

SESSION 4: Sex

Notes for group leaders



LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

The topics that are being explored in this session are ones that affect people deeply and personally. It will be especially important not to make assumptions about each other's life stories or convictions, and to remember that these conversations may be much more difficult for some than others. It may be helpful to remind the group of the commitments that the course invites people to make, as well as the pastoral principles that are introduced at the beginning of each session.

Remember to prepare the group for the story films (see below), allowing space after each of them is shown, as they may trigger a strong emotional response.

Overview of the session

- Pastoral Principle: speaking into silence
- Story film: Mark & Esther
A couple engaged to be married, one of whom is divorced.
- Learning together: sex and bodies
- Story film: Andrew & Gerhard
A gay couple in a civil marriage worshipping in a church where views about same-sex relationships are mixed
- Bible study: 1 Corinthians 6.12-20
- Learning together: sex and relationships
- Reflection and prayer

The following notes relate to the interactive elements at the end of each of the sections.

Discussing together: sex, bodies and intimacy

Allow 15 minutes for this discussion.

Begin by inviting people to share what they found challenging or striking.

Here are some questions to get the group discussion going:

- What aspects of sexual behaviour and attitudes in our culture do you find worrying?
Liberating?
- What form does intimacy take in your life – with friends, with God?

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

Invite the group to share their thoughts on the Bible reading and reflections. Here are some questions to help the group explore the passage together:

- What similarities, if any, do you see between Christians today and the Christians in Corinth?
- What difference does it make to you that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?

Discussing together: sex and relationships

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

This part of the course is deeply personal. It's important to remember that there may be a variety of experiences relating to sex, intimacy and relationships within the group, some of which may be painful and may rise to the surface when these matters are discussed. As leader, you will need to look out for people's responses and to listen out for comments that may be insensitive or hurtful, and to encourage mutual respect and gentleness in the conversations.

One way to begin the discussion is by inviting people to share any new understanding that the session has brought to light.

Here are some questions for the group to consider, as appropriate:

- What questions from those who don't share your view about sexual relationships do you find most challenging?
- How, in practice, does your church show the radical welcome of Jesus, while upholding Christian convictions about sexual relationships?

Reflection and prayer

Different groups have different ways of praying and ending their time together. Feel free to find ways of praying and concluding that feels natural for the group. Here is a prayer you might wish to use to conclude the session:

Most holy God,
when we come to you fearing that truth condemns us,
show us that truth is one with love
in your Word made flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

It may be appropriate to let the group know what pastoral support is available locally in case this or any of the other sessions have raised difficult issues for individuals.

Safeguarding and pastoral support

Questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage are very personal and there are disagreements about them in the church today. It's important to be aware that this session may be particularly sensitive. For some participants, it may bring painful experiences to the fore or challenge fervently held convictions.

As a group leader it will be important to be aware if someone in the group needs pastoral support. Do encourage members of the group to contact your local church leader or pastoral care team, or to do so yourself.

Safeguarding and the Church of England

If you are worried about a child or adult, please contact your [Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser](#) (DSA) without delay. If a child or adult is in immediate danger or requires medical attention, call the police and/or social services immediately. For more information about safeguarding, visit www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding