

Junior High – Spring 2006

Lesson Option

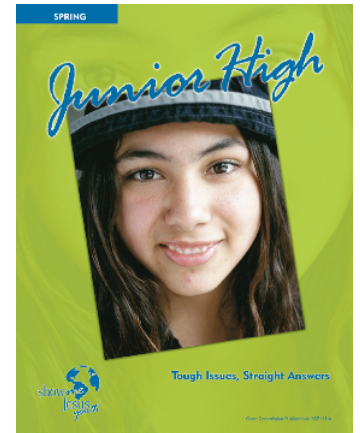


Article by Wendy Kelley

Tough Issues, Straight Answers

Lesson 6 – Rating Dating

**“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**



Have you ever looked at your class of junior high students and thought, “None of them is dating, nor do they plan on dating in the near future? Their parents will not allow it. Why should I put ideas into their heads about dating?” Some of them are still at the stage where the idea of dating is positively gross! Other students are eager to begin dating and some may have already started dating. Wherever your students are on the dating timeline, they are most likely many years away from choosing a mate. So, why discuss dating and marriage with junior high students? Dating and marriage are big issues; they will affect a person’s whole life. We must make every effort to equip our teens with biblical guidelines for all of their relationships.

Think about it this way. What do you do before you take a big trip? A wise person does not embark on a vacation without first making some plans and setting some goals. You might begin by deciding what kind of environment you would like to visit. Do you want to visit a tropical paradise, a majestic mountain, or a charming New England town? If you chose a tropical paradise, you can rule out Colorado. On the other hand if you want a mountain adventure, it would be an excellent choice. If you chose to visit a New England town, you are pretty much limited to the New England states. Your decision will also be influenced by your budget. While a trip to the Caribbean might satisfy your desire for a trip to the seaside, your budget may only allow a trip to the nearest beach.

After you have chosen a destination, you might start doing some research on your own or talk with a friend who has made the trip. You may contact a travel agent and get pricing information and brochures. You pick a date to take your trip, make necessary reservations and plan out your itinerary. If you plan to drive, you should make sure that you have current maps for the cities and states you plan to travel through as well as the city you are going to visit. It is not enough to simply bring a map; it must be the right map. When you are traveling through Vermont, a Virginia map is not going to help you. It does not matter that they start with the same letter and are both in the eastern portion of the United States.

There are many things that must be done to prepare for a trip. Before you leave, you must be sure that you have the right clothes and equipment. You do not need to pack your snow skis for a visit to southern Florida nor do you need your guide to Civil War battlefields for a visit to Utah. Obviously you understand how to plan for a trip and you know how important it is to have a plan. If we put this much thought and preparations into planning a short trip, why then do we do so little to prepare for dating and choosing a mate? A vacation quickly ends and we return to our normal routines; dating and marriage forever alter our lives.

Most people do not wait until their first day of vacation begins to start planning a trip. In the same way, teens must develop biblical standards and guidelines for dating and choosing a mate well before they go on their first date. As one sets goals for a vacation, teens must set standards for a future mate. As a traveler must use the right map, a teen must use the Bible to develop their standards. An online dating quiz and Hollywood formula for dating will not lead them in the right direction. Seeking advice from peers who know as little as they do about dating is also not wise. Teens should talk to someone who has traveled that path ahead of them; seek the counsel of godly men and women who are married. They must set standards regarding physical contact before they are ever in a relationship. Just as financial limits should be set for a vacation, limits must be set for physical intimacy. All of these issues should be dealt with in advance of ever starting a relationship. Once someone is in a relationship, it can be hard to formulate biblical standards. Emotions and desire can affect one's resolve.

Advice from a travel agent or a well-traveled friend can be invaluable when planning a trip. As a teacher of junior high students, you too can be invaluable to your students. Begin now to equip them with the tools they need to form biblical guidelines and standards for dating.

Note: Be sensitive to the principles and practices of your students' families. In some cases, parents do not allow dating of any type by their teenage children. Others might prefer that this topic not be addressed at all with junior high students. If these circumstances exist, you may need to modify or even skip lesson 6. If in doubt, talk to your pastor or church education administrator.



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