

**YOUTH
EDITION**



Sexuality

DISCUSSION SESSION 2
**Human Sexuality in
Christian Perspective**



Note to Discussion Sessions

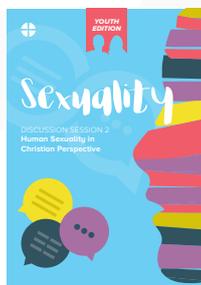
The following discussion session is part of a 4 series programme which has been designed to be used in a group from a local congregation or circuit. You can decide how much or how little of the suggested format to use. You know your context best. Please, modify or adapt the sessions as you see fit for the comfort level of your participants. If the full plan is followed, you should allow an hour to an hour and a half for each of the four sessions, which might easily be scheduled one night a week for a month.

The session guides are complements to and assume that participants will have read 'Sexuality – Developing Good Conversation on Difficult Questions' or the relevant sections of the document for each session prior to attendance. If your group does not wish to work in this way, you may plan to have some copies of the document on hand for people to review the relevant sections over a cup of tea/coffee prior to the start of the session.

Session 1 Why This, Why Now



Session 2 Human Sexuality in Christian Perspective



Session 3 Discussing Homosexuality



Session 4 What Should We Do next



🌐 All of these can be downloaded from www.irishmethodist.org/WPHS



Sexuality

DISCUSSION SESSION 2
**Human Sexuality in
Christian Perspective**



You Will Need:

- ✓ a copy of 'Sexuality - Developing Good Conversation on Difficult Questions' for each participant
- ✓ Methodist teaching handout
- ✓ Thumbs up, thumbs down pages
- ✓ a flip chart or white board
- ✓ sticky tape or blue tack for affixing flip chart pages around the room
- ✓ two packs of sticky notes
- ✓ printed A3 size bible passages
- ✓ a pen/pencil for each participant
- ✓ different coloured highlighters
- ✓ 'Rules' for good discussions page the group created last time (hang in a prominent place in the room)

PRAYER

Open the Session with prayer.

To the leader:

Remind the young people where they left off last time and revisit the 'contract' and emphasize the promises they made about how they would talk and listen to each other.

ICE-BREAKER

 5 mins

Choose an icebreaker/activity that your group enjoys.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

 5 mins

Use the definitions on page 14 of the Sexuality resource to explain to young people what you mean when you use certain terms.

- » Sex
- » Gender
- » Sexuality
- » Sexual Activity

THUMBS UP AND THUMBS DOWN

 15 mins

1. Prepare in advance two flip chart pages one with a big thumbs up emoji on it, the other with a thumbs down emoji
2. Hand out two different colours of sticky notes one to represent positive and one to represent negative
3. Invite the young people to find a partner and ask them to talk about the two questions laid out below.

To the leader:

You may need to define what you mean by church. Church is anything they have heard said by the church from the front, in conversation, in small groups, read or watched. Anything communicated by ministers, youth leaders, a Christian adult they respect, Christian friends, S.U leaders in school. For young people anything a significant Christian adult in their life says is heard as the church's voice.

You may also find that the young people struggle to recall anything the church has actually said about sexuality. If that is the case ask them to think about what they think the church thinks about sexuality both positively and negatively.

What positive things have you heard the church say about sex and sexuality?

What negative things have you heard the church say about sex and sexuality?

4. Ask the young people to put their sticky notes on each page.
5. Ask the young people to think about this - over all as you look at these pages – do you think the church is more positive or negative about sexuality?

You could finish this conversation by asking the group if they think the church needs to say more and if so about what particular issues?

REST

Reason, Experience, Scripture, Tradition

Have a large flip chart page prepared with four large boxes like the Four Wesleyan Sources Handout from last time. Put Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience each in one box.

Look again at what the young people experienced the church saying about sexuality and decide together what belongs in which box. At this stage most of what you have previously talked about will be in the reason and experience boxes, with some in the tradition box.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY?

 30 mins

Tell the young people you are now going to look at what the Bible says about sexuality.

1. Get three volunteers to read one of the following biblical passages each:

 Song of Songs 1:1-2:7

 Proverbs 5:15-23

 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

2. Ask the young people to get into groups of four and give them a copy of each passage printed out big on A3 paper, also give them 2 different coloured highlighters.

3. Ask the group to highlight the bits they think the bible is being positive and negative about sexuality, choosing a different colour for each.

4. Ask them to discuss from the passages they have read, does the bible put any boundaries around how we express our sexuality?

To the leader:

You may find it helpful to read some relevant materials about these passages prior to the session. A bibliography is provided at the end of these study session materials. Particular points of emphasis to bear in mind include the poetic nature of Song of Songs. That is, it gives images and metaphors to convey meaning and is not best 'decoded'. Poetry works with emotions and impressions as well as ideas, so it may be helpful to have your group think about how the poem makes them feel or what word pictures they find most compelling as a way into the passage.

The Proverbs passage conveys 'conventional' style teaching presented as a father's advice to his son. This passage appears within larger teaching on avoiding the temptations of adultery.

The Corinthians passage needs to be read with an awareness that Paul is answering questions raised by the Christians at Corinth in a letter they wrote to him. Paul deliberately differentiates between advice he gives and things commanded by the Lord.

As a group, summarize what you have learnt from the passages and put some bullet points in the scripture section of the REST diagram.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

 10 mins

ENGAGING TRADITION

Break into two small groups:

Distribute the Methodist Teaching handout to each group. Designate a group to look at a specific section or two depending on your numbers.

Ask groups to read aloud and then discuss the questions.

When you re-gather have each group present a little bit about what they read and what they learned. Put notes from these insights into the Tradition square of the Four Wesleyan Sources flip chart page.

Then ask each group to answer the following questions.

- » To live your life as a teenager/young adult, on what areas of Human Sexuality would you like the Methodist Church to be more clear about its teaching?

As a whole group, review what you have gathered from Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

 5 mins

‘God’s purposes and intentions for human sexuality’.

Still in their groups ask each of the young people to discuss from what they have learnt tonight, what do they think are God’s purposes in our sexuality?

Invite feedback.

SECRET QUESTIONS

 5 mins

Instructions:

1. Bring your question box again.
2. Ask each young person to write a question and put it in the box, this time ask them what questions this session has left them with.

Tell them that in the next session they will be focusing in on homosexuality.

Close the Session with prayer.

PRAYER

God our maker and our sustainer, you have made us fearfully and wonderfully. We have struggled to express your purposes for our relationships, but we trust in your guidance and in your grace. Teach us to use our minds, our bodies, our emotions, and our relationships for your purposes and for your glory. In the name of Christ, who offered the whole of himself for our sakes, Amen.

Methodist Teaching Handout

Read the following two excerpts. Then answer the questions:



PORNOGRAPHY - EXCERPT FROM 'PORNOGRAPHY - THE UNINVITED GUEST'

Council on Social Responsibility
March 2012

The Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland feels that it is important that the church and its members understand the nature of the problems associated with pornography. As a church we have an opportunity to promote wholesome personal relationships and challenge the assumptions that viewing pornography does not have adverse effects. Within pastoral care we may encounter those who are struggling with the addiction of viewing pornography and those who feel their relationships have been undermined by it. As a church we need to speak out against the increase in pornography and its use. This opposition should not be regarded as anti-sex but as upholding the importance of sex as part of loving meaningful relationships.



EXCERPT FROM 'PRACTICAL EXPRESSIONS OF METHODIST BELIEF'

We recognise the family as the primary unit in society and all possible encouragement is given to ministers and congregations to support and strengthen family life. Marriage is a relationship, intended as permanent, between one man and one woman within which sexual intercourse establishes a unique intimacy. A loving marriage relationship is seen as the only appropriate relationship within which sexual intercourse may take place. The church advocates responsible family planning, with the use of contraception.

(*'Practical Expressions of Methodist Belief'* accessed online: http://www.irishmethodist.org/sites/default/files/pdf/news/practical_expressions_of_methodist_belief.pdf)



('Methodist Worship',
p. 369)

"It is the will of God that, in marriage, husband and wife should experience a life-long unity of heart, body and mind; comfort and companionship; enrichment and encouragement; tenderness and trust.

It is the will of God that marriage should be honoured as a way of life, in which we may know the security of love and care, and grow towards maturity. Through such marriage, children may be nurtured, family life strengthened, and human society enriched.

No one should enter into this lightly or selfishly, for marriage involves the giving of a man and a woman wholeheartedly to each other. Christ in his self-giving comes to our help, for he loves us and gave himself for us."



Excerpt from
CSR Council amended
Pastoral Responses
12th March 2011

The Methodist Church in Ireland in common with every other Christian Church has members who are of homosexual orientation (whether lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender). Many never have heard any reference to sexuality from their pulpit, or if they have, it has often been negative. As a consequence some feel confused and hide their true feelings because they fear being marginalised and excluded from the Church family.

The Committee/Council if of a mind that homosexual orientation is not, in and of itself, a sin, however the Committee/Council is unable to come to an agreed mind on the question of homosexual lifestyle. In common with many churches we find ourselves divided into two main streams of Biblical interpretation in relation to the latter issue.

It is therefore important that we respect the integrity of those whose interpretation of scripture is different from our own and continue to work together in Christian love.

Questions

**1. What was new to you in the excerpt you read?
What surprised you?**

2. What do you agree with and what do you disagree with? Why?



Bibliography for the Leader

SONG OF SONGS

Richard M. Davidson 'Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden' *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27:1 (1989): 1-19. accessed online biblicalstudies.org.uk 25.11.16 <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1917&context=auss>

André LaCocque, 'Love in the Song of Songs' <http://www.bibleodyssey.org/passages/related-articles/love-in-the-song-of-songs.aspx>

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PROVERBS

Robert B. Chisholm, "'Drink Water from your own Cistern": A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15-23' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 397-409 accessed online biblicalstudies.org.uk 25.11.16 http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/OTeSources/20-Proverbs/Text/Articles/Chisholm-ProvCistern-BSac.htm

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1-2 Corinthians Resource Page, E.N.T.E.R., Felix Just, S.J. <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Paul-Corinth.htm>

David G. Horrel 'Corinth' Bible Odyssey <http://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/main-articles/corinth.aspx>