

Does Your Child's World Scare You?

Making the World a Better Place for Children

Leader's Guide

by

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This *Leader's Guide* provides suggestions for guiding a group study of *Does Your Child's World Scare You?* by Jeffrey W. Scott. The book is available from Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., by calling **1-800-568-1248** or by visiting our on-line bookstore at **www.helwys.com/online.html**

FOREWORD

This brief study guide is designed as a companion resource to the book, *Does Your Child's World Scare You?*, written by Jeffery Warren Scott and published by Smyth and Helwys Publishing of Macon, GA in 1997. It is suitable for use in Sunday school classes, in discipleship training, in short-term courses, ladies groups, or even in community groups.

You may obtain additional copies of the book on which this guide is based by calling (800) 568-1248. You may fax an order to them at (912) 752-2264. The mailing address is Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 6316 Peake Road, Macon, GA 31210.

Learning Goals

Upon completion of the study guide, each group member should have a better understanding of the plight of today's children and be able to identify ways in which they can make the world a better place for children. Each of the six sessions will have specific learning goals that will help you maintain your focus.

Plan Ahead

Before you begin your course or discussion group, be sure to attend to the following details:

1) Publicize this timely discussion through all appropriate means. Identify the groups in your community most likely to benefit from a study about children. Announce the subject of your study in the local newspaper, in your church bulletin or newsletter, on bulletin boards in the grocery store or community meeting areas, and to local parent teacher organizations and service clubs.

2) Have a supply of the book, *Does Your Child's World Scare You* on hand or be sure your local book store has an adequate supply to meet your needs.

3) Be sure that you have an adequate, comfortable room to accommodate your group. Have light refreshments on hand for the first meeting to help people relax. Refreshments can be rotated each meeting if desired.

4) Create a colorful poster outlining the session titles. Use this as a focal point in your room. A paper doll cut out of bright construction paper can be used to mark the session you are working on in the outline each week.

Does Your Child's World Scare You?

NOTES

Session 1: Introduction—"They're Just Kids"

Session 2: Family Life—"The Cleavers Don't Live Here Anymore"

Session 3: Violence—"It's a Jungle Out There!"

Session 4: Sex—"A Parent's Guide to Preventing Teen Pregnancy"

Session 5: Economic Woes—"It's Tough to be Poor"

Session 6: Health—"It's a Sick World"

Session 1

Introduction—"They're Just Kids"

Learning Goal

After completing this session participants will be able to give reasons for their concern about today's children and describe a Biblical basis for making the world a better place for them.

Let's Get Going!

- 1) Arrive early to prepare the room.
- 2) Greet each person as they arrive and give them a pencil and piece of paper. Ask them to list the top 5 things that frighten them about their child's or grandchild's world as they wait for the class to begin.
- 3) Introduce the teacher, the name of the group, and the outline of sessions using the focal poster you made prior to the beginning of the session.
- 4) Discuss the question, "What made you want to take part in this class/discussion group?"
- 5) Using the lists people compiled as they arrived, create a top 5 list of things that scare your group members about the world of their children or grandchildren.
- 6) Child advocate Margaret Brodtkin has observed:
"American children are more likely to be poor, drug-dependent, pregnant, murdered, or incarcerated than children in any other industrialized country." (*Every Kid Counts: 31 Ways to Save Our Children*, Harper/Collins: San Francisco, 1993, p. xxv)

7) Ask, “Are things getting better or worse? How does our list differ from the kind of list our parents or grandparents might have made about what faced children in their day?”

8) **Slip Them the Facts**—Ahead of time prepare slips of paper with a single bit of information on each. Pass them out randomly and ask that each person with a slip read their fact.

- Over 3 million children are reported as abused or neglected each year.
- Over 1,300 children die each year of maltreatment.
- One in five children in the U.S. are hungry.
- 14 children a day die from gunfire.

The Biblical Basis for Making the World a Better Place for Children

What does the Bible say about making our world a better place for children?

- 1) Have volunteers read Proverbs 31:8-9, Isaiah 1:17, and Jeremiah 28:29
- 2) Would you classify children as poor and vulnerable? Why?
- 3) Read Mark 9:36-37.
- 4) What does Jesus have to say about children and their priority?
- 5) Jesus tells us that we should welcome the children. How welcoming is your church to children? How child-welcoming is your community?

For Next Time

Remind participants that next time you will be discussing the dramatic changes that have taken place in the American family over the last thirty years. The title is “The Cleavers Don’t Live Here Anymore.”

Session 2

Family Life—“The Cleavers Don’t Live Here Anymore”

Learning Goal

Following the session on family life, participants will be able to identify several changes that have taken place in the structure of the American family over the last few decades. In addition, participants will be able to articulate practical ways that

individuals, churches, or civic groups could help alleviate the problems that these changes have caused.

NOTES

Before the Session

Prior to the session, videotape a portion of *Father Knows Best* or *Leave it to Beaver* or a similar show from that era. Frequently these can be found on television. If not, it is possible that the local library may have such a video.

Let's Begin

- 1) Greet folks as they arrive and ask them what was their favorite television show from the early 1960s. Ask them to think about the sitcoms that were in vogue during that time. You might even make a list of the favorites as people arrive.
- 2) Play a portion of the video you have prepared prior to the session. If you were unable to locate a show, simply ask the class to remember the characteristics of the Cleaver family, for example.
- 3) Lead the group in a discussion about the picture of the American family then as contrasted with the American family of today.

Research and Report

Divide the participants into three groups. Assign each group a topic to research in the textbook and prepare a summary report to share orally with the entire group. Allow about 8 minutes for research and give each group 3 minutes to share their findings.

- 1) What has been the impact of increasing divorce rates and single parenthood on America's children? (pp.15-20)
- 2) How has the rise in the number of latchkey children and lack of adequate, affordable childcare impacted America's children? (pp. 20-24)
- 3) What is the impact of family violence on children? (pp. 24-25)

What Can We Do About It?

So often we satisfy ourselves with identifying the problems in our families, our communities, and in our society, but do not take the next step of doing something about it.

- 1) Using a blackboard or large flow sheet put up a grid (like on the next page) to guide the discussion.

	Divorced/ Single Parenting	Latchkey Kids/Child Care	Domestic Violence
Me			
Church/ Organization			
Community Groups			

2) Have the group complete the matrix identifying things that could be done to address each of the three areas of concern. They should ask themselves, “What could I do?” “What could my Church do?” and “What could community groups do?”

Conclude

In a commencement address in 1965, President Lyndon Johnson observed:

“The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitudes, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged. When this happens on a massive scale, the community itself is crippled.”

As goes the family, so goes the nation.

A Look Ahead

The next session deals with the subject of violence. It is entitled, “Its a Jungle Out There.” Ask the class to bring in examples of violent toys, video games, or examples of violence on television.

Session 3

Violence—“It’s a Jungle Out There!”

Learning Goal

participants in this session will understand the link between violent toys and violence in the media and aggression in children. In addition, participants will be able to suggest two or three things they can do to make their home a less violent place.

Prior to this Session

1) During the week prior to the group meeting, save newspapers and magazines that can be used during Session 3 to identify stories on violence.

2) Videotape examples of violent commercials, or violent television programs for use during Session 3.

NOTES

As Participants Arrive

- 1) Greet the participants upon arrival.
- 2) Give each person a newspaper or a magazine and ask them to spend a few moments picking out a story or two involving violence. These stories might relate to violence on TV, violence on the streets, or have some other connection with violence.

Let's Get Started

- 1) Have members of the group describe the stories that they have found in the newspapers or magazines which related to today's topic of violence. Some may have remembered to bring stories that they have clipped out during the week. Elicit response from the group related to these stories. How do these stories make you feel? How would a diet of similar stories make children feel?
- 2) Observe that we are living in an increasingly violent society.
 - Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop observed in 1992 that the homicide rate is increasing at 6 times the rate of population growth.
 - Children are beaten, raped and robbed 5 times more often than adults age 35 or older and twice as often as young adults.
 - Juveniles account for 10% of the population but represent 23% of all violent crime victims.
- 3) Play the videotape you have prepared of violent commercials or violence in television shows. Ask the group to discuss the impact of media violence on children. Using the material found in the book on pages 42-45, demonstrate that media violence leads to three reactions in children: an expectation of violence in the world, a toleration of violence, and an imitation of violence.
- 4) Another area of concern for parents is the level of violence in their children's toys. Dr. Thomas Radecki has observed,
"Violent toy studies show that these materials cause children to hit, choke, push, and hold down other children. They have found increases in selfishness, anxiety, and the hurting of animals. Sharing and school performance have been found to decrease."

Dr. Arnold Goldstein, director for the Center for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University points to the problem of violent toys as desensitizing children to the dangers and harm of violent behavior. He argues that violent toys teach children to take pleasure in aggression, and decreases the child's ability to learn empathy, negotiation, and cooperation.

Ask for a list of violent games, toys, and video games that children find popular today.

So What?

Perhaps there is a problem with the level of violence in our culture today. Perhaps children are being negatively influenced by violence. So what can you do about it?

- a) what can I do about it in my home?
- b) what can my church or community group do about it?

You may find some suggestions in the book on pages 48-53.

Session 4

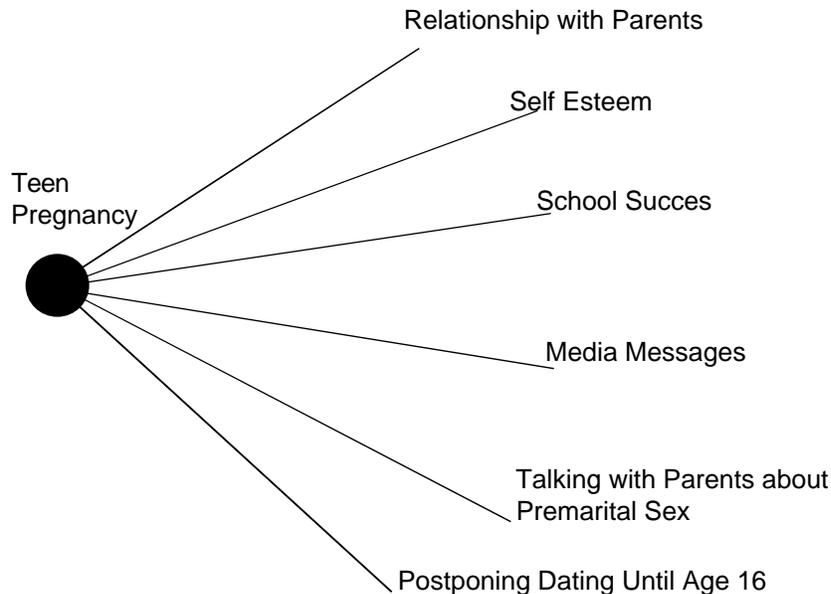
Sex—“A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Teen Pregnancy”

Learning Goal

Participants will be able to identify the epidemic nature of teen pregnancy and name several things parents can do to reduce their teen’s risk of teen pregnancy.

Before the Session

Prepare a visual for use in the upcoming session. Find a few yards of rope or twine. Cut 6 one-yard strands. Tie a knot in one end of the group of six ropes. Stretch the remaining ends and label them as shown in the illustration below.



As the Group Arrives

- 1) Welcome people as they arrive.
- 2) Ask participants to make a list of the things that will change in the life of a teenager when she discovers that she is pregnant.

Let's Begin

- 1) Review answers to the question posed as people arrived.
- 2) Call attention to the chart that you made and share the learning goal for the session.
- 3) Examine the teen pregnancy epidemic.
 - Over 1 million teens become pregnant each year and the birth rate is rising.
 - Our teen fertility rate is double that of Great Britain or Canada, triple that of Scandinavia, and 10 times that of Japan.
 - Our childbearing rate is worse than that of the average developing nation.
 - Nearly half of all adolescent females will experience at least one pregnancy as a teenager.
 - The recent National Survey of Family Growth found that 43% of women in 1969 were virgins at the time of marriage as compared with only 10% today.
- 4) What do these figures mean?
 - a) What does this level of promiscuity mean in an age of AIDS and STDs?
 - b) What does this mean emotionally, medically, economically, and spiritually to teens who have fallen victim to this epidemic?
 - c) What does teen pregnancy mean to the baby? Abortion? Adoption? A life of poverty?

How Can Parents Reduce the Risk?

- 1) *Build A Close Relationship with Your Child*
Recent research has shown that parents with close ties to their teenage daughters were able to reduce the likelihood of teen pregnancy by 42%. What are some of the ways that relationships between parent and teen are strengthened?
- 2) *Build Your Child's Self Esteem*
A second insulator from teen pregnancy is a healthy self-esteem. Teens with low self esteem have been found to be 6 times more likely than their peers to fall victim to teen pregnancy. Discuss what builds a child's self esteem.
- 3) *Encourage School Success*
Research shows an inverse correlation between school success and teen pregnancy. How can we encourage our children to do well in school and develop a future orientation or set of educational or occupational goals?
- 4) *Monitor Media Messages*
Film critic Michael Medved has suggested that prime time

television programs depict sex outside of marriage 13 times more frequently than within the context of a monogamous, life long relationship. Other studies have found that 80% of sex depicted on TV occurs between unwed partners. What influence does the steady diet of these media messages have on children and youth?

5) *Talk Candidly about Pre-marital Sex*

Only 15% of mothers and 8% of fathers discuss the subject of pre-marital sex with their children despite the fact that such discussions significantly reduce the likelihood of teen pregnancy. Why have we done such a poor job as parents in this area? What can be done to change this?

6) *Postpone Dating until after Age 16*

Research in the late 1980s demonstrated the wisdom of postponing dating until age 16. For example, 91% of children who began dating at age 12 became pregnant before graduation. Only 20% of those who waited until age 16 for their first date became a pregnant teen. What are appropriate guidelines for dating? How can these be enforced?

Session 5

Economic Woes—“It’s Tough To Be Poor”

Learning Goal

Following this session, participants will be able to identify the effects of poverty and hunger on children.

Before the Session

Locate a videotape of the Charles Dickens story, “A Christmas Carol.” You may have a copy, may be able to borrow one from a public library, or can rent a copy from a video store. Find the portion of the tape where Scrooge is approached by people soliciting a donation for the poor. Scrooge replies that it would be better for the poor to die and to reduce the surface population. Cue this portion of the tape and have it ready to utilize at the beginning of this session.

As People Arrive

Welcome participants warmly and ask them what they had for dinner last night.

Let’s Begin

Discuss briefly what everyone had for dinner the previous evening. Some may simply not remember. Why might we not remember? Ask the group if they ever knew what it was like to be without food?

Play the video tape selection showing Scrooge’s thoughts on the poor. Discuss briefly our attitudes about the poor.

Get the Facts

Review these facts with the group and discuss their significance.

- 1 in 4 American children are poor.
- 27 children die from the effects of poverty in the U.S. each day.
- Poor children are 3 times more likely to die from accident or disease than their peers.
- Poverty has an adverse impact on the cognitive development of children.
- Children in poverty are at greater risks of abuse and neglect, truancy, delinquency, educational failure and teen pregnancy.

Using the information in the text found on pages 79-80, have the group create a similar snapshot of the incidence and effects of hunger on poor children.

Whose Job is it?

An important question may well be, whose job is it to care for the poor and needy?

- Read the Scripture Matthew 25:34-40 and Proverbs 19:17.
- Whose job is it to care for the poor and the hungry?

What's a Parent to Do?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed that there was not a shortage of human resources, but a shortage of human will and imagination. When it comes to the subjects of poverty and hunger, do you think he is right?

- Is there funding out there for hunger relief (see p.80)?
- What can parents do to identify and ease the problems of poverty and hunger in their community?
- What can the church do to ease the impact of poverty and hunger?

Session 6

Health Concerns—“It’s a Sick World!”

Learning Goal

Participants will be able to identify lack of health insurance, smoking, and drugs as challenges to the health of American children following their participation in this session.

Prior to the Session

- Prepare three different kinds of paper cutouts (a circle, a triangle, and a square) so that you will have enough to give each member of your group one cutout.

- Prepare a poster with the quotation found on page 89 in the textbook.
- Collect old magazines that can be cut up.

As They Arrive

Welcome your participants and give each one a cutout figure you prepared previously. Give each participant an old magazine and ask them to find pictures related to smoking or alcohol. Be sure to include apparel or other items which help market these items.

Let's Begin

- Call attention to your poster and state that today we will be discussing the health of America's children.
- Share the clippings that were found and discuss participants' reaction to them.
- Ask them to divide into groups according to the cutout figure they were given as they arrived. Give each group 10 minutes to work on the following assignments:

Group 1— Utilizing the material found on pages 92-93, prepare a 3-minute talk on why children without health insurance should be a national concern.

Group 2—Utilizing the material found on pages 94-96 in the textbook, prepare answers to the following questions:

- 1) Why is the smoking industry interested in children?
- 2) What threats to children does smoking present?
- 3) Where do children get cigarettes?

Group 3—Utilizing the information found on pages 97 to 99 in the text, identify the seriousness of the alcohol and drug problem today and the role of the media in influencing children toward the use of alcohol and drugs.

Use this information to present a "TV News broadcast" to the rest of the group. Allow each group to make their presentations to the group and allow 10-12 minutes for each report and discussion. Direct the discussion to focus on the local aspects of these problems.

- 1) How serious is this problem in our community?
- 2) What is being done to help?
- 3) Who is addressing these concerns locally?
- 4) What more could be done?
- 5) What can I do as a parent to help my children avoid these pitfalls?

Direct the group's attention to the material in the back of the text related to other groups. Suggest that additional information can be obtained by contacting these groups.