

UNDER THE RADAR

WEEK 1

SAY: We're starting a new series today about the *things* we see and hear everyday that can affect us. The truth is this: we might not even know the affect these *things* are having on us – until it's too late. Those words are not meant to scare you; this is simply a truth we all need to know.

The *things* I'm talking about are temptations. Temptations can cause us to sin (make a poor choice). We'll take a closer look at some of these *things* (like music, movies, and our friends), and we'll discover what affect they can have on us. We'll also look at how we can protect ourselves. But, before we dive in too deeply, I have a question to ask.

ASK: Who knows what radar is and what it's designed to do? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Great answers! Radar is defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary like this: *"a device or system consisting usually of a synchronized radio transmitter and receiver that emits radio waves and processes their reflections for display and is used especially for detecting and locating objects (as aircraft) or surface features (as of a planet)."*¹

That's a really long way of saying that radar is a system designed to warn us of incoming things that could be on course to hurt us.

ASK: Who might use radar to detect incoming things?
(Potential answers: Airport Traffic Controllers use radar to track airplanes around the country, meteorologists use radar to track incoming storms, and the military uses radar to track their own aircraft, as well as incoming enemy aircraft or missiles)

ASK: Do you think WE have our own personal radar? *(Let the students respond)*

ASK: What do you think our personal radar is designed to do? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: These are all excellent answers! *(For the Leader: If you feel comfortable, share how your personal radar works for you)*

READ: Have one student read Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8 - *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* (New Living Translation)

SAY: This verse gives us a tool for making decisions about what kinds of things we should listen to, watch, do/play and say. It can also help our personal radar determine if incoming things are friendly or dangerous.

And speaking of danger, we definitely have an enemy that desires to destroy us – it’s the devil. And he’s a smart one, too. He knows our weaknesses and he works really hard to take advantage of us – to tempt us -- by using our weaknesses against us. To make it more complicated, temptations don’t usually come with warning labels. In fact, temptations often show up looking perfectly acceptable, normal and good.

Sins can happen when we give in to temptation. That’s when we end up making a poor choice. The whole thing sneaks up on us and we make a poor choice without even realizing what we’ve just done.

This is why we need to make sure our personal radar is working and that we use it. Does this mean it will stop every temptation and sin from sneaking up on us? No. Like I said, the devil is smart. And he’s good at what he does.

ACTIVITY: DULLED SENSES

(Use the onion and blindfolds)

ASK: For 4 volunteers to participate in an experiment.

SAY: The devil tempts us and sneaks up on us when our radar isn’t as fine-tuned as it should be. Often times we don’t detect possible dangers: we get so used to stuff because we’ve seen, heard, or said things a hundred times before. The things we do and the people we hang out with influence how well our radar works.

Instruct the participants to put on the blindfolds (no peeking!) and on your signal, hold the onion just under their noses and breathe in and out. Tell them to raise a hand when they can no longer smell the onion. [Have other students keep track of how long it takes for each participant to raise his/her hand]

ASK THE PARTICIPANTS:

- How strong was the onion smell at first?
- Did you notice the smell fading?
- What went through your mind as the smell faded?
- Did the onion lose its smell?

Say: The onion never lost its smell. It still smells like an onion, even now. The participants simply lost their ability to smell the onion. What causes this is called “desensitization”. As we get used to stuff, our senses are dulled and our bodies adapt to the situation. It’s like when your body gets used to intense physical activity the more you practice a sport, or when the swimming pool water seems cold when your first jump in, but then your body adapts to the temperature the longer you’re in the water.

The same thing is true for temptations and us. God is clear about what things we should be thinking about, seeing, hearing, and focused on. Remember Philippians 4:8?

We often say that someone or something has “crossed the line.” That “line” is what is acceptable, normal or appropriate. With God and His Word – the Bible - that line

doesn't change – ever. The world, however, seems to keep moving the line of what's appropriate, acceptable and normal. And this is not something new! No, even in Jesus' day, the line was being moved.

READ: Have one student read Matthew 21:12-13:

Matthew 21:12-13: *Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"* (New Living Translation)

ASK: Why do think Jesus was so upset by this? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Since way back in the Old Testament days, people had come to the temple to offer sacrifices to God. As times changed, it became acceptable to pick up your sacrifice from someone selling them. More convenient, I suppose. And the money changers were there to convert the money you brought from your hometown into money the temple could "bank." Only Temple Money was acceptable. The problem with the animal sellers and the money changers was that they overcharged or even cheated their "customers" in a big way!

ASK: Knowing what you do now, can you see why Jesus acted the way He did? *(Let the students answer)*

What was different? Why did He turn the place upside down? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: You're right! The Temple was supposed to be a sacred, holy place where God is worshipped and adored. Instead, it had become a convenience store where the people could "go through the motions" of making offerings and others were downright ripping people off. God hadn't changed, but the world had. The world wanted worship to be more convenient. The Temple leaders had made up their own rules about what kind of money they would accept.

CONCLUSION:

Over the next few weeks, we'll discover how we can easily become like those who came to offer sacrifices and got caught up in what the world says is acceptable and normal. The "line" of what's appropriate for us to see, hear, say and do has been moved again and again by the world we live in. As Christians, we have to stay focused on God's "line." As well, we will continue to discuss how we can keep our radar fine-tuned in order to identify temptations before they sneak up on us!

PRAY: *God, we thank You for making it clear what things we should think about and focus on. Sometimes we have trouble doing this, but we are so glad you're always there to keep us on track. We praise you in Jesus' name...Amen.*

UNDER THE RADAR

WEEK 2

AS SEEN ON TV (or the movies)

SAY: Last week we kicked off our series, *Under The Radar*, and I hope you had a great week and that your radar was on high def so that you could see any and all incoming stuff!! Or perhaps you weren't quite sure what was going on. Either way, I'm glad you're here this week because we are going to dig in to a couple of major influences in our lives – TV and movies!

But before we do that, let's review our key scripture verse, and then take a few minutes to see if your radar is working and what things are popping up on the screen.

ASK: Does anyone remember where our verse comes from? *(Let the students respond – have them find it in their Bibles)*

REVIEW: Philippians 4:8 - *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* (New Living Translation)

ACTIVITY: My Personal Radar Worksheet
(Give each student a Personal Radar Worksheet)

ASK: Do you remember what radar is and what it does? *(Let the students respond)*

And what about temptations? What are those? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Nice work! Thanks for the recap.

Let's take a few minutes to think about the past week and things you did or thought about doing, things you said, watched or listened to. Did any potential temptations show up on your personal radar? If so, plot and label them on the Personal Radar Worksheet just to get an idea of what things are starting to show up. If you're more comfortable simply plotting with symbols and not labeling the different things, that's okay, too.

(After a few minutes and as the students are finishing up)

ASK: Who is willing to share what sorts of things you picked up on your personal radar? No need to give specific examples, general types of things are totally fine. *(Let the students respond/volunteer)*

How did the things on your radar measure up to Philippians 4:8?
(true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy)

If they didn't measure up, what did you do or how did you handle the situation? *(Let the students respond)*

How long did it take you to figure out if they were in line with the scripture or not? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Thanks for stepping out and sharing with the group! It's not always easy to know whether things are temptations, with sin sneaking up on us or not. But the more you use Philippians 4:8 as your guide, the better off you'll be.

We briefly talked last time about how the world moves the line of appropriate, normal, and acceptable, but that the Bible clearly draws a line that doesn't move. This week we're going to talk about movies and TV. We all have our favorite movies and TV shows, and it's not my job to tell you what to watch or not watch. It is my job, though, to help you fine-tune your radar to defend yourself from the devil and his temptations. When we get used to things, especially things we see on TV or in the movies, our attitudes and our actions can be hugely affected!

What has become acceptable and appropriate at the movies has changed a ton over the years. Cursing, sexual situations and how much skin we see has increased so much over the past few years that even PG-13 movies are questionable for teens. A movie industry group determines movie ratings. This group uses a system that sets limits on what they believe to be acceptable amounts of cursing, nudity, drug or alcohol use, violence, etc.

Just because a movie-rating group sets a limit on what is and isn't acceptable to see and hear, doesn't make it actually acceptable. We have to compare it to Philippians 4:8. When we don't and we start thinking it's not a big deal, this is when our radar needs to be on and really working! If we regularly watch movies with inappropriate language and images we put ourselves in a tricky spot. We have to be careful to not get so used to stuff that we begin following the moving line of acceptable and appropriate. Because when we do, our attitudes toward things that don't line up with God can become relaxed, tolerant and maybe even accepting that these things are okay. Remember the onion from last week? Even though your noses got used the smell – the onion still smelled like an onion.

READ: Have several students take turns reading these verses for the group:
Acts 7:54-8:1; Acts 3:3; Acts 22:3-5

Acts 7:54-8:1: The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

Act 3:3: *But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.*

Acts 22:3-5: *... "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the Christians from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.*

ASK: What do these verses tell us about Saul? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Saul was putting Christians in prison or was involved in physically hurting or killing them. And it was perfectly acceptable and appropriate because of how the world, even the Jewish world, viewed followers of Christ.

ASK: But was it REALLY acceptable or appropriate? *(Let the students respond)*

SAY: Of course not! Even though Saul's actions were done in the name of God, God isn't in the attacking and abusing business. This is a perfect example of how the world defines what is okay to do and how people just go along with it. Fortunately, Jesus got a hold of Saul and completely changed him. As Paul, he became a champion for not doing what the world said is okay to do.

As much as we may not like it, we are influenced by the world and its definition of acceptable and appropriate. It shows up in what we say and how we act. Movies and TV drive this behavior in a big way.

ACTIVITY: Catch Phrase

(Write down the students' responses on the whiteboard or flipchart)

SAY: We pick up certain words or catch phrases because of TV shows and movies we watch. Help me make a list of these things we say – but keep it appropriate for this group. *(Let the students respond)*

[Possible 'starters': Doh! {Homer Simpson}; What's up, Doc? {Bugs Bunny}; These are not the droids you're looking for {Star Wars}; The tribe has spoken {Survivor}]

SAY: Thanks for the help. This just goes to show you that without the influence of movies and TV we might not say these things. But, because we spend a good part of our lives watching TV and movies, we begin to say the stuff we hear because it comes from a popular show or movie. We are influenced by the world around us. The key is to have our radar on and working to warn us of things that could tempt us to sin – like picking up a really inappropriate phrase to say...

One influence on TV that arrived in recent years is Reality TV. Over the last few years, the number of reality shows has exploded. Many sources report that just over 40% (or 4 out of every 10 shows) is a reality show. There are shows about families and their

lives, talent shows, makeovers, extreme contests, love, cooking, and the list goes on and on. Some, perhaps, have a positive message. But so many others show stuff of seriously questionable value.

SAY: Let's make another list. A list of Reality TV shows. (Make a list on the whiteboard or flipchart)

Which of these do you watch? (Let the students respond)

What do you like about the show or shows you watch? Does the show have a positive message? (Let the students respond)

Which ones don't send a positive message? (Let the students respond)

How much reality do you believe is actually in the shows? And does it depend on what kind of reality show it is? (Let the students respond)

Does the stuff you see in these shows influence how you talk, act or see yourself as a person? (Let the students respond)

>>Add that the way people behave on these shows may influence you NOT to talk or act a certain way<<

SAY: There's no doubt about it, Reality TV is hugely popular and it is a direct statement about our world and attitudes toward all kinds of stuff. We like to see what other ordinary people are doing and sometimes put ourselves in their place, thinking we could be doing the exact same thing. Some shows are fun to watch, while others could be sending the wrong message. Again, time for our radar to be on and working so that we can know the difference.

The danger in movies and TV shows is when the message they send is that alcohol and drug use, living together without being married, teen pregnancy, violence and extreme behavior (along with a lot of other stuff) are all normal, acceptable and appropriate.

CONCLUSION:

The influence of movies and TV on how we act or what we say – like the Catch Phrases -- is strong. When others are talking about movies or TV shows we want to be in the know, too. It's natural to want to fit in and not be left out. But because of how they can affect our attitudes and behaviors, it's super important to make good choices about what types of movies and TV shows we watch. So many look totally harmless and even seem appropriate because of their rating and our friends all watch them. That's the temptation "super-power" – looks good, but isn't actually.

It's nearly impossible to avoid the negative and inappropriate messages movies and TV send. It's all about being alert and using your radar to identify a potential.

PRAY: Father, this world we live in can be really tough to figure out. Thank You for helping us keep our radar on and working great so that we can make good choices about what we watch on TV and at the movies. We praise You in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.