**Topic: Judging Others**

**Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 16:7b; Acts 10:34-35; John 7:24**

**Activity: Choose Your Prize**

Choose a favorite game for your students to play. The purpose of this activity is the reward, not the game, so any game will work. Before the game, choose three prizes: a very nice prize that all students would want, an “ok” prize that preteens would accept, and a prize that a preteen would be disappointed to receive. Examples might be, an iTunes gift card, candy, and a pair of tube socks. (Dirty socks are even better!) Wrap the worst gift in elaborate, appealing wrapping, the “ok gift in “ok wrapping, and the best gift in a paper sack. After the game, call the first, second, and third place students on stage and allow them to choose their reward. After all three have chosen, have them open their gifts on stage for all students to see.

**After the activity, ask the following questions:**

* Did the wrapping on the outside match the gift that was on the inside?
* How did it feel to choose the “best looking” prize and then receive the least valuable prize?
* How did it feel to choose the “not-so-good looking” prize and then receive the most valuable prize?
* Based on the outer wrapping of each prize, what did you expect?

Have you ever heard the phrase, “You can’t judge a book by its cover?” What does that mean? (Pause for responses) It means that things are not always what they seem. This is especially true with people. We are quick to think that we know everything about a person just by looking at their clothes, their hair, or the house they live in. The truth is that none of those things really tell us who the person is on the inside.

At some point, we all judge someone based on what we can see. We see their family car and immediately decide that they’re rich or poor. We see the clothes they wear, and we immediately decide whether they’re cool or not. We think we know them based on what we can see on the outside, but the Bible tells us that we should not look at the outside because God does not look at the outside.

**Read 1 Samuel 16:7b**

1 Samuel 16:7b says, “The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” Our ability to see things and make judgments is a good, God-given thing. This skill helps us to see things that need to change in the world and do something about it. The problem is that Satan has twisted this good thing into a really bad thing. The tendency is to use this skill to judge others, which leads to hurtful comments and broken relationships.

After Jesus had resurrected, the church was having a major problem. Jesus’ death on the cross was for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. However, the early church was struggling with the prejudice of both of these groups. They hated one another! They thought that the other group was scum and all but went to war with one another. It didn’t matter if a person was the nicest, most loyal, most generous person on the planet. If they were a Gentile, then the Jew would not accept them. This was causing a major problem in the church.

One day, God spoke to Peter through a dream and showed him the truth. God showed Peter that the death of Jesus was for all people. God was looking at the heart of the person, not the outside. God was disappointed at how the people were making judgments of one another.

**Read Acts 10:34-35**

In Acts 10:34-35, Peter responds to this vision that He received from God. Listen to this verse, “Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” The heart of the person is what matters to God. We should also be looking at the heart, and not the outward appearance. Nova’s dad thought he knew Jesse based on what he saw on the outside. What he didn’t see was Jesse’s love for his family and his loyalty to his mother.

There are guys and girls at your school that you think you know. You’ve made up your mind about who they are based solely on what you see on the outside. We need to be careful not to judge others and think that we know who they really are. Maybe you’ve judged someone based on his or her appearance. Maybe you judged them based on just one thing that you heard them say. Maybe you judged someone based on the color or his or her skin. All of these things go against what God has taught us through His word. He desires for us to look at the heart.

So, how do you stop yourself from judging others? You can start by getting to know them and seeing who they are on the inside. Another great way to prevent from judging others is to remember the Golden Rule found in **Luke 6:31**. We should always treat others the way we want to be treated.

And lastly, we need to encourage them and share God’s word with them. No one is perfect, so you probably won’t like everything about that person. Instead of judging them, we should share the Word of God with them and allow it to change their words and actions. We need to follow the instructions that Jesus gave his followers in **John 7:24**. Jesus said, “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.”

**Break into small groups to discuss the following questions:**

* What are some things that cause us to judge others? (Material possessions, how they talk, how they act, friends they hang with)
* Why is it difficult to change the way we think of them?
* What are some ways you could work to change the way you think about the person?
* Read Luke 6:31. How does thinking about this verse change the way you look at others?
* As Christians, what is the potential damage of judging others? (They don’t see or experience God’s love)
* What is something that you can do this week to change a “judgment” that you have about another person?

Give students index cards and have them write their answers to Question 6. Encourage them to act on it this week. Pray over the students and their actions before dismissal.