

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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One Small Picture

Sexting Getting Teens in Trouble

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What Happened:

Philip Alpert, 18, was angry and hurt. His ex-girlfriend was ignoring him. He wanted to get a reaction—any kind of reaction—from her. So, at 3 a.m. one day, in a fit of anger, he sent revealing photos he had of her—ones she had taken herself and given to him—and sent them to everyone on his distribution list.

Shortly thereafter, Alpert was arrested on child pornography charges. He's now a registered sex offender, which makes it illegal for him to live near schools or send personal e-mails. He's undergoing five years of sex-offender re-education classes and will be on the offender list for 25 years—until he's 43.

Alpert's story was featured on a Feb. 14, 2010, MTV special titled "Sexting in America: When Privates Go Public." The special took an in-depth look on the phenomenon of sexting—teens taking and sending risqué photos of themselves and distributing them to others.

Sexting is disturbingly common. Research suggests that 20 percent of all teens have sent nude or semi-nude images of themselves, even though nearly half of all teens say it's common for such images to be seen by or forwarded to someone else.

Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

Law enforcement is aggressively prosecuting youth who send or receive such images—sometimes charging underage teens with producing and distributing child pornography. For folks who are convicted, their lives can change forever.

Talk About It:

Do you know anyone who's ever taken or sent inappropriate pictures of themselves with their cell phones? If you *did* know someone, would you try to talk with them about it?

Why do you think some teens send such pictures? Do they want to impress someone? Hook up with someone?

Why do recipients sometimes send the pictures to other people? Are they trying to look cool or important? Are they trying to get back at someone? Do they just think others want to see?

We've talked about what could happen if the police catch youth sending such pictures, but what are some of the other dangers of sexting? Who else might see them?

What the Bible Says:

“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? ...Does He not see my ways and count my every step?” (Job 31:1-2, 4).

“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.” (Rom. 1:24-25).