

# Session One:

## Body Image

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“The Media is the message and the messenger.”

### Discussion Questions:

1. Reread Matthew 6:22. God gives light to our sight; otherwise it is like we are sitting in a dark room where we cannot see. What did you see in this film so far? What do you think God might be calling your community to see?
2. The film tells the story of its creator, Jennifer Siebel Newsom, who channeled her pain inward from an early age and had to fight her way out of it. Newsom started to act, only to find that her agent wanted her to lie about her age and her Master’s Degree in Business. What does this say about Hollywood and bodies to you?
3. The film states that 78% of 17-year-old girls are unhappy with their bodies. Why do you think that is? No matter your age, how do you view your own body? What did you learn – and what is missing – in the film’s portrayal about the ways age and race/ethnicity intersect with being female? In what ways can we encourage more positive self-images for everyone, no matter our gender, race and ethnicity, or age?
4. The film suggests that selling cosmetics and beauty products is a lucrative industry. How is the advertising for these products sending us detrimental messages about ourselves and our bodies? Did you realize how heavily advertisers touched up photos and photo-shopped models’ bodies? Does this change your perception of beauty as defined by the media?
5. In what ways do you think these messages about bodies particularly affect children and teenagers?
6. Think about what you think is most central to a Lutheran expression of faith. How might faith speak to the images we see and the problems we face?
7. *If there are no teenagers in the group:* What do you think teenaged girls and boys would say if they saw and talked about this film? What differences do you notice with your own reactions? In what ways do these differences matter?

*If there are teenagers in the group:* What do you think older adults would say if they saw and talked about this film? What differences do you notice with your own reactions? In what ways do these differences matter?

8. Many of the people in the video were worried for someone. For whom are you worried?
9. What can you imagine could change because God gives light to the sight of the *whole* community?

## Session Two: The Portrayal of Women in Leadership

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“We still observe the physicality, not the content.”

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is one significant thing that struck you in this segment?
- 2) In one or two sentences, what do you think the main point of this segment is?
- 3) The narrator in the film states: “The emphasis on women's appearance affects more than just women on screen. It is affecting women's ability to participate in the political process. Yet the more power women gain, the stronger the backlash against them.” In general, do you think that society treats female leaders more harshly than male leaders? What about in the ELCA? What examples come to mind?
- 4) In Session 1, we learned that the United States is 90<sup>th</sup> in the world in regards to women being in leadership positions. Were you surprised? Why or why not?
- 5) The film discusses how women in politics are treated poorly by the media. One example was using the title “Mrs. Clinton” in referring to Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State. Do you think using a title that indicates her marital status (especially since she uses the title “Ms.”), rather than her title in the government, is a way to diminish her accomplishments? Why or why not?
- 6) Reread the quote from Proverbs 31. Having seen the film, how do you read the passage differently? In your congregation are women lifted up for their leadership, strong faith and God-fearing ethics? How can you do it more often?
- 7) The film suggests that as women gain power in public office and private businesses, they are symbolically losing power in the media. The film specifically points to reality television as the “contemporary backlash against women’s rights.” Why do you think backlashes might happen? Do you believe this is a coincidence or intentional?
- 8) Geena Davis points out that G-rated female characters are just as likely to be shown wearing sexually revealing clothing as characters in R-rated movies. In what ways do we *all* feel pressured to perpetuate the current system that objectifies<sup>1</sup> women?

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<sup>1</sup> Objectify: to make an object out of; to act as if one possesses another or can control another.

- 9) The film points to a high number of female journalists and news anchors who are or were objectified and sexualized. Why does this happen? What does this suggest about news shows as information versus entertainment? What can be done about it?
- 10) In what ways do you think the media's portrayal of women as "perfectly beautiful," vapid, and sexualized influences your personal and communal views of women as leaders? In other words, how do these images affect women and girls themselves? And how do you think these images affect your congregation's responses to women and girls in leadership? –and the ELCA's responses to women and girls in leadership?
- 11) The film encourages us to lift up women in our communities for being strong leaders. Whom in your life do you look up to for being a strong woman? Think also of some women of all ages who with a little support could go on to do great things.

## Session Three: The Media and the Church

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“We see the world and we replicate the world we grew up in.”

- 1) From your perspective, what was the main point of the conclusion of the film?
- 2) How do you define *sexism*?
- 3) Compare what you think with one way *sexism* has been defined by sociologist Allan Johnson. He describes it as the promotion of male privilege, found most notably in patriarchal social systems, which are male dominant, male identified, and male centered.

Although this stark definition can be a bit jarring, think about what each phrase means. For instance, in the United States, which sex dominates politics, the media, money, and church leadership? By which sex is “good” or “right” leadership identified? From whose perspective is the world seen and ordered—whose view of the world is most commonly promulgated—from whose eyes and in whose voice is reality seen and talked about?

- 4) What connections does the film make between sexism in the media and violence?
- 5) Now that you have seen the film in its entirety, what most helped you to see issues about women in the media? What was missing for you?
- 6) In pairs or in the whole group, share how these images affect you or make you feel.
- 7) Where is God in all of this? Is God on television or in magazines?
- 8) Where is the Church in all of this? What roles does faith play in our daily interaction with the media?
- 9) In what ways do we carry the media’s message of objectifying and degrading women into the sanctuary or Bible study? In what ways might the Church itself be a form of media that sometimes aligns with media messages—and sometimes not?
- 10) In what ways do we carry the media’s message to the election and treatment of leaders in the congregation? The synod? The ELCA?
- 11) We have observed that “the media we follow tell us what is important.” In what ways have you found this is true? What do you think we can do about what is harmful in the media?

- 12) Reread the passage from Romans 8. How do you read the passage now? What do you think about the tension represented in this verse between God's action and human waiting or passivity? For what do we hope? To what does God call us?
  
- 13) How will we begin to act out for what we hope?