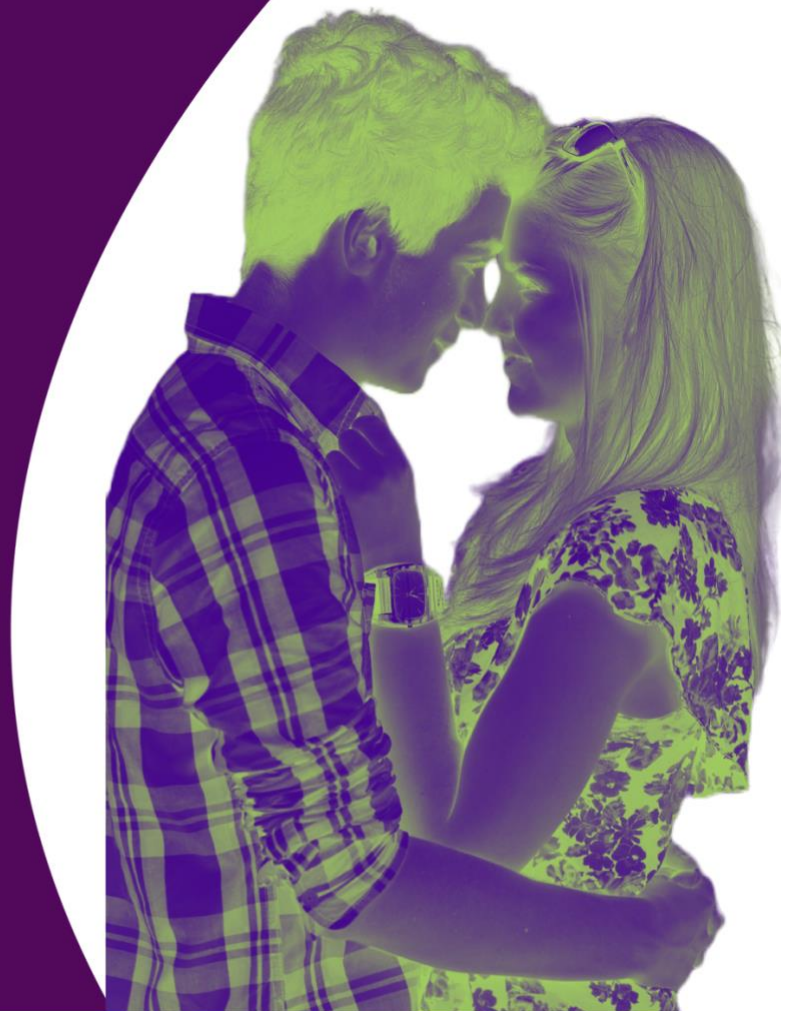


# TALKING TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

A resource  
for Christian  
youth  
workers

By  
Sally  
Hope



ALWAYS  
HOPEFUL

All Rights Reserved  
Sally Hope  
2023

# Talking to Young People About Healthy Relationships

## Contents

<b>Background</b>	.....	pg.4
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	.....	pg.5
<b>1. In The Beginning</b>	.....	pg.5
<b>2. God's Solution</b>	.....	pg.6
<b>3. Jesus vs Adam</b>	.....	pg.6
<b>Examples</b>	.....	pg. 7-13
<b>Adam Handout</b>	.....	pg. 15-16
<b>Jesus Handout</b>	.....	pg. 17-18
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	.....	pg. 19
<b>5. Suggested Exercises</b>	.....	pg. 19
<b>6. Further resources</b>	.....	pg. 21



# Talking to Christian Young People about Healthy Relationships.

## Background

It's an unpleasant fact that abuse takes place within teenage dating relationships at similar rates to adult relationships. Research from the University of Bristol and the NSPCC shows that 25% of girls aged 13-17, and 17% of boys, have experienced the use of physical force in a relationship. 72% of girls and 51% of boys had experienced emotional violence (most commonly "being made fun of" and "constantly being checked up on").

As our children get older, the risk heightens, with 16-24 year olds being the age group most at risk from Domestic Abuse.

However, research from Safelives has shown that sex and relationships education in schools is failing to address this: Only half of young people believe that SRE classes give them adequate information about toxic and healthy relationships and only 24% of young people recall being taught about coercive control. Worse, 22% of boys reported looking for information through pornography.

The church is in an ideal position to be able to make a difference in this area. Jesus provides a perfect example of how to relate to people in a healthy way, we can use a biblical understanding of relationships to teach our young people a biblical model of healthy relationships, not only filling the gap that the education system is creating but providing our young people with a Christian understanding of what 'good' and 'bad' looks like in relationships. It's never been more important for us to do this.

This resource provides a biblical model for understanding healthy and unhealthy relationships. It contains bible readings, questions to start discussions, handouts and exercises for understanding the model as well as additional resources for any young person who discloses that they are experiencing abuse.

*The model used in this resource uses Jesus and Adam as examples of "good" and "bad" in relationships. It is important to point out that Jesus is a role model for all of us, not just boys, and that we can all, at times, behave like Adam. People of all genders then should be seeking to behave like Jesus, not Adam, and whoever the YP is in a relationship with they should be expecting to be treated with love. If anyone is being treated in the way we describe the behaviours of Adam they should know it is not acceptable, whatever the gender of the perpetrator.*

*You can use these resources in single sex settings, which may provide a more comfortable setting for young people to open up and discuss them, or you may prefer to use them in a mixed setting in order to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ young people.*

*They're written to be used in youth group settings but could be adapted easily to use in a 1:1 setting.*

[sources: <https://safelives.org.uk/press-release-RSE-Report>; <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/missing-the-mark-teenage-relationship-abuse-report.pdf>; <https://reducingtherisk.org.uk/abuse-in-teenage-relationships/#:~:text=Research%20from%20the%20University%20of,with%20an%20object> ]



## **Learning Objectives:**

To understand how to use discernment to make good moral choices within romantic relationships, based on Jesus' example of love.

To recognise the signs of an unhealthy romantic relationship based on a biblical understanding of how Christians should treat one another.

In other words, to know how to behave as a Christian in a relationship and to know what to expect from a Christian in a relationship.

To be able to keep healthy boundaries within a romantic relationship.

## **1. In the beginning....**

### **Read: Genesis 1:26- 31.**

This first chapter explains that God created all of humanity to be equal, in his own image, and to fill and steward the earth. Who is made in God's image? All of us!

### **Read: Genesis 2: 18-24.**

The second chapter is not a differing account of creation, rather it drills down into the detail of the relationships between men and women and God.

Ask your group what we have learned so far about those relationships in the beginning.

*[Answers: We are all made in God's image. God said humanity was "very good." We were created for companionship and partnership. Animals could not be Adam's partner because they were not equal, but Eve is substantially the same, she is made from Adam, "flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone"- she is his equal, and so man will leave his parents and get married: we have relationships with each other because we are one and the same, flesh of flesh, bone of bone.]*

### **Read Genesis 3: 8-16.**

The original design above goes wrong when sin enters the world. Ask: What are the consequences for our relationships?

*[Answers: Shame/body consciousness- we cover our nakedness. Guilt and separation from God- we hide from God. Blame: the first thing Adam does is blame Eve. Power struggle: women will desire men (or this may mean women will desire power over men), but men will "rule over" or exert power and control over women.]*

Ask the group: Do we see those consequences echoed in our relationships today? Give examples? Maybe they can give examples from their own lives, or from popular culture, for example the Amber Heard/Johnny Depp trial, Harry and Meghan's rift with the royal family, and not just romantic relationships- politics. Do humans seek power and control within their relationships?

Ask the group: Is this because of God's design or because of sin? - some people believe that the consequences of the fall are a punishment from God, that it is his "will" for mankind, but Genesis 2 shows us that God created us to be equal and harmonious partners, it is sin that causes us not to be.



## 2. God's Solution

So, what does God do to fix it? He sends Jesus. Jesus doesn't only deal with our sin eternally, he provides the answer to it now, today, by showing us an alternative way to live and an alternative way to relate to one another.

**Read Matthew 22:34-39** The reason for the commandments was to discern between right and wrong. Jesus tells us to discern by loving God and loving each other: If we are behaving in loving ways, we will naturally do the right thing. The answer to how we relate to each other is love: because Jesus *is* love, it is his very essence.

This means we have a choice, we can either use Adam as our role model and exert power and control over each other, *or* we can fill our lives with Jesus and follow his example, which is to love one another.

But, in practical terms, what is the difference between relating to each other like Jesus (love) and relating to each other like Adam(control)? That's what we are going to look at now.

## 3. Jesus vs. Adam

**Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8.**

Remember God *is* love, so Jesus *is* love. If the word love has too many connotations of cheesy romance films, we can understand this verse by replacing the word love with the word "Jesus".

We could also even replace the words "love is not" with Adam, to remind us of the difference between following the example of Jesus-love or Adam who represents sin.

**So, this:** *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

**Becomes this:** *Jesus is patient; Jesus is kind; Adam is envious and boastful and arrogant and rude. Adam insists on his own way; Adam is irritable; Adam keeps a record of wrongs; Adam rejoices in wrongdoing Jesus rejoices in the truth. Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Jesus love never ends.*

So, let's create a picture of a boyfriend like Adam and a boyfriend like Jesus (remember this applies to girlfriends too- Adam and Jesus are representative of humanity, not just males)

Give out the handouts with the picture of Jesus and the picture of Adam.

Under each behaviour (on the next few pages) are some examples. Print the examples and cut them out without the heading describing the behaviour. Ask the young people to decide whether the person is behaving like Adam or Jesus. *(You can remove any you feel may not be age appropriate for a younger group) You can use all or some of them, depending on time, or you could give everybody one (or two or three from the same section) and ask them to go to the "Jesus" side of the room or the "Adam" side of the room depending on which they think their example fits.*



## Adam Examples

### Envy

*I love online gaming and play with both boys and girls online, but my new girlfriend says I shouldn't be talking to other girls because I'm hers.*

*My boyfriend comes round every night, he says he wants to be with me all the time. It's sweet but I haven't seen my mates in ages.*

*My boyfriend is always flirting with my best friend, he tells me she's "fit".*

### Boastful

*My boyfriend failed his maths test last week, he said it's my fault because I've been distracting him and normally, he gets the best grades in his class.*

*My girlfriend refuses to tell people we're together; she doesn't hang out with me in school, she's always with the "in crowd" and I'm not.*

*My boyfriend loves it when I wear low cut tops or short skirts and he's always grabbing hold of me and kissing me in front of his mates, he's so proud to be with me, he says I'm the fittest girl in college.*

### Arrogant

*I was hoping to stay on at school in sixth form and do A-Levels but now I'm thinking of going to do a BTEC at the college my girlfriend is going to because she says it would be awesome to be together.*

*My boyfriend is in a band, he says that he's always having to show the other members of the band how to do things because they're not as talented musicians as he is. He's taught me loads about music and I don't listen to the same music I used to anymore.*

*My boyfriend says that his mum promised to obey his dad and he expects a Christian girl to obey him.*

### Rude

*"He used to call me 'Bae" all the time but these days he calls me "bitch" and "whore" I don't think he means it though; he's just showing off.*

*"She's always laughing about how soft I am, she calls me her cute little nerd and jokes that I'm not a real man because I don't like football. It's all just banter though".*

*"He says it doesn't matter that I'm overweight because I'm really pretty for a big girl".*



*(This page has been left blank)*





### **Selfish**

*“He says boys have ‘needs’ and it’s not normal for us to have been going out this long without having sex.”*

*“I didn’t like being touched there at first, but he kept on doing it and now it’s not so bad I guess, it makes him happy and that’s important”.*

*She wanted me to buy her jewellery to show her how much I love her. I don’t earn much at my part time job but I’m saving for a nice necklace.*

*We always go to see action films because she’s really into them, they’re a bit boring tbh but it’s all she ever wants to watch.*

### **Irritable**

*“Sometimes I just keep my mouth shut when she’s in one of those moods so that she doesn’t go off on one at me. I feel like I’m walking on eggshells.”*

*“He really struggles with anger issues, he’s lashed out at me a few times, the odd push or shove here and there when he says I’m nagging at him.”*

### **Resentful**

*“I was 20 minutes late meeting him once and he still tells me on every date what a muppet he felt waiting for me, it was three months ago now.”*

*“Whenever we have an argument about something I always get it in the neck from her best friend as well”.*

### **Rejoices in wrongdoing.**

*“He says he gets violent when he’s “frustrated” and if I wasn’t so frigid, he wouldn’t be so angry all the time”.*

*“He’s got a photo of me with no top on and he threatens to show it to people”.*

*“I’m worried she’ll start self-harming again if I leave her, she has picked up razor blades and tried to cut herself when we’ve argued”.*

*“He says I’m mental, and you know what, I feel like I’m going crazy”?*

*“My parents don’t know I’m gay and he threatens to tell them whenever he doesn’t get his own way”.*



*(This page has been left blank)*



## Jesus Examples

### Patient.

*I'm really forgetful and I know it must get on his nerves when he has to tell me things two or three times, I even forgot we were meeting last week and he was cross at being left waiting but after his initial frustration he soon forgave me and now he drops me a text half an hour before saying he's looking forward to seeing me, I know it's really to remind me but he doesn't make me feel bad about that.*

*He wanted to see Barbie, I wanted to see Oppenheimer, we went to see Barbie because it was on early enough that we could get a pizza (my favourite) afterwards and he's already booked tickets for Oppenheimer next week.*

### Kind

*When I was too ill to meet him last week, he popped a bar of chocolate and box of paracetamol through my letterbox.*

*Her mum buys her a six pack of coke to last her two weeks when she goes to the supermarket, whenever I go over to her house she offers me a can of coke, even though she only has three for the week.*

*He lent me his favourite jumper last week when I was cold, it's so snugly.*

### Truthful

*"If he promises to do something I know he will".*

*"He's really good at art but I know he doesn't think he is; I point out the good parts of his artwork and tell him what I think is so good about it"*

*"I'm sure he prefers my old haircut to my new one, when I asked him if he liked it, he asked if I liked it and said that if I did and it made me happy then he was happy,"*

### Protects

*"I had a massive fight with my best friend last week, when I saw my boyfriend I cried about it, he put his arms around me and gave me a big hug, he said he didn't have the answers, but he wanted to be here for me".*

*"I wear the ugliest tracksuit imaginable round the house, they're really comfy! I wouldn't change out of them if my boyfriend was coming over for a gaming session, why would I? They're comfy and he doesn't care".*

*"She knows that thing I'm ashamed about but it's okay".*



*(This page has been left blank)*



## Trusts

*“Loads of her friends are boys, so what?”*

*“I met someone who lives near her who says she’s a slut. I don’t believe them, and I don’t listen to gossip, if there’s something in her past she wants me to know about then I’m sure she’ll tell me herself.”*

*“We both love hanging out with our own friends and sometimes just chillin’ out on our own, we make sure we see each other every few days and keep in touch by text”.*

*“No, I don’t know where she is right now, why would I?”*

*“Last week he took the mickey out of me, I was really upset, and he realised he’d overstepped. He said, “I’m really sorry, I shouldn’t have said that, it was really unkind, I thought I was being funny but I realise it was hurtful” and he hasn’t behaved like that since.”*

## Hopeful

*“He always takes time to fist bump my little brother when he comes over and chat to him about their shared interests”.*

*“She has plans for her future and knows what she wants out of life, I think she could do anything she put her mind to”.*

*“We’re not seeing as much of each other at the moment because we are both revising for exams, but he sends a message every evening to ask how it’s going”*

## Perseveres

*“We’re planning a youth service at church, and we’re both in the youth band, he plays the drums and I play bass guitar, we’re really good at keeping time with each other”*

*“We are both doing history A-Level and we’ve been revising together recently, if he gets distracted I give him a nudge to keep him on track, and if I get distracted he gives me a nudge to keep me on track, he’s good at remembering dates and has been showing me some of his memory tricks, I’m really good at social analysis and have been helping him with that”*

*I’ve had a really rough time at home lately and he’s been really supportive and understanding.*

## Consistency (Never Ends)

*“He doesn’t like Public Displays of Affection and explained in the early days that he didn’t want to be kissing in public, he said I shouldn’t take it as an insult, he just finds the whole thing a bit cringey. He’s maintained that stance in the whole year we’ve been together but is very affectionate to me in private”.*

*“He told me he liked me, he didn’t mess around flirting or doing that thing some boys do where they pretend, they don’t like you. He just said, “I really like you” and he’s always been like that.”*

*“When we have an argument, he’s always clear that even when he’s upset or angry he still loves me, he remains respectful of me whilst trying to explain his point of view, he doesn’t deliberately try to hurt me”*



# Adam = Power and Control (sin)

## Envy

Treats me like a possession  
Says who I can spend time with  
Wants me all to themselves  
Tries to make me jealous

## Boastful

Obsessed with their own image  
Wants me to look good all the time  
Grand romantic gestures  
Tells tall tales  
Won't accept responsibility for failures

## Arrogant

Thinks they are better than me  
Tells me what to do/wear/where to go  
Prevents me from doing things I enjoy  
Belittles and patronises me

## Rude

Puts me down  
Uses banter/jokes/backhanded compliments  
Uses derogatory language

## Selfish

Always gets their own way  
Decides what we do together  
Doesn't respect my boundaries  
Takes my money

## Irritable

Mood swings  
May use physical violence  
May use threats  
Makes me feel intimidated  
Makes me feel like I am walking on eggshells

## Rejoices in Wrongdoing

Manipulates me  
Makes me feel like I am crazy  
Denies or minimises their own behaviour  
Blames me for their behaviour  
Cruelty

## Resentful

Drags arguments out  
Drags others into arguments  
Re-writes history  
Lies about me to others

Remaining like Adam in relationships  
looks like this

**Envy:** “*you’re mine*” “*you belong to me*” “*we belong together*” Treats the other person like a possession, believes that being in a relationship entitles them to say who the other person can spend their time with, wants the other person to spend time exclusively with them and finds sometimes subtle ways to isolate them from their friends. May also seek to make the other person jealous, maybe by comparing them to others or by flirting with their friends.

**Boastful:** Very concerned with their own image, wants to go out with the “hottest” person in school because they look good on their arm sees the other person as a trophy. Keen to impress and may make grand romantic gestures but it’s really about making themselves look good. May tell tall tales. Never accepts responsibility for their own wrongdoing or failures, everything is someone else’s fault.

**Arrogant:** Thinks they are superior in the relationship. This may be because they’re male and they believe men are superior to women, but not necessarily, it could also be related to social status or academic success. They will exercise authority over the other person, they may say they are drawing boundaries but in fact they will be telling the other person what they can and cannot do: may tell the other person what to wear, what subjects to study, where to hang out, who to hang out with. May try to prevent the other person from doing something they’ve always enjoyed. Will speak down to, patronise and undermine the other person.

**Rude:** Puts the other person down, may do this using backhanded compliments i.e. “you’re really smart for a girl” or may disguise it as “banter” ... the key here is that after spending time with this person, their gf/bf will not feel good about themselves- their self-esteem will be lower as a result of the way they are spoken to. Will not use the other person’s name, they may use derogatory language but may also use terms such as ‘Babe’ or other pet names: never using a person’s name dehumanises and objectifies them and erodes their identity. May tell homophobic or racist or sexist jokes or use slurs as insults.

**Selfish:** Always has to have their own way, dictates where they go, what they do. Always puts his own needs first so will not respect the other person’s sexual boundaries if they are different. Will pester and pressure. Will use sex as a weapon to control or put the other down, may use words like “slut” or “slag” or “frigid” or say the other person must be a lesbian/gay if they don’t want to do something. May use emotional blackmail and talk about having ‘needs’ or say, “everyone else is doing it” They may attempt to get the other person drunk to persuade them to do things sexually they would not otherwise do. “They may also steal from the other or pressure them into giving them money or buying them things.

**Irritable:** The other person will feel like they are walking on eggshells. The irritable person has mood swings, they can go from being lovely to really snappy and angry, they lose their temper easily and will use intimidation as a way to control the other person. This may start off as moodiness and mini sulks but may also escalate to physical violence, though it doesn’t have to be abusive. They may use their physical presence or threats to intimidate the other person without ever being violent.

**Resentful:** They keep an argument going for a long time, they may also drag friends and family into arguments. They will make the other person feel like they are always in the wrong, this may mean moving the goalposts and changing the rules they set for them. The resentful person will twist things to make out that they are the victim, and the other person is the bully in the relationship. They will bring up past wrongs and may even re-write history or pretend things have happened that haven’t really to do this. They will tell other people lies or half truths about the other person in the relationship.

**Rejoices in wrongdoing.** They know that what they are doing is wrong and will use manipulation to continue to get away with it. They will make the other person feel like they are going crazy, they may even tell others they are worried about the other person’s mental health. They will flat out deny their bad behaviour, or they will minimise it by saying the other person is over-reacting, or they will blame the other person for the way they treat them. When they begin to rejoice in wrongdoing, they will become cruel and ruthless and will use a variety of tricks to stop the other person from leaving them or to make the other person feel small. They may tell people secrets, or “out” them if they are LGBT, they may show people photos of them or share intimate things they have done- these may be true or lies. They will exert complete power over the other person by finding ways to humiliate and degrade them. They may sexually assault them.

# Jesus = Love

## Patient

No expectations of changing me  
Loves who I am- even my faults  
Is patient and tolerant even when  
they're angry  
Looks for win:win solutions to  
conflict

## Kind

Good, helpful and generous to  
others  
Puts me first  
Treats others the way they  
would like to be treated

## Truthful

Honest and faithful  
Uses truth to build others  
up, never to hurt  
Encourages me

## Protecting

I feel safe around them  
I can relax and be myself  
with them  
They are supportive and  
caring

## Trust

They are trustworthy  
They trust me  
They believe the best about me  
They encourage my friendships  
They are responsible and reliable

## Hopeful

They have a positive outlook for  
their own life  
I feel hope for the future around  
them  
They believe in me  
They are a good role model to others

## Perseveres

They view me as an equal  
They contribute to the  
relationship  
We pull together when  
times are tough

## Consistency

I know where I stand  
They don't blow hot and  
cold or play games  
They don't withhold love  
or affection as a punishment

Following Jesus' example in a  
relationship looks like this.



## JESUS

**Patient.** They know the other person is imperfect and they love them anyway, with no expectations of changing them. They love the other person for who they are. They remain patient and tolerant even when they are feeling frustrated or angry. When there is conflict in the relationship, they have no desire to hurt the other person and genuinely look for a way to resolve the conflict that is best for everybody.\

**Kind.** They seek to do good things to be helpful and generous to the other person. They seek to put the other person first in the relationship. They do this in all their relationships, not just romantic ones. They treat everyone in the way they would like to be treated.

**Truthful.** They are honest and faithful. They do not ever seek to hurt the other person under the guise of “just being honest” and would never say something like “truth hurts” They know that the truth should cause the other person to flourish and blossom and so they seek to be encouraging.

**Protects.** This isn’t about being ‘macho’ and fighting or using violence on behalf of the other, rather it is about providing a place of safety and security. This person is someone their partner can relax and be completely themselves with, they are someone their partner can trust to talk to when times are tough, they are supportive and caring.

**Trusts:** They are both trusting and trustworthy. They believe the best of the other person and like and encourage their friendships as well as being able to enjoy their own time alone, or with their friends when they are not with their bf/gf. They are responsible, they work hard at their studies/work/hobbies and are reliable and when they do something wrong, they take responsibility and will apologise.

**Hopeful:** They have a positive outlook for their own life and give the other person cause to hope for the future, they believe in the other person and support and encourage them in the things that matter to them. They are a good role model to others.

**Perseveres:** The language used for this in the bible is about working together and pulling together when something is difficult. The bible talks about being “equally yoked” and the same imagery is used here. Imagine two horses pulling a cart... if they are not of equal strength they will pull unevenly, one will end up taking more weight and may get injured, and the cart may twist and get broken. It is the same in a relationship, equality matters. The couple who perseveres together see each other as equals and they both contribute equally to their relationship.

**Consistency (Never Ends):** This doesn’t mean you will be together forever, but it means that you are consistent with one another. The person whose love is eternal is not fickle, they don’t withhold love and affection as a punishment or give it as a reward, they care about the other person even when they are mad at them. They have clear and firm boundaries, and the other person always knows where they stand. They do not blow hot and cold or play games.

## 4. Conclusion

End the session by asking the Young People whether they think the Jesus Role Model is achievable? Is this something we can expect of a mere human?

The behaviours we see in the Jesus model are the outworking of love. They are reasonable expectations from someone who loves me. We will all mess up and get things wrong from time to time, so someone with Jesus as a role model may from time to time behave in an unacceptable way. So, ask the group what they think the difference is then between a person who loves like Jesus making a mistake, and a person who controls like Adam?

*Answer: 1- The way I feel. If I feel fearful at any point in a relationship with someone, if when they get things wrong the consequences frighten me, or their reaction to me doing things wrong frightens me, then they are not loving me like Jesus but are exerting control over me.*

*2: Their willingness to take responsibility. A person who behaves like Jesus will accept responsibility when they mess up, when they say "sorry" it will not be followed by the word "but." They will try not to do that thing again.*

### **Suggested additional exercises using this model.**

#### **1. Dating Profile**

Whilst Adam behaves in boastful, arrogant, and envious ways, he doesn't see himself this way. He believes his behaviour is reasonable because of beliefs he holds about girls and boys and maybe even about God. Consider what beliefs he may hold that create those behaviours, for example "God created men first so they are superior" or "Girls need boys to protect them and guide them" or "girls/boys will cheat if they are given the opportunity"?

Using that information consider how Adam may describe himself that might give you clues that he will behave in a controlling way in a relationship e.g.: "Alpha Male" "I know how to take care of a girl" and create Adam's dating profile.

(This is a good exercise for helping young people to spot red flags early on)

#### **2. Drama**

Below are some scenarios. Ask one person to play the girlfriend/boyfriend, a second person to play the person who behaves like Jesus in the relationship and a third to play the person who behaves like Adam.

Give them the scenario and ask them to think about how each would respond/behave and act it out, they could do this in teams with a bit of a practice or you could do it as an instant improvisation.



Play each improvisation out twice, once with the “Adam” character and once with the “Jesus” character (remember, they are not Jesus, they are just a person who uses him as a role model)

### Scenario's

1. Mike and Jenny are arguing. Jenny feels that it's always her who initiates contact by text or phone call and plans to meet, she feels if she left it to Mike, they would hardly see each other.  
Have one person play Mike as though he loves like Jesus and one person play Mike as though he responds like Adam.
2. Jackie and Dave have been together three months, Dave's friend Brian doesn't have a girlfriend and before Dave and Jackie were together Dave and Brian hung out all the time. However, Jackie and Dave have been spending so much time together recently and Brian has been complaining he doesn't see Dave anymore. Jackie doesn't really like hanging out with Brian. Dave needs to have a conversation with Jackie about how it is important to him not to neglect his friendship with Brian.  
Have one person play Jackie as though she is responding like Adam and one person play Jackie as though she is loving like Jesus.
3. Margo and Jess have been dating for a few months. They are out clothes shopping together. Jess is a little overweight and tries on a dress that is quite tight, Margo thinks it's not very flattering. Jess asks, “does my bum look big in this?”  
Have one person play Margo as though she is loving like Jesus and one as though she is responding like Adam.
4. Max and Sam have not been together very long. Max has bought Sam a very expensive gift. Sam feels a little uncomfortable as they would never be able to reciprocate, and they feel it's a big gesture early on.  
Have one person play Max as though they are loving like Jesus and one person play Max as though they are responding like Adam.
5. Jen and Steve have been out for pizza and are now mooching round the shops. Jen works part time and just got paid, Steve spent all his money on pizza. Steve sees a really awesome pair of earbuds that he wants and asks Jen to lend him the money for them. Jen is trying to save for her holiday and doesn't want to.  
Have one person play Steve as though he is loving like Jesus and one person play Steve as though he is responding like Adam.



### 3. Persuasion

This exercise makes the point that trying to prevent a person from doing the things they want to do is always coercive control.

Give the young people the following scenario.

Flynn and Jo are going out together. Jo is really into swimming and is part of a local club, she swims every morning before college and is really good at it. Her coach has asked her to move into Olympic Hopefuls squad that swims on Saturdays, he believes she might have a shot at the Olympics. Jo is really excited about the opportunity. Flynn doesn't want Jo to join this squad. He thinks her coach is too pushy, he doesn't think it's healthy for Jo to only focus on swimming to the detriment of everything else in her life, he's worried that it will be too much pressure for her on top of school work. He's very worried about how it will affect their relationship, she finds it difficult to find time to see him outside school as it is, and Saturdays are the day they often hang out and relax together.

Get two young people to play Jo and Flynn. Task the person playing Flynn to persuade Jo not to join the Olympic Hopeful squad without behaving like Adam, only behaving like Jesus.

You will find that it isn't possible for him to do this because love respects the other person and supports their dreams and their choices.

### 4. Bill Of Rights

Ask the group to create a "bill of rights" - things they are entitled to expect in a relationship.

I.e., I have a right to feel safe.

I have a right to my own friendships.

I have a right to privacy.

I have a right to time on my own.

I have a right to make my own choices.

I have a right to say no.

### 5. Happy Jars

Give each young person a jar to decorate. Ask them to consider how Jesus thinks of them, how Jesus wants them to be treated, what sort of things Jesus would say to them: get them to write these positive affirmations on pieces of paper, fold them up and put them in their jar, examples can include:

"I'm beautiful the way I am".

"I don't have to do things I am not comfortable with".

"I am a delight to my creator".

"I am worthy of love".

"I am a child of God and deserve respect".



They can take these jars home and take out those pieces of paper to remind themselves of how great they are and how they deserve to be treated should they ever feel rubbish.

### **6. Adam/Jesus bookmarks/posters**

Give the group bookmark shaped pieces of card. Ask them to draw Adam on one side, Jesus on the other and write some reminder sentences around each one about what kind of behaviour is good in a relationship and what kind of behaviour isn't. They can keep this with them as a reminder.

As an alternative you can make posters or laminated cards with fridge magnets glued to the back.

### **Further resources**

If a young person feels they are in immediate danger they should call the police on 999. If they are unable to speak they can press 5, then 5 again to alert the call handler to this.

Childline: call 0800 1111, or [sign up so you can online chat](#) and send messages (9am - midnight)

<https://lovespect.co.uk/advice/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/abuse/>

