two groups together and invite each to post its list of qualities on the wall. Ask a spokesperson from each group to quickly review the list along with the five traits the group wanted in a spouse.

2. After both groups have presented their lists, ask the young people if they see any similarities or differences between the two lists, as well as between the five asterisked items on each list.

3. Invite the spokespeople to come forward to share their groups' questions and answers. Before beginning, let the other young people know that the spokespeople should not be interrupted while answering a question. If an answer is not clear, or is too general, the other group may ask for clarification or additional input only after the spokesperson has finished. At that time, anyone from the spokesperson's group may assist in answering the question or offering additional input.

Alternate lists so that the groups take turns answering one question at a time. You will need to facilitate this session so that the groups do not spend too much time on any one question. Watch the clock carefully and keep the discussion moving; allow no more than 3 minutes for each question. If it gets to the break time and the groups have not finished, ask if the young people would like to give up some of their break to finish this activity.

Note that this activity will likely result in much discussion and some lively debate. Although this is certainly a desirable outcome of this activity, you may need to referee some of the discussion so that it does not become personal or disrespectful. It is also important that you allow the young people to dominate this discussion. Withhold your own opinions, if possible. Your primary roles in this activity are facilitator and summarizer.

Break (10 minutes)

During the break, recruit one girl and one boy to be the questioners for the Dating Game activity that is part of session 2. Give them a handout of the questions and briefly review the structure of the game.

Ask them to arrive a few minutes before the next session in order to meet with you to review the game.

E Presentation: Reaching for Relationships (20 minutes)

Before the session. Draw the ladder from handout 1–A, “Reaching for Relationships,” on newsprint, allowing room for comments to be written on the right side of the paper. Do not write in the words associated with the rungs of the ladder until the presentation itself. Prepare your presentation.

1. When you are ready to begin, write the word *infatuation* on the third rung of the ladder. Tell the group that you will use the term to refer to the early stage or “step” of a dating relationship when a person is “falling in love.” Ask the participants to call out words and phrases that might describe this stage. Write their comments beside the word *infatuation*. Responses might include churning stomach, sweaty palms, blindness to any faults of the other, excitement, constant thoughts about the other, carefree attitude, and long phone calls or talks with each other.

2. Next, write the word *love* on rung 10. Ask the group members what types of situations they have seen this term used in. You will probably get different and even contradictory definitions and scenarios where the word *love* is used in various media (music, television, movies) or within a variety of life experiences (parental love, love of a pet, love of ice cream).

Tell the group that you will use the word *love* to define a committed, long-term, caring relationship between two people. Note that this definition of *love* can apply to many types of relationships—same-sex, other-sex, parent-child, and God-people.

Ask the young people to identify actions and attitudes that may characterize the love stage of a relationship. Examples include a willingness to work through conflicts, mutual respect, unselfishness, forgiveness, and affirming touches.

3. Next, distribute handout 1–A. Review the following points with the participants in your own words, using examples whenever possible and writing the phrases *committed friendship* and *testing the waters* at the appropriate spots on the newsprint ladder as you review them:

- Most relationships seem to go through several stages or “steps” in development along the lines indicated on the ladder. Note that each rung or step on the ladder includes all the steps or rungs below it. This means that it is possible, even necessary, for a love relationship to include both friendship and infatuation. In the beginning steps of a dating relationship, people experience a “testing of the waters” that might last several dates. During this time, each person checks out the other and looks for shared interests, attractions, faults, warning signals, good feelings, and so on.
- This testing level is an important step or rung in the relational ladder because it helps us define what we want in a dating partner (and perhaps eventually in a spouse). Testing the waters is a time to decide if this person matches up with our own expectations, interests, hopes, and values.
- The next common step in a dating relationship occurs when the two people experience that “in love” feeling that was defined as infatuation. Nothing is wrong with the “in love” phase, but sometimes, if the two people do not venture further up the ladder, it is the last phase of the relationship. The relationship eventually tires out and ends, sometimes painfully. Relationships must grow and stretch if they are to flourish.
- In the middle of the ladder is committed friendship. Friendship is a necessary step, or rung, that a growing relationship must reach for. Friendship is marked by respect for each other, enjoyment of each other’s company, time spent together in meaningful ways, common interests, and open sharing of more deeply personal information, facts, and feelings.

A friendship *must* be nurtured if the relationship is to grow deeper. Strong friendships stand the tests of time and space. Even if a good friend is far away or has not been seen in a while, the friendship can be sustained through phone calls, letters, or occasional visits.

- Love is at the top of the ladder. Love is characterized by a level of permanence and commitment that offers each partner a sense of security and trust in the relationship. At this stage, both people are highly invested in the relationship and are committed to working through problems that arise. In a love relationship, the welfare of the other is as important or more important than one’s own welfare.

4. Following your comments, invite the young people to think about both past and current relationships, including those with dates, friends, or acquaintances, that they or someone they know has had. Ask them to write the name or initials of a person or persons in each relationship, on the rung of the ladder that corresponds with the furthest step the relationship reached. Tell them to fill in names or initials for as many rungs as they can. For example, they should identify at least one person for testing the waters, one for infatuation, and so on.

Emphasize that the relationships they identify do not have to be other-sex relationships; they can be same-sex friendships, parent-child relationships, or even the relationship between a person and God. Stress that they do not have to refer to their own relationships, although using their own is preferable. Assure the young people that this information will not be shared with or revealed to the large group.

5. Conclude the activity by discussing any insights that may have arisen out of this exercise. Use questions such as these:

- Are your more recent relationships, or those still going, further up the ladder than those in your past? Why might this be or not be so?
- Do you currently have relationships that reflect each level on the ladder? How would you characterize them?
- Do most young people confuse infatuation with love? with friendship? Why or why not?
- What rung on the ladder do you feel most dating relationships achieve among young people your age? Why?

F Scripture Search and Prayer (15 minutes)

This Scripture search activity is designed to encourage the young people to use the Scriptures to discover the different types of relationships in the Bible.

Before the session. Mark one of the assigned scriptural passages in each of seven Bibles. Also, pick out a tape or CD of a song that symbolizes or speaks to the type of healthy relationship that God is calling young people to have with one another.

1. Explain to the young people that the Bible includes stories about relationships—relationships between people and God, and between individual persons. Of all the relationships described in the Bible, it is possible to find some that appear to reflect every rung on the ladder. Announce that the young people will be doing a brief guided search of the Scriptures to discover some of the different relationships described.

2. Divide the group into seven smaller groups, distribute a Bible to each, and assign each group one of the scriptural passages below. Instruct each group to have one member read aloud its assigned passage. The small-group members are then to decide which level on the ladder the relationship is at. Ask them to select one person from their group to share their response and to offer reasons why they came to their conclusion.

- Ruth 1:11–18 (Ruth and Naomi)
- Judg. 16:4–21 (Samson and Delilah)
- 2 Sam. 11:2–5 (David and Bathsheba)
- Song of Sol. 1:2–4 and 2:1–6 (infatuation, romantic love)
- Sir. 6:5–16 (friendship)
- John 15:9–15 (Jesus calls disciples friends.)
- 1 Cor. 13:1–8 (love)

3. After 5 minutes, call the groups back together and invite each spokesperson to summarize her or his scriptural story and to state where on the ladder the relationship described in it should be placed and why. Write these responses on the ladder on the newsprint.

4. When all the groups have reported, summarize the activity by noting that the passages either tell stories about or offer general insights into a variety of relationships. Also explain that throughout the Scriptures, God is seen as being present to all people and all relationships. Relationships in which the persons involved understood and knew of God's presence seemed to be the ones of the highest quality and deepest commitment. Those that were more passing, manipulative, or shallow were the ones in which the people had turned away from God, even if only for a little while. The good news is that the people involved in all these relationships eventually turned back to God and were reconciled with God.

Conclude by telling the young people that the more we can recognize the presence of God in both ourselves and in our relationships, the more satisfying and lasting they will become.

5. Before beginning the prayer, dim the lights and place a candle in the middle of the circle where the young people are gathered.

Invite the young people to think about one relationship they would like God to be present to in their life. Let them know that during the prayer you will play a song, and while the song is being played you would like them to think of that relationship and how God may be trying to speak to them.

6. Begin the prayer by inviting the young people to focus on the lit candle in the middle of the room and then slowly reading the following prayer:

- God of all relationships, you have been a part of our life since we were conceived in our mother's womb. You know us inside and out, you know what we are thinking and feeling at this moment. You understand how hard it is sometimes to love one another as you love us. You also know how beautiful and powerful it can be to fall in love with another person.

We ask you now to gift us with your understanding presence, especially within the specific relationship each of us is thinking about right now [Pause for silent reflection.] With your promise of unconditional love and support, we know we can develop into the people you are calling us to be at this moment. Continue to strengthen us and our relationships so that they may more closely mirror the boundless love and complete trust you hold for each one of us.

We ask this prayer, through Christ our Lord. Amen!

7. You may wish to close with an appropriate song.

Alternative Approaches

After reading through the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make an addition to an activity. Consider your group and time limitations first and then these alternative approaches.

For step F. This closing prayer can be used in place of the prayer in step F. Create a prayer circle by gathering everyone and asking them to hold hands. One at a time, the group members should offer the name of a friend or family member who needs to be held up in prayer. The speaker should signal the next person's turn by squeezing his or her hand.

Video. If you would like to use a video as part of, or instead of, an activity in this session, see the list of recommended videos at the end of the introduction to this book.



Journal Options for Between Sessions

If you decide to add a journal-keeping component to the course, have the participants do their journal writing between sessions.

Before the end of the session, let the participants choose two of the following questions for journal reflection:

- What has your dating experience been like for you thus far? What has been the most exciting part? the most difficult?
- Choose one of the relationships that you wrote on the ladder and write about how you felt about it and where you did or did not experience God in it.
- Find a favorite picture of you and a person you dated. Using the picture to trigger memories and feelings that were part of that relationship, write about how you met the person and describe a funny and a sad moment you shared together. Include some of the feelings you had for the person. Conclude with where the relationship is now and why.

Closing Prayer and Evaluation



Closing Teacher Prayer

Lord God, to you I offer my thanks this day for the wonderful opportunity you have blessed my life with—the opportunity to share my faith and your presence with these unique young people.

Please continue to be present to me this week as I prepare for the next session. Allow your hand to guide me in all I do and say. In Jesus' name I make this prayer. Amen!



Family Connections

- Encourage parents to share at home with their teenagers the qualities that attracted them to their spouse when dating and to explain which of their dating relationships ended and why.
- Suggest that the young people share with their parents some of the questions raised in the activity Looking for Someone to Love and spend time as a family discussing them.



Evaluation

Take a few minutes after the session to record your impressions and observations. Write your thoughts in the spaces provided, for future reference.

1. What really worked well in this session?

2. What would make this session better next time?

3. Circle the number on the following scale that, on the whole, reflects how you rate this session:

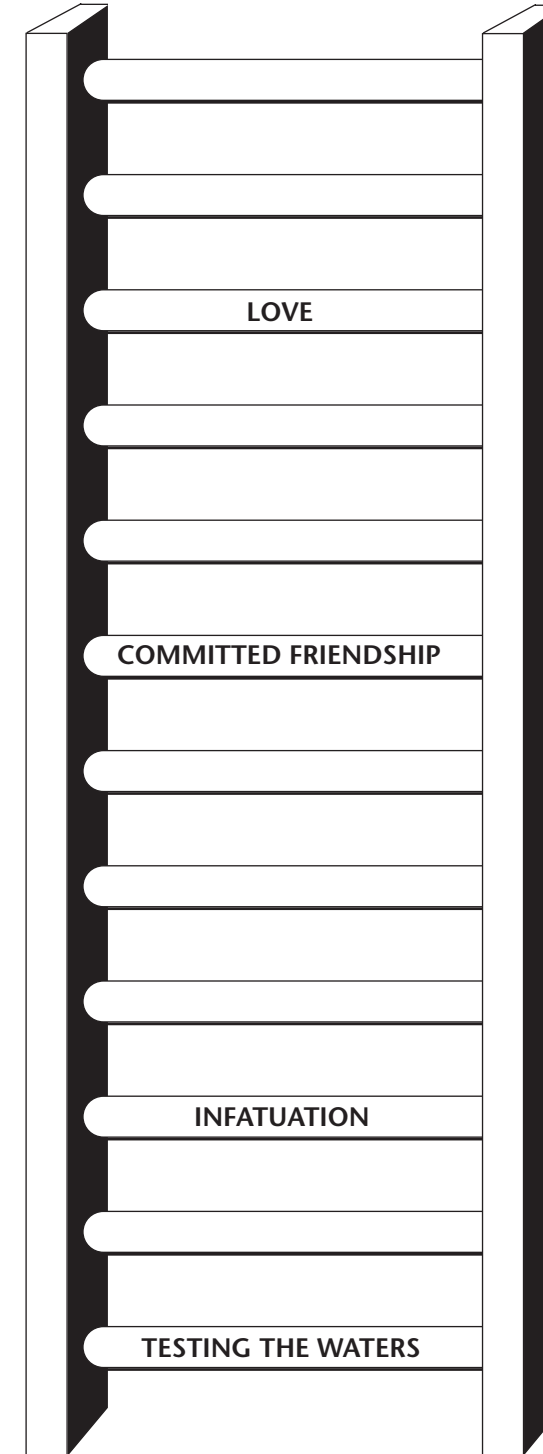
Poor					Average					Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

4. What are some reasons for your rating?

5. What things do you need to follow up on?

For **RELATIONSHIPS**

R E A C H I N G



Use the ladder below to plot your present and past relationships in terms of the level of commitment and trust you experienced in them. Or use the names of people that you know of who are or were in relationships.

Note: Not each rung of the ladder is labeled with a term. This is so that you can indicate a higher or lower level of a particular stage. For example, placing a name on the sixth rung from the bottom would indicate that the relationship was further along through the infatuation stage than would placing the name on the fourth rung.