



TAKE A NEW APPROACH TO DATING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Parental stress goes up a notch as soon as kids enter the dating scene. How can you encourage your kids to have healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex yet stay safe and morally pure? Youth leader Josh Pease offers these suggestions that just might surprise you:

- **Don't demonize sex, but don't overglorify it either.** As you encourage kids to save intimacy for marriage, also emphasize that sex shouldn't be just about self-satisfaction.
- **Model healthy relationships.** Let kids see what a sacrificial relationship looks like—on good days and bad. Show them how to work out problems.
- **Teach an "others-focused" approach to dating.** Instead of just asking, "Is this person right for me?" dating teenagers should also ask, "Am I right for this person?" Other questions to consider: By my behavior, do I influence the person I'm dating to be more like Jesus? Am I focusing more on what I can get out of them or on what I can do for them? Is my presence in their life right now distracting them from who God is revealing them to be?

As we emphasize abstinence and the beauty of God's plan for marriage, Pease says, let's also teach kids to model Jesus' sacrificial love in their relationships now. That way, they'll be better equipped to thrive as spouses in the future.

THE VIEW

- 68% of teenagers say their friends are in "healthy" romantic relationships, while 19% say their friends are in "unhealthy" relationships.
- 48% of girls and 40% of guys say trust is the most important part of a healthy relationship.
- When asked who influences their dating relationships, teenagers list parents first (35%) and friends second (28%). Only 3% of respondents list "religious leader and faith community."

(National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy)

TIPS >>>

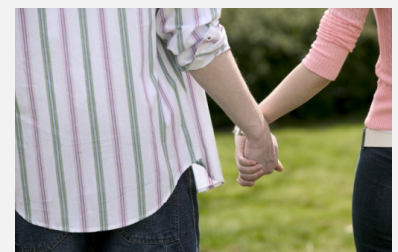
The small-group resource *Guy Talk, Girl Talk 2: The Cure for Cooties (Simply Youth Ministry)* offers these Bible-based dating tips for young people:

- **Turn off the negative influences.** Steer clear of hip-hop songs, magazines, porn, and friends who degrade people and go against God's designs.
- **Accept the differences.** Realize that boys and girls feel and see things differently.
- **Take it slowly.** First learn how to build good friendships without the pressure of romance and getting physical.

- **Be responsible for your actions.** Don't cause other people to stumble, whether by how you speak to them or how you dress.
- **Talk with Jesus about your experiences.** This may seem weird at first, but praying about your friendships makes a lot of sense if you're trying to understand the opposite sex.
- **Celebrate God's love and friendship.** In every area of your life, God has a plan, including a plan for friendship and love. Once we trust God and rely on him and his timing, we can celebrate him and his plan for us. .

FOR DISCUSSION

- What messages are your kids receiving about relationships from you? from their peers? from society? from the media?
- What role, if any, should you have in deciding whom your teenager dates or marries?
- What can you do *now* to ensure that you maintain positive ties with your teenager





GOING DEEPER

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Jane Dratz

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Jane Dratz explores how parents can help teenagers through relational landmines:

When tough times hit on the romantic scene and you're pulled into the middle of teenage drama, pass along these insights and strategies that can bring a Godly perspective to the challenge of ending a relationship.

- Always treat the other person with dignity and respect. Remember the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12).
- Don't let things drag on and on.

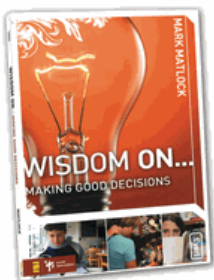
Address the source of the relational conflict. Talk it out. When you can't find common ground to work things out and you know it's inevitable that it's time to move on relationally, get up your courage and deal with it. Of course, be sensitive to specific timing.

- Unpacking personal conflict with others should be done in person, if possible. Come to the conversation calmly, not in anger (Proverbs 15:1).
- Express appreciation for what's been good in the relationship. But if

you believe it's time to move on, make that clear. Don't leave the other person dangling and hoping if you know clearly that things need to be over.

- Remember to run to God with the tough stuff because he promises to walk beside you through it all. A relationship with God through Jesus is ultimately the only relationship that will satisfy the deepest levels of your relational being. When relational stuff hurts, God's there in the midst of it to wrap his arms around you.

RESOURCE



Wisdom On... Making Good Decisions (Simply Youth Ministry) uses case studies, personal inventories, and more to apply biblical wisdom to friendships, dating, and relationships.

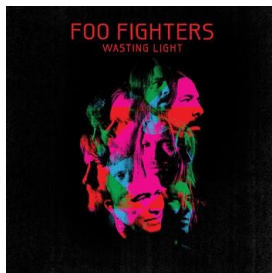
BIBLE FOCUS

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

2 Corinthians 6:14, NIV

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



FOO FIGHTERS

Background: Rising from Nirvana's ashes in 1994, Foo Fighters makes in-your-face rock. Their seventh album, *Wasting Light*, debuted at #1 on the Billboard charts. They've won six Grammys, including three for Best Rock Album.

Albums: *Wasting Light* (2011), *In Your Honor* (2005), *The Colour and the Shape* (1997)

What Foo Fighters Says: Founding force Dave Grohl is known as a rebel: "I never liked being told what to do. It's one of the reasons I dropped out of school. Give me something to assemble, I won't look at the directions, I'll try to figure it out by myself. It's why I love IKEA furniture."

Explore: Here's a YouTube video of the song "Home," the lyrics of which have led people to wonder if the Foo Fighters are a Christian band. They aren't.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcx015tRchE

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



OWL CITY

Background: Adam Young plays all parts of the popular Owl City musical project. Young found an audience after putting his music on MySpace. The song "Fireflies" from his major-label debut soared to #1 on the charts.

Albums: *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (2011), *Ocean Eyes* (2009), *Of June* (2007)

What Owl City Says: Regarding his faith, Young says, "Owl City is just me. I don't write Christian songs, but I am a Christian musician, so I suppose the classification of the band is up to the listener. My faith is very important to me and is a very big part of who I am as an individual. It's kind of up to you...."

Explore: On the Owl City Web site, you can view "Alligator Sky," a video from the new album: www.owlcitymusic.com/.

MOVIE

Title: *Super 8*

Genre: Thriller

Rating: Not yet rated (likely PG-13)

Synopsis: In 1979, some friends making an amateur film witness a terrible train accident. Soon people start disappearing, and the friends suspect something on the train is terrorizing the town.

Our Take: J.J. Abrams' work is usually pretty clean, well-written, funny, and genuinely interesting. With Steven Spielberg on board as a producer, this should be a blockbuster.

Title: *Green Lantern*

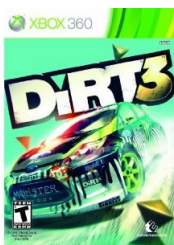
Genre: Action-Adventure

Rating: Not yet rated (likely PG-13)

Synopsis: For the first time, a human joins the ranks of the Green Lantern Corps—an intergalactic group of heroes sworn to protect the universe from evil.

Our Take: Marvel's superhero movies are meant to be family friendly, so expect mostly clean content mixed with lots of special effects and action sequences.

VIDEO GAME



DIRT 3—This game is all about adrenaline. The rally car racing simulation gives players more than 50 options for cars, plus new locations, routes, and events. Aside from possible lyrics in the music, this game *should* be good for teenagers.

Duke Nukem Forever—Steer clear of this first-person shooter. The franchise revels in over-the-top violence and degradation of women. There's a "Capture the Babe" mode, in which players can choose to spank women while abducting them.