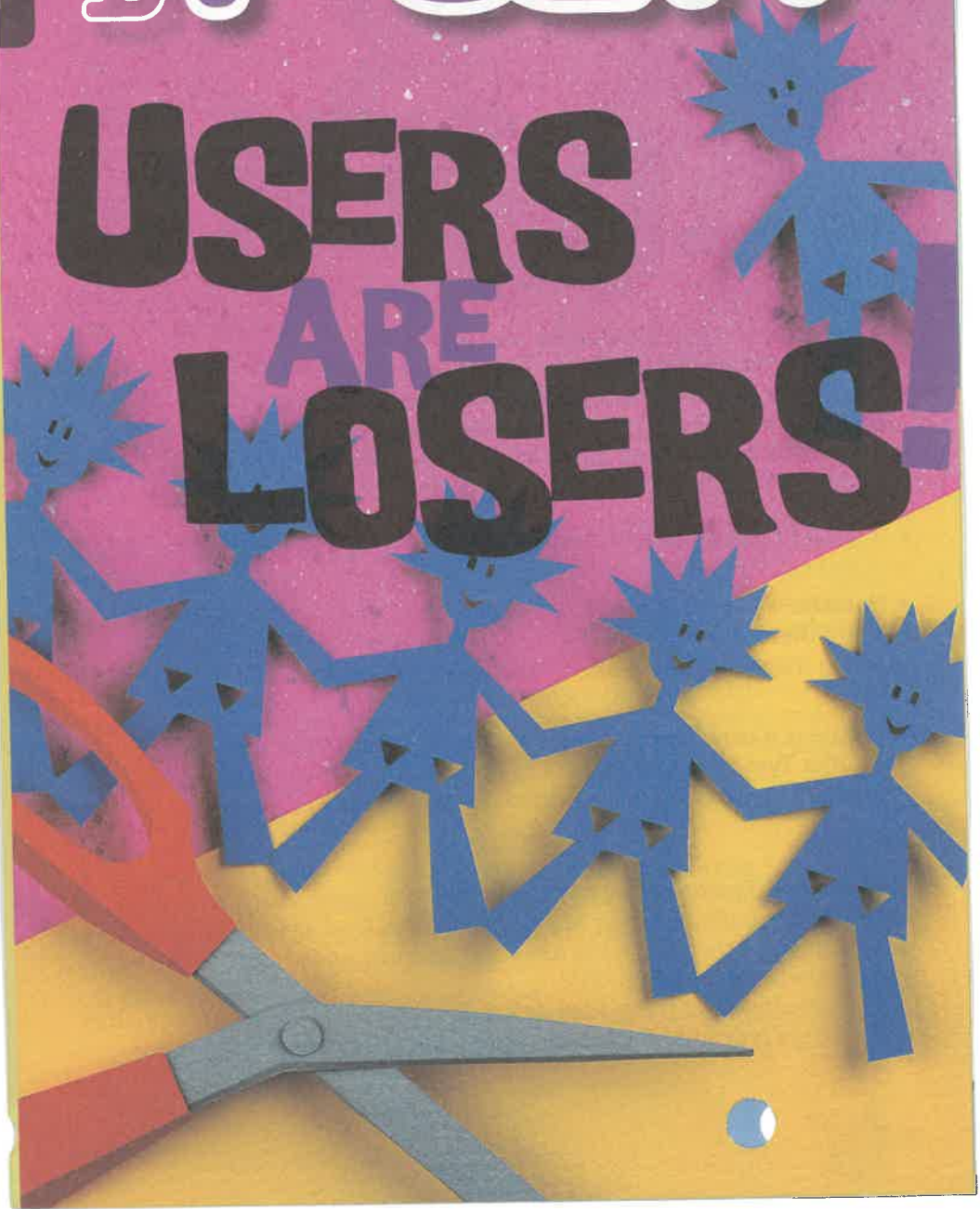


the rack

USERS ARE LOSERS!



USERS ARE LOSERS!

Years ago, a popular anti-drug ad coined the phrase "users are losers" in order to keep people from harming themselves. Today we can remember these words to keep from harming our relationships because it's possible to use people.

- Natasha is a user. James acts like she doesn't exist. But Natasha's heard that his best friend Jackson sort of likes her. So she's been acting friendly to Jackson, hoping to get to James.
- Tyrone is a user. He spends a lot of time at Derrick's house. It's not that Tyrone has any desire to be friends with him. But Derrick has the largest collection of video games this side of Japan.

Natasha and Tyrone both use people. The root cause of "people abuse" is a misunderstanding of what we are created for. God intends for us to love people and use things. All His rules are summed up in loving Him and loving others (Mark 12:28-31).

But somehow that has gotten switched around. We live in a society that loves things (cars, money, power, fame) and uses people.

**So what are the early symptoms of people abuse?
There are three clues.**

1. USERS FOCUS ON THEMSELVES, RATHER THAN ON OTHERS.
When faced with a decision, Natasha and Sean's first thoughts are: *What's in it for me? How am I going to benefit from this?*

2. USERS FOCUS ON WHAT THEY CAN GET, RATHER ON WHAT THEY CAN GIVE.
Brielle needed a ride to the mall to meet her friends. So when Cayden asked her to go get ice cream, Brielle said "yes." But as soon as she finished her extra-large double-dutch-chocolate-mint shake, Brielle said she had to run and left Cayden staring at two empty cups.

Like Tyrone, who uses Derrick for free video games, Brielle looks at people as a means of getting what she wants. To users, giving unselfishly of themselves to others is as foreign as Singapore. (A rather small country, by the way.)

3. USERS FOCUS ON THE "NOW," RATHER THAN ON THE "LATER."
Jess is always taking advantage of her friends. The money she's borrowed—and not paid back—could pay off most of the national debt. She expects them to do her homework and save her places in line while she takes her time getting to the cafeteria.

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Nellie Davis

READ all about Jacob's trickery in Genesis 27:1-24, 30, 41.

Pretend that the three characters from this story—Rebekah, Isaac, and Jacob—are visiting your class today. They are going to ask you some tough questions. How will you answer them?

Rebekah asks:

1. "God promised that Jacob would be the greater. I only wanted to help God do what He promised to do. So where did I go wrong?"

2. "What do you think I should have done?"

3. "How do you think this story might have turned out if I hadn't tried to do things my way?"

Isaac asks:

1. "It was the custom among my people for the oldest son to get the blessing. Why shouldn't I think God was following that pattern?"

2. "What do you think I should have done when I discovered I'd been deceived?"

3. "How do you think this story might have turned out if I had known God's plan?"

Jacob asks:

1. "God promised I would be the greater. I only did what I did to help God fulfill His promise. I even obeyed my mother—we're supposed to obey our parents, you know. So what did I do wrong?"

2. "What do you think I should have done?"

3. "How do you think this story might have turned out if I hadn't tried to do things my way?"

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Genesis 27:1-24, 30, 41

¹When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son."

"Here I am," he answered.

²Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. ³Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."

Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac

spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, ⁸Rebekah said to her son Jacob,

"Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and

prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.' ⁹Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: ¹⁰Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. ¹¹Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."

¹²Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. ¹³What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing."

¹⁴His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me."

¹⁵So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it.

Bible Study

¹⁵Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins.

¹⁷Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. ¹⁸He went to his father and said, "My father."

"Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"

¹⁹Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing."

²⁰Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The Lord your God gave me success," he replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."

²²Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. ²⁴"Are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"I am," he replied.

³⁰After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.

⁴¹Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

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And so her friendships don't usually last longer than half a grading period. But that doesn't bother Jess. After all, there are over a hundred students in her grade. She can always find some new friends.

Users don't focus on the long-range consequences of their actions. They simply want what they feel is good for them now.

But this addiction to people use has serious consequences. Maybe not as noticeable as those of a serious drug or alcohol addiction, but there are serious side effects.

As Jess is discovering, users often end up losing their friends. Sure, you can use a friend once or twice, and they'll usually forgive you. But once it becomes a habit, you'll discover you only have resentful ex-friends left.

Hard-core users don't even look for friends. They look for connections: Who can get me

what I want?

One of the biggest complaints in a survey of one thousand middle schoolers was summed up by a girl who wrote, "Why do guys just use you? And then when they get what they want, they just toss you away?"

Loss of respect is another side effect of people use. Logan got the reputation of being someone who used girls. Word soon made its way around the school, and now Logan spends Friday nights at home with Mom and Dad. Users are losers.

So, is it your life? Using people can be addicting like misusing drugs and drinking alcohol. Don't let yourself get hooked! People, yourself included, deserve better because God made them in His image. Before you step over someone else to get to where you want to go, think about where you're going and what you're doing to get there.

Hard-core users don't even look for friends. They look for connections.

SHORTCUTS!

featuring
ERIC

Anybody who follows a recipe has no imagination! I do it my way!



Anybody who does his own homework is crazy. Make somebody do it for you.



Anybody who's too scared to cut through Mr. Pape's backyard doesn't deserve his bike!



Anybody who takes shortcuts deserves what he gets! Right, teacher?



every day devos

In His Name

***"And whatever you do,
whether in word or deed, do it
all in the name of the Lord Jesus."
Colossians 3:17a***

W

***hen we remember that everything we say and do reflects on Jesus,
little things take on special meaning.***

MONDAY Think back to the last argument you had with a friend. Now picture Christ standing by your side at the time. Write out some things you might have said or done differently.

TUESDAY Think about the time spent with your parents during the last week. Pray and ask God to show you what could have been done to improve that time. Write down changes you can make this week.

WEDNESDAY Although you may not like school, choose the subject you're best in and spend an extra 15 minutes on homework in that subject. Pray and ask God to bless the talent He's given you in that area.

THURSDAY Today, choose the subject you have the most trouble with. Spend an extra 15 minutes on that homework. Then pray and ask God to provide outside help in that area.

FRIDAY In some small way, put the needs of another family member before your own needs today. (Let your sister have the bathroom first. Do dishes for your mom.)

SATURDAY Do you shortchange God during your day? Spend time alone tonight—apart from friends, TV, everything. Tell God about your week and ask Him to prepare your heart for church tomorrow.

