



SETTING STANDARDS

The Many Loves of Sara

August 12, 2023

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 12:1, 2 (NIV) • “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

John 17:15, 16 (NIV) • “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “SETTING STANDARDS”

Our teens are growing up in a society that makes the concept of sexual purity seem old-fashioned at best and repressive at worst. The media portrays kids—especially girls—as sexual objects at younger and younger ages. Some junior-high teachers report that oral sex is as common and casual among their 13-year-old students as kissing was a generation ago. In this polluted atmosphere the Word of God breathes like a fresh ocean breeze. Young Christians need

to know that human bodies and human sexuality are good creations of a good God—not products to be advertised and sold.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “SETTING STANDARDS”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Affirm that sexuality is God’s gift.
2. Understand biblical principles guiding relationships with the opposite gender.
3. Commit to upholding God’s standard for their relationships.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) two white roses; (Activity B) one rose (any color), magazines and catalogs.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Blank-inside greeting cards, envelopes, pens, seals.

2 BRIDGING

A. THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.

2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

Remember: Because the students now study their lesson prior to class, this review is for those sections in the current week's lesson.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimfaith.net)
- >> Service projects reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

This lesson can be an uncomfortable lesson for some to teach. In some cases you can drop the word "sexual" and follow the lesson, change the word "sexual" to "purity," or ask someone who is more comfortable with this lesson to teach it. If possible, it may be preferable to separate the boys and girls and have an older male lead the lesson for the boys and a woman to lead the lesson for the girls.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Get two white roses. Take one out at the beginning of class; keep the other hidden.

Get set • At the beginning of class, give one of the white roses to the students. Tell them to pass the rose around; smell it; touch the petals

and see how soft they are. Continue this activity as you go ahead to talk through the Beginning Illustration.

Go • At the end of the illustration, take back the rose. In most cases it will be bruised and the petals damaged from having been touched. **Say:** Every time you touch the petals of a rose it gets bruised. Our sexuality is the same way—every time we give away part of ourselves outside of God's plan, we come back bruised and damaged. We can't keep the purity God wants us to have as long as we're being careless with the boundaries we set in our relationships with the opposite gender. Then bring out the untouched rose. Ask them to compare the two. **Which is more appealing now? Which is living up to its full potential as a flower?**

Debriefing • **Ask:** How does this illustration relate to our sexuality? Do you think it's a good comparison? Why or why not? Point out to your students that through God's forgiveness, love, and power He wants to turn us back into the lovely person He made us to be. Even if we are already damaged because of wrong choices, He will still restore us if we let Him. However, in this life there may always be some effects of the damage caused by sin that will never be taken away until heaven.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Bring a rose to class (real, not artificial!) and several popular magazines and catalogs aimed at teens.

Get set • Pass out the magazines and catalogs to the group. Hold up the rose and **say:** This rose represents sexual purity—God's ideal for the Christian young person. Ask the class members to look through their magazines and catalogs and put a hand up whenever they see an ad that depicts a teenager in a sexually suggestive pose, situation, or outfit.

Go • Each time someone raises their hand, have

them show the ad or image to the group. Then tear one petal off the rose. Continue until the rose has been stripped of its petals.

Say: The world is out to destroy your innocence. Having standards is not a concern of the Hollywood filmmakers or the Madison Avenue advertisers. If we allow ourselves to be shaped to the world's standard, we'll never be able to maintain God's standard of purity.

Debriefing • Ask: How can we be "in the world, but not of it" when it comes to setting moral standards?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Kiera and Colin are teens who have just started dating. Kiera feels that Colin is pressuring her to do things that do not correspond with her standards for relationships. She knows that as a Christian young woman she should hold high moral standards of purity at all times. Colin holds lower moral standards, and in fact he doesn't seem to know much about the moral standards outlined in the Bible.

Debriefing • Ask: How should Kiera respond? Can she set boundaries and still enjoy this relationship, or is it better to break up with Colin? What guiding principles can Kiera share from the Bible as guiding principles for their relationship? What should she do if Colin does not agree with her?

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Our call to be citizens for God's kingdom affects every part of our lives—including our relationship with others. And that includes

intimacy. Whether you like it or not, by the time you've reached the early teen years, our society treats you as a sexual person. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people in today's society that just assume young people will not choose to remain pure and follow God's standard.

Break the class into smaller groups. Assign each group one of the following Bible passages. Ask them to read through the passages and discuss the questions below.

- Ruth 2:1-13; 4:1-17
- Genesis 24:26-67
- 1 Samuel 25:14-42
- Genesis 29
- Genesis 2:15-3:13

Questions to consider:

- What does the story say about what attracted the couple to each other?
- What does the story tell us about God's plan for choosing a husband or wife?
- Is anything in this story relevant to a teenager today?
- What attributes are found in the story that would be useful in setting standards?

Give groups about 15 minutes to read and discuss the passages, then have them come back and report what they've talked about to the class as a whole.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Say: In the illustration we used a few minutes ago, sexuality was compared to a rose. In this story it's compared to a gift—a book of poems—intended to show true love.

Ask: Which of these illustrations gets the message across best for you? Why? Point out that the "rose" illustration (used in both Beginning Activities) looks at your sexuality as something special between you and God—your own private space, which is tied in both to your

self-esteem and to your relationship with God. The “gift book” illustration looks at your sexuality as something between you and your future wife or husband—an expression of love that’s most powerful if shared with only one person. Both views are true: both present different aspects of the truth. Saving your virginity for the person you will someday marry is important. But it may be even more important to remember that the unique gift God has given you is tied in to your relationship with God. There are many reasons that God’s command to keep our lives pure is important to follow!

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Your mom and your sister are having a fight. “You’re not going out of the house dressed like that!” Mom raises her voice. “Especially a good Christian girl!”

Your sister rolls her eyes. “I *am* a good Christian girl, Mom,” she says. “But I want to look good. It’s just a style.”

Ask: Whose side are you on in this argument? Do they both have a point, or is one absolutely right? Society sells a lot of images of young teens in sexually suggestive positions and outfits. What are appropriate styles of dressing for Christian young women and young men?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Hand out blank-inside greeting cards (choose an attractive picture on the cover, but not a picture of a person) and pens to class members. **Ask: If you’re committed to living by God’s standard of sexual purity—keeping yourself pure until marriage—why not put that commitment into writing to help seal it? It doesn’t need to be shared with anyone else—it’s between you and God. On the card I’ve given you, just write, “I choose to**

remain pure because . . .” and give the best reason you know for staying a virgin till marriage. (If you think it is appropriate for your group, suggest that those who may not feel as pure as they know God made them to be might ask God to restore them, and give them the power to remain that way.) Invite students to seal their cards in the envelopes and address them to themselves. Then tell them that you would like to collect the envelopes and mail them to them at some unexpected time in the future. Allay their fears that you will not open and read them by giving them each a special seal to stick on the flap of the envelope (or have them sign their names across the sealed flap). Later, purchase special stamps (in the U.S. there are usually stamps available with a love theme) and pray for God’s guidance about which envelope to slip into the mail on which day. Don’t mail them all at once. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide this activity.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you draw the line between appreciating the fact that God made you male or female, and showing off to attract the attention of someone of the opposite gender? For example, is it appropriate to dress in a way that emphasizes your body and makes you look sexually attractive to the other gender?
2. We often hear the risk of pregnancy and STDs as the main reasons for avoiding sex outside of marriage. What are some of the bigger reasons that God wants us to wait?
3. Where should Christian teens draw their boundary lines for sexual activity when it comes to dating?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Sexuality is a valuable gift from God. But like all God's gifts, it's meant to be used in the right place and at the right time. As a human being

you're uniquely male or female. The body and feelings God gave you are meant to be saved for a lifelong, powerful love relationship and the family you will someday build. Until then, God calls you to live a life that's different from what our culture dictates. God's standard calls for young people to keep themselves pure. Pray frequently, asking God to keep you morally pure to honor Him and live your life to His name's glory.



STUDENT LESSON

SETTING STANDARDS

The Many Loves of Sara

August 12, 2023

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 23, Marriage and the Family:** “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a life-long union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 64, 65

THE MANY LOVES OF SARA

Sara was so “in love” with Tony. He was the perfect guy. When their one-month dating anniversary came up, she looked all over for the perfect gift to give him. Knowing how much he loved to read, she chose a beautiful collection of love poems, wrapped it in gold paper, and gave it to him. “Think of me as you read them,” she said.

“I always will,” he promised.

But Sara and Tony never made it to their two-month anniversary. Things went wrong. Breaking

up was hard, but Sara soon felt better when she met Marc. After a few months together, Marc’s birthday rolled around, and she wanted to choose the perfect gift for him. She looked at a lot of things, but finally she wound up back in the bookstore, buying that same collection of love poems. As she wrote “*To Marc with all my love forever . . . Sara*” on the inside cover, she paused for a moment, thinking of when she’d written those same words to Tony. But this was different, she assured herself.

After she broke up with Marc a few months later, Sara met Mike. Later there was Kevin, then Jared, then Brandon. Throughout her high school and college years Sara dated quite a few guys. And every time she had to choose a special gift, the gift that would perfectly express her love, she found herself choosing that same book of love poetry.

Finally Sara met Derek. This time it really was forever. They dated for several months and finally planned to get married. Derek suggested that they buy each other a special gift to exchange at their wedding—a token of their love for each other. Sara searched and searched, but in the end she couldn’t come up with anything better than that same book of love poems that said it all just right.

When Derek opened the book, a tear came to his eye. “This is so perfect,” he said. “I’ll think of our love whenever I read these.”

Sara nodded, but she felt a little sad. She was sure her love for Derek was forever, but she couldn’t help thinking about all those other books of love poems floating around out

there. The book no longer seemed as special; the words of love between its pages no longer seemed meaningful just for her and her loved one. If only she'd saved the perfect gift for Derek!

—This illustration was inspired by a similar story called "The Gold Locket," by Robert Wolgemuth. *Christianity Today International/Campus Life magazine.*

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Hebrews 13:4.
- » As you read in Hebrews 13:4, God's plan is that physical intimacy between a man and a woman be experienced solely within the boundaries of a committed marriage union. The Bible clearly teaches that physical intimacy experienced outside of marriage is sin and has devastating consequences (Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 13, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Some of the negative consequences of intimate relationships outside of marriage include: broken relationship with God who calls us to holy living, loss of trust, compromised conscience, unwanted pregnancies, children born outside of marriage, sexually transmitted diseases, and guilt.

Yet there are people who do not view the gift of sexuality as special to be cherished and saved for the marriage union. They treat it as a casual matter to their own harm.

What advice would you give someone who doesn't understand the instructions God has given in His Word concerning love and the marriage union? (See Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11; Psalm 119:9.)

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

- » Read Genesis 2:18-24; Deuteronomy 6:5.
- » Marriage is a blessing that God gave to men and women at the very beginning—in Eden! We can truly love someone only when we are in a right relationship with God. In choosing your friends, look for the person that loves God above all else. Respect yourself and your future by setting your standards according to God's plan for your life. Ask God to help you to remain pure and never let someone talk you into doing something that makes you uncomfortable or lowers God's standard for your life.
- » Unscramble the following verse to learn who God tells us we should avoid choosing as a husband or wife. The verse is from the New King James Version.

has communion with what 2 Corinthians do
lawlessness unequally light with for righ-
teousness 14 not what 6: yoked darkness
fellowship be unbelievers with together has
and NKJV

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-
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- » Why do you think God would tell us not to enter into marriage with an unbeliever?

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-
- » What other situations could also apply to this verse?

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Psalm 119:9.
- » It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that looking good is all that matters, and that giving in to every urge is the way to go. God's Word holds up a different standard. God wants us to treasure and value our sexuality and to use it only at the right time within the boundaries of married life. When the use of sexuality begins too early or inappropriately, it loses its value, and deep scars and relationship issues arise that last a lifetime.
- » Growing up as a Christian young person means valuing your sexuality.
- » God made you a guy or a girl, with the body, the hormones, the emotions, and the desires you have. And God wants to help you learn to channel those desires into the right kind of relationship at the right time.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Look up the Bible texts and match them with the verse. You can find all the versions of the Bible that are used in this exercise at www.Biblegateway.com.

Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)

Genesis 2:18 (CEV)

1 Thessalonians 4:2-5 (*The Message*)

1 Corinthians 6:15 (CEV)

Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

_____ "The LORD God said, 'It isn't good for the man to live alone. . . .'"

_____ "Marriage should be honored by all . . ."

_____ "Don't you know that your bodies . . ."

_____ ". . . Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body . . ."

_____ "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? . . ."

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 4:2-5.
- » Review the memory text.
- » If you make the choice to remain sexually pure, what does that mean?
- » It will likely mean walking out of step with the culture around you. But, that shouldn't stop you from holding on to your gift of sexuality. Someday God will bring into your life the person you will marry. What a joy and delight you both will have in giving yourselves to each other.
- » Be willing to be different. You will only spare yourself lots of heartbreak.
- » Don't allow yourself to be in situations that blur the lines between right and wrong.
- » By remaining pure, you will hold on to your reputation and someday share your purity with the person who loves, respects, and values you.
- » You will need to take a stand at times to walk out of step with society—to value God's gifts to you and keep yourself morally pure for your lifelong partner. But such a commitment will be worth everything!

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read 1 Corinthians 6:15.
- » Are you ready to make a commitment to remain morally pure until marriage? If so, why not put it in writing? Fill in your own thoughts on the lines below:

I want to remain morally pure because _____

Some things I may need to do (or not do) to keep this commitment are: _____

When it gets difficult, here's what I'll do to help me keep my commitment: _____

