

The Dangers of Impulsiveness

Part 1

Goal for the Lesson

One of the more dangerous character traits for children to possess is impulsiveness. A little tendency to be impulsive can sometimes destroy a life in a moment, or, in other cases, wreak continual havoc through a habit of making impulsive decisions. Impulsive young people often find themselves in trouble, and wonder how they got there.

Impulsiveness comes from the root word “impulse.” Impulse is defined as the influence of a particular feeling, an impelling force which drives one to action. Impulsiveness is defined as being swayed by emotional or involuntary impulses.

We can see from these definitions that a person who is impulsive easily gives in to their emotions or feelings, which prompt them to do or say something immediately.

Impulsiveness reflects the opposite of biblical teaching. Everything a Christian does should be based on God’s laws, and God’s principles for living. The Bible continually tells us to obey God, and not to act on our impulses. Acting on impulse is actually making an idol of one’s self. There is much to learn about this great sin of impulsiveness and how it sneaks into the most mundane areas of our lives. Through these lessons, we hope to teach our children not to act on emotion, but to act on the Word of God.

Scripture for the Lesson

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” —2 Corinthians 10:5

Definitions

Ask the children what they think the words mean in this verse, and then explain the correct definitions.

Impulse	- a particular feeling (anger, jealousy, impatience, etc.)
Impulsiveness	- trait of acting suddenly on impulse instead of thinking first
Casting	- the act of throwing
Imaginations	- the formation of a mental image
Exalteth	- praises, lifts up, inspires
Against	- in opposition
Captivity	- the state of being imprisoned
Obedience	- the act of obeying, complying with the commands of those in authority

Ask the Children

Ask the children questions to prod them to think about how the verse can apply to them.

- (1) What is impulsiveness?
- (2) How does one cast down imaginations?
- (3) What are some things that exalt themselves or lift themselves above God’s Word?
- (4) How can we cast those things down?
- (5) What might happen if we don’t cast out those beliefs and thoughts that are in opposition to God’s Word?
- (6) How can we bring our thoughts into captivity?
- (7) How can we bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ?

Skit 1

As Tommy is walking through the living room, he sees that Jacob has built a really nice tower out of the building blocks. He casually walks over and knocks it down. When asked why he did that, his answer was, "I don't know."

Ask the Children

- (1) Tommy saw the blocks and had a thought to knock them down. He acted on impulse. He did what he felt like doing. How do you think Jacob felt about Tommy's actions?
- (2) Should Tommy have acted on his thought?
- (3) What should Tommy have done with his thought?
- (4) How would bringing his thought into the obedience of Christ have changed Tommy's actions?
- (5) Can you think of any similar situations where one thought leads to one type of action, and a thought submitted to Christ brings a different action?

Personal Application Questions

- (1) When thoughts come into your mind, do you impulsively act on them, or do you think before you act?
- (2) Do you ever wish that you behaved differently?
- (3) Do you pray before everything you do?
- (4) Isn't praying before you do something the same as bringing your thoughts to Jesus?
- (5) How can you obey Jesus if you do not bring your thoughts to Him first?

Stop, Think, Pray

An obedient child of God might still have had the thought to knock the tower over, but that child would have stopped and thought about it. "Jacob would not be happy. He might not think it would be fun. He would not laugh to see all his hard work knocked over. And he might get really angry, and it would be my fault. Knocking the tower over would not be kind. Hmm. Would Jesus knock it over? Probably not. I guess I could just admire Jacob's tower and that would make him happy."

Stop, think, pray before you act, and that will help you to bring your impulses in line with God's will. And, it will help you to become a more thoughtful person, and more obedient to Christ.

Teacher Notes (explanation of skit)

Children are very impulsive by nature, and must learn to curb their physical impulsiveness. Tommy, without regard to his brother, saw the tower, and out of fun or meanness, we don't know, impulsively knocked it down. He did not think before he acted. He just acted.

Sharing Thoughts With Children

The Bible teaches us that we are not to do what we feel like doing. We are to obey God. "Self" wants to do what it wants to do. "Self" wants to determine a person's actions. "Self" says, "Hey, that looks like it would be fun to knock that tower down." "Self" knocked the tower down. "Self" is impulsive.

Impulsiveness is a really bad habit, and as all habits do, it strengthens over time. Young people need to learn to bring their thoughts into the captivity of Christ. They need to submit their thoughts to Him before they ever turn their thoughts into actions.

Skit 2

Ken is feeling sorry for himself that he doesn't have a mountain bike like his friends. He has been saving for a year and just never seems to have enough money to buy the bike. His friend Tom phones and asks him to go to the hobby store and then the local ice cream shop for a milkshake. Impulsively, he says, "Why not? Sure, I'll go."

Ask the Children

- (1) Why do you think Ken has not been able to save enough money to buy a mountain bike?
- (2) Did Ken stop to think just how much his trip to the hobby store and milkshake might cost him?
- (3) Do you think it just might be Ken's habit to impulsively go places or impulsively spend money?
- (4) How does impulsiveness keep one from reaching one's goal?
- (5) How should Ken have handled Tom's request in order to not be impulsive, and to even bring this request to Christ?

Personal Application Questions

- (1) When someone asks you to do something, do you ever answer yes or no, without really thinking about it?
- (2) Are you sometimes sorry that you agreed to do something, and wish that you had said no?
- (3) Do you think that you are an impulsive person?
- (4) How can you become less impulsive?

Think First

Think first! Think before you do. Thinking first allows you to figure out what God wants you to do. Thinking first allows you to choose whom you will serve. Thinking first allows you to bring your own thoughts and desires to the Lord Jesus, so that you can obey Him.

If you go with your feelings, go with what you feel like doing, that is impulsiveness, which is sin. If you stop and think about what is the right thing to do, and still choose to do wrong, that is sin too. If we love Jesus, we will obey Him.

In the case of Ken, he knows that his bike has been sidetracked by his impulsive spending. He will only reach his goal when he decides to at least weigh each opportunity that he encounters upon its merits and consequences. He will need to take each opportunity to God, to see if God wants Him to spend his money on something different. If God says, "Go," then Ken should go. If God wants Ken to deny himself and to save his money in order for Ken to learn self-control, then Ken should do as God is teaching him to do. The key is to Stop, Think, Pray, and then Obey!

Review

Review the verse and challenge the young people to bring everything to Jesus.

Teacher Notes (explanation of skit)

Every time that Ken accumulates anything significant in his savings toward his bike, he finds some "pleasure of the moment" on which to spend it. As a result, at the rate he is saving, he likely will never reach the amount he needs for the bike. Ken seldom thinks before he agrees to something.

Sharing Thoughts With Children

"Self" is always at the bottom of sin. "Self" cries out for immediate gratification. "Self" does not want to hear about reasons why we should not gratify ourselves.

God does not want us to be slaves to our impulses. God wants us to be a servant to Him, to be obedient children. In order to do this, we must think before we act. We must decide whom we will serve, for we are serving one or the other—self or God.

We must learn self-control. We must learn to bring our thoughts and bodies and actions to God. We should rule, under God, our thoughts and actions, not our thoughts and actions rule us. One is God's way; the other is Satan's way.