

January 2012

## Life FOCUS Parent Newsletter

### This Month in Bible Study: Cultural Confusion

#### Why This Study?

Students live in a culture that has drifted off course. People in our culture simultaneously abuse the body and worship it. Our culture is obsessed with sex and sensuality. But it's all about the individual, as seen in how our culture treats people who are considered expendable or inconvenient to our way of life, people who are different from us, or people who are less fortunate than us. Many students base their thinking and lifestyles on what popular culture endorses. This study tackles these issues head on and shows us the biblical counterpart to a culture gone awry. Students can stand for Christ and what is right in the midst of a culture that no longer understands truth.

Students will be challenged to OWN their faith. *Discernment* is a category under the umbrella of OWN, and this study will help students discern between what culture says and what Scripture teaches. (For more information on the strategy to own their faith, see the Student Strategy at <http://www.lifeway.com/studentstrategy/>.)

#### What parents can do:

- Use the suggestions in this newsletter to engage your teenager in discussions about the importance of taking a stand for Christ and what is right.
- Read *Path of Purity: A Family Guide* (LifeWay Press, 2010). This resource for parents will equip and encourage you to guide your children along a path of purity from early in his or her life into adulthood.
- Give your teenager a copy of this book to read: *Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations* by Alex and Brett Harris (Multnomah Books, 2008). Consider reading it too!

#### Networking resources designed for parents and/or teachers:

- For a social network to help parents keep it all together, visit <http://parentzparent.ning.com>.
- Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/lifefocus](http://www.facebook.com/lifefocus).
- Do you twitter? Check us out at <http://twitter.com/lifefocus>.
- Find parenting encouragement and helps at <http://livingwithteens.com/>.
- Sign up for a semi-weekly family e-devotional from LifeWay Student Ministry at <http://www.lifeway.com/heartconnex>.

### Connect with Your Teenager

From fashion runways to “too thin” teens on TV, teen girls get the unspoken message that they must look a certain way to be accepted. This message is reinforced by friends, boys, and even mothers who constantly diet and are never satisfied with themselves. This constant barrage of unrealistic standards can result in low-self image and feelings of inadequacy. You can guide girls through this challenging time in life in the following ways:

- Pray for them, their influences, their friends and their healthy growth.
- Use Scripture to show them how unique they are.
- Explain the natural changes that occur during puberty.
- Discuss media images. Allow them to talk about what they see and feel about these images.
- Encourage healthy eating and sleeping.
- Avoid negative comments about your own body image.
- Use positive language when discussing their bodies and others. Avoid talking about other people's weight or labeling them. This language may make your teens wonder how you talk about them when they are not there.

Source: *Living with Teenagers* magazine, May 2011.

([www.lifeway.com/livingwithteenagers](http://www.lifeway.com/livingwithteenagers))

## Family Bible Connection

Sunday School affirms the home as the center of biblical guidance. Family Bible Connection is a strategy for you, as a parent, to discuss with your teenager—and the whole family—the biblical truths and principles discovered in their small group Bible study.

The class your teenager participates in uses a Bible study curriculum called Life FOCUS. You may participate in an adult Bible study that uses one of the adult counterparts in Bible Studies for Life (Life Truths, Life Values, Life Ventures, Life Lessons, or Life Words). Because you are studying the same passage, you and your teenager can both contribute to a family conversation about how God's Word applies to your lives as individuals and as a family.

## This Month in Bible Study: Cultural Confusion

This study is a five-week topical study based on selected Old and New Testament passages and looks at five issues affecting our culture.

### January 1: A Fast-Food Culture – Prov. 23:20-21; Dan. 1:8,11-16; Rom. 13:12-14

**The Question:** *How can I take better care of my body this year?*

This session challenges students to take care of their bodies. They'll be encouraged to choose to take care of their bodies in order to bring honor to Christ and to serve His kingdom.

Discuss the results of people who are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Find current stories of celebrities whose lives are in ruin due to excess. As a family, make a commitment to break bad habits and start good habits. Be specific and evaluate your progress on a regular basis.

### January 8: A Sensual Culture – Ephesians 5:1-5,8-12,15-16

**The Question:** *How can I live a pure life in an impure world?*

This study helps students understand that we live pure lives when we imitate God, walking in His love, light, and wisdom. Students will identify areas where they've been influenced by sensual messages and choose to walk a life of purity.

By this age your teens have seen the results of destructive decisions concerning sexual issues. Help them understand that remaining pure involves more than just an act; it means guarding from sexual content. By resisting the temptation to view explicit material, teens will curb destructive behavior. Go to [www.lifeway.com/tlw](http://www.lifeway.com/tlw) for more helpful information from the True Love Waits Web site.

### January 15: An Expendable Culture – Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

**The Question:** *Why should I care about other people?*

This session focuses on our need to care for others because God does. Students will be encouraged to show respect for others by treating them as God sees them and values them.

Read Psalm 139:16. Ask: **What does this verse tell us about our future? What does this verse tell us about how God cares for the unborn?** Discuss ways your family can demonstrate to others that they're valued by God. For example, as a family, visit residents at a nursing home, invite a widow/widower to join you for a meal, or pray for an unfriendly neighbor and seek ways to serve him or her in love.

### January 22: A Divided Culture – Acts 10:9-15,22-23,28-29a,34-36

**The Question:** *C'mon. Aren't some people really better than others?*

This study helps students understand that God doesn't show favorites and neither should we. Students will identify their prejudices and look for ways to overcome them.

Discuss current events with your teenager. As issues of different cultures are mentioned, spend time researching and discussing the background and back stories of the people involved. Attempt to develop an understanding of those involved in order to grasp the event and their response from their perspectives.

### January 29: A Greedy Culture – Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:10-15,17-18

**The Question:** *What can I do to help someone in need?*

This session points out that we are to show generosity, dignity, and mercy to those in need. Students will be challenged to get personally involved in helping people in need around them.

With your teenager, establish a working budget based on allowance and any part-time job he or she has. Help him or her learn to contribute a tenth of all income. Be sure to lead by example, and be open to discussing your budget and your giving habits.