

### MORALITY

#### Introduction

Try to imagine the picture of a giant banquet hall where King Herod is sitting at a drunken feast. Herodias, his wife, is sitting next to him. (Herodias left Herod's brother to marry Herod.) Off in prison is John the Baptist, who dared to tell the king that it was wrong to marry his brother's wife. Herod faces a moral dilemma after his stepdaughter (whose name was Salome) performs what was surely a highly sensual dance.

Listen to the story as it develops. Then, move into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire below.

1. If tabloids existed back then, what would the headlines be?

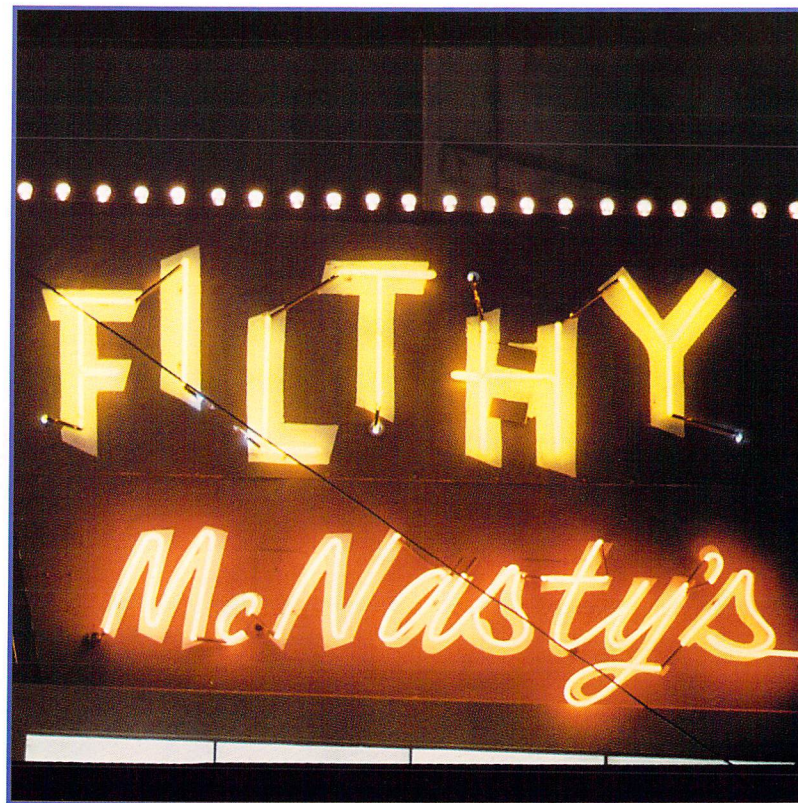
- ☐ "Prophet Loses Head Over Girl"
- ☐ "First Lady in Charge at Palace"
- ☐ "Popular Preacher Pays the Price for Exotic Dancer"
- ☐ "Royal Birthday Party Gets Out of Hand"
- ☐ "John the Baptist Returns From the Dead to Haunt Herod"

2. What rating would you give this story?

- ☐ G ☐ R
- ☐ PG ☐ X
- ☐ PG-13

3. Of the three people involved in the death of John the Baptist, which one do you feel the greatest anger toward because of their moral corruption?

- ☐ King Herod—because he took his brother's wife and gave the order to kill the person who spoke out against him
- ☐ Herodias—because she deserted her husband and tricked the king into killing John the Baptist out of spite
- ☐ Herodias' daughter—because she let her mother use her "dirty dancing" to have John the Baptist killed



4. John the Baptist dared to tell the king that it was wrong to take his brother's wife. If you were John the Baptist, what would you have done?

- ☐ just what he did
- ☐ kept my mouth shut
- ☐ written an anonymous letter to the editor
- ☐ said my peace and then ran for the hills

### JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

<sup>14</sup>King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

<sup>15</sup>Others said, "He is Elijah."

And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

<sup>16</sup>But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

<sup>17</sup>For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. <sup>18</sup>For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup>So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, <sup>20</sup>because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

<sup>21</sup>Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave

a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup>When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." <sup>23</sup>And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

<sup>24</sup>She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

<sup>25</sup>At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

<sup>26</sup>The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, <sup>28</sup>and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup>On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:14-29

5. In your own circles, who do you admire for the way they have stood up for what is right?

6. What is the closest you have come to "losing your head" for something you said or believed in?

7. When you have to make a moral decision, what do you do?

- ☐ struggle for days
- ☐ make a snap decision
- ☐ hope it will go away
- ☐ go for a long walk
- ☐ ask for help
- ☐ see what my friends or family are doing
- ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Specifically, where do you draw the line when it comes to entertainment with sexual or violent content?

9. How would you rate yourself in standing up for what is right? Finish the sentence below by choosing one in each category:

IN STANDING UP FOR WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT, I (AM) ...

Rock of Gibraltar \_\_\_\_\_ Jello pudding  
stick to my convictions \_\_\_\_\_ waver back and forth  
usually follow the crowd \_\_\_\_\_ rely on my own judgment

10. What is your biggest fear in standing up for what you believe?

- ☐ that I will be laughed at
- ☐ that I will be alone
- ☐ that I will lose my friends
- ☐ that I will look stupid

11. How can the group pray for you, particularly in relation to moral issues?