



Creating a Sexual Ethic

This lesson will help youth identify how faith values establish guidelines for a sexual ethic related to relationships with themselves and others.

ENHANCER OF JOY

Holistic Sexuality Education

DURATION

60 minutes

LESSON DEVELOPED BY

Lorien Carter and Kate Ott

GOAL

Creating a Sexual Ethic

TIPS TO PREPARE

A group covenant or ground rules provides a helpful starting point when talking about how values shape decision-making. As a minister, knowing in advance what values shape your sexual ethic is a helpful reference point, though not necessary to share.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- Pens or other writing supplies
- My Personal Values Participant Handout

SETTING THE ATMOSPHERE

Sexuality discussions can often be uncomfortable for youth, so creating an atmosphere that

reflects the usual, comfortable style of your youth group is important. Youth may want some space so others are not looking at their worksheets. Open space either at tables or around the room on couches, carpet, so on is helpful.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Matthew 7:24-27 - *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. . . .*

Purpose

This session will help youth identify how faith values establish guidelines for a sexual ethic related to relationships with themselves and others.

Objectives

In this session, youth will

- Be able to identify values that they hold for themselves and create a personal values statement
 - Be able to use that values statement to guide the creation of a personal sexual ethic
-

Further Study

Advocates for Youth. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>.

Heather Corinna, *S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-To-Know Progressive Sexuality Guide to Get You through High School and College*. New York: Marlowe and Company, 2007.

Michael F. Duffy, *Making Sense of Sex: Responsible Decision Making for Young Singles*.

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011.

Love is Respect.org. <http://www.loveisrespect.org/>. This site also includes a dating abuse hotline.

Kate Ott, *Sex + Faith: Talking to Your Child from Birth to Adolescence*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013.

Mark D. Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Sex, Etc. <http://www.sexetc.org/>. This is a sexuality education site by teens, for teens.

Introduction for Leaders

Knowing Yourself And Your Teens:

Talking about sexual ethics with youth who are already dating is a great opportunity for self and relationship assessment. It can also be awkward when partners are in the room together. The participants may be romantically involved with each other or know each other's romantic partners. If using small groups, split up couples so that each person has the freedom to express their own opinions without thinking just because they are a couple they have to say the same thing about values and their sexual ethic. In fact, this exercise might help them identify ways to make their relationship stronger or that they do not have shared values.

Sexuality is often a topic that can illicit discomfort and laughter because we do not talk about sexuality related issues as often as we should. It is important to have a covenant (or set of group guidelines) for your youth group that includes details for how to engage with each other

in respectful ways. If you don't have a covenant, it will be important to create one BEFORE you facilitate these sexuality lessons.

Here are a few resources to walk you through the process of creating a covenant with your youth group members:

<http://religiousinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Questions-for-Creating-a-Youth-Group-Covenant.pdf>

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/families/workshop1/105585.shtml>

Here are some examples of youth group covenants that you can modify or adapt:

<http://www.gracemontclair.org/uploads/youth/youth-group-covenant.pdf>

<http://www.fpcponca.org/PresbyNews/covenant.pdf>

Gather

Gather (10 minutes)

- Welcome the participants to today's session.
- Choose a participant to read aloud the following scripture passage:

Matthew 7:24-27: Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

- Share the following interpretive statement of the passage:

This “Build your House on the Rock” parable is about needing a strong foundation for your faith. Building relationships based on core values strengthens them and creates a firm foundation that can weather difficult problems.

- Introduce the session topic by noting that we engage with everyone (friends, family and romantic partners) according to our personal values.
- State: Today we will be creating a personal values statement and a personal sexual ethic.
- Define a sexual ethic as: the personal beliefs, attitudes and feelings that a person has about their sexuality and the actions they take to live accordingly. This includes but is not limited to sexual behaviors that they may engage in across their lifespan.

Engage

Engage (30 minutes)

Values and Descriptions

Distribute a participant handout to each participant. Instruct them to review the list of values and their descriptions. Remind them that there are blank lines which can represent a “value” that they feel is important to them but isn’t included on the list. They can write their own values on one or more of these blank lines.

My Five Core Values and Statement

Once they have had some time to reflect on the words and descriptions, ask them to identify the five values that they believe best represents them; those that are most important to them.

Now, ask the participants to list their five “core values” at the top of the reverse side of their participant handout.

Ask participants to describe how easy or hard it was to select only five core values.

Elicit or prompt for:

- There were more than five values that were important
- Some of the values seemed similar to each other
- Some of the values are clearly “socially desirable” (honesty), while others may seem more superficial (attractiveness)

Now, in the space provided on the participant handout, instruct each participant to write a

personal values statement (of a few sentences) incorporating their five core values.

For example, if a participant selected:

● God's will ● honesty ● independence ● intimacy ● loyalty, their personal values statement might be something like:

I will be honest and loyal in all of my relationships, especially my intimate relationships. While I value being independent, I also want to honor God's will in my life.

Invite participants to read their personal values statement aloud to the group, if they are comfortable doing so.

Practitioner's Note: This activity is excellent. It gave students words to express their values and thus a way to talk about them and how to communicate their values to others. The conversations about values and relationships brought the individual reflection back to the community and built connection. This also allowed the leaders insight into what the students are thinking.

Reflect

Reflect (15 minutes)

Living according to my values

After they've read their statement or listened to the other statements being read, ask each participant to respond (in writing or verbally) to the first three reflection prompts on the participant handout.

- What behaviors do I do or say that show that I am living according to my personal values statement:

At home...

At school...

With my friends...

- Would others around me agree that these are my core values? How would they know that I am living according to my values statement?

What would my teachers say?

What would my parents/caregivers say?

What would my friends say?

- Which of my core values do I need to work on in order to live according to my values?

Living according to my sexual ethic

Now, invite the participants to think specifically about their romantic or intimate relationships. Emphasize that it isn't necessary for a participant to be in a current romantic relationship or even to have experienced any romantic relationships. Exploring a sexual ethic can be in preparation for a future romantic relationship, it can be used to guide a current romantic relationship or it can be used to consider what you'd like to do differently in the future, based on a past romantic relationship.

In the space provided on the participant handout, instruct each participant to write a personal sexual ethic (of a few sentences) incorporating some or all of their five core values.

Ask participants to respond (in writing or verbally) to the remaining two reflection prompts on the participant handout

- Thinking specifically about past, current or future romantic or intimate relationships: How would my romantic partner(s) know that I am living according to my sexual ethic?
- How can I enlist those around me (parents/caregivers, teachers, youth group leaders, friends, romantic partners, etc) to help me live according to my personal values statement?

Send Forth

Send Forth (5 minutes)

- Close the activity by reminding participants that a sexual ethic is based in values and that values guide all of our relationships with others, not just our romantic relationships.
- Gather youth in a circle and invite them to pray.

- Explain that you will lead them in an opening and then invite the youth to share the values they picked popcorn style, by speaking them aloud with no order.

God, we give you thanks for the wisdom of our minds, the clarity in our hearts, and the passion of our souls. The values we cherish most come from your example, Jesus. They are the foundation of our relationships. Help us to live out the values we have named today:

[popcorn style naming values]

- When everyone has completed saying their values, you will close the group in a repeat-after-me format.
- Please close by repeating after me:

We strive . . . We strive

to always live . . . to always live

our faith values . . . our faith values

as the grounding . . . as the grounding . . .

for our relationship to God and Others . . . for our relationship to God and others.

Amen . . . amen.