



# Into the Light

Honest to ... Goodness



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STEPHEN WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE

LATE SUMMER 2009

*Note:* This newsletter contains explicit teen discussion about sexuality. If you're a young reader, please ask your parents before continuing to read.

Dear Friend,

I dare you. Get almost 1,000 teens in a room to hear a Christian perspective on sex. Not long into your presentation, hold up a cell phone and invite them to text you their questions and comments (yes, "text" is now a verb). The texts bombard you faster than you can read them.

You've just turned the tables. They thought they were going to hear just another sermon, but now they are fully engaged, thinking about what THEY think. And telling you.

That's what Rebecca and I experienced when we spoke at the ANSR (*A New Sexual Revolution*) event in early summer. The text messages were startling:

- my boyfriend is pressuring me to have sex and we're 13...i tell him no every time wat do i do
- Me and my xboyfriend after we broke up decided to be friends but now all he wants to do is have sex with me cuz he thinks i am insecure....?
- If im a virgin and girl ask me to do it to them wat do i do
- my mom tells me not to have sex out of marridge but she does it. how do i keep strong knowing that my mom does it.
- If sex is a sin, will i still be able 2 enter gods heavenly gates
- One of my friends is gay and even though I told her I was straight she keeps flirting hinting at gay stuff I don't want to loose her as a friend but I want to make it clear that I'm straight and I'm not changing
- how can guys tell their gf [girlfriend] to not pressure them?
- Wat if we already had intercourse and we dont know how to tell our parents bc we dont want to hurt them
- Is there a second chance with God if i have already given myself to someone?
- My boyfriend and i are sexually active and committed. He wants to get married after high school but i think he only wants to 2 get married b-cuz we have sex...and i dont think sex-love-marriage dont have 2 go together, i love him so wat do i do?
- Wat happens when i feel like my back is against the wall do i turn 2 sex to find a way out or 2 feel loved
- What should i do if u need to talk to somebody about sex but u dont know who to turn to n dont trust anybody
- how can we trust people if people you thought you could trust completely betray you?

Because we built an anonymous opportunity for them, these kids finally had a chance to bring things into the light and paint for us a picture of their sexual world. They feel pressured to have sex and pressure to continue having sex once they've started. They are confused about appropriate lines and principles that can guide their decisions. They wonder if they've committed the unpardonable sin. Girls feel pressured, and guys do to. What's worse, sometimes they feel like they have no one they can trust who can give wise counsel. Some feel like their role models aren't really role models at all.

Our hearts were breaking that night as we read these messages.

How can all of us help the teens in our world rise to the challenge of creating a new sexual revolution that will help them reinvent their culture in a way that honors God?

Rebecca and I counted it a privilege that night to offer Biblical insights, our story, and straightforward honesty to help these students. Instead of focusing on a “Don’t do this, don’t do that…” approach, we decided to give the students a few principles that will help them navigate any sexual challenge they face. Three snapshots from that night illustrate this approach.

- One half of the audience stood up and shouted at the top of their lungs at the other half: **You matter more! You were meant for more!** The other half stood up and shouted back. If you’re going to make a fool of yourself, you might as well do it for a truth like that! If you bring your whole life into the light of God’s word (especially Gen. 1:26-27), you can’t mistake the fact that God created us with value and purpose. We wanted the teens to have fun speaking truth to themselves and encouraging their peers with the strongest reasons for doing what’s right sexually.
- “...now I am Never gonna have an abortion.” That’s what one student wrote on the comment card after the event. At ANSR, we didn’t just bring sexuality into the light. We also exposed the deadly *results* of sexuality by showing a video of aborted children. The destructiveness of abortion is one of the most persuasive reasons to follow God’s plan for sexuality, especially for guys. In fact, at one JFA high school training a few years ago, a Christian young man responded to pictures of abortion by saying, “I’m never going to have sex again.”
- With just 15 minutes before the teens would walk out the door, I told them I was *not* going to ask them that night to make an abstinence pledge (as important as those are). Instead, I wanted them to make the commitment that would enable them to make an abstinence decision EVERY time they felt tempted: **bring things into the light.** I explained what I meant: “Tonight I’d like you to commit to find one older, wiser person and one peer within one week and ask each of them if you can share with them on a regular basis exactly how you’re being tempted sexually.” Then I picked up the phone and called my friend Alan Shlemon. He and I have been meeting regularly to bring things into the light for about eight years. On speakerphone in front of the crowd, Alan asked me a set of hard questions about my relationships. We weren’t faking it. It was a real accountability session that ended with me committing to spend more focused time with my wife Rebecca (something I had committed to but failed to do that week). After the presentation, I could tell these moments made an impression. The teens couldn’t believe I’d expose myself like that. Instead of *telling* them how important honesty is, I *showed* them.

The response to the evening? About a third of the audience stood to commit to find a mentor and friend to bring things into the light about their private sexual lives. I made sure they knew this was a public commitment in the light. There was no “heads bowed” or “eyes closed.”

Thanks for partnering with Rebecca and I as we model this critical Biblical counsel for the staff at JFA and audiences we speak to. I’m convinced any success I’ve had in my sexual and relational behavior is because of the habit of honesty. Bringing things into the light brings such freedom from the private sins that haunt so many of us. *Honest* to (develop a habit of) *goodness*!

Would you also like to model this for the people in your sphere of influence? Over 100 ANSR attendees expressed their commitment to bring things into the light by joining the ANSR Facebook group. (Search “ANSR” at Facebook.) You can join too. Why not invite a teen friend, too?

For the One Who Is the Light,

*Stephen*

P.S. Read more quotes and audience comments at [www.stephenmwagner.com](http://www.stephenmwagner.com) (search ANSR).

**NOTE:** If you enjoy my newsletters and believe in the work I’m doing with Justice For All, would you consider joining my team of regular supporters? Rebecca & I are aiming to finish our support-raising by the end of summer. At present, we’ve raised 80% of our monthly need. Fill out [THIS SHORT ONLINE FORM](#) (or call 800-281-6426) to let us know if you would consider helping us get to 100%. Thanks! -SW