



Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia

St Mary's Cathedral

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

Bible Studies: Love, Sex & Marriage (Leaders Notes)



Our Mission:

*To glorify God together in response to his grace
by making disciples of Jesus Christ*

About These Studies

These studies were written by various SMACC leaders for use among university students. You are most welcome to use and adapt these studies for your own context. Where you do so please provide the following acknowledgment.

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Notes For Leaders

The following notes are designed to help leaders in leading these studies effectively.

Study 1:

Main point: God's designed marriage with a specific pattern as lifelong intimate one-flesh union between a man and a woman that they may serve God's purposes. This specific pattern is fulfilled by the ultimate marriage between Christ and the church.

Study 1: God's Design For Marriage & Relationships

Launching Questions

1. What criteria would you have for the person who would become your future spouse?
2. What do you think makes a good marriage?

Context

In Genesis 1, we read that God is the loving creator of the whole universe, including every human being every animal and everything else. This shows us that God knows what's best for us as our loving maker. It also shows us God has the authority to tell us how we should relate to one another. This is why in Genesis 2, man is forbidden from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because as God, only God can truly decide what is right and wrong.

*We also see in Genesis 1:26-27, that humanity is made in God's image. This involves two key aspects. We share in God's **rule** (having dominion over the created world) and in **relationship** (God says let "us" make man in our image). We are one humanity in two genders, reflecting God's Triune nature. We see these two aspects fleshed out in Genesis 2 in human **work** and human marriage.*

Read Genesis 2:15-25

Although creation was repeatedly declared "good", indeed "very good" in Genesis 1, something is "not good" in Eden.

3. Why is it 'not good' that Adam was alone? Was Adam lonely? (cf. God's purpose for humanity in 1:28, 2:5, 2:15)

There is no evidence to indicate so. Being alone and being lonely are not the same thing. If the problem was simply loneliness, God would have created a companion or a friend. But what Adam need was a helper, a complementary partner.

It is not good that Adam is alone, because Adam cannot be fruitful and multiply by himself. And one man cannot exercise over such a vast world. The job is simply too big for him.

The question can be used to probe on cultural habits of thinking that we are only "half a person" if we are not attached to someone else.

- a. How will Eve help solve the problem of 'being alone'?

Eve was a helper fit for him (2:18), and there is also companionship. Together, they can multiply, and together fulfil God’s purpose of ruling the world.

b. What does this tell us about the purpose of marriage?

Companionship, and to carry out God’s purposes as told to man (multiply, subdue, have dominion over the living things on earth and work the land). Marriage is about serving God (Christopher Ash) – to bring up children to know the LORD.

c. Is it godly then to not want to have children in your marriage? (cf. Psalm 127)
V3 talks about children being given by God as a blessing. It is a great calling to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Marriage is for children. If we are not willing to have children, we should remain single.

Of course, there are some here today who can’t have children. Either because they’re not married, or they’re unable to. But yet we rest in the assurance that our value and our worth is not tied up in being a mother or a Father. But as children of God. Made in his image. Redeemed by his Son. Loved by him. We continue to trust him and serve him in whatever situation he has placed us.

4. What does it mean that Eve is a “helper fit for him”? (2:18)

She was found to be suitable amongst all the other creation to be his helper.

a. Does this mean women are inferior to men? Why/why not?

No, Adam and Eve are made by God, in His image – equal in value but distinct in gender and roles.

b. Look at the following statement - would you agree with it? Why / why not?

“WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female. WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.”¹

c. What does this passage teach about the roles that God intends men and women to play?

Man as the leader, woman as the helper. The man is created in orientation to the world - to work. The woman is created in orientation to the man – to be his helper.

By creating humanity male and female, we reflect the Triune nature of God.

¹ Nashville Statement: a Coalition for Biblical Sexuality - Article 3.

If you wish there are further statements to evaluate in the appendix at the end of this study.

For while the Father and the Son are equal in their divinity, they have different roles. The Father plans and sends. The Son is to submit and obeys. Equal status. Different roles.

We see this complementarity expressed supremely in marriage. One man and one woman. Equal value different in role.

5. Look carefully at verse 2:24-25. What do they teach about God’s intention for marriage?

<i>²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother</i>	<i>The man shall leave his parents to start a new family unit</i>
<i>and hold fast to his wife,</i>	<i>The man is to remain faithful to his wife</i>
<i>and they shall become one flesh.</i>	<i>Two will be united. Physical union, not spiritual union (1 Cor 6:16-17)</i>
<i>²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.</i>	<i>They will live in intimacy and perfect trust with one another. The heart of the marriage is faith. The foundation of our marriage with God is also faith, though love is definitely also a part of it.</i>

6. How is God’s design for marriage affected by the fall? (Genesis 3:6-19)

In Genesis 3, we see the creation order reversed as Eve eats from the tree. Adam, who is with her fails in his role to lovingly lead the family. And the result of their sin is devastating.

Having eaten, they are no longer unashamed. Adam and Eve hide their nakedness from one another. With God’s good order now overturned, Adam and Eve become a threat to one another’s rule. And vulnerability is no longer safe.

Instead of taking responsibility, the man blames the woman. Children are affected by the fall. For the woman, there will be pain involved in childbearing (More answers can be discussed from the text, though not all are listed here).

a. How should this shape our expectations for marriage?

Marriage will be difficult. Because of our sin, we live under God’s curse. Part of that curse is that God will frustrate us from achieving the perfect relationship of

Genesis 2. And God does this, so that we would find our meaning and purpose, not in another person, but only in him.

Read Malachi 2:10-16.

7. What does Malachi 2:13-16 teach about God's desire for marriage?

- a. How does this desire reflect his expectation for their relationship with him as his people? (cf. Malachi 2:10-12)

Their unfaithfulness to God is being reflected in their unfaithfulness in their marriages.

- b. What does Jesus say about divorce laws in Matthew 19:1-12?

The laws were put in place because of a sinful people. This was not the original intention/design of marriage. Jesus is explaining that there is only one reason that marriages end in divorce: that is sin... It may be the sin of one party, or both. Perhaps one sins more than the other. But sin is always the cause of marriage breakdown.

- c. Why is it that a man who divorces and then remarries commits adultery?

To divorce and then remarry while your former spouse is still alive is adultery. Because in remarriage, you are now joining yourself in union to someone who is not your spouse you pledged to love for life. Man should not do so for himself (Matt 19:6)

There may be discussion of different situations. Leaders are advised to discuss accordingly and sensitively:

Divorce in the context of abuse, adultery, non-Christian spouses leaving etc.

Clear reasons for divorce: sexual immorality, desertion by a non-Christian spouse.

- d. From all this, what do we learn about what marriages should be like?

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

Paul has showed us God's big plan to make sinful people like the Ephesians (and us) his people. He did this through Jesus' death and resurrection and now, we can have an intimate relationship with Him. Having Jesus as our (head) ruler, we're called to love each other and build each other up since we are his (body) people. We must live differently from the world: to be selfless and separated from our sinful tendencies; to live like people saved by God.

8. How does this passage reflect and explain the roles of men/women in marriage we explored in Genesis 2?

Complementary roles – husband is the head, wives willing submit to the head.

13. Assess the statements below. What would you respond to someone who said this to you?

- a. *“Happy wife, happy life”*
- b. *“True love is being with the person who accepts me for me”*
- c. *“You need to start loving yourself more if you want others to love you”*
- d. *“Submission in marriage is out of fashion and it is no longer applicable in our modern world”*
- e. *“John & I don’t want kids. We are not good with kids & it’s probably better for everyone. We are very busy with our work & church- we think we will be ‘more effective’ without kids.”*
- f. *‘I have been married just over 9 years now. We have tried and tried to work things out together, but we are just too different. The feelings of love I had on my wedding day are gone, and all is left is awkwardness and silence. I think this is the end.’*
- g. *“My marriage is really having difficulties. I’m thinking of separating and moving back in with my parents.”*
- h. *‘I am hopeful that my marriage will be one of openness, intimacy, sexual fulfillment and the pursuit of personal significance’*
- i. *“We have different dreams & aspirations-my husband / wife and I. We love being married to each other because we support each other to fulfil our dreams. We give each other emotional, mental & physical support, & we understand each other when at times we ‘can’t be there for each other. I don’t want him to lose his dream because of me, if he/she thinks he/she needs to work overseas in Germany for 2 years to attain that dream – I won’t get in the way”*
- j. *“My Mum is insistent that I stay in the job that I am in now and which she helped me to get before I was married, because it pays really well and it gives me high standing in this dog eat dog world. My wife on the other hand has real problems with me staying out entertaining clients until 2 in the morning and just the general demands of the work. My mum says I will not be ‘honoring her if I quit. What should I do?”*

Prayer Points

- Thank God for the gift of relationships and the goodness of marriage. Thank God for bringing about the fulfilment of marriage with Christ’s work on the cross on behalf of his bride, the church.

- Pray for Christians you know who are married: ask God to help both husbands and wives conduct themselves in godliness and love towards one another, following the model of sacrificial love and submission outlined in Ephesians 5.
- Pray for those seeking a spouse, that they would desire a godly spouse according to God's design, not what the world seeks in a spouse.
- Pray that we will be satisfied in our relationship with Jesus above all

Book recommendation

1. Married for God, Christopher Ash
2. Not Yet Married, Marshall Segal
3. The Heart of Marriage, Michael Hill
4. The Meaning of Marriage, Tim Keller
5. This Momentary Marriage, John Piper (Also available free online)
6. Joined Up Life, Andrew Cameron
7. What did you expect, Paul David Tripp

1. Nashville Statement: a Coalition for Biblical Sexuality - Article 1, 2, 4, 5, 11, 12, 14

Article 1

“WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church. WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.”

Article 2

“WE AFFIRM that God’s revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage. WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.”

Article 4

“WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God’s original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing. WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.”

Article 5

“WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God’s design for self-conception as male or female. WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.”

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ’s death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure. WE DENY that the Lord’s arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

What do you think of the above affirmations?

Appendix 2: Extracts From The Prayer Book

a. A Service for Marriage – First Form (AAPB)

We have come together here in the sight of God, and in the presence of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony; which is an honourable state of life, instituted from the beginning by God himself, signifying to us the spiritual union that is between Christ and his Church.

Christ adorned and beautified matrimony with his presence, and with the first sign by which he revealed his glory, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; and Holy Scripture commands that all should hold it in honour.

It is therefore not to be entered upon unadvisedly, lightly, or merely to satisfy physical desires; but prayerfully, with careful thought, and with reverence for God, duly considering the purposes for which it was ordained.

It was ordained for the procreation of children and that they might be brought up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord, to the praise of his holy name.

It was ordained so that those to whom God has granted the gift of marriage might live a chaste and holy life, as befits members of Christ's body.

And it was ordained for the mutual companionship, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

b. A Service for Marriage – Second Form (AAPB)

We have come together in the sight of God for the joining in marriage of this man N and this woman N.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said of marriage that 'From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one." So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.'

Marriage is the symbol of God's unending love for his people, and of the union between Christ and his Church. So Saint Paul teaches that the husband must love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and that the wife must give due honour to her husband.

Marriage should be honoured by all, and is not to be entered into lightly or carelessly, but with reverent and serious respect for those purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Marriage is a gift from God for the well-being of mankind, and for the proper expression of natural instincts and affections with which he has endowed us.

It is a life-long union in which a man and a woman are called so to give themselves in body, mind, and spirit, and so to respond, that from their union will grow a deepening knowledge and love of each other. In the joys and sorrows of life, in prosperity and adversity, they share their companionship, faithfulness, and strength.

In marriage a new family is established in accordance with God's purpose, so that children may be born and nurtured in secure and loving care, for the well-being and instruction, and for the good order of society, to the glory of God.

a. SMC Wedding Template

We have come together in the presence of God, to ask his blessing on the marriage of "NAME OF BRIDEGROOM" and "NAME OF BRIDE", and to share in their joy.

The Scriptures teach us that marriage is a gift of God in the creation, a holy covenant in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with His church.

Marriage is given that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given, that they may have children and be blessed in caring for them and bringing them up in accordance with God's will, to His praise and glory.

In marriage, husband and wife belong to one another, and they begin a new life together in the community. It is a way of life that all should honour; and it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly, but reverently, responsibly, and after serious thought.

This is the way of life, created and hallowed by God, for which "NAME OF BRIDEGROOM" and "NAME OF BRIDE" now seek God' blessings. They will affirm their pledge to each other and in tokens of this give and receive a ring.

Therefore, we pray with them, that strengthened and guided by God, they may fulfil His purpose for the whole of their earthly life together.

What do you think of the above descriptions of marriage? Which best expresses the teaching of Scripture?

Study 2: To Marry or Not to Marry?

Launching Question

2. What are some of the challenges and opportunities that single people face as they seek to serve God?

Encourage people to open up and share how they honestly feel. Try to steer people to share both positive and negative things, so that it doesn't just become a "venting" session.

Read Matthew 19:1-12

3. Why do the disciples think that it might be better not to marry?

Marriage is a lifelong commitment.

4. What are some reasons that Jesus gives as to why someone may remain single?

Some will be single because of circumstances or the sin of others. Some will choose singleness for the sake of the kingdom. It is worth thinking why Jesus speaks of "eunuchs" and not just people who don't marry. Does this communicate something of the costly nature of singleness given how God has made us? (Cf. Ash, Married for God)

5. Although costly, Jesus challenges us to consider singleness as a real possibility that some should receive. How should this transform the way we relate to single people?

e.g. Not assuming that all Christians get married. Or looking down on Christians who don't get married. Indeed, it may be quite the opposite – that we should esteem their costly commitment to the Lord.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

6. Faced with a choice between singleness and marriage, which one does Paul consider "better"?

Paul wishes that all are as he is – i.e. single, but this is a suggestion not a command.

7. Why does Paul call marriage a "gift" and singleness a "gift"?

Because both are good gifts of God that can be used to serve and glorify him. Though in some ways singleness is better, both are good, and one or the other is to be desired under different circumstances. Whether we are single or married, we should not despise the state we are in.

- a. How do you know which gift you have?

Not about how you feel or what you desire. Not whether you are happy or contented in your current state. Otherwise you could just give up the "gift" of marriage when you thought you no longer had the gift. Imagine you thought you had the "gift" of marriage and no one suitable

ever comes along. Has God stopped being gracious? My gift is whatever my current state is, and this will likely change throughout my lifetime. To call both a gift implies that both states are good, not just marriage.

- b. How should calling both singleness and marriage a gift change the way we think about our current state (whether married or single) when we're finding it difficult?

Applying the above. Be content with whatever state you are in and see God's goodness in whichever state.

8. What principle does Paul give us in v17-24 to help us think about singleness and marriage?

Remain in the state you are.

9. If remaining singleness is better, does that mean Paul expects all Christians to remain single? Why/why not? (v8-9, v27-28, v36-38, v39-40)

No. He still expects that some will marry, and this is not sinful.

- a. If singleness is better, is it sinful (or less godly) if a Christian wants to marry? Why? Why not? (Cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-5)

No (although of course it depends on their reasons!) There are godly reasons to remain single, and godly reasons to desire marriage and there are ungodly ones too.

10. What advantages does Paul see in a single life? (v28-35)

Freedom from anxiety, easier to serve the Lord in an undivided way.

11. In the end, what is Paul's overriding concern?

Undivided devotion to the Lord.

12. If a Christian does decide to get married, why must they only marry "in the Lord"? (v39, cf. Dt. 7:1-5, Ezr. 9, Neh. 13:23-27, 1 Cor. 7:12-16, 39, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1)

Marriage is for serving God. And we can't assume that the other person will become a Christian. The more likely option is that in compromising on this command, it is the first step of many that may take us away from following Christ.

The following framework can be helpful in thinking about how to make wise and godly decisions about who to marry (if I choose to)

- **Matters of Righteousness**

- **Opposite Sex** - Gen. 2:24, Gen. 18-19,; Lev. 18:22, Matt.19, 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)
- **Not a close relation** - Leviticus 18, Deuteronomy 20, 1 Corinthians 5, Matthew 14
- **Not already married** - Matthew 19, 1 Corinthians 7:39, Luke 16:18
- **Marry a Christian** – Dt. 7:1-5, Ezr. 9, Neh. 13:23-27, 1 Cor. 7:12-16, 39, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1

- **Matters of Wisdom** (Titus 2:1-10, 1 Tim. 2:8-3:13, 1 Pet. 3:1-6, Eph. 5:22-33, Prov. 31:10-31)

The goal of the Christian who chooses to marry is to establish a godly marriage. Thus, the Christian should be looking for a counterpart who is committed to fulfilling that goal. It is also wise to marry someone with similar goals and hopes in life.

- **Matters of Triviality**

All other factors being even, feel free to choose who you like!

Read Matthew 22:23-33

13. We saw that marriage points forward to the heavenly reality of the covenant relationship between Christ and his Church. In what way should a single life prefigure heaven?

Like the angels, serving the Lord in a single-minded way.

14. How does this affect the way that we think about singleness and marriage?

Marriage and singleness is not ultimate. Both point to some aspect of the gospel. In the end, what matters is serving God, with your singleness or your marriage.

Application

15. Think about the best unmarried role models you know. What have you learned from them about how you may serve God as a single person? Are there any ways they are serving that they couldn't if they were married?

16. How do churches sometimes treat single people? Is this helpful or not?

17. How can the church (particularly those who are married) care for those who are feeling lonely or discontent in their singleness?

18. How can single people be encouraged to see their singleness as an opportunity serve God undividedly?

a. If you are single, how can you use this to serve the Lord undividedly now?

b. If you're married, how will you be devoted to the Lord in your marriage?

19. How would you respond to these people?

a. *"I can't be single. I don't have the 'gift'. I want to get married & have kids. I am sure God will bless me in this way as He created us to have relationships, 'to multiply & subdue the earth'. I can't possibly see myself being single for the rest of my life."*

b. *Could it be so wrong to 'go out' with someone who hasn't made a decision about God yet? Besides, she is half way there- she is keen & searching. She's been coming to church with me & asking questions. I am sort of the only 'Christian' contact she trusts. She has had some pretty bad experiences with cults in the past. Anyway, if you look around, you will see that a lot of people get 'converted' as a result of a relationship – it does work and God has blessed so many in the past."*

Prayer

- Pray that whether we are single or married, we would be undivided in our devotion to the Lord.
- Pray that we would be content in our current marital status and see it as a gift from God that can be used to glorify him.
- Pray that the church would effectively love and care for those who find it difficult or lonely to be single.

Study 3: Sex & Temptation

Launching Question

1. Which do you consider more important: what you think with your mind or what you do with your body? Why?

This question is asked particularly with the idea of sexual temptation in mind, but the question is more general than that. The aim at this point is to get people discussing what they think.

Context

A. God's Design for Sex

2. What is God's design for the place and purpose of sex according to Genesis 2:24-25?

God's design is a one-flesh union – with total vulnerability and no shame. The sexual union expresses and strengthens this unity within marriage.

3. According to 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Why is it important that married couples continue to invest in their sexual relationship?

Because of the temptation to sexual immorality (v2).

Because our bodies don't belong to ourselves but to our spouses. It would be unloving to deprive our spouse of this.

- a. How does it transform our thinking about sex, to know that our body belongs to our spouse?

Sex is about loving service, not self-gratification.

- b. How does that make a Christian view of sex different from the world?

In the world, sex is about self-gratification, fulfilling my sexual needs. The other person is there to serve me.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

4. In verses 12-14, Paul responds to two statements from the Corinthian church. What do you think the Corinthians meant by these statements? How does Paul agree and disagree with them?

- “All things are lawful for me”

This is probably a quote from some in the church who felt that they were above moral rules and that their bodies had nothing to do with their spiritual lives.

Paul agrees in the senses that Christians are not under the OT law. But disagrees that it means we can live however we want.

Paul gives two reasons:

- 1) "Not all things are helpful" – for me or for others. As we'll see, sexual sin is sin against our own body, but it's also sin against the Lord, our future spouse, and the person we've committed the sin with.*
- 2) "I will not be dominated by anything". Sin is enslaving, and that is particularly the case for sexual sin (Cf. Rom 6).*

- *"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"*

This is probably a quote from some in the church who felt that they were above moral rules and that their bodies had nothing to do with their spiritual lives. This classically comes from a particular Greek philosophical view and is probably also related to their denial of bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15).

In a sense Paul agrees with the statement. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. But the problem is its application. But this doesn't mean we can use our bodies however we like.

- 1) "The Lord will destroy both one and the other". God will judge us according to how we use our bodies.*
- 2) The body is created for glorifying God (cf. v20)*

5. Paul says "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body"? (v14). What does the Bible mean by "sexual immorality"? (cf. Leviticus 18, Deut 27)

Any kind of wrong sex, apart from sex to your spouse within marriage. This includes:

- *Fornication –sex before marriage*
- *Adultery –wrong sex within marriage to someone you're not married to*
- *Incest – sex with a close relative*
- *Bestiality –sex with an animal*
- *Homosexuality – sex with someone of the same sex*

6. What to verses 15-20, teach about the purpose of sex in marriage? How does this make sexual immorality so unthinkable?

Sex is the glue, that joins to people as one flesh. God has so designed us, such that when we sleep with someone, we crave that intimacy again and again. In marriage, that is perfect – because it leads to an ever deepening intimacy between husband and wife.

Sexual immorality is like spiritual prostitution. To be a Christian and to engage in sexual immorality is like taking Jesus to the prostitute, defiling him.

7. Why must the Christian take decisive action against sexual immorality?

*It is sin against our own body. Our bodies are a temple for the HS.
Our bodies are not our own but belong to Christ.*

- a. How is sexual immorality different to other sins?

Sin against our own body, but it's also sin against the Lord, our future spouse, and the person we've committed the sin with.

8. Read Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 6:20-7-27

- a. How do these verses emphasize the importance of fleeing sexual temptation?

It ends in destruction and death. We lose everything. Our sin will have dire consequences.

- b. What are some strategies suggested here for how to avoid temptation?

Listen to wisdom (5:1, 6, 7:24)

Stay far from her (5:8, 7:25)

Give your affections to your own wife (5:15-18).

Read Matthew 5:27-30

9. How do these verses help to shape our understanding of sexual sin?

It's not just about what you do, but also what you think. We must take drastic action and fight the battle of the mind. Because God made our bodies, our minds, our hearts, to glorify him. To showcase to the world, his steadfast love, and faithfulness. And to reject him, our Lord, our life giver, as Adam and Eve did, is to choose the path of death.

And Jesus warns here that perseverance in sexual sin, indeed any sin, will lead to judgement in hell. Radical action is required.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

10. What warnings are we given in these verses? (cf. Col. 3:5-6)

The sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- a. Why do you think Paul warns against being deceived (1 Cor 6:9)?

We can easily justify our actions, that their won't really be any consequences for our sin, either now or later.

- b. Does this mean there is no hope if I've already committed sexual sin?

There is hope in Christ, we can be washed, sanctified, justified.

- i) Jesus blood means we can be **washed**. Sin and especially sexual sin often makes feel dirty and stained. But Jesus blood means we can be washed of all our sins. Even serious sexual sin. Even repeated sexual sin. Sin you've been committing for decades. Sin that makes us so soiled. For there at the cross Jesus took on himself all our sin and guilt, bearing our punishment. So that we can washed clean.*
- ii) Jesus blood means we can be **sanctified** - that means to be made holy, blameless, set apart. When we sin sexually, we might feel unwanted by God. Ugly before him. But through Jesus death, we're purified, and set apart as his special child.*
- iii) Jesus' blood means we can be **justified** – that means to be not guilty. At the cross, not only does Jesus take the punishment we rightly deserve in our place. But he declares us righteous as if we never sinned. He gives us a fresh start. A clean slate. That is the promise of the gospel.*

- c. What encouragement is there for those who have committed sexual sin (in mind or body)?

Turn from these things and turn to Christ. And you'll be saved and forgiven.

No matter what sexual sin lies in our past, we can go to the cross, and find there the joy of sins forgiven. And a loving Lord, who embraces us and welcomes us. And we can find in him hope, and acceptance, and freedom.

Application

11. What specific and practical things can you do to “flee from sexual immorality”?

12. What particular steps can you take as a GG to help one another to fight pornography/lust/sexual temptation?

13. What steps can we take to remain pure and avoid sexual temptation in a dating relationship?

a. What helpful boundaries could/should be established?

b. What should you do if you've already crossed those boundaries?

14. *“Peter & I are just as good as married – we are only short of taking the vows & getting the legal piece of paper. We are very certain of our commitment to one another & we trust & respect each other deeply. So we decided it wasn't that important to wait for our wedding night. We have had sex a few times now & it has drawn us even closer to each other.*

How would you answer this person? What should they do?

15. Struggle with sexual temptation rob the Christian of joy, assurance and motivation to serve, but we feel too shameful to talk about it. How can we be more open and caring for one another in our struggles?

Prayer

- Thank God for the beauty and goodness of sex within marriage.
- Pray that God would enable us to be pure and holy and protect us from sexual temptation.
- Pray that God would give us courage to confess our failures to one another, and to help one another to live righteous lives in response to God's grace.

Study 4: Sexuality & Homosexuality

Launching Questions

1. What questions do you have about homosexuality and same-sex attraction?
2. How should Christians relate to people who feel attracted to the same-sex?

Context

In study 1, we have seen thus far that God's design for sex is within the lifelong union of a man and a woman in marriage. In study 2, we saw that any kind of sexual stimulation apart from constitutes sexual immorality.

The Big Picture

3. What do the following verses say about homosexual conduct?
 - Genesis 19:1-25
The city is intent on the on the Gang-Rape of Lot's guests, in an act of homosexual sex. Lot describes such an act as wickedness.

And God's response is swift. Moments later, the city is destroyed by fire from heaven.
 - Judges 19:22-30
Wicked, vile, outrageous.
 - Leviticus 18:22, 20:13
Homosexual sex is specifically forbidden in the strongest terms; it's an abomination. This sin was a capital offence.
 - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
Homosexual practice will be judged.
 - 1 Timothy 1:10
Homosexuality is described in this passage as one of the many things that ungodly, sinful people do.

Read Romans 1:18-32

4. Why is the wrath of God revealed? (18-23)

Because of humanity's ungodliness and unrighteousness. Part of the way that our ungodliness expressed is in our attitude to the truth. Sinful human beings bend or twist the truth according to our own preference. It is also ultimately our rejection of God and refusal to treat God as God.

5. According to verses 24-27, what is one way that this rejection of God expressed?

We create our own gods that resemble us; we remold and reshape god into the god of our own liking.

6. How are homosexual/lesbian acts described here? Why?

- Dishonorable passions.
- Contrary to nature.
- Shameless acts.
- Due penalty for their error.

It's very clear from all these verses, that the Bible sees homosexuality as a sin. A serious sin.

7. What does it mean that such acts are "contrary to nature"? (v26)

Nature here refers to God's deliberate design for marriage and sex in creation.

And that purpose is clear from our genitalia. Our sexual organs as men and women are designed for sex between a man and a woman leading to procreation. Not for same-sex.

Homosexual activity is against the order of nature.

Identity

8. Sometimes people who struggle with same-sex attraction describe their sexuality as part of their identity. What defining mark gives human beings value/significance if it is not their sexuality?

Gen 1:26-28

That they're created in God's image

1 John 3:1-3

We are God's children

9. How would recognising our identity "in Christ" help to liberate someone from the need to act on their desires?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

10. Is it possible to resist the urges to act on feelings of same-sex attraction?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

11. What hope is there for the person who struggles with same-sex attraction?

We're all sexual failures in one way or another. But the Bible reminds us that no matter what we've done – as we turn to Christ:

- We can be washed of all our sins – totally forgiven.
- We can be sanctified – made holy and blameless in God's sight.
- We can be justified – declared not guilty. Righteous

Every sin can be forgiven. Including homosexual sin. But only as we repent of it, and trust in Jesus death on the cross to save us.

12. How do they receive this fresh start? (cf. v18-20)

By fleeing from sin, and choosing to glorify God with their bodies.

13. What will repentance look like for the person who struggles with same-sex attraction?

Choosing to say no to same-sex attraction, embracing God's design for marriage and finding his/her ultimate value in that he/she is a child of God for whom Christ died, a member of God's own family. (Romans 8:12-15)

Application

14. How would you respond to the following statements?

- a. "I was born this way. I can't help it. This is who I am".
- b. "Doesn't God want us to love one another?"
- c. "Doesn't God want us to be happy?"

15. What should I do if I have feelings of same-sex attraction?

16. LGBTI advocates often describe Christians as “homophobic”:

- a. In what ways do Christians relate unhelpfully towards those who struggle with same-sex attraction?

- b. How should a Christian relate to someone who struggles with same-sex attraction?

If you have time, you might like to watch some of this video (42 minutes) and discuss:

<http://bit.ly/same-sex-attraction>

Pray

- Pray that God would help us to love and share the good news of Christ with those who struggle with same-sex attraction.
- Pray for those who struggle with same-sex attraction that they would find liberation, joy and forgiveness in Christ.