



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

More To The Story / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

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

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

For students to recognize that God's design for sex was for it to have emotional significance, and for them to think critically about cultural messages that they should be emotionally unaffected by sexual activity or content.

SCRIPTURE

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2 NIV).

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:9-10 NIV).

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Communicator Note: Give a few examples of words you've learned from your students. Or, if you have to, ask them to say some words that you probably don't know.*
- Here's another one: I've heard some of you use the word "cringy".
- There's another topic that could potentially feel cringy at first, although I promise that I'll make a total effort to handle it well. We're talking about sex.

TENSION

- When it comes to sex, sometimes adults talk about it in a really intense way.
- While some adults talk about sex like it's dangerous or bad, other adults seem to think it's no big deal at all.
- Some people act like having sex is catastrophic, and others act like it's completely casual.
- When you talk to people who've experienced something and they tell you it's no big deal, the most logical thing to believe is that it's no big deal.
- We live in a world where the normal pattern of thinking is that sex is a casual thing, so it's natural for us to start believing that it is.

- At the same time, even when we tell ourselves that something isn't a big deal, you may have noticed that sometimes it can become a bigger deal.
- So even though sex isn't catastrophic, there are times when it doesn't seem so casual either.
- Sex isn't casual, no matter how casually you treat it.

TRUTH

- To start, you need to know that if you're feeling any shame over things you've done in the past, there's no judgment here.
- We can all be transformed and begin thinking in a new way. Here's how:
 - Start by identifying where you've been affected by a thought pattern.
 - Then be transformed, as Paul says, by renewing your mind.
- What is it that you'd like to see transformed in your life? No matter what it is, just know that sometimes a transformed mind starts with transformed behavior.
- Even if it takes a while for your thinking to change, you can start living like a transformed person right now. Your thinking will follow.
- Live like there's more to the story when it comes to sex. Live like sex isn't casual.

APPLICATION

- I want to look at something the apostle Paul said in a letter to a group of Christians in Rome.
- When people started to follow Jesus in the Roman Empire, there was tension between what was normal at the time, and the life Jesus was inviting them to.
- Chances are, they felt some confusion over what was the real story, and who they should believe (*Romans 12:2 NIV*).
- Paul's saying that there's a certain way the people around you live. There's a pattern, but that doesn't mean you should conform to it.
- God isn't just asking you to BELIEVE something about Him or about the world—He's asking you to LIVE differently.
- So, in terms of sex, what are some of the normal behaviors or "patterns of this world"?
- It's definitely a culture of casual sex. But there's more to the story.
- If you're getting ANY messages that tell you to stop feeling, stop thinking, or stop caring...pay attention.
- Paul obviously isn't talking about sex or dating here, but that doesn't mean his advice doesn't apply to that area of our lives. He tells us to love and care about each other sincerely (*Romans 12:9-10 NIV*).
- That's a different message than we're hearing in a culture of casual sex.
- God is calling us to be the kind of people who understand that how we treat another human being is never casual, no matter how casually people act about it.
- God, who invented sex, designed it to be a good thing, to be significant, and to matter, but we're getting messages that tell us something else.
- This is an invitation for us to transform our minds, think differently, and refuse to conform to a way of thinking just because that's how everybody else thinks.

LANDING

- Look, I get that sex is a complicated topic. There are plenty of competing messages about what's okay, what's not, and how you should live.
- That's why I think having a Small Group Leader is such a big deal.
- Your SGL knows sex isn't casual no matter how casually it's treated, and they can help you figure out what matters for YOU now, and in the future.



TEACHING SCRIPT

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BOTTOM LINE

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

INTRODUCTION

1.5 MINUTES

One of my favorite things about hanging around high-schoolers is learning all the words you invent. I bet you didn't know that, but you're giving me an education.

(Communicator Note: Give a few examples of words you've learned from your students. Or, if you have to, ask them to say some words that you probably don't know.)

Here's another one. I've heard some of you use the word "cringy." And now I can't imagine my life without it. "Cringy" works for all kinds of topics...like talking about *The Bachelor*, eating gas station hot dogs, or watching REALLY awful TikTok videos.

And there's another topic that could potentially feel cringy at first, although I promise that I'll make a total effort to handle it well. You ready?

We're talking about sex.

If you haven't been here the past few weeks, or you love to sleep your way through church talks, we've been discussing things like sex, virginity, and porn. Yeah, you're awake now, aren't you?! And while we've tried to keep it low-key and not stress anybody out, there's still something about these topics that feels a little...well...uncomfortable. Right? Yes!

But why?

TENSION

4.5 MINUTES

I think one reason is this...

When it comes to sex, sometimes adults talk about it in a really intense way.

- Your health teacher talks about sex like you're going to get an STD and die.
- Your parents are more nervous about having "the talk" with you than they are about teaching you how to drive.
- And maybe you've heard people here at church talk about sex like it's the most important thing ever.

And here's what's confusing: **while some adults talk about sex like it's dangerous or bad, other adults seem to think it's no big deal at all.** Maybe you have family members who talk about sex like it's totally casual. You've listened to songs where artists talk openly about it. Celebrities joke about it. And it's pretty much all over the internet. People who talk openly about it seem to be doing just fine!

Here's what I'm getting at...

- **Some people act like sex is a huge deal.**
- **Other people act like it doesn't matter at all.**

Some people act like having sex is catastrophic, and others act like it's completely casual. But which is it? Well, most of us don't pick catastrophic. Why is that? Maybe it's because you know people who've had sex, and they didn't die. It didn't ruin their life. Maybe you've had sex, and you didn't die. It didn't ruin your life. **And when you talk to people who've experienced something and they tell you it's no big deal, the most logical thing seems like to believe is that it's no big deal.**

So we get into a pattern of believing that sex is casual. You've probably never thought about it in those exact words, but **maybe you've...**

- **Told yourself that a hook-up is no big deal.**
- **Tried to talk yourself out of catching feelings for someone you've been physical with.**
- **Made all kinds of jokes and laughed about sexual things.**
- **Sent nudes.**
- **Pushed someone's boundaries—or even your own—because you told yourself that it really isn't a big deal.**

If that's you, I'm not saying that you're a bad person. I'm saying that you—like the rest of us—live in a world where the normal pattern of thinking is that sex is a casual thing, so it's natural for us to start believing that it is.

At the same time, even when we tell ourselves that something isn't a big deal, you may have noticed that sometimes it can become a bigger deal. Maybe you noticed that...

- It wasn't a big deal to one friend who hooked up, but it really affected another.
- Something was said as a casual joke, but you still felt really uncomfortable.
- Somebody told you to be chill about it, but it really affected you.
- Porn seemed casual until you saw something that made you feel awful.

So even though sex isn't catastrophic, there are times when it doesn't seem so casual either. Think about it this way...

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

That's why my goal here today isn't to tell you what to think. I want to help you understand HOW to think when you hear two competing ideas about a subject that can affect your life.

TRUTH

7.5 MINUTES

To do that, I want to look at something the apostle Paul said in a letter to a group of Christians in Rome. Now, here's what you need to know about Rome at the time Paul wrote this. The messages coming from Roman culture were NOT the same as the messages Jesus had proclaimed. So when people started to follow Jesus in the Roman Empire, there was tension between what was normal at the time, and the life Jesus was inviting them to.

In fact, it's possible they were feeling the same sort of things we are—conflicting messages about God and what it means to follow Jesus. And chances are, they felt some confusion over what was the real story and who they should believe. With that in mind, Paul writes this...

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2 NIV).

Paul is never one to dance around the point. He gets right to it. He's saying that there's a certain way the people around you live. There's a pattern, but that doesn't mean you should conform to it. God is inviting you to do something different. God isn't just asking you to BELIEVE something about Him or about the world—**He's asking you to LIVE differently**. He's asking you to treat yourself and others differently as a result. God doesn't just want to be a good idea to you—He wants to be the force that shapes the decisions you make.

So, in terms of sex, what are some of the normal behaviors or "patterns of this world"? Maybe it's that...

- We're not supposed to feel any feelings when it comes to sex.
- Sex is something that just happens and is part of the moment, but not something you bring up with that person ever again.
- Sex is a rite of passage, and if you don't do it, you're not really an adult.
- You're weird if you see porn and feel uncomfortable about it.
- When you hear a joke or someone sends you a picture, it's not a big deal, and acting like it's a big deal is overreacting.

These are just some of the messages we get from what's happening around us. It's definitely a culture of casual sex. But there's more to the story. So before we go any further, I want to clarify something. If you're getting ANY messages that tell you to stop feeling, stop thinking, or stop caring...pay attention. If you feel like your gut feelings are an overreaction, or that you're weird or naïve for having feelings, take notice. If something is telling you to turn off your feelings or pretend to be okay when you're not, that's generally not a great idea. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. A few verses later Paul says this...

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:9-10 NIV).

Paul obviously isn't talking about sex or dating here, but that doesn't mean his advice doesn't apply to that area of our lives. He tells us to love and care about each other sincerely. That DOESN'T mean to pretend like you care about someone or be fake so that you can get something from them. No; he tells the Romans, and us, to REALLY love others—to hate what is evil, wrong, or hurtful, and hang on to what is good. That's a different message than we're hearing in a culture of casual sex. Think about it this way...

- If we have to talk ourselves out of feeling something...
- If we have to turn off our conscience in order to make that joke, watch that clip, or open that picture...
- Then we AREN'T being sincere, genuine, or real. We're being fake.

We're just pretending, and God has called us to something more. God is inviting all of us to be transformed into something new. Something better. God is calling us to be the kind of people who understand that **how we treat another human being is never casual, no matter how casually people act about it.**

God, who invented sex, designed it to be a good thing, to be significant, and to matter. And if we're getting messages that tell us that it doesn't matter, it's not a big deal, or we should have less feelings about it, that doesn't line up with the heart of God. If someone sends us a pic and something in our heart goes, "I shouldn't look," that's something worth paying attention to. If we're going further in a relationship than we want to, and our hearts are getting involved more than we think is okay, we need to listen. That's an invitation for us to transform our minds, think differently, and refuse to conform to a way of thinking just because that's how everybody else thinks.

APPLICATION

4.5 MINUTES

In a culture of casual sex, there's more to the story. And Paul tells us to transform our minds beyond what culture tells us. But how? To start, you need to know that if you're feeling any shame over things you've done in the past, there's no judgment here. Every single one of us has done something we regret, something we aren't proud of, or something we wish we would've thought through more than we did. No one is better than anyone else. We're all created in the image of God. And we're all called to do what Paul is suggesting, no matter what our sexual history is. We can all be transformed and begin thinking in a new way. Here's how:

Start by identifying where you've been affected by a thought pattern. When it comes to sex, in what ways are you tempted to conform or just go along with what everyone else is saying or doing? Have you viewed it as something that's not a big deal, or something that you should turn off your feelings toward? You owe it to yourself as an adult to think critically about how much cultural messages affect you. It's difficult to take a different approach to something you're unaware of. Start paying attention to the ways that culture influences your thinking.

Then be transformed, as Paul says, by renewing your mind. Changing how your mind works isn't easy, but here are some tips that can be helpful...

- If you want to change the way you talk or joke about sex, maybe memorize a single Bible verse to remind you of the power of your words.
- Maybe there's a pattern for the decisions you make. When you go to certain parties or hang out with certain people, the end result is usually the same. So for you, the decision that you may need to make is avoiding certain people or places for a little while.
- Maybe instead of thinking about people as objects for your benefit, begin thinking about people as human beings who are uniquely created and loved by God.
- Maybe it's a pattern that has created some secrets that are slowly hurting you. I know this one is extra difficult, but sometimes the absolute best way to change your thinking is to talk about what you're thinking with someone who's older, wiser, and trustworthy. It will be so relieving for you to share what you're going through, and get that burden off your shoulders. In turn, they can help you check your thinking and your choices.

What is it that you'd like to see transformed in your life? No matter what it is, just know that sometimes a transformed mind starts with transformed behavior. In other words, even if it takes a while for your thinking to change, you can start living like a transformed person right now. Your thinking will follow. So live like there's more to the story when it comes to sex. Live like sex isn't casual.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Look, I get that sex is a complicated topic. There are plenty of competing messages about what's okay, what's not, and how you should live. That's why I think having a Small Group Leader is such a big deal. I want every person here to have a trusted adult that they can talk to about anything—someone who has your best interest in mind. It may be a little intimidating to bring things up at first. But if you have some things that you need to talk about, here's what I want you to know...

They won't be surprised.

They won't judge you.

They'll help you sort out what is and isn't a big deal.

Your Small Group Leader signed up to be here for you, no matter the conversation. And this one is included. They know sex isn't casual no matter how casually it's treated, and they can help you figure out what matters for YOU now, and in the future.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS