

CORRUPTION ABDUCTION [unhealthy friendships—Proverbs 1]

THIS WEEK

Many young teens assume that they are their own person and are influenced little by their friends. Those who observe teens for any length of time have just the opposite opinion. This TalkSheet is designed to help students see that the enticement of bad friends can lead them down paths toward unhappiness and regret.

OPENER

Use your noodle. Start by putting a few dollar bills in the bait slots of several mousetraps. Then set the traps and divide your group into teams. Give each team a few uncooked spaghetti or pasta noodles. With the noodles, each team must retrieve the dollar—but without springing the traps. Use this activity as a way to introduce the first discussion question.

Or brainstorm with your group about the different types of traps and baits—mousetraps, fishing lures, salt licks, and the like. Those that hunt or fish in your group will know a few of these. Talk about how each of them works, what kind of creature it works with, what kind of bait is used, and how likely it is that the creature will escape from the trap. How do these lures and traps compare with those (figurative) traps that people use on each other?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. What would your kids most likely be tempted with? Make a list of their suggestions and ideas. Do your kids think others are aware of their weak spots? Why or why not? In what different cases would your kids be tempted by different things, such as food, money, cigarettes, or drugs?
2. What percentage did your group come up with as a whole? Some of them may have varying opinions and the reasons for the variance. Let them defend their opinions with the group.
3. Ask the group to list their answers and make a master list on a whiteboard or poster board. Then ask how many of your kids have heard the same responses coming from their friends. Point out the relevance of these verses to the lives of teens today.
4. What do your kids think? Do they know people who've tangled themselves up with their own poor choices? What would these people have been thinking as they made the choices that snared them?
5. Do your kids agree or disagree? Point out how people can use wisdom to evaluate the influence

of friends. Talk about how easy or difficult it is to break of from friends who aren't good influences. What opportunities or dangers are involved in trying to influence those friends for good?

THE CLOSE

Although many of people think they are the exception, the truth is that bad company really does corrupt good morals. People must be very careful about who they choose to hang out with, because not all will have their best interests in mind. God may use people to influence their friends towards good. In fact one of the greatest things a young teen can do is to draw friends toward God, but people must be strong in the faith and realize their own limitations and areas of weakness. That's the balance of giving without giving too much. Spend some time talking about this with your kids. What do they think? How strong are they when dealing with friends, peers, and family members?

MORE

- People reach out to others in different ways. Some people are pastors, some teachers, and some singers. Being a witness of others for Christ is unique to each person. Challenge your kids to think of one way that they can reach out to those around them throughout the week and beyond. Dare them to go out of their comfort zones and to see what happens when God uses them in their everyday lives!
- Point out to your kids that getting snagged in the wrong crowd can be a gradual process—but it's one they'll face in high school, college, and beyond. You may have kids in your group who are in these situations already, hanging with the tough kids, smoking, or doing drugs. Be careful not to come off as judgmental. Instead encourage your kids to think about what they're doing and what others around them are doing. Are they fitting in or standing out? Take some time to talk about the struggles that your kids may be facing and the powerful influence of peer pressure.