



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Let's Talk About . . . Consent

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

SERIES SUMMARY

A conversation about consent and mutual respect.

CONVERSATION BOTTOM LINE: Choose to honor yourself and others.

SCRIPTURE

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13 NIV).

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10 NIV).

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and prompts that are bolded in this script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier Subscribers.

OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA available in the Annual Subscription to the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Let's Talk About . . . Consent Teaching Video
 - Let's Talk About . . . Consent Integrated Teaching Video
 - Let's Talk About . . . Consent Countdown Video (10 Minutes)
 - Let's Talk About . . . Consent Week 1 Day 7 Video Devotional
-

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *[Ask students to tell the person next to them something people their age can't stop talking about.]*
- Our ministry is a safe space to talk about anything, ask questions, and have conversations about difficult or confusing things.
- Today we're talking about consent.
- Consent is to give permission for something to happen or to agree to do something or allow something to take place. *[Give relevant examples.]*
Consent is often related to what someone does or doesn't want in relationships, dating, and physical touch.

TENSION

- It may feel like consent isn't relevant to you because the adults in your life have a lot of control over what you can and can't do. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- You have more options to say "yes" or "no" to someone or something than you think.
- You have a chance to give your consent every day, especially when it comes to relationships, dating, and physical touch.
- **Small Group Questions:**
 1. **What's one example of something you have to ask permission for?**
 2. **What's one example of something a middle schooler might be allowed to give permission for on their own?**
 3. **On a scale of very comfortable to not comfortable at all, how do you feel about saying "no"?**
 4. **What's one situation where it's difficult for you to say "no"?**
- You have the power to choose to say "yes" or "no" to things, and you should expect others to listen to and respect your answer.
- Talking about consent might be difficult because you may have been in situations where you didn't know what to do or someone hasn't respected your consent. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- It's wrong for someone to disrespect your answer when it comes to consent. Talk to a trusted adult to help you navigate your situation if this has happened to you.
- Consent is about the way we treat each other.
- You have a responsibility to give your consent and to respect the consent of others.
- Sometimes it's hard to navigate friendships and relationships because we think more about what we want or what's best for us instead of what the other person wants or is best for them.
- When it comes to consent, how do we choose to respect ourselves and others?

TRUTH

- When we read about the events in Jesus' life recorded in the Bible, He never disrespects, dishonors, or disregards others. He doesn't choose Himself over what's best for others.
- Jesus is the ultimate example of what it looks like to love and respect others.
- He said: *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends"* (John 15:12-13 NIV).
- Jesus explained that we should love, care about, respect, and honor people the way He does. He asks us to listen to and respect the words, needs, and consent of others.
- Paul wrote to the church in Rome a way we can show others that we care about them: *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves* (Romans 12:10 NIV).
- When we honor someone, we show them respect with words, actions, thoughts, and behaviors. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Honoring someone means not only respecting their consent, but not putting them in a situation that makes them uncomfortable or disrespected.
- Paul said to be devoted to one another, which means to treat others with honor and respect every day.
- You can choose to honor yourself and others.

- When someone doesn't honor your consent, it's a signal to step back from a relationship or person who doesn't want what's best for you.
- Maybe you've had your consent ignored or disrespected or have recognized that you haven't honored someone else's consent.
- It's never too late to start over, speak up, and love yourself and others the way Jesus calls us to: with honor.
- Choose to honor yourself and others.
- **Small Group Questions:**
 5. How does it make you feel when someone doesn't respect your "no"?
 6. How does it make you feel when someone respects your "no"?
 7. How does it make you feel when you see someone else not respecting someone's "no"?
 8. How do you think it makes others feel when you don't respect their "no"?
 9. How do you think it makes others feel when you respect their "no"?
 10. Why do you think talking about consent matters?
 11. What do consent and faith have to do with each other?

APPLICATION

- Choose to honor others. Pay attention to their words, actions, and body language. Respect their consent.
- Expect to be honored by others. Decide how you want to be treated and set that as a standard for yourself.
- Speak up with confidence. Use your voice to express what's okay and not okay with you.
- If someone doesn't respect your "no," don't be ashamed to talk to a trusted adult. What happened to you is not your fault, and you shouldn't have had to go through it.

LANDING

- Choose to honor yourself and others.
- Respect has the potential to make big changes in our lives and relationships, including how we treat others and expect others to treat us.
- **XP [Experience]: Consent Journal Page**
 - **Small groups will complete a journal page together to help them navigate how to say "no" in situations that make them uncomfortable, brainstorm how they can honor themselves and others, and identify a trusted adult they can talk to about consent.**
 - **Groups will close in prayer.**

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

This week's talk combines small group and large group into one experience! If your students don't already sit with their small group during the large group talk, have them do so this week. As you go through the message, you'll prompt groups to have a variety of discussions. Feel free to adjust how much discussion time you give small groups based on how long you have for programming.

THINK ABOUT THIS

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There's a tricky tension to navigate when talking to middle schoolers about consent. For starters, they're still at an age where they have to follow the instructions of most adults or authority figures in their lives. Keep in mind that they're struggling to balance having to do what they're told in some areas and finding the freedom to say "no" in others. With that, keep the focus on more than just sex, dating, and relationships. While consent plays a major role in those areas, it can also apply in other parts of their lives, like social media, friendships, what they watch on TV, who can send them a picture, etc. In big and small ways, they're giving or honoring consent on a regular basis as middle schoolers. You may have some students who haven't had their consent respected. They may open up to you about what happened to them, perhaps without even realizing how big of a deal it really is. Individual follow up is going to be key here so that students who need help can take some steps to get it. And finally, remember to talk about what it means to honor other people's "no." We don't want to dismiss the fact that there may be some students in your group who are pushing against the consent of others, and this could be the message and conversation that helps them see that.

INTERACTIVE

OVERVIEW

There is no Interactive for this week's standalone message.

This week's talk combines small group and large group into one experience! If your students don't already sit with their small group during the large group talk, have them do so this week. As you go through the message, you'll prompt groups to have a variety of discussions. Feel free to adjust how much discussion time you give small groups based on how long you have for programming.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Let's Talk About . . . Consent

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

BOTTOM LINE

CHOOSE TO HONOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Hi everybody! I'm _____, and I'm so glad you're here today for another message in our *Let's Talk About* collection. My hope is that conversations like this one will give you the opportunity to talk about things that are important in your life right now! Today, we're going to talk about a more serious topic that's a really important conversation to have. As we get started, I want you to know that here at *[insert name of your ministry]*, you can talk about anything. This is a safe place to ask questions and have conversations about difficult or confusing things. Even if it's awkward, uncomfortable, or hard to understand, we're going for it because we really believe that you're mature enough to have these kinds of conversations with us.

So today, we're going to talk about **consent**.

To get us on the same page, we're defining consent this way: **to give permission for something to happen or to agree to do something or allow something to take place.**

- When you let your little sister borrow your sweater, you're giving your consent for her to wear it.
- When you let someone play on your brand-new gaming system, you're giving them your consent to use it.
- When someone asks to take your picture and you agree, you're giving them your consent to snap the shot.

Usually when we use that word "consent," it's in a conversation that's more serious. It's usually about what someone does or doesn't want when it comes to things like relationships, dating, and physical touch. That makes it a really big deal! It has the potential to change both the way we treat others *and* the way we let others treat us.

TENSION

8 MINUTES

Maybe you're thinking this doesn't matter to you yet. Why? Because the adults in your life typically have most of the control over what you can and can't do.

Sometimes it feels like there's not that much you get to choose for yourself!

When you look at it that way, it's easy to see why you might think consent isn't something that matters to you right now. That may be true in the big, obvious parts of your life, but trust me, you have more options to say "yes" or "no" to someone or something than you might think.

You actually have opportunities to give your consent every day, especially when it comes to something like relationships, dating, and physical touch. You have the power to say "yes" or "no." Believe me, I know that's easier for some of us than it is for others! Take a few minutes and talk about this more with your group:

1. **What's one example of something you have to ask permission for?**
2. **What's one example of something a middle schooler might be allowed to give permission for on their own?**
3. **On a scale of very comfortable to not comfortable at all, how do you feel about saying "no"?**
4. **What's one situation where it's difficult for you to say "no"?**

No matter how challenging it may be for you to say no to something you don't want, it's important for you to know that you have the power to choose for yourself. That you can speak for yourself. That it's okay to expect others to listen to and respect your answer.

Now, maybe talking about consent feels difficult for you. Maybe you've been in situations where you didn't know what to do or someone hasn't respected your answer when you said "no" to something.

- You've been asked to do things you didn't like or feel comfortable doing.
- You didn't want to do it, and you weren't comfortable with it, but you felt pressured by the other person to give in.
- Maybe, in that moment, you didn't know what to do. You didn't know how to express how it made you feel or that you didn't want to do it.
- Or maybe you did speak up, but the other person didn't listen.
- You didn't give your consent for them to talk to you, touch you, text you, or treat you a certain way, but they did it anyway.

In case nobody has told you this before, that's not okay. I'm so sorry that happened to you. I hope you'll find time today to talk to somebody like a parent or your small group leader to help you navigate what it feels like to have your consent ignored.

Consent is really about the way we treat each other. That means, in the same way you have a responsibility to give your consent, you also have a responsibility to respect the consent of others.

Sometimes, this is a difficult thing to navigate in friendships or kind-of-more-than-friendships. Maybe that's because, when it comes to friendships, or dating relationships, you're thinking more about what you want than what's best for the other person. Or maybe, instead of thinking about what's right or best for the other person, you're just thinking about what you can get away with. Maybe they even said "yes" at first, but then they changed their mind and told you "no." That's confusing, right?

So, what do we do with all of this? When it comes to consent, how do we choose to respect ourselves and others?

TRUTH

15 MINUTES

When I'm not sure what to do or how to navigate a difficult or confusing conversation, I like to look to the one person I know I can trust to guide me toward what's best: **Jesus!**

When we look back at the events of Jesus' life recorded in the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament in the Bible, we never see Him disrespecting, dishonoring, or disregarding other people. We don't see Him choosing what's best for Him over what's best for others. We don't see Him doing anything other than leading with love and respect. His example is the ultimate example of what it looks like to love and respect others. So, I think we can trust His words on it, right? In fact, let's take a look at something Jesus said that can help us start this conversation in the right place:

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:12-13 NIV).

Basically, Jesus was saying, “You see the way I treat you? The way I care about, respect, and honor you? The way I put what's best for you over what's best for Me? That's love! And that's what I want you to do for the people around you, too!” No, Jesus isn't asking us to literally “lay down our lives” like He did for us. But He is asking us to pay attention to what's best for someone else. He's asking us to listen to and respect the words, needs, and consent of others first.

The conversation on consent doesn't stop there! Later, in the New Testament, we read a letter a man named **Paul** wrote to the followers of Jesus in Rome. Now, Paul was a leader in the early Christian church. Because of that, he had a ton of influence in the lives of people who believed in Jesus back then. He wanted to use his influence to encourage and support them. He wanted to share wisdom on how they could live out the message of Jesus, like in the words we just read!

Let's look at something Paul said in his letter to the church in Rome that can help us understand what this looks like for us today:

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10 NIV).

Paul said that one way we can show others that we care about them is by **honoring** them. **Honor** is another way to say **we treat each other and ourselves with respect**. When we honor someone else, we show them respect with words, actions, thoughts, and behaviors. We listen and respect their consent.

When someone doesn't want to go out with you, you respect that and stop asking.
When someone doesn't want to see those pictures, you don't send them.
When someone doesn't want you to talk to them that way, you don't keep talking.

Honoring someone else means not only respecting their consent; it also means not putting them in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable or disrespected. It means choosing what's best for them, even if it's the opposite of what you want to do in the moment.

That's what honor looks like when we actually do it. And we all deserve to be honored!

Let's take a look back at the very first part of this verse. Paul said to **be devoted to each other**, which means be committed to treating each other this way. When you're devoted, you're loyal to it every day. It becomes not just something we do, but a way that we live. When it comes to consent, it means being committed to treating someone else with love, respect, and honor *all the time*. Talking about consent and asking for permission is a lifestyle.

And just as much as we should honor others, we should expect to be treated with that same honor. It's the standard you can ask for. You can **choose to honor yourself and others**.

When someone doesn't honor you or gets angry that you asked to be honored, that's a sign. It signals that you need to take a step back from a relationship or person who doesn't want what's best for you.

Now again, I know this conversation may be complicated for some of you. Because you may have already had your consent ignored or disrespected. Or maybe, you're recognizing for the first time the ways you haven't honored someone else's consent. Either way, you can honor yourself by talking about it today with someone you trust. Let a trusted adult in your life, like a parent, aunt or uncle, grandparent, or small group leader, honor you by helping you through it.

It's never too late to start over.

It's never too late to speak up.

It's never too late to love yourself and others the way Jesus calls us to: with honor.

Choose to honor yourself and others.

Go ahead and talk about these questions with your group:

1. How does it make you feel when someone doesn't respect your "no"?
2. How does it make you feel when someone respects your "no"?
3. How does it make you feel when you see someone else not respecting someone's "no"?
4. How do you think it makes others feel when you don't respect their "no"?
5. How do you think it makes others feel when you respect their "no"?
6. Why do you think talking about consent matters?
7. What do consent and faith have to do with each other?

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Okay, how do we do this? How do we actually show each other the honor we deserve?

First, choose to honor others. Remember that choosing to honor someone is a decision we have to make. Choose to treat people with respect. So much of consent is about listening to the other person. Pay attention to their words, their actions, and even their body language. Decide that you're going to listen to and respect what they're saying or doing when it comes to consent.

Then, expect to be honored by others. Decide how you want to be treated and honored now. Then, you'll know how you want to be honored by others, and you'll know when that is not being honored or respected.

Finally, speak up with confidence. You're allowed to use your voice to express what's okay and not okay with you. So, if you want someone to stop, you can say that. If you want to say "no" to something, you can say that. Even if you've said "yes" in the past. Even if you're not sure how the other person will feel. Even if you're scared. You can speak up about what you want and what you know is best for you.

I get that this is easy to talk about, but in real life, speaking up for yourself can be really hard. That's why, in a few minutes, we're going to talk through ways we can do this confidently.

And finally, if someone doesn't respect your "no," don't be ashamed to share that with a trusted adult. What happened to you is not your fault and you shouldn't have had to go through it. You can honor yourself by telling someone who can help you. And if you've already told an adult and they didn't get you the help that you needed or wanted, tell another adult you trust. Take a minute and think about an adult in your life who may be that person for you!

LANDING

15 MINUTES

So, as we go out today, remember to **choose to honor yourself and others**. Doing this has the potential to make big changes for our lives and relationships. It has the potential to change the way we treat others and the way we expect others to treat us.

Thank you for diving into this conversation with me and with your group today!

As we end today, let's take some time to complete one final activity with your group.

XP [Experience]: Consent Journal Page

This is where small groups will complete a journal page together to help them navigate how to say "no" in situations that make them uncomfortable, brainstorm how they can honor themselves and others, and identify a trusted adult they can talk to about consent.

After completing the journal page, close in prayer together in groups.
