



Fellowship In Senior High

January 8, 2019

Dear FISH Parents:

This letter is to inform you that our upcoming FISH Winter Retreat will focus on aspects of sexuality, primarily dealing with healthy boundaries, consent, emotions and values. Because of the nature of the program, I wanted to communicate with you, the parent or guardian, in advance of the event.

The topics of sexuality, sexual behavior, intimacy in relationships, dating, and the like, come up regularly at FISH, whether we've planned for it or not! Our Wednesday evening small group time gives a regular opportunity to address these issues in a safe and respectful environment. Yet, we sometimes could use a greater block of time to cover related issues in more depth. Our winter retreat will provide for this.

This will be the eighth time in the past 24 years that the FISH group has dedicated a winter retreat to the topic of sexuality. Still, we recognize that it is impossible for us to cover the topic completely and thoroughly in a one weekend session. We also recognize that you have the greatest and most important role in educating your children about sexuality relative to your own family's values, beliefs, and boundaries. We hope that our willingness to discuss the topic at FISH will favorably support the efforts you are already making.

The following basic principles underpin the course and will guide the FISH leaders as we seek to be faithful in our role as mentors, models, teachers and organizers:

1. Respect for young people is important. Leaders will respect the dignity of the FISH kids and acknowledge the value of the opinions and beliefs they express.
2. A good course on sexuality helps to reduce rather than increase adolescent sexual activity. When issues of sexuality are talked about, put into perspective, and demythologized, young people begin to see it as a part of life as God has given it, not as a god in life that must be experienced.
3. Sexuality is seen as a positive aspect of personality. Sex is seen as a gift of God over which we are to be good stewards.
4. Most values are formed at an early age and through observation rather than verbal instruction. The values of the youth in FISH are largely already in place. With this in mind, our discussions can help by encouraging young people to be aware of, articulate and make choices in line with the values they already possess. We trust that this will prove extremely helpful when they are in situations that challenge and call into question their values.

In addition, these fundamental principles for learning about sexuality will be respected:

1. Parents are the primary educators of their children about sexuality. Churches, schools, and other community agencies serve to supplement what families are already doing.
2. Young people need to have accurate information about the physical, emotional, and social aspects of their sexuality.
3. The worth and dignity of all people must be respected, regardless of a person's gender, race, religion, culture, or sexual orientation.
4. Each person is responsible for her or his own sexual behavior and the consequences.
5. Before making important decisions regarding sexual behavior, people need to weigh the current and future consequences for themselves, significant others, their families, and society.
6. Open communication is an important part of healthy relationships with others.

Our primary focus for the two days will be to help the FISH kids come to terms with what they value about themselves and in relationship with others, inform them of their God-given rights to consent and the creation of boundaries in all situations and try to better equip them for responsible decision making and caring for the gift of their sexuality.

The retreat is scheduled for the final weekend in January. Your child should bring home a retreat registration/information form soon with more details about the event. The forms are due back by the 13th.

I am hopeful that this weekend will be an informative and constructive time for the entire FISH group, as it has been in the past, as we consider and discuss God's gift of sexuality together.

If you have further questions please call me.

Faithfully,

Michael Ozaki
Associate Pastor