



A resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

# MONKEY-BARRING

**BY: Katie Schneider**

CPYU Research Fellow and the Director of Youth Ministry and Administration at Highview Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Dousman, WI.

*We have all met someone who is never single. As a teenager, I had friends that moved through multiple dating partners faster than I could work up the courage to even say “hi” to a guy I had a crush on. How could they have had time to get to know someone and start a new relationship when the previous one just ended?*

*Spoiler alert: they were working on the new one before letting go of the old one.*



WORLD

## What is Happening?

As most of Gen Z and soon Gen Alpha enter the age of dating, many are navigating the dating scene like the monkey bars on the playground—they hang on to a previous relationship “rung” until they have a firm grasp on the next one. Amanda Miller, professor of sociology at the University of Indianapolis says that while the trend is not new, monkey-barring is very prevalent right now for a variety of reasons:

1. The rise of online dating apps makes finding a partner more like shopping, giving a false security that there will always be someone else
2. Fear of being single
3. Fear of having to deal with the rejection or awkwardness of a breakup
4. Addiction to external validation that comes from the attention and affection of others

While there is disagreement about whether this counts as infidelity in the relationship, it's safe to say most would agree it is at least deceptive. For the person who is doing the monkey-barring, they are lying to their current partner about the state of their relationship and searching for a new one without their knowledge. They are also deceiving their new partner by leading them to think what they have is sincere, when likely they are being used as a backup plan.





## WORD

### What Does God's Word Say?

While there are no chapter and verses of Scripture that specifically speak to dating, there are some underlying biblical principles that need to be addressed in the lives of those who are monkey-barring.

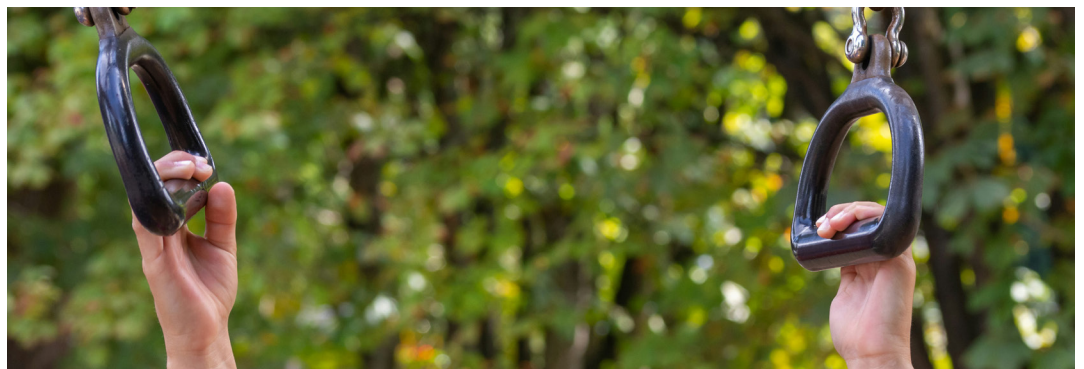
**Our value is given to us by God, not someone we are dating.** Humans are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and if we are believers, we are adopted into God's family (John 1:12). We are his masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10), the pinnacle of all of creation. God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die in our place so that we can be united with him forever (John 3:16). No human being could give us a higher value than we've already been given by our Creator. That also means that the person we date is also of tremendous value and deserves to be treated with respect, not as an option in a vending machine.

**As an image bearer, we are called to resemble God in the way we build relationships with others.** All our relationships should be governed by love and commitment, not deception. Proverbs describes lying as an abomination to God and something he hates (6:16-19; 12:22) and points out that our deception is going to be exposed (10:9).

**The purpose of dating is to find someone to marry.** The covenant of marriage is a one-flesh union that lasts "until death do us part." If a person is not ready for that sort of commitment, they should not be dating in the first place.

**Everyone will go through times where we feel lonely and rejected.** However, this does not give us an excuse to be deceitful in our relationships. During these times, we need to remember that we have a God who is always with us and will never reject us (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5). He wants to comfort us in our times of hardship. Instead of seeking comfort in the arms of another potential partner, we need to turn to the Lord when we are struggling with our relationships.

**Singleness is a good gift from the Lord.** Whether for a season or for a lifetime, singleness is a gift that the Lord will use to draw you closer to him (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).





**WALK**

## Conversation Starters and Questions:

As adults, we also need to make sure we are modeling the principles above in every area of life, not just dating. *Here are a few additional actions you can take to help you instill biblical values:*

- Remind your children that their value is given to them by God. He created them and has given them infinite worth as his image bearer, regardless of their relationship status.
- Discuss how to handle tough conversations with honesty and respect.
- Talk about how you handle the times you feel lonely or rejected by someone. What encourages you during these times? Be vulnerable.
- Make sure both marriage and singleness are talked about as good gifts from God. Singleness is not a punishment; it is a gift the Lord uses to allow someone to more fully dedicate themselves to him.

Chances are that your teenager already knows someone who is monkey-barring. It is important that we have conversations with our kids to help them understand why their peers may be engaging in monkey-barring and why it is not a healthy or biblical way to view relationships.

### Conversation Starters:

1. What is the purpose of dating? What do you think the average student in your high school would say?
2. Do you think singleness is a bad thing? Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 together and talk about how being single is also a gift. What can you do when you're single that you can't when you're in a relationship?
3. Do you think monkey-barring is considered deceitful? Cheating? Why?
4. Do you know someone who is engaging in monkey-barring? Why do you think they do it? What does this reveal about what's going on in their heart?
5. What would you tell someone if they were monkey-barring but wanted to stop? How could you encourage them?

**C P Y U**

CENTER FOR PARENT/YOUTH UNDERSTANDING

Phone: (717) 361-8429  
E-Mail: CPYU@CPYU.ORG  
Web: WWW.CPYU.ORG  
Mail: PO BOX 414,  
ELIZABETHTOWN  
PA 17022, USA

*"Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,  
but those who act faithfully are his delight."*

**- Proverbs 12:22**