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LINC

: / YOUTH . CONNECTING _ FAITH / AND . LIFE

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. NUMBER 10

**:// In Christ
There Is Neither
Jew nor Greek,
Beauty nor Geek**

Take a young lady with remarkably good looks who may well be a swimsuit model and aspiring fashion designer, and match her up with a young man with unkempt hair and thick glasses who has a degree in philosophy and is pursuing a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering. In the real world, the two would mix like oil and water. But this isn't *The Real World*; it's *Beauty and the Geek*, Thursday nights on the WB.

The producers of the show select eight stereotypical glamour girls and eight stereotypical computer nerds and pair them up. The "beauties" and the "geeks" have almost nothing in common, but that's the point. The geeks are to help the beauties stretch their academic knowledge and teach the girls that they have more to offer

than sex appeal. Meanwhile, the beauties are to help the geeks refine their social skills and give them a boost in self-confidence. The couples compete against one another to see who will undergo the biggest transformation.

If nothing else, the show offers some real examples of how individuals are unfairly defined in our culture and how such stereotypes affect their sense of identity. When this season began, the contestants believed certain things about one another by considering little more than appearance. However, as the season progressed and they got to know their partners and competitors better, many of their assumptions were proven incorrect.

In reality (unlike reality television) we don't always have the opportunity to look beneath one's outward appearance to discover the true person within. Too often girls have an unrealistic notion of beauty, a notion exacerbated by portrayals of young women on television, the Internet, magazines, and the big screen. As a culture, we glorify a female body type that is rare and sometimes unhealthy. The eight women pictured on the cover of the recently published *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue have measurements that only a fraction of the population shares. Is it any wonder that of the millions of Americans suffering from eating disorders, about ninety percent are adolescent females?

Meanwhile, boys have difficult expectations to live up to as well. They are expected to be strong, athletic, attractive, cool, and, most of all, in control. Michael Thompson,

co-author of *Raising Cain*, says, "Boys measure everything they do or say by a single yardstick: Does this make me look weak? And if it does, he isn't going to do it." So, the average teenage boy is unlikely to ask for help with schoolwork or to admit that he's hurt emotionally.

Teens are driven by, perhaps more than anything else, a desire to fit in. Many hang out in small clusters of like-minded friends, and every cluster has its own identity. Youth ministry professor Chap Clark says of youth today, "The members of the cluster tend to subordinate their own personal convictions, loyalties, and norms to the will of the collective whole" (*Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*). Thus youth are often stereotyped according to whom they hang out with; and their true personalities are hidden from most peers, teachers, members of their church, and so on.

As Christians, we know that our value as individuals comes from God creating us as individuals, each with different talents and passions that we can contribute to the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:12-37**). Though our society may fail to recognize our unique gifts and try to force us into a mold, Christians can affirm that our dissimilarities are blessings from God to be embraced and celebrated.

In this issue of LINC, we look at how stereotypes keep us from being the people God calls us to be. In Program A, "Same Difference," we help youth celebrate how their differences complement one another. In Program B, "That's What You Think," we ask the question, What makes a person beautiful?



what's
inside?



:// BIBLE_TALK /

Genuine Copy of the Original,

Genesis 1:26-31

Well, I'll Show You 1 Samuel 17:17-47

All a Part of the Big Picture,

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

:// PROGRAMMING _

Program A_Juiced Up!: "Same Difference"

Purpose: to help youth celebrate how their differences complement one another

Program B_Coffee Talk: That's What You Think

Question of the Day: What makes a person beautiful?

Devotion: // What I Like About You

YOUTH_PAGES /

Somebody Who . . .

What Do We Know About These People?

Top Ten List

Next in LINC

Next Week's Question of the Day

What Do You Think?

What You Said

In the Bible

Furtree High

**A Copy of the Original
Genesis 1:26-31**

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

—Genesis 1:27b

Commentary: God created us in God’s image. Does this mean that you have God’s nose? God’s eyes? No, God’s image goes well beyond physical appearance. Everything we are comes from God. Emotion, passion, creativity, and a sense of humor are all traits that God possesses and passes along to us. We aren’t photocopies of God, but each of us reflect God in some way and is capable of doing the work God calls us to do.

Questions to talk about:

- ➡ In what ways do you reflect God? How might others see God by looking at you?
- ➡ How do you see God’s image reflected in others?

**I’m Not Good Enough
Exodus 4:1-17**

But he said, “O my Lord, please send someone else.”

—Exodus 4:13

Commentary: When God called Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian slavery, Moses essentially said to God: “You must have the wrong guy. Why would you choose me? I killed a man! And I’m a nobody—a lowly shepherd working for my father-in-law. I can’t even talk right. I have a speech impediment!”

God then essentially responded to Moses: “I don’t care. I created you and know what you are capable of. I have chosen you regardless of what you think of yourself.”

The same goes for any of us. We all have doubts about our abilities and self-worth, but these doubts do not lessen our value as children of God.

Questions to talk about:

- ➡ If God were to ask you to perform a seemingly impossible task, what excuses might you come up with to get out of it?
- ➡ How might God respond to your excuses?

**Well, I’ll Show You
1 Samuel 17:17-47**

David said, “The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.”

—1 Samuel 17:37a

Commentary: Throughout history, people have assumed that because of race, gender, size, income level, and so on, certain people would not be successful in school, sports, business, leadership, or life in general. Most of us have underestimated someone’s abilities; we may have even tried to boost our self-esteem by making someone feel inferior. Most of us also know the pain of being underestimated, rejected, or overlooked. Fortunately, no one’s value depends on anyone’s opinion but God’s.

In **1 Samuel 17:17-47**, David faces battle against Goliath. David is disrespected first by his brother, then by King Saul, and finally by Goliath. They assume that David’s size makes him unfit for battle and that the young boy doesn’t stand a chance against

the giant of Gath, Goliath. But David’s strength and confidence come from the Lord, not from the feelings and stereotypes of others; and the future king defeats the mighty giant.

Questions to talk about:

- ➡ In what ways do people disrespect, underestimate, or misunderstand one another?
- ➡ How does your relationship with God give you confidence and strength?

**All Part of the Big Picture
1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

—1 Corinthians 12:14

Commentary: In this letter to the church in Corinth, Paul uses one of the Bible’s most memorable and powerful metaphors: equating the church with Christ’s body. Each part of the human body is different and does a job for which it is uniquely suited. When one of these parts begins to function improperly, it affects the entire body.

Likewise, each Christian in the body of Christ is unique, with different talents, passions, and ideas. Too often we allow our differences to separate us instead of looking for ways that our individual gifts can complement one another. If we truly are to be Christ’s body, then we must respect and honor our fellow body parts and what they each have to offer.

Questions to talk about:

- ➡ Think about the other youth in your Sunday school class or youth group. What unique gifts do they bring?
- ➡ What unique gifts do you bring to the body of Christ?

**The purpose of
LINC is to help youth
develop Christian
identity and live the
Christian faith in their
contemporary culture.**

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:// PROGRAM
A: **JUICED UP!**
"SAME DIFFERENCE"

Purpose: to help youth celebrate how their differences complement one another

Getting Ready: You will need Bibles, copies of Youth Pages, pens and pencils, index cards, a markerboard or large sheet of paper, and markers.

I Didn't Know That
(10 minutes)

As the students arrive, hand out copies of Youth Page 5 and instruct the youth to work on the "Somebody Who ..." scavenger hunt.

Option 1: Have the participants sit in chairs in a circle, with one person standing in the middle.

Say: "We're going to play 'Never Have I Ever.' The person in the middle says, 'Never have I ever ...' and names something that he or she has never done but that someone else may have done (such as traveling out of the country or eating liver). Everybody who has done what the person in the middle has said gets up and runs to another chair while the person in the middle also tries to sit down in one of the empty chairs. Whoever is without a chair stands in the middle and starts the next round."

Answer any questions the youth have; then ask the person in the middle to start the game.

Option 2: If you have a small group, hand out index cards and have the youth list three things about themselves that the others might not know and one thing about themselves that is untrue. Have the youth take turns reading their cards and guessing which item on each card is untrue. Repeat as time permits.

Ask:

- ➔ What did you learn about your classmates that surprised you?
- ➔ How do we not know that many things about one another even though we go to the same church?

Seeing Shouldn't Always Be Believing
(10–15 minutes)

Point out the people pictured on Youth Page 5 ("What Do We Know About These People?"), and ask your students to describe each person in three different ways. Encourage the youth to go beyond physical characteristics.

Ask the youth to read aloud their answers as you record them on a markerboard or large sheet of paper.

Ask:

- ➔ How did you think of ways to describe these people when you had only pictures to go on?
- ➔ What, if anything, can we tell about these persons' personalities simply by looking at their pictures?
- ➔ What are the dangers of drawing conclusions about someone by only looking at the person's photograph or physical appearance?
- ➔ In your day-to-day life, how do you make assumptions about people by considering only how they look?

Never Expected That
(10–15 minutes)

Say, "When we use a stereotype to form an opinion about someone, we not only treat that person unfairly; we also shortchange ourselves by not considering what he or she has to offer."

Use the questions and commentary on Page 2 (Bible Talk) to lead a brief discussion on **Exodus 4:1-17**, **1 Samuel 17:17-47**, or both Scriptures.

Say: "On the surface [Moses or David] didn't seem like someone with much to offer. His appearance wasn't impressive, and he had done little to suggest that he would be a strong leader. But God looks deeper, knowing how we can use our gifts and abilities to their fullest potential. And God can see how people who underestimate us and put us down can end up working with us for the good of all God's people."



Our differences are a gift from God.

Then invite a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 13:54-58**. Say: "Even Jesus had to deal with stereotypes, in his hometown no less. People saw him as a commoner, a carpenter's son with little to offer. Their stereotypes kept them from seeing that this seemingly ordinary guy from Nazareth was the Messiah."

Ask:

- ➔ When has a person whom you expected little from surprised you?
- ➔ How has a stereotype kept you from seeing someone's potential?
- ➔ How can you look past stereotypes in the future and get to know people for who they truly are?

Designed to be Different
(15 minutes)

Ask volunteers to read aloud **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. As time permits, discuss this Scripture, using the questions and commentary on Page 2.

Then say: "Even though our differences often divide us, they are a gift from God. If everyone were a skilled musician, we wouldn't truly appreciate a good song; if everyone were gifted as a pastor and leader, the church would be a mess. If we all had the same sense of humor, knew the same things, and dressed the same way, spending time with one another would be boring."

"When we use our differences to separate ourselves from one another or to exclude others, we dishonor God's gift and the church as a whole fails to live up to its potential."

Name an important task your youth would be able to perform, such as doing a service project or preparing a worship service. Then have each student name one (and only one) way he or she could use his or her God-given abilities to contribute to this task. Help the youth find creative ways they can use their talents, and make sure that every youth answers.

What I Like About You
(5 minutes)

Close with the Devotion (page 4).

→ : // PROGRAM B :
COFFEE TALK! :
THAT'S WHAT
YOU THINK

Question of the Day: What makes a person beautiful?

Cultural Connection: The WB show *Beauty and the Geek*

Topic: Stereotypes

Use the information on Page 1 to relate the cultural connection to the topic of stereotypes and to introduce the individual talk topics you choose.

Questions to Get You Started

- ➔ Are you familiar with the show *Beauty and the Geek*? If so, what common stereotypes are at work on this show? What does the show tell us about making assumptions about other people?
- ➔ In what ways do you stereotype or unfairly judge your peers?
- ➔ In what ways, do you think, do other people unfairly judge or make assumptions about you?

Talk 1: Naturally Valuable

KEY POINT: A person's value comes from being a child of God, not from the perceptions of others.

Ask:

- ➔ What qualities and traits does our culture value the most in young people? Why, do you think, are these qualities so desirable?
- ➔ What abilities or attributes does our culture not value enough? Why, do you think, are these things valued less than those we decided were desirable?
- ➔ How is a person treated differently because of his or her talents, appearance, or family income level? How does being treated differently because of these traits make a person feel about him- or herself?
- ➔ Read **Genesis 1:26-31**. What do you think being created in God's image means? How does knowing this truth influence how you treat others?

Read More: Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 8, 139:13-16; Isaiah 43:1-7; Matthew 13:54-58; John 1:43-46; 1 Timothy 4:11-14

Ask:

- ➔ How do the Scriptures add to this discussion?

Talk 2: Stereotypical Christians

KEY POINT: Christians often are stereotyped unfairly, but we do have a real reputation to live up to.

Ask:

- ➔ What assumptions, good or bad, does our culture (or your peers) make about Christians? Which are inaccurate? Which are true? Which are negative? Which are positive?
- ➔ Where, do you think, do these stereotypes come from?
- ➔ How do stereotypes about Christians affect how you live out your faith?
- ➔ Read **Matthew 5:11-12**. How, do you think, would Jesus respond to negative or unfair stereotypes?
- ➔ Read **Romans 12:9-21**. As a Christian, how would you like to be stereotyped?

Read More: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Matthew 5:11-12; John 15:18-25; Romans 12:9-21; Ephesians 4:17-5:2; 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Ask:

- ➔ How do the Scriptures add to this discussion?

Talk 3: The Difference That Difference Makes

KEY POINT: Our differences are gifts from God that should be celebrated.

://Devotion: What I Like About You (10 minutes)

Getting Ready: You will need a Bible, pens or pencils, and index cards.

Hand out index cards and pens or pencils. Instruct each person to write his or her name at the top of the card and pass the card to the person on his or her left.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 Samuel 16:7**: "But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature . . . for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.'" Then ask another volunteer to read aloud **1 Thessalonians 5:11a**: "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other."

Ask each person to write on the cards they now have a short sentence of praise or affirmation—something other than a physical attribute—about the person whose name is written on the card. Then have everyone pass their cards to their left and repeat the process. Continue until the cards return to their owners.

Invite one of the youth to read aloud **Psalm 8:3-9** as a closing prayer.

Using This Program

- Use Coffee Talk as a discussion starter. Focus the lesson on one section, or hit several issues, considering the interests of your group.
- Challenge the students to a Bible study on one section, using the Scripture verses listed under "Read More."
- Make photocopies of Bible Talk on page 2, and use the commentary and discussion questions for a theological complement to your Coffee Talk discussion.
- Begin or end the session with the devotion.
- Ask the youth to think about the Question of the Day and cut out In the Bible (page 6) for reflection and Bible study during the week.
- These topics and questions may be controversial. Challenge the youth to engage in meaningful discussion, realizing that your talk may address sensitive issues. Prayerfully explore these points, asking for pastoral or professional assistance when necessary.

Ask:

- ➔ In what ways do differences divide people? Why?
- ➔ Why, do you think, did God create us with so many diverse abilities, personality traits, and interests?
- ➔ Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. How have you seen people use their various gifts and experiences to work together and do great things?
- ➔ What do Paul's words about the body of Christ say about our relationships with people who are much different from ourselves?

Read More: Exodus 4:10-17; 18:13-26; Proverbs 22:2; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; James 3:7-12

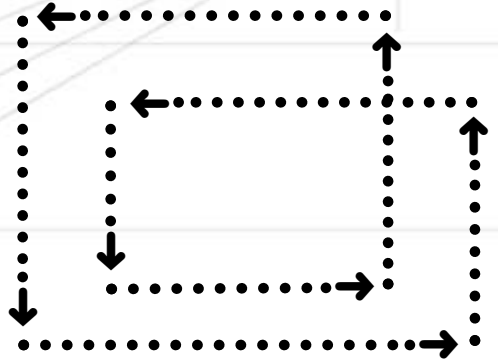
Ask:

- ➔ How do the Scriptures add to this discussion?



U L I N C

: // YOUTH . CONNECTING _ FAITH / AND . LIFE



keeps a blog:

has more than one middle name:

didn't watch the Super Bowl:

can stand on his or her head:

**Somebody
Who ...**

Instructions: Mingle with your group members, and try to collect a signature from a person who fits each of the descriptions on this page. You may not sign your own sheet, and any one person can sign only two boxes.

has a pet reptile or amphibian:

has been to another continent:

plays on a baseball or softball team:

has sung solo at church or school:

is allergic to chocolate:

plays a musical instrument:

has had surgery:

wears contact lenses:

can ski without falling down repeatedly:

has eaten caviar:

What Do We Know About These People?



1. _____

1. _____

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

3. _____

3. _____

:: // TOP TEN LIST

Top Ten Lines That Geeks Use to Pick Up Beauties

10. Ditch that guy! Don't you know what kind of operating system he uses?
9. Guess what? I beta-tested the Xbox 360™.
8. You're easily in the eightieth percentile of pretty girls.
7. You remind me of my third grade teacher.
6. I love you even though your perfume aggravates my allergies.
5. Let's go down to the lab and check out our chemistry.
4. My feelings for you are more powerful than a dual-cone, 2.8 gigahertz processor.
3. The effervescent nature of your shampoo is reminiscent of the hand cream my grandmother used to wear.
2. You look great in those genes.
1. *Legh Daq wlj puv cher?* (Klingon for "Want to see my bug collection?")

:: // NEXT . IN / LINC

:: // : GET YOUR BRACKETS READY! NEXT SUNDAY THE TEAMS ARE SELECTED AND THE PAIRINGS ARE SET FOR THE NCAA® MEN AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS, BETTER KNOWN AS MARCH MADNESS™. WITH ITS RITUALS, THIS SEASON GENERATES ENTHUSIASM IN SCHOOLS, OFFICES, AND HOMES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. HOW CAN WE GENERATE MORE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE RITUALS OF OUR FAITH?

What Do You Think?

What are the top ten lines that geeks use to pick up beauties?

Please fax your group's response to Pam at 615-749-6239, e-mail us at pshepherd@umpublishing.org, or snail mail us at

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Nashville, TN
37202-0801

:: // IN THE BIBLE

MONDAY: Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

How can you, as a young person, set an example for your fellow Christians?

TUESDAY: Read Jeremiah 1:4-8.

No one but God knows your real potential and your true worth.

WEDNESDAY: Read Psalm

139:13-16. All of God's creations are wonderful. What does God think is wonderful about you?

THURSDAY: Read John 1:45-46.

Even Jesus was stereotyped and rejected. We can't know who someone truly is unless we "come and see."

FRIDAY: Read Isaiah 54:10.

Memorize this verse for the times when the whole world seems to turn on you.

SATURDAY: Read 1 Corinthians

12:12-27. Which of your God-given talents or abilities can benefit the entire body of Christ?

Cut out and tuck in your Bible for your personal reflection and study this week.

WHAT YOU SAID

Worst Places to Advertise

Submitted by the high school Sunday school class at Prospect United Methodist Church, Dunlap, Illinois

- Funeral homes
- Nursing homes
- Garbage trucks
- Bottle caps
- Foreheads
- Portable toilets
- Airplane banners
- Tattoos
- Toilet paper

:: // FURTREE HIGH

