

# AWKWARD

Feb 28- Week 2 Middle School

## INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to remind your MS students to be in the Dod between 5:45-5:55pm. We will have dinner for MS from 6-6:30pm. Then, our guest speakers will begin promptly at 6:30pm. See the schedule below:

6-6:30pm Dinner

6:30-7pm MS Guys- in the gym to hear speaker, Michael Leahy

MS Girls- in the Catacombs to hear speaker, Julie Davies

7-8p All HS CRUs to their rooms

## BOTTOM LINE:

Sex isn't casual no matter how casually it's treated.

## SCRIPTURE:

- *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. ... Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2)*
- *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:9-10)*
- *The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps (Proverbs 14:15).*
- *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise (Ephesians 5:15).*

## THINK ABOUT THIS:

At this phase, it may be difficult for teenagers to recognize how media or cultural influences affect their thoughts and attitudes. They are not incapable, just inexperienced. As leaders, we can help them think critically by teaching them to name and evaluate cultural messages about sexuality, from porn to ads to peer conversations. This week in your conversations, aim for teaching them HOW to think rather than telling them what to think. Most importantly, we want students to recognize the dangers in cultural messages about sex (specifically the messages influenced by pornography and porn-like ads) and begin to think critically about them in light of God's heart for them and His plan for their lives.

## MESSAGE:

- To start, you need to know that if you're feeling any shame over things you've done in the past, there's no judgment here. We can all be transformed and begin thinking in a new way. Here's how:
  - Start by identifying where you've been affected by a thought pattern.
  - Then be transformed, as Paul says, by renewing your mind.

- What is it that you'd like to see transformed in your life? No matter what it is, just know that sometimes a transformed mind starts with transformed behavior.
- Live like there's more to the story when it comes to sex. Live like sex isn't casual.
- Hear what the apostle Paul said in a letter to a group of Christians in Rome. When people started to follow Jesus in the Roman Empire, there was tension between what was normal at the time, and the life Jesus was inviting them to.
- Chances are, they felt some confusion over what was the real story, and who they should believe (Romans 12:2 NIV).
- God isn't just asking you to BELIEVE something about Him or about the world—He's asking you to LIVE differently.
- Paul obviously isn't talking about sex or dating here, but that doesn't mean his advice doesn't apply to that area of our lives. He tells us to love and care about each other sincerely (Romans 12:9-10 NIV).
- God is calling us to be the kind of people who understand that how we treat another human being is never casual, no matter how casually people act about it.
- Porn's Influence on us
  - The average age of exposure to porn is 11 years old.
  - We're not just affected by it. We're actually INFLUENCED by the culture of porn.
  - Porn culture is all around us!
  - Porn is sexualized content designed to get a specific response.
- There's a website called [FightTheNewDrug.org](http://FightTheNewDrug.org). They've compiled decades of studies from respected institutions about pornography.
  - Pick 3-4 of the listed examples that will resonate most with your CRU:
    - Porn doesn't tell you facts like this when you look at it. It wants you to be distracted and addicted. It doesn't want you to have a full, complete life.
    - Porn will not make you better at sex.
    - Porn will not make sex better for you.
    - Porn will not help you understand what sex is like.
    - God isn't against porn because He thinks that the act of sex is bad. He's anti-porn because pornography has twisted what He intended sex to be.
    - God is a 100% loving God, and there is absolutely nothing loving about pornography.
- God, who invented sex, designed it to be a good thing, to be significant, and to matter, but we're getting messages that tell us something else.

## APPLICATION

Take notes from your time with the speaker. Take special note of any questions or special comments from your students. If there are certain issues or questions that need to be discussed during group, make sure you ask them.

## QUESTIONS

1. On a scale of 1-10, how awkward is it to talk about porn in church?
2. Look at the following categories. Where do you see sex talked about as if it's...

- A. No big deal. Totally casual?
- B. Serious. Important?
- C. Dangerous. Scary?

3. A common pattern of thinking in our culture is that sex should be casual and you shouldn't "catch feelings" or "get emotional" about it. How would you define what "casual" means in regard to sex?
4. Were any of the facts the speaker read surprising to you?
5. If someone is a follower of Jesus, why does it matter whether they're affected by porn?
6. Read Ephesians 5:15. What does it look like to be wise living in a culture influenced by porn culture?
7. Read Romans 12:2. What would transforming the pattern mentioned in that question above look like?
8. Read Romans 12:9-10. How does treating sex casually keep us from doing this?
9. What are some ways we can renew our minds?

#### **THIS WEEK:**

This week start a text thread with your small group that asks different questions each day of the week unpacking Romans 12:9-10 in high school terms. For example:

*Monday:* What does "love must be sincere" mean when you're in middle school?

*Tuesday:* What does "hate what is evil" look like in middle school?

*Wednesday:* What does "cling to what is good" look like in middle school?

*Thursday:* What does "being devoted to one another" look like in middle school?

*Friday:* What does it mean to "honor one another" in middle school?

**Note to CRU Leaders:** This is a tricky conversation to start and may make some students feel uncomfortable. Feel free to acknowledge the awkwardness before getting started. At this phase, high-schoolers are likely to have experiences with pornography or sexual content, but oftentimes they are unaware of how they are affected. Instead of simply talking about content in terms of "good" or "bad," steer your conversation toward naming how they may be affected and helping them decide to self-censor content that may be harmful to their future. Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

We intentionally steer away in the small group questions from connecting porn to shame, and the detrimental effect it has on a person's relationship with God. The reason for this is because shame is never a great motivator for long-term behavior change.

Most teenagers in church are already feeling shame about their relationship with porn, and may already be prone to assuming God is angry at them or disappointed in them. The intention behind this discussion is to help you guide the discussion toward hope and practical steps for thinking critically about porn, and taking steps to change behavior. As you lead this conversation, be mindful of how you talk and the language you use that never sets up a student to feel shame or like there is something wrong with them, but rather, like everyone, they are a victim to the porn industry and that there is hope for them.