



Choices to make

Tobacco

Breathe Life

1 Corinthians 3:16

Teaching aim

To enable young people to gain more knowledge about the effects of smoking.

Setting the scene

What do you think of smoking? How might you recognise someone who smokes? - stained fingers and teeth and clothes smelling of tobacco etc. Smoking can cause other more serious problems which we are going to consider. It kills more people than murder, suicide, drowning, alcohol, AIDs, car accidents and all other drugs (legal and illegal) combined.

Why smoking is harmful

When a cigarette is inhaled, the smoke deliberately goes straight into the lungs. Cigarettes contain many harmful substances. Let's consider three of them:

- Nicotine is the drug in tobacco which is addictive, that is why, once you start smoking, it is very difficult to give it up.
- Tobacco smoke contains carbon monoxide gas which, if breathed in, can be very dangerous. The gas mixes with the blood and stops it carrying enough oxygen to the rest of the body. This is why smokers may get out of breath easily.
- Tar collects in the lungs and this can cause lung cancer. Around 114,000 people die every year in the UK from smoking-related diseases (ASH).

Smokers may say "It's my life and I can smoke if I want to". This is wrong. Those who do not smoke may have to breathe in smoke from other people - passive smoking - which can result in throat and chest infections, coughing and long term problems such as asthma.

Why people smoke

Young people may want to look grown up. Some adults do things that are bad for them so they are not good role models.

Some say they smoke to help them relax. The drug nicotine makes people feel relaxed but this is only because the body gets used to it and, therefore, gets tense when nicotine levels are low. When more nicotine is absorbed, a feeling of relaxation comes back.

Some smoke because their friends are doing it so they follow the crowd thinking it will make them look "cool". Smoke makes your clothes, hair and breath smell and your teeth and fingers are discoloured. How cool will you really appear?

Someone who smokes is not likely to be as energetic and active as their nonsmoking friends. Many people die from diseases that could have been prevented had they not started to smoke. It is very important to make the right choice about smoking and not to be influenced by others. You don't have to smoke to be happy. Remember our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we should look after them. - *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own 1 Cor. 6:19.*

Smoking and the environment

Smokers may not realise the effects of smoking on the rest of the world. Millions of hectares of farmland grow tobacco instead of food. Forests are cut down to make more fields for tobacco. The tobacco leaf has to be dried and about one tree in every twenty-five in the world is burned to cure tobacco.

Each crop of tobacco is sprayed with sixteen doses of pesticide. These can pollute drinking water and kill animals apart from the insects they are designed to kill.

Smoking causes litter by cigarette packets and butts being thrown down in the street. What has Psalm 24:1 to say to us about smoking and the environment? As far as Christians are concerned they are put on the earth as caretakers. Read Genesis chapter 1. Discuss whether Christians should be doing more to save the environment.

Summing up

There is evidence that smoking is bad for your health. Many people die from diseases that could have been avoided if they had never smoked. Smoking is not a "cool" thing to do. Nicotine is a very addictive substance and it can be hard to stop once you have started. Considering the facts may help you to choose whether to smoke or not. If you choose a tobacco-free lifestyle, you will be caring for your own body and setting a positive example to others.

Resources

Activities

- Activity Sheet "Tobacco- 1".

Discussion points

- Is it wrong for Christians to smoke?
- How can you relax without smoking?
- Is it right to ban smoking in all public places?
- Do young people have a responsibility to protect the environment?

Prayer points

Thank God for:

- Good health
- A lovely world

Pray for:

- Young people who have become addicted to smoking.
- Those who are destroying the environment that they would stop.

