



Youth Venture Advanced

THE QUEST FOR CHARACTER

Written by Mark Hoffman

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Youth Venture
Advanced Course 1-5
“The Quest for Character”
(Revised Edition)
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Published by:
Christian Services Network
1975 Janich Ranch Ct.
El Cajon, CA 92019
Toll Free: 1-866-484-6184
www.CSNbooks.com

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Printed in the United States of America

Symbols used in this text:



Lesson Keys

If you remember one thing, remember this!



Check Up

Questions or activities to check for comprehension.



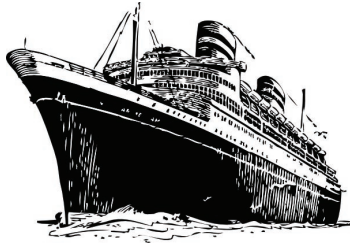
Bible Verse

What God says in His Word about the lesson.

1

Aim for the Heart

On the night of April 14, 1912, the great ocean liner TITANIC crashed into an iceberg in the Atlantic and sank with great loss of life. There were not enough lifeboats for all the passengers, and women and children were seated first.

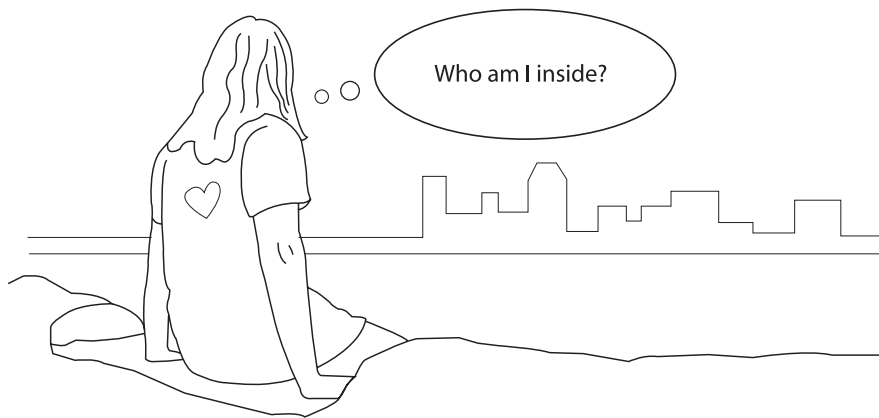


One wealthy woman, who had a place in a lifeboat, asked if she could return to her stateroom for something. She was given just three minutes to do so. As she hurried through the corridors, she stepped over money and precious gems littering the floor where they had been dropped in haste. Once in her stateroom, she ignored her own jewelry and instead grabbed three oranges.

Then she quickly returned to her place in the lifeboat. Perhaps, the woman had spent her entire life collecting her jewelry and fashions, but on that day her values changed. She recognized that food was necessary for life, but jewels were not.

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Like her, sometimes we grab for things that seem to sparkle, glitter, and shine and forget about things that are far more important and necessary. **Many people struggle to gain possessions or fame and yet neglect something far more important, their inward character.** Your character is who you truly are inside. It is the combination of habits, traits, strengths, and weaknesses that make you who you are. It is possible to develop good character; it is also possible to develop bad character.



Your character is who you truly are inside.



Character Traits

Below are some examples of good character and poor character. List some additional good character traits and bad character traits in the blanks:

Good Character

- Honesty
- Courage
- Good moral values
- Responsibility

Poor Character

- Dishonesty
- Irresponsibility
- Quitting
- Laziness

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Your character makes up your inner heart or soul, which is eternal. Long after your body is dead and your possessions are worn out or given to others, your character or soul will continue to exist. It is a terrible mistake to neglect the development of your soul while you pursue less important things. Character is what you do when no one's looking. **Nothing will determine your future as much as your character.** Your character is more important than your looks, financial status, opportunities, or possessions. Image is nothing ... character counts. A person may have great opportunities handed to him, but if he lacks character he will blow those opportunities. He may have great possessions, but if he lacks character he will soon lose his possessions. The Bible tells us that the ultimate quality and success of our life flows out of our heart—that is, our inward character—just like a river flows out from the spring, which is its source. Jesus Christ said: *“What good would it do for a man to gain even the whole world, but lose his soul?” (Matthew 16:26, NIV.)* Remember that in your life, the great question is not “What do I get?”, but “What will I become?”

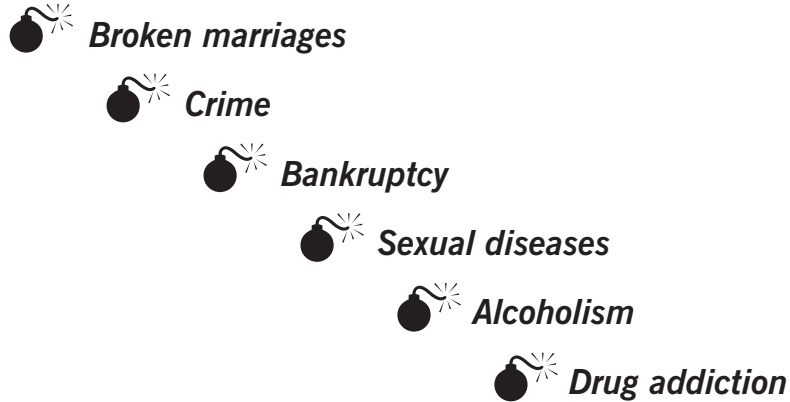


“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” – Proverbs 4:23 NASB

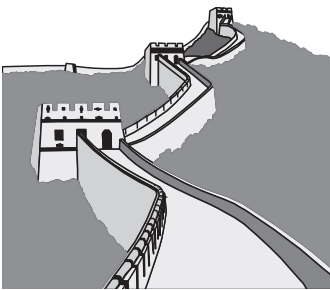


Character is what you do when no one's looking.

In America today, we are facing a crisis of character. All around us we see the evidence of this breakdown of character.



These and many other problems are the result of people who have pursued things and thrills but neglected developing good character. **Remember, there is no outward failure until there is first inner failure.** Outward success follows inward success. Even a society cannot endure if its citizens neglect their character. An individual must have good character in order to know lasting happiness and success. A family needs character to stay together. A marriage will fail unless both partners have inward virtue and self-control. Ancient China learned this lesson the hard way.



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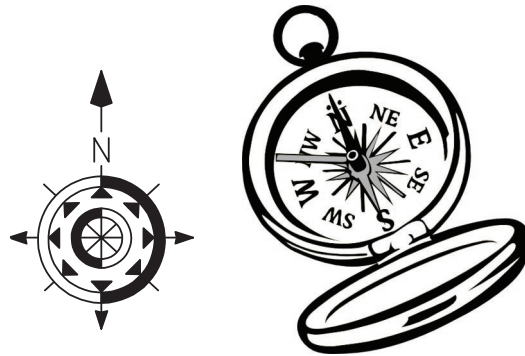
The Chinese people wanted security against the barbaric peoples to the north, so they built the Great Wall of China. It was so high they believed no one could climb over it, and so thick nothing could break it down. They settled back to enjoy their security. During the first hundred years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times. Not once did the barbaric hordes break down the wall or climb over it. Each time they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates. The Chinese were so busy relying on walls of stone that they forgot to teach character and honesty to their children. (source: worthydevotions.com)



Outward success follows inward success.

America today is in danger of a similar collapse, not because of outward enemies, but because of an inward loss of character. Look around at young people today. Many are adrift because they lack character, that inward code of right and wrong and firmly-held beliefs that should direct your life. A little story makes the point:

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A ship was wrecked. As the sailors were making their escape in small boats, suddenly two of them sprang overboard and swam back, entering the sinking ship. Soon they returned with something grasped in their hands. They had gone back to get their compass. They knew that without that compass they would soon be hopelessly lost.

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Good character acts like a compass, keeping us on track and keeping us from getting involved in destructive activities or bad influences. Your honesty or character will guide you and keep you from heading off in the wrong directions. Without it many young people are blown off course into destructive places. Can you think of a time when following your conscience and doing the right thing kept you out of trouble? The lack of character is reflected in the problems of the kids who go to school with you. In our Grossmont Union High School district the drop out rate is over 22%. In this same district, backpacks, lockers, and students are searched trying to stem the flood of drug abuse. Cheating is epidemic. Of those who do graduate from high school, the U.S. government estimates that 30% are functionally illiterate, that is, they could not read their own diplomas.



“A good person is guided by his honesty. But the evil person is destroyed by his dishonesty.” – Proverbs 11:3 NLT



Besides school problems, many kids in our community are getting in trouble with the law:

1. According to official statistics, how many juveniles were arrested in El Cajon in recent years? (Check one)
 A. 55 B. 250 C. 1,510

2. The murder rate for 14–17 year-olds has increased by what rate over the past years? (Check one)
 A. 30% B. 70% C. 165%

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Bad choices made during the teen years affect people for years to come. After working with thousands of individuals for more than 25 years, I have seen that most people spend 20 or more years paying for missed opportunities, mistakes, and poor choices made while they were teenagers. Character is the ability to discipline yourself to stay true to your beliefs and moral values. **Only then can you experience true freedom.**

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1. List some possible long-term problems that can develop because of foolish choices and missed opportunities made during the teen years.

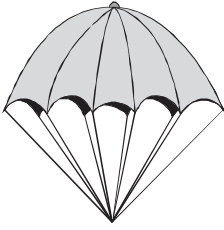
(Some possible answers: alcoholism, drug addiction, lack of education, poor marriage, child support payments, lifetime sexual diseases, barrenness, criminal record, debt, etc.)

2. Do you believe that living without moral values or violating what you believe to be right leads to greater freedom or a loss of freedom? Explain your answer.

(Note: correct answer to both questions in the top section is “C”)



You pay a high price for a low way of living.



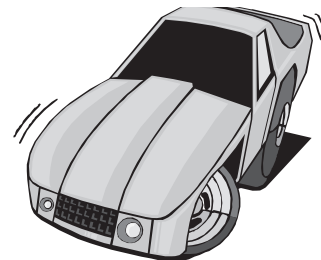
Suppose a skydiver at 10,000 feet announces to the rest of the group, “I’m not using a parachute this time. I want freedom.” **What she will experience is not freedom but destruction, due to the unyielding law of gravity.** Only if she remains attached to the parachute is she free to experience the exhilaration of real freedom. In the same way you will enjoy lasting freedom and well-being only by remaining true to God-given values, since this universe runs according to God’s laws.

Nothing is more important to your future than your character. No skills, abilities, or experience will make up for it. Your character is the make or break issue. It will open or close doors for you. In a recent study by the U.S. Labor Department, 3,000 employers were asked to evaluate eleven criteria by which they chose employees.

- Last on the list were school references.
- Next to last was what school they went to.
- Ninth was what their grades were.

Do you know what they put down as first and most important? The applicant’s character. Many young people work very hard to get into the right college. They worry much about their grades, and yet many of them ignore what is the real key—the development of character.

In the end it is your character by which your family friends and potential employers will evaluate you. You may try to impress people with the clothes you wear, the people you hang out with, or some accomplishment you have done. But in the end you will be known and judged on the basis of your character. A well-dressed liar is still despised for being a liar. A person who gives up when things get tough will be known for being a quitter, no matter what kind of car he drives.



You will enjoy lasting freedom and well-being only by remaining true to God-given values.



Lesson Quiz — Did you get the point?

1. Your character is (circle one):
 - a. The combination of habits, values and strengths that make you who you really are.
 - b. Your sense of humor.
 - c. How many friends you have.

2. The main reason for problems and failure for teens is:
 - a. No place to go after school.
 - b. Lack of good character.
 - c. Not enough money.

3. In a recent study employers said their #1 priority for hiring was:
 - a. Grades
 - b. Character
 - c. Looks

4. Fill in the blank:
 - a. In my life the great question is not “What do I get?”, but _____

 - b. You pay a high price for _____

5. In which of the following areas do you see the most room for improvement in your character? (circle those you would like most to improve)

Honesty	Generosity	Honoring God
Responsibility	Not giving up	Humility
Loyalty	Kindness	Gratefulness
Standing against pressure		
Respectful to parents and other authorities		

Note: End with prayer asking God to help you form good character.

2

Living from the Inside Out



Mickey Mantle, one of the greatest and most-loved baseball players that ever lived, recently died of conditions brought about by years of alcoholism. Shortly before he died he said, “Role model? Yea, I guess I am a role model of sorts— Don’t be like me.”

To develop good character is the most rewarding goal you can have. It is a goal that is within the reach of anyone who will pursue it. Many young people pursue goals that are unrealistic. They put all of their energy into dreams and goals that they are unlikely to attain or that will not really satisfy them. For example, a recent poll taken among African-American high school athletes by Lou Harris showed that 44 percent of these students think they will become pro athletes. In reality, according to an expert, professor Richard Lapchick of Northeastern University, the odds are 1 in 10,000 that they will reach their goal. The tragic thing is that no doubt many of these young people will be unprepared for the future, because they have unrealistic expectations. How about you? Are you investing in the things that are truly necessary for your future? While living the life of ease, as a professional surfer, pro athlete, or rock star is not a realistic goal for the other 9,999 of us, the development of character is a goal to which we can all attain. And it alone guarantees happiness and success. Remember that even many pro athletes and rock stars are unhappy and become drug addicts or alcoholics. Almost every day the news tells us of another pro athlete or rock star that is hospitalized for drugs or a suicide attempt.



“The good man walks along in the everbrightening light of God’s favor; the dawn gives way to morning splendor, while the evil man gropes and stumbles in the dark.” – Proverbs 4:18-19 TLB



The development of character is a goal to which we can all attain.

A Golden Key To Happiness. Neither fame nor wealth can ensure happiness. Not everyone can be as outwardly beautiful as a super model, but all of us can achieve the far greater inward beauty of excellent character. It is character that brings true success or happiness. Several years ago the Gallup organization conducted an extensive study. In their study they concluded that 12% of the American people were highly-committed Christians. In other words, these people had made following Jesus and developing good Christian character their highest priority. This group was over twice as likely (68%) to report they were “very happy” as those who had made no such commitment (30%).

Friends Of God. The Bible promises a special relationship with God for people who are godly—that is, people who have good Christian character. People who try to show the same character as their Heavenly Father are given a place of close friendship with God. God sets them apart from others, and they enjoy a special relationship with Him. He hears and answers their prayers. They have special access with Him.

.....



In Psalm 24:3-4 what do “clean hands and a pure heart” refer to? What is promised to people who have them?



“But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself. The Lord hears when I call to Him.” – Psalm 4:3 NASB



“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to falsehood or swear by what is false. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord.” – Psalm 24:3-4 NIV



It is character that brings true success or happiness.

The highest character is Christ-likeness. That means to be like Christ. The spirit of Christ within the believer works to bring about this very character. **Our job is to let God’s Spirit within us develop the very character of Christ in us.** God’s Spirit wants to direct us in our daily walk every day of our lives. A person who has Christlike character and is united inwardly with Jesus is strong and has an inner compass or guidance system. This is because he or she has personal convictions (that is, beliefs and values) that they will stand up for and will not give up. These now direct their life.

Preferences Or Convictions. Many people today have no convictions, only preferences. *Preferences* are opinions of how you want things to be. However, if opposition against those opinions or preferences is too great, then they are simply given up or set aside. *Convictions* however, are beliefs or principles so important to a person that he or she will hold to those even when they are unpopular or bring opposition. Only people with convictions prevail and succeed in the end. Consider the following example:

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Tom and James are invited to a party. They both agree that they won’t drink alcohol, and if there is any at the party, they will leave together. At the party someone brings out a bottle of whiskey and starts to pass it around. Tom and James get up to leave, and some others in the group begin to make fun of them and pressure them to drink. James reluctantly sits back down and begins to drink, while Tom goes home alone.

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Which of the two had a conviction about not drinking, and which only had a preference?

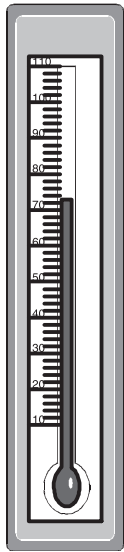
Tom had a _____ James had a _____



“Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.”
– Galatians 5:16 NASB

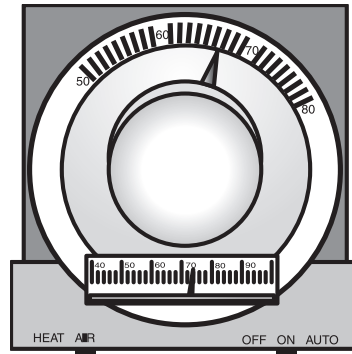


Our job is to let God’s Spirit within us develop the very character of Christ in us.



Thermometers And Thermostats. People who merely have preferences are like thermometers. A thermometer will always adjust to its environment. If it is in a room that is 60°, then it will soon read 60°. If you put it in a room that is 90°, it will soon read 90°. A person without convictions is like that. All they do is reflect and take on the level of those around them. They just do whatever everyone else is doing. They become what everyone else is. Without convictions they become dependent upon others to know how to act or what to think. Such people become dependent upon their peers and are slaves to the approval of others. This dependency on others causes inner turmoil, insecurity, and an unstable life. In addition, you may be pressured into making BIG mistakes for which you may pay for the rest of your life.

A person with convictions, however, is like a thermostat. Instead of taking on the temperature of the room, a thermostat will change the temperature of the room. People with convictions are able to influence their circle of friends in a positive direction. By their life, example, and words, they will influence kids away from drugs, alcohol, and other temptations. They will influence their friends to go to church and become involved in positive activities. The difference between being a thermometer or thermostat lies in developing convictions.



.....



In your life over the past year, would you say that you have been more of a thermometer or a thermostat?

Thermometer

Thermostat



Only a person with convictions and character will be able to stand strong in today's world.

Take A Closer Look. Popular youth culture—including such things as rock and rap music, television shows popular with teens, and movies aimed at the teen market popularize the very opposite of values that are necessary for success in the real world. Think about the attitudes and practices that are valued by teen culture (such as MTV, the music industry, popular teen magazines like Surfer, Heavy Metal, Y.M., or even just the peer group at your school).

.....



1. From the list below underline the attitudes and behaviors that are prized or popular in teen culture:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Acting responsibly | Sex within marriage only |
| Politeness | Sarcasm/put down |
| Living by moral convictions | Planning |
| Studying/working hard | Getting away with something |
| Breaking rules | Daredevil stunts |
| Doing whatever feels good | Revenge |
| Gotta have it now | Highest priority having fun |
| Forgiveness | Obedying parents |
| Tricking/fooling authority | Recklessness |
| Multiple sex partners | Inner character most important |
| Patience | Respecting authority |
| Outer looks most important | Partying |
| Attention to God/Bible | Sacrifice or work for future benefit |

2. Next, go through that list and circle the characteristics and values which are necessary for real and lasting success over the course of your life. Compare the two lists. What does a comparison show?

Culture (noun) ... behavior patterns ... products of human work and thought, characteristic of a community or population.

A person who has character is able to stand against wrong influences even when it means standing alone. Standing alone is never easy, but you can do it when you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Are born again by receiving Jesus as your Savior and have Him live in your heart.</p> | <p><i>“But to as many as received Him, to them He gave the right and power to become children of God.”</i>
– John 1:12 NASB</p> |
| <hr/> | |
| <p>2. Change your thinking by learning God’s Word (the Bible) and begin to see life from God’s perspective.</p> | <p><i>“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be inwardly transformed by the renewing of your mind.” [making your thinking new]</i>
– Romans 12:2 NIV</p> |
| <hr/> | |
| <p>3. Learn to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance, strengthening, and comfort.</p> | <p><i>“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”</i>
– Romans 8:14 NIV</p> |
| <hr/> | |
| <p>4. Realize that you are never alone because God will never forsake you.</p> | <p><i>“God has said, ‘I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.’”</i>
– Hebrews 13:5 NIV</p> |

The Cost Of Not Having Good Character. Inner strength of character is the deciding factor of your life. If you do not develop true, godly character, you will suffer great loss:

- a. You will live below the level you were created for; you will be mastered by lust, selfishness, and painful consequences.
- b. You will miss out on God’s plan for your life. You will be unable to provide real leadership to your friends, future family, or community.
- c. You will experience the failure to lay hold of your dreams and suffer breakdown in your closest relationships.



If you don’t stand for something—you will fall for anything.

**Lesson Quiz — Did you get the point?**

1. A goal that will bring about happiness and which is within everyone's reach is:
 - a. Being a pro athlete or rock star.
 - b. Being lucky.
 - c. Developing good character.

2. According to a Gallup Poll those who commit themselves to following Jesus and developing Christlike character are more than twice as likely to say they are very happy as those who make no such commitment.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. The Bible promises a special relationship with God to those who:
 - a. Are rich.
 - b. Are beautiful.
 - c. Develop Christlike character.

4. The difference between preference and convictions is that you will stand up for your convictions even when you are opposed or must pay a price to do so.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. If you don't stand for something _____

6. Happiness and success come from:
 - a. The outside in.
 - b. The inside out.

Close with prayer.

3

Kindness

Kindness is a character trait of great value. It is a trait that brings great favor with both God and man. God expects us to show kindness. **Kindness means doing good to others according to our Heavenly Father’s will.** Being kind means that I use my words and actions to lift up and encourage others. Being kind involves a decision to see that other person as God sees them rather than through critical eyes. But it involves more; it also means a willingness to cooperate with God’s kindness in the other person’s life, so that God’s good will can come about in their life.

The Power Of Kindness. People today are in great need of kindness. Where there is no kindness, children grow mean and adults become hardened. However, kind words spoken and kind deeds done will change people. A kind word can encourage the discouraged, comfort the hurting, and give courage to the doubting. Knowing this gives you a great power for good.



Circle one of the following 2 choices that describes how you want to respond to others’ weaknesses.

Whenever I see a need or shortcoming in the life of another, I have 2 choices:

1. I can criticize them or make fun of them because of that need or shortcoming.
2. I can see that need or fault as an opportunity to demonstrate my love for Christ by responding with a word or act of kindness.



“What is desirable in a man is his kindness.” – Proverbs 19:22 NASB



“Be ye kind to one another ...” – Ephesians 4:32 NASB



You may not be a great leader or a great evangelist, but if you will begin to show kindness you can change your world.

Changed by Acts of Kindness

A 14-year-old boy named Bill Wilson sat on a drain pipe by the side of the road in St. Petersburg, Florida. The boy had a disfigured jaw and crooked teeth. His pants had holes in the knees. He had returned to that same spot for three days, ever since his alcoholic mother had left him there with the simple words, "I can't do this anymore, stay here." She never returned. The boy's father had already died some time before. A man who lived in that neighborhood, named Dave Rudenis, noticed the youngster sitting there. He walked over to him and talked to him. He bought him something to eat. He paid for the boy to go to a week-long church camp that was beginning the next day. Even though Bill had no idea what a church camp was, he went because he had nowhere else to go. The boy enjoyed camp, but mostly stayed to himself. Then on Wednesday evening at the meeting, he heard something for the first time in his life. He heard that Jesus had died for him on a cross to forgive his sins and give him eternal life. After the message, he went forward for the altar call and received Christ. Somehow he knew that his life would never be the same. When he returned home, he became active in Dave's church. The pastor of the church took him into his own home like his own son. The church payed for corrective surgery on his jaw and braces on his teeth. Today that young boy, Bill Wilson, has grown up. He now operates a church and Sunday school in New York City, called Metro Ministries. It is a ministry that reaches thousands of the poorest children in the worst sections of New York every week.

.....

Bill's life was changed by acts of kindness.

- First the kindness of Dave Rudenis,
- Next by the kindness of Jesus Christ in dying on the cross for him,
- Then the kindness of the pastor and the congregation of the church.

Now Bill is passing on that same kindness to others in need.



Kindness can change the world. Your family, your school, your neighborhood will start to change when you practice kindness.

God is Kind. God wants us to be full of kindness because He is kind. God shows us every day his great kindness. Think about how God is kind to us each day. He ...

- Gives us life and health each day.
- Forgives us our sins whenever we ask.
- Is patient with us even though we often fail Him.
- Hears all our prayers.

God wants us to be kind, because He is. As His greatly-loved children, He wants us to grow to be like Him.

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Can you think of other ways in which God shows us His kindness?

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The Golden Rule. Jesus exemplified kindness and mercy. He spent much of His time with the poor and outcasts of society. He came to help those who needed help. One time a group of important people were criticizing Jesus for spending time with “losers.” Jesus replied to them, *“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* (Mark 2:17 NASB.) Jesus was even kind to those who were unkind to Him. He prayed for those who mistreated Him. He conquered the world, not through force, but through kindness. He calls us to do the same thing: *“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.”* (Luke 6:27, 28, 31 NASB.) This verse has come to be known as the Golden Rule. It is a simple rule to guide your life. Jesus understood that love was more powerful than hate and kindness more lasting than meanness. The Bible tells us that kindness can overpower hate.



“But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:8 NASB



“The Lord is full of compassion and kindness (or mercy).” – James 5:11 NASB



“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” – Romans 12:21 NASB

THINK before you speak!

- Is it **TRUE?**
- Is it **INSPIRING?**
- Is it **HELPFUL?**
- Is it **NEEDED?**
- Is it **KIND?**

.....



List several people you have known who were kind. After each name, write about what effect that person had on others.

.....

Insulting God. Have you ever considered the following? The Bible tells us that *“God created man in His own image.”* (Genesis 1: 27.) That means that every person is created to be a little image, or picture, of God. Every person is created to show forth or reflect some part of God’s glory. Like God, and unlike all animals, every person has a spirit; the ability to reason, speak, love, and make moral choices; and each person has an eternal soul. Every person is therefore, in some sense, a reflection of God. Since every person was created in the image of God to reflect His glory, it is not possible to insult, disrespect, or mistreat any person, without insulting and showing disrespect for God, who created them. That is why the Bible says: **He who insults those made in God’s image insults God. Those who are kind and show respect to those made in God’s image honor God.** Consider if you were running for mayor. You might put up campaign posters with your picture all over town. If some people treated those posters with disrespect by drawing a moustache over your picture or horns coming out the back of your head, would they not be showing you disrespect? Would you not consider yourself insulted? In the same way, when we insult people made in God’s image, we insult God. Remember this the next time you are tempted to insult or ridicule someone for a supposed fault or failing. No matter who they are, all people are created in the very image of God.



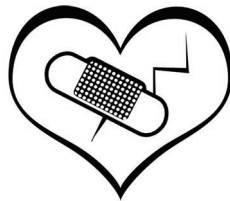
**“He who mocks the poor, mocks the God who made them.”
– Proverbs 17:5 NASB**



“He who oppresses the poor insults His Maker. But He who is gracious to the needy honors God.” – Proverbs 14:31 NASB

The Up Side. There is an up side to all of this. Because people are made in God’s image, when we are kind to them we are serving and honoring God, who will reward us. Jesus went so far as to say that when you helped one of His followers, you were helping him. Every time you invest a kind word or deed in a person, you cause everyone to remember that person’s true worth. You show that people—all people—are worth the effort. After all, Jesus thought people worth the effort of coming to earth from heaven and dying on the cross for them. Often people treat others as if they were of no value. They insult and ridicule others and treat them like dirt. This lowers the worth of everyone. Being kind to someone who needs it reminds everyone of how valuable all people are.

Kindness has the power to change people. I heard a story once that a man and wife had a terrible relationship:



They only talked in order to argue. One day, out of the blue, the husband said something kind to his wife. The wife responded by being kind in return. Several years later the wife was reflecting on how her marriage had changed. Now she and her husband loved each other and worked together to solve problems. She traced the change to that one day long ago and asked her husband what started it all. He said he had been reading a book that said ‘you should say something kind to your wife everyday’, and he made a promise to himself to do it. One kindness brought forth another until their entire marriage was changed.



“He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his good deed.” – Proverbs 19:17 NASB



“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it unto me.” – Matthew 25:40 NASB

“An act of kindness is far more than meeting a physical need. It highlights the worth of a person.” – Bill Gothard

By being kind you can actually help people come to believe in God. Kind words and actions can demonstrate the forgiveness, love and kindness of God making it easier for others to believe in Him. Even when others treat us badly our kindness and forgiving attitude can demonstrate God’s willingness to forgive them despite their shortcomings.

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1. Are you ready to put forth the effort and learn of the incredible power of kindness?

Yes

No

If you marked yes, then try this experiment. This month try to reach out to someone who needs a friend and show them kindness. Watch how they change before your very eyes. In fact, watch how you change as you see God use your kindness to change another person’s life.

2. List the names of several people who need kindness shown to them that God is calling you to treat kindly.



“Do you not know that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”
– Romans 2:4 NKJV



Never forget that kindness enriches the life of both the one receiving it and of the one giving it!

**Lesson Quiz — Did you get the point?**

1. Whenever I see a need or shortcoming in someone's life I have 2 choices. I can _____ them because of that need or shortcoming, or I can see that fault or shortcoming as an opportunity to demonstrate _____ by responding with a word or act of kindness.
2. Being kind involves a decision to see that other person as _____ sees them rather than through critical eyes.
3. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule in Luke 6:31: "Treat others in the same way that _____ ."
4. In the story, Bill Wilson's life was changed by:
 - a. A government program.
 - b. Expensive counseling sessions.
 - c. The kindness of God expressed through others.
5. Do you agree with the following statement?
"We cannot give God anything since He already owns everything and doesn't need anything. We can however give to God by showing kindness to his followers who do have needs."
 - a. Agree
 - b. Disagree

Hint: Look at Proverbs 19:17 and Matthew 25:40 which are on page 23.

6. On the line below, list the name of someone to whom you are going to make an extra effort to show God's kindness:

Close in prayer regarding what you learned today and any other prayer requests you have. Do not forget to pray for the person to whom you are going to make a special effort to be kind.

4

Moral Freedom



Freedom. Everyone wants it. Everyone talks about it. Sadly, many people never achieve true freedom, for the greatest freedom is within the human heart. True freedom is the freedom from sin, bad temper, selfishness, fear, and slavery to bad habits, wrong desires or even addictions to such things as alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. **Real freedom is not the right to do whatever we feel like doing. It is the power to be able to do what we ought to do.** It is the freedom and ability to become what God promises us we can become. People who follow desires and activities that are against God's will soon find that they have lost their true inner freedom. Sinful habits and activities have caught them and they are not free to receive what God wants to give them. They are not free to become what God would make them. Selfishness, lust, or pride, or such things as alcohol, sex, or drugs may overcome them. They become slaves to these things. They have lost their freedom. Their attitude and outlook on life is made negative, because rather than having true inner freedom, sin has gained control over their hearts. Their thinking, emotions and expectations become affected. Even their own view of themselves eventually suffers.



"So Christ has made us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don't get all tied again in chains of slavery." – Galatians 5:1 (Living Bible)



"Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." – John 8:34 NASB



**"For by whatever a person is overcome, by this he is enslaved."
– II Peter 2:19 NASB**



Real freedom ... is the freedom and ability to become what God promises us we can become.

Norman Vincent Peale illustrates this point with a story in his book, *Power of the Plus Factor*:

As I was walking, I came upon a tattoo studio. In the window were displayed pictures of tattoos, which you could get. One of these tattoos that could be put on your flesh was three simple words "Born to Lose." I entered the shop in astonishment and, pointing to those words, I asked "Does anybody really get that terrible phrase 'Born to Lose' tattooed on his body?" He replied, "Yes, sometimes." "But, I just can't believe that anyone in his right mind would do that," I said. The Chinese man simply tapped his forehead and in broken English said, "Before tattoo on body, tattoo on mind."

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That story makes a point. When people give up their inner freedom, when the effects of sinful thoughts and actions darken their heart and morals, then their view of themselves and everything else becomes increasingly negative.

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Do you want to go on and learn how to achieve this inner freedom?

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What Makes You Tick? Those who desire this true, inner freedom must understand their true nature. The Bible teaches us that God has created each of us with three dimensions, or three drives. There are 3 distinct dimensions or drives in your life:

- Body = Physical drives or needs.** Our need for food, water, physical exercise, and sexual expression.
- Soul = Psychological drives.** Our need for friends, belonging, and intellectual growth.
- Spirit = Spiritual drives.** Our need for God, His love, and His acceptance. Our need to understand our purpose, the meaning of life, and what happens after death.

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"... lest anyone of you become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
– Hebrews 3:13 NKJV

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"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." – I Thessalonians 5: 3 NASB

All 3 of these elements go together to make you who you are. **God’s plan is that the spiritual dimension be the strongest and direct the others.** However, when through violating God’s Word and a lack of self-control the physical drives are wrongly satisfied, they can become dominant. We then become enslaved to them and our spirit becomes weakened and dull, drowned out in a flood of unrestrained physical drives and desires. Then God seems distant and far away, and we have a hard time hearing from Him. Moral freedom means having all our physical and psychological drives under the control of God who dwells within us. It means that we exercise self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Self-control is the ability to control or overrule wrong impulses, urges, desires, and emotions. It allows you to place your values and beliefs over your urges and emotions.** Only then can you walk in truth and freedom. With the strength God supplies you can exercise self-control:

- When you feel an urge or desire to sin.
- When you have an urge to hurt someone.
- When you feel a destructive emotion like depression or rage.

You can control these feelings and emotions because God’s Holy Spirit who dwells within you will give you strength when you ask Him. The thing you must remember is this: you will either be controlled by urges and feelings, or by God’s Spirit.

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Put the letter “S” after those activities that the Spirit of God would lead you into and an “F” by activities that feelings and urges would lead you into.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| _____ Self-control | _____ Pregnancy |
| _____ Depression | _____ Overeating |
| _____ Patience | _____ Slander & Gossip |
| _____ Fear | _____ Thoughtfulness toward others |
| _____ Suicide | _____ Courage |
| _____ Working hard now for future rewards | |

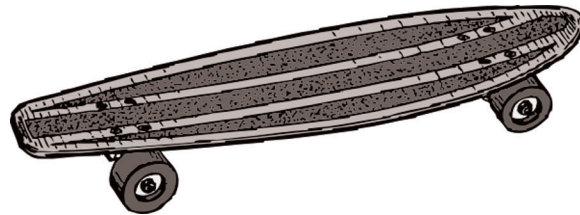


“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other ... Live by the Spirit and you will not follow the desires of the sinful nature.” – Galatians 5:17,16 NIV



Moral freedom means having all our physical and psychological drives under the control of God who dwells within us.

A High Price for Low Living. Following God’s Spirit leads to success and life while following urges and feelings leads to confusion, defeat, and even death. This is illustrated in the following tragic testimony of Mark “Gator” Rogowski:



Many know me as Gator, the skateboard professional. But my real name is Mark Rogowski. I’m in prison for the death of my former girlfriend. I am 29 years old and have been in prison for 5 years. I may never go home. Before prison I had a great career as Gator, the world champion skate pro. My life was full of limousines, homes, new cars, world travel, and concerts backstage, and going around with actors, models and rock stars. I was frequently on television, radio, magazine covers, and in centerfolds worldwide. From the ripe age of 16, my yearly income rose to \$100,000 a year and upward. (I am not telling these things to brag but merely to tell my story, in the hope that it might help someone, and to give glory to God who has opened my eyes to my faulty beliefs.) You could say that for the most part I was a self-centered, conceited, prideful young person who often times disrespected others. I made what seemed to be “little” compromises in my behavior here and there, which numbed me to larger compromises later. And I allowed so-called “harmless” activities to go unchecked in my life. Things like drinking beer and booze, smoking cigarettes (then pot), lying, ditching classes and slacking on homework, hanging out with the wrong people and also looking at porno videos and magazines. Another thing was having sex before getting married. You know, I took a lot of the ideas from movies, MTV, and album lyrics literally. I thought, if it’s on TV or on a rock CD then it must be cool. WRONG! You could say that my moral life was basically like a swinging door—whatever felt good at the time. Another thing, since the age of fourteen, I had been getting drunk on alcohol regularly. At the time of my crime I was 24 and had been sober for 6 whole months for the first time. That night we had taken some codeine pills and drank several bottles of wine. My mind had already been swimming with perverted images I’d seen and read about in porno books and videos. The wine and pills really took away my inhibitions (fears, reason, conscience) during that hour. But the real key to my bizarre behavior that night was my anger—even though I may have appeared happy and clean on the

outside. I had a tremendous amount of jealousy, anger, and resentment built up inside. Deep inside I felt that my girlfriend and others “owed” me something. I felt cheated when my expectations weren’t met. I desperately wanted control when I found out that she had a secret romance on the side. I also thought I could handle all of my problems all by myself ... I was too embarrassed or proud to share my true feelings with anyone. Believe me, I never thought I was capable of anything so bad as this. I’d never hurt any of my girlfriends in any way before. I have so much sadness inside because of my sudden act of violence. I took human life away and made relatives and friends have great pain. Her parents will never see her wedding day or grandchildren. I stole their joy. I violated someone’s body. I hate prison, this life here, and what I did back then. I may never get out now. But unlike a bad dream, I can’t just wake up out of it and go skateboarding. No fun, no freedom, no second chance. Today I have a very tender conscience and new healthy attitudes. I know this is pretty heavy stuff; but, please, check your life and your heart before it’s too late. Hey, you don’t have to be foaming at the mouth or “crazy” to get some guidance or talk to a counselor—someone who will listen. Finally, please don’t be deceived into believing what some other sources (like TV, movies, friends, trends, and culture) tell you is “cool” or normal. Check it out for yourself. Please stay away from sex before marriage, away from pornography, drugs, and alcohol—they are just not good for us. And remember, GET HEARD, IT’S OK TO NEED HELP.



What can you learn from Mark Rogowski’s life?

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The Power of a Clear Conscience. Living in moral freedom unleashes a great power in your life. It is the power of a clear conscience. Your conscience is the God-given small voice inside that tells you whether what you are doing is right or wrong. When you do wrong, your conscience will bother you. A clear conscience is one



“Beloved, if our heart [conscience] does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.” – I John 3: 21-22 NKJV

that is clear of offenses toward God or people. A clear conscience gives one great confidence and boldness. It allows you to look everyone in the eye without shame and to approach God without guilt or fear. One of the greatest reasons for fear, insecurity, low self-image, and dullness toward God is a guilty or bad conscience. A bad conscience spells trouble, because you now have a faulty inner compass. You gradually lose the ability to tell right from wrong, and you soon start living a lie. A person who has violated their conscience is a person in conflict with himself. He is acting in a way that is against what he believes in his heart. Therefore he cannot have confidence or display ongoing courage. But someone with a clear conscience is sensitive to the leading of God and can face life with boldness, hope, and confidence. **Only someone who maintains his moral freedom can have a clear conscience.** However, anyone can gain this clear conscience by asking and receiving forgiveness from God and attempting restitution with anyone he has wronged.

Moral Purity = Life Management. The Bible compares our heart with its emotions, imagination, hopes and dreams, to a spring from which flow the rivers of our life. *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the streams of life.”* (Proverbs 4:23 AB.) This spring and its waters are pure and sweet at birth. As young children our hopes, dreams, and enthusiasm know no bounds. They are meant to carry us like a river into God’s plan for our life. But that river must be kept pure. This spring and its rivers can become polluted and its waters lost, leaving us empty and hollow inside, bored and lacking in hope. Our enthusiasm, joy, and life can evaporate as we pollute our “inner waters” through rebellion, lust, and greed. This is the unfortunate story of so many people. Through sin and bad choices they have poisoned their attitudes. Because they did not “watch over their heart with all diligence [care]” they have become polluted and weak inside. They become cynical and pessimistic. **Living by God’s directions for life allows us to live in moral freedom and maintain a clear conscience.** It frees us on the inside from internal conflict and releases God-given energies to fulfill God-given plans and dreams.



“If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
– I John 1:8-9 NIV



“Keep ... a good conscience, which some have rejected, and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.” – I Timothy 1:19 NASB



Lesson Quiz — Did you get the point?

1. Everyone who commits sin _____ (John 8:34)

2. The greatest freedom is:
 - a. The right to do whatever you want, whenever you want.
 - b. To live a life free from rules, laws, authorities, and limits.
 - c. An inner freedom from sinful habits, addictions, and desires that would keep us from doing what we should and receiving God's blessing.

3. Below, list the 3 dimensions or drives that make up your life next to their proper definitions.
 - a. Our need for God, His love, acceptance and help. Our need to have meaning and purpose in life. = _____
 - b. Physical needs and drives. Our need for food, water, and physical exercise. = _____
 - c. Psychological needs. Our need for friends, belonging, and intellectual growth. = _____

4. God's plan is that your spiritual dimension be the strongest and bring about His wonderful plans in your life.

Do you believe God has a plan for your life?

a. Yes b. No

Do you want to discover His plan for your life?

a. Yes b. No

List the steps you are willing to take to develop your spiritual life so that it becomes the strongest part of your life:

5. A clear conscience releases a great confidence and power in your life. An unclear conscience brings confusion and compromise into your life, and separates your heart and thoughts from God. Do you have a clear conscience now?
 - a. Yes b. No (If you answered no, will you talk about it with your mentor?)

Close in prayer.

5

Self-Respect or Self-Destruction?



In the previous lesson, we talked of how the Bible compares our heart, with its emotions, imaginations, and dreams, to a spring from which flow the great rivers of our life. Some of these rivers or drives within us are extremely powerful. They are so powerful that they can do great good or great harm. When a powerful river is within its banks, it can deliver water for irrigation, provide efficient transportation, and even generate tremendous hydroelectric power through a system of dams and spillways. However, if that river is allowed to break through those banks or overflow them, it becomes a very destructive flood, destroying everything in its path. Every year in America, people lose their property and lives to such floods. **Sexuality is one of the most powerful drives in us. When the sexual drive is channeled within its God-given banks, it is a source of great benefit and even life.** The act of sex within marriage produces closer bonding, trust, intimacy, and even babies who will grow up being loved and cared for by a mother and father. What an incredible gift sex is. **However, when cut loose from these banks of marriage, sex has proven to be one of the most destructive forces in our culture:**

1. Since 1950 births to single mothers have increased by 900%, even though abortion is now the most common form of surgery in the United States, undergone by 1.5 million women per year. In fact, 40% of all teenage girls and young women become pregnant while single.
2. In some cities, nearly 60 percent of minority children are born to single mothers, and three out of four are raised without a father. Consequently, welfare rolls and prison populations have exploded.
3. In the U.S., over 1 million people are believed to be infected with HIV, the AIDS virus. In San Diego County alone, more people have died of AIDS than died in the terrible events of September 11, 2001 when terrorists flew commercial airliners into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.



Sexuality is one of the most powerful drives in us.



1. In S.D. County alone how many residents have already died or are dying from AIDS?

- a. 250
- b. 900
- c. 6000

2. According to the U.S. Justice Dept., a woman living with her boyfriend is how many times more likely to suffer domestic violence than a woman living with her husband?

- a. Two times as likely
- b. Ten times as likely
- c. Fifty-six times as likely

.....






Paying the Price. Violence, poverty, disease, broken families and death are the result of our society releasing the sexual river from its God-given banks of marriage. However, there are deeper and more personal costs a person will pay. God has placed within us an ability to dream great dreams and to conceive of great things. This is because, as our Father, He is pleased when we accomplish something wonderful. He has made us in such a way that great rivers of creativity and energy can flow out of our heart to help us accomplish those dreams. It is amazing to look around the world and see what people can accomplish. Just imagine what YOU might accomplish with God’s help. However, wrong sexual activity can divert and diffuse this great torrent of energy, enthusiasm, and drive.

Answer to both questions above is “c”



God has placed within us an ability to dream great dreams and to conceive of great things.

Sexual sin and sexual pollution (such as pornography) in your formative years, can result in life-long struggles such as:

-  **A lack of sexual self-control (promiscuity)**
-  **Addiction to pornography**
-  **Feelings of guilt and shame**
-  **Sexual confusion—even homosexuality**
-  **Sexual diseases and barrenness**

Millions of Americans must divert great amounts of energy in order to struggle against these destructive problems, which they developed by misusing their sexuality. The inner strength and power God had given them is diverted and lost. Instead sexual lust burns them out, as one college student recently wrote:

.....

I began to notice that the more sex I had, the more I wanted. I had always heard the excuse that having sex was the way to get rid of sexual tension, but the opposite was true. Having sex increased the desire. It was like a drug. I couldn't stop myself, yet at the same time I wasn't satisfied at all. The people I knew who were outright promiscuous were even worse than I was—it was all they ever talked about and evidently all they ever thought about. It controlled them; they never controlled it. Sex was an all-consuming fire that never burned out, but instead burned them out.

.....

Cuts Like a Knife. Having premarital sex can be the most damaging thing you ever do. In the act of exposing your body, the intimate touching, and the physical union, you also expose your heart and soul. A person who becomes sexually active will experience deep hurt and pain when that one who you became joined with through sex rejects you for another person and abandons you for their next boyfriend, girlfriend, or casual fling. God gave sex a tremendous power. In order to help a man and woman bond as husband and wife and achieve greater oneness and harmony, He gave sex the power to bond two people together.

 **An addiction is anything that has more power over you than you do.**

Every time you have sex, you are offering part of yourself; your most intimate self, to another person. When they leave, you lose that part of yourself. You are diminished—you are ripped off; part of your river of life goes down the sewer drain. That is one reason why God reserves sex for marriage. In the book of Proverbs, in a poetic section that refers to our sex life like a stream, we are cautioned to have sex only with our husband or wife. Casual sex results in a scattering of the focus, drive, and energy we were given at birth. Our dreams and ambitions as well as our potential “runs off into the streets.” Premarital sex eventually brings inner wounding, confusion, and a lowered self worth.

What Sex Can’t Do. Sex, like drugs and alcohol, is often used by young people to mask an inner loneliness and emptiness. God’s love is the answer for this loneliness and emptiness of the human heart. Trying to cover it over by having sex only keeps us from reaching out to God. It becomes a stumbling block in our spiritual growth. Premarital sex is not the cure for loneliness, unpopularity, bad grades, low self-worth, unhappiness, or a bad relationship with your parents. It will not make you feel like more of a man or more like a woman. In fact, it will not do anything but make your problems worse. Sex is not some light amusement or handy distraction to take your pain away. Rather, it is a powerful gift from our Creator. Misusing its power comes with a high price.

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**“And don’t you know that if a man joins himself [has sex] with a prostitute, she becomes a part of him and he becomes a part of her? For God tells us in the scriptures that the two become one flesh.”
– I Corinthians 6: 16 NASB**



“Drink water from your own well, my son—be faithful and true to your own wife. Why should your spring be dispersed and your streams of water run off into the streets?” – Proverbs 5: 15-16 NKJV



Premarital sex eventually brings inner wounding, confusion, and a lowered self worth.



1. List some people you have known who have paid a high price for misusing sex outside of marriage:

2. List the problems that misusing sex causes in life.

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The Lie Of Safe Sex. The safe sex message has been a disaster for many teenagers. It sends a message that sex outside of marriage can be done without harmful consequences. In fact, in a recent poll, 63% of teens feel that teaching about “safe sex” in school will lead to more sex. Unfortunately the idea of “safe sex” is just not true.

Planned Parenthood recently concluded a study which was reported in *USA Today*. According to that study, out of 100 couples that use condoms, what number would be pregnant after 1 year? (a.) 2 (b.) 14 (c.) 60

According to the study, at the end of 1 year 14 of the 100 couples would be pregnant due to the failure of condoms as a birth control measure. The rate among teenagers is much higher. In fact, at the typical American high school, roughly 100 students become pregnant every year. Worse news is that condoms are even less likely to prevent the spread of diseases. While a female can only get pregnant 3–5 days a month, diseases can be spread everyday. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says that 2 out of every 100 condoms just plain leak, even before they are removed from the package. Relying on a condom is like playing “Russian roulette”. This false idea of “safe sex” is one reason why 3 million teenagers (one in six) will be affected by a sexually transmitted disease this year.

“They pass out condoms, teach sex education and pregnancy-this and pregnancy-that. But they don’t teach us any rules.” – 17 year-old high school student, quoted by Jane Gross in *The New York Times*, 3/29/03

Some couples have sex in the belief that it will make their relationship better. However, sex outside of marriage tends to have the opposite effect. Introducing sex into the relationship complicates the relationship and brings in tensions that otherwise would not be there. Premarital sex clouds the issue of true love and brings in a confusion of emotions. **Because sexual passion is so strong, it is easily mistaken for love.** This is one reason why people often feel that they married the wrong person, someone they were not truly in love with.

Sex Before the Wedding. Premarital sex will not make a bad relationship better, but it may ruin a good relationship. According to the U.S. Census, couples that live together before marriage are 50% more likely to divorce than those who marry without having lived together. Having sex before marriage tends to begin to sour the relationship. Many couples believe that if they are in love and plan to get married that it is OK to have sex and even live together. But that decision will probably be regretted. A national survey indicated that out of 100 couples who lived together:

- 40 break up before marriage (making it feel like a divorce)
- Of the 60 that get married, 45 will get divorced (50% higher than the national average)
- Only 15 of the 100 couples are still together after 10 years. Those are pretty lousy odds.

Sex is too important to just let someone else talk or pressure you into it. Unfortunately, too often that is just what happens.

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Many surveys have been conducted among teens that are sexually active. According to those surveys, what do you think was the number one reason why those teens had their first sexual experience?

- a. Curiosity b. Lust c. Peer pressure

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If you marked peer pressure, you are correct. In the teen world, there is much pressure to engage in sex outside of marriage, even though it is unwise and against God’s will. Our culture is saturated with sexual messages. In fact, a recent study by Planned Parenthood noted that the three major networks broadcast over 65,000 references to sexual behavior in one year, an average of 27 references per hour.

Stand Up And Speak Out. If you fall for the influence of TV and rock music or give in to peer pressure, you simply move down to their level. If you speak up for your own beliefs, you invite them up to your level. Sex needs to be lifted up from the gutter where movies, television, and so many teenagers have placed it. You can help restore sex and the dignity of our bodies to the place they deserve. God's rules for sex are not there in order to deny us pleasure, but rather to help us to live in the dignity and honor that come from being children of God, and to protect us from the consequences of misusing this powerful gift.

Here Is An Incredible Truth! Our bodies are a temple of God's Spirit who dwells within the Christian. Therefore we must treat our bodies accordingly. In fact, when Jesus died on the cross and purchased us back from the power of Satan with the price of His own blood, he purchased our bodies as well. Therefore, we must glorify Jesus with how we use our bodies, since Jesus is the new owner.



“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable ...” – I Thessalonians 4:3-4 NIV



**“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”
– I Corinthians 6:18-20 NASB**



Lesson Quiz — Did you get the point?

1. Since 1950, what is the increase in births to single mothers?
a. 250% b. 600% c. 900%

2. Sexual sin and sexual pollution can result in which life long struggles?
a. A lack of sexual self-control (promiscuity)
b. Addiction to pornography
c. Feelings of guilt and shame
d. Sexual confusion—even homosexuality
e. Sexual diseases and barrenness
f. All of the above

3. Opening your body to physical intimacy can open your heart and soul too.
a. True b. False

4. Who is more likely to have their marriage end in divorce?
a. Those who live together before marriage.
b. Those who do not live together before marriage.

5. List influences you’ve noticed that speak “sexual freedom messages” in our culture today.

6. It is God’s will that you should be sanctified ... in a way that is holy and honorable (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4) and that you honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:20). Would you like to pray with your mentor about committing yourself to sexual purity?
a. Yes
b. No
c. At a later time
d. I have already made this commitment in my life and would like a prayer of encouragement.

**Close in prayer regarding what you have learned today
and any other prayer requests you have.**

