

***Dealing with Dating part 2***  
***Helping Your Young Adult Prepare for the Future***  
***By Cary Schmidt***  
***Youth Pastor, LBC Student Ministries Director***

Last month we started talking about how to deal with dating as our children grow. In the midst of a culture that is awakening sexual desires at younger and younger ages, how do we as Christian parents find the right biblical balance on this issue? I believe the central battle regarding this issue is your teenager's heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" It is obvious that Satan would like to turn your young person's heart the wrong direction, enlarge and pervert their desires, and ultimately rob their purity.

In our first article we looked at the first seven of fourteen guidelines that will help a wise parent stand guard over their teenager's heart regarding these new attractions. Let's move on to the next seven. Ask God for wisdom as you apply these principles in your own home.

- 1. See the Teen Years as the Lab and Yourself as the Instructor.** The teen years are truly the laboratory in preparing for adult life. They are, in essence, the last stop on the road to adulthood. This is your final opportunity to shape character, establish values, and nurture the heart before your young adult begins making very serious life choices. This is the time to begin deliberately helping your son or daughter to prepare for a life-long relationship in marriage. In a day when parents tend to disconnect during these years, your teen needs your constant involvement and guidance in these matters. The devil's plan in this area is to distance teens and parents. Teens try to get alone and apart, while parents tend to be too busy, disinterested, or even insecure about how to deal with these issues. Rather than giving in to distance, fight it. Stay engaged with your young person and mentor them through every step of this process right up until marriage!
  
- 2. Encourage a "Be Friends" Relationship Philosophy until Graduation from High School.** If they aren't on a road to marriage, then there is no real good reason to get wrapped up in one serious relationship. These exclusive relationships have no where to go except downhill! They tend to distance the heart from things that really matter. They tempt a teenager to have misplaced priorities, and they often weaken other vital relationships! More than discouraging relationships, encourage light ones! Help your young person understand the danger of becoming too serious or exclusive too soon!
  
- 3. Watch for Three Danger Signs: Isolation, Extended Time, and Physical Contact.** With young people these three areas always lead to problems, and two of the three are not necessary until after marriage. Only an engaged couple needs to spend large amounts of extended time together as they plan and prepare for their life-long relationship. I am amazed at how often parents accept the standards of a secular culture in these areas. Please don't vacate your place in the hedge of protection! Don't allow temptation to increase by ignoring these three areas. Additionally, please keep in mind that many T.V. show, movies, and certain types of music will further fuel the fire in these areas!

**4. Be Approachable and Preemptive about Dating.** One of the biggest mistakes that parents make in teen relationships is that they are completely unapproachable—whether from fear, busyness, or insecurity. Your teen will go somewhere for answers, and there are many in the world who are only too eager to give them wrong answers! Please decide that your teenager will have biblical answers from you before he hears the wrong answers from the world. Beyond that, bring these subjects up regularly with biblical insight and compassionate instruction.

**5. Be involved as a Parent.** Nothing can combat the world's fleshly influence in this area better than a strong relationship with mom and dad. Be close to your teen. A lifestyle of neglect and apathy leads to broken hearts, divided homes, and searching young people!

**6. Don't Push Your Teen to Date.** For some reason, some parents lean to this dangerous extreme. Rather than being uninvolved, they are too involved in a pushy way. This is not natural, and it is not healthy. Have a heart for your teen's feelings, help regulate them and manage them, but on the other hand, if there is no fire burning, don't bring out the matches and firewood!

**7. Don't Take a "Break-up" Lightly.** Don't take it lightly when your young adult loses a boyfriend or a girlfriend. This is one of the most traumatic experiences that a young adult faces, and you must help them through this time. Expect them to take it harshly, seek to understand how they feel, and encourage them toward the Lord and His Word during these seasons of growth and transition.

In conclusion, remember these words: "The right person at the right time." This is the goal! This is the reason you are praying, teaching, guiding, and preparing this young life—for the right person at the right time!

Don't panic just because your teen notices a boy or girl. After all, you did too when you were their age. It's a normal, God-given occurrence that needs to be carefully controlled by God-given parental authority. Set the biblical standard for your home and enforce the standard with determination. At the same time love your teen. Your young person will respect and honor this approach—and one day, from the vantage point of a happy marriage, they will be forever grateful for your mentoring!