

BIG IDEA

Provide your preteen a healthy concept of friendships, marriage, and other relationships in a society that constantly diminishes the value of these connections.



KEY SCRIPTURES

- *We are called to have close friendships* (Prov. 18:24).
- *We are to have healthy, supportive relationships* (Ecc. 4:9-12).
- *We must love God, and we must love others* (Luke 10:27).
- *We should keep peace with one another* (Eph. 4:2-3).
- *We are to serve others* (Phil. 2:3).
- *Marriage is a symbolic Christlike union between a man and a woman* (Eph. 5:25-33).



KEY QUESTIONS YOUR PRETEEN MAY ASK

- Will I get married some day? When? How will I know who's the right person?
- How should I deal with people who are mean to me?
- What is it like to have a boyfriend/girlfriend?



AT THIS AGE MOST PRETEENS WILL ...

- Have formed concepts of personal worth.
- Have developed a conscience and a value system.
- Be capable of deep, complex relationships with peers.
- Find themselves attracted to members of the opposite sex.



DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

- Preteens will have a richer understanding of the concept of marriage and may entertain serious (but still immature) considerations about the realities of married life. They also will be aware of divorce and same-sex marriage, though they may not totally comprehend the implications and consequences of these issues.
- Your preteen may feel ready for or actually enter into a more “romantic” relationship. Because of the influence of his peers and the different boundaries of other parents, it's important to fully explain your boundaries, values, and views.
- As your preteen develops friendships with like-minded peers, she will find more pronounced dissimilarities with certain people (ideological, interest-based, jealousy-induced, or otherwise). Some preteens may develop “rivals.” Be ready to help her navigate possible conflicts and to disarm possible resentments that may surface between your child and her peers.

- The role of digital communication and social media in friendships and boyfriend/girlfriend relationships is pervasive. Being aware is crucial. Set limits but also explain with grace your hope for fully-developed healthy relationships.



COACHING TIPS

- Model respectful and loving behavior with your spouse. Your communication with one another will affect your child in subtle and overt ways. Explaining ways that people solve disagreements or approach commitment will help present a realistic viewpoint.
- While modeling a healthy relationship, also discuss unhealthy or negative relationship behaviors. Topics to discuss could include domestic violence, inappropriate touching, premarital sex and/or cohabitation, and same-sex marriage. Help your child know how to identify these relationships and how to respond to them graciously and without harsh judgment.
- Compare biblical standards for marriages, friendships, and other relationships with the world's standards. Explain why and how they should live with godly values in their relationships.
- Be invested in your preteen's social and extracurricular life. Some may become discouraged when they see peers entering into relationships as they remain single. Talk with your child about singleness, loneliness, and the often unrealistic expectations that individuals invest into their significant others.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **WHY DO YOU AND [ONE OF YOUR PRETEEN'S FRIENDS] GET ALONG?** This question will require your preteen to think critically about the tenets of a positive relationship. Use this conversation as a way to steer your child toward new ways of examining what makes for sustainable friendships. A counter-question might be, *Why don't you and so-and-so get along?*
- **WHAT DOES GOD SAY?** Starting with small, concrete examples, talk with your preteen about biblical truths. Discuss how the world glorifies things that go against God's will, such as same-sex marriage. Make sure the truth is clear, but emphasize we are not to ostracize or condemn those who think differently. Explain that we are to love all people as Jesus did.



SAY OR PRAY

- God created humans to form a relationship with Him through Christ.
- God created humans to form loving relationships with others.
- God does not want us to be lonely.
- God wants us to be peaceful with our neighbor.
- God created marriage with Adam and Eve.