SELF-RESPECT: Acknowledging why you are so important

Studying what the Lord teaches us about sexuality

Introduction
God created you as an important and unique person. Due to our great worth in God’s eyes, we must love ourselves and others wisely. God calls us to act out of the goodness with which we are created. Our sexuality is a good quality which must be treated as God wishes and teaches.

These are the things we will talk about in this first lesson:

- You are an important person, having been created in the image of God.
- People who do not know how important they are often make mistakes with life.
- The sexuality God gave you is important and good.
- We have to think and behave intelligently to understand sexuality in this confusing world.

You are important
God created you to be like Himself, and to be an image of God (Genesis 1:26). He made you good. You were made with a mind able to understand and a heart able to love. You are able to possess everything through this understanding and love. “For all things are yours . . . and you are Christ’s” (1 Corinthians 3:22).

God made all things. He cares about everything that He has made. He cares most of all about the people He has made. He made each of us to be like Himself, and to become His close friend. “Even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (Luke 12:7).

The eternal Son of God loved you so much that He gladly laid down His life on the cross for you. God knows you are worth this much.

Not all self-love is sensible. We have good reasons for saying that we are important people. Sometimes, however, people have shallow reasons for thinking they are better than anyone else. Some think that what makes them most important is that their parents have money and they live in a big house. Some think that what makes them important is the fact that they are stronger and better looking or have more talent than others. Some people tell us we are better than others because of the color of our skin or our nationality. But this kind of thinking is shallow and causes trouble. It makes us look down on others.
You should love yourself wisely. Remember what Jesus said. We should love other people as we love ourselves. He wants us to love our neighbors very much, and He clearly wants us to love ourselves. However, He wants us to love ourselves in wise and good ways. We should love ourselves by being happy for all of the really good gifts He has given us. We should also have an eagerness to make our lives good and joyful as well as care about others.

MISTAKES people make when they do not love themselves

The Lord does not want us to be sad about ourselves. We are, in fact, loved by many people, not only by God. Many people count us far more precious than we imagine.

Can you think of some people who honestly love you?

Sometimes people go through difficult times. Those who should love them don’t. Foolish people seem to say to them: “You are no good!” And they are tempted to believe it. They should never give in to such temptations! They should remember that God is present with them in all of their troubles. Indeed, their worth is great. God made them, and He made them good. They are precious and really very important to Him.

Christ finds you important. Christ always knew you. He knows you now and he cares about you. You are His, even if you think that you are a pretty ordinary person. He counted you as worth more than anyone could imagine. Ordinary people are made to possess heaven and all things as sons and daughters of God. “The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Activity A — Things that make you important

God wants you to realize that He loves you, and made you good. He wants you to know that each one of you is worthy of love and care.

On a piece of paper, in large letters (with crayon or magic marker) write one quality you find in yourself that you like. (The above discussion about self-respect, and how important you are, may give you ideas.)

Tape the qualities you have written down edge-to-edge on the board.
Reflection on the activity

Is it good to remember how important you are?

Are the traits listed by the boys and the girls very much alike, or very different? Do girls and boys, in fact, have many of the same good qualities?

Boys and girls, and men and women, are alike and equal in being people and children of God.

God created men and women equal in dignity and honor. But, they are also said to be “complementary.” That is, they are also created differently in interesting ways that make them go well together. This does not mean one is better or superior to another, just different in some ways. What does that mean?

Is the world better because there are both boys and girls in it? What was God thinking when He made you a boy, or made you a girl? Should you be glad for being what you are?

Activity B — Questions to think about

Sometimes young people do foolish things. They start drinking beer, or taking drugs, or playing with sex because they mistakenly think that this is a good way to get attention or affection. Sometimes they act that way because it seems that nobody cares or notices them. Should we, as friends of Christ, do anything to encourage people who are sad and think that no one cares for them? What are some ways we can encourage and help such people?

What should we do if we begin to fear that nobody loves us? How much worth does Christ find in you? (See 1 Peter 1:18-19.)

Which is worth more: a human being, or the sun and the stars? (See Genesis 1:18-31.) Why?
SEXUALITY is important

God made us. He made us male and female, and He saw that it was good. We are precisely the boy or girl that He wanted to make.

As we study our faith, we will understand more and more about how good God’s gift of sexuality is for us.

Sexuality is not trivial. When it is treated as God wishes, it makes life better in many ways.

Because we are not all alike, we are naturally attracted to each other. The good feelings that come from being girls and boys help us to make greater friendships, and to escape loneliness. We can have great friendships even in our young years, but they become deeper and better as we grow up. We need to let Christ teach us how to love each other.

Some day, most of us will find one special person so dear to us that we will be happy to share our whole lives with that person in the wonderful friendship of marriage.

God gave us sexuality to provide us with one of the most wonderful powers we have. It is a power very much like God’s own power. Sexuality (when we learn to live as Christ teaches us) gives us the power to love so much that we can bring new persons into existence, within marriage, our own children, whom we will love more than we can imagine now.

As we study why God made us male and female, we need to learn more and more from Christ. We need to learn the kinds of love and friendship that are necessary to make life meaningful and good. We need to understand why God made our bodies and our hearts in the way that He did, and how we are to live wisely and well in a world in which so many people are very confused.

THINK and act intelligently to understand sexuality

God made us male and female. He made our sexuality, and it is good. But sometimes the world makes people think that sex is something bad or “dirty.” We need to look for what is right and not just believe what is presented to us on television, radio, and in advertisements. What is right may not always be what is popular. We need to talk to people that we trust and who we know will give us the information that we need.
Discussion

- Can good things be treated badly? Is this also true of sex?
- Why is it that sex seems bad to some people, even though God made it?
- Do many people treat sex as a trivial thing, using it only for momentary pleasure? How? Can you think of examples from social networking sites and texting?
- Do movies, the internet and TV programs sometimes treat sex shabbily? Is it healthy for us to let our imaginations and memories be filled with indecent pictures and thoughts?
- Is it important to understand sex, if we are to live good lives as we grow older?
- Who are the best people to teach us about sex? Is it easy for us to talk with them about important things?
- Sexuality is a gift from God. Do we owe Him the gratitude of behaving responsibly by keeping our minds and hearts pure?

TYING things together

Remember what we studied in this lesson:

1. God has made us, and made us good. We are important!
2. Things can go wrong if we do not realize how important our lives are.
3. God made our sexuality. It is good and has important purposes.
4. We have to think clearly, and act reasonably, to get an honest and true understanding of sexuality.
Write your notes down here!