

SEXUALITY
BY DESIGN

INFLUENCERS



SEXUALITY BY DESIGN: INFLUENCERS, VOLUME 1

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SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Being a good steward of a gift or a resource involves more than just stashing it away in a safe place. It involves recognizing its true value, assuming personal responsibility for its care, and continually making decisions that assure its well-being.

At Susquehanna Valley Pregnancy Services (SVPS) we recognize that sexuality is a gift from God to be stewarded—to be valued, respected, and governed by choices that honor God, others, and ourselves. *Sexuality by Design* helps teens steward their sexuality by acknowledging what God says about it and encouraging them to make choices that align with His design and purposes for sex.

Foundational Principles

Sexuality by Design is written from the perspective that God is the ultimate authority on all things related to life and that He communicates pertinent, practical truth to us through the Bible. Some of the foundational principles on which *Sexuality by Design* is based are listed below.

- ❖ *God defines marriage as a committed, covenantal relationship between one man and one woman.*
- ❖ *God intended from the beginning that sexual activity is to occur exclusively within a marriage.*
- ❖ *The Bible identifies any sexual activity that takes place outside of His design as sexual immorality and instructs us to abstain from it.*
- ❖ *There are powerful influencers that impact our lives, positively or negatively, in regard to our sexuality.*

- *God's desire is that we demonstrate sexual integrity in every stage of life. This involves keeping our thoughts, conversations, and behaviors in line with God's standards regardless of age and marital status.*
- *The Bible makes it clear that God has provided all we need to live holy lives—even in the realm of our sexuality.*
- *If someone has made poor sexual choices in the past or has been the victim of someone else's poor choices, God willingly offers healing and restoration.*

Key Features of the *Sexuality by Design* Curriculum

Scientific

Sexuality by Design incorporates principles from biological and behavioral science to support the truth of God's Word. Some lessons illustrate key concepts with science-related demonstrations and object lessons that are inexpensive and easy to perform. *Sexuality by Design* references classic as well as cutting-edge research related to brain chemistry in order to better understand how sexual activity impacts us physically and emotionally.

Customizable

Sexuality by Design is designed to work equally well in a variety of group settings and formats. Time allotment, venue, group size, available technology, and staffing vary tremendously from group to group. SVPS created *Sexuality by Design* with group diversity in mind.

- *Use the curriculum with mixed-gender or gender-specific audiences.*
- *Schedule it as a weekly series or retreat-style event.*
- *Include large group teachings with small group breakouts or create your own configuration.*
- *Use the lesson scripts "as is" or modify their content.*
- *Use all videos and activities or choose the ones that work best for your group.*

Topic Based

The *Sexuality by Design* curriculum features multiple stand-alone volumes. Each volume includes several lessons that take an in-depth look at issues teens face today, such as influencers and pornography.

How *Sexuality by Design* Works

Each volume within *Sexuality by Design* consists of individual lessons meant to be presented sequentially.

Overview

Each lesson begins with an **overview** that identifies the lesson objectives, highlights the core truths that are communicated throughout the teaching, and details the sequence of the lesson contents.

Script

The next major component is the **script**, which includes the main teaching content for the lesson. The script is written as though the lesson is being presented by the author of the curriculum. While it is true that it could be recited as is, the expectation is that each leader will familiarize himself or herself with the content and then communicate the lesson in his or her own style and voice. The script includes sample questions that could be used to create opportunities for group interaction during the teaching session. Possible answers to these questions are provided. The script also acts as a type of presentation guide that gives a suggested sequence for recommended and optional videos and activities. Elements from the script pages could easily be transferred into presentation software or group member handouts.

Each lesson script is divided into three sections:

- ❖ *Assess: What Does Current Culture Say?*
- ❖ *Acknowledge: What Does God Say?*
- ❖ *Align: What Strategies Help Us Line Up with God's Design for Sex?*

Assess

The **Assess** section of each lesson identifies what current culture says about the topic. This section discusses attitudes and behavioral trends often communicated through various media outlets. It also typically includes pertinent video clips and/or group activities designed to initiate engagement with the topic. Since current culture is constantly changing, group members should be encouraged to describe the cultural landscape according to their own experiences, as well as identify struggles they deal with related to the topic.

Acknowledge

The **Acknowledge** section of each lesson reveals what God says about the subject. This section uses specific Scripture passages as the ultimate source of truth related to the topic where applicable. *Sexuality by Design* also applies biblical principles to topics not specifically addressed in Scripture in order to establish an informed perspective on the issue. In the Acknowledge section, this curriculum often uses scientific research to reinforce the truths found in Scripture. Activities, demonstrations, and object lessons are also support elements in this section.

Align

The **Align** section provides a brief recap of the lesson and then introduces practical strategies designed to help group members make sexual choices that keep them in alignment with God's design. This section is designed to give opportunity for deeper conversation related to the topic. For this reason it is suggested that group members divide into gender- and age-specific small groups, if possible. Due to some of the conversations that will arise during this lesson component, it is strongly recommended that each small group have at least one adult leader of the same gender as the group.

Each Align section includes multiple options for the group leader to choose from and present. There are two **Small Group Activity** options in each lesson. One is typically designed for more mature teens, the other for a less mature group. Another possibility is to read one or more of the **Small Group Scenarios** and have group members answer questions about stories that relate to the topic. The leader can choose one or more of the **Small Group Discussion** questions to initiate in-depth conversations about the topic or give group members the opportunity to ponder lesson truths chosen from the **Small Group Reflections** page.

The script pages also include suggested and optional support materials like **Videos**, **Activities**, and **Demonstrations**. Detailed instructions on how to perform these are provided within the text. If the leader chooses not to use a video, a description of the video's content is often included and can be communicated to the group verbally.

Sexuality by Design includes highlighted **Leader Notes** throughout the curriculum to provide additional support information.



Leader Considerations

Sexuality by Design incorporates video clips within the lessons. These video clips complement the teachings and, in some cases, are referred to multiple times throughout the lesson. It is highly recommended that these media resources are secured and tested on your available display equipment before they are presented to the group. Please refer to your church's/organization's policy on media use and licensing.

When difficult topics, like the ones discussed in *Sexuality by Design*, are presented in a group setting it is important that the leaders be sensitive to the following possible dynamics:

- ❖ *In any group, there may be members who have never been sexually active, members who have been and/or are currently sexually active, and members who may have experienced sexual trauma.*
- ❖ *Topics should be treated with respect and communicated with grace and truth. Judgmental or condescending comments from the leaders or other group members should not be allowed.*
- ❖ *Some group members may lack a basic understanding of Scripture. This would require a deeper level of guidance and more background instruction by the leaders.*
- ❖ *Some group members may be hearing or impacted by the truth of what God says about a topic for the first time. This new realization may bring an emotional response, especially from those who have been sexually active. The leaders should be prepared to address possible feelings of guilt, shame, sadness, etc.*
- ❖ *Know and follow your state's laws related to mandatory reporting if a group member shares information about sexual relationships or an abusive situation (past or present).*
- ❖ *Have a variety of local referral options and materials readily available to give to group members who could benefit from additional support.*

At Susquehanna Valley Pregnancy Services, we recognize the importance and value of youth ministry. It is our prayer that you will find *Sexuality by Design* to be helpful as you engage with teens about the challenging—yet essential—topic of sexuality.

OVERVIEW

LESSON OBJECTIVES AND CORE TRUTHS

OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize that desire is a powerful influencer that motivates and impacts our decisions.
2. Identify “instant gratification” as a mindset held by current culture.
3. Understand that God created us with a natural capacity to desire.
4. Identify the benefits and challenges associated with stewarding our desires well.

KEY VERSE: LAMENTATIONS 3:25

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.” (ESV)

CORE TRUTHS:

1. Desire is a powerful influencer that motivates us and significantly impacts the decisions we make.
2. Sexual desires are a normal part of God’s design for us and, as such, are fundamentally good.
3. Waiting can be one of the most difficult things we are called to do, yet it carries great reward.
4. Since we are all “wired to desire,” the responsibility of stewarding desires falls on each of us.

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Small Group Activity: The Missing Piece

Small Group Component: Scenarios

Small Group Component: Discussion

Small Group Component: Reflection



SCRIPT

WIRED TO DESIRE

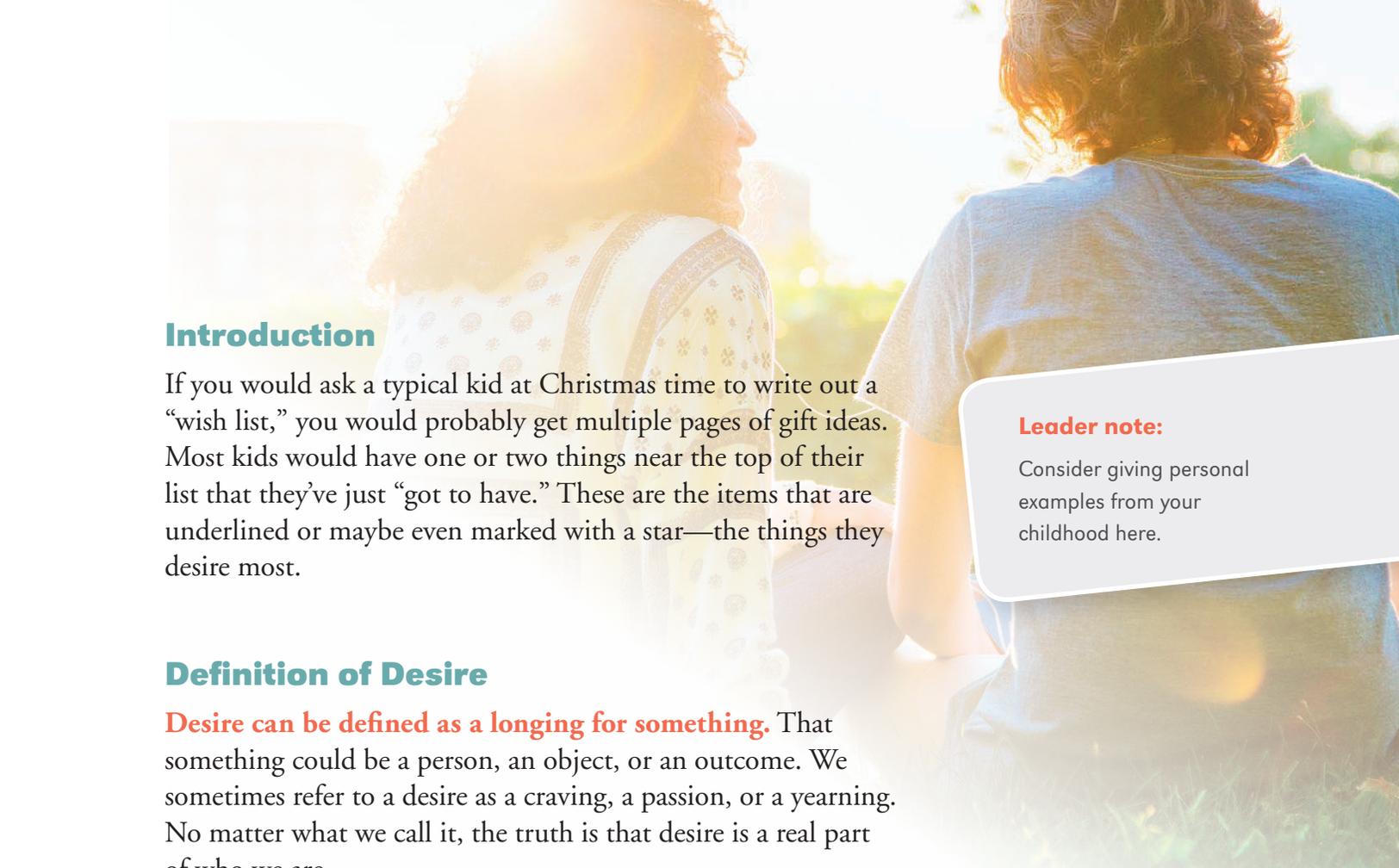
Review

In Lesson 1 we learned that God designed us to be sexual beings and that sex within marriage is one of His good gifts to humanity. We learned that God has clearly described His design for our sexuality in Scripture, provides us with help through the Holy Spirit to walk out His plan, and offers restoration through Jesus if we have already messed up. We defined the term sexual integrity as “honoring God, yourself, and others through your sexuality with your heart, mind, words, and actions.” We learned that it is each person’s responsibility to be a good steward of God’s gift of sexuality, which involves making choices that align us with His plan.

We also identified six powerful influencers that impact our lives positively or negatively and focused on knowledge as the first one.

Q1: Can anyone list the other five?

- *Desire*
- *Peer Pressure*
- *Crowd Pressure*
- *Media Pressure*
- *Accessibility*



Introduction

If you would ask a typical kid at Christmas time to write out a “wish list,” you would probably get multiple pages of gift ideas. Most kids would have one or two things near the top of their list that they’ve just “got to have.” These are the items that are underlined or maybe even marked with a star—the things they desire most.

Leader note:

Consider giving personal examples from your childhood here.

Definition of Desire

Desire can be defined as a longing for something. That something could be a person, an object, or an outcome. We sometimes refer to a desire as a craving, a passion, or a yearning. No matter what we call it, the truth is that desire is a real part of who we are.

A desire is a deep feeling that is not easily ignored and has a sense of urgency attached to it. For this reason, **desire is a powerful influencer that motivates us and significantly impacts the decisions we make.**

Q2: What are some things that people genuinely long for?

Here are possible responses. Feel free to use them as examples or create your own.

- *To be loved and appreciated*
- *Popularity*
- *Freedom*
- *A good job*
- *Vacations*
- *Wealth*

CORE TRUTH #1

Desire is a powerful influencer that motivates us and significantly impacts the decisions we make.



ASSESS

WHAT DOES CURRENT CULTURE SAY?

Current culture speaks loudly and often about desire. Messages like “follow your heart” or “live your dream” address the concept of desire. Unfortunately, many of these messages encourage us to fulfill our desires at any cost and without considering the consequences.

Q3: What kind of messages have you heard through media, peers, or other voices that encourage us to fulfill our desires regardless of the consequences?

Here are possible responses. Feel free to use them as examples or create your own.

- ❖ *“Just do it.”*
- ❖ *If it feels good, do it.*
- ❖ *Give in to your desires.*
- ❖ *Indulge your senses.*
- ❖ *You deserve it.*

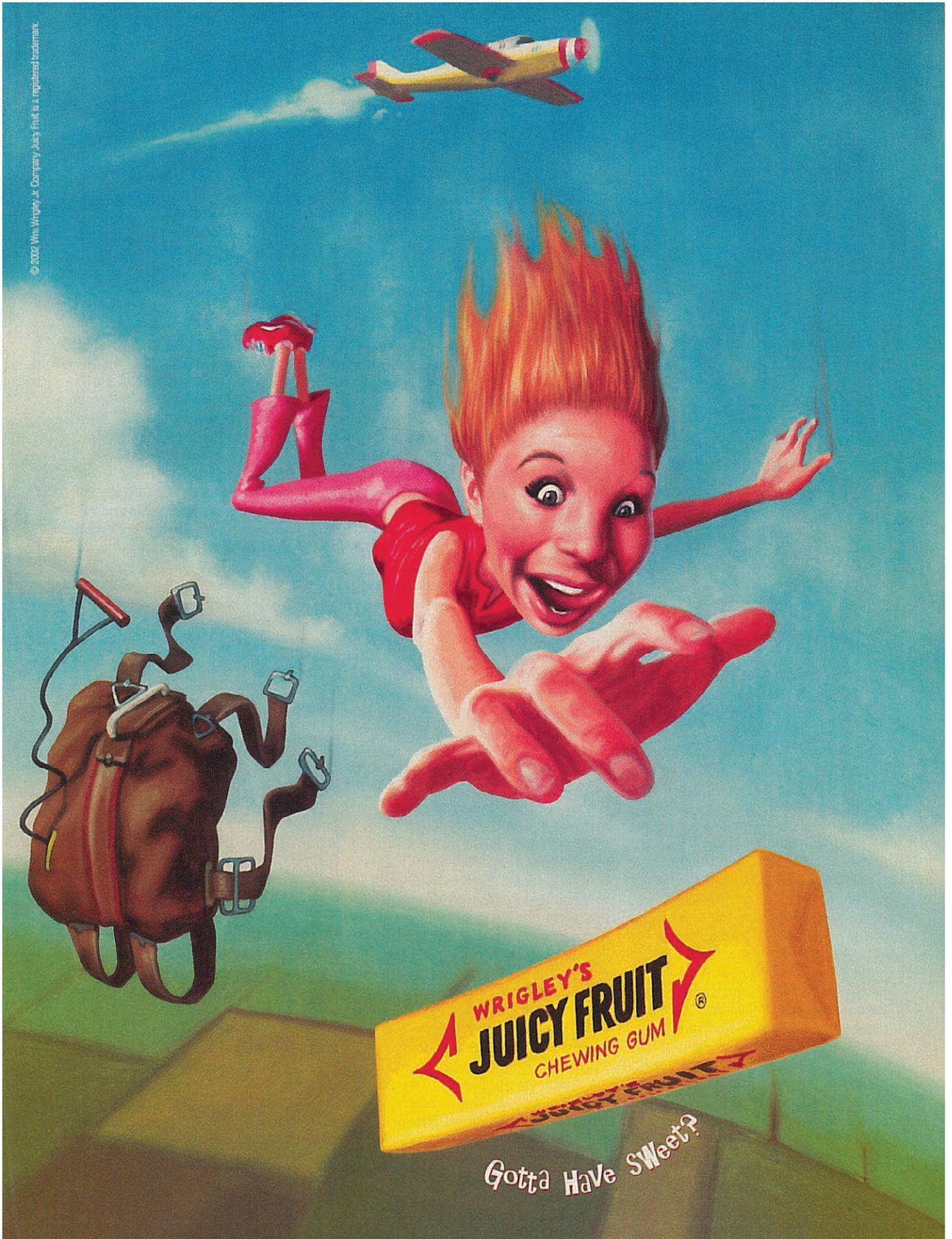
Leader note:

The ad on the following page can be displayed, copied and handed out, or projected on a screen.

Juicy Fruit® Parachute Ad

Sometimes there are multiple messages being communicated at the same time. Here’s an actual advertisement for Juicy Fruit® gum.

© 2002 Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company. Juicy Fruit is a registered trademark.



Q4: What messages is this ad suggesting to its audience?

Here are possible responses. Feel free to use them as examples or create your own.

- ❖ *Satisfying your need for something sweet is more important than anything else.*
- ❖ *It's okay to take serious risks to get what you want.*

Instant Gratification

Another message often communicated by culture pertains to the speed at which we expect our desires to be fulfilled. “We want it—and we want it now!”

Perhaps this “want it now” mentality is to be expected given the warp-speed pace at which most of society functions. We have easy and immediate access to almost anything we could want. If we are hungry we have prepared foods in the freezer and fast food down the street. Smart phones allow us to shop, find information, entertain ourselves, and communicate with almost anyone, anywhere, in a variety of ways.

Experts have defined this “want it now” mentality as “instant gratification.” Several studies have been done related to this cultural trend. The most famous one is called the Marshmallow Experiment.



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Sex and sexuality. Culture bombards us with messages like “anything goes” and “it’s not a big deal.” This constant barrage often shapes the attitudes and behaviors of teens for the worse.

God’s plan for sexuality stands in contrast to culture. He tells us it is a big deal—a gift to be valued, respected, and governed by choices that honor Him, others, and ourselves.

Sexuality by Design equips teens to steward their sexuality as they:

- **Assess** what current culture says about sex
- **Acknowledge** what God says in Scripture, reinforced by biological and behavioral science, and
- **Align** themselves with His design through activities, discussions, and realistic strategies.

Use this mixed-gender, highly-customizable curriculum to help young people esteem and make wise choices about their sexuality.

“*Sexuality by Design* is worth reading and teaching!”

“*Sexuality by Design* is a valuable tool to lead teens into understanding sex and sexuality in all of its God-designed wonder and joy. It offers hope and a path to sexual integrity, regardless of one’s sexual past or present. *Sexuality by Design* clearly and forthrightly offers correctives to culture’s errors by communicating God’s best way in a practical manner... which in turn, will lead teens to flourish. This curriculum is worth reading and teaching!”

Dr. Walt Mueller, Founder and President
Center for Parent/Youth Understanding

“This is an essential curriculum for any youth ministry.”

“Our students are in great need of guidance as they navigate the issues of their sexuality. But it’s hard to know how to structure lessons for them that feel well-researched, accessible, and rooted in the truth of God’s Word. That’s why *Sexuality by Design* is great. It’s solidly grounded in scientific studies and is very teacher-friendly. It’s fun and engaging for the students—and it’s beautifully linked to God’s heart for His kids as revealed in the Bible. This is an essential curriculum for any youth ministry.”

Josh Zimmerman, Junior High Youth Pastor
Lebanon Area Evangelical Free Church, PA

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Susquehanna Valley Pregnancy Services (SVPS) has served women, men and teens unprepared for pregnancy in South Central Pennsylvania since 1985. As one of its core services, SVPS has provided sexual integrity education for decades. Using that expertise SVPS developed *Sexuality by Design* to serve and equip church leaders as they engage teens about their sexuality.