# Workshop: Discussion Notes

Sarah’s Diary

How a very good Christian girl could be seduced by her principal

Written by Ann Hamel and Cheri Corder

**For the facilitator**

Please review the discussion questions. Consider these answers and ideas ahead of time.

* How does Mr. M groom Sarah to accept his advances?
  + He builds her up, saying she is more mature than the other kids, making her believe she is more on his level
  + He gives her the idea that they have a future working together as teachers
  + He “tests” her by stepping on her toes, paddling her with the ping pong paddle, and eventually giving her little side-to-side hugs
  + He tells her there is “something special” between them
  + He wrote her a letter over summer break
  + He wins her father’s trust
* What makes her vulnerable?
  + She’s young
  + She trusts Mr. M completely
  + She seems to need the attention
* What is the power differential between them?
  + He’s an adult, her teacher, her principal, her boss, a leader at church. This is obvious in her inability to call him by his first name
* Why doesn’t she tell on him?
  + She’s in love, and loyal
  + She enjoys it and feels guilty
  + She feels responsible for what is happening and believes she will be blamed
  + She doesn’t want him to go to jail
  + She doesn’t want her dad to kill him, and go to jail
  + She doesn’t want her dad, who isn’t a Christian, to be put off about God or the church
  + Even when she’s in college, he has kept her guilt and shame fresh. It would be one thing to tell the counselor about something that happened when she was younger, but another to “confess” to something that happened two weeks ago.
* Sex offenders can seem humble but really can be very arrogant. What specific examples can you give of Mr. M’s arrogance?
  + Taking Sarah’s virginity while her mother was in the building
  + Going to her house and taking her on a motorcycle ride in front of her parents
  + Giving the class an assignment so he could take her somewhere to “be lovers”
* You can tell that Sarah feels responsible for the relationship because she mentions several times that “she” needs to be more careful. She even plans what she would do to defend Mr. M if he was caught. What makes Sarah feel responsible for the relationship?
  + Mr. M tells her she is responsible because of her hair, her outfits
  + Her dad talks to HER, not to Mr. M, about going on the motorcycle
  + Feeling responsible helps her feel like his equal
* What impact does her relationship with Mr. M have on her relationship with God?
  + She feels guilty and stops praying
* How does the experience change her view of herself and of her future?
  + She wondered for a while if she even had the *right* to get married
  + She doesn’t think the kind of guy she wants would accept her
* Any other observations?
  + Seeing Mr. M being lovey-dovey with his wife makes her question whether she can trust other things she observes
* Do you believe Mr. M really did love Sarah? If so, how would you describe that love?
  + He seems to have had a strong emotional bond to her, but wouldn’t real love for a student *prevent* a romantic relationship? He was acting out a sex addiction, seeking to meet very unhealthy needs.
  + He had the power to make a difference in Sarah’s life… and he did. But it was for evil. It was serving his own selfish desires, rather than meeting her genuine needs as his student.
* Once Sarah is in college and an “adult”, is it now an affair or a continuation of the abuse?
  + When a young person experiences trauma (even if they don’t perceive it as such), they fail to continue maturing and until they get help, they often stay the same emotional age as when the trauma occurred.
  + There is more to consider than Sarah’s age. The situation is not black and white. Remember that she still does not feel she can call Mr. M by his first name.
* Even in college, Sarah does not think of the relationship in terms of abuse. She thinks of it as an affair.

1. What would you say to her to help her understand it was abuse?

* Perhaps observing other girls the age she had been, especially interacting with a teacher about the age Mr. M had been, would be helpful.

1. In what ways would it be hard for her to make that shift in her thinking?

* She has believed most people would think *more* of her if they knew “such a wonderful man loved her”. This is key to her self esteem. To accept that he did not really love her but was using/abusing her (even if he did have some level of emotional attachment to her) would be a major shift in her self-concept. She would also have to accept that she had not been his equal after all, shifting from the concept of “adultery” to “abuse”, from being the love of his life to being his victim.
* Let’s say Sarah does marry. Can you imagine a scenario where she and her husband can be friends with Mr. & Mrs. M? Could Sarah ever teach at the same school as Mr. M?
  + No, and no. If Mr. M truly realizes the impact of what he has done, and how manipulative he has been, he will never put himself, his wife, *or Sarah*, in that situation. Also, once Sarah understands the nature of their relationship, she would not go.
* Let’s say Sarah does come to terms with the true nature of this relationship, and confronts Mr. M about all the losses and difficulties it caused her. What are some practical things he could do to make things right?
  + *Sincerely* apologize, expressing understanding for what he has done to her.
  + Cover counseling expenses.
  + Pay for college.
  + Repay her parents the tuition, plus interest.
  + Leave her alone; have *no* contact. Should they both be in Heaven, they can reconnect then.