



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

More Than Friends / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

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BOTTOM LINE

Dating is great, but thinking is better.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students begin to think clearly and long-term when it comes to their current or future dating relationships.

SCRIPTURE

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." His father and mother replied, "Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?" (Judges 14:1-3a NIV)

"Get her for me. She's the right one for me" (Judges 14:3b NIV).

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver" (Judges 16:4-5 NIV).

"How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and

haven't told me the secret of your great strength." With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it (Judges 16:15-16 NIV).

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Samson got so wrapped up in his relationship that he couldn't think clearly anymore. And like most people caught up with a person or relationship, the first thing to go was Samson's ability to use good judgment. He stopped thinking. He was driven by his emotions and feelings for Delilah, not his logic. And eventually, he gave in. The same can happen to us today. While we might not be ruler or a judge, when thinking clearly takes a backseat in our dating relationships, it can lead to poor decisions.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Here's a question: What took up the most space in your brain this week?

I'm guessing that no matter what you thought about this week, at least part of your brain space was taken up by this: Dating.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

TENSION

Dating is on all of our minds.

See, here's what happens: Sometimes people just stop thinking.

For all the time we spend *thinking about* dating, our temptation is to *stop thinking* as soon as we start dating.

And even though you thought it would make your life better, it just got more complicated when you became more than friends.

TRUTH

The habit of not really thinking things through when it comes to dating has been around forever!

Today, we're going to look at a guy from Scripture whose story is found in the Old Testament book of *Judges* and takes place during a really important time for his people, the people of Israel.

Samson was given supernatural strength from God. But he also had a weakness—the ladies.

It's important to know that the Israelites and Philistines weren't friends. So falling for a Philistine woman was like having a crush on the enemy. But Samson didn't care.

We need to know that even though Samson made some huge mistakes, he still cared about his relationship with God.

His problem was that when it came to girls, he stopped thinking.

He was driven by his emotions and feelings for Delilah, not his logic. And eventually, he gave in.

His desire for a certain type of relationship didn't just hurt him in the moment; it destroyed what *could've* been in his future.

APPLICATION

The point is this: Thinking > Dating.

Dating is only as good as your brain allows it to be.

God made you and has something great in mind for you.

So think about why you date, think about who you date, and think while you date.

LANDING

As you head out, I want you to know that *who* you date and *how* you date have the potential to make or break your high school years.

INTERACTIVE

This Interactive happens during the Tension. Ask five or six of your Small Group Leaders to share funny stories of when they did something dumb for/because of the person they were dating. (You may want to reach out to your leaders beforehand to make sure you have a few leaders ready to share.) Leaders can stand up where they are and share or

quickly come up on stage and share their stories. You could also shoot them in a confessional style video of dating fails and then simply play the video. Example: "I watched pay-per-view professional wrestling because a guy I liked in high school was into wrestling."



TEACHING SCRIPT

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BOTTOM LINE

DATING IS GREAT, BUT THINKING IS BETTER.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Here's a question: What took up the most space in your brain this week? What did you think about? Daydream about? Wonder about? Worry about?

I'll assume there are a ton of answers to that question. Maybe you spent part of your week thinking about . . .

- School stuff and how much homework you have to do.
- Sports or a tryout for a team.
- How to get un-grounded.

If you're in high school, there's a lot of stuff on your mind. But I'm guessing that no matter what you thought about this week, at least part of your brain space was taken up by this:

Dating.

TENSION

2 MINUTES + INTERACTIVE

Whether you *want* to date someone, you *are* dating someone, you wish you *weren't* dating, or you're just trying to keep up with *who's* dating at your school, one thing is for sure: **Dating is on all of our minds.**

And that's partially because no matter how many people you have or haven't gone out with, the whole dating thing is complicated. For example, what do you call it?

Sure, some people have a clear boyfriend/girlfriend status, but what about the stage *before* that?

TEACHING SCRIPT

- Maybe you're texting or talking with someone.
- Maybe you guys are "hanging out," but you're not exclusively dating.
- Maybe you're *more* than friends, but *less* than dating. Yeah, confusing!

And we know that nobody calls it *dating*. So what do you call it?

The good news is that if you're someone who feels a little overwhelmed by the whole dating thing, that's okay. You're normal. Nobody else *really* knows what's going on either; so don't sweat it if you're confused. Because here's the truth:

Dating is complicated.

And it's not just the beginning "hanging out" stage that throws us off. We've all seen dating relationships that started great, but end up making someone's life *more* complicated.

Maybe you've been in or seen a relationship that led someone to almost become a different person because of who they were dating. They were like a shape shifter—just morphing into a different person because of who they were with. They used to be confident and sure of themselves, but then it totally changed. *That* is a problem.

See, here's what happens: **Sometimes people just stop thinking.**

- **They become what someone wants them to be.**
- **They become who they think they should be in order to keep the person they're with.**
- **They stop using good judgment.**

For all the time we spend *thinking about dating*, our temptation is to *stop thinking as soon as we start dating*. You've seen friends do this, or maybe you've done this. Even some of your small group leaders have done this.



INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.

This can lead us to a bad place because we stop paying attention to who we really are, what's best for us, and where our lives should go moving forward.

And even though you thought it would make your life better, it just got more complicated when you became more than friends.

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

Historically speaking, dating, and all the confusing statuses that come along with it, is a fairly new idea. Mary and Joseph weren't hitting up Starbucks or sending cheesy texts back and forth in high school.

But the habit of not really thinking things through when it comes to dating has been around forever! It's true, we sometimes check our brains at the door when it comes to people we're more than friends with.

Today, we're going to look at a guy from Scripture who you may have heard of before (if not, don't sweat it). His story is found in the Old Testament book of *Judges*, and it takes place during a really important time for his people, the people of Israel.

The Israelites were finally free. After some key leaders died, they didn't have a king, so God gave them "judges." Judges were rulers who made decisions for the people that the military would then enforce.

One of those judges was a guy named Samson, who we're going to talk about today.

According to the Bible, Samson was given supernatural strength from God. But Samson also had a weakness—the ladies. Even if you don't believe the Bible is true, I think Samson's story is fascinating one, and it can be helpful to you and to your dating life.

Here's what we learn about Samson:

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." His father and mother replied, "Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?" (Judges 14:1-3a NIV).

It's important to know that the Israelites and Philistines weren't friends. So falling for a Philistine woman was like having a crush on the enemy. People in that time were expected to marry from within their nation. That's why Samson's parents questioned his selection process. Why was he interested in a girl from his nation's greatest enemy? That may seem strange to us now, but chances are there are probably people your parents would prefer you never date, too.

But Samson didn't care. He had one thing on his mind when he said:

"Get her for me. She's the right one for me" (Judges 14:3b NIV).

In other words, *"I don't care about what you think! I'm going to do what I want!"* Hashtag #SpoiledBrat!

But before we keep going, we need to know that even though Samson made some huge mistakes, he still cared about his relationship with God. He was even described as a man of great faith. **His problem was that when it came to girls, he stopped thinking.** He stopped listening to people and using good judgment.

Later, Samson chases after *another* Philistine woman.

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver" (Judges 16:4-5 NIV).

TEACHING SCRIPT

So the drama begins. Delilah begs Samson to reveal the source of his strength. But Samson won't talk:

"How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it (Judges 16:15-16 NIV).

Maybe you're reading this and wondering, *What is Samson's problem? Delilah is so extra! Just dump her and move on.* The solution seems simple enough to us. But to Samson, it was more complicated. He was confused. **He was so wrapped up in this relationship, he couldn't think clearly anymore.**

And like most people caught up with a person or relationship, the first thing to go was Samson's ability to use good judgment. He stopped *thinking*. He was driven by his emotions and feelings for Delilah, not his logic. And eventually, he gave in.

His goals moved from ruling well to making a woman happy. He reveals the secret of his strength. And—shocker—Delilah betrays him. She sells him out and tells his enemies. As a result, he's captured and tied up near two pillars in a temple courtyard, where he eventually dies alongside thousands of Philistines.

Not a happy ending!

We see a guy with all the potential in the world ruin his life because he stopped thinking. His desire for a certain type of relationship didn't just hurt him in the moment; it destroyed what *could've* been in his future.

APPLICATION

4 MINUTES

If we can learn anything from Samson's story, it isn't to stay away from dating or girls named Delilah. The point is this:

Dating is great, but thinking is better.

In other words, dating is great! I'm a big fan. But **dating is only as good as your brain allows it to be.** Once your thinking takes a backseat to dating, you're in trouble. You could miss out on something amazing or end up in a bad place if in the midst of dating, like Samson, you lose sight of this:

God has a plan for you.

Maybe you've heard that a thousand times, so the statement isn't all that impressive. But let me say it again: *God has a plan for you.* And that plan doesn't depend on who you're dating or would like to date. God made YOU on purpose and *for a purpose.* In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says, *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (NIV).

TEACHING SCRIPT



This means that God made you and has something great in mind for you. And when you move your goals and thoughts away from God's plan and place them only on a person or relationship, you risk missing out on that plan.

Here's the good news. **As many times as Samson lost sight of God's purpose for him, God never gave up on Samson.** God heard him and used him to do great things.

When you read his story, however, you can't help but wonder what *could've* been if Samson had kept his brain in the game.

Lucky for us, we've got the chance to figure this out *now*. Because we can remember: **Dating is great, but thinking is better.** And we can start thinking in these three areas:

- 1. Think about why you date.** What's your purpose? Ask yourself this question and then answer honestly. Because the truth is, dating is fun and good, but it won't be fun or good if we have the wrong purpose for it. It isn't a way to prove something, climb a social ladder, or make yourself look good in front of others. It's a way to learn how to get to know someone and have fun. With a healthy purpose, we're more likely to have healthy relationships.
- 2. Think about who you date.** It's tempting to want to go out with the first guy who asks you to boost to your self-image. It's tempting to ask out the girl who you know won't say no. But it's really smart to be picky when it comes to dating. It'll save you a lot of trouble.

I'm just going throw it out there: You should have something in common with the person you date. Everyone gets that. But if you're a Christian who's committed to following Jesus, then *that* should be something you have in common with the people you date! **Not because people who don't follow Jesus are bad people, but because when you decide following God is an important part of your life, it'll be really tough to be more than friends with someone who doesn't feel the same way.**

- 3. Think while you date.** When you find someone you love spending time with, that isn't the time to turn off your brain. It's the time to start using it even more! Ask yourself if things are in a healthy place emotionally and physically, and how much of your brain time is devoted to obsessing over this person. He or she may be a great person, but is this relationship great for you right now? Process it out loud with another person like your small group leader. Just don't turn off your brain!

By the way, this is a great area to invite God into the process. It shouldn't feel weird to talk about your dating life with Him. He's interested, and He has a plan for your life. So He'll be more-than-committed to helping you make great decisions in this area!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

As you head out, I want you to know that *who* you date and *how* you date have the potential to make or break your high school years. Not because dating is bad. Dating is great, but only if you keep your brain engaged! So start thinking *now* about what a healthy dating relationship would and could look like for you.

Decide some things ahead of time. When you do, relationships will become a lot less complicated. And trust me, you'll be glad you did! Remember, **dating is great. But thinking is better.**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
