

WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT _____

ABOUT THE RESOURCE

“What God Says About _____?” was created by Canyon Hills Student Ministry as a source of help and hope for the middle school and high school students that they might grow in their love for God and others. This resource was written by Ben Bourland, Marianne Bourland, Hosanna Renstrom, Josh Fitch, Hannah Monroe, Alyssa Culberson, and Conner Renstrom. We pray this tool would be used to foster a community of students who love to turn to the Bible as their source of truth and guiding counsel in everyday life.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

This tool exists to help others cultivate a greater trust in and reliance upon God’s inerrant Word as the ultimate authority and guiding counsel to some of life’s important questions. It focuses on revealing what God has to say about a variety of topics and provides challenging questions that force one to wrestle with and change in response to the truth of God’s Word. The practical hope is that many more followers of Jesus would develop the practice of turning to Scripture for answers because they trust it.

HOW DO I USE THIS?

Two primary ways to utilize this effectively are:

- When someone in your circle of influence asks a question related to a topic provided in this resource, have them read and consider the *Key Scriptures* and *Key Questions* on their own followed up with a discussion about the topic together.
- Utilize the *Key Scriptures* and *Key Questions* within to build a one-off Bible study focused on helping those in your circle of influence think more biblically about a felt need in their life.

Each topic also contains *Shepherding Tips* comprised of biblical truths and counsel on how to care for people. However you use this tool, we encourage you to approach every conversation by using the *pacing and leading* method described below:

- **Pacing:** First, meet the person where they are at by asking follow-up questions about their time wrestling with the key Scriptures and questions. The hope is for them to come to their own conclusion of What God says: as you lovingly guide them by means of questions. Then, affirm any ways they are accurate in their understanding of Scripture. Doing so will deepen their confidence in being able to discover God’s opinion on their own in the future.
- **Leading:** Finally, shepherd them towards biblical truth/accuracy in the areas they might be misunderstanding the meaning or application of God’s Word. Help them think biblically about the matter by resolving any misconceptions they have about Scripture. Lead with gentleness and love. Note that each shepherding tip has in **bold** key truths and counsel to quickly reference in conversation if needed.

Be relational in your approach by showing the person you care about them and their reason for bringing the topic up. Everything you ask or say should be rooted in love. This is not an opportunity for you to preach at them, but rather shepherd them towards Christ. The goal is to

win a person's heart over to the authority of God's Word in their life, not win a debate. Sometimes, you may not know the answer or what to say. In such cases, be humble and admit you do not know. Don't act like an expert on the matter, rather demonstrate humility by revealing your own reliance on the Word of God for guidance. Be prepared to invite them to look at God's Word together for further answers you don't have for them in the moment. If you realize the person asking is not a born-again follower of Jesus, help them understand the gospel first and foremost as the key that unlocks the answer to every topic within this resource.

HOW DO I FOLLOW UP WELL?

This resource will prove great fruit when getting to know the struggles, doubts, and hearts of those in your circle of influence. It provides a launching pad for discussions about biblical truth which then opens up into a long-term care and shepherding of others as they grow in their trust and knowledge of God's Word. The person will likely need continued care and follow up regarding the specific area of their life.

The following are ideas for providing continued growth for the person:

- Recommend books of the Bible or large portions of Scripture to read for further study.
- Encourage them to memorize one of the key Scriptures.
- Share one of the recommended resources, or a resource you know of, for continued study (books, sermons, podcasts, etc.).
- Encourage them to share what they learned with another person as a way to solidify the truths on their heart.
- Challenge them make changes in how they think, speak, or live as a means to growing in Christlikeness.

Table of Contents

ABORTION.....	6
ABUSE.....	7
ALCOHOL/DRUNKENNESS.....	8
ANGER	10
ANXIETY/WORRY	11
BULLYING (FOR THE BULLY).....	12
BULLYING (FOR THE BULLIED).....	13
DATING	14
DEPRESSION	16
DIVORCE	17
DRUGS/MARIJUANA.....	18
EATING DISSORDERS	19
FEAR.....	21
FLIRTING	22
GOSSIP/SLANDER	23
GRIEF	24
LONELINESS	26
LYING.....	27
MASTURBATION	28

MODESTY	29
PEER PRESSURE.....	30
PORNOGRAPHY	31
PURITY.....	33
RACISM.....	34
SELF-CONTROL	35
SELF HARM/CUTTING	36
SEXTING	37
SEXUAL ORIENTATION/LGBTQ+	39
SINGLENESS	41
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS	42
SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE (WIFE TO HUSBAND)	43
SUBMISSION TO PARENTS.....	45
SUFFERING	46
SUICIDE	47
SWEARING / FOUL LANGUAGE / JOKES	49
TEMPATION.....	50
TIME MANAGEMENT.....	51
TITHING.....	52
TRANSGENDERISM/GENDER IDENTITY.....	54
TV/VIDEO GAMES.....	55

ABORTION

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- Psalm 139:13-16: "...You formed my inward parts..."
- Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..."
- Psalm 127:3-4: "...children are a heritage for the Lord..."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "...the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..."
- Genesis 1:27: "...God created man in his own image..."
- Acts 17:25: "...he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."
- Exodus 21:22-25: "...if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life..."

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Who does the Bible say is the creator of all life?
- How does understanding God's love and compassion for the unborn look different than how the world views the unborn?
- Does the Bible teach that every human being has an equal right to life? Do you believe that an unborn child should have an equal right to life?
- In light of Psalm 139, does size (fetus or toddler) or location (inside or outside of the womb) or level of development (four months old vs. four years old) determine our worth, value, or right to live? Who does the Bible say determines our worth?
- After reading the above Scriptures on God's opinion, would you say God is pleased when we take the life of an unborn child?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

As Christians, we believe that God is actively and personally involved in the life of every unborn person (Psalm 139:13-16) and that life is precious from conception to death. Every human being has intrinsic value and immeasurable worth because they are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Moreover, **since our bodies were made by God (Genesis 2:7) and belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Isaiah 43:1), we do not have the right to terminate a life in the womb.**

As Christians, we are called to defend, protect, and value all human life. **Abortion is intentionally taking the life of a human being made in God's image.** Exodus 21:22-25 prescribes the same death penalty for someone who causes the death of a baby in the womb as for someone who commits murder. Followers of Jesus believe that children are a gift from God no matter the circumstances of their conception (Psalm 127:3-4). Some would argue that abortion is allowable in cases such as rape or incest. But do two wrongs ever make a right? If a mother is raped, is it justifiable to punish that innocent child by taking his or her life in an attempt to right that wrong? **For us to decide when a life is a life is to play God.** Only God has the authority to do that. Secular scientists in the field of embryology agree with God's Word. They established that from the earliest stages of development (conception), the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings.

This person may be asking about abortion for many reasons. This person may be considering abortion or knows someone who is considering abortion. This person may have had

an abortion or knows someone who has had an abortion. Or this person may be torn between the world's opinions and God's opinion and needs clarity. If this person has had an abortion, it is important to stress that God offers forgiveness, restoration, and freedom to those who turn to Him (Psalm 32:3-5, Isaiah 43:18-19, Psalm 40:1-3). God is the only true source of our comfort and healing (Psalm 18:1-6). There is no sin that cannot be forgiven. In either circumstance, **it is imperative that this person feels heard and not judged, that they do not feel ostracized and alone, and that they know they are loved and cared for.** If this person is seeking to figure out what they believe in light of God's Word and the world's opinions, help them not only understand what God's opinion is but why they can trust His Word. **The goal is not to help the person know how to win a debate but know why they can trust God's Word and how to help others trust God's Word.** Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person(s) involved in this topic of conversation so we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- Sermon by The Porch: Pro-Life vs Pro-Choice (10/20/20)
- focusonthefamily.com: search "abortion" for over 100 articles
- Abort Abortion by Mark Driscoll
- thegospelcoalition.org: numerous resources and articles
- Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments. Randy Alcorn. Multnomah

ABUSE

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 37:39-40; 46:1; 72:12-14; 103:2-13: "God is our refuge and strength..."
- Isaiah 25:4: "[God is] a stronghold to the needy in his distress..."
- Lamentations 3:57-60: "You came near when I called on you..."
- Romans 8:28, 31-39: "...for those who love God all things work together for good..."
- Philippians 4:6-7: "...let your requests be made known to God"
- Hebrews 4:16: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does God's response to abuse teach us about His character? How can we trust that God cares for us regardless of our circumstances?
- Why does God sometimes allow for abuse to take place? How should we view evil in light of the Gospel? Do you think that God can use evil for His glory and our good?
- How does God comfort, encourage, and provide for us when we are suffering?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care: to care:

Abuse (in all forms) is sinful and a rejection of God's perfect design for humanity (Matthew 22:37-40; John 15:12). The presence of abuse in our world reminds us that evil is a present reality and a consequence of our depravity and rejection of God (Romans 3:23; 8:18-25). Devastatingly,

abuse is more common than we often realize. Because of its sensitive and private nature, we are usually only aware of a fraction of the abuse that takes place among those around us. **When a person courageously chooses to trust us and reveals an occurrence or pattern of abuse, God's Word (and the law) calls us to action.** Be a careful and active listener and note the relevant details. Gently thank, encourage, and comfort the person sharing. **Remind them that God cares deeply for them and hates all abuse.**

Abuse is never acceptable and always sinful. We want people to understand that, regardless of the circumstances, abuse is never their fault and does not reveal a God who has abandoned us (or is punishing us). **Because He is a God who is near to the brokenhearted** (Psalm 34:18), **we can trust that God will also comfort and provide for us in our suffering** (Psalm 37:39-40; 46:1; 72:12-14; Isaiah 25:4). God asks us to come to Him, bringing our suffering before Him as a loving Father. **Although God never promises to change our circumstances, we know that He works all things (even evil) for His glory and our good, and nothing can separate us from His love** (Romans 8:28, 31-39). Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking about this topic so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Recovering from Abuse (series, booklets), David Powlison. CCEF.
<https://www.ccef.org/recovering-child-abuse-help-and-healing-victims-part-1/>
- Why Me: Comfort for the Victimized (Resources for Changing Lives), David Powlison.
- Domestic Abuse: How to Help (Resources for Changing Lives), David Powlison, Edward T. Welch, Paul David Trip.
- Is It Abuse?: A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims, Darby Strickland.

ALCOHOL/DRUNKENNESS

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35: "...whoever is led astray by [alcohol] is not wise"
- Isaiah 5:11-12, 22: "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine..."
- Romans 13:12-14, 14:21: "...let us cast off the works of darkness..."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 10:13-14, 31: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price"
- Ephesians 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit..."
- 1 Peter 1:16, 5:8-9: "Be sober-minded; be watchful"
- James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- How does the way(s) we use and treat our bodies affect other people around us?
- What is God's purpose and design for how you use and treat your body? What questions do you have about God's opinion on if drunkenness is sinful or not?
- Does having the freedom (biblically, legally, etc.) to do something always mean that it is wise? How do we know if a decision or action is wise and honoring to God?

- Does your private and public usage of alcohol reflect Jesus to the surrounding world? Do other trustworthy brothers/sisters in Christ express concern about your alcohol usage?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care: to care:

Because God is the Creator of all things, He has the authority to determine our identity and purpose. In His perfect goodness and wisdom, God has designed us to reflect Him and image His characteristics to the world around us. **How we use and treat our body reveals what we believe to be true about God and how He created us.** The Bible gives us parameters and freedoms in how we use and treat our bodies. **When considering alcohol use, Scripture is clear that drunkenness is a sin (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18).** Intentionally choosing to inhibit our mind and dismiss the call to sobriety is a rejection of God’s design for our bodies. In wisdom, the Bible calls us to consider many factors beyond drunkenness when evaluating how we use and treat our bodies. We are commanded to selflessly love others; it is sinful to partake in alcohol in a way that will cause someone else to sin (Romans 14:21). There are numerous potential consequences with alcohol use, even if drunkenness does not occur (Proverbs 23:21, 29-35; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 13:13, etc.). **The Bible calls us to seek wisdom and counsel when making decisions about how we use and treat our bodies, as we were designed to honor God in all things (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; James 1:5).**

The motivation(s) behind why someone would ask about alcohol use are varied. For example, **a person may struggle personally with alcohol use, or they may be looking for advice on how to care for another person who struggles with alcohol use and be interested in how the Bible addresses the topic.** For many people, middle school and high school are the time when they are first exposed to alcohol and the temptations surrounding its use. For others, exposure may have occurred at a younger age but the unique dynamics during their adolescent years invites new questions and temptations. **Regardless of their past and where they are currently, remind people that God desires us to be free from sin and habits that dishonor Him. Encourage people who have struggled and/or are currently struggling in this area that the death of Jesus on the cross included provision for victory over sin (Romans 6:6, 11-13).** Because of what Jesus accomplished, we are free and able to repent of our sin, trusting that we will be forgiven and have the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pursue righteousness. **As we “put off” the sin of drunkenness, we are enabled to “put on” being sober-minded and filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:22-24).** No sin or sinful pattern is too big to be covered by the grace and mercy of Jesus. **When a person courageously chooses to trust us and reveals an occurrence or pattern of sin, God’s Word calls us to action. Be a careful and active listener and love the person in their pain. Gently thank, encourage, and comfort the person. Remind them that God cares deeply for them and desires for them to live free from sin.** Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking about this topic so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Heart of Addiction, Mark Shaw.
- Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction, Edward T. Welch.
- Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith, Stuart Scott

ANGER

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 4:25-27, 31-32: "...let bitterness, wrath, anger...be put away from you..."
- Matthew 5:21-26: "...everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement..."
- Galatians 5:19-26: "...those who belong to Jesus have crucified the flesh..."
- James 1:19-20: "...be slow to anger..."
- Romans 12:19-21: "...do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
- Colossians 3:13: "...forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Is living a life with constant anger or bitterness in your heart towards others or life circumstances consistent with a life that reflects Jesus? Why or why not?
- How might dwelling on anger or bitterness in your heart affect your actions, words, or thoughts? How might doing so affect your relationship with God, others, and or yourself?
- How does Scripture instruct us to deal with our anger or bitterness? What virtues does God call us to replace our anger and bitterness with?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

God's anger is not like ours (Galatians 5:19-21; Mark 3:1-5; Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:41-44). He is perfectly holy. His anger is focused on sin whereas the anger we tend to feel is aimed at other people, circumstances that don't go our way, or God Himself. God calls this type of anger sin. **Sin is anything not thought, said, or done for the glory of God** (Romans 3:23). God sent Jesus to redeem us from the penalty stored up by every instance of unrighteous anger or bitterness so that we might walk in a manner of love towards all (Colossians 3:5-8).

If the person is wrestling with whether or not their anger is sinful, ask them what they are angry about. Their answer may reveal if they are experiencing anger like God's anger or an anger that stems from a sinful heart. The person may be asking you about anger or bitterness because they are struggling to forgive someone, feel as if they are experiencing unjust treatment/circumstances in their life, and/or are in a season of suffering. Seek to understand the situation surrounding their heart of anger or bitterness. This person may struggle with anger and bitterness as a habitual response when things don't go their way which may reveal a deeper idol in their life. Encourage them pray and confess any harbored anger and/or bitterness to God and ask Him to help them forgive anyone they may need to forgive. If applicable, you may encourage them to share their stored-up feelings with the person they are directed towards as a way to seek reconciliation. Reinforce to them that God is a good and loving Father even in the midst of every life circumstance. Be empathetic. **Simply saying, "I'm sorry that happened..." goes a long way.** Their heart may be more prone to receive truth and counsel for dealing with their anger or bitterness if they first know you care about them and their situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Anger, Anxiety, and Fear (mini-book) by Stuart Scott
- Anger: Escaping the Maze (mini-book) by David Powlison
- Bitterness: The Root that Pollutes (mini-book) by Lou Priolo
- Search “anger” on gotquestions.org

ANXIETY/WORRY

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Luke 12:22-34: “...do not be anxious about your life... Instead, seek His kingdom...”
- Matthew 6:27: “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”
- Philippians 4:6-7: “...the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts...”
- 2 Timothy 1:7: “for God gave us a spirit not of fear...”
- Hebrew 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Do you trust that God is good, perfect, and sovereign? Do you believe that God keeps His promises? How do these character traits change the way you view uncertain situations?
- List some promises that God makes in Scripture that you can be certain of. How have you seen God be faithful to His promises in your life?
- Have you seen worry help your situation? What *does* help you in hard situations?
- Is there anything you have been putting above God or failing to believe about who He is in your life that you need to confess?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

There is *always* something to worry about. People worry about things that are uncertain and out of their control (which is most everything). However, Scripture reveals that those who believe in Him have way better reasons *not* to worry! Worry is a problem with our hearts and not our external circumstances. **The root of worry is believing that you need to be in control and God is not.** When you worry, you are not trusting in who God says He is and has proven to be. This response is sinful, and it accomplishes nothing (Matthew 6:2). **However, Jesus offers us an alternative to worrying that is full of hope!** Amongst the many uncertainties of life, Scripture tells us what we can be certain of. These are just a few examples: Jesus cares for you and will provide what you need (Luke 12:22-34). God is faithful through hard situations (Psalms 9:9-10). God will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). A person may be asking about this subject because they have struggled with worry their entire life, are facing a really difficult season of life, or are overwhelmed with the number of things on their plate. Encourage them to abide in the promises of God in Scripture when tempted to linger in anxiety or worry. Go to God with the person and demonstrate how to cast our anxieties on God and ask for peace that comes only through Him.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety by Elyse Fitzpatrick

Social Anxiety by Amy Baker

A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23 by Phillip Keller

BULLYING (for the bully)

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 4:29-32: "Be kind to one another..."
- Luke 6:43-45: "...out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."
- Philippians 2:1-11: "...count others more significant than yourselves."
- Romans 12:9-21: "...Outdo one another in showing honor...Repay no one evil for evil..."
- 1 Corinthians 15:33: "...Bad company ruins good morals..."
- Matthew 7:12: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Why do you bully others? What are you seeking for yourself in doing so?
- How can you reconcile actions of bullying with your identity as a follower of Jesus?
- How does God command us to treat all people in our life?
- Are you using the gifts, talents, and position you have to love and build others up or tear them down? Is your speech and actions towards others, affirming or crippling?
- How did God respond to you when you were a sinner, vulnerable, and incapable of saving yourself?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Bullying is using your power, position, or abilities to intimidate or tear down others. These actions are not consistent with the life Jesus calls us to live (Matthew 22:39). **Anyone who is not growing in their love for other people proves they do not truly know God (1 John 4:8).** All forms of bullying, whether verbal, emotional, or physical is sin and needed to be confessed to God for His forgiveness. Those who are doing the bullying may not always be aware of the deeper heart issues they face behind their actions or words. Common underlying struggles may be pride, insecurity/power, fear of man, bitterness, or more. These roots of their actions must first be brought into the light and dealt with before behaviors towards others will change. This person may be bullied themselves, live in a broken family, and or struggle with making friends. **Help them to unpack what drives them to hurt or put others down.** Then, walk them through biblical repentance with God and repentance towards those they have wronged. Ask questions to identify their specific heart idols/fears/lies and address them by speaking about the character of Christ towards us in the gospel and how He calls us to live the same way towards others. Struggle with control? We can trust the all-powerful God rather than trying to control others ourselves. Wrestle with insecurity? **Jesus gives us a brand-new identity in Him and we no**

longer have to base who we are off what others say, but rather on who God says we are.
Driven by pride? Christ calls us to a life of humility of which He himself modeled perfectly. Etc.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/bullying.html>
- Booklet - Help! My Child is Being Bullied by Tim Keeter: <https://store.faithlafayette.org/browse-by-topic/help-my-child-is-being-bullied/>
- MP3 – Helping Parents Whose Child is Being Bullied by Kevin Carson: <https://store.faithlafayette.org/browse-by-topic/christian-life-and-growth/family/helping-parents-whose-child-is-being-bullied/>
- Article – What Should I Do if I’m Being Bullied? By Andy Woodall: <https://blogs.faithlafayette.org/4twelve/what-should-i-do-if-i-am-being-bullied/>

BULLYING (for the bullied)

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 4:29-32: “Be kind to one another...forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”
- Matthew 5:38-48: “...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”
- Romans 12:9-21: “...Outdo one another in showing honor...Repay no one evil for evil...”
- Matthew 7:12: “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them...”
- Matthew 5:10-12: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...”
- Psalm 31:4: “...you are my refuge.”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does God direct us to do when we are the recipients of evil and injustice? What practical steps does he encourage us to take? What hope does he provide us as we obey him?
- Is there any bitterness or hatred in your heart towards another person? If so, why?
- Is there anyone you need to forgive?
- How can you practically begin to take refuge in God? Which of His promises can you trust more in as a source of strength?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Bullying is using your power, position, or abilities to intimidate or tear down others. Bullying occurs because we live in a sin broken world. All people will at some point in their life experience being bullied in some way shape or form. Whether it be for what they believe, someone/something they stand up for, or simply because they are in the crosshairs of bully. Being bullied is a form of suffering in a sin broken world. The person asking might currently be being bullied in their community, marriage, on social media, etc. It may be something that’s gone on for years or weeks. The bullying may be driven by one person or multiple people. People they may know or not know at all. Ask additional questions to understand the situation.

Seek to understand what the bullying entails since what is considered “bullying” can vary. Also, make sure to know how the person is responding internally with it (e.g., in rare cases bullying can contribute to self-harm and suicide). Be careful to not promote gossip or slander but acknowledge the difficulty of their position. **Saying “I’m sorry this is happening” goes a long way. Encourage them to keep displaying God’s love and grace to their bully in the way they respond.** Point them towards the hope of God’s promises they can have in the midst of suffering (Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 1:3-9; James 1:2-3). Where appropriate, if there is a safety concern, involve anyone who may need to be aware and involved (eg. parents, pastor, school authority) to help the person or situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/bullying.html>
- Booklet - Help! My Child is Being Bullied by Tim Keeter: <https://store.faithlafayette.org/browse-by-topic/help-my-child-is-being-bullied/>
- MP3 – Helping Parents Whose Child is Being Bullied by Kevin Carson: <https://store.faithlafayette.org/browse-by-topic/christian-life-and-growth/family/helping-parents-whose-child-is-being-bullied/>
- Article – What Should I Do if I’m Being Bullied? By Andy Woodall: <https://blogs.faithlafayette.org/4twelve/what-should-i-do-if-i-am-being-bullied/>

DATING

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- 2 Timothy 2:22 – “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness...”
- Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 – “...not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.”
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 – “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 – “...abstain for sexual immorality...control his own body...”
- Matthew 19:5 – “...a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:31 – “...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is the Biblical purpose of dating? What is your purpose of dating?
- What does God have to say about dating? Marriage? Purity?
- Do you think there is a right time to begin dating? If so, when and why?
- How do you date a person while at the same time guarding your heart, his/her heart, maintaining your purity, and maintaining his/her purity?
- What are your standards for dating? What are your boundaries for dating?
- What does God-honoring dating look like to you?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

The Bible never speaks about dating. In fact, the concept of dating is only about 100 years old. However, the Bible does have a lot to say when it comes to guarding our hearts (Proverbs 4:23, Romans 12:2), the type of people we should date (2 Corinthians 6:14-15), and the importance of keeping our ways pure from sexual immorality (Psalm 119:9-11, Colossians 3:5, Eph 5:3). The world tells us that it is okay to begin dating as soon as we begin to have feelings of attraction and to date as many people as possible before you ever think about getting married. But, as followers of Jesus, **we are called to look and behave differently than the world in all ways, including when and how we date** (Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:15, 1 John 2:15-17). If you are a follower of Jesus, **the ultimate goal of dating is marriage**. The Bible tells us that we should not, “awaken love until the time is right.” (Song of Solomon 2:7). In 1 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy to, “talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat older women as you would your mother and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters.” (1 Timothy 5:1-2). When we enter into a dating relationship with a member of the opposite sex, we open ourselves up to many temptations as our emotions develop and our attractions deepen toward that person. The Bible teaches that we are to be emotionally and physically intimate with only one member of the opposite sex ... your spouse.

There are many motivating factors behind asking a question regarding dating. This person may be looking for advice on when, who, or how to date, this person might want to date but not understand what that looks like as a follower of Jesus, this person might be in a dating relationship and is feeling convicted of how they are currently going about dating, or this person may simply want to understand what the Bible has to say on this topic. If this person is curious about when to start dating, here are some practical questions you could help them consider:

- Are you ready for marriage? If so, are you pursuing dating in such a way that you are searching for someone who shares your desire to follow and glorify God in all things (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)?
- If you are dating to marry, have you set up definite boundaries with this person to protect both your heart and your purity (Job 31:1, 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)?
- If you are not ready for marriage, what do you hope to accomplish through entering into a dating relationship? What are your intentions and desires for this relationship? Are you allowing your emotions to rule your decision to date (Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 28:26, Proverbs 3:5-6)?

Have you sought wise counsel from parents, a mentor, or a life group leader before entering into a relationship (Proverbs 6:20-24, Proverbs 12:15)?

If the person is still under the authority of a parent, **remind them that their clearest instruction from God is to honor their father and mother** (and the father/mother of the one they are dating) in whatever rules they set first and foremost. If you would like more information on the biblical principles for dating, please ask a pastor.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- Love-ology by John Mark Comer
- Outdated by Jonathan Pokluda
- Sex, Dating and Relationships: A Fresh Approach by Gerald Hiestand
- Sermon Series by The Porch: Dateable (Aug-Sept 2021), Fantasy (2018), First Comes Love (2017), Relationship Goals (2016)

DEPRESSION

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 13:2-6: “How long must I...have sorrow in my heart all the day...”
- Psalm 38:9: “O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you”
- 1 Peter 5:6-7: “...casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you”
- Matthew 11:28-30: “...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: “...God of all comfort...”
- Psalm 77: “...In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord...what god is great like our God...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- How long has depression been affecting your life?
- The world offers many solutions to depression that prove short-lived. What does God offer you as a lasting help and hope to depression?
- If your depression could speak, what would it say about you and what would it say about God? How does this look different than the truth that we see in Scripture?
- If God allowed depression to be something you battle against for the rest of your life, would you still believe Him to be good and worthy of your worship?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Depression is a heavy burden, and the way out can feel impossible. Often times, symptoms can look like lost ambition, emotional numbness, fear, fatigue, and/or deep despair. Depression or sadness in itself is not sinful but the root cause and/or the actions they take as a result of their depressions may be. If sin is the cause of depression, confession is a necessary first step (Psalm 25:17-18). **Whatever the cause is, Christians suffering from depression can find hope in biblical truths.** God understands our despair (Mathew. 26:38) and He encourages us to “call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you” (Psalm 50:15). This is not a new struggle. Many people in the Bible were honest to God with their sadness (David, Solomon, etc.). He promises to provide hope and comfort. Scripture also shows us that we can find joy in our Salvation and our eternal hope.

Some key motivations behind the person asking may be a personal struggle with depression or they may know someone who struggles with depression. **If the person you are shepherding is confiding about their own battle with depression, help them examine their heart and identify the root issue(s) that may be causing their depression.** (It may be guilt, grief, ungodly fears, trauma, stress, or can even be a side effect of a medication.) It is common for a struggle with depression to become someone’s identity. Remind them that our pain does not define us. Instead, a believer’s identity must be rooted in Christ and His love for us. Practically, take some time to set goals with this person (journal to God daily, Scripture memorization, exercise, setting a consistent sleep schedule etc.). Setting these goals can help the person start in the right direction for healing.

Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking about this topic so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *We're All Freaking Out (and Why We Don't Need To)* by David Marvin
- *When the Darkness will Not Lift: Do What We Can While We Wait for God and Joy* by John Piper
- *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness* by Ed Welch

DIVORCE

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Malachi 2:4: “the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth”
- Mark 10:9: “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- Matthew 19:3-9: “...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”
- 1 Corinthians 7:10-16: “...if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved.”
- Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is God’s overarching heart towards divorce revealed in Mark 10:9?
- What effects might divorce have others in the circle of influence (family, friends, etc.)?
- What hope does God offer to hopeless people? Do you believe God can restore even the most broken of marriage?
- How does God command us to forgive in Ephesians 4:32? Is there anyone in your life you need to forgive as God has forgiven you in Jesus?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Marriage is a covenant commitment before God between a man and a woman to live in biblical union with each other for the rest of their earthly lives (Malachi 2:14). Divorce is a direct result of the sinfulness of mankind and against God’s original intended design (Matthew 19:3-9). God never delights in divorce as it is against His overarching desire to forever sustain what He sovereignly brought together (Mark 10:9). In any marital conflict, God’s desire is for the marriage to be reconciled for His glory and the couple’s good. God gives us the pathway for reconciliation through the gospel. Yet, we as a church believe God has allowed two qualifications for biblical divorce: adultery and abandonment (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15). Any divorce that occurs outside of these biblical parameters is sin.

This person may have someone close to them who are divorced or going through a divorce, be experiencing the effects or consequences of their or someone else’s divorce, and or planning to divorce another themselves. One of the most important things you can do with either person is to **reinforce who God is and what He desires from their life. They need to be reminded that God proved capable of reconciling even the world’s greatest relational**

conflict by restoring the broken relationship between Himself and a sin rebellious world. Share this hope with the person as you seek to understand their circumstances and sympathize with their suffering. Speak truth in love. Whatever their circumstance, remind them that their main focus should be to honor God. Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible | Jay Adams
- How to Save Your Marriage Alone (mini book) | Ed Wheat
- Children and Divorce: Helping When Life Interrupts | Amy Baker
- Single Parents: Daily Grace for the Hardest Job (mini book) | Robert Jones

DRUGS/MARIJUANA

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Romans 13:12-14, 14:21: "...let us cast off the works of darkness..."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 10:13-14, 23, 31: "...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"
- Galatians 5:19-24: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh..."
- Ephesians 5:15-21: "Look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise..."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:22-24: "Abstain from every sort of evil..."
- 1 Peter 1:16, 5:8-9: "Be sober-minded; be watchful"
- James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is God's purpose and design for how you use and treat your body? What questions do you have about God's opinion on if drugs/marijuana usage is sinful or not?
- How might the way(s) you use and treat your body affect other people around you?
- Does having the freedom (biblically, legally, etc.) to do something always mean that it is wise? How do you know if a decision or action is wise and honoring to God?
- Are there any practices in your life that you need to put off in order to honor God by finding your ultimate pleasure in Him?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Because God is the Creator of all things, He has the authority to determine our identity and purpose. In His perfect goodness and wisdom, God has designed us to reflect Him and image His characteristics to the world around us. **How we use and treat our body reveals what we believe to be true about God and how He created us.** The Bible gives us parameters and freedoms in how we use and treat our bodies. **When considering drug/marijuana use, Scripture is clear that anything apart from sober-mindedness is a sin (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Peter 5:8-9).**

Intentionally choosing to inhibit our mind and dismiss the call to sobriety is a rejection of God's design for our bodies. In wisdom, the Bible calls us to consider many factors when evaluating how we use and treat our bodies. We are commanded to selflessly love others; it is sinful to intentionally partake in something in a way that will cause someone else to sin (Romans 14:21). There are numerous potential consequences with drug/marijuana use, even if complete loss of control does not occur (Proverbs 23:21, 29-35; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 13:13, etc.). **The Bible calls us to seek wisdom and counsel when making decisions about how we use and treat our bodies, as we were designed to honor God in all things (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; James 1:5).**

The motivation(s) behind why someone would ask about drug/marijuana use are varied. For example, **a person may struggle personally with drug/marijuana use, or they may be looking for advice on how to care for another person who struggles with drug/marijuana use and be interested in how the Bible addresses the topic.** Regardless of a person's past and where they are currently, remind people that God desires us to be free from sin and habits that dishonor Him. **We as a church do not endorse the use of recreational use of marijuana, as it rejects the Bible's call to sober-mindedness and pursuing holiness in all things (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:16, 5:8-9).** Recreational marijuana usage quickly, if not instantly, alters one's state of mind in a very similar way to that of excessive drinking and drunkenness. It also has damaging effects on the body and may tempt others who struggle to sin. Although medicinal drug/marijuana use under the care of a medical professional may be biblically permitted, we encourage those considering this to seek wise counsel before moving forward since studies show medical usage of marijuana is a deception based on public opinion not on science.

Remind people who have struggled and/or are currently struggling in this area that the death of Jesus on the cross included provision for victory over sin (Romans 6:6, 11-13). Because of what Jesus accomplished, we are free and able to repent of our sin, trusting that we will be forgiven and have the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pursue righteousness. **As we "put off" the sin, we are enabled to "put on" being sober-minded and filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:22-24).** No sin or sinful pattern is too big to be covered by the grace and mercy of Jesus. **When a person courageously chooses to trust us and reveals an occurrence or pattern of sin, God's Word calls us to action. Be a careful and active listener and love the person in their pain. Gently thank, encourage, and comfort the person. Remind them that God cares deeply for them and desires for them to live free from sin.** Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking about this topic so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Heart of Addiction, Mark Shaw.
- Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction, Edward T. Welch.
- Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith, Stuart Scott
- <https://youtu.be/nbZB4VUlrHA>

EATING DISORDERS

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 139:13-14: "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."

- I Corinthians 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God...”
- Romans 12:1-2: “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God...”
- Philippians 4:8-9: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Is it hard for you to see yourself as “wonderfully made”? Do you think God can help you start to see yourself the way He sees you?
- Are you glorifying God with your body?
- Are eating disorders sinful?
- What thoughts and actions do you need to confess and ask forgiveness for?
- What are two ways you can begin to rely on God in order to find freedom from eating disorders?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

From the very beginning your body was crafted and created by God. While we might see flaws, we are created according to His perfect design of “us”. Your body is His creation, and you are beautiful in His sight. Psalm 139:13-14 states, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”

When you accepted Jesus as your Savior, you laid your life down and took on His life as your own. Just as Galatians 2:20 states, “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live, in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me.” Which means how He chooses to see us, value us, and define us is how we should see ourselves, value ourselves, and define ourselves. If we choose to take ownership of something that belongs to God, it becomes an idol...it becomes something we love or serve more than God. By meditating on the truth of God’s word and using His word to fight against our broken mindset we can begin to give our bodies back to God. **Someone who wrestles with body image and/or eating disorders has an internal dialogue in need of the truth of God’s word.** Many times, they have a low opinion of God and high opinion of themselves in regard to assessing their worth. Take time to walk them through the supremacy of God, His trustworthiness, and that they are His craftsmanship. Additionally, help them write out their inner dialogue then contrast the lies with the truth of God’s word. Consider selecting one or more of the verses to memories and graciously hold them accountable to the truth of who God says they are.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Love to Eat, Hat to Eat by Elyse Fitzpatrick
- Biblical Body Image: Joyful Journey Podcast
- Eating Disorders by Ed Welch

FEAR

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Deuteronomy 31:8: "...He will not leave you or forsake you..."
- Psalm 34:4: "...delivered me from all my fears..."
- Habakkuk 3:16-19: "...God, the Lord, is my strength..."
- Philippians 4:8: "...if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things"
- Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Is your fear drawing you close to God or pulling you away from God?
- What does your fear reveal about what you love/value the most?
- How does Scripture call us to respond to fear? How can God's perfect love change the way that you respond to fear?
- What kind of fear does the Bible reveal is sin in our lives and needed to be repented of?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

There is fear that can enslave us and draw us away from God and there is fear that can draw us to Him. Believers are called to fear God which means to have an exalted view of God, see Him in all His glory, and then respond to Him appropriately. God also designed fear so that we would flee from real danger and direct us to safety. **When fear becomes a sin is when it draws us away from the Lord.** 2 Timothy 1:7 makes it very clear that a "spirit of fear" is not from the Lord. When this spirit of fear overcomes us, we are not trusting in God's promises or remembering His character. All throughout Scripture, we see that God gives believers a correct way to respond to fear. **We are called to trust in His promises and cast our fears or anxieties on Him.** He does not leave us without hope! **If we are obedient to turn to Him, God promises to deliver us from our fear (Philippians 4:6-7)!** God does not promise that bad things will not happen. However, we know that when bad things do happen, we can cling to the truths that we find in Scripture: God cares about us, He loves us, and He will never leave us. Trusting God is a refusal to give into fear.

This person may be asking this question because they are wrestling with whether or not the fear that they are experiencing or have experienced is sinful. While fear and anxiety can have similar responses, it is when fear leads to an anxious heart that it is sinful. They may also be looking for tools to be able to navigate fear in their life. Encourage the person to write down some key verses on fear on a notecard that they can keep close when they need a reminder of who they can turn to when they are afraid.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Running Scared* by Ed Welch
- *Fear: Breaking Its Grip* by Lou Priolo
- *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety* by Elyse Fitzpatrick

FLIRTING

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Proverbs 12:22: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord...”
- Romans 12:9-10: “Let love be genuine...love one another with brotherly affection.”
- Matthew 18:7-9: “...woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!”
- Ephesians 5:1-4: “...be imitators of God...Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking...”
- Philippians 4:8-9: “...whatever is true...honorable...pure...think about these things.”
- Psalm 16:11: “...in your presence there is fullness of joy...pleasures forevermore.”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What are you trying to get from flirting? Do your motivations behind acting as though attracted to or trying to attract someone for amusement rather than serious intention align with how God directs us to act and think?
- Are you seeking to replace the affection only God can give you with the affection or attention of another person?
- Is there anything you may be intentionally or unintentionally getting another person to believe about you or your intentions that is not true? What do the above Scriptures tell you about God’s thoughts on lying? Is it loving to deceive others?
- How might you be failing to guard a brother/sister in Christ’s heart when flirting? How might you be leading them into greater temptation to sin?
- How can you express interest for another person of the opposite sex in a way that promotes purity, speaks truth from intentionality, and builds the others up? What should or shouldn’t be present from the Scriptures above?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

People define flirting very differently. Flirting is most commonly defined as behaving romantically without serious intent or showing superficial or casual interest or liking. Flirting, in another sense, can be done in a God honoring way to express interest in another person with intentions for marriage or to increase romance within marriage. **Start by discussing the why behind their flirting and how their why may reveal areas of sin in their heart.** This may prove their flirtatious behaviors are based on deception or deceit, which is not honoring to another person nor walking in the truth as God calls us to (1 Corinthians 13:6; Colossians 3:9).

Motivations behind flirting are commonly self-centered such as popularity, manipulation, self-amusement, personal pleasure, people pleasing, and more. These motivations are what reveal flirting as a sinful act in our lives. **Help the person to identify these motivations, why they are wrong, and what heart we should have towards others instead** (Colossians 3:12-17). Girls may seek guys’ attention as a way to fill the hole of an insecurity in their heart. Guys may seek girls’ attention as a way to get something from the girl or gain popularity. In certain cases, talk about how to show genuine interest to a person of the opposite sex in the context and way that honors God and the person they are interested in. Help the person

to find biblical commands to follow and wise principles to consider (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:1-4, Colossians 3:5-10; Song of Solomon 2:7). Create a space to talk about what specific things may be good not to do and why. The goal here not to draw a line for the person to get as close to as they can while still being “in the clear”, but to help them understand how to practically pursue purity, flee from temptation, selflessly love in a romantic context, and point others toward Christ. At the most basic level, **encourage the person you are walking with to consider Christ's selfless love for us and how he calls us to selflessly love those around us. Shepherd them to find their affection in the one true God who alone can satisfy our cravings to be loved** (Psalm 16:11). Help the person figure out for themselves according to scripture what that looks like when interacting with someone of the opposite sex (John 15:13; Matthew 22:34-39).

FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/flirting.html>
- *Single, Dating, Engaged, Married* by Ben Stewart
- *Outdated* by Jonathan Pokluda

GOSSIP/SLANDER

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- Leviticus 19:16: “You shall not go around as a slanderer...”
- Matthew 12:34-36: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...people will give an account for every careless word they speak...”
- 1 Peter 3:10-11: “Whoever desires to love life keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit...”
- Psalm 141:3: “Set a guard over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”
- Ephesians 4:29: “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up...”

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- In light of these Scriptures, what are some questions you can ask yourself when tempted to share information about someone else?
- Before you share information about another person, do you examine your motivations? Do you intend to build this person up with your words or will your words expose or hurt this person?
- Considering a moment of gossip in your life, would you have told this story if that person had been present?
- What does Scripture say are some consequences of gossiping? What kind of damage can gossip cause in your relationships?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

When used inappropriately, our words can hurt others, divide friends, and damage reputations and relationships. Gossip is the story of another's sin or shame shared behind a person's back. Gossip can also be the act of sharing information, stories, or rumors in order to judge, entertain, hurt, vent, make fun of, or gain the approval of others. The Bible labels gossips as untrustworthy and meddling (Proverbs 11:13, 20:19, 26:20; 1 Timothy 5:13) and even worthy of death (Romans 1:29, 32). Gossip can damage our walk with God (2 Timothy 2:16). Gossip or slander is very tempting and often fun to engage in at the expense of another. **We sin not only when we speak gossip but also when we willfully hear it.** The Bible likens the words of a gossip to, "delicious morsels" (Proverbs 18:8). But is it right? **Is gossip a reflection of someone who desires to love, honor, and serve the Lord?** Jesus taught us that all the words we speak, good and bad, flow from the abundance of good or evil stored up in our hearts (Matthew 12:33-37). **Damaging words should be replaced by positive, productive words that build others up and reflect the character of God.** (Proverbs 12:18, Ephesians 4:29). Proverbs 16:24 tells us, "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."

This person may be asking about gossip because they have been hurt or impacted by gossip, they are unclear about what qualifies as gossip, or they are struggling with this sin. When having a conversation with a person about gossip or slander, it would be helpful to read James 3:2-12 together and discuss what James has to say about the power of the tongue. It is important to acknowledge that gossiping can be hard to resist. However, you must always consider your heart motivations before speaking. A practical way to do this is to ask yourself, "Is this story mine to tell?" Another idea is to use the acronym **THINK**: Is it **T** True? Is it **H**elpful? Is it **I**nspiring? Is it **N**ecessary? Is it **K**ind?

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- "War of Words" by Paul Tripp
- Sermons by The Porch: RIP to Gossip (2022), Gossip and Restraint (2018)
- thegospelcoalition.org: "How to Shut Down Gossip"
- gotquestions.org: "What Does the Bible Say about Gossip"

GRIEF

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalms 30:5: "...Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."
- Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "...[do] not grieve as others do who have no hope."
- Isaiah 41:10: "...I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you"

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Have you ever felt alone in your grief? What does the bible say about God's promise to be at our side?
- What are some ways (mentioned in the scriptures above) that you can be comforted in your grief?

- What does God promise to do when He is the God of your life?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Grief is an emotion given to us by God. Lamenting is the biblical outlet for us as Christians to express grief and loss. There are countless places in the bible where God's people deal with great sorrow, grief, and fear. David discussed his grief throughout the Psalms. Even the disciples were grieved when Jesus told them that he would be betrayed and killed. "The disciples were filled with grief." (Matthew 17:23)

In our lost and broken world, grief is a strong emotion experienced by everyone at some point in their lives. **In our grief God is near (Isaiah 41:10). He sees your pain, walks with you through it, and gives His purpose and presence to it.** "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

Grieving is often a process with many twists and turns that are difficult to predict. It impacts all aspects of your life—emotional, physical, mental, social, and spiritual life. Everyone grieves differently, but to heal everyone must walk through the process. Grief can be engulfing, and it can feel like you are only treading water going nowhere. Grief can be characterized by feelings of isolation or feeling like you are just going through the emotions. You can feel resentful towards God and keep asking why. Anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness are also feelings **that** accompany loss. Every person is unique in how you process grief. It takes time for the healing to occur. Working through grief and the emotions that accompany it is not easy. It is most often the most difficult thing you will go through. As stated earlier, **God is with you during this season of sorrow; to provide comfort in your pain and strength when the grief is overwhelming.** "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life." (Psalm 119:50)

A person might approach you because they have recently lost someone close to them; a family member, a friend, or friend of the family. They may have lost a friendship or just come out of a relationship. There may be issues with the parents who might be getting a divorce or are separated. If not apparent, see if you cannot discern what the grief might be associated with as it may change how you counsel the person through the available biblical passages.

Here are several suggestions for walking alongside the person with some helpful paths forward. You might encourage them to write their thoughts in a journal and pray over them; explain that God is right there reading along with them. Suggest that they talk to Jesus in the quiet moments and seek out 'Jesus Following' friends they can share these pains with. Keeping their thoughts inside does nothing to alleviate their grief. Encourage them to spend consistent time in Psalms, especially 23, 32, 34, 37, 42, 46, 91, 107, and 145. Another less obvious set of things they can do is exercise daily and practice healthy eating. Both will help them as the Lord walks with them through their trial. Finally, if you feel that the person has lost hope in their grief, please inform a pastor about the person(s) involved in this topic of conversation so we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- A devotional by Jim Sewell on Lamentations 3:21-24 - [Lamentations 2:21-24 - Canyon Hills Community Church](#)
- Also another by Pastor Chad Torrison - [Lamentations 3:16-24 - Canyon Hills Community Church](#)

LONELINESS

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 13:1: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?...”
- Matthew 27:46 – “...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
- Psalm 73:25-26: “...My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart...”
- Joshua 1:9: “...do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you...”
- Hebrews 10:24-25: “...consider how to stir up one another... not neglecting to meet together...”
- Ecclesiastes 4:7-12: “...Two are better than one...”
- Psalm 30:5: “...Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Has God ever felt distant to you? If so, why do you think you felt that way?
- What truths do the above Scriptures teach you about who God is in your life even when you feel lonely?
- How does knowing that God is always with you make you feel?
- What do you turn to when you are lonely? Is what you are turning to helping you?
- What are some active steps you can take to pursue relationships with others? (volunteering, join a class or a soccer team, delete social media, etc.)

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

We see God’s design for human relationship from the beginning of creation. Genesis reveals God as a relational God, and we are created in His image (Genesis 1:26). We also see God’s heart for the lonely in Genesis. He responded to Adam’s loneliness by creating Eve (2:18).

Throughout Scripture, we see many godly people crying out to God and bringing their loneliness to Him. Even Jesus felt deserted on the cross (Matthew 27:46). There are many causes for loneliness. **Find the root of the person’s loneliness.** (i.e., they recently moved, their choice to follow the Lord resulted in lost friendships, they are living in sin and the guilt is keeping them from being in relationship with others, etc.) God’s promise that He will never leave us is true in every circumstance. **No matter where they are coming from, remind them that they are actually never alone.** Just like David in the Psalms, encourage the person to cry out to God. Walk them through what it looks like to lament over their struggle and ask boldly for God to provide relationships.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* by Mark Vroegop
- *A Shepherd’s Look at Psalm 23* by Phillip Keller
- *Finding God in My Loneliness* by Lydia Brownback

LYING

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Exodus 20:16: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”
- Proverbs 12:22: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord...”
- Ecclesiastes 12:13: “...Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”
- Ephesians 4:15: “[speak] the truth in love...”
- Colossians 3:9: “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- How serious is lying to God according to you? Why do you think that is?
- Why do people lie? What are you most willing to lie for in order to get (i.e., popularity, money, approval, attention)?
- If you found complete contentment and approval from God, do you think you would still have reason to lie? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it’s important to God that we as His people tell the truth in all circumstances?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

We lie when we make an untrue statement with the purpose to deceive. Lying is most often a fear of man vs fear of God issue. When faced with temptation to lie we should pause and ask ourselves what it is that we are most worried about happening if we do not tell a lie. Are we worried about facing consequences for our actions or what others might think of us if we don’t lie? Whatever the reason, **telling the truth is precious to God and it demonstrates the fear of the Lord.** It’s not a suggestion but a command by God. **Those who love God should see progressive growth at telling the truth in all areas of life out of a desire to please God rather than man** (John 14:15; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 4:15). The Bible teaches us that God is truth and that lying is directly contrary to the nature of God Himself (Proverbs 12:22; John 14:6; Hebrews 6:18). **Lying is so serious to God that He gave up His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for even the smallest of lies on our behalf.** Lying is not a fruit of Christianity, but telling the truth reveals a changed heart by the gospel and one that desires to please God even when it’s hard. A lifestyle of lying damages our credibility, complicates relationships, and makes further lying even more likely. **The sooner you make lies right the better.** Some motivations a person asking may have might be they struggle with lying, have been hurt by another person’s lie, or are wanting to justify a lie they told or plan to tell. Shepherd this person by getting to the heart behind the lies. Encourage them to **tell the truth out of a desire to please God and trust that He will take care of the results in any circumstance when they do** (Proverbs 3:5-6). Help them deepen their understanding that God alone can satisfy any cravings for attention, admiration, or self-worth by trusting who He says they are.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Deception: Letting Go of Lying by Lou Priolo
- <https://youtu.be/vF1T-MwJm4>

MASTURBATION

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 7:1-5, 10:31: "...glorify God with your body..."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: "control his/her own body in holiness and honor"
- Matthew 5:27-28: "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has committed adultery"
- Galatians 5:16-24: "...walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- Romans 13:4: "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin..."
- 2 Corinthians 10:5: "...take every thought captive to obey Christ"

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Are there any moments of lustful thoughts or selfish desires when masturbating (if applicable)? If so, what does Jesus say about those thoughts in Matthew 5:27-28?
- Do you think God is honored when you masturbate? Why or why not?
- Do you think God is pleased if we intentionally place ourselves in situations fully knowing that temptation to sin will be amplified?
- What does 1 Cor 7:1-5 say about God's intended purpose for sexual pleasure in our life? How might masturbation hinder you from loving your future spouse in the ways God designed intimacy to be had in marriage?
- How might a lifestyle of masturbation effect your witness for Christ? If a non-believing friend asked if you masturbate and you answered honestly, how might that effect your friends view of God, their sin, and or the Christian life?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

If we cannot give God glory for something and or are not fully convinced it is honoring to Him, we should not do it (1 Corinthians 10:31; Rom 14:23; Colossians 3:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Your body is a temple of the holy spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). God did not design our bodies to experience sexual pleasure alone but rather solely within the covenant of marriage with a person of the opposite sex. God designed intimacy in marriage for the purpose of procreation, unification of one man with one woman, mutual God-glorifying pleasure, and also as a way to serve one another (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). **When you masturbate, you use God's design for sexual pleasure in a way He did not intend. Masturbation hardwires your mind for self-service which will hinder the way you biblically love your future husband or wife.** People often wrestle with whether or not masturbation can be done without sinning to keep it in their life as a source of non-sinful pleasure or stress relief. The Bible nowhere explicitly discusses masturbation, but we can biblically discern from multiple Scriptures that in most cases it falls under the category of sexual immorality and is sin. The Scriptures do speak a lot about the

heart of a person behind the act (1 Corinthians 6; 1 Thessalonians 4; Matthew 5; Galatians 5; Rom 13; James 1). A helpful question to ask when trying to understand if something is sinning or not is, “**did Jesus have to die for that act?**”. Sin is ultimately a matter of the heart rather than behaviors (Matthew 5:27-28). So how far is too far? Consider if you struggled with suicidal thoughts. Would you go to the top of a skyscraper and stand on the edge of the building? Absolutely NOT! You wouldn’t even want to get on the elevator because of the temptation to jump off. **Even if masturbation could be done without sinning, doing so puts us in a vulnerable place for greater temptation which Satan loves God’s people to be in.** Satan loves to feed our temptation and wait for us to fall.

When approaching this subject with someone, start by asking questions about their heart posture when masturbating to pinpoint potential sinful motives of their heart. Encourage them to repent of any convictions that surface. This person may have an addiction to masturbation in their life (typically partnered with pornography/sexual images), be regularly exposing themselves to sexualized content, and or be utilizing masturbation as a source of stress relief. Talk through the importance of guarding our hearts and minds from sexualized content and taking all thoughts not honoring to God captive to Christ. You may need to help the person monitor what they watch, listen to, read, etc. Sharing your personal wrestle with masturbation (if applicable) and how God changed you may be helpful. A key truth to communicate is that **God desires His people to find their true and ultimate satisfaction in Him when faced with stress, anxiety, and or loneliness** (Psalm 16:11; Philippians 4:6-7). **Remind the person that masturbation is (in most cases) taking your body which God made to be good and using it for sinful purposes.** Finally, help them find accountability and pray for their holiness.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Purity Principle by Randy Alcorn
- The Problem with Masturbation by Winston Smith
- Sex in a Broken World by Paul Tripp

MODESTY

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- 1 Peter 3:3-4: “Do not let your adorning be external...”
- 1 Samuel 16:7: “...man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”
- 1 Timothy 2:9-10: “...women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel...”
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...So glorify God in your body.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:31: “...whatever you do, do it all for the Glory of God.”

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Why do you dress, act, post, etc. the way that you do?
- When you choose your clothing, is your desire to get attention from others or to honor God?

- Do your actions and the way you dress set you apart from the world?
- Do your actions and dress cause others to stumble or weaken your testimony as a believer in Christ? (1 Cor 8:9, 2 Cor 6:3)
- Why do you think God cares about modesty?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

There is much uncertainty and contradiction in today's world concerning the topic of modesty. The world tells us that we can dress and act any way that feels good to us. However, **God desires us to glorify Him in everything we do** (1 Corinthians 10:31) and to glorify him with our bodies because our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is why modesty cannot be defined as a simple list of what to wear and what not to wear. **Modesty is an outward reflection of an inward heart attitude that desires to glorify, honor, love, and obey God in all ways.** The way we dress and act tells the story of who we are, what we believe, and who we choose to follow. **It is a matter of the heart and not the adherence to a set of legalistic rules.** Our faith should influence not only our wardrobe choices, but every aspect of our behavior. Modesty also honors God by serving others. As a follower of Jesus, we are to be thoughtful of others. We are not responsible for another's thoughts, actions, or sins. However, just because we have the freedom to do, say, or wear what we want, does not mean we should. We should never do anything to cause another to stumble. We can honor God by loving others through our dress and behavior (1 Corinthians 8:9, 2 Corinthians 6:3, John 13:34-35).

This person may be asking this question because they feel pressure from friends, desire to be liked by the opposite sex, are responding to what they see on social media, disagree with their parents' opinions, or is looking for a defined set of rules to live by. When speaking with a person about this topic, it is important to get to the heart of their question. Start by asking questions that allow this person to examine their motivations behind the way they dress or act. The heart attitude of a follower of Jesus should be evident in every aspect of their life, thereby demonstrating to the world who they choose to honor, love, obey, and serve.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- Sermon by The Porch: "Modest Isn't Hottest" (6/28/21)
- "The Modesty Conversation We Need to Have" by Megan Hill found on: thegospelcoalition.org
- "Does God Care What I Wear" by Mary Kassain found on: desiringgod.org

PEER PRESSURE

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Proverbs 24:1-2: "Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them"
- Ephesians 5:5-11: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them"
- 1 Timothy 4:12: "set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity"
- Proverbs 1:10-16: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent"

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does God say about seeking the world's input on how to live your life?
- Using the wisdom and truth from scriptures above, what are some questions you can ask yourself when faced with a situation where you are feeling pressured to act in a certain way?
- How can your response to peer pressure situations be an opportunity to witness to others?
- When you are feeling pressured to act/watch/engage in ways that are not pleasing to the Lord, who are you trying to please? Why?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

God has some very strong feelings toward actions that lead to wrongdoing out of a desire to please others. God says that a companion of fools will be destroyed (Proverbs 13:20). God says that we will not be tempted by anything more than anyone else, but He promises us a way out of each temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Even stronger yet, God says that **if we seek to please other people, we cannot be servants of Christ** (Galatians 1:10). James 1:12 tells us that there is a wonderful reward for those who endure temptation -> the crown of life! At the end of the day, we need to be listening to the Holy Spirit within us and commit to obeying God instead of our friends. **We make the voice of the Holy Spirit clear in us when we are daily searching the scriptures and learning about the character of our God.**

There are many reasons why this person may be asking about Peer Pressure. Today's world and information/identity/status driven culture can provide a wide range of emotions and even depression that can emanate from Peer Pressure situations. Spend some time investigating the root of why they might be asking the questions they are so that you can be more thoughtful about how to apply what is written in this Topic. Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Youth has a good exercise of taking an egg, balloon, and ball; asking them to try and apply pressure to each one until it breaks/pops. Talk with them encouraging them to relate what they observed with the exercise and how it might be applied to peer pressure. Anything with enough pressure applied can crack, unless our "outer shell" is solid and strong. They must develop this strong outer shell (using the Shepherding Tips above) to be able, with God's help, to say NO to pressure.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- A great article on Peer Pressure by John Piper - [A Call to Teenagers to Be Free | Desiring God](#)
- Peer Pressure: Recognizing the Warning Signs and Giving New Direction (Paul Tripp)
- When People Are Big and God is Small (Ed Welch)

PORNOGRAPHY

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 101:3: "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless."

- Luke 11:34-36: “Your eye is the lamp of your body.”
- Proverbs 15:3: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place”
- Romans 13:14: “...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires”
- Matthew 5:27-28: “...everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart”
- 2 Timothy 2:21-22: “..if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does God say about ‘viewing’ sinful images? How does viewing and acting on pornography appear to God Who sees everything?
- What are ways that you can see that pornography can affect a person’s entire life? How might you see this affecting people around you?
- What sinfully motivates your pornography usage? Stress relief? Sexual satisfaction? Curiosity?
- What is one new way in which you can guard your heart from sexual images today? What do you need to cut out of your life to walk in great holiness today? Social Media? TV? Internet Access?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

God’s view of pornography is very clear in scripture. Even though there were no computers or other screens to access pornography in biblical times, God has very strong feelings about what goes on in our minds and how we act on our thoughts. Scripture clearly states that **our eyes are to be kept from viewing sinful images** (Job 31:1, Matthew 5:28). God’s word also says that **pornography affects our entire life** (Luke 11:34-3 & James 1:14-15). In Psalm 139:7-12, David talks about not being able to flee from the eyes of God; from His presence. It is vital to turn from this sin and remove pornography entirely from one’s life.

This person might not be viewing pornography but is wanting to. They might be feeling-out what the spiritual ramifications are. If they are viewing pornography, they may be asking about it because the Lord may be convicting them, and they want to understand their guilt and shame. You might want to encourage them to write Philippians 4:8 on a card and read it before going to bed and when they wake up. Maybe suggest that if they must work or study on a computer, they could have worship music playing in the background; keeping their bible close at hand. Encouraging them to take a fast from all electronic devices could be warranted but be ready for real pushback as this is a primary form of connecting with friends...more importantly the spiritual ones. Maybe suggest that they find someone trustworthy to whom they could confess and with whom they could pray with when they struggle.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Breaking Pornography Addiction (booklet), David Powlison
- What’s Wrong With a Little Porn When You’re Single? R. Nicholas Black
- How Not to Fight Pornography - [How Not to Fight Pornography | Desiring God](#)

PURITY

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- Philippians 4:8: "...whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable...think about these things."
- Matthew 5:27-28: "...everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery..."
- 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in...purity."
- Psalm 119:9-11: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word."
- Galatians 2:20-22: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."
- Ephesians 5:3: "...sexual immorality and impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you..."

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- How would you define purity? How does God define purity?
- Why is purity important to God?
- How do you exhibit purity in your daily life and in your relationships?
- How does giving into impurity impact your view of the opposite sex, your future spouse, your kids, etc.?
- What struggles do you face in remaining pure in your heart, mind, or actions?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Purity is the freedom from anything that contaminates. It is the quality of being faultless and uncompromised. In the Bible, purity often communicates holiness or perfection. Only God is truly pure, holy, and perfect. However, our purity does matter to God. **A pure life is one in which sin no longer determines the choices you make.** God created us to reflect His image and to live in pure, unbroken communion with Him. However, **sin corrupts purity** (Psalm 14:3) and impurity in our lives can hinder our relationship with God (Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:19-21). Today, when we think of purity, we often think primarily of sexual purity. God cares deeply about our sexual purity (Ephesians 5:3, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 2 Timothy 2:22). However, **Biblical purity is so much more than simply abstaining from sex outside of marriage. Biblical purity is a matter of the heart** (Matthew 5:27-28). If we have been born again through faith in Jesus, we are no longer slaves to the passions of our former selves (1 Peter 1:14-15). God calls us to purity in how we deal with others (Luke 6:31), our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5), our words (Ephesians 4:29), and our actions (1 Corinthians 10:31). However, as sinful humans, we will fall short, and we will be tempted to give into the desires of our flesh. So, **we must guard our heart, mind, and body** by carefully considering our friendships, our relationships with members of the opposite sex, what we watch,

what we listen to, what we read, and how we spend our time. We cannot be devoted to the things of this world and to God. James 4:4 tells us, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Some common motivations behind asking this question might include a personal struggle with maintaining purity, pressure to compromise sexual purity, confusion by the world’s messages regarding purity, or a desire to know or set boundaries when dating. When shepherding this person, it is important to ask questions to understand their heart motivations and their understanding of God’s call to purity. Matthew 5:8 states, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” For someone to be pure in heart, it means their heart is set on one thing and nothing else - Jesus. For us to truly be concerned about purity, we must be concerned about where our affections and devotions lie. While the Bible is certainly concerned with sexual purity, it is far more concerned with a purity of heart. While physical adultery is a sin, it is symptomatic of a far deeper issue: spiritual adultery.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- gotquestions.org: “What does the Bible say about purity?”
- discipleshiptools.org: “The Character of Purity”
- openthebible.org: “Purity is About More than Sexuality”

RACISM

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Genesis 1:26-27: “...Let us make man in our image...”
- Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”
- 1 John 4:8: “Anyone who does not love does not know God...”
- James 2:8-9: “...You shall love your neighbor as yourself...”
- Romans 8:21: “...creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption...”
- Revelation 7:9: “...a great multitude... from all tribes and peoples...standing before the throne...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Where do people get their worth and value from according to Genesis 1:26-27?
- How should our hearts and actions reflect how God made every person?
- How does racism go against God’s design for human relationships?
- What does Scripture say about true reconciliation? How does this look different than the world’s solution for racial reconciliation?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Scripture is very clear that beliefs or actions that value one person or people group over another goes against God’s design for human relationships (James 2:8-9). Racism (valuing one race over another) is a result of sin entering the world in the garden and we have seen the

consequences of this sin throughout history and will continue to until the world is fully restored by Christ (Acts 3:21).

For one with racist beliefs:

Remind them that God created all mankind in His perfect image (Genesis 1:27). Point this person to see how the Gospel should change how we view and love others. When we believe in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, we are born again (1 Peter 1:23-25) and we become a new creation (Galatians 6:15). We have a new identity in Christ (Galatians 5:20)! Ask them what this means to them? Are they living differently than they were before they knew Christ? **All Christians should value their identity in Christ above all else and then joyfully celebrate their race and ethnic diversity in the family of God.**

For one that struggles with the effect of racism in their own life or in the lives of others:

The damaging effects of racism appear in many different extents and forms. Take the time to listen, seek to understand, and lament with them over the hurt they have seen or experienced. Especially in recent years, the world has been loud about this topic and the solution to the problem can be very confusing. **The hope for reconciliation that we have in Christ looks very different than the hope that the world offers. We can look at Christ's life as the example of what true love looks like (1 John 3:16).** We are called to love others in the way that Christ first loved us. We cannot change other's hearts, but we can pursue the life of love and reconciliation that Christ calls us to. While we long for relationships to be restored on earth, we are given a glimpse of hope in Revelation 7:9 of perfect reconciliation when we are reunited with Christ in heaven.

Lastly, please inform a pastor about this conversation so we can best care for you and the person asking.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Weep with Me: How lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation* by Mark Vroegop
- *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* by John Piper

SELF-CONTROL

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Proverbs 25:28: "...like a city broken into and left without walls."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:4: "...know how to control his/her own body in holiness and honor..."
- Galatians 5:16-21: "...walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13: "...God is faithful...he will also provide the way of escape..."
- John 14:15: "If you love me you will keep my commandments"

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does a lack of self-control in our life say about what you love most? What are you choosing to love more than God in moments when you lack self-control?

- What things in your life are the hardest to say no and/or yes to out of a lack of self-control? What areas in your life can you not seem to get under control?
- How might a lack of self-control play a role in your battle against all kinds of sin?
- What implications would having greater self-control have in your life?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Self-control is the balancing of passions and desires unto the glory of God. It is an important fruit of the Spirit that has great implications on our life and holiness as followers of Jesus. A self-controlled life is one of the distinct marks of a Holy Spirit filled person who loves God (Galatians 5:16-21). Lack of self-control tends to show up when we have a hard time saying no to things. Jesus lived a perfectly self-controlled life and as a result had a healthy relationship with His Father and others around Him. **A character of self-control begins not with behavioral change but rather by asking the Holy Spirit to control us as we learn from and live like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:22-24). A self-controlled heart is cultivated ultimately when our desires for sin is replaced with a greater desire for God (John 14:15).** What you love most will be what you choose most. **Our lack of self-control gets attacked the greatest when desire for sin, opportunity to sin, and temptation occur at the same moment in time.** The ongoing battle for self-control is fought by growing in love for God, guarding our hearts from opportunities to sin, and turning from temptation. The person you are caring for might have an ongoing battle with a particular sin (gossip, sexual sin, etc.), difficulty placing priorities in the right place, and or a hard time focusing in life (conversations, lectures, tasks, homework, etc.). Help this person understand that their lack of self-control is ultimately a matter of their heart/desires. Some may share about a diagnosis (HDHD; ADD) or something that they believe hinders their ability to be self-controlled. Remind this person that their condition is not responsible for their lack of self-control. Rather, their condition may simply mean they have to work harder than others at honoring God in areas of self-control. Remind this person of hope to change because of the Holy Spirits work in their life as they surrender their desires to Him.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://vimeo.com/164505284>
- <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/586c240e725e250e1dc73403/t/6283d919f72fcf3844da2b4f/1652807962804/Y-Chart+Progression.pdf>
- Motives: *Why Do I Do the Things I do?* By Ed Welch

SELF HARM/CUTTING

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- John 14:27: "...my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you..."
- Psalm 139:14: "...I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "...You are not your own, for you were bought with a price..."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13: "...He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability..."
- James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Do you believe that God is sovereign? Good? Loving? Just? How does believing these things about God change how we view ourselves?
- If applicable to you, why do you partake in self-harm? What do you believe you receive from it?
- Do you find that self-harm brings short-term or long-term relief? What did Jesus do for you to offer you long-term peace? Do you desire this peace He offers?
- What emotions are at play when you desire to self-harm? (Ex: anger, pain, grief, sin, guilt, depression, anxiety, etc.)
- What are some of God's promises in Scripture that you are able to cling to when you are discouraged? (Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 54:10, Ephesians 2:10)

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Self-harm is an extremely prevalent issue in our world. The Mayo Clinic defines self-harm as, “non-suicidal self-injury... the act of deliberately harming your own body, such as cutting or burning yourself”. Those who struggle with self-harm may be acting out of a desire for some sort of relief from their current situation, a longing for control, or guilt. **Through your conversation try to discover the root of why they are harming themselves. What does it solve or release for them?** Before you are able to work on a solution to the physical problem, you must understand what is going on in the heart.

Remind this person that harming themselves may bring temporary relief, however the only true peace we can have is in Jesus (1 John 4:4). **Someone who struggles with self-harm is believing lies about themselves and/or lies about God.** Point them to the character of God by asking if they believe God to be sovereign, good, loving, and just and how trusting God as such may change the way they view themselves. Help the person understand how Christ's death on the cross frees us from our shame and guilt. **The truth is that God created this person, loves them, and has a plan for them.** Changing our inner monologue about how and what we believe does not happen overnight. It's a continual decision to come to the Lord (Acts 3:19). Come up with a personalized plan with the person for how to better handle their emotions in a God-honoring way next time they are tempted to self-harm. (Ex: call you when needed, memorize Scripture, exercise, get enough sleep, build Godly relationships, remove any possible weapons, write down lies they believe and truths that counteract those lies.) Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person asking about this topic so that we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Cut: Mercy for Self-Harm* by Nancy Alcorn
- *Cutting* (booklet) by Jeremy Lelek
- *Hope and Help for Self-Injurers and Cutters* by Mark Shaw
- *Self-Injury: When Pain Feels Good* in Journal of Biblical Counseling by Ed Welch

SEXTING

KEY SCRIPTURES:

What God says:

- Colossians 3:5: “Put to death...sexual immorality, impurity, passion...”
- Philippians 4:8: “...whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable...think about these things.”
- 1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct...in purity.”
- Galatians 5:19-21: “...sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality...those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- James 1:14-15: “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire...desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin...”
- Matthew 5:28: “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully intent has already committed adultery in his heart.”

KEY QUESTIONS:

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does God say about sexting in the Bible?
- Do you think sexting and pornography are the same or different in God’s eyes according to the Bible?
- How might sexting affect your relationships or self-image?
- What are possible worldly and spiritual consequences of sexting?
- Does sexting glorify you, others, or God?

SHEPHERDING TIPS:

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

“Sexting” is the act of sending sexually explicit messages, videos, or photographs to another person via mobile phone. Many people from a young age have either sent or received a “sext.” This form of sexual immorality is only increasing in regularity as access and use of technology grows and as sexting becomes more and more normalized in today’s culture. It is important to understand that **God stands against all forms of sexual immorality** (Hebrews 13:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:18-21, Colossians 3:5), including sexting. Some may think that sexting is harmless because it does not encompass a physical sexual act. However, Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:28, that even looking upon a woman lustfully is the same thing as committing adultery with her in your heart. The right to see someone naked is reserved for a husband and a wife. Moreover, once a “sext” has been sent, there is no taking it back, it can be shared over and over without your consent, and the consequences can be far reaching. As believers, **we are to exercise self-control over our earthly desires, thoughts, and actions in submission to God’s authority in our lives** (Colossians 3:5). Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). 2 Timothy 2:22 reminds us that we are to, “flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

This person may be curious about what sexting is, has received a sext, has been pressured to send a sext, or is in a relationship in which sexting is already occurring. If this person has come to you because they are or have been sending or receiving sexts, it is important for them to know that God offers forgiveness to those who are ready to repent and turn from their sin. John 1:1:9 states, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness.” If they are feeling pressured to send or receive explicit messages or photos, please inform a pastor about this conversation so we can best care for this person.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- dosomething.org: “11 Facts about Sexting” (statistics)
- guardchild.org: “Teenage Sexting Statistics”
- Purity Principle by Randy Alcorn
- Battling Sexual Sin sermon by The Porch. JD Rodgers. June 2022
- Lust and Self Control sermon by The Porch. Jonathan Pokluda. Feb. 2018

SEXUAL ORIENTATION/LGBTQ+

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Genesis 1:27-31: “...male and female he created them.”
- Matthew 19:4-6: “...the two shall become one flesh...”
- Romans 1:26-27: “...men gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another...”
- James 1:13-15: “...desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin...”
- Leviticus 18:22: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”
- 1 Corinthians 6:9: “...the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God...nor men who practice homosexuality...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Do you believe God had your good in mind when He designed marriage to be solely between a man and woman? If not, why not?
- Do you feel as if God is keeping something good from you by calling you to pursue dating, engagement, and or marriage with only someone of the opposite sex?
- Can you think of any reasons why God might have limited marriage to only one man and one woman? What are the benefits of marriage when both a mother and father are present?
- What does God say about sexual temptation that leads to lust of any kind (homosexual or heterosexual)? Do you believe it is sin?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

God is the good and wise creator who made us in His image and in His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, we have inherent, immeasurable, and irrevocable worth (Genesis 1:26-27, Matthew 19:4-6; Psalm 139:13). God has designed marriage to be solely between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:3-6). The union between believer and Jesus is exemplified in the complimentary and unified relationship between a husband and a wife (Ephesians 5:31-32). Sin was brought into our world and has affected the world in its totality (Romans 5:12; 8:22). This includes how we may feel and think about attraction and sexual

relationships. Because of sin, the world has created its own meaning for marriage and called any type of sexual attraction good (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9). These definitions confuse the hearts and minds of many people today, especially the younger generation. Sinful desires, including the desire for same sex relationships, come out of the human heart under sin's influence (James 1:14-15, Mark 7:20-23). A person has not sinned if they experience the temptation of same-sex attraction but do not act on it or embrace it as an identity. It becomes sin when a person acts on these temptations. God also makes it clear in His Word that same-sex sexual relationships of any kind and or adopting/affirming LGBTQ beliefs are also considered sin before Him as they glorify that which God calls sin and calls God a liar (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Isaiah 5:20). It makes no difference if two people are in a committed relationship or not. Same-sex sexual relationships are against his natural, created design (Romans 1:26-27) and dishonor the body that God has given us (Romans 1:24).

The Bible reveals that the heart behind homosexuality is a **seeking one's own glory above Gods**. This person **calls God a liar, claiming their feelings define what is true about who they can rightly have a sexual relationship with. This heart claims they can do better than God, suppresses the truth and attempts to be creator in God's place by giving supremacy to their feelings above His divine authority** (Romans 1:21-22; Romans 1:18-23). Our need for change is not simply behavioral change but heart change. The amazing news is that Jesus provides an answer to the sin corrupted heart through His life, death, and resurrection. After trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, the believer receives the Holy Spirit in them, making what is impossible for man to do alone, possible with God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to turn from temptation and live a life honoring God and full of joy (John 14:16-17, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 3:16-21). It is only by pursuing God's design for relationships that we can experience true joy in marital intimacy of all kinds.

People may have a variety of reasons for asking about this subject. First, seek to understand why they are asking to help you wisely navigate the conversation. They may be unsure if homosexuality is a sin, know a friend who supports LGBTQ, may be themselves or know someone who is LGBTQ. Whichever the reason, communicate with grace and truth. The foundational truth to share is that **God is good and His greatest desire for us is a heart that loves Him and life that honors Him** (Ephesians 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The person may need help understanding how to think biblically about this subject. They may need to hear the good news of the new identity Jesus' offers them through the gospel. Jesus came to die for and to save the person living a same-sex lifestyle just as much as he came to save the self-righteous church goer. The amazing news for the believer is that the Holy Spirit strengthens, encourages, and empowers us to honor God by acting in holiness with our bodies and experience the joy that comes from doing so (John 14:16-17, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 3:16-21). Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person(s) involved in this topic of conversation so we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- "Is God anti-gay?" by Sam Allberry
- "Why does God care who I sleep with?" by Sam Allberry
- "Washed and Waiting" by Wesley Hill

SINGLENES

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 37:3-4, 73:25-26, 84:11-12: “Delight yourself in the Lord”
- Matthew 5:6, 7:7-11; 19:10-12: “Blessed are those who hunger...for righteousness”
- 1 Corinthians 7:1, 6-9, 25-38: “But each has his own gift from God...”
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-15: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers”
- Philippians 4:11-13: “...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content”
- 1 Timothy 6:6-7: “But godliness with contentment is great gain...”
- James 1:17: “Every good and every perfect gift is from above...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is God’s purpose and design for us in singleness? How does the Bible teach us to view singleness?
- Why does God sometimes allow for our desires to go unfulfilled according to Philippians 4:11-13?
- How does knowing God’s character affect how we view singleness?
- How does God comfort, encourage, and provide for us when we have a desire to be in a relationship or married?
- What does it look like to be content in all things, including singleness? How should we respond when we are single and have a desire to be in a relationship?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Because God is perfect and good, the gifts that He gives us are also perfect and good (Psalm 84:11; Matthew 7:11; James 1:17). The Bible uses language that describes both marriage and singleness as gifts—good gifts designed to bring us joy and God glory (Proverbs 18:22; 1 Corinthians 7:6-9, 25-38). **God also designed us to desire marriage and deep, meaningful, intimate relationship(s) with those of the opposite sex.** The concept of dating and being “in a relationship” is a relatively modern paradigm and is not discussed in the Bible. The Bible only has two categories of relationships between two people of the opposite sex: singleness (i.e., brothers and sisters in Christ) and marriage. However, because we live in a culture where dating is the traditional pathway to marriage, we must be purposeful to view dating through the lens of Scripture.

For people who are currently dating, the temptation to sin often abounds and care must be taken to honor God and seek accountability within the relationship. For people who are single and desire to be in a relationship (or married in the future), questions about God’s goodness and faithfulness can arise. **When a person comes to you with questions about singleness or God’s character and design, remind them that a desire to be in a relationship that leads to a God-honoring marriage is a good thing!** Point them to verses and passages in Scripture that describe God’s sovereign timing in all things in our life. Comfort them with the truth that God’s design and plan for us are good. **Encourage them to use their singleness as an opportunity to grow in contentment and trust in God. God always has our best interests at heart.** Practical steps could include encouraging them to serve at church, cultivating relationships with those of the same sex

(for example, in a Life Group), and/or keeping a list of ways that God has blessed them in their singleness. Above all, remind them that both singleness and marriage (in the future) are temporary, and the real treasure is the hope we have to spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven. **Whether a person is single or in a relationship, we can trust that God works all things for His glory and our good in His perfect timing (Romans 8:28, 31-39).**

FURTHER RESOURCES

- When God Writes Your Love Story, Eric and Leslie Ludy.
- Not Yet Married: The Pursuit of Joy in Singleness and Dating, Marshall Segal.
- Outdated: Find Love That Lasts When Dating Has Changed, Jonathan Pokluda.
- Single, Dating, Engaged, Married: Navigating Life & Love in the Modern Age, Ben Stuart.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 4:29: “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful...”
- I Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
- I Corinthians 15:33: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ Become sober-minded...”
- Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...”
- Ephesians 5:7-11: “Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord...”
- I Timothy 2:9-10: “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly...”
- Romans 6:13: “Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What 5 words describe your online persona?
- Do you have personal boundaries regarding social media? (IE: time limits, following others, followers, PM or DM rules, sexting or videos?) If yes, take a minute to write them down. If you haven’t thought about your personal boundaries online, take time to do that now.
- Does social media increase your feelings of envy, discontentment, jealousy, and gossip? Is this pleasing to God?
- Do you feel more worth and value by reactions/followers on social media or is your worth found in Christ alone?
- Is your time with God greater than your time on social media?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

While God's word doesn't speak directly of social media, it does speak directly to our motives, our conduct, and our personhood in Christ. Social media is here to stay and learning to navigate it in a way that reflects, and honors Christ takes intention and boundaries. YOU are the commodity, meaning YOU-your persona are what people are buying. There is a pressure to stay relevant and to keep your followers satisfied. However, as Christ followers our greatest goal is to please and glorify Christ. Galatians 2:20 states, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." **Every snap, every image, tweet, text, video, both public and private, are known by God and should reflect a life reconciled to Him (Matthew 5:13-16). We become what we behold** and when we are beholding Christ we become like Christ. Romans 6:13 reminds us to "...not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So, use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God." When we consume (behold) social media we become like those we follow. Which reflects I Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.' Become sober minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God." Another byproduct of social media is its ability to feed our sin, like gossip, envy, slander, jealousy, and manipulation. Someone who consistently finds themselves effected emotionally and spiritually by the use and effects of social media might need help unpacking the heart behind *why* it's so impactful. Pleasing man verse pleasing God is a main root cause of sin and distress online. These are sin issues of the heart. Encourage the person to ask the Lord to reveal why social media effects them so deeply. If there are sins to confess, help them to walk through confession and asking the Lord for forgiveness. Work together on a strategy for repentance. Consider taking a social media break or deleting apps that are harmful to your relationship with God.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges
- The Measure of a Young Man by Gene Getz and Kenton Getz
- Peer Pressure by Paul Tripp

SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE (wife to husband)

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 5:21-24: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
- Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men."
- Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Based on the verses I read above, was this modeled for me in my immediate family? How might this impact my initial response to biblical submission?
- Does God's Word say that a wife should do anything her husband says? If not, what does He say?
- How might biblical leadership by the husband impact a wife's decision to follow her husband in this way (submission)?
- Describe how God's design in submission in marriage brings Him glory. How would you say that a wife submitting to her husband reflects Jesus' own submission to His Father according to 1 Corinthians 11:3?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

The primary point in marriage relationships is that husbands and wives should strive to 'out-serve' one another. If this is the goal of each person in the marriage union, the times when the husband may make a decision with the submission of his wife will be few and far between. The husband and wife are a team: working together in unison on all decisions. There should be rare occasions where there may not be a clear path forward on the options discussed, and in those cases, the Lord asks the husband to take responsibility of the decision and the wife to willingly submit to the decision he chooses. When a wife submits to her husband in response to his loving leadership, it is not difficult. The husband is to lead her towards Christ which means it is never ok for the husband to ask his wife to do something that is against God's word in either sin or deed (Acts 5:29).

In no way is there any difference in value between husband and wife in God's eyes. Both husbands and wives are image bearers of God and hold the same infinite worth in His eyes (Genesis 1:27). Just as the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are GOD, they each hold a different function in the execution of their roles. Jesus submitted to the Father by being obedient to the will of the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3).

At the judgement, husbands (as the head of their wives) will be held to a higher account for their decisions within the marriage. **Just as God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of the church; so it is that Christ is the head of the husband, and the husband is the head of his wife.** In God's perfect design in marriage, we see the gospel represented in this way.

They may be coming to you about this topic because of behavior they are witnessing at home. It could even be an 'out of balance' situation where there may be oppression over one spouse or another. Discerning the root of what is driving the question will help you select appropriate passages in God's Word to help them understand what God is saying about this important topic. Continue to encourage them to pray and point them to God's Word for help understanding His perspective on the mutual worth yet different functions men and women have in marriage. If you sense that there may be marital abuse based on your conversations with them, you should not hesitate to reach out to and inform a pastor.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Meaning of Marriage – Timothy and Kathy Keller (Specifically Chapter 6)
- Pastor Steve's message on 'The Irresistible Wife' - [The Irresistible Wife - Canyon Hills Community Church](#)

SUBMISSION TO PARENTS

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Matthew 7:9-11: "...which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?"
- Deuteronomy 6:4-7: "...You shall teach them [instructions to love God] diligently to your children"
- Proverbs 1:8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching"
- Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."
- Deuteronomy 5:16: "Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you"
- Proverbs 17:25: "A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- There are many more scriptures on obeying one's parents; however, what are some themes you hear in what God says through the passages above?
- Do you believe that your parents inherently want to raise you right and honor God in doing so? Why or why not?
- What are some different ways that you can think of to 'Honor your father and your mother'?
- Do you think that discipline by your parents is biblical? What types of discipline (by parents) does God talk about in His word?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

The family unit is God's design for the stable and nurturing mechanism of preparing children for not only life but hopefully a lifelong service to God (Psalm 78:5-7). It is the parents' responsibility to impart Godly wisdom (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12). God tells us to pay attention to parental wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 13:1). However, God never condones abuse (Ephesians 6:4 & Psalm 27:10). In Jeremiah 29:11 God promises us that He has plans for us and that those plans are for good and not evil; that He will give us a future and a hope. It is our responsibility to honor and glorify God by respecting and obeying our parents. **God says that our reward for honoring/obeying our parents is 'a long life' (Exodus 20:12).**

There are many reasons why a person might want more information on this topic. It could be a genuine desire to be a good kid for their mom and dad...or it could be that there is perceived pressure a person feels under to achieve or succeed. When coming from a non-Christian home, it could be how to better be a witness to their parents as they strive to honor their parents AND honor God. Here are some helpful ideas for them to embrace and act on this godly command. Maybe suggest they write a letter of 'thanks' to their parents. It will encourage them! Encourage them to suggest that the parents set aside one night of the week as 'family time'; for games, sports, eating out, and other things the family enjoys doing together. Finally, suggest that they prayerfully consider 3 things they can do today that would honor God in respecting and obeying

their parents. This is especially important when trust has been broken by sinful behavior toward their parents.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Honoring Your Parents in *The Measure of a Young Man*, Gene Getz and Kenton Getz
- [Honor the Parents God Gave You | Desiring God](#)
- Life Beyond Your Parents' Mistakes (booklet), David Powlison

SUFFERING

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- I Peter 4:12: "...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you..."
- James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test..."
- I Peter 1:6-7: "...even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith..."
- Phil 3:7-8: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ..."
- Prov 3:11-12: "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD..."
- Psalm 9:9-10: "The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Do Christians suffer in the world?
- Is there a purpose for suffering?
- What should our response be in our suffering according to I Peter 1:6-7 "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"?
- Can He be working through your suffering? How?
- What verse from above can you meditate on during a season of suffering?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Throughout the Bible we read stories of suffering. **God never diminishes or minimizes the fact that we will suffer in this life. However, He promises that our suffering will be purposeful.**

God allows suffering to show us more of His character and to refine, or purify, our hearts.

Sometimes we suffer as a consequence of our own sin, sometimes we suffer because someone sinned against us, and other times we suffer because of circumstances God allows. Regardless of why we suffer the result of our suffering is to help us know God in a more personal and intimate way (Romans 3:5-3). Suffering will also result in us becoming more like Christ. Our greatest tool

and/or weapon in our suffering is God's word. When we cling to the truth of God's word to help us endure through suffering, we experience the power of God's word actively in our lives (Isaiah 55:11). We might read about God's faithfulness to us but to experience His faithfulness grows our relationship with Him. As a result of our suffering, our faith and trust in God grows and we become rooted in our experience of His presence. God has a redeeming purpose in suffering. Scripture is the key to our strength and perseverance. Suffering is the test of what we believe to be true about God. The person may be suffering because of their sinful choices or because of something done to them. Remind them of God's promise to use their suffering to bring them closer to Himself and to make them more like His Son. If the person is in a season of suffering, encourage them to go to God and instead of asking Him to remove the suffering, ask Him to help them understand its purpose.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Can God Be Trusted in Our Trials? Tony Evans
- Shelter in the Time of Storm Paul Tripp
- Trusting God Even When Life Hurts Jerry Bridges
- Therefore I Have Hope by Cameron Cole

SUICIDE

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."
- Proverbs 3:5-8: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11: "...who comforts us in all our affliction...On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again."
- Psalm 86:1-13: "For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you."
- Psalm 34:17-20: "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit"
- Exodus 20:13: "You shall not murder."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

General questions:

- What does the Bible say about who the owner of life and death is and what God's heart is towards purposefully ending your own life?
- How might taking one's own life effect other people?
- What does the Bible say is the true way to peace, freedom, hope, and life? Have you found Jesus to be the true way to peace, freedom, hope, and life? If not, what is holding you back from trusting in Him?
- What truths from Scripture can you set your mind and heart on for hope and peace when struggling with suicidal thoughts? What help does God promise in Psalms 34 and 86?

For someone struggling with suicidal thoughts:

- What is something that you want so much that you are willing to take your life in order to get it? (Peace, rest, no conflict, etc.) How will that happen through taking your life?
- When you think about continuing on with life, what is a thought/idea/emotion that instantly pops up? (Fear, depression, exhaustion, no friends, etc.)
- Has something outside of your own thoughts/desires been the driving force to want to take your life?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

The act of purposefully ending a life God has given is sin (Exodus 20:13). Suicide is a false gospel. In many ways, it is an acting as one's own savior, attempting to deliver oneself from (salvation) the sorrow, despair, and evil (sin) of this world. Suicide is a cry for the gospel since it is, at its core, an identity crisis. The person has lost a sense of purpose in life and is longing for purpose. This heart is primed for the gospel. The good news is that Jesus offers an all-satisfying identity in Him. Instead of asking us to die for Him, Jesus died for us in love and calls us to be a living sacrifice by daily denying ourselves and following Him (Romans 12:1-4; Luke 9:23). If the gospel is good news, then suicide is anything but good news. Suicide is only good news when someone contemplating life concludes that not living is actually a good thing. **The answer to this false gospel is that Jesus brings about true spiritual life for all who repent and trust in Him. Ask questions to see if they have put their faith in Christ. If not, offer eternal life with Christ as the greatest cure.**

If they are suicidal, **ask questions to identify what it is they most want.** You are talking with someone who is willing to lay down their life for something. **That something is actually the idol that is controlling them.** Examples of the core issue may be selfish ambition, revenge, anxiety/fear, deceitful desires of the flesh, guilt, broken relationships, false hopes/crushed spirit/despair, deep sorrow, or even muting effects of psychoactive drugs. Understanding what the person's foundational struggles are goes deeper than the current crisis.

This person may have either attempted suicide before or plan to. Start by **communicate that you genuinely care** (Acts 16:28 and Romans 12:15). Then, **discern heart motives together** and lovingly confront the underlying deceit. You may also need to address relationships involved that are impacting the person's consideration of suicide. At the end of the day, they are facing a spiritual battle. Fighting for them involves praying, reading Scripture, singing, being present, listening well. Use God's Word to pierce through any deceptions (Hebrews 4:12). **Remind them of who God says they are and what their purpose is (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).** **Leave them with practical next steps** such as writing out a lament related to their struggle, writing down lies they are believing and counter biblical truths, bringing their struggles to God in prayer, and inviting others into their struggle to pray for them. If this person isn't personally struggling with this topic but rather knows someone who recently committed suicide or are struggling with suicidal ideation, be present to comfort them, reinforce the character of God in their heart (His love, sovereignty, goodness, etc.), and help answer any questions they might have about the situation through a biblical lens. Let them know that bringing the information to you was the right thing.

Don't promise to NOT share information they tell you with others. Inform them that, because you love them, you may need to share information with the right people to get help they (or a person they know) need. Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person(s) involved in this topic of conversation so we can best provide care for the situation.

Helpful truths to communicate are:

- God is with us and helps us fight our battles (Psalm 23; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:31-39).
- God knows our sufferings and is using it for our good and His glory (Rom 8:28).
- Taking one's life is selfish when there are people who want you here.
- The problems do not go away; rather, the person transfers their despair, sorrow, and mental turmoil to those who are left behind.
- True love is this, that someone lay down his life for his friends, not his or her own self (John 15:13).

FURTHER RESOURCES

- "Help! My Friend is Suicidal" mini book by Bruce Ray
- "I Just Want to Die, Replacing Suicidal Thoughts with Hope" by David Powlison
- Suicidal Ideation | Daniel Berger II

SWEARING / FOUL LANGUAGE / JOKES

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Ephesians 5:4: "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking..."
- Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such..."
- I Corinthians 13:4-8: "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant..."
- James 3:8-10: "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison..."
- James 1:26: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- How does Ephesians 5:4 and 4:29 shape your view of cussing?
- Do you agree with scripture that what's coming out of your mouth is what's in your heart?
- How might cursing and crude joking from a Christians mouth taint the image of Jesus in minds of non-believers?
- What should be coming out of your mouth instead of curse words and crude jokes?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

We are a billboard of Christ to a watching world and our speech reveals our heart. **A heart that has been reconciled to Jesus should be pouring out words of kindness, love, gentleness, and encouragement, not slander and coarse language.** We are to be in the world but not of the world. Crude words/jokes and/or cussing is behavior fit for an unbeliever; not for someone who has been made "new". Just as Ephesians 5:4 states, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving." Our desire to fit in or

impress our peers with our foul words or humor comes at the cost of pleasing Christ. God's word reminds us in James 1:26 "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." Our behavior reveals who we desire to please, God or man. If we talk/joke as the world does what kind of example are we of a life changed by God? If the fruit is bad, the root is bad. We should be known for speaking life into others and offering hope instead of insult.

This person may be driven by insecurity and desire to fit in, developed a bad habit in the way they speak, and or be allowing ungodly media to fill their heart resulting in ungodly speech. Someone who is struggling with their speech has a two-step process to address: their heart-what they are pouring into it, and their words-what they choose to say becomes an automatic behavior. We can't address one without the other. Saturating your heart with God's word and limiting exposure to things (music, meme's, TikTok's, movies) that are contrary to God's word, will start to change the heart and as the heart changes the word choice and behavior will follow. However, until we see our sinful speech as ugly as Christ sees it, it will be difficult to change.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges
- Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith by Stuart

TEMPATION

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- James 1:14-15: "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin..."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13: "...God is faithful...he will provide the way of escape..."
- Matthew 4:1-11: "Jesus said to [Satan], 'Again it is written...'"
- Matthew 5:29: "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is the difference between temptation and sin according to James 1:14-15?
- Is there ever a moment when faced with temptation that we can't say no to sin according to 1 Corinthians 10:13?
- Do you think God is pleased if we intentionally place ourselves in situations fully knowing that temptation to sin will be amplified?
- What can we learn from Jesus' example in Matthew 4:1-11 about how to respond to temptation in a way that pleases God?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Temptation is enticement or encouragement to do evil and something every believer constantly wages war against (Galatians 5:17). **Temptation does not and cannot come from God, rather it comes from Satan and or our own fleshly desires** (James 1:13-15; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

Temptation is not sin and therefore not something Jesus had to die for on the cross.

Temptation becomes sin when we act on sinful desires or temptations in thought, speech,

sight, or practice. Like a referee making calls during a football game based on a knowledge of the rule book, our conscience bears witness (throws the flag) when we have crossed over from temptation to sinful actions that violate God’s law, leaving us with feelings of guilt/shame following (Romans 2:15). We can expect strong levels of temptation when we are craving something in our lives that we are not getting (attention, affirmation, money, affection, sexual fulfillment, etc.) and or are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Worldly sources and influences such as TV and music are likely to fill our minds with things that lead to greater temptation to sin. As Christians, we are to occupy our minds with things of God so that there is less room for worldly influences to lead us away from the path of holiness (Colossians 3:2; Phil 4:8). Jesus understands this battle. He Himself was tempted, but rather than giving in, He remained faithful, providing for us the perfect example of how to fight temptation using the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15). The Bible tells us that every time we sin, we can look back and know that we could have said no (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Encourage the person to ask, **“how will this hurt God, myself, and others? Will I regret this?”**, when faced with temptation. Challenge them to walk in greater holiness by guarding against areas where they know they experience greater levels of temptation. This person may be regularly giving in when temptation arises, experiencing great guilt in their conscience, wondering how far is too far, and or experiencing higher amounts of temptation in their life. If the person seems to be labeling their clearly sinful choices “temptation” in order to deflect responsibility, then ask lots of questions about their heart posture in the midst of temptation. Questions convict, statements accuse. Love the person well by helping them gain clarity on the difference between temptation and sin and encourage them with biblical tools to fight against temptation (Proverbs 4:14-15, 6:27, 27:12; Matthew 26:41; 2 Timothy 2:22-23).

FURTHER RESOURCES

- “The Dynamic Heart” diagram: <https://vimeo.com/698381907/4d81fbc51a>
- *Killing sin habits: conquering sin with radical faith* by Stuart Scott

TIME MANAGEMENT

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Psalm 39:4-5; 90:12: “...let me know how fleeting I am!”
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: “For everything there is a season...”
- 1 Corinthians 10:31: “...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”
- Ephesians 5:15-17: “...making the best use of the time...”
- Colossians 3:1-2: “Set your minds on things that are above...”
- James 4:13-15: “...yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Does God care how we use our time? Explain.
- What does the Bible say about how we should view and use our time?
- What does the way(s) we use our time say about what we believe about God?

- How do we know if the way(s) we use our time honors and glorifies God?
- What is the biblical response if/when we realize we are misusing our time? What is one area of your life God may be convicting you to stop giving your time to and start giving it to something better?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Many of us (sinfully) view our time at church as “God’s time” and the rest of our week as “our time” to be used as we please. **The Bible teaches that God, in His sovereignty, has graciously given us all our time a gift to use wisely (Psalm 39:4-5).** Time is a scarce resource (Psalm 39:4-5, 90:12; Ephesians 5:15-17). We all have the same number of hours in our days, but individual schedules and how we use those hours will determine what we accomplish with our time. Some of us are more naturally gifted at time management and flourish within an organized and structured schedule. Others are more spontaneous and function better with a schedule that is held with an open hand. Regardless of our leaning, the Bible calls us to use our time wisely and with the primary purpose of bringing glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 5:15-17; Colossians 4:5; James 4:13-15). **Using our time in a way that honors God requires prayer, wisdom, and discipline.** God has given us His Word as the ultimate source of wisdom, but godly counsel in our lives can also be of great help.

People may have questions about time management because they are realizing for the first time that God cares deeply about how they use their time. They also could be feeling overwhelmed and are looking for guidance in managing a schedule. Others may already know that they are misusing their time and are looking for next steps. Encourage and thank others for coming to you for help. Remind them that the Bible is sufficient and speaks to all these issues. It may be helpful to have them use a weekly planner or app on their cell phone to track their time. As a leader, you could also offer to review their weekly schedule and give your thoughts and advice. **Understand that, depending on their age and context, people may have limited control (or complete freedom!) over how they spend their time.**

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Spiritual Leadership, J. Oswald Sanders.
- What’s Best Next, Matt Perman.
- Do More Better, Tim Challies.
- Priorities: Mastering Time Management (booklet), James Petty.
- Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem, Kevin DeYoung
- The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, John Mark Comer

TITHING

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Proverbs 3:9-10: “Honor the Lord with your wealth; and with the firstfruits of all your produce...”
- Malachi 3:7-12: “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse...”
- Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...”

CHCC STUDENT MINISTRY

- Mark 12:41-44: “she out of her poverty has put in everything she had...”
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart...”

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What is God’s purpose and design for tithing? Does God need our money? Does the church need our money?
- How does the Bible teach us to view our money? What does our view of money reveal about our heart and what we believe?
- What is God working to grow in our hearts in commanding us to tithe?
- According to the Bible, what is a good starting point for how much we should tithe? How do I know if I am tithing enough? Do you see biblical reasons for continuing to increase our generosity over time, both in time and resources?
- Should I tithe even if I do not make very much money or only receive an allowance?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Under the Old Testament Law, God commanded the Israelites to offer a tithe of what He had provided them (e.g., crops, produce, animals, money, etc.). The word “tithe” literally means “tenth”. This recurrent offering was meant to bring God glory as a demonstration of their trust in Him and willingness to help those in need (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Following the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the establishment of the Church, Christians are no longer mandated to tithe exactly ten percent under the Law (Romans 7:4-6). However, Jesus still commands the church to be sacrificial, generous, and good stewards of all that He has given us. **We as a church encourage believers to begin by tithing ten percent of their total income to God in the local church. How we view and use our money reflects what we believe to be true about God and His promises.** God does not need our money but calls us to use our money in ways that will glorify Him and advance the message of the Gospel.

For many people, questions about tithing will revolve around the “why” and “how.” Because God is perfect and good, the gifts that He gives us are also perfect and good (Psalm 84:11; Matthew 7:11; James 1:17). **God has given us money as a tool to steward for His glory and the good of those around us.** Tithing is an issue of the heart, not a command based on an exact number or percentage. Share with the person that although God has provided some people with more money than others, He promises to protect and provide for them as they love and trust in Him (Matthew 6:25-34). **Encourage the person asking to take the next step towards being more generous with their money because of God’s faithfulness and care for them.** Because of who God is, we can be generous with our money, regardless of how much we give. It is not necessarily a sin to tithe less than ten percent of our earnings, however, many Christians believe ten percent to be an appropriate starting point. Tithing less than ten percent often reveals a heart that values money more than God. We should give cheerfully and generously, striving to support the church and benefit God’s Kingdom as we have been led by Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and our convictions (2 Corinthians 9:6-7; James 1:5).

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Managing God’s Money, Randy Alcorn

- The Treasure Principle, Randy Alcorn

TRANSGENDERISM/GENDER IDENTITY

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- Genesis 1:27-31: "...male and female he created them."
- Matthew 19:4-6: "...the two shall become one flesh."
- Romans 1:26-27: "...men gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another..."
- James 1:14-15: "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin..."
- Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."
- 1 Corinthians 6:9: "...nor [people] who practice homosexuality...will inherit the kingdom..."

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- Do you believe God had your good in mind when He designed you to be the biological sex you are? What about the sex God created you to be is good and how might who you are reflect Him?
- Do you feel as if God is keeping something good from you by making you the way you are?
- What do you think someone is trying to get out of changing their gender identity? Affirmation, attention, love, etc.?
- What does God say about claiming or altering your body or lifestyle in a way that attempts to change what He created and calls good? Does the Bible call this sin? Why or why not?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

God is the good and wise creator who made us in His image and in His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27) which includes creating us with bodies that are valuable and wonderfully made (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7,22, Psalm 139:1-16; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 19:3-6). Every person is created intentionally by God from birth as either male or female to reflect His image exactly how He intended (Psalm 139:1-16). It is God who gives us identity, meaning and the truth about who we are. We cannot find our true identity by looking to ourselves to define who we are however we please (Psalm 139:1-16, Romans 12:1-2). Therefore, **we should seek to honor God with our bodies based upon what He calls honorable as a way to reflect the image of God** (1 Corinthians 6:18-19).

Sin affects our hearts and commonly manifests itself when we feel incomplete in our own skin or have desires that do not match what God calls good or righteous (James 1:14-15, Mark 7:20-23). A transgender person is someone who identifies as a gender that does not correspond to their biological sex. This may or may not include actions to alter one's body or appearance. It is possible that because of the effects of sin a person may experience feelings of mismatch between their gender identity and their biological sex. To experience this is not sin

itself but instead a form of suffering due to the effect of sin upon our lives. **When an image bearer of God responds to these feelings by claiming a gender identity that is not their biological sex and/or altering their body or lifestyle to match this perception of themselves, it is sin.** The Bible reveals the heart behind this act as **seeking one's own glory above Gods.** This person calls **God a liar, claims they can do better, and attempts to be creator in His place by giving supremacy to their feelings above God's divine authority** (Romans 1:21-22; Romans 1:18-23). Lastly, **this act is a false salvation experience in attempt to seek transformation by affirmation apart from Jesus.** The amazing news is that Jesus provides an answer to this sin corrupted heart through His life, death, and resurrection. By faith through grace, He makes us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:7) where we are progressively conformed into His image (Romans 8:29). **True, whole self-transformation and lasting joy is achieved through trust in Jesus Christ alone which gives us a redeemed understanding of our complete and permanent identity in who He says we are** (Ephesians 2:10; John 1:16; Colossians 2:9-10).

People may have a variety of reasons for asking about this subject. First, seek to understand why they are asking to help you wisely navigate the conversation. They may be unsure if transgenderism is a sin, know a friend who supports transgenderism, may themselves be or know someone who is a transgender person. Whichever the reason, communicate with grace and truth. The foundational truth to share is that **God is good and His greatest desire for us is a heart that loves Him and a life that honors Him** (Ephesians 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The person may need help understanding how to think biblically about this subject. They may need to hear the good news of the new identity Jesus' offers them through the gospel. Jesus came to die for and to save the person living a same-sex lifestyle just as much as he came to save the self-righteous church goer. The amazing news for the believer is that the Holy Spirit strengthens, encourages, and empowers us to honor God by acting in holiness with our bodies and experience the joy that comes from doing so (John 14:16-17, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 3:16-21). Lastly, please inform a pastor about the person(s) involved in this topic of conversation so we can best provide care for the situation.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Strange New World* by Carl Trueman
- "Transgender" by Vaughn Roberts

TV/VIDEO GAMES

KEY SCRIPTURES

What God says:

- 1 Corinthians 15:58: "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"
- Philippians 3:7-9: "For [Jesus] sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ..."
- Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters..."
- Ephesians 5:15-17: "...making the best use of the time..."
- 1 Corinthians 7:35: "to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord." (Consider in the context of entertainment rather than marriage).

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to consider in light of what God says:

- What does Phil 3:7-9 teach us about the worth of all else in comparison to Jesus? How might this change the way you view your time spent on forms of entertainment?
- If others knew how much time you currently give to entertainment in comparison to God, what would they say you appear to love more?
- Has entertainment hindered you in any way from a living a life of “undivided devotion to the Lord” and or “abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 7:35; 2 cor 15:58)?
- In what ways might TV/video games be influencing your character in an ungodly way (i.e., thought life, the way you speak, the way you act)?

SHEPHERDING TIPS

Biblical truths to communicate and how to care:

Forms of entertainment such as **TV and video games are not inherently sinful but rather something to be stewarded** unto the glory of God. Entertainment has great potential to quickly poison our undivided devotion to God (1 Corinthians 10:23-24). Our usage of entertainment is sinful when it becomes something we lack self-control over, turn to for satisfaction above God, and or worship over God (Matthew 6:24). **The question is not can you choose TV/video games but will TV/video games be the best choice** of the time God has gifted you and commanded you to use towards loving Him and loving others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 1 Peter 4:2; Ephesians 2:10). TV and video games communicate many kinds of underlying messages to its viewers. It's important that we **practice wisdom and discernment when engaging in entertainment so that we might guard our character and beliefs from being conformed to the world** (Rom 12:2). **The day we meet Jesus will be the moment we realize that all other activities we spent time on was garbage in comparison to worshipping Him** (Philippians 3:7-9; Psalm 73:25-26).

This person may feel guilt over their time spent on entertainment due to an unhealthy addiction and or is partaking in entertainment that is harming their growth in godliness. Help them understand the benefits to changing from where they currently are at. **Walk them through practical biblical next steps for putting off TV/video games and putting on things of God** (Ephesians 4:22-24). Ask if they are engaging in any types of entertainment that glorifies sin and contributes to sinful tendencies in their life (Romans 12:9, 16:19; Ephesians 5:11). Encourage them to put those off as well. Come up with other things to fill their time with. Don't be legalistic, rather **be clear and loving about why you're encourage them in the ways that you are**.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- <https://youtu.be/ZoAwOQeUaEI>