

Q: Can you think of another time when the sexual actions of one person affected a lot of people?

If you think you still need to reinforce the point that the sexual actions of one person can affect a whole bunch of people, share the following illustration.

Back in the 1980s, excess was in (along with tight jeans and the color turquoise, but that's a longer story). In the minds of many, the more you had the better you were. Televangelists built minikingdoms for themselves on the backs of people they begged money from, promising them financial return for money they gave. A lot of people found their hope and eternal security in these men—never a good thing to do.

These kingdoms crashed when reporters and photographers snapped pictures of some of these men leaving hotels with prostitutes and secretaries. Only God can judge the actions of these men, but we can look back and see the damage their sexual irresponsibility caused. To this day many people have a deep mistrust for ministers of the word of God because of the foolishness of these men.

But they were just like David. They thought for the moment and not for the long term. This brought a whole lot of trouble, not just to them, but to all who called themselves Christians.

Q: We've spent some time looking at how the sexual choices we make often have negative consequences for others. Could the opposite also be true—that the choices we make often have positive consequences for others? Can you give an example of this?

Read the following account to your students as an example of the way our decisions affect others.

A few years ago, a college student told me she was pregnant, and I was the only one who knew. As we talked, it became clear she wanted an abortion, but she didn't want to face that alone. She was no longer in contact with the father of the child. I suppose she felt pretty isolated. Finally, she asked if I would go with her to the clinic.

I said no. I told her my theological reasons and tried to convince her to look for another way. When the conversation ended, I guess neither of us felt like we got what we wanted from the other.

A few days later, her sister came to town and agreed to take her to the clinic for the procedure. I always thought she made the wrong choice, but I've never been certain I made the right one.

Was I as convincing as I could have been about my church's willingness to help her through the pregnancy, maybe help her with an adoption—whatever it might take to stand by her? Would she have made a different decision?

What if I had offered to go with her? What if she had agreed to wait a while before making a final decision? Would that have given her more time to think about it? Would she have made a different decision?

Who knows?

I just know I never felt like I handled that very well. I mean, she had the abortion, right? I don't know. I would wish for another chance on this one, but honestly, I'm not 100 percent sure what I would do.

I feel bad about that, too.

Imagine that right now a young woman we know is sitting in a coffee shop, wondering what to do about being pregnant. Let's say we knew she was coming to us with this problem one week from today.

- Q: What would you want to be prepared to say to her?
- Is there anything that would keep us from saying that? Why?

- Q: Do you think going to the abortion clinic with her shows responsibility or irresponsibility toward her? How about toward God?

Back to the story of David. We've already seen how he didn't act responsibly toward others, but the flip side of the story is someone who acted very responsibly. The prophet Nathan really stepped up to the plate in this situation and bore the responsibility to confront the king. This must have been a scary thing to do—he could have lost his life; he knew David had already killed to cover up his mistake.

- Q: What are some things we can do to step out of our comfort zones and act responsibly when others are making sexual choices that seem to go against what God wants?

- Q: Are there any boundaries we would cross by doing this? Is this a bad thing?

One of the often overlooked elements of this story is what Nathan did after he confronted David. In 2 Samuel 12:25, we see that when Bathsheba has another son (Solomon), Nathan the prophet is the one who announces his birth—and that the name Jedidiah will be attached to this son, meaning that this son is loved by the Lord. After Nathan acted responsibly and confronted David about his sin in the whole Bathsheba-Uriah mess, he didn't just split. He stuck around and was part of God's redemption for David. He really understood his responsibility to David.

- Q: If you wanted to act as responsibly as Nathan in the story about the college woman who had the abortion, what would you do?
- What would make it hard to do that?
 - Given those difficulties, what would motivate you to stay in the woman's life?

To help students personalize the story of David and Nathan, use the material from **U Da Man!** (page 151 in this book) as background for large or small group discussion, or as a tool for individual, personal reflection.

video discussion starter

FIGHTING FIRES

VIDEO

The responsibility of a Christian community to help each other with our sexuality.

After you show the **"Fighting Fires"** video clip, lead the following discussion.

- Q: Okay, a little hint here. The video is a parable about something deeper. And since this is a book about sex, it might not come as a big surprise to hear it's something related to sex. What do you think a *sexual fire* is?
- Q: What kinds of things do you think stop a guy like Andy, or a person like any of us, from acting responsibly and fighting sexual fires that others are going through?
- Q: What do you think Andy—the firefighter who doesn't fight fires—has to say to a group like ours?
- Andy was surrounded by signs of fires. Is that true for us? Do you feel surrounded by sexual fires?

YOU'LL NEED

- list-making materials
- television or video projection unit
- VCR or DVD player
- Good Sex video, cued to "Fighting Fires" [28:45]
- copies of **Fighting Fires** (page 152), one per student
- pencils

This discussion is going to get more and more confusing if your students lack some sort of shared definition of sexual fires. What we mean by "sexual fires" is sexual struggles people are going through.

Do you think we could be ignoring sexual fires in our Christian community? If so, let's make a list of the kinds of fires you see. I'll go first—I see signs of sexual abuse, how about you?

After you have a list of these fires, follow with—

- Q:** Do you think a person can help others fight sexual fires before she gets her own fire under control? Why or why not?
- Q:** Andy had the tools and education to fight fires, but he lacked the will. Do you think we have the tools we need to fight the sexual fires around us?
- If so, what are those tools?
 - If not, what are the tools you think we need to do the job?
- Q:** At least part of Andy wanted to fight fires. Do we really want to address the sexual fires in our lives and in the lives of the people around us?
- It's possible that Andy was afraid of fighting fires. Is fear ever a motivation for not wanting to accept responsibility for the sexual fires that rage around us?
 - What might happen if we hop in to fight other people's fires when they don't ask us to? Is this ever a good thing? Why or why not?
- Q:** Eventually Andy was fired—firefighters have to fight fires, right? How about us—what could happen to this group if we fail to help ourselves and other people whose houses are burning down?

To help students focus more closely and personally on dealing with the sexual fires around them, use the questions from **Fighting Fires** (page 152 in this book) for large or small group discussion, or individual, personal reflection.

the last word

=closing application

TALK ABOUT IT

Choosing who we can ask to encourage and hold us accountable as we struggle with sexual responsibility.

There's an old saying among recovering addicts—"We are only as sick as our secrets." I believe that's really true as we discuss our responsibility to God and others. We have a responsibility to deal with the things that cause us to live in shame and guilt.

- Q:** What do you think makes people hold onto their secrets and keeps them from sharing their struggles so others can help?
- Q:** Is this what keeps you from sharing struggles?

Read the following quote to your students from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He believed this is how Christians should think about each other:

Even Paul said of himself that he was the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)...There can be no genuine knowledge of sin that does not lead to this extremity. If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all. My sin is of necessity the worst, the most grievous, the most reprehensible...My sin is the worst...How

YOU'LL NEED

- copies of **Talk About It** (pages 154), one per student
- pencils

can I possibly serve another person...if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own?

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Harper and Row)

- Q:** How big do you believe your sin is in comparison with others?
- Q:** What responsibility do you believe you have in sharing your sinfulness with God and others?
- Q:** If you sense someone else is struggling with a sexual issue, what responsibility do you have to them?
- Q:** What are some things you can do to become more responsible to God when it comes to your sexual questions and struggles?
- Q:** What are some things you can do to become more responsible toward others when it comes to your sexual questions and struggles?
- Q:** What are some things you can do to learn personal responsibility and how every action has either positive or negative consequences?

Conclude this exercise by distributing pencils and copies of **Talk About It** (pages 153-154 in this book) to each student. After giving them several minutes to complete the handout, have them huddle in groups with one or two other students to share one thing they've learned from this discussion and one way that will impact their sexuality.

In other words

video opener

TROUBLE

VIDEO

Signs that a friend might be in relational trouble.

- Q:** What strikes you about this video clip?
- Have you seen any of these signs of trouble in a relationship? If so, and without embarrassing anyone, talk about what you've seen or experienced.
- Q:** Do you think most people don't recognize trouble signs when they see them or do you think most people ignore signs of trouble? Discuss that.
- How do you think some people miss what seem to their friends like clear signs of trouble?
 - Why do you think some people ignore the warning signs?
- Q:** There's an old saying that love is blind. There's a somewhat newer saying that love is not blind, love is stupid. Do you agree or disagree?
- Q:** What responsibility do you think friends have to each other before, during, or after signs of trouble appear in a relationship?
- Before
 - During
 - After

YOU'LL NEED

- four student volunteers
- a television or video projection unit
- VCR or DVD player
- *Good Sex* video, cued to "Trouble" [31:35]

To "listen" another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.

—Douglas Steere
Gleanings: A Random Harvest
(Abingdon, out of print).