

KEEPING IT

REAL

Keeping it real...

When you hear that phrase, what comes to mind? With so much in the world that is fake — from special effects to plastic surgery to veggie burgers — it's refreshing to focus on what's real in your life and how to keep it that way.

Relationships are a very real part of our lives, and perhaps the most important part. Just imagine how well you would survive on a tropical island with no other humans in sight. Even if you figured out how to get food, water, and shelter, you would still be starving for conversation and friendship. Ever heard the saying, "No man is an island"? It means that people can't thrive when they're cut off from everyone else, like an island surrounded by water. As complicated as our relationships can become, we really do need each other.

We were created for relationships because we are made in the image of God. He is in Himself a relationship. He is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was God who didn't want Adam to be lonely in the Garden of Eden, so He made Eve. If relationships are that important to God, they need to be important to us too.

This series is designed to help you get to the heart of your most significant relationships — with your parents, your siblings, your friends, your enemies, and God Himself. As you work through these lessons, pay attention to what God is teaching you through His Word about your interactions with others. Are you keeping it real?

Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 1: PARENTS

If you had to choose a TV show or movie that best describes your family, what would it be?

- Cheaper by the Dozen*
- The Simpsons*
- 7th Heaven*
- Home Improvement*
- Gilmore Girls*
- Other: _____

Day 1

1. Often, the greatest problem faced by students today is not peer pressure, or drugs, or sex – it is coping with life at home. How would you describe your relationship with your parents?

- Great
- Pretty good
- So-so
- Not so good
- Bad

2. Take a look at your family life:

How often do you talk to your mom or dad about things that are important in your life?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never		Sometimes						All the time	

How many nights a week does your family get to have dinner together?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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How many times do you get in trouble in an average week?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
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Do you find yourself wishing you had more time or attention from your parents?

yes no

3. It would be easy to blame everything that's wrong with family relationships on parents. But the truth is that relationships are a two-way street. When you have a bad day, how does it affect the way you treat your parents?

4. Which of the following statements is most true about your parents?

- They really love me, even when they frustrate me.
- They are God's gift to me, and I talk to them about everything.
- I want to show them that I love them, but they make that very difficult.
- I am afraid of my parents. They don't know God.
- My parents don't understand me at all.

5. Why do you think God created families? (Check all that apply.)
- To teach us how to relate to Him and to each other
 - To provide an environment where children can grow and learn
 - To drive us crazy
 - To give us opportunities to take care of each other
 - To teach us about obedience and authority
 - Other: _____
6. The word “father” is used nearly 1,000 times in the Bible! God is the ultimate Father. Even if our earthly fathers have not been good examples, we can know the ultimate Father. Read **John 1:12**. What do you think it means to be His child? (Check all that apply.)
- You will never be disciplined.
 - You can pray to Him anywhere, anytime, about anything.
 - You can experience the blessings of knowing God, including eternal life in Heaven.
 - You are better than everyone else.
 - You have a new nature that desires to obey God and live like Jesus.
 - Other: _____
7. How might being His child affect the way you see and respond to your parents?

Day 2

1. While your parents are not always right, they are still your parents. Put yourself in their shoes. Check true or false:
- T F Raising me would be easy.
 - T F The hardest part about parenting is keeping the house clean.
 - T F I never take my parents for granted.
 - T F I don't need to honor my parents if they're not Christians.
 - T F I don't need to honor my parents if they aren't honoring me.
2. Read **Deuteronomy 5:16** and **Ephesians 6:1-3**. What does it mean to honor your parents?
- Give them trophies.
 - Instruct them on how they can be better parents.
 - Respect and obey them.
 - Do what they tell you if it sounds good to you.
3. What would it look like to dishonor them?
4. What is the promise that goes along with this command?

Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 1: PARENTS (cont'd)

5. What does the promise mean?

- If you obey your parents, you will live to be at least 100 years old.
- Obedience leads to a peaceful and fulfilled life because it's God's way.
- You will become rich if you honor your parents.
- Obey, or you're dead. Yikes!

6. What happens to our relationship with our parents when we disrespect, disobey, and dishonor them, and how does that affect our relationship with God?

7. Name three things you can do for your parents this week:

Making It Personal:

Think about your relationship with your parents. Remember that no parent is perfect. Extend grace and forgiveness to them, just as God has done for you. Treat your parents the way you'd like to be treated. Ask God to show you how to take steps to heal any hurts in that relationship, and to give you the love, patience, and courage to follow through.



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Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 2: SIBLINGS

Day 1

1. We often expect our relationships with family members to be free of problems. But the truth is that the most intimate relationships are the ones with the most potential for problems and pain. Think of a time when you had a problem with a family member. What was it, and how did you handle it?
2. What do you and your brother(s) and/or sister(s) fight about most often? (If you're an only child, substitute a close friend or relative for these questions.)
3. Sibling rivalry—competition between brothers and sisters—is anything but new. Read the story of the very first brothers, Cain and Abel, in **Genesis 4:1-16**. Why was Cain angry with Abel?
 - Some of Abel's sheep got into Cain's garden.
 - Abel teased him that his offerings weren't good enough.
 - Abel was God's favorite because he was the baby of the family.
 - God preferred Abel's offerings to Cain's because Abel gave the best he had.
4. How did Cain deal with his feelings?
 - They talked about it and came to an understanding.
 - He stole some of Abel's sheep for his offering.
 - He murdered his brother and lied to God about it.
 - He asked God to help him be a better brother to Abel.
5. What do you think is the main reason siblings often feel like they have to compete with one another?
 - Each person wants to stand out and be the best.
 - They are afraid their parents won't love them as much if they aren't as good-looking or talented as their sibling(s).
 - They feel like they are always being compared to one another.
 - Deep down, they want to be just like their sibling.
 - Other: _____
6. Cain didn't just want God to be pleased with him, too. He wanted God to NOT be pleased with his brother. That's jealousy. When have you felt like Cain?
 - When my brother or sister got all the attention
 - When my work wasn't good enough
 - When I felt like my brother or sister was trying to make me look bad
 - When I felt badly about myself
 - Other: _____

7. God didn't reject Cain's offering because He didn't like Cain. He rejected it because of what was (or wasn't) in Cain's heart. Rather than deal directly with God and obey Him, Cain chose to take his frustration out on his brother. How often do you get angry with your siblings when they are not the real problem? What issues could you talk to God about today?

Day 2

1. So, is being angry itself wrong? Look up **Ephesians 4:26**.
2. But as you saw, sibling rivalry can be dangerous when it gets out of control. You may be thinking, *Yeah, but I'd never actually kill my brother or sister—even though sometimes I'd like to!* Turn to **Matthew 5:21-22**. What truth do you discover in this passage?
 It's okay to hold onto anger against your sibling as long as you don't act on it.
 Ongoing anger and murder are two very different things.
 When you hold onto anger toward your sibling, you commit murder in your heart.
 It's easy to love your siblings all the time.
3. What was Jesus trying to teach us through this verse? (Check all that apply.)
 God takes our relationships with each other very seriously.
 Your attitude matters as much as your actions.
 Jealousy is no big deal.
 Mismanaged anger can lead to sin.
4. How would you rate your ability to deal with your feelings toward your siblings?
1 2 3 4 5
I keep my cool Mildly annoyed Hot temper—look out!
5. Read over the following list. Put an “H” next to the “healthy” ways to deal with your anger toward your siblings and a “U” next to the “unhealthy” ways.
 Beat them up
 Walk away until you can get control of your anger
 Pray for a better attitude
 Yell at them
 Steal or break something of theirs
 Talk through the problem
 Talk it through with an adult
6. Why do you think we sometimes treat our friends better than our own family?

Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 2: SIBLINGS (cont'd)

7. List the names of each of your siblings in the spaces below. (If you are an only child, write down the name of a close relative or friend who fills that role for you.) Next to each name, write down something you like about that person. Think: Have you ever shared that with him or her?

My Sibling(s):

Qualities:

Making It Personal:

Do you ever spend any one-on-one time with your brother(s) and/or sister(s)? How could you do that this week and strengthen your relationship?

Remember, God places us in each other's lives for a reason. You share a bond with your brothers and sisters that you won't find anywhere else. Ask God to open your eyes to see and appreciate the gifts He has given you through your family.



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Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 3: FRIENDS

Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. — **Philippians 2:3-5** (The Message)

Day 1

1. It's been said that "friends are the people who know everything about you and like you anyway." Would you agree? Who are those people in your life?
2. What do you look for in a friend?
 - A great sense of humor
 - Good looks and popularity
 - Brains
 - Just anyone to hang out with
 - Someone who shares my hobbies/interests
3. Friendships are among the most important relationships we will ever have. Our friends play a big role in shaping who we are, which is why it's so important to choose friends wisely. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think your friends influence you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Some				A LOT	
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you influence your friends?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all				Some				A LOT	
5. Read **Philippians 2:3-5**. What does it mean to "put yourself aside"? (Check all that apply.)
 - Realize that others' needs are more important.
 - Neglect your own needs.
 - Flatter people so they will feel special.
 - Treat people with kindness and respect, the way you'd like to be treated.
6. The Bible tells us to have an attitude of humility in our friendships. Being humble means not hogging the spotlight—looking out for others instead of drawing attention to yourself. Which of these are examples of humility?
 - Being excited for a friend when he/she makes the team
 - Not rubbing it in when you get a good grade
 - Getting angry when your friends have other friends besides you
 - Being willing to let your friends copy your homework
 - Listening more than you talk

Jesus, even though He was God's own Son and the King of Kings, called us His "friends" rather than His "servants" (**John 15:15**). His humility is our example. It's important that we demonstrate the same attitude of love toward the people around us, even the people we wouldn't ordinarily think of as friends.

Day 2

1. Do you consider yourself to be a good friend? Why/why not?
2. Read about four very good friends in **Mark 2:1-12** to answer the following questions. If you had been one of them, what would you have done?
 - Waited outside
 - Suggested you all go back home
 - Exactly what they did
 - Pushed your way through the crowd
3. What quality impresses you the most about these four?
 - Concern for their friend
 - Determination—they wouldn't give up
 - Cleverness
 - Faith
4. These friends didn't help the paralyzed man because of what he could do for them in return; they helped him because he was in need and they wanted to serve him. Think of a time when you were in need and a friend helped you. What did he or she do? How did that make you feel?
5. Describe a time when you were a good friend to someone else. What did you do?
6. Think about the friends you have now. Are they the type that would do anything for you, or are they always expecting something in return? What are some of the dangers of making the wrong kind of friends?

Making It Personal

Proverbs 17:17 says that "friends love through all kinds of weather." This week, concentrate on being a good friend. Try thinking of other's needs as being as important as your own. Friendship gives plenty of opportunities to be like Jesus.

Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 4: GUY/GIRL FRIENDSHIPS

Day 1

1. What current relationships will prepare you to someday have a serious relationship with a member of the opposite gender? (Check all that apply.)
 - My brothers
 - My sisters
 - My friends
 - My parents
2. What do you think are the most important qualities for you to have in order to be a “great date”?
 - Be funny
 - Be good-looking
 - Be popular
 - Be well-mannered and courteous
3. Read **Ephesians 5:3-6**. Which of these don't fit with being a follower of Jesus?
 - Encouragement
 - Bad words
 - Obscene gestures
 - Laughter
 - Telling stories
 - Dirty jokes
 - Giving thanks
 - Gossip
 - Vandalism
 - Practical jokes
4. So what's wrong with “silly talk and course joking”? (Check all that apply.)
 - It is hurtful to people .
 - God doesn't want you to have any fun.
 - It can be embarrassing to the opposite gender.
 - It just isn't funny.
 - Other: _____

You might think that Christians are just boring people who look down on others. But Jesus actually made the religious people of His time angry by hanging out with some shady characters. He showed that it's possible to love the people without becoming just like them. So ask yourself: Are your friendships making you more or less like Jesus?

Day 2

1. What do you think is the purpose of friendships between guys and girls?

- Flirting, flirting, and more flirting
- Having a good time
- Getting a different perspective
- Learning about ourselves and God
- Feeling attractive to someone else

2. What do you think about dating?

- It's a waste of time.
- I can't wait to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- I'm scared of dating.
- I'm not allowed.
- Other: _____

3. In the columns below, list some of the positive and negative things about dating.

Positive:

Negative:

4. Whether or not you believe in dating, friendships between guys and girls are special. They can be very important as you develop. According to **1 Peter 2:17**, what is the key to these relationships?

- Chemistry
- Respect
- Generosity
- Honesty

5. What are some ways that you can show your friends of the opposite gender that you respect them and understand that your friendship is special?

6. Read **1 Timothy 4:12** (NIV) and fill in the blanks below:

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are _____, but set an _____ for the believers in _____, in _____, in _____, in _____, and in _____."

Keeping It Real in Relationships

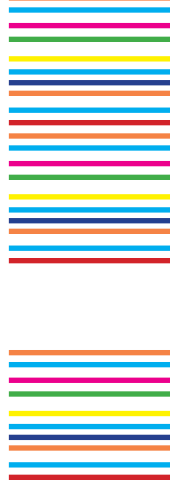
Week 4: GUY/GIRL FRIENDSHIPS (cont'd)

7. Rewrite 1 Timothy 4:12 below in your own words..

8. What does this have to do with guy/girl friendships?

Making It Personal

What Jesus cares most about is what's in our hearts. When we know Him, we discover that we want to obey Him. That begins with our thoughts. It's important to let our friends—especially our non-Christian friends—see that we are different because of Jesus. Where is that true for you today?



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Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 5: GOD

Have you ever wondered why we are here, on the earth? Why God created us? It's a big thought.

Day 1

1. What things most often make you happy?

Being with friends

Spring break

Hot chocolate on a cold day

Other: _____

2. All human beings, no matter who we are, want to be happy. But the trouble with happiness (in case you haven't noticed) is that it depends on circumstances. There is something more solid, more lasting, than happiness: joy. God designed us for joy. The word "joy" is used more than 200 times in the Bible. Read a few of those verses right now and write out one thing that each verse tells you about God's plan for joy in our lives:

Nehemiah 8:10 _____

Psalms 30:11 _____

Psalms 92:4 _____

Psalms 94:19 _____

3. Which phrase below best describes your view of God?

Dull, boring, and far away

Very frightening—just waiting for me to make a mistake

Like Santa—He is there to give me whatever I want

Like a friend—He is there to be with me no matter what I am going through

Other: _____

4. How does a person's view of God affect his or her response to Him?

5. For the last several weeks, we have talked a lot about family and friends. Do you consider God a friend? As family? Why or why not?

6. That is what He wants to be. In fact, He gives us family and friends to teach us about Him and how He cares for us. Talk to Him today like you would talk to a friend. Tell Him your hopes, fears, problems, and frustrations. David modeled this kind of conversation with God for us. Look at **Psalm 13:1-6**.

How many feelings can you list that David expressed to God here?

7. How did David's heart appear to change over the course of his prayer?

God knows our thoughts and our hearts. But expressing them to Him changes us. Practice doing that today.

Day 2

1. God wants us to *enjoy* spending time with Him. But have you ever realized that *you* make God happy?

Zephaniah 3:17 says:

For the Lord your God is living among you.

He is a mighty savior.

He will take delight in you with gladness.

Psalms 147:11 says:

...the LORD delights in those who fear him,

who put their hope in his unfailing love.

In **Jeremiah 32:41**, God says of His people:

...I will rejoice in doing them good.

2. Look up **1 Peter 1:8-9**. Does this verse describe you? Why or why not?

3. When you have difficult times, disappointments, or sadness, do you quickly turn to God?

Yes No

4. Read **Psalms 61:1-4**. Does this describe how you feel when you pray?

Yes No

5. God doesn't want our relationship with Him to be just something we have to do. His goal is for us to look forward to the times we have to talk and listen to Him. What would it take for you to have that kind of relationship with Him?

6. Consider doing something you enjoy today, and making it about God. Go for a walk, a run, or a bike ride. As you go, talk to God about what is going on in your head, or about the things you see. Pray as you go, for the neighbors you pass, the schools you go by, and the things going on in your mind. Time with God doesn't have to be spent sitting in your room. He enjoys us the most when we are enjoying Him!

Keeping It Real in Relationships

Week 5: GOD (cont'd)

Making It Personal

Do a very risky thing today. Ask God to make you hungry for Him. But watch out—He will! Think about what you want your relationship with God to be like, then tell Him and ask for His help. Ask Him to show you those areas of your life where He wants you to rejoice.



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6. According to **John 13:34-35**, what is the most dramatic way that we can show the world that we are different because Christ lives in us?

If this is so, then that should tell us just how unusual it is when people genuinely love each other and get along. It isn't easy. We can only do it with God's help.

Pray for your friends, your family, and your enemies by name today. Ask God to let good things happen for each of them, and to help you behave in loving ways toward them.

Day 2

1. Which of the following relationships do you struggle with the most?
 - My parents
 - My siblings
 - My teachers
 - My friends
 - Other kids at school
2. Another reason why we struggle in our relationships, in addition to our own selfish nature, is that we have an enemy who works to use our own thoughts, feelings, and desires against us. How does **1 Peter 5:8** describe Satan? What do we need to do to be on our guard?
3. But what if changing our behavior was as easy as changing our clothes? **Romans 13:14** uses this analogy to describe that way we can shed our selfishness and put on Christ's nature. How would you go about clothing yourself with Christ?
4. According to **Galatians 5:22-26**, what gives us the power to be different?
5. When and how have you realized that your relationship with God affects all your other relationships—and vice versa?

Making It Personal

In the battle for good relationships, prayer is one of our best weapons. Go to God when you are tempted to want your own way, or even when you are trying to be loving, but it just isn't being noticed. Ask Him to give you patience and love for others—friends and enemies alike.



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