

Choices to make

Solvents

Don't sniff your life away

Matthew 10:29-31

Setting the scene

Our noses are very sensitive; we rely on them more than we realise. They can detect thousands of different smells. What are your favourite smells? Your ability to smell is one of God's wonderful gifts. He wants you to use it for enjoyment and to keep you safe; people often smell fires before they can see them. Unfortunately, some young people use their God-given sense of smell in wrong ways as we shall learn in this lesson.

Smells

There are some items which are harmless and some which are dangerous to smell. Sniffing makes things easier to smell. When you breathe normally, the air passes straight back to your throat but, by sniffing hard and long, you can make the air go to the part of the nose that does the smelling. This sends a message to your brain which decides what the smell is.

Test out your sense of smell in the following way. Cut up an apple and a carrot. Get someone to blindfold you and put one of the pieces in your mouth while you are holding your nose. It will be difficult to tell whether it is the apple or the carrot. This is because your sense of taste is linked to your sense of smell. This explains why you cannot taste properly when you have a cold.

Sniffing solvents

Some substances have chemicals called "solvents" in them.

Can you name some of these harmful items? - Glue, petrol, aerosols, cleaning solvents, correction fluid, cigarette smoke etc. These give off very powerful fumes. If they are sniffed, they can make a person light headed, dizzy or sick. They can also give them sore spots on their face and make them tired. Some of these symptoms are similar to being drunk but the effects of solvents do not last as long as alcohol. The number of teenage glue sniffers rose from 28,000 in 1995 to 168,000 in 2005 (Institute for Public Research, Nov 2006). Although sniffing might make people feel good for a while, this soon wears off. If they

are sniffing because they are unhappy, when the effect wears off, they will still be unhappy. People may be affected in different ways by sniffing. Some get scared while sniffing because the happy thoughts they were expecting turn out to be terrifying nightmares. Long term solvent abuse can damage the brain, the liver and kidneys. If the body is damaged too much, it will not work properly.

Choose to be solvent-free

It is estimated that first time users of solvents account for one in three of the deaths caused by sniffing. (TheSite.org)

Why do people sniff? These are some of the reasons given:

- I'm sad.
- My friends do it.
- It makes me feel good.
- I've nothing else to do.

Sniffing can become a habit which is very hard to stop. It is, therefore, very important for young people to understand the dangers. It is illegal to sell solvent based products to anyone under eighteen who may use them for sniffing.

We all have ups and downs in life and may feel unhappy at times. This is when the devil may tempt us to do wrong things like sniffing solvents. God knows all about us and cares for us so we can turn to Him for help to make the right choice - read Matthew 10:29-31. Some young Christians wear a bracelet with the letters WWJD (What would Jesus do?) to help them when they have choices to make.

Summing up

Solvent abuse is a problem especially among young people. There are a number of products which contain solvents. Sniffing these can result in a person being tired, sick, light headed, dizzy and with sore spots on the face. Young people die from sniffing every week; sometimes they die the first time they sniff solvents. God wants us to follow a Christian lifestyle. You should always ask yourself, "What would Jesus do in this situation?", "What would He want me to do?"

Standard

Teaching aim

To educate young people about the dangers of solvent abuse.

Activities

- Activity Sheet "Choices to make - 1".

Resources

Music

- MP 256 I am not mine own
- MP 298 I want to learn to appreciate You
- MP 339 In the name of Jesus

Discussion Points

- If you put things into your body that stop it working properly, can you still do God's work?
- Would sniffing encourage a lifestyle that Jesus wants us to have?
- According to the law it is illegal to sell solvent-based products to anyone under 18 who may use it for sniffing. What problems could this cause?

Prayer points

Thank God that:

- If we give our lives to Him and allow Him to direct our lives, we can be happy without things like solvents.

Pray for:

- Young people caught up in solvent abuse.
- Families who are hurting because they have lost a son/daughter through sniffing.

