

Editorial Response

For use in Lesson 1 on page 9 of this book.

Imagine that the following are excerpts concerning abortion from editorials written in newspapers. How would you respond to each, based on biblical principles you have learned?

Editorial #1

Teenage pregnancy is at epidemic proportions today. We must not only try to prevent the pregnancies—we must consider the girls who are pregnant.

Teens are especially concerned about their standing among their peers. The embarrassment and social stigma of having to carry a baby to term could be devastating. Therefore, an early abortion is the only compassionate alternative.

Editorial #2

Career women have gained much ground in the workplace. Women can no longer routinely be passed over for promotions.

A reason for this is that women have the power to control if and when they have children. The possibility of an unexpected pregnancy is no longer a reason to deny career advancement to women. Abortion is necessary to ensure fair treatment of career women.

Editorial #3

These are uncertain economic times. Many families are barely making it financially. The burden of an unexpected pregnancy is a hardship that would make an already bad situation worse. Abortion needs to be an option for such struggling families.



The Value of Life

Lesson 1

Unit One: Tough Issues

Scripture: Psalms 12:5; 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4, 5

Life Focus: Abortion kills what God values.

Today's Challenge

What do your friends say about abortion? How do you answer them? Participate in these activities to understand God's view of human life and how to defend it.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Explain why certain possessions are special to you.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Examine God's perspective on unborn human life.

Step 3

Making It Real

Discuss how unborn human life is devalued in our society.

Step 4

Living It Out

Commit to taking a stand against abortion.

Prized Possessions

Imagine yourself in your house at night. Suddenly, a smoke alarm sounds! If you had time to rescue just a few items from the blaze, what would they be? Certainly we want to protect our most valuable possessions.

The Bible is clear that human life is very valuable to God. That certainly includes unborn children as well. The Bible tells us that even unborn human life is God's *workmanship* with whom God desires a *relationship* and over which He holds a *sponsorship*.

Continued on next page. ➤

Hide It in Your Heart

"As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."

—*Luke 1:44*

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead students in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *High School Resources* CD.

Psalms 12:5; 139:13-16

⁵"Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise," says the LORD.
"I will protect them from those who malign them."

.....
¹³For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

Jeremiah 1:4, 5

⁴The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Encountering God's Word

WORKMANSHIP Psalm 139:13-15

David knew that God is the creator of the "inmost being" of every unborn baby, a special creation that He has "knit . . . together" (Psalm 139:13). Notice God's loving attention to detail when creating a work of living art. God's works are masterpieces, "fearfully and wonderfully made" (v. 14).

Imagine how much more David would have marveled if he knew what we know today. In the human body there are over 100 trillion cells, and every cell has its strip of DNA with a precise sequence of over three billion bits of information. Long before birth this miracle of God's design is evident. Within six weeks of conception, for instance, the tiny brain is visible and electrically active. Every minute until birth, another 100,000 nerve cells are produced and "wired" into place, allowing the baby in the womb to react to light, noise, voices, or pain.

When coalition troops took Baghdad during the war with Iraq in April of 2003, looters raided museums, galleries, and libraries there. Artists, historians, and archaeologists were devastated because ancient and irreplaceable works of art were lost. Does that hint at how God might feel about the millions upon millions of works of art, His unborn children, who have been lost through abortion since it has been made legal in the United States?

RELATIONSHIP Psalm 139:16; Jeremiah 1:4, 5

David declared, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). Without David, how would Israel have withstood Goliath? Without David, who would have written the songs of worship that still inspire believers today? Without David, what would have happened to the line of kings that came after him, including Jesus, the King of kings? What would have happened if David had never been born? Abortion not only destroys God's workmanship; it also tampers with God's plans for the future.

God echoed David's words when speaking to the prophet Jeremiah. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). Unlike David, Jeremiah's legacy was not so dramatic. Jeremiah has been described as the only preacher in the Bible who failed to win a convert. He did not father a line of kings or shape the policies of a nation. But God also had plans for Jeremiah. From the greatest of kings to the most reviled of prophets to people like us today, God creates with a mission in mind. Abortion thwarts that mission.

God has plans for the unborn.

Tuesdays with Morrie was a popular book several years ago. The author wrote of having a regular Tuesday appointment with an old college professor over the last few months of the older man's life. During those planned meetings, the two developed a deep relationship. The book makes it obvious that the author treasured these meetings. Likewise, God has plans to spend time with His special creations, even before they are born. Abortion makes those plans and treasured relationships impossible by canceling the meetings before they can be kept.

SPONSORSHIP Psalm 12:5

Finally, the Scripture clearly teaches that the weakest members of society have a special place in God's heart. King David wrote that when God sees that "the poor are plundered and the needy groan," the Lord "will protect them from those who malign them" (Psalm 12:5). We must be careful if we pick on the helpless. In doing so, we make God angry.

It is clear that God wants justice for those who are unable to care for themselves (9:9; 10:17, 18). The law of Moses commanded that the people of Israel were not to mistreat foreigners who lived among them (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33, 34). They were not to take advantage of widows and orphans and not to cheat those who needed to borrow money (Exodus 22:22-27). The law further forbade the abuse of people who suffered from physical disabilities such as being blind or deaf (Leviticus 19:14). What is God's attitude toward the weakest members of society? God will not stand idly by while people abuse the weak.

Despite consistent efforts over the past decade, the U.S. courts have refused to allow partial-birth abortion to be outlawed. In this procedure, the birth process is allowed to begin. The baby begins to exit the womb feet first. While the infant's head is still inside the womb, a doctor crushes its skull by removing its brain tissue. It is difficult to imagine a more barbaric procedure. It is even more difficult to believe that a God who protects the weak is unmoved by this atrocity.

No, the word *abortion* never occurs in Scripture. Yet it is clear that God opposes any action that would kill His special creations, disrupt His plans for His beloved, and victimize the most helpless people in the world.

God wants the helpless to be protected.

Life Focus: Abortion kills what God values.

Use one of the following activities to help your students explain why certain possessions are special to them.

QUICK STEP Memories

As students arrive, have them turn to page 4 in their student books and fill out their answers in each category. Then discuss their answers:

- **What were your favorite toys when you were a kid? What was the most surprising gift you ever remember opening? Why were those possessions special to you?**
- **If your house caught on fire, what would be the first five things you'd grab? Why are those possessions so special to you?**

Lead into Bible study: **We all have possessions that are special to us. God sees each human life as special, even those lives that aren't born yet. Today we'll find out three reasons why God considers unborn life so valuable.**

"A Proper Bridge"

Begin with the line, "Will someone tell me why the old man wants us to build a proper bridge?" End with, "You've a lot to learn about the army." In this scene, the commanding officer of World War II POWs orders his men to take pride in their work rather than build a shoddy bridge for their captors. (Note: A copy of this video is often available for free at local libraries.)

You may wish to show our classic TV clip "A Work of Art" from the CD instead. Discuss either clip with these questions:

- **What work product is portrayed in this clip? How did the person who accomplished it act toward it? How did he feel about someone knowing that he did it? Do you think these feelings are reasonable? Explain.**
- **What possessions do you have that are uniquely yours? Describe your feelings toward those possessions.**

Lead into Bible study: **We all have possessions that are special to us. That is especially true about those we have shaped or created. God sees each human life as special, even those lives that aren't born yet. Today we'll find out three reasons why God considers unborn life so valuable.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on current events, download The Scene online. Go to www.21stcc.com and click on "Downloads" and "The Scene." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.



Time

10 minutes

discussion

Materials

High School Student, pens



Time

10 minutes

video

Materials

copy of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) (or *High School Resources CD*), audiovisual equipment



news



Step 2

Searching the Word

Life Focus: Abortion kills what God values.

Use one of the following activities to help your students examine God's perspective on unborn human life.

Time

20 minutes

research

Materials

High School Student, Bibles



QUICK STEP What Do You Think?

Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Turn with students to page 5 in their student books. Ask each group to read the lesson text and complete one or more of the research assignments found there.

As groups work, move among them to help with their assignments. Explain the background of the text, using *Encountering God's Word* as a resource.

Have each group present its findings when group research is completed. Comment as necessary to make sure that all main points are made clearly and completely.

Lead into the next section of the lesson: **The Bible is clear that human life is very valuable to God. The Bible tells us that even unborn human life is God's workmanship with whom God desires a relationship and over which He holds a sponsorship. Let's look at how that viewpoint differs from that of many in our culture today.**

Time

20 minutes

audio skit

Materials

High School Resources CD, Bibles, CD player



"Master Artist"

Play the first track from the CD, titled "Master Artist." Discuss it with the following questions:

- **What was the skit attempting to say? How effective do you think it was?**
- **Read Psalm 139:13-15, noting all the artistic words in those verses. How is the message of David in these verses similar to the message of the audio skit?**
- **Compare the words of Psalm 139:16 to Jeremiah 1:4, 5. Summarize their meaning. What were the plans God had for David? for Jeremiah? How were those plans different? Do you think God has plans for every unborn child? Explain.**
- **How might the sculptor in the skit have felt if someone broke into his studio and vandalized his unfinished work? Read Psalms 9:9; 10:17, 18; 12:5. How is that feeling similar to how God feels when the helpless are threatened?**

Comment as students discuss, making sure the main ideas of the text are clearly made. Refer to *Encountering God's Word* to help you.

Lead into the next section of the lesson: **The Bible is clear that human life is very valuable to God. The Bible tells us that even unborn human life is God's workmanship with whom God desires a relationship and over which He holds a sponsorship. Let's look at how that viewpoint differs from that of many in our culture today.**

Life Focus: Abortion kills what God values.

Use one of the following activities to help your students discuss how unborn human life is devalued in our society.

QUICK STEP "Set Apart"

Distribute copies of this week's issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* to each student. Read the story "Set Apart" together and lead a class discussion with these questions:

- **What were the distinctions between Amber's, Clarisse's, and McKenzie's points about abortion?**
- **Why did McKenzie struggle at first to come up with an argument for her position? Do you ever find yourself struggling to come up with reasons for the things you believe? Why or why not?**
- **Do you think it was a good idea for McKenzie to use her brother as part of her presentation? Why or why not? How can talking about personal experiences help or hurt a discussion like this?**

Lead into the last lesson step: **After taking such a personal and difficult look at the issue of abortion, let's spend some time planning to stand up for the lives of the unborn in specific, God-honoring ways.**

Editorial Response

Divide your students into three small groups for this activity. Distribute copies of page 4, and assign each group one of the editorials there. Groups should respond to their assigned editorials, writing as if they were submitting their responses to their local paper. As they work on their letters, they should use what you just discussed from the Bible study. You may want to remind them of the Scriptures you just studied, recapping why God sees unborn life as valuable.

Walk around and help groups as needed. After some time, gather the class back together and allow each group to read its letter. Encourage their work. Lead into the last lesson step by saying: **It's good for us to compare how God views unborn life with how society views unborn babies. Now let's look at some ways we can take a stand against abortion.**

Time
20 minutes

report

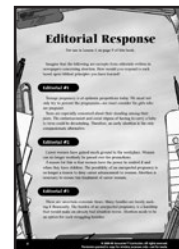
Materials
ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* for each student



Time
20 minutes

creative writing

Materials
copies of p. 4 of this book, pens, paper



Life Focus: Abortion kills what God values.

Use one of the following activities to help your students commit to taking a stand against abortion.

Time

10 minutes

prayer**Materials***High School Student***Time**

10 minutes

object lesson**QUICK STEP Taking a Stand**

Turn with the class to page 6 of their student books. Say: **Today we've seen why all life is important to God. And what's important to God should be important to us.** Read together the ideas on the student page that offer ways your class can take a stand against abortion. Brainstorm other ideas. If you or your students have already participated in these ways, allow some time to share a story or two of what that was like and what was learned from the experience.

Close in a prayer circle. Pray for parents who may be considering abortion. Pray for healing for mothers and fathers who've decided to abort children. Pray for our nation and our lawmakers and the protection of the unborn.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.

Baby Love

Secure permission ahead of time to take your students to visit your church nursery.

Spend a few minutes in the church nursery, allowing the students, if possible, to interact with the infants and toddlers. Return to class and ask your students how they felt about the visit. Then say: **The little ones we saw today are gifts from God. Someday they will grow up to become adults, and they possibly will have children of their own. But just a few months ago, these perfect little people could have had their lives cut short by abortion. We must realize that abortion is much more than a choice; it is a life ended.**

Challenge your students to make a commitment to stand up for the rights of the unborn. Let them know that it can be as simple as being honest about their views in class discussions at school or counseling with a friend who is in trouble.

Close in a time of prayer. Pray for a change of heart among doctors who perform abortions. Pray for women who have had abortions and men who have encouraged those abortions. Pray for those who might consider having an abortion in the future. Pray for the protection of the unborn.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.



Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- "The Rules of the Game"
- "Working Out"
- "Set Apart"



True to God's Design

Lesson 2

Unit One: Tough Issues

Scripture: Romans 1:25-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Life Focus: Homosexuality violates God's design for humanity.

Today's Challenge

What do your friends say about homosexuality? How do you answer them? Participate in these activities to understand God's view of so-called sexual preference and how to defend God's truth.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Talk about products designed for specific purposes.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Examine God's perspective on homosexuality.

Step 3

Making It Real

Critique current attitudes toward homosexuality.

Step 4

Living It Out

Commit to showing God's love to homosexuals while bating the sin of homosexuality.

Ingenious Inventions

Ever wish that you could have a hot, home-cooked meal waiting for you when you get home? The Intelligent Oven turns from a refrigerator to an oven, cooking your food to perfection, and is activated by your phone call! Ever wish you had a little extra strength? Inventor Keijiro Yamamoto developed a power-assist suit that monitors your muscles while you lift something heavy and supplements your strength with air pressure! Ever wish you could tell someone to back off when he just didn't seem to get the message? Adam Whiton and Yolita Nugent have invented a No-Contact Jacket that greets anyone who lays an unwanted hand on you with 80,000 volts of electricity! How wonderful to have inventions created for specific purposes!

Likewise, God designed men and women and sex and marriage for specific purposes. But homosexuality goes against those purposes. Let's look at God's perspective on homosexuality—its *cause*, *consequence*, and *cure*.

Continued on next page. ➤

Hide It in Your Heart

In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

—*Romans 1:27*

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead students in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *High School Resources* CD.

Romans 1:25-27

²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Encountering God's Word

CAUSE Romans 1:25-27

From the first part of the Old Testament, the Bible labels homosexuality as a sin, chosen behavior "that is detestable" to God and part of a set of pagan practices God's people were to avoid (Leviticus 18:22). Homosexuality is listed along with other bad sexual choices such as incest, adultery, and bestiality (vv. 6, 7, 20, 23).

In writing to the Romans, Paul explained the source of all sin. Fallen human beings "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18). What truth? Although evidence is abundant for the existence of God (vv. 19, 20; Psalm 19:1), we

Homosexuality, like all sin, is rooted in the rejection of God.

would rather act as if He did not exist and has no moral claim on us. That self-deception is the source of all sin. Because we have "exchanged the truth

about God for a lie," we begin to seek purpose in "created things rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). We seek pleasure for ourselves without any thought of what God has designed us to be. This leads to a catalog of "every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity" (vv. 29-31). Those sins include exchanging "natural sexual relations for unnatural ones"—homosexual activity (vv. 26, 27).

According to the American Psychological Association, "most scientists today agree that sexual orientation is most likely the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors." While many factors certainly influence behavior, the Bible teaches that human beings are not bound by any of them. Choosing to do something God forbids, whether it be lying, theft, or homosexual behavior, is a conscious choice to rebel against God's rule.

CONSEQUENCE 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

A popular view of God teaches that since He loves, He will exact no consequence for any sin. But the Bible also teaches us that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4) and cannot let rebellion against Him go unpunished.

Those who willfully live in sin will not share in the inheritance God plans for His children. "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). John echoes these thoughts in his vision of a new heaven and new

Homosexuality, like all sin, brings judgment.

earth. "Outside [of the gates of new Jerusalem] are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Revelation 22:15).

But many in our society believe that God does accept unrepentant homosexuals. In November of 2003, the Episcopal church consecrated the Reverend Gene Robinson as a bishop of the New Hampshire diocese. Robinson admits to being a practicing homosexual. While many in the church argued that ordaining a gay church leader violated Scripture, others disagreed. The Reverend Douglas Theuner, whom Robinson replaced as bishop, said to Robinson, "You are no more or less a child of God like everyone else. . . . What a joy it is to have you here."

Regardless of what many in society and even in some churches are saying, the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful. The Bible further teaches that such behavior will be judged. Popular opinion does not alter God's law.

CURE 1 Corinthians 6:11

We must not fail to point out that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination to God. We also must not fail to proclaim the power of salvation in Jesus Christ to all who come to Him—to the homosexual as well as to the heterosexual. Jesus loves everyone, including the homosexual offender. He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He wants to change us and to help us live a life of holiness.

Homosexuality, like all sin, can be conquered by the blood of Christ.

After speaking of the judgment of God leveled at unrepentant sinners, Paul concluded by saying, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

People may get caught up in sin, including homosexuality. But there is no sin that Jesus didn't die for, there is no sin He cannot forgive, and there is no sinner we should not love.

Some people and groups who claim to be Christians have singled out homosexuality as a sin that is worse than others and have chosen to launch hate-filled campaigns against homosexual individuals. In strong opposition to this view, Paul taught that God loves all sinners and seeks to change every one of us.

Homosexuality violates the purposes for which God designed men and women and sex and marriage. Though our society teaches many untrue things about homosexuality, the Bible is clear about its cause, consequence, and cure.

Life Focus: Homosexuality violates God’s design for humanity.

Use one of the following activities to help your students talk about products designed for specific purposes.

QUICK STEP Nifty Inventions

Post (or project) Sheet 1 so that all students can read it. Together read about the different inventions listed there. Then ask: **Which invention do you find the funniest? Which one of these would be most helpful to you? Why?**

Take a few minutes as a class to come up with your own invention. First, figure out a specific purpose you want to accomplish, and then figure out how you’d design a product to meet that purpose.

Lead into Bible study: **All products are designed with specific purposes in mind. Likewise, God designed men and women and sex and marriage for specific purposes. Homosexuality goes against those purposes. Today we’re going to look at God’s perspective on homosexuality.**

Follow the Blueprint

Before class, obtain a blueprint of a building, preferably the building that you are meeting in.

Spread out the blueprint on a table and ask your students to gather around it. Ask them to identify structures from the blueprint such as doors, walls, stairways, air ducts, and electrical outlets. Have them identify why they think the building was designed this way. What purpose does each structure have? Why is each structure placed where it’s shown on the blueprint?

When you have finished, say: **Blueprints are vital to the building process. Plans are made carefully to ensure that each portion of the design fits its intended purpose. Deviations from the original design—even minor ones—may cause permanent and even dangerous flaws in a building.**

Lead into Bible study: **God designed men and women and sex and marriage for specific purposes. Homosexuality deviates from those original designs and purposes. Today we’re going to look at God’s perspective on homosexuality.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on current events, download The Scene online. Go to www.21stcc.com and click on “Downloads” and “The Scene.” There you’ll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week’s lesson.



Time

10 minutes

discussion

Materials

High School Resources Sheet 1 (or High School Resources CD, projection equipment)



object lesson

Time

10 minutes

Materials

a professional blueprint

news



Life Focus: Homosexuality violates God's design for humanity.

Use one of the following activities to help your students examine God's perspective on homosexuality.

Time

20 minutes

research**Materials**

High School Student, Bibles, pens

**Time**

20 minutes

creative writing**Materials**

Bibles, pens, paper

Teaching Tip

If your class does not care for creative writing activities, write the sample epigrams on the board. Then have students read the texts given and match them to the corresponding poems.

QUICK STEP Without Excuse

Divide the class into groups of three to five students and turn with them to page 8 of their student books. Ask each group to read the lesson text and complete one or more of the research assignments.

As groups work, move among them to help with their assignments. Explain the background of the text, using *Encountering God's Word* as a resource.

Have each group present its findings when group research is completed. Comment as necessary to make sure that all main points are made clearly and completely.

Lead into the next section of the lesson: **The Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sin that is caused, like all sin, because of rebellion against God. The Bible further teaches that homosexual behavior, like all sin, will be judged by God but can be forgiven and corrected through Christ. Let's contrast this view to other views our culture has about homosexuality.**

Epigrams

An epigram is a short, pithy poem, often two lines long. For example, an epigram about cats and dogs might be: **Dogs love people, but cats are cold / Dogs come when you call; cats put you on hold.**

Divide the class into three groups. Instruct each group to author an epigram summarizing one of the following Scripture assignments.

- **Cause of homosexuality—Romans 1:25-27**
- **Consequence of homosexuality—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10**
- **Cure for homosexuality—1 Corinthians 6:11**

As groups work, help them with their epigrams. *Encountering God's Word* and these sample poems will help:

- Romans 1:25-27—When the truth of God is traded for lies / Then no type of behavior should ever surprise.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10—Those who don't want God to tell them what to do / Should not be surprised when God disowns them too.
- 1 Corinthians 6:11—Can God change the life of someone who's gay? / By Christ and the Spirit, no other way.

When group work is complete, have groups share and explain their epigrams. Comment as necessary to make sure each point is made clearly and completely.

Lead into the next section of the lesson: **The Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sin that is caused, like all sin, because of rebellion against God. The Bible further teaches that homosexual behavior, like all sin, will be judged by God but can be forgiven and corrected through Christ. Let's contrast this view to other views our culture has about homosexuality.**

Life Focus: Homosexuality violates God’s design for humanity.

Use one of the following activities to help your students critique current attitudes toward homosexuality.

QUICK STEP “Homosexuality Through God’s Eyes”

Distribute copies of this week’s issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* to each student. Read the article called “Viewing Homosexuality Through God’s Eyes” together and lead a class discussion with these questions:

- How has sin distorted God’s created design for sex?
- Consider the statement “Whatever our greatest desire is directed toward is what we tend to worship.” Would you agree or disagree? Explain your reasons.

- What are some ways described in the article that church-goers may have been hypocritical or alienating toward people who are homosexuals? Have you seen any of these attitudes in your congregation? What can you do about that?

Lead into the last lesson step: **We know that homosexuality goes against God’s purposes and that means it can be harmful to people in various ways. But we also know that God loves all people, and men and women who struggle with homosexual temptations can be forgiven and restored just as men and women struggling with any other sin can be. So how do we maintain balance and show love to people with these struggles without appearing to agree with their sinful behavior?**

A Deeper Look

Before class, read page 9 in the student book.

Students will be acting out the three scenarios, so you’ll need to divide your class into several small groups. The first group needs only two students; the second group needs at least three but could have more; the last group can be larger, using the remaining students. Have the groups look at student page 9 to work on their assigned scenarios. They should act out what they think would happen in their situations. There should be at least one person in each skit who represents the biblical point of view on homosexuality, including some of the main points you just discussed in Bible study.

As they work, help each group figure out how to apply today’s biblical points to current situations. After some time, allow the groups to perform. Then discuss with questions such as these:

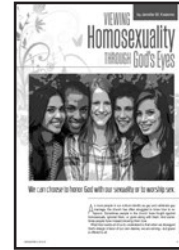
- Did the characters in these skits remind you of people you know?
- Do people you see usually respond in God’s loving manner toward gays and lesbians? If not, how do they react? (Ex: make mean jokes, accept the lifestyle as OK, etc.)

Lead into the last lesson step: **We know that homosexuality goes against God’s purposes and that means it can be harmful to people in various ways. But we also know that God loves all people, and men and women who struggle with homosexual temptations can be forgiven and restored just as men and women struggling with any other sin can be. So how do we maintain balance and show love to people with these struggles without appearing to agree with their sinful behavior?**

Time
20 minutes

report

Materials
ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*
for each student



Time
20 minutes

drama

Materials
High School Student



Life Focus: Homosexuality violates God’s design for humanity.

Use one of the following activities to help your students commit to showing God’s love to homosexuals while hating the sin of homosexuality.

Time

10 minutes

self-evaluation**Materials**

High School Student

**Time**

10 minutes

prayer**Materials**

whiteboard, dry-erase marker

QUICK STEP Attitude Check

Allow students to spread out around the room and spend some time silently reading page 10 in their student books. Ask them to think seriously about these questions and then spend some time alone in prayer.

After some time, gather back together. You may want to discuss people’s ideas or experiences in how to show love to people while at the same time disagreeing with their sin. Close in a group prayer.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.

God So Loved

Write the text of John 3:16 on the board. Then circle the phrases “God so loved,” “whoever believes,” and “shall not perish.” Ask your students: **What do these phrases say about the way God looks at those who are caught up in homosexuality—or any sin?** Allow time for student responses. When they have finished, say: **This verse summarizes God’s view of sin and sinners. Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection, anyone who comes to Him may receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.** Continue with: **Do you know of someone who is caught up in a gay lifestyle? As Christians we cannot approve of the sin, but we certainly must love the person, knowing that we too are sinners saved only by God’s grace.**

As you close in prayer, ask your students to think of someone they know who is involved in same-sex relationships. If no one comes to mind, ask them to pray generally for those caught up in the gay lifestyle. Also pray that God would give you and your students wisdom and love as you respond to this issue both now and in the future.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.



Here’s what’s in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- “Thoughts from a College Athlete”
- “Exactly Nothing”
- “Viewing Homosexuality Through God’s Eyes”



Saving Your Best

Lesson 3

Unit One: Tough Issues

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20; Hebrews 13:4; 2 Timothy 2:22

Life Focus: God gave us our sexuality to use as He directs.

Today's Challenge

What do your friends say about sex outside of marriage? How do you answer them? Participate in these activities to understand God's view of sexuality and how to defend it.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Discuss some rules that you find difficult to follow.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Examine God's perspective on premarital sex.

Step 3

Making It Real

Critique current attitudes toward premarital sex.

Step 4

Living It Out

Plan for sexual purity.

Made to Be Broken?

Have you ever gotten a speeding ticket? lost TV privileges? been sent to the principal's office?

We all probably have faced consequences of rule breaking at one time or another. Why? Because some rules seem hard to keep. It seems difficult to travel the speed limit on an open road on a clear day. It seems difficult to control our tempers when our parents correct us. It seems difficult to keep quiet and study in school when we are surrounded by friends just dying to talk to us!

God's rules about sexuality may seem difficult to keep at times. Temptation surrounds us and is often so enticing! Yet the Bible tells us that God's call to sexual purity brings *personal, societal, and spiritual* good.

Continued on next page. ➤

Hide It in Your Heart

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

—1 Corinthians 6:18

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead students in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *High School Resources* CD.

1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20

¹³You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

.....
¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Hebrews 13:4

⁴Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

2 Timothy 2:22

²²Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Encountering God's Word

PERSONAL 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20

The ancient city of Corinth honored Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sensuality. Therefore, Corinth was a city immersed in sexual immorality.

Paul noted that a popular saying in Corinth was "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The meaning of that proverb was "We are made to have sex, so all sex is good."

Paul recognized that this argument reduced complex and beautiful human beings to sexual machines. "The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord," countered Paul, "and the Lord for the body" (v. 13). The highest

Sexual morality is good for the individual's well-being.

purpose of human beings is not sexual satisfaction and reproduction but communion with God. Therefore, God put restrictions on sexuality for

the good of His special creations (Leviticus 18).

When we use a sports car to haul manure, we ruin it. When we use a toothbrush to clean a toilet, we never again will use it for its original purpose. Whenever we use something for a task for which it was not intended, it becomes damaged. Likewise, when people sin sexually, they hurt themselves and their partners. Therefore, Paul warned, we need to run from sexual immorality, because it destroys those involved with it (1 Corinthians 6:18).

So what? It's my body. If I want to use it in this way, why is it anyone else's business? Paul corrected that ever-popular misconception. Our bodies are God's property, not ours (vv. 19, 20).

Sexual expression outside of marriage deeply scars people. Whoever engages in premarital sex loses innocence and purity and is open to sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, genital herpes, and even AIDS.

SOCIETAL Hebrews 13:4

In the middle of the first century, some Jewish Christians were tired of being persecuted for their faith and were tempted to give up. The writer of Hebrews made convincing arguments that the church was God's only

Sexual morality is good for cultural stability.

kingdom and citizenship in it should not be taken lightly. Therefore, the letter closes with an admonition

to keep the Christian community strong and stable (Hebrews 12:28).

Sexual morality, according to the writer, was one way of keeping God's kingdom on earth strong. The writer commanded, "Marriage should be honored by all" (13:4). Marriage is a special institution

created by God (Genesis 2:24). Preserving marriage should be a goal of the Christian community (Matthew 19:4-6).

How is marriage to be preserved? The writer of Hebrews said that it was by seeing "the marriage bed kept pure" (Hebrews 13:4). Sex is reserved for married couples only. The Greek world of the early church was filled with sexual promiscuity. The early church was called to be a model of family stability to the depraved world of its day (Romans 13:13; Ephesians 5:3). The church must answer that same call today.

The writer of Hebrews closed his thoughts by saying, "God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4). Those who misuse sex will be judged. But sexual immorality does not just bring judgment to individuals. God warned that the nation of Israel would collapse if it adopted the immoral sexual practices of those around them (Leviticus 18:28).

Some recent studies have shown that premarital sex occurs as often among teens in the church as it does among teens who are not in the church. Divorce rates among Christians differ little from the rates of non-Christians. This should disturb us. We are charged to be different for the good of society.

SPIRITUAL 2 Timothy 2:22

Timothy was a young man from a small town, whom Paul took under his wing (Acts 16:1-3). Ironically, the young, sheltered country boy became an evangelist in Ephesus, one of the most multicultural metropolitan centers of the ancient world (1 Timothy 1:3). God works in mysterious ways. His wonders to perform!

Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to help him grow spiritually and succeed in this ministry. Part of that counsel was a call to sexual morality.

Sexual morality enhances our relationships with God.

"Flee the evil desires of youth." (Compare these words from 2 Timothy 2:22 to 1 Corinthians 6:18.) Let's face it. We want to follow the call of God, but we are often distracted by the call of our glands. By fleeing the latter and following the former, we join "with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). In other words, when we reject the lure of sexual immorality and instead seek what God wants for us, God builds us up along with the rest of the body of Christ.

Yes, some rules are hard to follow. The commands of God to control our sexuality are certainly among them. But when we heed God's call to sexual purity, He brings us personal, societal, and spiritual well-being.

Life Focus: God gave us our sexuality to use as He directs.

Use one of the following activities to help your students discuss some rules that they find difficult to follow.

QUICK STEP Gotcha!

As students arrive, turn with them to page 12 in the student books and ask them to have other students initial which punishments on the list they've received. In the space at the bottom of the page, have students add other punishments they've received. After everyone has had a chance to examine the list, read over it and allow students to raise their hands if they've received each punishment. Then lead a discussion with questions such as these:

- **What rules did you break to get these punishments?**
- **Name a rule you've broken more than once. What rules do you find hard to follow? Why is it hard for you to follow those rules?**

Lead into Bible study: **Rules are often frustrating, but they are made for our protection. God created sex to be a beautiful thing between husband and wife. But He made the rule that sex must occur only in marriage. Let's look at three benefits that come from following God's plan for sex.**

"Rules"

In the week before class, record some mini interviews with friends, coworkers, or your teens. Ask them: What rules do you have the most difficulty following?

You may wish to show our interview video, "Rules," from the CD instead. To begin class, play either set of mini interviews and discuss them with these questions:

- **Which of the rules mentioned do you find most difficult to follow?**
- **Why do you think it is hard to follow those rules?**

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Rules are often frustrating, but they are made for our protection. God created sex to be a beautiful thing between husband and wife. But He made the rule that sex must occur only in marriage. Let's look at three benefits that come from following God's plan for sex.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on current events, download The Scene online. Go to www.21stcc.com and click on "Downloads" and "The Scene." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.

Time

10 minutes

game

Materials

High School Student, pens



Time

10 minutes

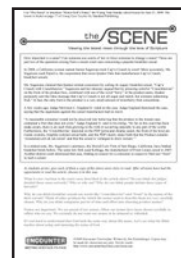
video

Materials

Prepared video (or *High School Resources* CD) and audiovisual equipment



news



Step 2 Searching the Word

Life Focus: God gave us our sexuality to use as He directs.

Use one of the following activities to help your students examine God's perspective on premarital sex.

Time

20 minutes

puzzle

Materials

High School Student, Bibles, pens



Time

20 minutes

research

Materials

copies of assignments, Bibles, paper, pens

QUICK STEP Put 'Em Together

Ask your students to look at page 13 in their student books and complete the activity. When they have finished, the completed lesson outline should read like this:

- 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20—Some people say, “We are made to have sex, so all sex is good.” But that’s just not true. When people sin sexually, they hurt themselves and their partners. Our bodies are God’s property, not ours.
- Hebrews 13:4—Let’s respect and defend marriage—it is a special institution created by God. Sex is reserved for married couples only. Those who misuse sex will be judged.
- 2 Timothy 2:22—Let’s follow the call of God, not of our glands. Respecting God’s commands builds up the church.

Explain these verses, pointing out the *personal*, *societal*, and *spiritual* benefits of sexual morality. The content of *Encountering God’s Word* follows this outline and will help you. Close by saying: **Yes, some rules are hard to follow. The commands of God to control our sexuality are certainly among them. But when we heed God’s call to sexual purity, He brings us personal, societal, and spiritual well-being. Let’s use this understanding to critique current attitudes toward premarital sex.**

Big Questions

Before class, make copies of the assignments.

Divide the class into three groups, giving each group one of the big questions about sex that follow:

- Big question from Corinthians: Everybody says sex is no big deal. Our bodies are made for sex. So what’s the harm? (See 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20.)
- Big question from Hebrews: I was born a Jew and raised a Christian. But frankly, I’m tired of being different. I’ve always been told that those who follow God should be different from the rest of the world when it comes to sex. How different should we be and why? (See Hebrews 12:28, 29; 13:4.)
- Big question from Timothy: I lived in a small town most of my life. Now I’ve moved to the big city of Ephesus and have been called to lead the church there. I have the normal sexual feelings of any guy my age, and the temptations here in the city are everywhere. How can I grow to be the Christian leader I need to be? (See 2 Timothy 2:22.)

As groups work, move among them to help students with their questions. Use *Encountering God’s Word* to help them understand the background of their text and to formulate answers.

Have groups share their responses. Comment as necessary, making sure each main point is made clearly and completely. Close by saying: **Yes, some rules are hard to follow. The commands of God to control our sexuality are certainly among them. But when we heed God’s call to sexual purity, He brings us personal, societal, and spiritual well-being. Let’s use this understanding to critique current attitudes toward premarital sex.**

Life Focus: God gave us our sexuality to use as He directs.

Use one of the following activities to help your students critique current attitudes toward premarital sex.

QUICK STEP Getting Personal

During the week before class, find a trusted adult who would be willing to share a personal story about having sex outside of marriage and the bad consequences that resulted from it. (Or you may find a person of each gender so one can talk to the guys and one can talk to the girls. See margin for suggestion.) If you don't find a person to come to class, you may want to have someone you know write out their story anonymously, and you could read it to the class.

Invite the guest speaker to share the emotional and physical consequences of the sin. Details need not be given about the actual circumstances (and other persons need to remain unidentified), but a description of the pain that resulted would be helpful. Make sure the speaker shares what attitudes he or she had about sex outside of marriage before it happened and how the attitudes have changed after the sin. Also ask the speaker to discuss the ways sex is portrayed in the media (through songs, ads, movie plots, etc.), but how sex outside of marriage is really not glamorous as shown. Allow students to ask questions.

Thank your guest speaker, and then lead into the last lesson step: **It's good to hear firsthand about the consequences that result from sex outside of marriage. Our society does make it look glamorous and tries to tell us everyone is doing it. But there is pain that results, and everyone is NOT doing it! Let's talk now about ways we can plan to remain pure from this day forward, no matter our past.**

"A Strong Bond"

Distribute copies of this week's issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* to each student. Read the article "A Strong Bond" together and lead a class discussion with these questions:

- **The author of the article makes four main points about the kind of bond that sex produces and the kind of bonds we are supposed to have. Which one of those points stood out to you the most and why?**
- **Consider this statement: "Our culture claims to value freedom, but using your body however you feel like in the moment isn't true freedom." What do you think about this idea? Do you ever feel pressure to equate "freedom" with behavior that is not Christlike? What can you do about that?**
- **Would you say that most people you know consider premarital sex to be a big deal? What are some views that you've heard?**

Lead into the last lesson step: **It's good to have an honest discussion about our views of sex and to consider seriously what God wants for us. Our society tends to underestimate the kind of bond that sex can produce between people, and the subsequent damage that can occur when that bonding doesn't happen within a marriage. Let's talk now about ways we can guard against being hurt through inappropriate relationships and look forward to a strong bond with our spouses.**

Time
20 minutes

guest speaker

Materials
prepared guest speaker

Teaching Tip
For these next two lesson steps, you may choose to separate your class by gender. If you'd like, have an adult of the opposite gender help you co-lead. Teens will feel more comfortable discussing and opening up about the topic of sex when they are away from classmates of the opposite gender.

Time
20 minutes

report

Materials
ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* for each student



Life Focus: God gave us our sexuality to use as He directs.

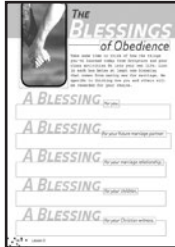
Use one of the following activities to help your students plan for sexual purity.

Time

10 minutes

prayer**Materials**

High School Student, pens

**Time**

10 minutes

object lesson**Materials**

paper and pens

QUICK STEP The Blessings of Obedience

Turn with the class to page 14 in their student books. Have your students come up with blessings that occur when people save sex for marriage. Work as a class to come up with at least one blessing that happens for each person mentioned on the page when teens commit to remaining pure.

Then spend a few minutes thinking of ways your students can keep each other accountable in their commitments to purity. Keep in mind that some students may have failed already in this commitment. Encourage your students to live lives of purity from this day forward, no matter what they've done in the past. Finally, close in prayer, asking God's blessings on your students' lives as they strive for holiness, particularly in the area of sexual purity.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.

Scars Remain

Begin by having a couple of students show off a scar on their bodies (any that are presentable!) and briefly explain how they got them. (Or you may show a scar of your own.) Then say: **Despite knowing better, many people give in and have sex outside of marriage. This creates emotional scars and possibly physical scars. Even if people seek the forgiveness God freely offers from sin, they will tell you that the scars will always remain.**

Have students choose a partner or two of the same gender. Groups should come up with a specific plan to steer clear of sexual temptation (Ex: don't date alone, commit not to kiss, etc.). They should pick practical ideas they will really commit to doing. Then have the partners commit to helping each other stay accountable to these decisions and commit to praying for each other to avoid temptations. They may want to write out their plans and commitments to accountability. Let your students know how important these commitments are. Allow groups to spend time together in prayer and then be dismissed when they are finished.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.



Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- "But I Don't Want to Lose"
- "Alix Andrews Wins . . . Again!"
- "A Strong Bond"



Breaking Barriers

Lesson 4

Unit One: Tough Issues

Scripture: Numbers 12:1-11; Revelation 7:9

Life Focus: All human beings have value to God.

Today's Challenge

What do your friends say about human diversity? How do you answer them? Participate in these activities to understand God's view of the diversity He designed in human life and how to defend it.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

List ways people differ from one another.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Examine God's perspective on prejudice.

Step 3

Making It Real

Look at the results in this world when God's perspective on prejudice is ignored.

Step 4

Living It Out

Commit to loving all people equally.

Alike but Different

Probably no one entertainer has inspired as many impersonators as has Elvis Presley. Yet no two Elvis impersonators are exactly alike. Take Robert Lopez, now known as El Vez, the Mexican Elvis. El Vez claims he "reinvents American rock from a socialist Hispanic perspective." Then there is Melvis, "The Kosher King of Rock and Roll," who claims to be "the first openly Jewish Elvis impersonator outside of Israel." Even when people try to look and act like others, their differences show through!

God created and deserves the praise of all people—every race, every color, every social level, and both genders. Yet prejudice is still present in our world. A story from Scripture not only demonstrates how long prejudice has been around but also illustrates its *cause*, its *casualty*, and its *conflict* with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Continued on next page. ➤

Hide It in Your Heart

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

—Romans 12:16

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead students in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *High School Resources* CD.

Numbers 12:1-11

¹Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. ²"Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this.

³(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

⁴At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you." So the three of them went out. ⁵Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, ⁶he said, "Listen to my words:

"When there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions,
I speak to them in dreams.

⁷But this is not true of my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my house.

⁸With him I speak face to face,
clearly and not in riddles;
he sees the form of the LORD.

Why then were you not afraid
to speak against my servant Moses?"

⁹The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.

¹⁰When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam's skin was leprous—it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, ¹¹and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed."

Revelation 7:9

⁹After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Encountering God's Word

CAUSE Numbers 12:1, 2

In Numbers 12:1-11, racial prejudice reared its ugly head in Moses' life. He had led God's people out of bondage in Egypt, and now he was leading them from Mt. Sinai to the promised land. But in the midst of his heroic leadership, Moses began to attract criticism from Miriam and Aaron—his own sister and brother. Their complaint was that he had married a Cushite woman (v. 1). There is no indication in the text that there was anything

Prejudice is a symptom of a power struggle.

morally or spiritually wrong with the woman—it was just that she was a Cushite, not a Jew. (The Cushites were descendants of Ham,

who lived in the southern Nile valley in what is now the country of Ethiopia on the continent of Africa.)

But we see that this issue was a red herring, an argument raised to hide the arguers' true intent. Miriam and Aaron made the unsubstantiated charge that Moses' marriage to the Cushite woman had diminished his ability to lead God's people. Yet their true aim was to lower Moses' standing so they could elevate their own. "Hasn't [the Lord] also spoken through us?" they asked, intending to take over the role of leadership (v. 2). After all, hadn't Miriam led all the women in praise (Exodus 15:20, 21), and wasn't Aaron chosen by God to be high priest (28:1)? By putting Moses down, they hoped to gain recognition for themselves.

This is the formula of racism yet today. An obvious physical characteristic is used to label someone. Then the charge is made that this characteristic makes that person less fit to assume power. Then the accuser assumes more power by default.

CASUALTY Numbers 12:3-8

Since Moses was a very humble man (Numbers 12:3), he said nothing in his own defense, but God spoke out at once (v. 4). "Come out to the tent of meeting," He said. There they would learn whether God approved of Moses. The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and commanded, "Listen to my words" (v. 6). A prophet, He explained, sees visions and dreams. But Moses was more than a prophet. To him God spoke clearly, not just in riddles (v. 8). Because Moses was faithful in all God's house (v. 7), Miriam and Aaron should have been afraid to speak out against him.

Prejudice causes us to overlook remarkable people.

Then, to show that Moses was right and they were wrong, Miriam was struck with leprosy (vv. 10, 12). Aaron cried out in dismay, "Please . . . [do not] hold against us the sin we have so foolishly

committed" (v. 11). In response to their repentance and the prayer of Moses, God reduced her penalty to seven days of exile outside the camp (vv. 13-15). Ultimately, the foolish sin of racism was recognized for what it was. When Miriam and Aaron marginalized Moses, they actually were challenging the authority of God to grant gifts to those He chooses.

Jamie Escalante taught advanced math at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles, where drugs, gangs, and violence were facts of daily life. Despite these obstacles, Escalante was able to motivate a small group of students to take and pass the advance placement calculus exam in 1982. But the Educational Testing Service that administers the test invalidated the scores. Based on the students' background alone, the administrators believed that the students had cheated! Prejudice still causes some people to overlook talented people.

CONFLICT Numbers 12:9-11; Revelation 7:9

To dismiss any group of people because of a physical characteristic is the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches. The Great Commission commands us to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). As he worked to fulfill that commission, Paul said of the church, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:11). Likewise Peter affirmed, "God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:34, 35). God's plan for humankind will be complete when all His people finally gather before His throne in Heaven. There will be "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9). There will be no room for prejudice in Heaven. Neither is there room for it among God's people now.

Prejudice puts us in direct opposition to God.

Prejudice is a stain on the history of civilization. Miriam and Aaron played the race card against Moses. During the Crusades many Jews, Arabs, and Turks were slaughtered under the banner of the cross. More recently black militants and white supremacists have squared off against each other. Isn't it time for Christians to lead the way in eliminating prejudice, by living and proclaiming the love of God?

Life Focus: All human beings have value to God.

Use one of the following activities to help your students list ways people differ from one another.

QUICK STEP All About You!

As students arrive, turn with them to page 16 of their student books and ask them to begin thinking about the questions listed there. After everyone has arrived, allow the students to share their responses. Point out how different the responses are. You might say: **Just in this room, we have people with very different backgrounds, different interests, different dreams, and different talents given to us by God.**

Lead into Bible study: **God must enjoy variety—look at how many different plants, animals, and people He put on this earth! But some people can't handle differences. They think differences cause certain people to be superior over others. But this type of attitude is not from God. Today we're going to look at God's perspective on prejudice.**

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Ask students to write their names on slips of paper. Collect the slips and place them in a hat. Draw out two of the slips. Give crowns to those students and ask them to wear them. Tell the students: **Today these two chosen people are the most special in the class. They are ordained more talented, more attractive, and just plain better than the rest of you. You who are not selected are less talented, less attractive, and more of a nuisance to our class.** Give preferential treatment to the crowned students, such as food only for them and nice chairs to sit in. Tell them they each have two wishes that they can make any student perform. (Ex: make someone do 10 pushups.) Compliment these two students and insult the rest of the class. After a few minutes, stop and ask each group of students how they felt in their roles.

Lead into Bible study: **It's ridiculous to tell certain people they are better because their names were drawn from a hat. But some people actually look down on others because of similar superficial things. Today we're going to look at God's perspective on prejudice.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on current events, download The Scene online. Go to www.21stcc.com and click on "Downloads" and "The Scene." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.



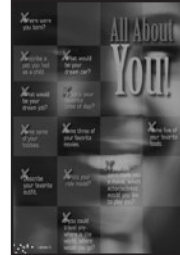
Time

10 minutes

self-evaluation

Materials

High School Student



Time

10 minutes

object lesson

Materials

pens, slips of paper, hat (or box),
2 paper crowns (such as ones from
Burger King restaurant) (optional:
food, 2 nice chairs)

news



Step 2

Searching the Word

Life Focus: All human beings have value to God.

Use one of the following activities to help your students examine God's perspective on prejudice.

Time

20 minutes

art

Materials

High School Student, Bibles, pencils



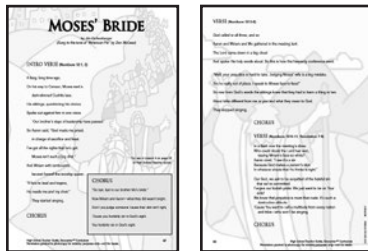
Time

20 minutes

creative writing

Materials

Bibles, paper, pens, copies of pp. 87 and 88 of this book



Teaching Tip

Turn this into a discussion activity by making a copy of our sample song for each student. Read the Bible text for each verse and compare them to the words of the song.

QUICK STEP Cartoon Completion

Distribute pencils and have your class turn to page 17 in the student books. Read the directions aloud. Students will illustrate the main events of Numbers 12:1-11. As students draw the cartoon panels, move around the room, helping students understand the story and giving suggestions for their drawings. Refer to *Encountering God's Word* as necessary.

Summarize by asking the following questions:

- **What charge did Aaron and Miriam make against Moses?**
- **Did they have facts to back up their charge? Explain.**
- **How did God respond? Why did He respond in that way?**
- **Read Revelation 7:9. How does excluding on the basis of race work against God's plan for humankind?**

Close by saying: **Racism has always been used by one group of people to allow them to think themselves superior to others. But that bigoted attitude insults God, who created human diversity. More than that, such people work against God, who wants to invite all people to come to Him. What happens when prejudice occurs in our world today?**

Moses' Bride

Before class, make copies of pages 87 and 88 of this book, as needed.

Divide the class into three groups. Give each group paper and pens.

Instruct each group to look up one of these Scripture assignments.

- **Cause—Prejudice is a symptom of a power struggle (Numbers 12:1, 2).**
- **Casualty—Prejudice causes us to overlook remarkable people (Numbers 12:3-8).**
- **Conflict—Prejudice puts us in direct opposition to God (Numbers 12:9-11; Revelation 7:9).**

Groups should read their texts and create a song to a familiar melody, summarizing their part of the Bible story. Help students with their tasks as they work in groups. *Encountering God's Word* and the sample verses on pages 87 and 88 of this book will help you.

After group work is completed, allow students to read or perform and explain their songs. Comment as necessary to make sure all points are made clearly and completely.

Close by saying: **Racism has always been used by one group of people to allow them to think themselves superior to others. But that bigoted attitude insults God, who created human diversity. More than that, such people work against God, who wants to invite all people to come to Him. What happens when prejudice occurs in our world today?**

Life Focus: All human beings have value to God.

Use one of the following activities to help your students look at the results in this world when God’s perspective on prejudice is ignored.

QUICK STEP Real-Life Situations

Students may work in pairs or in small groups for this activity. Turn with them to page 18 of their student books. All groups should read each situation and identify the prejudice there, discussing what stereotypes and biases are evident in each. Then groups should come up with ways they would confront the prejudice if they were involved in the situations. What would they say to correct the situations? What does God have to say about these types of biases? Can prejudice ever be fully eliminated? What changes in attitudes and actions can be made to make progress in eliminating prejudice?

After some time, allow the groups to gather back together and share their thoughts on the situations. Help them see how the Scriptures they read in Bible study are relevant to today’s situations.

Lead into the last lesson step: **It’s important to realize that we all can be tempted to have prejudiced attitudes. There may be times when we try to be impartial, but our personal biases still shine through. However, we can commit to confronting our own stereotypes. Let’s discuss ways we can begin to love all people equally.**

“Come Together”

Distribute copies of this week’s issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* to each student. Read the article “Come Together” and discuss it as a class with these questions:

- **Consider Jamal’s story from the first part of the article. Have you ever had an experience of feeling like someone was judging you just because of what you looked like? What was that like? Have you ever judged someone in that way? What were your reasons?**
- **The author said, “We are not meant to simply stay in our little corner with people who look like us. We are called to break these barriers now.” Have you ever tried to break down these kinds of barriers? What was that like? Jamal made a decision to take action to try to break down prejudices. What could you do this week to try to break down some prejudiced ideas you or your friends might have about others?**

Lead into the last lesson step: **It’s important to realize that we all can be tempted to have prejudiced attitudes. There may be times when we try to be impartial, but our personal biases still shine through. However, we can commit to confronting our own stereotypes. Let’s discuss ways we can begin to love all people equally.**

Time
20 minutes

report

Materials
High School Student



Time
20 minutes

discussion

Materials
ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* for each student



Life Focus: All human beings have value to God.

Use one of the following activities to help your students commit to loving all people equally.

Time

10 minutes

self-evaluation**QUICK STEP** Jesus Loves the Little Children

Begin this activity by asking: **Who can sing or quote from memory the song “Jesus Loves the Little Children”?** If you don’t get a volunteer, the words are:

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Many of us learned this song when we were little, but the message still can apply to us today. In God’s eyes, all people are equal. Think about the following: Is it hard for you to speak up and stand up for people who are being mocked or teased? Are you guilty of displaying prejudiced attitudes in your words or actions? Close in prayer, asking God to forgive you and your students of your past prejudices, give you wisdom to conquer your stereotypes, and help you to love all people equally.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.

Time

10 minutes

prayer**Materials**

High School Resources Sheet 2 (or *High School Resources* CD, projection equipment)

**God’s Creation**

Post (or project) Sheet 2 so that all students can see it clearly. Then say: **Prejudices happen when we judge others based on their appearances, without allowing ourselves to get to know them on the inside. Spend some time looking at this poster and thinking about these questions: Do you tend to have bad attitudes toward people who are a different race than you? from a different country than you? from a different generation than you? Have you ever looked down on someone who was homeless? someone who had a disability? Take some time to confess the prejudice you’ve displayed in the past. Ask God to transform your mind and help you see all people through His eyes.**

After time for silent reflection and prayer, close in a group prayer aloud.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these and hand them out or e-mail an issue to your students each week.



Here’s what’s in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- “Quiz: Are You a Good Competitor?”
- “The ABCs of Losing Well”
- “Come Together”