



Hey parents,

Last year I wrote an email about “13 Reasons Why.” Netflix has come out with season 2 and so I wanted to send out an email with some initial observations. I will start this handout the same way I did last year (I guess it is ok to plagiarize myself). As some of you are probably aware, a show on Netflix called "13 Reasons Why" was just released dealing with the topic of teen suicide. This is the most watch Netflix show ever produced. There is a good chance your teen is watching it or has already watched it. If not then they are most definitely hearing about it at school (especially for those who go to FA and CHS). However, there is a darker side to this show we need to be aware of. The Washing Post said:

“Educators and school mental health professionals across the country are warning parents about the Netflix series “13 Reasons Why,” saying the show’s graphic depiction of a teenager’s suicide could contribute to a “contagion effect” among students with mental illness and linking it to self-harm and suicide threats among young people.” <<http://wapo.st/2qz2OH5> >

I would like to take a minute to bring you up to speed from my perspective.¹

Now for the new information:

There are many questions I’ve been asked about the show over the last few days, most of them coming from youth workers and parents. “Should I watch it?” “Should I allow my kids to watch it?” “Do you think its accurate in its depiction of teenage life?” “How should we process this?” All of those are good and necessary questions. Allow me to offer some initial observations. . . and as usual, in no particular order. Bear with me here as my head is still spinning as I try to sort it all out.

1. The content warnings that run before each episode are warranted. The show is raw and blunt in its depictions of horrible things. Nothing like this made it to the small-screen just a decade ago. This show deals with some very mature themes; including suicide, depression, underage drinking, rape, premarital sex, drug use, broken families, homosexuality, revenge porn and bullying.

¹ I have not watched the show myself. Most of the content has come from Walt Mueller at CPYU.org (<https://cpyu.org/?s=13+reasons+why+season+2>). I copied and pasted most of the material, these are Walt’s words.

This show is GRAPHIC in its language (frequent use of the F-word) among other things. There are a couple times where nudity is shown, however no frontal nudity. There are scenes depicting multiple sexual assaults, and the final episode graphically shows the main character committing suicide.

2. This IS NOT a show for kids or young teens. It portrays even more extreme events. If you want to watch it with your mature teen, prescreen each episode.
3. The show tries to glorify suicide much less than season one. It succeeds in this endeavor.
4. 13 reasons still misses the biggest impact of suicide. Once gone a person is gone. There are no more conversations or revelations. Hannah Baker is still very present, and she wouldn't be. She even mentions it in a physical sense but she still fully lives on which just is not true or healthy to portray.
5. The creators of the show try to give a voice to a generation. Many of the monologue moments hit what the experts say the generation feels. They did their research, good for the show. Good insights for adults.

Observations from the shows content:

1. Sexual assault has very different impacts on victims. 13 reasons gave very good read on the deep and carried scars of victims.
2. The stats show many women have experienced sexual assault. This show really gives them voice and advances the convo. However not everyone has experienced it though the show says "every woman I know" has gone through it.
3. The pressure of groups like sports teams or friend clicks to look out for each other and be abusive to outside groups is real.
4. Counseling and support groups do not just talk at issues. Clay sort of blows them off as inadequate at one point which is a shame since they even help show members how to work through stuff.
5. Where is God. Barely a mention of God though it is super normal for even nonbelievers to wonder in times of tragedy. Here are the couple mentions
 - A "Me Too" moment where a youth pastor is mentioned in passing as a sexual assaulter. So sad this is a reality for even one girl let alone the many it is.
 - a funeral service at a church.

– *brief conversations with priest at that church.*

6. *Drug addiction is hard. It is not an easy cycle to come clean and even harder to stay clean. Well done, even though I wished addiction didn't look like this.*

Truths from God's Word:

1. You are not alone. “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

2. You have value. “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” “Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.” (1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 10:31)

3. God cares about your tears. “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

4. You can find help. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Psalm 46:1; Hebrews 4:15-16)

5. Your life has purpose. “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

6. What you are going through is temporary. “Do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)