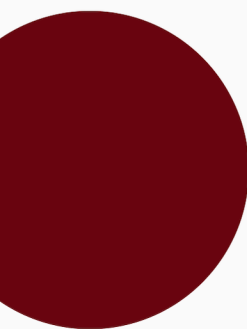


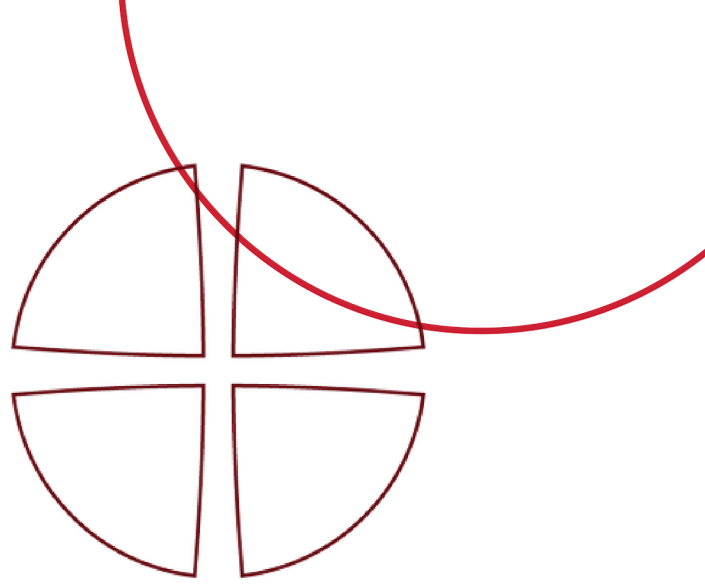
Sexuality

INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES



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FACILITATOR'S NOTES

These notes accompany a series of four video-led Bible Studies. They are: Sexuality and Creation: An Interactive Bible Study in Genesis, Sexuality and Jesus: An Interactive Bible Study in the Gospels, Sexuality and Grace: An Interactive Bible Study in Romans, and Sexuality and Leadership: An Interactive Bible Study in 1 Timothy.

WHY WE'VE PRODUCED THESE STUDIES

The purpose of these Bible studies is:

- To resource local churches and others to engage positively with the topic of sexuality in the Bible.
- To enable the Church to have a more Biblically-resourced conversation about sexuality, including at Conference.
- To model approaches to scripture and good conversations, including good disagreement.

Throughout the course of its work the Working Party on Human Sexuality spent long periods of time studying scripture. This was fruitful, challenging and life-giving, and something worth sharing with the wider Church. The interactive Bible studies that toured the island in 2020 were well received with comments like, "I wish we could do more of this," and "I had no idea the Bible had anything to say about this." In the wider conversation about sexuality in the Church there was evidence of some unhelpful approaches to scripture such as proof-texting and surface readings that make scripture subservient to views arrived at by other means. This is a reminder that if we're not reflecting on what scripture says about sexuality, then our perspective is going to be shaped by other things.

We live in a time of immense cultural change and people inside and outside the church have questions about sex and sexuality. While this series of Bible studies can't cover everything it offers a beginning and there is space in each session for people to reflect Biblically on a range of issues and questions.

Across MCI people have expressed a desire to develop tools to study scripture for themselves: "Don't just tell us what it means – show us how to read it." Accordingly, these studies aim to model skills that are transferable to all Bible study: Listening to the text and listening to one another; Asking good questions about the text and allowing the text to ask questions of us; The Genesis study highlights literary patterns; The Romans study models how to pay attention to context and how to pay attention to our emotions; The Timothy study uses translation as a resource and considers how scripture is applied; The Gospels study focuses on allowing the Bible to surprise and challenge us.

Scripture offers rich resources for reflecting on human sexuality. It is hoped that these studies communicate a love for scripture and a desire to listen to God. Each of the studies begins by stating: “For followers of Jesus, the Bible is our authority and our rule of life. In the words of scripture we can discover the heart of God, so we come to the Bible ready to have our lives shaped, and changed, and inspired by it.”

HOW TO USE THIS INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY MATERIAL

The format of the Bible studies is a series of short videos introducing topics and a range of activities designed to help us engage deeply with scripture. Each session is designed to stand alone, or as part of a series in any order.

These studies have been designed for use by people with a wide range of views, experiences, ages, contexts, Biblical knowledge and learning preferences. They should be accessible to most people 14 years or older. They can be used by established Bible study groups, home groups, youth groups etc. or by new groups brought together for this purpose.

Your role as facilitator is to organise a time and place, to choose the activities that best suit your group, to bring any necessary resources, and to guide your group through the activities.

This is not a “taught” Bible study where a leader studies and prays and then explains what they have learned as a sermon or lecture. Here, the Bible speaks for itself and the facilitator enables people to ask good questions and listen to one another. We have tried to minimise the amount of time the facilitator spends talking, to maximise the time spent in conversation. Think of yourself as the “guide on the side” rather than the “sage on the stage”.

There will be a range of experiences and levels of expertise in the room including you as a facilitator. There may be time when you can help by offering some clarity but be aware that some people may treat your word as authoritative so try to encourage people to engage for themselves.

Like with any Bible study, people may be leaving with more questions. People may be leaving with views that you disagree with as to what a text means or how it is applied. We trust that God speaks through scripture, and we trust that people’s convictions will be strongest when they arrive at them themselves. The materials consistently communicate that we come to scripture ready to be challenged and changed, so we pray that the Holy Spirit gives clarity as people continue to think on the words of scripture.

LEADING CONVERSATION ON SENSITIVE TOPICS

Bear in mind that there will be range of views, traditions, beliefs and experiences in the room. Encourage a respectful atmosphere for conversation where people feel free to share and feel free to disagree with one another.

Sexuality is extremely personal, so be aware that some situations raised by the text or in conversation are not only hypothetical but are likely to be the experience of people in the room. Some topics may be painful for people to hear discussed. It may be helpful to pause and say something like: “It’s important to acknowledge that what we’re discussing isn’t just in theory. We’re talking about the real lives of people who God cares about deeply.”

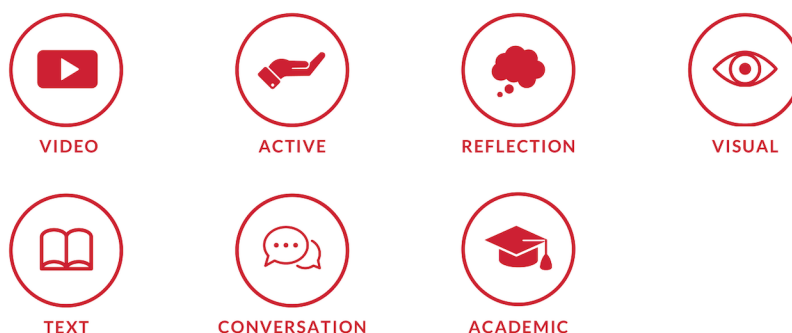
Some issues have been highly contentious and people may feel afraid to share a view out loud. These Bible

studies aim to create a space where people can explore their own views and the views of others by talking them out. People should be allowed to express their current thinking without being judged as though it is their final and only thought. If there is a direct disagreement in the room it may be helpful to pause and say something like: "Hearing things that we fundamentally disagree with can be difficult and it can even be painful. Where the learning can come is when we continue to listen to one another with grace to really try to hear where the other person is coming from and what has formed their view."

Think through in advance what pastoral support you can offer to people following the Bible study.

PREPARE

These Bible studies are designed to last two hours but the timing is flexible. The materials give a number of core activities and then offer some optional activities designed to help us engage with scripture.



As well as the videos and listening to the text, there are activities that are visual and active, as well as conversation and reflection and academic activities specifically for those who want to engage with scholarship.

Choose a range of activities that suits your group best. Even if you are part of a regular Bible Study that is largely conversational, an activity that involves movement or something visual could really help those who learn best that way.

Once you have chosen your activities designate a rough time for each activity.

Finally, gather any physical resources you will need such as coloured pens and print-outs. You may wish to review the video material ahead of time and think through any issues that will be particularly relevant to your group.

Try to prepare for the Bible study at least a day in advance.

LAYOUT AND ATMOSPHERE

People are more likely to engage with scripture and feel comfortable to share if they are physically comfortable. Consider the room where you are meeting and think through things like seating, heating, lighting and refreshments. You may want to have some worship music playing quietly as people arrive.

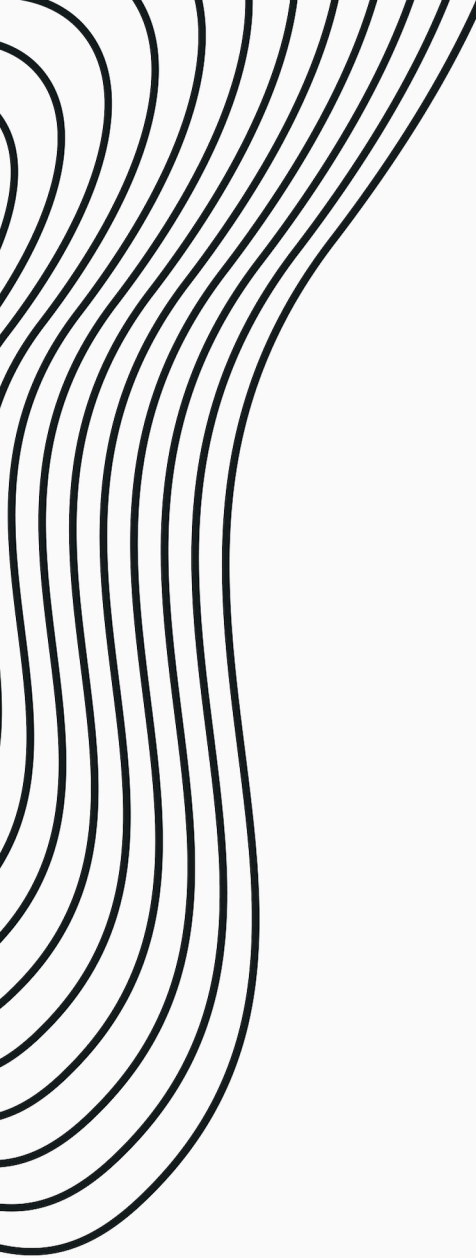
These studies are designed to enable conversation between groups. A café-style arrangement of chairs around tables is perfect. Groups of three to six would be ideal - large enough that quieter individuals can be part of an active group and small enough that people feel comfortable to share personal thoughts. You will know your group dynamics best.

Make sure everyone can see and hear the video material.

If you have chosen any activities that involve moving around, think through the set-up of the space before you begin.

PRAY

We want this experience of reading the Bible together to be life-giving and we want God's Spirit to be free to work. As you prepare to lead this session, be praying for yourself and for the participants ahead of time. It might be good to know there is a small group of trusted people praying for you. Finally, know that those involved in preparing this material have been praying for everyone who will use it - that we will all come closer to Jesus through it.



FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD • LIVING WHOLEHEARTEDLY AS FOLLOWERS

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