

Big ^{*}iSSUES

LEADERS NOTES[®]

Ken Moser

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LEADER'S NOTES

Dear Youth Leader,

Welcome to Effective Youth Ministry Press free leader's notes!

These leader's notes are for the Youth Bible study booklet *Big Issues* that is for sale from www.effectiveyouthministry.com.

These notes are designed to assist your in preparation and enable you to get the most out of your Bible study time.

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Regards,

Effective Youth Ministry Press Team

www.effectiveyouthministry.com

big issues for today's youth introduction

Welcome to Big Issues for Today's Youth!

This series of studies is designed to tackle some of the big concerns of today's young person. Some issues that have challenged many generations ("How do I get along with my brother/sister" "I know God loves me but I still sometimes feel unworthy") still exist today. However, there are also new issues that youth confront ("How do I be a Christian when I'm on Facebook or MySpace?")

Over the next six weeks these studies will examine these big issues in light of God's word. Some of these issues can be overwhelming and complex. However, as you work through the issues you will find ways to help each other as well as find comfort, encouragement and clarity from the Bible.

My hope and prayer is that God will use these studies to give you solutions to these big issues.

Ken Moser

Big Issues • leader's notes:

Study 1 ©

let's get started

Have the young people answer the sharing question by circling one of the listed answers. Ask each person to share his/her answer. If you want, you may have some discussion about the answers shared.

Ask a volunteer to read the story "Fiona's forceful friends". Ask volunteers to share what they would say to Fiona.

going deeper

Do Not Conform Part 1

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:1-3

How is the Christian to live? (v. 1) As a living sacrifice.

Can you think of examples of how to do this? Have some discussion about examples of how to be a living sacrifice. They can write answers in the space provided in the box. Some suggested answers: Make decisions that honor God. "Die to yourself." Put God and your neighbor first.

What does v. 2 tell us about giving into peer pressure?

Do not conform to the world's pressures.

What is the solution to giving into pressure? (v. 2) Suggested answers: "Renew your mind." Fill your mind full of godly thoughts. Get to know the word of God and let it inform the way you think about this world.

When you are with your friends, how can you tell when what they want to do is not what God wants for you? Ask for suggested answers. Suggested advice: You must get to know God's will and his desires for us. This comes by reading and knowing what is in his word, the Bible.

Do Not Conform Part 2

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 1:13-16

What are the five things we are to do according to these verses?

1. Prepare your minds for action
2. Be self-controlled
3. Set your hope on the future grace to come
4. Don't conform to your evil desires
5. Be holy

Can you give examples for any of them? Have some discussion about examples of how to do the five things listed in 1 Peter 1:13-16. They can write answers in the space provided in the box.

Discuss the two questions about dealing with friends wanting you to do the wrong thing. Be prepared to offer your own advice. Don't be afraid to correct bad advice.

Ask the group to rate their friends in regards to peer pressure on the scale provided. Then discuss answers. Ask the group to discuss: Is there anything you can do to relieve some peer pressure?

How do I deal with pressure from non-Christian friends?

Ask one or two volunteers to read Ephesians 4:17-24.

What does Paul insist on? (v. 17) Don't live like the nonChristians (the "Gentiles")

Use the next four questions to discuss the personal situations of people within the group and how they cope with peer pressure.

getting active

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions.

let's pray

Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

Big Issues* leader's notes:

Study 2

Self image and the Christian

let's get started

Have everyone answer the sharing question by checking the box next to one of the answers provided then discuss their answers.

Ask a volunteer to read the story "Doug doubts his worth". Ask volunteers to share what they would say to Doug and what you think God would want Doug to know.

going deeper

God has poured his love on us

Ask a volunteer to read 1 John 3:1-3.

What is God's attitude towards believers according to this passage?

Great love that has been lavished on us

How should this passage shape the way we feel about ourselves?

We should see ourselves as loved by the creator of the universe

Discuss some advice you could give to a friend who says "I know that God loves me—I've heard it all before. It just doesn't mean all that much to me"?

Our Heavenly Father loves us more than we can imagine

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 8:38-39.

On a scale of 1 to 100, how much does God love us according to this passage from the Bible?

The answer should be 100.

Why is Paul (the author) so convinced that God loves us? (See 8:1-4 for help.)

Because God sent Jesus to die for us. God's love for us is "in Christ"

Ask the group for their suggested answers to the remaining questions on page 13.

If you follow Jesus you are a new creation

Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:17

What do you think it means to be 'in Christ'?

God sees the purity of his son when he looks at us. To be "in Christ" means that our penalty for sin has been paid.

What do you think it means to be a 'new creation'? Can you give examples?

Some suggested answers: We are born again, we are innocent and pure in God's eyes.

Use the passage to answer the two hypothetical questions the Christian person may ask him/herself.

If you have time you could look at one or more of the passages about what it means to be 'in Christ'. (Romans 8:1, Galatians 3:26-26, Ephesians 2:13, Colossians 3:1-4.

getting active

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions.

let's pray

Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

Big Issues* leader's notes:

Study 3

Dealing With Depression

NOTE: Please realize that this study is not meant to be a cure for depression. This is merely a small group Bible study that aims to provide help. Depression can be a serious condition that needs to be treated professionally.

let's get started

Have the young people answer the sharing question by checking the box of one or more of the listed answers. Ask each person to share his/her answer. If you want, you may have some discussion about the answers shared.

Ask a volunteer to read the story "Karli is down". Ask volunteers to share what they would say to Karli and how they could help her. Ask if anyone has struggled in this area. Be prepared for this study to raise some concerns that you may have to deal with pastorally.

going deeper

God's people experience sadness

Ask for volunteers to read Psalm 88.

Why do you think the author was so sad? We don't know the specific reasons.

How long has the author suffered? (v. 15) "From his youth" (v. 15)

Why do you think God lets his people feel this sad? There is no definitive answer to this question but some suggestions: God uses sadness to help us rely on him, to shape us as people, to grow in godliness, to grow in trust of God.

Ask the group to share their answers to the remaining two personal questions based on Psalm 88. Be prepared to take the time to allow people to share personal issues in the area of depression. If required follow up individuals personally if you feel there are some needs that should be addressed.

God's love in the midst of ruins

Ask for volunteers to read Lamentations 3:19-27.

[FYI: It is optional to read the FYI section. The young people can follow up reading about Jeremiah in their own time]

How is Jeremiah feeling in response to what has happened? (v. 19-20) Afflicted, bitter, downcast

What is the only thing that brings Jeremiah hope and happiness? (v. 21-24) God's great love for us

Why do you think he is not angry with God for what has happened? He knew it was punishment for the nation's sin

Ask the remaining two personal questions on page 19. Be prepared to offer advice as well as to correct any poor advice.

The word 'good' is used three times in v. 25-27. What does Jeremiah tell us about finding 'good things' in the midst of suffering? God is in our times of suffering working. He never departs from the believer, even if we sometimes feel that he has.

Ask the remaining two personal questions about Lamentations on page 20. Be prepared to offer advice as well as to correct any poor advice.

Keep your eyes focused on eternity

Ask a volunteer to read Revelation 21:1-5.

List all the positive things that we can look forward to in heaven: Here are some: We will be with God. No tears, no death, mourning, crying or pain. All is new.

How can the hope of eternal life help us to continue to press on despite being sad or depressed now?

Have the group share their answers. It is important to note that our hope of heaven does not lead us to the conclusion that suicide is an option. We trust God to bring us through the suffering in this life and in his time to reward us with heaven.

getting active

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions.

let's pray

Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray for those who are struggling with sadness and depression. You may need to be discreet about who you pray for. With this in mind, silent prayer may be a good option. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

Big Issues* leader's notes: Study 4©

Life online (Facebook, Myspace and your online community)

let's get started

Have the young people answer the sharing question by checking the box of one or more of the listed answers. Ask each person to share his/her answer. Then discuss the two sharing questions about the sites they have chosen

Ask a volunteer to read the story "Oscar is online". Ask volunteers to share what they would say to Oscar as well as what they think about how the Christian is to act online. Ask for their opinions on what they would say to someone about whether an online community can help or hurt his/her Christian faith.

going deeper

Some guidelines for life online

Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 4:8.

Ask the group to give examples of the eight types of things we are to think about and write them in the spaces provided. Then ask volunteers to share if they have ever found it hard to live out Philippians 4:8 while being part of an online community.

Ask the group to share their advice for the three scenarios. You may want to plan ahead what you would say in each situation.

The kind of community we must be (whether face to face or online)

Ask one or two volunteers to read 1 Peter 2:9-12.

What four things are we to be as a community? (v. 9a) Chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, people belonging to God.

Why are we to be like this? (v. 9b)

We have been called out of darkness and into his wonderful light.

What has God done for us that has made us so special? (v. 10)

Become his people and received mercy.

How are we supposed to live in light of this? (v. 11-12)

As strangers and aliens in this world, we are also to stay away from sinful desires and live good lives among the nonChristians around us.

How can we reflect this way of living online?

Suggested advice: say helpful things about others, post positive, God-honoring messages, place Bible verses on our homepage.

Have each person place a mark on the line that reflects how easy or difficult they find it to be a Christian online then share answers.

Loving those in your online community

Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:29.

What does this tell us about the way we must relate to each other?

Speak words that build up instead of words that tear down

Treat others well

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 6:27-31.

What kind of person is this passage asking us to be?

People who are totally different. People who do well to others and don't retaliate when wrong is done to us.

Discuss how we should treat other people online and what we should we do when we are treated unfairly online. Keep Luke 6:27-31 in mind as you answer.

getting active

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions.

let's pray

Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

Big Issues* leader's notes:

Study 5

getting along with YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER (and the rest of YOUR family for that matter!)

If there is an only child in the group have them direct the questions in this study toward their relationship with their mother/father.

let's get started

1. Have the young people describe their place in their family by circling one answer in each box. Ask each person to share his/her answer.
2. Have each person place a mark on the scale to show how well they get along with their sibling/s and share their answers. Then answer the three questions on the bottom of page 30. While you want them to be honest try not to let people say deliberately nasty things.

Ask a volunteer to read the story "Aaron's Angst". Ask volunteers to share what advice they would give Aaron then discuss what it would mean for him to honor God in the way he relates to his sister.

going deeper

Living in Harmony Part 1

Ask one or two volunteers to read Romans 12:16-21.

Use the three questions to apply the teaching in the personal situations of the group members.

Living in Harmony Part 2

Ask one or two volunteers to read 1 Peter 3:8-12.

What does this passage say that is similar to the previous one (Romans 12:16-21)?

Live in harmony with each other, don't repay evil with evil, live at peace

What do you think it means to live "in harmony" with your sibling(s)? Can you give everyday examples?

Don't get angry at them for no reason, share your possessions, listen to them, let them go first.

Is it possible to not repay evil with evil and insult with insult? This question should help the group discuss how possible it is to put this passage into practice.

Have the young people describe how they feel about living in harmony with their siblings by circling one of the answers provided. Ask each person to share his/her answer.

Love with Actions and Truth

Ask one or two volunteers to read 1 John 3:11-20.

What is the main thing this passage is telling us to do? Love one another

What is the example given to us? (v. 12) (Do you know this story? If not, read Genesis 4:1-12.)

Cain- who murdered his brother

What does it tell us about being filled with hate? (v. 11-15) Those who hate belong to the evil one, if we don't love we "remain in spiritual death", if you hate your brother you are like Cain who was a murderer, hatred is a sign that we do not have eternal life

What does this passage tell us about love? (v. 16-20)

Jesus is our model of love-he laid his life down for us, love is seen in our actions, we must not only say we love others-we must show it by what we do.

Read v. 18 again. How are we to truly love those around us (including those we live with)?

Ask the group to share their opinions.

What are some practical things that you can do straight away to show love to your brother/sister?

Ask the group to share how they can love their siblings "in actions and in truth".

getting active

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions. Be prepared to offer your advice as well as correct any poor advice.

let's pray

Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

Big issues • leader's notes:

Study 6 ©

going out... Dating... Having a girlfriend/boyfriend!

let's get started

Have the young people answer the sharing question by checking the box next to one or more of the listed answers. Ask each person to share his/her answer then discuss their answers.

Ask a volunteer to read the story "David's dilemma". Ask volunteers to share what they would say to David and then share what they think they should do if everyone around them has a girlfriend/boyfriend but they don't.

Ask each person to place a mark on the scale that indicates how important they feel it is to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

going deeper

Don't attach yourself to the wrong person.

Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

What do you think it means to be "yoked" to someone?

To be tied to them, attached to them in a strong way

Why is it wrong to be yoked to a non-Christian? What are the potential problems?

Because light can't have fellowship with darkness, Jesus can't have harmony with the devil. Your non-Christian partner may want to please their worldly desires (greed etc.) while you will want to please your heavenly father.

Have you ever known someone whose relationship with Jesus suffered because they went out with a nonbeliever? Ask the group to share any examples.

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 7:39. **What does this verse tell us about whom we are to be "tied" to?** Someone who belongs to the Lord

To those in a relationship: go out for the right reasons

Have two volunteers read Matthew 7:12 and Philippians 2:1-5.

Ask the group to discuss what these verses say to each of the three scenarios. They may have a variety of answers. The overall message of each one is:

Matthew 7:12: Do to them as you would want them to do (treat) you

Philippians 2:1-5: Do not be selfish or do things simply to advance yourself

Treating your partner with purity

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 5:3.

What does this tell us about how we must treat the person we are going out with?

There must not be a hint of sexual immorality

What are some practical things you must do to make sure you don't go too far physically? List as many as you can. Here are some suggested answers: go out in

groups, don't sit alone together in a car, don't be alone together in a bedroom, make sure someone else is home if you are together, be careful of the amount of physical contact

Have one or two volunteers read 1Thessalonians 4:3-8.

What does it mean to be "sanctified"? (v. 3) to be set apart ('holy')

Why does Paul tell us to "learn to control our bodies"? (v. 4) so that we don't act like non-Christians and we don't sin against each other

Who are we not to be like? (v. 5) the 'pagans' (non-Christians)

What should we do when our friends put pressure on us to have a physical relationship with the opposite sex? Try to stand firm and not give in

Helping each other

Ask the group to answer to give their answers to the three questions.

let's pray Lead a prayer time using the listed suggestions and spend some time praying about what they have learned in today's study. Pray also for any other matters the group shares.

If there are group members who you feel are struggling in this area in some way you may want to follow them up for further discussion in the coming week.

Other recommended resources for your youth ministry:

Small Group Bible Studies

Starting Out
By Ken Moser

Foundations for Christian Living
By Ken Moser

Work Rest Play
By Ken Moser

Big Issues For Today's Youth
By Ken Moser

Young Men
By Ken Moser

Death and Resurrection
By Julie Moser

Studies 2 Go
By Julie Moser

More Studies 2 Go
By Julie Moser

Luke: Who is Jesus?
By Ken Moser

Luke: Jesus' Parables
By Ken Moser

Luke: Carry Your Cross
By Ken Moser

Resources for Leaders

Programs 2 Go
By Ken Moser

Changing the World through Effective Youth Ministry
By Ken Moser

Creative Christian Ideas for Youth Groups
By Ken Moser

**Youth Evangelism: Reaching Young People in a Way
that Honours God**
By Ken Moser

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