



This is the third week of *The Lord of the Rings*, a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc. The topic for our discussion this week is Porn, Promiscuity and Pain.

*Lord of the Rings*

- **What is the first memory you have related to the topic of sex?**
- **As a child/adolescent, what was your primary source for information about sex?**
- **What are some of the wrong ideas about sex and intimacy that you learned growing up?**
- Eric gave us 3 ways we get trapped by an illusion of intimacy: an Unguarded Heart (*Prov 4:23*), an Uncaptured Thought (*2 Cor 10:5*), and an Unchecked Action (*1 Cor 6:15*). **With this in mind, discuss the importance of *physical* and *emotional* boundaries.**
- At the end of the story in *John 8:1-11*, Jesus says to the adulterous woman, “go now and leave your life of sin.” **What does it mean to “leave your life of sin”?**
- **What boundaries and sources of accountability do you have in place to protect yourself *physically* and *emotionally*?**
- **What role can your Growth Group play in helping you establish and keep healthy boundaries?**

Group Leaders!



*Lord of the Rings*

Thank you again for those of you who have been providing helpful feedback on your Growth Group meetings. For those of you who missed getting feedback to me this week, please be sure to email me with some feedback within 2 days after your meeting.

At this point, the Growth Groups for the fall are essentially closed, which means I won't be adding people to your groups. However, I hope that your groups are keeping "the empty chair" and looking for people to invite and include so your groups can grow and multiply. There are several folks coming to Journey each week who are not in a Growth Group. Among these folks are prospects for every group. Encourage your folks to keep their eyes open and to talk openly about what their Growth Group means to them and how important it is as a part of Journey.

I look forward to the feedback from this weeks' meetings. This series is full of some powerful stuff for our couples and our singles. This weeks topic could very well be the most essential to transforming the lives and relationships of some of our folks. It may be the conversation we need to have to open up doors of trust in our groups and to really see what is lying under the surface for some of our folks. Try to keep the conversation upbeat and positive, no matter what is shared, and be supportive and merciful if someone opens up with a real struggle.

Thanks again for your hard work! We couldn't do this without you!

Andrew

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This is the third week of *The Lord of the Rings*, a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc. The topic for our discussion this week is Porn, Promiscuity and Pain.

The first three questions are meant to bring a some laughter to your group to soften the edge of talking about sex. Feel free to take a little time on these questions so your folks can open up and get a little more comfortable with the topic. If you are going to have success with the deeper questions, you need to break the ice a little with this topic. However, even though the questions are meant to be light, you might run headlong into a serious issue from someone's childhood. Don't make light of these situations. Try to be ready and play it by ear as you proceed.

As a note, if someone in your group reveals a genuine struggle with a sexually-related issue, let them know that we have several resources available that can help them overcome the issue. Encourage them to seek help and to find a source of accountability. There are definitely potential confidentiality issues in this topic, so try to honor them, but encourage people to find help if they need it.

- **What is the first memory you have related to the topic of sex?**

If your folks need help getting started, some examples may be: "interrupting" your parents, playground chatter, finding some magazines, reading a book, sex-ed class, etc. You may run into some bigger issues here, so be ready. There may be some stories of abuse or other serious issues. Please do not make light of serious issues. But, also don't let negative stories monopolize this time. If something big comes up, you may want to say, "we need to come back to this in a few minutes . . ." and move on. Either that, or you could use a serious comment here to jump into the discussion, if a genuine need seems to arise.

- **As a child/adolescent, what was your primary source for information about sex?**

This question is intentionally a little more personal, but it is also diagnostic. Folks who had bad sources of information will be more likely to have wrong ideas. Also, the fact that parents and the church are often the last place we got information about the topic of sex brings home the reality of where this topic is going. As you progress through the discussion, begin to shift thinking so people realize that God has a lot of truth to give us about sex and intimacy. If we pursue understanding fro God, a lot of problems can be averted.

- **What are some of the wrong ideas about sex and intimacy that you learned growing up?**

Again, this question is intentionally even more personal. This question is also a bit more loaded. You may have some really funny responses here. You may also have some serious issues come up. You may also find some issues that some folks have had to overcome and can share their victories. Play it by ear and use the discussion to lead into a review of Eric's message as we look to God's truth about sex and intimacy.

- Eric gave us 3 ways we get trapped by an illusion of intimacy: an Unguarded Heart (*Prov 4:23*), an Uncaptured Thought (*2 Cor 10:5*), and an Unchecked Action (*1 Cor 6:15*). **With this in mind, discuss the importance of physical and emotional boundaries.**

You may want to take a moment here to revisit the passage from 1 Corinthians 6:18 that I had listed in the Leaders' Guide 2 weeks ago. This passage instructs us to flee from sexual immorality. You may also want to take a few minutes and look up a few references in Proverbs related to the consequences of falling into sexually immoral behaviors. Some examples would be: Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:20-23; 6:32-33; 7:21-27.

As you go through these 3 traps, I encourage you to talk about how falling into each of them affects your relationship with your spouse (current or future.) One of the lies our culture teaches us is that we can have an inappropriate relationship with somebody and not have it affect our marriages. Especially for those who are not married yet. I encourage you to talk about how both the mental connections made in those relationships and the visual and emotional memories tend to stick with you and can haunt you at the worst moments, particularly in the context of a marriage relationship.

- At the end of the story in *John 8:1-11*, Jesus says to the adulterous woman, "go now and leave your life of sin." **What does it mean to "leave your life of sin"?**

Most translations say, "Go and sin no more." If you keep the statement in context, they say the same thing. However, it is easy to take it out of context with the second translation. "Leave your life of sin" is much more tied to the context and speaks clearly to how we should respond. Jesus is not telling the woman to be perfect. He is telling her to make wise decisions and to get out of the harmful lifestyle she finds herself in.

- **What boundaries and sources of accountability do you have in place to protect yourself physically and emotionally?**

You can approach this however you want to. As ideas for your conversation, I'm going to get on my soap box for a few minutes. You can disagree if you want, but the following is wisdom I've gained from my own experience both in my own life and those I have helped in various circumstances:

I can't say this too bluntly: Any person who refuses to have a filter on their internet probably has a problem. Some folks may not have it, but if they were told they have to, wouldn't have a problem with it. If they have a problem with a filter, they probably need one.

Another huge issue is emotional boundaries. It is often easy to talk "too much" about whatever it is you are dealing with. If someone is Instant Messaging, calling, emailing, talking to, or otherwise communicating excessively with someone of the opposite gender who is not their spouse (or potential spouse,) they are in great danger of an unhealthy emotional connection. Finding ways to set up accountability with these issues is often harder to do. Encourage your folks to ask those closest to them if they seem to talk about anyone of the opposite gender more than other people. We tend to talk about things we are attached to. This is a great symptom.

One other blunt bottom-line issue: there are *very few (if any)* circumstances where someone absolutely needs to be alone with a person of the opposite gender other than their spouse. 99.9%+ of circumstances could easily be dealt with either with another person present, with an individual of the same gender, or in a public place. Being alone with someone of the opposite gender is just plain risky.

- **What role can your Growth Group play in helping you establish and keep healthy boundaries?**

Depending on what has been shared, this may be easy or hard to get a good application from this question. If someone needs help, encourage them to choose 1 or 2 people in the group to ask tough questions and/or help them get some safeguards in place (i.e. internet filtering.) Try to get practical, measurable goals for your folks to pursue.