

POP

goestheculture



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 **ACCESS**
downloadable curriculum

Introduction

The world of popular culture seems to fly by us and change faster than we can comprehend. As soon as we seem to think we have a grasp on what's going on, new fads and trends explode on society, leaving us in the dust. In the realm of "pop culture," being six months behind in our understanding can leave us feeling lost and out of touch. Unfortunately, the evolution that pop culture has taken has been one of a downward spiral. Cultural tendencies show things are only going to get worse.

Take for example the 1950s sitcom *I Love Lucy*. Despite the main characters, Ricky and Lucy, being married, their bedroom was always shown with two separate beds. Television executives could not even fathom the idea of implying any type of sexual relations were occurring. We've come a long way from those days. Today, most primetime television carries overtly sexual themes, most of which occurs outside of marriage. In addition, homosexuality has crept its way onto the airwaves, depicting gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships as a normal part of life.

Unfortunately, this downward spiral is marketed at the most vulnerable of all groups: teenagers. In the early 1990s, teen programming took on an innocent role with shows like *Saved By the Bell*, which tried to address teen issues from an almost laughable standpoint. In today's society, teen programming has taken a more graphic look, as cheesy high school sitcoms no longer attract the interest of this generation. Instead, teens and young adults have been drawn to shows like *Gossip Girl*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Family Guy*, which brings in viewers because of their vulgarity, rebellion, and promiscuity.

The world of music has not fared any better. The days of Davy Jones are long behind us and a new era has burst through the door. The phenomenon of pop music hit its full stride in the late 1990s. For a time, it was classified as "bubblegum" pop because of its innocence and appeal to pre-teens. Top artists of this genre, such as Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, and Justin Timberlake of N'SYNC, became household names and the adoration of millions of fans. However, as time has gone by, these same artists have transformed from "innocent" to international sex symbols. Their pop music has been blurred with rap and R&B (Rhythm & Blues), and their lyrics have taken on a much more aggressive tone. Maybe even more popular than their music is their tabloid lifestyles outside of their professions.

As you can see, pop culture is rapidly changing, and it will not slow down anytime soon. The purpose of the following lessons is not to keep you informed of the latest trends, fashions, movies, and gossip. Even if that were attempted, by the time you downloaded this curriculum much of the information would be outdated and many of the people listed would no longer be relevant. Rather, the purpose is to help you and your students discern pop culture with a Christian worldview. Even if you are not able to stay informed about the hottest TV show or who's dating who, you can use the principles in the following lessons to help you approach culture.

The five lessons in this study will each touch on a specific element of pop culture that influences a teenager's life. You will discuss a Christian approach to movies, music, TV, materialism, and image. These lessons are designed to get your group members talking and thinking, and hopefully change the way they approach many elements of pop culture.



Outreach is very important as you begin a new Bible study. Below you will find the title and descriptions of each lesson so you can announce it in the church bulletin, emails, postcards, text messages, and social networking statuses.

Be Careful Little Eyes What You See

In our first session we will discuss how to approach movies from a Christian worldview.

Be Careful Little Ears What You Hear

In this session we will discuss how to approach music from a Christian worldview.

And Now A Word From Our Sponsors

When we meet this time we will discuss how culture's view of materialism is not God's view.

(Don't) Change That Channel

As we gather we will learn how to discern TV from a Christian worldview.

We'll Be Right Back

Our goal for the last session of this study is to learn that we don't have to match the image our culture portrays.

SAMPLE



Session 1

Be Careful Little Eyes What You See.

Materials Needed:

- 15-20 small items (toys, school supplies, household items, etc.)
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Handout

Lesson Objective

To help students approach movies from a Christian worldview

Connect

Before your students arrive, put 15-20 small random items on a table. Ideas for items include a baseball, pencil, bar of soap, CD, highlighter, book, wallet, candy bar etc. Once you have set out all of the items, cover them so your students are not able to see them when they arrive. After your students have arrived, have them form small groups of 2 to 4. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Uncover the items on the table and tell your students they have two minutes to study the items on the table. However, during the two minutes they are not allowed to write anything or communicate with their group in any way. After two minutes, cover the items again. Tell your students that in their groups, they have three minutes to write as many items as they can remember. After the time has elapsed, uncover the items and discuss the answers with your students. Ask your students why they were able to remember so many of the items. Did they try to use memorization techniques or were they able to remember simply by looking at the items? Say to students: One of the reasons why we are able to remember things like these items is because their images become engrained in our mind. Even if we are not trying to remember them, our minds still retain more than we even know.

Consider

As you begin this section of the lesson, ask your students if they can name the two highest grossing movies of all time. The answers are Titanic (1997) and The Dark Knight (2008). Ask your students why they think these two movies have made more money than any other movies in history (Each movie grossed over half a billion dollars!). Try to steer the conversation towards content rather than comments like, "It was awesome!"

The two movies are about as different as they can be, and yet millions of people went to the box office to see them. When we look at the synopsis behind each movie, it is rather intriguing. Titanic really does not have anything to do with the boat or the boat sinking. It's more about a sexual affair between two unmarried strangers. On the other hand, The Dark Knight is a movie that glorifies deception and murder. While many people have seen both movies, they were created to appeal to two different audiences. While Titanic is a "chick flick," The Dark Knight was created to be a guy's action movie. However, when these movies were created, the writers and directors were looking at more than just a target audience. Have your students discuss the following questions:

- Why are females driven by movies involving love and romance?
- Why are males driven by movies involving violence and action?

Movies have become so popular in our society because they exploit our inner desires. Fe-



Session 1:
Be Careful Little
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males are driven to “chick flicks” because of that inner need for intimacy and romance. Males are driven to action movies because they crave the adrenaline rush and sense of masculinity. The interesting thing is, God created those desires. He created men and women differently, giving us different passions and needs.

Unfortunately, Hollywood has figured out how to exploit that. Ask your students how movies might exploit (or take advantage of) our inner desires. One way they do this is by making sin look desirable. Ask your students if they can remember how you described Titanic and The Dark Knight earlier. While many people would describe Titanic as a beautiful love story and The Dark Knight as a superhero movie, you described them as a movie about a sexual affair between two unmarried strangers, and a movie about deception and murder. Ask your students why Hollywood would never market the movies with those phrases.

Hollywood would never use that terminology because it sounds unappealing. Instead, they seek to exploit our inner desires for intimacy and romance and action and masculinity and use it to portray as desirable. Think about this: God is the creator of sex. Sex is part of His plan. He has even given us sexual desires. However, movies have taken God's gift of sex and perverted to make money off of us. What happens when Hollywood takes one of our desires, changes it to a sinful form, and makes it look desirable? All we have to do is look at the numbers for the sex-crazed American Pie movie series. It has taken in over \$350,000,000 from people who understand they have sexual desires, but have no idea they are being exploited for it. Just like the unmarried sex affair in Titanic, the series has taken sin, repackaged it, and disguised it as desirable to bring us into the theater.

Ask the participants to discuss the following question: What effect do movies have on you? After your students have finished discussing the issue, have them get back into their original groups. Give them a clean sheet of paper. Without uncovering the items on the table from the Connect activity, tell your students they have two minutes to write as many items as they can remember that were located on the table earlier. After two minutes, see how many items your students recalled. It is likely they did not remember as many items as the first time, but they probably still remembered quite a few.

Say something like: Sometimes we like to argue that the things we see in movies don't affect us, but in reality, they do. Just like you still remembered many of the items that were on the table, what we see in movies can have a lasting effect on us too. Whether we realize it or not, things we see and hear become engrained in our mind, whether it's violence, nudity, bad language, sexual situations, etc.

Ask the participants to turn to 2 Samuel 11. Have one of your students read 2 Samuel 11:1-5 aloud to the class. This chapter details the sexual affair of David and Bathsheba. Have your students discuss the following questions:

- Was it wrong for David to simply see Bathsheba? (If David had no knowledge that Bathsheba might be there, then no.)
- If David knew ahead of time that Bathsheba would be bathing, would it have been wrong for him to look at her?
- The image David saw affected him in ways he would have never guessed. What did he do after he saw Bathsheba? What were the immediate consequences of his actions?

Have one of your students read 2 Samuel 11:14-21. David's “simple” glance continued to have consequences. Discuss the following questions with your students:

- How did David's glance affect more people than just himself?



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- Do you think David realized that by simply looking at something he shouldn't have been looking at, his life would change dramatically?
- If David could do it all over again, what do you think he would do differently?

Have one of your students read 2 Samuel 11:26-27. David's sin greatly displeased God. Even though he was considered a man after God's own heart, he still stumbled because of something he saw that became engrained in his mind.

Sometimes we think we're strong enough in our faith that what we see on the big screen won't affect us. We view David as a great man of God, and yet he still fell into sin because of what he saw. Many people we consider "Bible heroes" fell into the same trap. Samson gave in to Delilah's beauty, and Adam and Eve sinned because they could not look past the beauty of the tree in the Garden of Eden.

Ephesians 5:3-4 makes things very clear to us. In these verses, Paul says there must not even be the slightest amount of sexual immorality among us. Not only that, but we should not be greedy, and we should avoid obscenity and dirty jokes at all times.

Do we really think we're stronger than King David? Do we really think we know God on a more personal level than Adam and Eve? If we were honest with ourselves, then we would admit that just like these "heroes," we're affected by what we see and hear as well. Hollywood knows that, and they're looking to cash in on it.

Commit

Telling your students something is bad or wrong is easy; telling them how to discern that for themselves can be rather complex. To give your students guidance in learning how to decide with God's help what is acceptable for themselves, introduce the Philippians 4:8 model. Since this model will be used throughout this series of lessons, it will be referred to as the P48 model to help your students remember it. Distribute the P48 Model HANDOUT to your students. The handout breaks down Philippians 4:8 and explains each principle in the verse. Go through each part of the verse with your students. If there is a popular movie your students have all seen or are familiar with, break down the movie with the P48 model.

Tell your students to look at the P48 model during the following week. Encourage them to look at the model before they watch any movies during the week. Even if they are planning on watching a movie they have seen one hundred times or know is completely clean, using the model can still help them discover truths about movies they have never thought of before.

Remind your students of Ephesians 5:3-4. Even though a movie may seem appealing, it may not be profitable to watch. In fact, elements of the movie could lead to sin in our lives. Tell students it's important to put movies through the P48 test. If they do not pass the test, they may not need to be viewed.

For additional resources, check out www.pluggedinonline.com. This website is a publication of Focus on the Family and provides a lot of information regarding specific movies, television shows, video games, music stars, etc.



P48 Model

Philippians 4:8

We may think certain movies are enjoyable, but are they profitable to watch? Could they be sinful? Use the P48 Model (Philippians 4:8) to help you determine what you should and should not be watching.

Finally, brothers, . . .

Whatever is TRUE

- Does this movie support what the Bible says about life, sex, purity, love, purpose, etc?
- Does this movie contradict God's Word in any way?

Whatever is HONORABLE

- Does this movie present noble ideas?
- Are things in this movie profane?

Whatever is JUST

- Does this movie present a right and truthful way of thinking?
- What does this movie have to say about living a holy life?

Whatever is PURE

- Does this movie promote or destroy morality?
- Is this movie "clean" or are my Christian values being attacked?

Whatever is LOVELY

- Is this movie pleasing?
- Is the overall quality appealing and perfected?

Whatever is COMMENDABLE

- Would others who hold my Christian values find this movie in good taste?
- Would my parents, friends, youth pastor, pastor find the movie as appealing as I do?

. . . if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.