

A Discussion Guide

based on

Dateable

Are You? Are They?

by

Justin Lookadoo

and

Hayley DiMarco



Overview

introduction	5
Session One —Covers Chapters 1–3	9
Session Two —Covers Chapters 4–6	11
Session Three —Covers Chapters 7–10, and 16	13
Session Four —Covers Chapters 11–15	15
Session Five (optional) —Date Night!	19

Introduction

How many teens in your church or small group are clueless about the opposite sex? Do they ever ask you questions you don't know how to answer? Do you ever wish you could have an open and honest conversation about dating and relationships? Now you can.

The *Dateable* discussion guide is designed to help you lead a four-week discussion of our book *Dateable*. It offers four complete sessions (with an optional fifth session included), each coordinating with specific chapters of the book and full of activities, questions, and helpful sidebars that will help you make this guide work for you and your group. We start each session with an opening activity that helps your students start thinking about the concepts they read in those chapters. After each opening activity, we've included numerous questions you can use to kick start a discussion. Please note that these questions are just guidelines. You may find that students come with enough questions of their own to fuel an hour's worth of conversation. Or you may need to rely on the questions provided here to keep the discussion rolling. How you want to utilize these questions is up to you. Just remember: the goal is to generate a healthy discussion about dating—not to simply “get through” the list of questions provided.

It's almost time to get started. But first, here are some helpful hints about using this guide in a group setting.

Dateable Foundations

While this *Dateable* discussion guide is not intended to be an in-depth Bible study, the book has been built on biblical principles. One of these principles is the truth that each human is a valuable person created in God's image, deserving of love and respect from others (Genesis 1:27). Another bedrock principle is the advice of Philippians 4:8, which encourages us to set our hearts on things that are true, noble, right, pure, and admirable. It's our hope that the *Dateable* study will help students think about dating in this light.

If you think your group already has a firm grasp of these principles, then you are ready to dive into this study! However, if some of your students are not familiar with

these concepts, you may find it helpful to give a brief introduction to these ideas before you begin.

Follow-Up

If your group has a positive experience with these *Dateable* sessions, offer your students the opportunity to do a more in-depth study of these concepts with our book: *The Dateable Rules: A Guide to the Sexes*. This four-week study book is available wherever Christian books are sold (Note: many retailers offer discounts for multiple copy purchases). This and other youth resources are also available from Revell at www.revellbooks.com. And don't forget to check out our websites: www.hungry-planet.net and www.RUDateable.com

Group Rules

Remind your students that this study group is a place where people are to be valued and respected. We suggest that you share these simple group rules with everyone before you start:

- » **Practice confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
- » **Respect other people's views**, even when they are different than your own.
- » **Listen. Listen. Listen.** Don't be the one who does all the talking. Let others have a chance to share their views as well.
- » **Don't interrupt.** Wait your turn to talk.

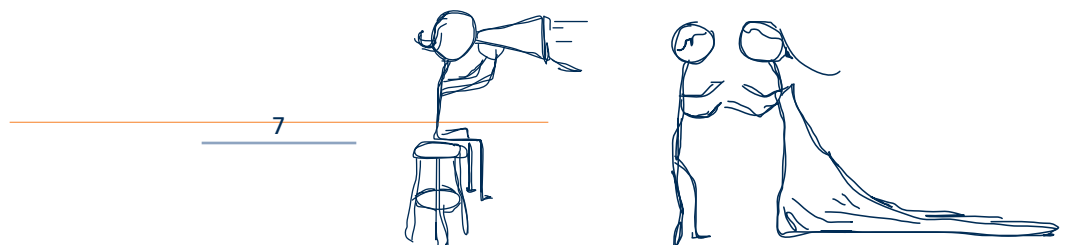
Tips for Leading a Discussion

Here's a few ideas to keep your discussions rolling in a meaningful way:

- » **Prepare.** Make sure you've read through the book chapters and the retreat outline for each session. As you prepare for the sessions, consider one or two personal anecdotes you may be able to share during the group's discussion.
- » **Be yourself.** Thank students for sharing their thoughts and opinions, but don't feel that you need to agree with every one. Be honest with your students about the lessons you've learned in your own experiences—even if they may not be what your students want to hear!
- » **Encourage students to go deeper.** When someone gives a simple response, ask them follow-up questions such as "Why do you feel that way?" "Explain what you mean by that." "Tell us more."

Introduction

- » **Allow for silence.** Remember: Your students haven't read the questions ahead of time and they may need some time to process a response. Allow for about seven to ten seconds of silence before saying anything further, even when it makes you feel uncomfortable. If necessary, you can reword the question or move on to another topic.
- » **Include everyone in the discussion.** If it seems like the same two or three students are responding to all your questions, look for ways to bring others into the conversation. Some students may need a little encouragement to share their thoughts and opinions. So invite them to talk by saying something like "Lisa, I'm curious what you think about this too" or "John, I'd love to hear what you have to say about that." Be sensitive to their feelings, though: If the student has nothing to say or looks extremely uncomfortable, give them an "out" by moving on to someone else.
- » **Be a good listener.** The goal is to have a true discussion, not just a "talk" from the group leader. Avoid putting words in the students' mouths or overreacting to comments that you may not agree with. Try asking "mirror" questions that challenge students to clarify or affirm what you've heard. For example, say "What I hear you saying is this. Is that what you mean?" or "So what you seem to be saying is this. Would you agree?"
- » **Bring God into it.** Pray for the students before and after each session. Ask God to direct your discussion and be open to the Spirit's leading. It may be that He takes you in an unexpected direction, so don't get too hung up on "the plan." If students are genuinely interested and engaged in a healthy side topic, let the conversation go, saying a silent prayer for God to be working on their hearts as you go.



Session One—Chapters 1–3

Opening Activity: “Magazine Mockups”

Supplies needed: Posterboard and markers

Divide students into teams of two to four. Tell the groups that they are editors of various best-selling magazines and their task is to create a special issue on dating. They should use their posterboard to draw a cover mock-up, including a picture and teaser statements such as “Best Cheap Dates” and “Take Our Quiz to See If Your Relationship Will Last.” On the back of their posterboard, they should make a list of at least five articles/topics they will include in their special dating issue.

Once you are sure groups understand their assignment, tell them that there’s one last detail they need to consider: The target audience of their magazine. Then assign each group one of the following magazine titles: Seventeen, Twenty-Seven, Forty-Seven, or Seventy.

For larger groups, you can add more titles, or assign the same title to more than one team.

Give teams about ten minutes to work on their magazine mock-ups and then have a spokesman from each team present their ideas to the large group.

Follow-Up Questions

- » Do you think that dating is different from one age group to the next? If so, how?
- » Should your approach to high school dating be different than the approach you take later in life? If so, why?

Student Feedback

Before moving into further discussion, ask students to share any questions or comments they had as they read chapters 1 through 3.



Discussion Questions for Chapters 1-3

1. Do you agree with the premise that “It Will Not Last?” Why or why not?
 - » Why do people date in high school? What are they hoping to get out of a dating relationship?
 - » Discuss this quote from the book: “So often we focus our energy and our desire on someone else. A person. A crush. We never get to explore that destiny we were designed for because we’re so busy trying to get someone to like us. We put our lives on hold because we think we will automatically accomplish all the great stuff when we get old. . . Don’t let your plans get distracted by the search for love.” (page 9)
 - » If you started thinking of dating relationships as temporary, how would that change your approach to dating?
2. How do you think guys and girls approach dating relationships differently?
3. Do you agree with the authors’ concept that “How Much You Put In = How Much It Hurts When It Ends?” Why or why not?
 - » The authors suggest that you should guard how much you invest in a relationship physically, emotionally, and socially (page 33–40): How do you think a guy or girl can tell if they are investing too much in a relationship?
 - » What would be some smart dating guidelines to follow if you want to avoid having your life fall apart when a relationship ends?
4. On page 15, the authors say “Your dating experience will shape your married life.” In what ways do you think the typical high school dating scene is a good influence on future marriages? In what ways is it a bad influence?
5. Why do you think it might be better to let a relationship develop slowly, rather than jumping in fast and furiously?
 - » Consider this quote: “Don’t confuse the feelings with love. Love doesn’t feel all mushy. Love isn’t sweaty palms and sleepless nights. Love is a decision you make to care for someone no matter how you feel.” (page 23) Do you think most high school couples are truly in love? Why or why not?
 - » The authors list eight ideas to help you be remembered in a positive way after the relationship ends (pages 50–55). Can you think of additional ideas that will help you be remembered as “the one who got away”?
6. Did anything in these chapters change your views on high school dating?

Session Two—Chapters 4–6

Opening Activity: “Fact or Fiction”

Supplies needed: Index cards and pens

Have students divide into pairs. Give each pair an index card and a pen and tell them to think up one interesting fact or statistic that they do not think the rest of the group will know. They should write their fact on the card. Then, they must make up two “fiction” facts about a similar topic. Each group should end up with one fact and two fictions.

Have each pair read their list and let the rest of the group guess which item is fact and which items are fiction.

If you want to make this a competition, give each pair a point when they guess the correct fact from another group. Give them two points if no other group is able to correctly guess their own fact.

Follow-up Questions

- » How common is it for high school students to make up little fictions? Are there certain situations where lying seems more acceptable than other situations?
- » What types of situations tempt teens to lie the most?

Student Feedback

Before moving into further discussion, ask students to share any questions or comments they had as they read chapters 4 through 6.



Discussion Questions for Chapters 4–6

1. Do you think it always holds true that if someone will lie for you, then they will lie to you? Why or why not?
 - » How do a person’s friends impact their character development? How can friends support each other in having good character instead of pulling each other down?
 - » What kind of dishonest behavior do you see in the dating relationships at your school?
2. Discuss this quote from chapter 5: “Don’t forget, in the end, no matter how sweet he is, he is male first. And that means he has one goal, and that is the physical pay-off.” (page 76).
 - » How do a guy’s words and actions affect a girl’s emotions when she’s interested in him?
 - » Is a guy responsible for how his actions make a girl feel? Why or why not?
 - » How can a girl tell if a guy is being nice just to get a physical pay-off or if he’s just a genuinely nice guy?
 - » Girls: Do you think girls often feel pressure for the physical pay-off? How common is that at your school? For teens in general?

Some questions are designated for “Guys” or “Girls.” For these questions, we suggest asking for initial responses from the designated gender group. But as the discussion continues, allow for additional response from the other gender group as well.

3. What kind of lies do you think girls tend to tell themselves about dating relationships?
 - » How true is it that girls tend to dream up a “perfect guy” that no guy can ever live up to?
 - » Should girls ask guys out on dates? Why or why not?
 - » Guys: Is it true that guys are more attracted to a girl “who’s smart, confident, and honest with herself?” as the book says on page 105? What are the biggest qualities that guys look for in a girl?
4. Would you agree with the idea that the basic thing teens are looking for in a relationship is acceptance? What lies do you see people believing to keep feeling accepted?

Session Three—Chapters 7–10, 16

Opening Activity: Skin-Deep

Supplies needed: 10-15 pictures cut from magazine, paper, and pencils

To prepare for this activity, cut out magazine pictures depicting a variety of people (young, slobby, professional, soccer mom, grandmotherly, etc.). Be sure to include some photos of scantily-dressed sex symbol types. You should also include some photos of more “real-life” people—a mom with her kids, a person cooking a meal, or someone playing a sport, for example.

When the group is gathered together, hand each student a piece of paper. Then hold up one picture at a time and ask the group to write down two words that give their first impression of each person. Then go back over each picture and ask, “Assuming you were about the same age as this person, would you want to go on a date with them? Why or why not?”



Follow-Up Questions

When you’ve gone through all of the photographs, follow-up the activity with these questions:

- » Did you find yourself describing some people more like objects and others more as actual people with family, hobbies, careers? If so, what was the difference between the two groups?
- » Can you tell a lot about a person by their appearance? Can appearances ever be deceiving?
- » In general, do you think most high school relationships are more focused on the external (physical appearances, “making out,” sex, etc.) or on the internal (personality traits, hobbies, developing good communication, etc.)?

Student Feedback

Before moving into further discussion, ask students to share any questions or comments they had as they read chapters 7 through 10 and 16.

Discussion Questions for Chapters 7–10, 16

1. Do you generally agree with the statement that “people will treat you the way you are wrapped”? Think of some real-life examples to support your answer.
 - » Why do girls buy sexy and revealing clothes? Is it a good thing or a bad thing to want guys to notice your body?
 - » Do guys really have more respect for girls who dress modestly?
2. Do you think guys and girls generally come to relationships with similar sexual expectations or different sexual expectations? Why or why not?
3. Do you agree with this book’s premise that the guy should be the one to establish the physical boundaries in a relationship? Why or why not?
 - » Guys: Do you agree that girls have a subtle power in a relationship, if they’re willing to use it? In other words, if a guy is interested in a girl, can he be convinced to listen to her when she makes suggestions about her physical boundaries?
 - » Girls: Do you prefer for the guy to plan the date or for you to plan the date? How important is it to have someone plan the date, rather than just letting things unfold?
4. How far is too far? The authors suggest nothing beyond simple kissing. What do you think of these guidelines?

Yep, that means no making out. No “nap time.”
No “backrubs” or other assorted “feeling”
gestures.

- » What do you think of the boundary guidelines mentioned in the book (staying in public, not going to your houses when no one is there, etc.) What situations do you think it’s wise to avoid while you are dating?
- » Why is it important to set your own personal boundaries rather than waiting to see what your bf/gf thinks?
- » When should you and your bf/gf discuss the physical boundaries you set for a relationship?

- » Should you continue dating a person if you haven't discussed your physical boundaries? What if you don't share the same feelings on how far you're willing to go?
- 5. Do you think the boundary rules should change depending on whether you're casually dating, seriously dating, or engaged? Why or why not?
- 6. How does taking in pornography impact a person's ability to be in a healthy relationship?

Session Four—Chapters 11–15

Opening Activity: Making Your Match

Supplies needed: Index cards and safety pins

To prepare for this activity, you will need to think of several pairs of opposites (or use some from the list below). Write one half of each pair on an index card, creating enough index cards for each person in your group.

For another fun option, use the names of famous couples in popular culture instead of the opposites. Be sure to use couples that teens will be familiar with.

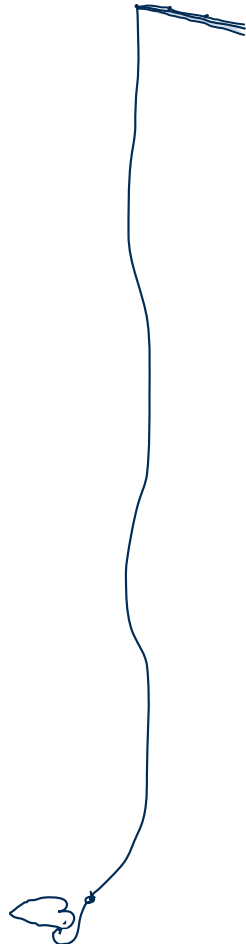
Opposites:

Sweet and sour
Black and white
Sunshine and rain
Happy and sad
Soft and Hard
Loud and Quiet

When you are ready to begin the activity, use a safety pin to attach an index card to each student's back. Tell them that their job during the next few minutes is to mingle with the group and find their opposites. They may only ask yes/no questions of other people, and they may only respond to questions with a yes or no.

Follow-Up Questions

- » How did your search for your other half in this activity compare to the way teens look for a dating relationship?



- » How important is it to understand who you are yourself before you start dating another person?
- » In what ways do you think guys and girls are different from each other? Are they more alike or more different?

Student Feedback

Before moving into further discussion, ask students to share any questions or comments they had as they read chapters 11 through 15.

Discussion Questions for Chapters 11–15

1. Guys: Is there really such a thing as “guy mode?” How are you different when you’re with the guys vs. when you’re in mixed company?
 - » Consider this quote from page 161: “Guys, stop being jerks. Yeah, I just told the girls what guys are like, but I never said it was good. We guys are so afraid of things we don’t understand that we would rather be a butthead than appear soft.” Do you agree with the author’s suggestion that guys need to be more sensitive to girls? Why do guys have such a hard time doing this?
 - » Do you think it’s true that guys won’t be interested in a girl if she’s trying to act like one of the guys? Why or why not?
 - » Girls: The book mentions things guys should avoid doing in front of you (farting, telling dirty jokes). What other things do you think they should cut out when the girls are around?
2. Discuss this quote from page 167: “What [girls] want is adventure. Girls want excitement... She wants to be swept up in something bigger than she is. She wants a real man to take charge and give her the ride of her life.”
 - » What advice would you give a guy who wants to plan a great date?
 - » Girls: This book lists several traits that guys should strive for, including passion, confidence, strength, boldness, and adventure. Do you agree that these traits are attractive to girls? Are there any qualities you would add to the list?
 - » How might different guys express these traits in different ways?

3. Do you think the book is accurate when it says guys like a challenge? Why or why not?
 - » Guys: Are you more likely to be interested in a girl if there's some mystery about her? Why or why not?
 - » What makes a girl "mysterious"? What sorts of things do girls say that ruin the mystery?
 - » Do you agree that guys should be the ones to ask a girl out and pay for the date? Why or why not? How does this tie into a guy's sense of challenge about a relationship?
4. What does it take to be in a relationship? What should you be willing to put into a dating relationship to make sure it's a healthy and positive experience for both of you?

Session Five (optional)—Date Night

If you have time in your schedule, end your *Dateable* study with a group date. Take the crew out for pizza or come up with a creative and fun service project that you could all do together. Encourage students to think of this as a time to practice encouraging each other and treating each other with the respect and care that a dating relationship would need.

Whatever you plan, save a little time to read the last chapter of *Dateable* together. Encourage students to think about what this book said to them. Have they been challenged to rethink their approach to dating? Were they encouraged to gain some confidence and start dating for the first time?

Ask each student to share something they discovered during your study that will make them more dateable. Then give the other students a chance to affirm and encourage that person by sharing the special traits and gifts they see in them.

If your students will be very uncomfortable sharing this type of information in a large group, you may want to split up into smaller groups for this final sharing time.

End with a special prayer for your group. Tell the students you are proud of them for the time and effort they've put into thinking about a godly approach to dating. Then say a prayer for them, asking God to bless them with the wisdom and strength to develop healthy dating relationships.

Hey, you could even end the night with a big group hug!



About the Authors of *Dateable*

Justin Lookadoo is a former juvenile probation officer turned author and speaker whose in-your-face message connects with teens. He is the best-selling coauthor of *Dateable*, *The Dateable Rules*, and *The Dirt on Breaking Up*, and also wrote *The Dirt on Sex* and *The Dirt on Drugs*. Find out more about Justin at www.lookadoo.com and www.rudateable.com. And for more information on booking Justin for relationship programs, parent conferences, or other *Dateable* speaking opportunities, please contact him at speakers@lookadoo.com or PO Box 3104, McKinney, TX 75070.

Hayley DiMarco writes cutting-edge and best-selling books for teens including *Mean Girls*, *Mean Girls Gone*, *Sexy Girls*, *Technical Virgin*, *Dateable*, *The Dateable Rules*, *The Dirt on Dating* and *The Dirt on Breaking Up*. Hayley also writes books for former teens including *Marriable* and *Mean Girls All Grown Up*. Her goal is to give practical answers for life's problems and encourage readers to form stronger spiritual lives. Hayley is Chief Creative Officer and founder of Hungry Planet, an independent publishing imprint and communications company that feeds the world's appetite for truth. Hungry Planet helps organizations understand and reach the multi-tasking mindset, while Hungry Planet books tackle life's everyday issues with a distinctly modern spiritual voice. For more information on Hungry Planet including leader resources and online communities that revolve around the books, visit www.hungryplanet.net.

