



FIELD GUIDE



RELATIONSHIPS
SITUATIONSHIPS



FIELD GUIDE: Relationships and Situationships

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MT. BETHEL HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

We're so glad you picked up a copy of this Field Guide on Relationships and Situationships. You are going to want to bring this guide with you every Sunday morning as we walk through this special series together focusing on relationships and the relational situations you face. You can also use it at home all week long as a resource that is full of advice, scripture and helpful tips. The bible doesn't offer a black and white picture of what a dating relationship should look like...or does it? We believe that God's heart for dating is good, equally yoked and pure. In the very beginning of creation, God saw Adam and "knew that it was not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18-24). God created us to be relational with others - relationships are hard, yes, but they are also good. As you take your time discovering what God says about relationships and His heart for dating, we truly hope this booklet offers guidance, wisdom and help as you navigate relationships!



PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Do you know how powerful prayer is? It is one of the most important practices in the Christian faith. It's the way we communicate with God. It's how we foster the personal relationship He offers us. When we lose sight of its importance, we lose sight of Him. Prayer is a time of sharing with God all that's on your heart, repenting of the sins you have committed, and listening for His voice. All throughout scripture, God's people prayed. They prayed when they needed help and when they were surrounded by their enemies, they prayed when God was faithful to His word and delivered them, and they prayed for forgiveness of their wicked ways and a cleansing of their mind and heart (Psalm 51:2).

Practicing Prayer

What are you praying for?

When you enter into your time of prayer what does it look like? What are you asking for? Are you asking for your will to be done or God's will? Praying for a relationship is not a bad thing, if that's something you desire God already knows it so why not ask for it? However, sometimes you need to give yourself a heart check and if you are wanting your desires more than you want God, take some time to repent and realign your heart to His. God should be on the altar of our heart, not a relationship or the ache of being single. Pray with trust that God hears you, loves you, and is working for your good - if you are living for His glory.

How are you praying for it?

Are you doing all the talking or are you making time to listen to His responses? Oftentimes we go to God with all the things on our heart and after we're done, we get up and continue with our day. A good reminder to hold is that prayer is a way of communicating with God. And communicating involves equal parts listening and speaking. Take some time to evaluate your heart posture before speaking or asking for something. Do you want a quick fix to rid you of your sadness or jealousy? Or are you truly willing to step into His hands and let Him hold your desires? A relationship might not come right away and that's ok. But continue to pray with faith my friend!

Use this prayer

Dear God,

I so desperately want to be out of singleness. I want to have this relationship and I admit that oftentimes I want it more than you. Father, forgive me for the times I shove you out of the way. Forgive me for the times I idolize a relationship over you, teach me to love you more than my desires. Help me to have the strength to pray with faith when I come to you with the things that are on my heart. Help me to have the trust in your goodness and faithfulness because you are good and faithful. Thank you for loving me so deeply, and for wanting good things in my life. Lead my spirit to glorify you in all that I do, and in all that I ask for.

In Jesus' name I pray,
Amen



COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

When looking at relationships, one of the foundational building blocks to a Godly and healthy relationship is good communication. In a world that is so connected through phones, computers, and social settings, we are people who are arguably in constant communication. And that can make it hard to discern what is and what is not healthy communication, especially in physical relationships. A part that cannot be overlooked in relationships is the role of verbal communication. This is any communication that goes beyond text messages and Snapchat, and exists when hanging out face to face or talking over the phone. Verbal communication in a relationship is so important because in other forms of talking (i.e. Snapchat, Instagram, Discord, etc.) there are many aspects of communication that get left out. Some of these key elements of verbal communication that can be missed in non-verbal communication include: body language, tone, and context. Miscommunicating these elements can lead to poor communication between one another and can have a very negative impact on the relationship or even the “talking” phase. Another aspect that we can miss while living in such a connected world is the difference between unproductive and productive conversation. Now, I’m not saying that talking to people is unproductive.

I believe all conversations can be fruitful in a sense, but when looking at and pursuing relationships, we have to evaluate the quality of the conversations and communication. This evaluation can look like: Do you actually enjoy the conversations that you have with this person? Are your conversations able to extend naturally past small talk or do you have to force intentionality? And, do you value one another's opinions, inputs, and contributions when it comes to conversations and communication? When evaluating communication in life and in relationships, it can be intimidating to even start. In this section, we want to address some Red Flags in communication that may mean you need to evaluate this further.

RED FLAGS

They make you feel like your feelings of insecurity, hurt and frustration are your fault

- In the talking stage and especially in the relationship, humility and honesty has to be present on both sides. If you are feeling insecure, hurt, or frustrated about something in the situation, you have to be honest with the other person. It does neither side any good to bottle up frustrations and hurt. However, in these expressions, the other person (yes, sometimes "the other person" is going to be YOU) has to listen and respond with humility even if you have a hard time seeing the issue at hand. An important aspect of good communication is listening and humility. If the other person refuses to listen to the frustrations or apologize when in the wrong, this is a red flag! Rather, both of you must be honest in these moments and listen to one another with respect, not seeking to cast blame or defend actions but rather work together to find a solution. A simple apology can go a long way!

They continue to steer the conversation to the physical and sexual part of the relationship

- This is a big one. We live in a hyper-sexualized culture, and we must acknowledge that. The world around us continues to stray from the biblical view of sex and has reduced people down to just vessels for pleasure. This inevitably finds its way into relationships and especially talking phases. The red flag here is that the other person's end game in the talking/relationship communication is something physical. Every conversation somehow finds its way to seeking something physical from the other person. It is so important to recognize this, because if this seems to be where every conversation begins to go, then they may not be interested in a relationship, just the pleasure that can come from being physical with you. This can lead to horrible miscommunication surrounding expectations, values, and respect for each other. According to scripture, the role of a relationship is to honor one another and to glorify God. Both sides have to work together in order to properly communicate the expectations in the relationship and the values you wish to uphold. If every conversation has an end goal of something physical, then we **MUST** evaluate the communication and relationship as a whole immediately!

They only want to communicate with you through social media

- In a 21st century red flag, there is a need to look at the preferred method of communication in the relationship. If the person is only willing to communicate through the avenue of social media such as Snapchat or Instagram, then this should be a red flag. In a world with so many ways to communicate, there is nothing wrong with staying connected through different things such as social media, but when it comes to potentially pursuing a relationship, we must remember the importance of good/healthy methods of communication.

As I mentioned earlier, good verbal communication is key to a healthy relationship because it allows each person to better receive key aspects of communication such as tone, body language, and context. These aspects are absent when only communicating through social media, so they should not be used as the main method of communication in the talking phase and especially in the relationship. Often if the person prefers to only communicate through these apps, then they have unhealthy intentions, lack maturity needed for a healthy relationship, and/or trying to hide something from you = red flag! When looking at communication, the method in which you communicate is almost just as important as what you are trying to say. In a healthy relationship you and the other person should both desire to communicate in a verbal, face-to-face way rather than through short messages over social media. If one party is not comfortable to communicate in a verbal manner, this is an early red flag when it comes to communication in a relationship.



BOUNDARIES

INTRODUCTION

Boundaries are an extremely important topic of a relationship. They can lead you on a path of holiness, purity and glorifying God, but if left out or not prioritized it can lead you on a path of lust, sin and heartbreak. Boundaries are also sometimes awkward to talk about when just starting a relationship, so I hope this helps bring you clarity and guidance. The reason they are so important when you are in a relationship is because they protect your heart, your purity, and your spirit. They also provide you with guardrails as you learn how to date and grow closer to each other. Boundaries can look physical, emotional or even spiritual. Each area helps you to be single and do it well and to be in a relationship and do it well.

Practicing Boundaries

Tangible boundaries

Inside a relationship

One great and easy boundary is to have a curfew. It's been said that nothing good happens at night, which is so true! Make a curfew of how late you will hang out and stick to it! Be intentional and in agreement with the time you set.

Not hanging out in a bedroom is a good boundary to put in place because there is no reason for you to be in there with each other alone! That sounds like you're asking for something to happen, and Jesus calls us to live higher than that.

Having an open-door policy is a good idea to help keep you and your significant other out of temptation. When the door is open, anyone can walk by so keep that in mind and keep fighting the good fight.

Don't talk about marriage or plan for your future together when that is still years away. It won't do anything good for your heart if you break up, and it won't help with physical boundaries.

Keep your friends close and don't lean on them any less. Your significant other should not be your number person until you are married - and even then, you still need community.

Outside a relationship

If hanging out with single people of the opposite sex isn't helping you in your singleness but only making your ache grow louder, then maybe stick to your girl group or guy group. Your community is there for you to lean on, and if they aren't then you should find a new community.

Social media is a monster! Don't let it fill your mind with jealousy, comparison or discontent. Social media is built on appearing perfect, so if all you see are relationships on TikTok, then it can create a false expectation of what real relationships are like. Delete it, put time restrictions on it, take a 2-day break every week...whatever you need to do, but place boundaries with social media.

Nurture your spirit. If you are desiring a relationship or have been desiring one for a while and it still hasn't happened, don't let your spirit fall into despair and unbelief. Read scripture, pray, listen to worship music. Don't let yourself believe lies about God, but dwell on His promises to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11), restore your soul and lead you on a path of righteousness (Psalm 23:3), and to care for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Things to note

Having a boundaries conversation is absolutely necessary in a relationship. Will it be awkward? Potentially. Could you not see eye to eye? Maybe. But this is not an area where you get to pick and choose how to walk it out. God's word is clear, we are not to put ourselves or others in a place of temptation. **Talk about your boundaries, be clear with them, and stick to them.** There is no point in setting boundaries if you don't have the intention to hold to them.

It's important that you and your significant other are on the same page and in agreement of the boundaries set. If one is constantly having to say no, you will get yourself into a situation you might regret. If you are not on the same page, you may not be equally yoked, and you need to discuss what that means for your relationship.

Praying Scripture

Use these verses as encouragement when you need it, truth when you are believing lies, and promises of God when you forget.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9

Genesis 2:18-24

2 Corinthians 6:14

Song of Solomon 2:7

Psalms 23

Matthew 26:41

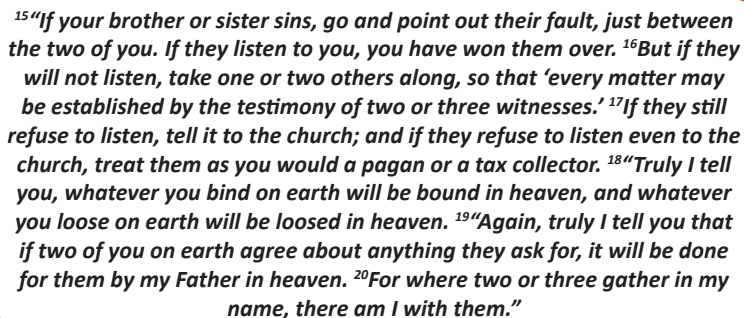
If you want to talk about this further, have questions, or anything else at all, please reach out to your Student Ministry Team. They are here for you, they love you, and they want to walk through it with you!



ACCOUNTABILITY

INTRODUCTION

Accountable means to be held responsible. **Accountability** is the action of holding someone else responsible. Have you ever heard the term accountability partner? It is when you and another person help each other stick to a goal you've set, a boundary you've put in place, and even a routine you have started. Accountability is a way we encourage one another in our faith journey. It's also a great gift to have whether you are in a relationship, about to be, or not even close. Have you ever pondered the verse Matthew 18:15-20? It is a great example of holding one another accountable. It requires discernment, love, and humility. Use discernment to decide whether to say something and whether to take it to heart. Use love to share whatever guidance you might give and how you respond to what you are hearing. Use humility to call out the sin you see and in receiving the correction.



¹⁵"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Practicing Accountability

If you're a friend

If you see your friend stumbling in their dating relationship, talk to them and help call out the sin you see. If you are the friend stumbling, listen with humility and know that you are loved, and sometimes biblical love might not feel great in the moment.

Frequently check up on your friend about how they're doing in their dating relationship. Don't be scared to ask about how their boundaries are and if they have crossed any, what are their conversations like, do they have the same beliefs and values, are they dating with humility, are they feeling heard and loved?

Be a part of the relationship - your outside perspective is valuable. New couples tend to spend all their time together, so don't be afraid to ask to hang out with them as a couple.

If you're a parent

Have an open-door policy at home - no closed doors allowed in this house!

Set a curfew and communicate it with your son/daughter. A good friend once told me that nothing good happens at night, and she's right.

Know the parents of whom your child is dating and get on the same page with boundaries such as curfew, open door policy... don't foster an environment where things can happen.

Build trust with your child. Explain the boundaries you are setting or the conversations you want to have. You as their parent have the most authority and space to help hold them up in accountability.

If you're the one in a relationship

Ask your friends and parents to help set these guidelines in place and keep them there. You are not a burden and they won't be mad or disappointed at you if these lines get crossed - it is an honor for them to have that place in your relationship.

Listen to what your friends are saying about your relationship. Even if you don't like what they are saying, they may be right. If your four closest friends are all saying the same thing it seems to me that they probably have a point.

Be vulnerable and honest. Don't feel shame to the point where you make yourself feel like you have to lie. That's when the enemy wins.

If you don't feel like you are in a place to seek accountability from your friends or parents, please consider asking someone else you know. Your Student Ministry Team is here for anything you need - we'll help you keep your boundaries and pray with you when you fall short, because we all fall short.



CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY

Rounding off this field guide on relationships, there is nothing more important than remembering who you are and who you're called to be according to scripture. The common denominator of all relationships are people, and at the center of all relationships needs to be the Lord. At the end of the day, He is the one who formed us, He is the one who breathed life into us, He is the one with a will, plan, and purpose for us, and He is the one who will restore us back to Heaven above.

There are many factors that play into having a healthy relationship, but none more important than approaching every stage with a Godly perspective. We must remind ourselves that people are imperfect and not every relationship will end happily ever after, and that is ok! Even a relationship that doesn't end in marriage can be used by the Lord, especially if throughout that relationship you sought His will and His values. We can approach both dating and singleness with confidence that the Lord will be faithful! We encourage you in times of doubt or anxiety surrounding any stage of relationships, from singleness to dating and to marriage, always remind yourself of what God says of and about you.

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord reminds His people, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the holy one of Israel, your savior.”

Navigating these stages of life can be intimidating and confusing. There will be moments of highs and lows but how we stay grounded is to remind ourselves that God is in control. He has called you by name and you are His. When we pass through the waters and the fires, He is by our side. No matter the situation you find yourself in, whether a student seeking a relationship, a student in a relationship, a parent navigating a child through a relationship, or anywhere in-between.

Put the Lord at the center and remind yourself that He is faithful and always in control. Pray scripture over your life, your relationship, your child, and your situation, being sure to invite the Lord in to move and provide in all aspects. Fully submitting yourself to His love, compassion, peace, hope, and joy that He offers everyone, including YOU!

APPENDIX

We know this subject can be intimidating to evaluate and we hope this has helped start the conversation surrounding relationships. For such a massive topic, we encourage you to seek out more resources that may help! Scan the code below to access a compilation of resources put together by our team.







Mt. Bethel Church
4385 Lower Roswell Road, Marietta, GA
770.971.2880

Visit us at: mtbethel.org/students

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