

Meet the Christian Parents: Questions to Ask and Guidelines to Give Your Daughter's Potential Boyfriend

Jennifer Degler, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist and Life Coach

Co-Author of *No More Christian Nice Girl*

Interfaith Counseling Center, 240 Rodes Avenue, Lexington, KY, (859) 685-7753

www.jenniferdegler.com, www.cwives.com, jennifer@jenniferdegler.com

We told our daughter and son from an early age that they weren't allowed to have a boyfriend/girlfriend until high school. This takes the pressure off of them, particularly in middle school when many teens feel like they have to find a boy/girlfriend because everyone else seems to be dating. We encouraged our kids to "blame us" and say "my parents won't let me" if they were asked why they weren't dating anyone.

In addition, we said that they would need to direct their heart elsewhere if they became attracted to a non-believer. Because you end up marrying someone that you date, we don't want our kids to date someone who isn't actively practicing their Christian faith. They have non-believers as friends, but the people you pull in closest to your heart should be like-minded about Jesus.

We also told our daughter, Josie, from an early age that any potential boyfriends would need to come and talk with us in our home before she could date him. This was somewhat embarrassing to her, but we told her that if he wasn't willing to do this, then he wasn't man enough to be her boyfriend. We also told her to not apologize to the boy about the requirement, and to clearly let him know that he could not refer to her as his girlfriend until he had talked with us. (Note: if you are a single mom, you could invite a respected male relative or male pastor to join you as the "father" figure for this conversation. It's really helpful and effective to have a man there.)

By her senior year in high school, Josie had dated two boys. First, in the 10th grade, Josie and a boy became interested in dating. She told him about our "meet the parents" requirement which he agreed to do. He then sent her a Facebook relationship request which she denied, telling him that they couldn't say they were in a relationship until he had talked with us. We arranged a time for him to come over to our house and asked Josie to give him a "heads up" that we wanted to hear his testimony. He couldn't drive yet, so his dad dropped him off at our house for our meeting.

In the 11th grade, a second boy was interested in taking Josie to the prom. Although he hadn't officially asked her to be his girlfriend, we felt like going to prom was a big event that called for going over the dating guidelines, plus it was clear that they were both interested in a possible dating relationship (they ended up dating for over a year).

At both of these meetings, Josie greeted the boy at the door, they spoke for a couple of minutes, and then we asked her to go to her room while we talked with him.

We sat down in the living room and thanked him for coming over. We asked about his hobbies and family to try to get to know him. Both boys were visibly quite nervous (which is a good sign in our opinion) so after a few minutes of chit chat, we got down to business. We shared very briefly (2 minutes) about our personal relationships with Jesus Christ and asked to hear his testimony. We listened for sincerity, regular church attendance, and fruit (e.g, bringing friends to church, going on mission trips, community service, etc.).

After this, we shared the following with him and gave him a copy to keep (Jennifer had all this written out, so feel free to read word-for-word from this outline):

* Our daughter has been well-loved and well-protected her entire life. She is coming to you pure and with a good reputation. If you two should end your relationship at some point, we expect you to return her to us in the same condition in which you received her.

* Other boys will watch how you treat her as your girlfriend (how you touch her and speak to her) and will then expect to treat her the same way. If you are disrespectful to her with your words or actions, then other boys will think they can talk disrespectfully to her or treat her poorly. We expect you, when you are with her and when you are hanging out with just the guys, to speak and act respectfully toward our daughter, and to take up for her and protect her and her reputation from harm.

* If you should decide you no longer want to date our daughter, please break up with her quickly rather than dragging it out for weeks. Break up in person or over the phone. Do not break up via texting, social media, e-mail, or by sending someone else to do the breaking up.

Specifics:

- 1) You may not be in her bedroom, and she may not be in your bedroom. This rule applies even if there are other people, such as siblings, in your bedroom.
- 2) The two of you may not be alone in our house or your house. At least one parent needs to be home.
- 3) If you get cold while watching TV in our basement, you may not share an afghan or blanket with our daughter. You can have your own blanket—we have plenty.
- 4) If you are at our house at dinner time, you are always welcome to join us. We look forward to getting to know you better.
- 5) You may hold her hand if she wants.
- 6) You may put your arm around her shoulders if she wants but never during a church or youth service. Also, if you put your arm around her shoulders, do not let your hand flop down in the general vicinity of her chest.
- 7) You may put your arm around her waist if she wants, but do not let your hand or arm drop to her rear end. Do not put your hands in one another's back pockets.
- 8) You may kiss her if she wants.
- 9) You may not lay together on a couch, bed, floor, in a car, etc.
- 10) You may not sit with your legs across one another.
- 11) You may not take a nap together. If you are sleepy, please go to your house to nap alone.

12) Whenever you come to pick her up, always come in the house to get her. Don't honk the horn or text her to say you are in the driveway. Bring an umbrella if the weather is bad.

13) If you are driving our daughter, do not text or talk on a cell phone. In this way, you are protecting her and showing respect for her safety by giving driving your full attention.

14) When you bring her home, always walk her to the door. Do not sit in the car outside talking. Please come in the house if you want to continue talking.

15) You may not go "parking" with our daughter ("parking" is making out in a car somewhere secluded).

16) You may not go into lingerie stores (e.g., Victoria's Secret) with our daughter or help her pick out a swimsuit.

17) If you are watching a DVD or television with our daughter, keep the remote nearby. If a sexually suggestive scene starts, it is your responsibility to quickly find the remote and fast forward past that scene or to quickly switch the channel if something sexually suggestive comes on the TV. Do not take our daughter to see sexually suggestive movies in the theater. In this way, you are protecting and honoring our daughter.

18) Do not discuss your private body parts with each other.

19) Do not send sexually suggestive texts, e-mails, Facebook/Snapchat/Instagram/Twitter messages or phone messages to our daughter. We are on social media and look forward to being one of your Facebook/Snapchat/Instagram/Twitter friends.

20) You may call us "Mr. Degler" and "Mrs. Degler." Please put our home phone number in your phone in case you should need to call us directly: (123) 555-1234.

21) If you are with our daughter at an event or party, and you discover that alcohol or drugs are being used by minors, we expect you to get her out of there immediately.

After this, Jennifer asked if he had any questions or comments, and if he could agree to these guidelines. She gave him a copy of the above guidelines. Then she said, "Mr. Degler would like to talk with you alone now," and left the room to go talk with Josie and go over the same guidelines with her.

Jennifer told Josie to never apologize for any of these guidelines. For example, if the boy started to break a guideline and then said something like, "Oh, wait, I'm not supposed to drop you off without walking you to the door," Josie should never apologize or say "that's OK, it's no big deal." Instead, she should say "thank you for remembering that." Josie was also reminded that while we had given him dating guidelines, she would ultimately teach him how to treat her.

Jeff said the following to the boy (this took just 2 or 3 minutes):

1) It says a lot about you and your character that you had the courage to come over here and talk to us. I'm proud of you for coming over here.

2) Sometimes guys need other guys to talk to. I'm available if you ever need another man to talk to.

3) (This is a direct quote) "I expect you to keep your hands off my daughter. Do I make myself clear?"

Once the boy agreed to this, Jeff said, "Then you may date my daughter."

(Note: although Josie was initially reluctant and embarrassed about the Meet the Parents requirement, afterwards she had this to say: "It's nice that I didn't have to sit down with my boyfriend and tell him about my boundaries and purity—my parents did that for me. And it's good to know that your parents care about your dating life, purity, and that they have your back dating-wise—and that my dad would kick his rear if my boyfriend ever did anything to hurt me. Requiring him to meet with your parents may sound weird at first, but you'll be grateful for it later on.")

Jennifer Degler, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist, life coach, and co-author of *No More Christian Nice Girl: When Just Being Nice—Instead of Good—Hurts You, Your Family, and Your Friends*. A frequent speaker at women's events and marriage retreats, she also maintains a counseling practice in central Kentucky. She is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors and the founder of CWIVES, an organization devoted to helping Christian wives enhance their sexuality (www.cwives.com). She has been interviewed by Women's Day.Com, Moody Radio, and numerous other media outlets. Jennifer and her husband, Jeff, live in Lexington, Kentucky, and have two children. Visit her Web site at www.jenniferdegler.com.