

Consider the Bait and Switch of 'Hooking Up'

One hundred and fifty college students on the campus of the University of Southern California have poured into a lecture hall to hear me. To make matters worse, they have no idea what's coming.

All they know is that they have come to a "Relationships Forum" and that some older guy is going to be talking on sex, love and dating. What they do not know is that I am about to gently but firmly pass along what I know about a coming apocalypse of consequences related to their favorite pastime—hooking up.

The forecast for tonight's meeting is increasing clouds, a 100 percent chance of thundershowers and golf-ball sized hail. We are going to have an adult conversation about adult things because they are swimming in the deep end of very adult behaviors that have big consequences their *young adult* minds can't quite comprehend yet.

This is what I know about my audience from all the research smarter people than me have been compiling on the hookup generation:

- Just under half of the freshmen in the room already have had sexual intercourse in high school.
- Over half of the students in front of me have had oral sex within the last 30 days.
- Three quarters of the females have had "casual" intercourse in the last year.
- Every third boy I see has had three or more sexual partners within the last year.
- 75 percent of the girls and 55 percent of the guys who have had sex in high school or college privately regret

it and wish they could have a “do-over”

After letting them know we were going to set a course for the stormy waters of sex, love, dating, hooking up and what the latest research is revealing on the subject, I made an appeal of sorts to help soften the inevitable blow. The subject of young adult sex is, literally, *touchy* on many levels. So my appeal went like this:

“Tonight, please remember that I am not your mom or your dad, your rabbi or your pastor. But *I am* your friend. Friends watch out for each other. Friends advise and guide with your best interests at heart. Friends tell you what they know—especially if it will protect you from harm. So please repeat after me: *KENNY IS MY FRIEND.*”

And with one voice they all indulged me and labeled me a “friend.”

Likewise, whether you are a young adult or a parent, a virgin or actively sexual, *please remember* before you read on that I am, above all, your friend. I am a friend who has dedicated a lot of his life to researching, writing and speaking on the topic of sex and relationships. I am a friend who has psychologically assessed thousands of sexually broken people. I am a friend who spends a lot of time reading articles no one cares to read about love, sex and dating because I hate the heartache and pain connected to the misuse and abuse of sex between men and women. So as your friend please allow me to say to you up front—*your personal approach to sex and sexual activity as a young adult matters more than you could ever imagine.*

Trust me. Stay close. Lean in.

A Sexual War Zone

Today’s sexual landscape resembles a forbidding war zone.

War zones afford little control to those caught up in them and, as time passes, they desensitize soldiers and citizens alike. A new normal pervades and, along with it, a new mentality that breeds newer behaviors that once upon a time seemed inconceivable.

Young adults today live in an environment where every aspect of their existence is sexualized by culture.

In the thick jungles of this sexual Vietnam, morals are overwhelmed by a trillion-dollar digital marketing barrage. Like wallpaper, display screens and media everywhere normalize every type of sexual engagement but the most pornographic. But now even those shades of black and white are turning grey with much enthusiasm. Young adults feel entitled to engage in this world of "sexcraft" but most are not ready for it on multiple levels. Recent research and surveys among high school and college students reveal a pendulum swing of titanic proportions.

Most young adults live daily in a culture where:

Sex is expected. Young adults feel obligated to be with a lot of people sexually and are not having much success going against this pressure. Over 50 percent of all high school graduates, across multiple studies, report having had sexual intercourse. For those 16 years or younger engaging in sex, these young adults will have between 3-5 more sexual partners before the age of 20.

The sexual experience is bad. Feelings of obligation and peer compulsion are the worst drivers for sexual encounters. Thirty percent of these encounters for females 16 and older are NOT voluntary. For girls under the age of 15 that number increases to over 40 percent. To this end, it is no surprise that 20 percent of college females report being forced to have sex against their will. These sexual experiences are bad.

Young adults are depersonalizing their sexual

partners. They have sex and “move on” mentality has caused young adults to completely bypass the connecting process which affords others consideration. Potential sexual partners exist to meet a need and in the process are depersonalized and discounted emotionally. Lust, not love, is the driver of the hookup mentality which engenders a condition of strong emotional detachment. Boys are using girls. Girls are using boys. Neither sex really caring or considering what they are *actually doing* to each other and to their relational futures.

Drugs and alcohol are numbing and fueling hookups. Casual sex in both the high school and college settings are being directly correlated to an increased presence of drugs and alcohol. What students and young adults can't or won't consider sober, they will find the courage to experiment and indulge in while intoxicated. It's also important to note that the majority of non-consensual sex and sexual violence occurs in the context of a hookup when alcohol or drugs are present.

Have sex and move on with your life, right? Didn't *mean anything* right?

The Bait and Switch of the Cultural Narrative

Ask any young adult who is sexually active the following questions:

1. *Does a pat on the back communicate something to you?*
2. *How about when another person hugs you?*
3. *What about when you high-five a friend?*

Their responses, like yours, would be immediate and expected. A pat on the back communicates encouragement. A hug communicates comfort or closeness. And a high five signals agreement.

Then ask the same young adult: *What about sex with another*

person?

Kenny Luck is the president and founder of Every Man Ministries. As the former men's pastor at Saddleback Church in California and current leadership pastor at Crossline Community Church, Kenny has found the proven way to improve men's ministries around the world.

For the original article, visit .