

YOUTH
11-14s

GROWING UP

God's
Good
Story



SESSION 3

I have a valuable body

Psalm 139:14 • 1 Cor 6:19-20

faith **in** kids

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Growing Up - God's Good Story 11-14s

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Cover design, cover illustrations and worksheet illustrations by Alex Webb-Peploe | Lesson illustrations by Magriet Brink | Writing team: Amy Smith, Ed Drew, Cathy Dalton, Jo Chamberlin, Lizzie Clarke.

"All for the glory of God alone" (1 Corinthians 10:31)



SESSION 3

I have a valuable body

Psalm 139:14
1 Cor 6:19-20



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Truth that changes me:

Our bodies are a gift from God that we treat with care.

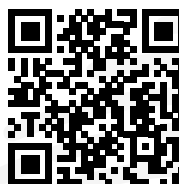


Faith in Youth looks like:

Young people who value and protect their God-given bodies.

Preparation

As you prepare this session, we recommend watching the series introductory video if you haven't seen it.



Notes



Where are we going?

We want our young people to understand how valuable and precious our bodies are because they are God's wonderful gift to us and the place where he chooses to live by his Spirit. Because we belong to God it matters what we do with our bodies, how we care for them and how we respect other people's bodies.

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going, The world our young people live in** and **Look at the passage** to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.



The world our young people live in

Our young people hear confusing messages about their bodies; they are wonderful "just the way they are", but looking a certain way seems to add value. Young people have always been curious about their own bodies and other people's but the current generation live in a highly visual culture, where inappropriate images are frequently shared and seen. Despite the protection parents put in place, research shows one third of twelve year olds and half of fourteen year olds have seen pornography. Most see it for the first time in their own homes.

All this is happening at a time when their own bodies are changing and attraction is developing. In the noise around them, we have a calm and beautiful truth to share - our bodies are a wonderful part of who we are and we should be in awe of the God who made them. Because God values our bodies, we guard them wisely and are deeply respectful of the bodies of others.



Look at the passage



Your Body – God’s Wonderful Gift

I *“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made”* **PSALM 139:14**

Our good and awesome creator designed us to have a physical body - it is an intrinsic part of us, not something separate from the real us. Your male body was designed just for you and God thinks it’s amazing. Your female body was designed just for you and God thinks it’s amazing. The wonder of our bodies is rooted in our creator, we are valuable because he says we are. Such an awesome gift deserves to be treasured and respected.

Your Body – God’s Priceless Purchase

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a great price.” **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20**

Our bodies matter to God, they are significant to who we are. They are not merely an outer case that we can swap or change, they are part of who we are. Our bodies are precious to God twice over. Firstly, they were made by him, given to us as a gift. Secondly he paid the greatest price, Jesus’ death, to buy them back. Everyone who trusts Jesus becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Because God makes his home in us, our bodies have divine significance.

Your Body – How to Respond

I *“Therefore, honour God with your bodies.”* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:20**

Because of the value God gives our bodies, what we do, how we think, how we treat our own bodies and those of other people, matters. It is not just about *our* honour - the decisions we make and actions we take are for God’s honour. The way we live and the choices we make should be directly linked to understanding that our bodies are valuable and part of God’s amazing design.

Showing honour means to show great respect for something.



Win my heart first

How do you think about your body? Do you work hard to stay healthy and look good? Do you wish you looked different? What about other people’s bodies? Are you jealous, constantly comparing, or relieved that you ‘look better than them’.

As Christians we have a better story: our bodies, and other people’s, deserve great respect because God hand-crafted them for us. Every cell belongs to God and he values them so highly that Jesus gave his life to make them his own again.

For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.

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Our valuable bodies should be delighted in and respectfully cared for in equal measure. We cover the parts of our body that make us uniquely male or female because those parts deserve great respect. It matters what we do with our bodies, it matters how we think about and treat other people's bodies.

- How do you tend to think about your body? Can you agree that your body is valuable and wonderfully made by God?
- Often valuing our bodies is about wanting others to admire us. How could we do this in a way that brings God honour?



5 minutes to focus on your group

How do you think the young people in your group feel about their bodies? Are there any who you know are embarrassed about their bodies? Can you see something of how they feel about their bodies from how they dress or present themselves? Revealing as much as possible or covering every inch? Do they treat other people's bodies with respect, or is there teasing about physical features?

What do the young people in your group need?

Pray for them:

- to grasp the truth
- to live it out
- to rely on the Spirit



In case you're feeling nervous...

- This generation of young people are growing up in a sexualised, visual culture which frequently does not respect or honour the beauty of the bodies God has made. By bravely talking about these difficult issues you are loving your young people.
- We want to reinforce the truths about consent that the young people will have already heard. Their body is precious and so only they have the authority to decide who gets to see it or touch it.
- We talk about pornography because the data says that we need to with this age group. By raising it as a topic in a Christian context we want young people to realise that they can too.
- We have spoken generally about private parts of the body throughout this session. If the children talk about specific body parts, use proper anatomical terms e.g. penis and vagina. The NSPCC recommends this from age 5. You don't need to introduce them, but do be prepared to use these words.

We understand this might feel daunting. The intention is to start a conversation, not to complete it.



Series overview visual

The overview visual (see p. 11) helps to explain the foundation of this series. Because God created us, he knows us better than anyone else. He gets to tell us who we are.

The visual shows a person hearing messages from themselves - these are thoughts and feelings (represented by the thought clouds); messages from others - including other people and the media (represented by speech bubbles); and messages from God - what he has written in the Bible. The crown shows that God's messages are the most important - we only let other messages stick if they say the same things as God says. God made us and loves us more than anyone, great delight comes from listening to him.



11-14s Session Plan



Get going


Protect the President

Have the young people make a large circle around the room. Mark the circle with cones. Pick someone to be the President and stand in the centre of the room on a marker. Choose a few people to be bodyguards and have them form a tight circle around the President, facing the outer circle.

The players in the circle have to try to hit the President with a soft ball. Under arm throws only! The bodyguards have to defend the President - they could have trays or cardboard shields to use as protection. Nobody is allowed to move their feet (a leader may have to fetch the balls and return them to the circle players).

If someone hits the President, the game pauses and that young person becomes the President. The former President becomes a bodyguard and the bodyguard who has been there longest joins the circle. At the end of the time limit, people who are the President or a bodyguard are the winners.

For a quieter game in a smaller space, one young person at a time can mime putting on protective clothing for various activities (e.g. cycling, cricket, ice hockey, rock climbing, scuba diving). The rest of the group has to guess the activity they are preparing for.

 **Link:** Our bodies are precious! They need protecting, we are our own body's bodyguard. Today we're seeing that all of us need to make wise, careful decisions because our bodies are so precious.



Teaching time

Your Body – God's Good Gift

You could use a present - a picture or a wrapped empty box - to make this point more visually engaging.

What is the most precious gift you've ever been given? A new bike? Phone? Laptop? Jewellery or clothing?

How did you treat that precious gift?

Read **Psalm 139:14**. Underline what God says about your body.

Last week we heard that our bodies were lovingly created by God and given to us as a gift. Our body is either male or female - whichever body we have God says it is



Notes

You will need: 4-6 soft balls, some cones or markers and some plastic trays

You will need: Bible verses Psalm 139:14 and 1 Cor 6:19-20 printed out large, pens for highlighting and making notes.

good. Today we're thinking about how we treat these precious bodies.

- How have you heard others speak about bodies, or parts of bodies, in ways that are not respectful?
- How does this verse help us to decide what we do with our bodies?

The best thing about your body is not what other people think about it or how it looks, but that God gave it to you as a beautiful gift.

Your Body – God's Home

Look at **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

- What does God call your body? Find and underline it!
- What do we know about the temple in the Old Testament? What was it for? *King Solomon built an amazing temple as a place where God could be worshipped and present with his people (1 Kings 6:11-14). Now, as Christians, our bodies become a temple for the Holy Spirit. God chooses to live in them. God thinks our physical bodies are more amazing than a castle, a hotel, a mansion or even the temple from the Old Testament. That's how greatly God values our bodies.*
- What do we learn about a Christian's body, if God calls it a temple? *If we are a Christian, God paid the greatest price, Jesus' death, to buy them back, to then make them the place where the Holy Spirit lives.*

Being a Christian means your body is no longer yours! That makes it more precious not less, because God paid the highest price for it. He has made it so holy (or 'precious to him') that he has chosen it as the place to make his home.

Your Body – How to Respond

Look at **1 Corinthians 6:20**

- The Christian body may belong to God but what is our part in it?
- We started by thinking about the most precious gift you've ever been given. How would you treat that thing if you *didn't* value it? *Throwing your bike on the mud, leaving your phone on the floor to be trodden on ...*
- If you did that, what would it say about your attitude to the person who gave you the gift?
- What would it look like to use the gift to honour the person who gave it to you? *Using the phone Grandma gave you to send her nice messages, using the bike your parents gave you to do an errand for them, telling someone who admires your jewellery what a great job the friend who gave it to you did in choosing it...*
- What sorts of things could someone do with their body that might **honour** God and what would it look like to **dishonour** God? *The goal is to get the young people thinking about the sorts of issues we are thinking about. What sorts of issues come to their minds?*

continued →



If you think your group could manage, look up 1 Kings 6:11-14 and/or 2 Chronicles 5:13-6:2 to get a more in depth understanding of the temple in the Old Testament.

Caring for and respecting our own bodies, and other people's, honours God. This includes:

- Covering them appropriately, giving particular care and respect to private parts.
- Not sharing naked pictures of our own bodies, or anyone else's, because bodies are not something to stare at or use for others' entertainment. What do you think would be a good thing to do if someone sent/showed you a 'nude'? *Choose not to look, ask them not to show us pictures like that, talk to an adult we trust about what happened.*
- Caring for our bodies well, washing them and being healthy. Knowing that it is never good to damage, hurt or starve our bodies.
- Not using our body to seek attention (sexually), and not laughing at other people's bodies.

Some people really don't like the body they have been given. They wish it looked different or could do different things. God says: "Your body was made by me, the master craftsman. It was bought at a great price – you're worth it!". Let's remember that whenever we think about our own body or someone else's.

It is likely that some here will have already done things with their bodies that they regret. We may have seen or sent something that we feel like we can't undo or forget. We may feel very alone in this session, or feel like it has come too late. To be a Christian is to know that anything and everything can be forgiven. 1 John 1: 9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." There can always be a good story ahead. You also do not need to think through this alone. Please talk to an adult that you trust (perhaps your leader in the room).




Brain break

Penthouse priorities

Ask everyone to imagine their dream home. What would be their two priorities to make their penthouse feel like their own?

Or decide on 10 penthouse priorities in advance, showing them to the young people and asking them to vote on the two they would prioritise to find the favourites of the group. Options could include a music and dance room, an indoor cinema, a gym, a swimming pool, a gaming room or a walk-in wardrobe.

 **Link:** God designed your body. If you are a Christian, God makes your body his home as the Holy Spirit lives within you. That makes your body special in two ways – God made it and God lives in it.

You will need: paper and pencil

continued →



Heart & hands

Did you spot it?

- From today's session, how does the Bible describe your body?
- What have you heard today about your body that is new, surprising or particularly exciting?
- What is your headline for how you make decisions about your body?

Work it out

- Using the series overview visual: We pick up messages from others and from our own thoughts and feelings, but only God can tell us who we really are. What messages are you hearing from friends and peers about the value of your body, other people's bodies and how to make decisions about your body? *It might be helpful for you to offer some suggestions: Do you hear friends talking about pornography or sending explicit pictures of themselves or others? There are several ways that people choose not to look after their bodies from not treating them well, to not valuing them to deliberately damaging them. Do you see any of those decisions being made by your friends?*
- Your body is a good gift from God - how could you care for it well? *Answers could cover feeding it, cleaning it, protecting it. Be specific e.g. cleaning my teeth, eating enough food, not letting other people hurt it.*
- The concept of 'consent' is extremely helpful when we're making decisions about our bodies. Ask the young people what they have been taught about consent already. 'Consent' means deciding what we and others do with our own bodies. Other people don't get to put pressure on us or make us do something we feel uncomfortable about. As Christians, we want to consent to use our bodies in ways that God says is right, and say 'No' to treating our bodies in ways that God says aren't good. Can we share some examples of decisions we get to make about our bodies? Can we think of requests from others that require our consent? *This might be safeguarding advice which includes choosing who gets to touch or see your private parts. It might include requests for naked photos of your body or others showing you pornography.*

Live it out

Look at Case Study Picture A of Lucy in front of a mirror deciding what to wear (see p. 12) for a big party.

- What might Lucy be hoping for? What are some of the different thoughts she might be thinking? *So many options- some good! Perhaps she is hoping her clothes choice will honour God. Perhaps she knows her body is God-given and beautiful so she wants to encourage others with how she dresses. Maybe she wants to be liked because of how she dresses. Or she wants to show as much of it as possible to catch the eye of the person she fancies. Perhaps your young people's answers will give you an insight into their thinking in such a moment.*
- What does God tell her about her body? *He designed it, says that it is good and longs for her to honour him with it.* If you were her friend, how would you encourage her to remember this?
- How might what we have heard today change her from feeling like she needs to show off her body for people to like her?

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We have found that this is where children make the most progress relating the Bible to their everyday lives. Please leave enough time for this section.

Given the topic, it might make sense to split into single sex groups for this Heart & Hands. If your group is pre-teen, you may not need to, but as young people get older the issues boys and girls face tend to be different. You know your group best.

At some point in this session, suggest the young talk to an adult they trust if these are topics they are thinking about but they want to discuss further. Mention that there is confusion and struggle about bodies for many and it would be great for young people to be talking honestly about this.

Dressing provocatively is often a way of seeking attention and getting an ego-boost. Often young people don't know how much they are loved and valued by God so they seek approval elsewhere. Use this discussion as an opportunity to reinforce that they are beautiful to God.

Look at Case Study Picture B of Luke looking nervous and embarrassed as his friend shows him a naked picture on his phone (see p. 13).

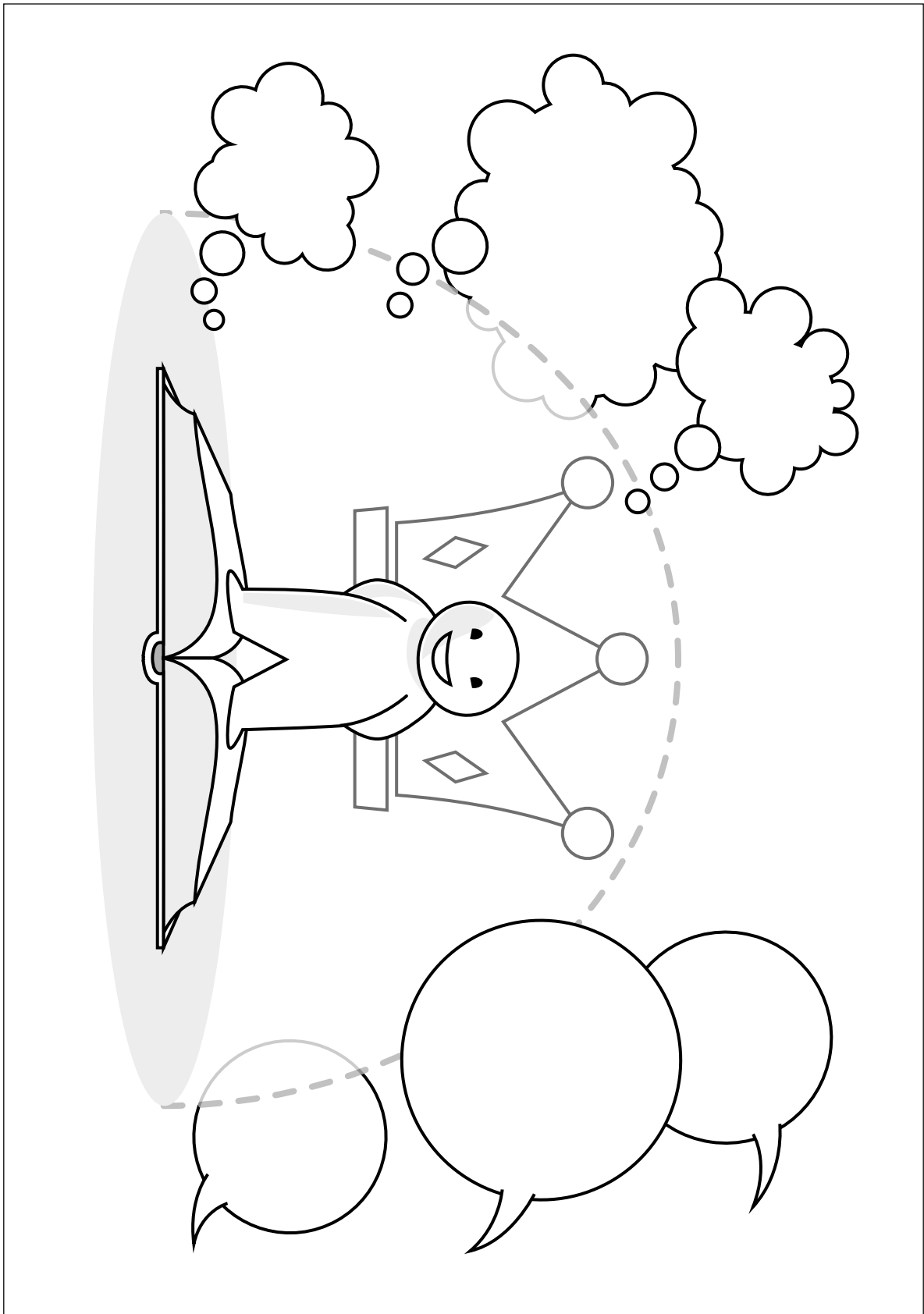


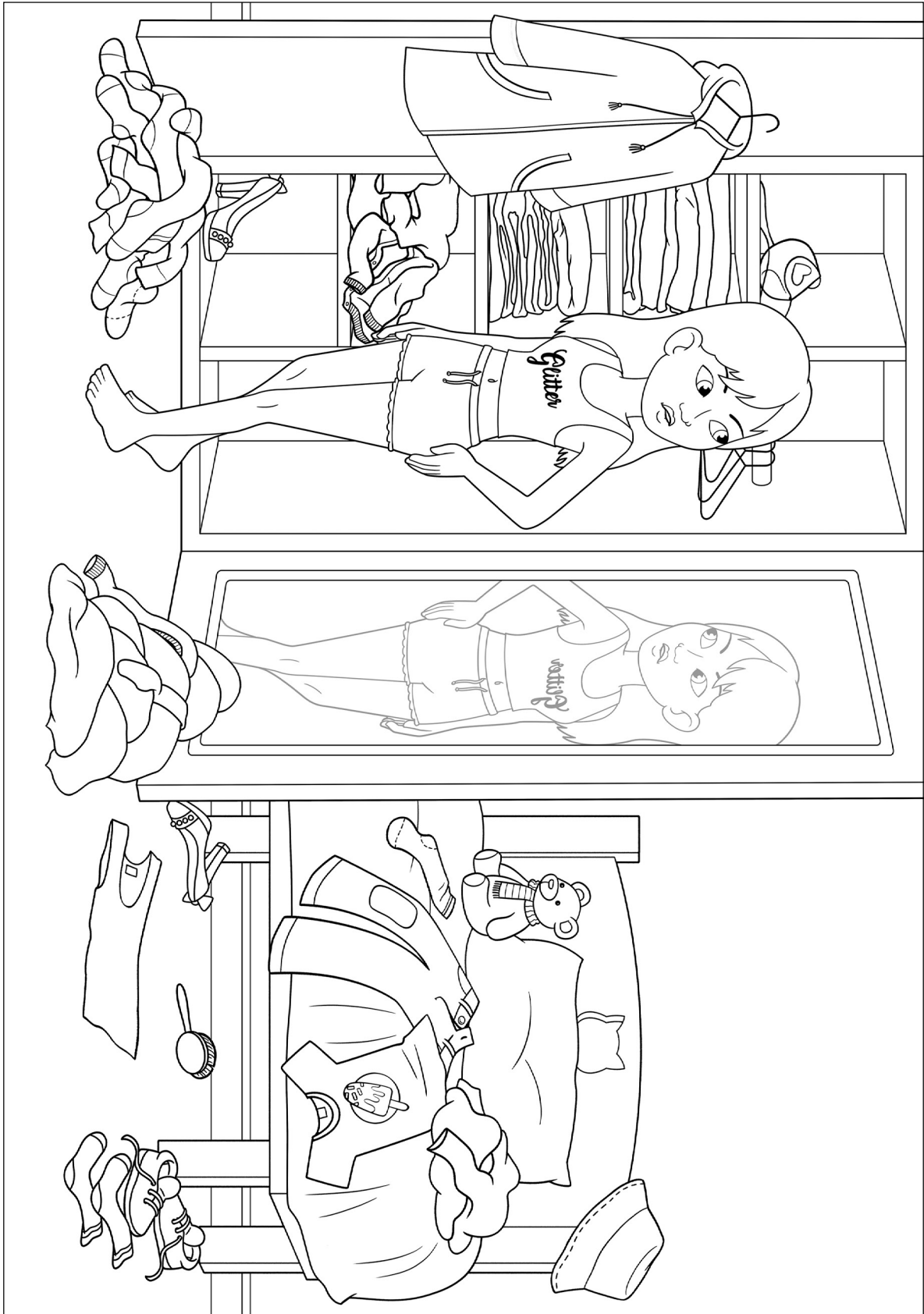
- What would you tell him to do in this situation? *Take the young people back to the discussion above: Realise it is not OK, look/walk away, speak to a trusted adult. Talk about who they could talk to in a situation like this.*
- Why might it be hard for Luke to choose not to look? How could you encourage him?
- Why does it matter what pictures we look at of other people's bodies? *They were made by God. They are all precious and deserve to be treated with respect.*

Prayer

Ask God to help you know and feel the great value he has for the body he has given you. Ask him to help you be wise and careful with your valuable body. Ask him to help you respect others and be careful with what you look at and how you act, so that you might honour God with your body.











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