

YOUTH  
11-14s

# GROWING UP

God's  
Good  
Story



SESSION 5

## I have strong feelings

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

faith  kids

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

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



## SESSION 5

# I have strong feelings

1 Corinthians 6:12-20



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### Truth that changes me:

We belong to the Lord who can help us to respond well to our strong feelings.

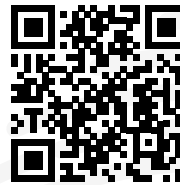


### Faith in Youth looks like:

Young people who can make good choices with their strong feelings because they know who they belong to.

## Preparation

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



### Notes

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.



### Where are we going?

This lesson aims to give young people a framework for navigating their strong feelings. We want them to see that their feelings aren't meant to own them or help them get what they want; they're there to lead us into what Jesus wants for us. We look ahead to desire and sexuality without fear, knowing that we are both made to love and helped to act wisely.



### The world our young people live in

Our young people hear that feelings should be acted on - "If it feels good, it is good, fullstop". Hookup culture is the norm and physical intimacy is entered into lightly - the average age that young people first have sex in the UK is 16-17. We might ask, "If our feelings aren't meant to be followed, why are they there?"

God gives us feelings as a good gift - they tell us something but not everything. Hunger shows us that we are needy creatures, that need is normal, but we need God above all things. Satisfaction after hunger helps us understand how Jesus satisfies. Feelings matter, but they don't master us. Our actions are directed by God, our maker who knows us and loves us.

As our young people develop stronger physical attractions and sexual desires, we'd love them to understand that we are much more than self-seeking pleasure machines - we are made to love and delight in Jesus, to be united with him. We belong to him and only he will fulfil our deepest desires.



## Look at the passage



### My Feelings Don't Own me

*"I have the right to do anything' you say - but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' - but I will not be mastered by anything...."*  
**1 CORINTHIANS 6:12**

"I have the right to do anything" might feel like the anthem of this generation, but it's an age-old struggle. In 1st century Corinth, doing what you felt like (particularly sexually) was the order of the day. This verse tells us that as Christians we are changed to love and live for what is good, not to return to the sin that once trapped us. We are not meant to be victims of our feelings, driven wherever they lead. Instead we belong to a Lord who gives us our bodies, feelings, minds and souls. With him in charge, we can be certain we're heading somewhere good.

### What I Do With My Body Matters

*"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:18**

Hear the voice of your maker speaking in stark contrast to culture, 'Run away from sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage! No matter how you might feel, how good it seems, or what everyone else does - God says "Leg it!" What we do physically matters because we are more than just a physical body. The union of a man and woman in sex is part and parcel of a deeply committed, vulnerable and trusting relationship. You can't make intimate physical connections without it affecting the rest of you.

### I Belong to God

*"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies."* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:20**

We are not ruled by our strong feelings and desires, because we belong to God, the awesome creator who designed us. Like the designer of a beautiful car, God watched on heart-broken as we wheel-spun his wonderful creation out of the garage and trashed it. The designer bought the wreckage back, paying top-whack, and is committed to restoring us to glory. Because of this, we live thankful, delighted lives that share with the world - 'My Dad's design is the best.'



## Win my heart first

What is your favourite treat? Relaxing in the sunshine, catching up with a friend, Peanut M&M's, a cold beer, or perhaps something you'd rather not admit to? We all desire many things, some things that are good and some things that God forbids. Our strongest desires for good things can be great when they take us to godly rest

*For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.*

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and peace, but if we allow them to master us, that good thing that is meant to take us to Jesus can become a god thing that rules us. What if that desire grew until it was no longer under our control? Can we tell when a strong desire has become a damaging force in our lives?

Being ruled by our desire to have, consume, enjoy, escape, is not who we were made to be. We belong to the Lord. When we live ruled by feelings alone, seeking self-satisfaction, we don't honour our bodies like God wants us to.

- Where in your life might it be tempting to be ruled by your strong feelings?
- How might it look different to let those strong feelings take you to Jesus?



## 5 minutes to focus on your group

Thinking about the young people in your group, where are they slaves to their feelings? Where do you see their wildest emotions? Where are the tantrums, the manipulation and the lying to get what they want? How can you help them understand that their feelings are God's good gift, but they aren't meant to be in charge.

*What do the young people in your group need?*

*Pray for them:*

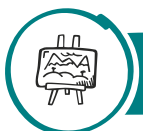
- to grasp the truth
- to live it out
- to rely on the Spirit



## In case you're feeling nervous...

- There is a significant difference between the feelings and desires of the youngest 11 year old and the most physically mature 14 year old. The desires they have, particularly any sexual desires, will be changing and developing as they grow older and experience puberty.
- We focus on feelings that all young people can identify with now - happiness, anger, sadness - and then look ahead to sexual desire. We want the young people to go away understanding what God says about our feelings, so they can respond to them well now and in the future.
- Children with SEN may particularly struggle with this lesson, particularly with talking about their own feelings and understanding other people's. That's OK. This lesson is just as true for them, even if they find it harder to put into practice. We want to help to start a good conversation about feelings with all children.

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



## Series overview visual

The series 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.

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# 11-14s Session Plan



## Notes




### Get going

#### Whose strong feelings?

When I am starving I love to eat a ... <i>What most satisfies your hunger?</i>	
I am terrified of ... <i>Any phobia or intense discomfort?</i>	
I get angry when ... <i>What gets on your nerves like nothing else?</i>	
You wouldn't guess it but I love to ... <i>An activity or pastime you secretly love?</i>	

**You will need:** A copy of the table below for each young person and leader with some pens

Get each young person to fill in the four blank boxes without talking to anyone else or showing anyone their answers. Tell them in advance that you will be reading out their list to the group to see if others can guess who they think it is. Just a bit of fun!

 **Link:** Strong feelings and deep desires are part of being human. Some are secret and some everybody knows (it seems!). We're thinking about some of those strong feelings today, and carefully considering how we respond to them.



### Teaching time

#### Your Feelings Don't Own You

*"I have the right to do anything' you say - but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' - but I will not be mastered by anything...."*  
**1 CORINTHIANS 6:12**

"We're going to learn how we use our strong feelings to honour God.

*Have the verse written out on a large piece of paper and break it down. Start by highlighting, with different colours, checking what these concepts mean; "the right", "beneficial", "mastered".*

These questions might help explore the verses:

**"I have the right to do anything"** - That sounds like huge freedom - are you surprised that this is in the Bible?

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**You will need:** Bibles / verses printed out, large sheet of paper, pens





**“Not everything is beneficial”** - That sounds like real wisdom - what does it mean? Can you think of an everyday example of something that you are free to do but you choose not to because it is not good for you? eg eating only sweets, cycling without a helmet, ignoring everyone at school.

**“I will not be mastered by anything”** - Can you think of a strong feeling that can start to control us to the point where we are no longer choosing how we respond? Perhaps an argument with a friend or sibling, over a screen? Or refusing to do your homework? Or that competitive urge while playing sport? Or anger when you discover what someone has done? Sometimes we let our strong feelings take over - God wants to help us with this.

Having strong feelings is part of what it is to be human. Jesus had strong feelings. Jesus wept when his friend died. Jesus threw over tables with controlled anger when he saw how the temple was being used. Jesus knew how it felt to be really tired, hungry and thirsty (John 4: 6-8). We are learning how to *respond well* to these feelings; to not be mastered by them. We do not need to be owned or defined by our strong feelings. Through puberty, you can expect your strong feelings and what you feel strongly about to change. This is normal and good.

Talk to your neighbour. Can you think of some things that provoked strong feelings 3 or 4 years ago that you struggled to control that you don't struggle with or feel strongly about anymore? Are there new issues that cause strong feelings that take you by surprise or are newer to you? *Perhaps issues from a few years ago are more about getting your own way, getting what you want, sharing and basic needs like hunger and tiredness. Developing feelings might be more relational; loneliness, belonging and acceptance, or more intensely emotional; deep sadness or deep anger, or more sexual; noticing beauty or longing to be wanted.*

## What I Do With My Body Matters

**“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.” 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18**

We are now going to focus on one strong feeling - sexual desire. Sexual desire is when you want to have sex with someone. It's something you feel physically in your body as well as in your thoughts. Some of you might have already felt it. Some of you won't have felt it yet. That's OK. We're thinking about it now to help you to be ready for it when it happens.

**Look at the verses together...** using a pen to mark key words, writing answers and noting questions that come up.

- We find here an instruction and a reason. Can we identify each and understand them? *The instruction: 'Flee from sexual immorality'. Sexual desire is powerful, usually more powerful than other desires - respond to it very carefully, don't mess around with others, run away from that. The reason: 'whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body'. That language is hard to understand. "Sins against their own body"- What do you think that means? We can respond wrongly to other strong feelings, but a wrong response to sexual desire is more dangerous. (That doesn't mean that sexual sin is unforgivable.) There is something different about sexual activity and the impact it has on self and others. It is powerful. Inside of marriage it has the power to make two individuals into one body. That is how the power of sexual activity can be used rightly.*

Hard word alert! 'Immorality' literally means 'Not moral' or 'not the right way to live' so 'sexual immorality' means 'not the right way to be having sex'- that is any sexual activity outside of one man and one woman marriage.

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- In the last session we learnt that God invented marriage to help us understand something bigger. What does marriage help us to understand? *What it will feel like for Christians to be in the new creation - like a marriage to Jesus - being loved perfectly, without fear of being alone, feeling secure, able to be vulnerable and honest because the relationship is totally safe, where we are like the bride, different to the groom (Jesus).*
- Marriage reminds us to look forward to eternity with Christ. So, when we experience a sexual desire that we need to say 'No' to, we can remember how much we are loved by God and that being with him forever will be much much better than any sexual experience now. And if we one day get married and experience sex as God intends, we can still remember that being with God forever will be much, much better!

## I Belong to God

*"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies."* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:20**

We looked at this verse in Session 3. God has given you an amazing body, designed just for you. As people saved by Jesus' death, we belong to God twice - he made us and he saved us! It's like we have a double "I belong to God" name label. God owns our bodies twice!

Some people say we must always follow our feelings, but God says we have more than our feelings driving us - we can pause, listen to those who love us and think about what God wants for us.

How could the following feelings take over in a negative way that would be dishonouring to God?

- Hunger (after a long time since your last meal)
- Fear (something frightening is happening outside school)
- Jealousy (your best friend is hanging out with someone else)
- Sexual desire. *At some point during our lives, most of us will have a strong sexual desire for someone we are not married to. This can happen both to single people and to married people. We're told to get out of these situations where we are tempted to sin, and not to act on that strong desire because it can damage us, and the other person, too. And having fled the immediate temptation, we should pray to God, asking him to change our hearts so that we are not tempted in this way in the future.*

When strong feelings arrive we don't let them take over, we don't have to follow them. We live with Jesus as Lord and trust what he says, because he loves us and wants what is best for us. Refer back to the series overview visual (see p. 11).

Can you think of a way that you could use your body to honour God in each of the situations we just talked about? *E.g. offer to help the person who is going to be making your next meal; find a teacher so that everyone is safe; go and see someone you know is lonely; walk away from the person / picture that you feel tempted by.*

How could you use those strong feelings to remind you of being with Jesus forever? *Think about the great feast God promises us in the new creation; remember that when we are with God forever there will be no more sadness and nothing to be afraid of; think about how good it will be to hang out with Jesus for eternity - he will never leave you; remember that God made us to belong completely to him - being with him face to face will feel amazing.*






## Brain break

### Hungry Chinese Whispers

Sit in a line all facing the same way. Give the person at the back of the line a strong feeling by whispering it to them. They tap the person in front of them who can turn around to face them and then make a facial expression for that strong feeling. They can't use any words, contact or hand gestures, they can only use facial expressions. The next person then taps the person in front of them, so that the strong feeling is passed up the line. The last person in the line shows the rest of the group their final version of the facial expression and tries to name it. That person can then be the person at the back of the line, to go again with a new strong feeling. You could use hunger, thirst, anger, jealousy, love, curiosity, restlessness, independence.

 **Link:** Strong feelings are part of our lives. They're good. They're helpful. It's how we respond to them that matters.



**You will need:** Nothing



## Heart & hands

### Did you spot it?

- What have we learnt about our feelings and desires? Who gave them to us? Are they always good? Always bad?
- How do we decide how to respond to our feelings?
- How can our strongest feelings and desires help us to grow in our love for Jesus?

### Work it out

- Looking at our series visual (see p. 11) - when it comes to our strong feelings and how to respond to them, where are these messages coming from? *From other people? From our parents? From inside ourselves? From thoughts or feelings?*
- What are some of the loudest messages we are hearing?
- What do you want to remember to help you to live differently as someone who belongs to God?

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

continued →

## Live it out

Look at case study picture A (see p. 12) where a boy is playing on a games console surrounded by a mess in his room with dishes on the floor. It's dark outside and he has rings under his eyes. He looks tired and pale.

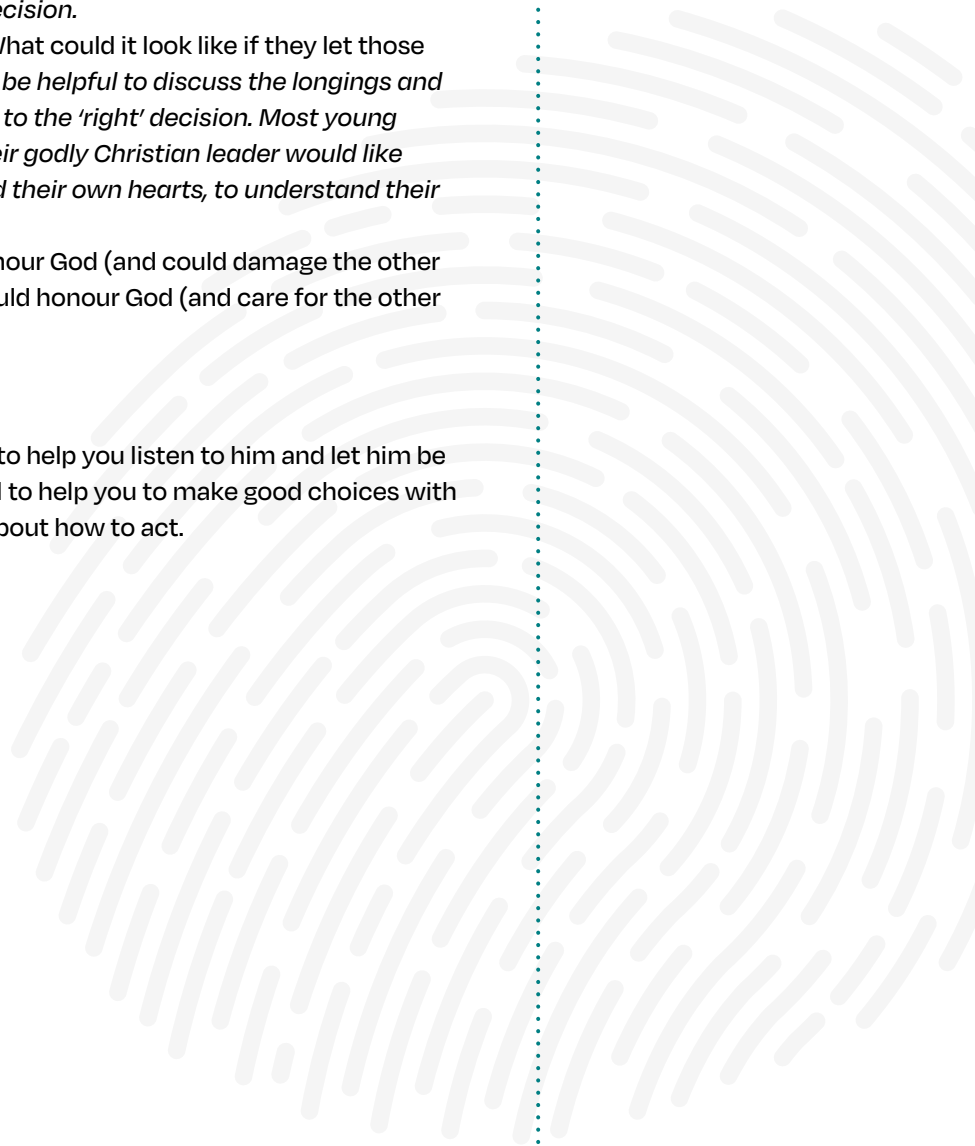
- What strong feelings and desires is he having? Who or what is in control here? How can you tell? What clues can you see to work it out?
- What have you heard today that could help him make better decisions?
- What could you say to him to encourage him (to look after his body and mind well)?

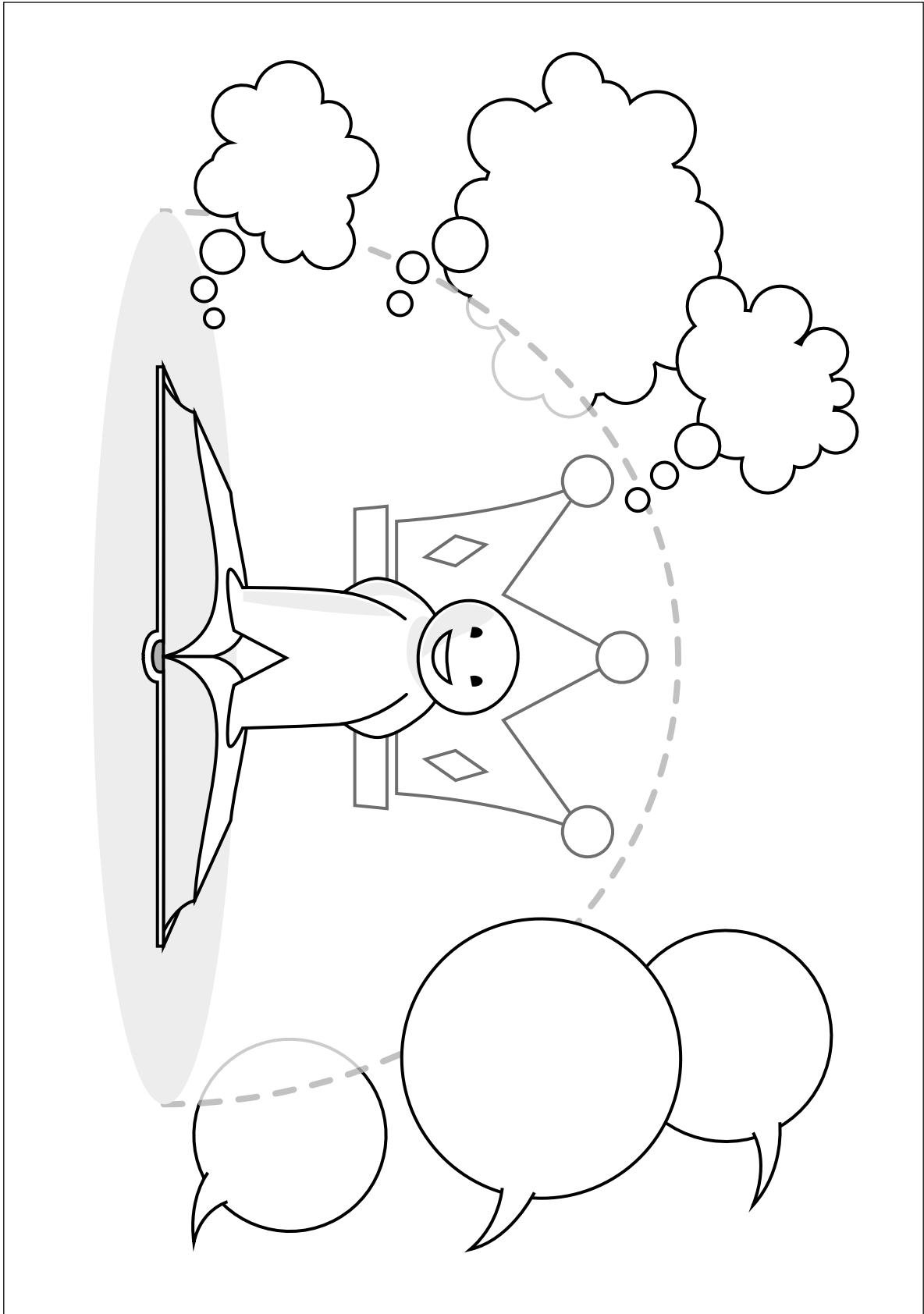
Look at case study picture B (see p. 13) where a boy and a girl are walking together, looking at each other and holding hands. They seem to be attracted to one another, or possibly in a relationship.

- What are the different things they might be feeling? *Encourage the young people to explore the variety of strong feelings that could exist. Older girls often long for a sense of belonging and being wanted, while older boys often long for sex. If they are Christians, these young people might also be longing to please God and to make a godly decision.*
- Which feelings might be strongest? What could it look like if they let those strong feelings take control? *It would be helpful to discuss the longings and wrestling of the heart, before rushing to the 'right' decision. Most young people will have a good idea what their godly Christian leader would like them to do, but are they ready to read their own hearts, to understand their desires and fight for godliness?*
- What could they do that would dishonour God (and could damage the other person)? What could they do that would honour God (and care for the other person)?

## Prayer

Thank God for giving you feelings. Ask God to help you listen to him and let him be the driver, not your strong feelings. Ask God to help you to make good choices with your body when you have strong feelings about how to act.











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