



Week Five

A Note for All Group Leaders — This week we are talking about sex. If your group is a mixed gender group, consider dividing the group up by gender. While the questions below are not intended to create oversharing, they will center on the topic of sex and it may be wisest for your group to divide up.

Opening Prayer

God, we trust you are here with us now. Help us to hear what you have to offer us through today's time. Amen.

Talk It Over

This week we continued our series #relationshipgoals. During this series, we have been looking at various types of relationships and various practices we can adopt to bring greater health to our relationships. This week we focused on sex. Know, that no matter your relationship status, this guide was created with you in mind.

- Different perspectives are a normal part of life; it's easy for us to see things differently. Tell us about a time you and someone else had a very different take on a given situation.
- Growing up, what lessons did you hear about sex? Consider what messages you heard in your home and outside your home.
- How comfortable or uncomfortable are you talking about sex? Why is this the case?

Today's big idea centers on these two central ideas: If you are married, you need to plan to have sex or you won't. If you are single and following Jesus, you need to make a plan to not have sex. While these ideas may sound counter-cultural, they are ideas that honor what we see in the Bible.

- How familiar or unfamiliar are you with these ideas?
- As an adult, where do you turn to for ideas about a healthy sex life or healthy sexual boundaries?

The majority of this weekend's Bible verses come out of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. These two books of the Bible were letters written by the Apostle Paul to the followers of Christ in the city of Corinth. From what we know historically speaking, a common belief in the city of Corinth was that the human body and soul were disconnected entities. This dualistic perspective resulted in forms of living and religion that centered on the indulgence of any desire — even at the expense of others freedom. Paul understood his teaching, that focused on sex being something much deeper than sheer physical pleasure, was radical and against the grain of culture.

- Is it easy or hard for you to take a position that is counter to the crowd? Why or why not?
- As followers of Christ, how do you think we can honor the Bible's perspective of sex without sounding judgemental, self-righteous, and out of touch?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:16-20 (MSG)

Paul is telling us that sexual sin – sex outside of God’s plan – is like no other sin. This isn’t because God hates it more than other sins or because God will judge it more harshly. This isn’t about sexual sin removing us from God’s grace or love. Rather, what Paul seems to be saying is that God desires for us to see all our life — including our bodies — as sacred and belonging to God. Paul wants his friends in Corinth to know they are so loved and so valued by God that God wants to have full access to all of their life and to use all our life to show the world his purpose and heart.

- In what ways do the messages you heard growing up and the messages you see all around you conflict with what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians?
- Using your own words, in what ways do you see honoring the Bible’s views of sex as a way of owning how loved and valued you are by God?

Science tells us that sex results in the release of the chemical oxytocin. Oxytocin is known as the cuddle drug because it’s a chemical designed to bond and attach people. This is the same chemical that is released during childbirth and breastfeeding.

- In what ways have you seen this science to be true in your life or in the life of those around you?
Please note, there is no need to share names or details to answer this question.
- If this science is true, why do you think common culture still doesn’t educate us accordingly?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 (MSG)

While Paul affirms and honors celibacy in singleness, Paul is clearly not shaming sexual desires or sex within marriage. In fact, Paul is laying out basic values that are intended to ensure both partners are respected and honored.

- In your own words, recap what you feel Paul laid out in this verse.
- In what ways does our culture send messages of shame involving sex?

Paul’s words in this passage depict a Christian marriage as a covenant between two interdependent people who are trying to be like Christ to one another.

- In your own words, describes attitudes or actions that you think depict this idea of two interdependent people trying to be like Christ to one another?

Read Genesis 17:7 (ESV), Exodus 6:7 (ESV), Ezekiel 36:28, and Jeremiah 30:22 (ESV)

A Note for All Group Leaders — If finding all these verses feels daunting, read the first two.

Throughout the Bible we hear God declaring his intent and desire to be with his people. Often times the language used to describe God’s unwavering heart for his people is the term covenant. In other words, as marriage is intended to be a place of this intentional coming or binding together, God desires to create a relationship with humanity marked by love and companionship. The Bible depicts the end goal to be a relationship so intimate we can come forward – without reservation, worry, or shame – knowing we are loved, safe, forgiven, and recipients of grace.

- God doesn’t just invite us into a relationship with him, the Bible tells us he regularly makes the first move towards us. Tell us about a time you sensed God was pursuing you.
- In what ways do you think you can get better at saying ‘yes’ to a deep, intimate relationship with God?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for being a God who moves towards us and looks to connect with us. Help us to lean into our relationship with you. Help us to give you access to all of our lives — including the parts that involve our body and our sexuality. Help us to see your heart for us and to show the world your love. Amen.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.