

# *Pathway*

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

## **Introduction — *Dating 2***

---

Your parents can probably tell some funny stories about how they first met and began dating. And, no doubt, you've heard about other cultures where marriages are arranged without any dating at all! But your love life is different from your parents' and those of other cultures. However, what God says about guys and girls in relationships doesn't change with the times, or locations on the map. The Bible sets some specific guidelines for your actions and attitudes concerning dating. This *Pathway* series will explain those guidelines.

## DAY ONE — Dating 2

**Hiding It in My Heart:** When David realized how special he was to God, he wrote Psalm 139:14. Memorize this Bible verse today to remind you of this fact.

*I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

**Today's Prayer:** Thank God for how He made you, and for the fact that you are valuable to Him.

**Today's Verse:** ... *He hath made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6).*

## Look in the Mirror: Liking Myself First

"The guys at Central High are so immature," Joy moaned. Karen nodded in agreement. Bemoaning their lack of dates was more interesting than studying for a History exam.

"Is this a private conversation, or can anyone join it?" asked Lynn, Karen's older sister, as she entered the living room.

Karen rolled her eyes, knowing Lynn would probably stay.

"You wouldn't be interested," Joy said.

"Sure I am," Lynn replied. "I'm an expert in not getting any dates."

"But you always have a boyfriend!" Joy couldn't hide her surprise.

"In the last few years, yes. But not in high school. Only I had a different reason than you."

"Oh, no!" Karen groaned. "Not the 'I Hated Being Tall' speech. I've heard it a million times!"

Joy threw a pillow at Karen. "Well, I haven't heard it," said Joy.

"I had this problem with being tall," Lynn began. "When I was in high school, I stood taller than every guy I liked. It was a definite social disaster. I was sure that my height was why I never had any dates."

"I later discovered that God made me the way I am - tall - on purpose, and not as a curse."

"Yeah, but what does all that have to do with my not having a boyfriend?" Joy interrupted.

"Understanding God's view helped me begin to like my unchangeable parts, like height," Lynn answered. "When I quit feeling sorry for myself about how tall I was, I no longer drove away the guys with my self-pity. If I was good enough for God, then I was good enough for myself!"

**Do you ever feel like Lynn did when she was in high school? If so, what feature(s)**

**about yourself don't you like?** \_\_\_\_\_

**A Look in the Book:** God tells us in His Word how He views us. **Get a better handle on His perspective by reading the following passages. Then write down at least one fact about yourself that each passage teaches.**

Psalm 139:16: \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 2:4-10: \_\_\_\_\_

**Now write an ad for yourself, highlighting your best qualities.** (Ask yourself: "What might God say about me?")

How would you like that ad to read two months from now? **Focus on one changeable quality you want most to develop and describe it below.**

Unfortunately, many dates are chosen on the basis of three criteria: looks, ability and status or importance. How well you measure up to those standards greatly influences how well you like yourself. But a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ assures us of value in all three areas:

- We are accepted unconditionally, regardless of appearance (Ephesians 1:6).
- We are exceptional because our sins are forgiven, not because we have certain abilities (Ephesians 1:7).
- Christ chooses to always be with us because we are important to Him (Matthew 28:20).



## DAY TWO — Dating 2

**Today's Prayer:** Talk with God about areas of your inner character that need changing. Then ask Him to work in you to make those changes.

**Today's Verse:** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).*

### Getting Ready: Being the Best Me

“Getting ready for a date should involve more than praying that she will say yes or that he will call to ask you out.” Wayne couldn’t help laughing with the rest of the group at Joey’s mock swoon and facial expressions.

Pastor Dave continued. “It’s also more than preparing for a beauty contest, or talking Dad out of the car for an evening. Getting ready for a date begins with becoming the best you. Sure, outward appearance is part of being your best. But looking handsome or beautiful, being well-groomed and dressing in style can’t cover up a lack of inner beauty or character.

“Most guys who date girls with bad reputations only have one thing on their minds, and it’s not marriage. Girls who date good-looking guys stuck on themselves usually grow bored and end the relationship long before love develops.”

Wayne was hooked. The meeting was no longer a time-filler to please his parents. His eyes moved to Nancy. He had never asked her out because she was rather plain-looking. But he suspected she wouldn’t say “yes” if he did ask. Nancy was one of those girls Wayne and his friends overlooked for dates, but the kind his parents would like. “She has character,” he knew his father would say.

Wayne tuned in to Pastor Dave again. “...We need to focus on developing a Christ-like character, rather than comparing ourselves with those around us who get all the dates. So tonight we’re going to look at two Bible passages to determine what kinds of inner qualities we should have and see how we measure up.”

**How would you describe the Christ-like character Pastor Dave mentioned? List several inner qualities you think are important.**

---

---

---

---

---

**A Look in the Book:** One of the passages Wayne’s youth group studied is Matthew 5:3-9. (The other is Galatians 5:13-26.) Christ began His famous Sermon on the Mount by listing seven inner qualities that are attractive to God, as well as to potential dates. **Read Matthew 5:1-16 to see this passage in its context.**

Notice that Christ begins each of these qualities with the word blessed which means happy. It refers to inner joy that is not dependent on outward circumstances. A happy, satisfied (contented) Christian can make for a wonderful date whether it is to a party, youth activity, or to a high school athletic event.

**Let’s look at these qualities:**

1. Poor in spirit - humble, not self-sufficient, but dependent on God
2. Mournful - genuinely sorry for sin which leads to not sinning deliberately
3. Meek - gentle, submissive to God
4. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness - actively growing to be more like God
5. Merciful - compassionate, meeting needs of other people
6. Pure in heart - cleansed from sin, pure motives and actions, no hypocrisy
7. Peacemaking - upholding God’s truth to resolve conflicts

**Which of these already characterize your life? Put a check in front of them.**

**Which ones do you especially want to make a part of your character?**

---

---

---

**How can you begin to develop them? Write two different ways.**

---

---

---

As God continues to develop these qualities in your life, they will not long go unnoticed by your friends. Young people serious about living the Christian life will be challenged and motivated to Christian growth.

### DAY THREE — Dating 2

**Today's Prayer:** Discuss with God the dating guidelines that you've been learning today. Ask God to help you keep them!

**Today's Verse:** ... *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh* (Galatians 5:16).

## Preparing for a Relationship: Setting Standards

You arrive home from school to find a large envelope addressed to you. You drop your books in the nearest chair and tear the envelope open. Pulling out the contents, you look at the cover letter.

"Dear High School Student," it begins. "We are conducting a survey to determine when a teen ought to be able to date."

Good topic, you think. Great! Finally, someone has recognized how important my opinion is. You pick up a pen and begin the survey form.

### 1. *At what age should a young person begin to date?*

Before 12  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  After high school

*This is easy, you think, checking your preference. Next question.*

### 2. *What are three important things a teen should think about before he or she begins to date?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

You never thought about this one before. After chewing the eraser for a few minutes, you write down the following:

### 3. *What are the three most important facts a teen should know about a specific person before he or she asks for or accepts a date? Rate them 1, 2, 3, etc., in order of importance.*

age  personality  looks  family background  interests  
 relationship with God  intellect  athletic ability  other \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. *What standards should a young person set before he or she begins to date?*

*Dating standards? What kind of questionnaire is this?* you ask yourself. You skip the question and complete the rest of the survey. When you go back to 4, you're still stumped.

The subject of dating standards may be new to you. Not many people talk about it. But it does deserve serious consideration!

The best time to decide what kind of person you will and will not date is before you date. This is also the time to determine what you will and will not do on a date. Setting guidelines ahead of time can save you from embarrassing and harmful situations. If you're already dating, however, it's not too late to create some standards now.

The Bible doesn't boldly proclaim, "Here's a set of dating standards which every Christian teen should obey." But the Bible does provide guidelines you can apply to dating in order to honor the Lord in this area of your life!

**A Look in the Book:** *Read each of the following passages. Then write a guideline(s) to follow, or a question(s) to ask as you think about dating someone or to evaluate your present dates.* A couple are already done for you as examples.

Romans 15:2: How can I help my date grow closer to God?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: Will this date lead me into immorality (sexual sin)?

2 Corinthians 6:14-16: \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:29: \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 2:3-4: \_\_\_\_\_

***What other dating guidelines can you think of that aren't mentioned in these passages? List a few!***

---

---

---

---

***Now spend a few minutes thinking seriously about your own life. Put a check in front of the above standards you want to make your own.***



**DAY FOUR — Dating 2**

**Today's Prayer:** Thank God for what you learned about friendship today. Ask for His help to show a genuine concern for others out of which a lasting friendship can develop.

**Today's Verse:** *A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).*

## Beginning a Relationship: Being a Friend

In between mouthfuls of pizza, Beth and Stephanie compared notes on guys they wanted to date.

"I'm tired of not having any dates!" said Stephanie. "What's wrong with me anyway?"

Startled, Beth looked over at Stephanie. They had been best friends since grade school and talked about everything. But Steph had never asked this question before. Beth thought seriously about it.

Finally, Beth blurted out, "Are you sure you want to know?"

"I brought it up, didn't I?"

"OK. You asked for it. Sometimes you're not very friendly."

Stephanie bristled. "But I have friends."

"Yeah, maybe a few. But how often do you start a conversation with someone else, or go out of your way to help someone? Sometimes you do act kinda stuck-up," Beth continued. "I know you really aren't because we've been friends so long. But the guys only go by what they see."

Over at Steve's house, Ted and Dan talked about girls while Steve and Mike played table tennis.

"Game!" shouted Steve, as Mike missed the ball.

"I've had enough," Mike said. "You're too good for me."

"It's about time you recognize me as a champion!" Steve joked. "Since you won't play anymore, let's go bother the other two."

After a few minutes of listening, Mike spoke up. "You guys always manage to have a date for the football games and youth group activities. What's your secret?"

"No secret," Ted replied. "I just ask someone I'd like to get to know better."

"That's easy for you to do. But I can't make myself walk up to a stranger and ask her out."

"There's your problem. You need to make friends with some girls first, so they're not strangers. It cuts down on the fear of rejection."

Beth and Ted both zeroed in on a key point! Sometimes a guy will ask out a girl he doesn't know, or someone will consent to a blind date. But being friends is usually a preliminary step. And the more friends of the opposite sex you have, the greater are your possibilities for dates.

**A Look in the Book:** Jonathan is one of the best examples of a friend in the Bible. Even though Jonathan would have become Israel's king when his father, Saul, died, he knew God had chosen David to succeed Saul. But Jonathan was David's best friend anyway. **Grab your Bible and read 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7 and 23:15-18. What does Jonathan's example teach about being a friend? Write your findings below. Then think of specific ways you can follow his example with your peers at school, at church and in your neighborhood.**

**Qualities of a friend    Personal application**

Love

Eat lunch & talk with someone who isn't with a group of friends

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**How can being a great friend enhance your dating life?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Think about a person you would like to date. **How can you begin to become better friends with this person?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Even if you don't end up dating this person, you will have another friend. And not many people complain about having too many friends!



## DAY FIVE — Dating 2

**Hiding It in My Heart:** Memorize Proverbs 15:23 to encourage you to continue to work on good communication skills:

*A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!*

**Today's Prayer:** Talk to the Lord about any problems you have in communicating with people, especially those you date. Ask Him to help you put into practice what you studied today.

## Growing a Relationship: Developing Communication Skills

“According to my parents, I don’t have any problem communicating. They’re always yelling at me to get off the phone. Mom says I can talk longer than anybody else she knows. Kurt’s parents tell him the same thing, so I guess I don’t hold the record!”

Pastor Dave laughed with the rest of the youth group at Chris’ response to his question.

“Any more problems you have in talking with others?” he asked again.

“My dad says I talk a lot, but I don’t always make sense,” Joey said. “He always says he can’t figure out what I’m really trying to say.”

“There is a difference between talking and communicating,” Pastor Dave responded. “It’s important to know what communication is if you want a dating relationship or friendship to grow.”

### Communication Clues

The following clues will help you develop communication skills. Think about how you could apply these principles to your own dating life (now or in the future).

1. Express interest in the other person by your questions and comments.
2. Ask open-ended questions that can’t be answered with a “Yes” or “No.” For example, “What is the best or worst thing that happened to you today?”
3. Listen actively. Think about what the other person is saying, not what you will say next. Let him know he has your full attention by looking directly at him and not interrupting.
4. Share yourself, especially your feelings.
5. Don’t be afraid of silence. Nobody can talk nonstop intelligently.

**A Look in the Book:** The Bible has a lot to say about communication. **Read the following proverbs. Then write an example of the kind of speech to which each one is referring.**

Proverbs 12:25: *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.*

---

---

Proverbs 15:1: *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*

---

---

Proverbs 18:8: *The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*

---

---

Jesus Christ is a Master of communication. We can learn from studying His conversations in the gospels. **Choose one of the following passages and read it. Then jot down what you’ve learned about communicating with another person. Write how you can use your discoveries on your next date.**

Luke 24:13-27; John 3:1-16; 4:5-26: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY SIX — Dating 2

**Today's Prayer:** Ask God for His help to love others in the ways you studied today. If you are dating someone who doesn't treat you according to these guidelines, ask God for courage to talk to him or her about it. Ask God to help you break off the relationship if necessary.

**Today's Verse:** *Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).*

## Evaluating a Relationship: Discerning Real Love

"If you love me," Roger said to Janet, "you'll stay at my house this weekend when my parents are gone."

"If you loved me, you wouldn't ask me to do that," Janet replied.

How often have you heard Roger's line? How common is Janet's reply?

It's tough trying to sort out love. The situation is complicated because we use the word love to describe all kinds of relationships. "I love chocolate chip cookies"; "I love baseball"; "I love the color blue" and "I love Bill."

When thinking about people, however, there are basically three kinds of love. The "If" kind of love says, "I love you if you do ... or if you are ..." It is conditional on the other person fulfilling your expectations. Roger's line to Janet fits this category.

The "Because" kind of love says, "I love you because you ..." It is tied into something the other person does, or is or has. For example, "I love you because you make me feel good"; or "I love you because you have a lot of money."

"In-spite-of" love says, "I love you in spite of ..." It is real love, totally unconditional with no strings attached. It is love that says, "I love you even though you aren't always perfect"; or "I love you - period!" This is the kind of love God has for us - the kind of love He expects us to develop for other people (whether we're dating them or not).

**A Look in the Book:** The best description anywhere of real love is found in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul described the importance of love, as well as the characteristics of love. (The word charity in the King James Version is better translated love; make this substitute as you read 1 Corinthians 13.)

Paul begins by writing that real love is more important than eloquent speech or fluency in languages. It is better than knowledge, the ability to proclaim God's Word to others or strong faith in God. It is even superior to generosity or self-sacrifice. Without love, these abilities and actions are useless.

In verses 4-8a, Paul lists several ways love acts. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth ...*

**List six of them below. (Choose the ones which are least familiar to you.) Then define each one, using a dictionary and/or other Bible translations.**

Compare how you treat those you date with Paul's list. **Put a check mark in front of the ones below that need work in your life.**

Ways love acts:	Meanings:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**On My Own:** Think of a mature Christian adult who has observed you with friends and/or the person you are dating. Ask him or her to evaluate how you treat others according to the above list. What changes does he or she suggest you make? Choose one change to work on in the next few weeks; then report back to him/her.