



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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Study 1: God's Design For Marriage & Relationships

Getting Started

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

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

 - c. Is it godly then to not want to have children in your marriage? (cf. Psalm 127)

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

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

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?

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>and hold fast to his wife,</i>	
<i>and they shall become one flesh.</i>	
<i>²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.</i>	

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

a. How should this shape our expectations for marriage?

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.

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)

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

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

- 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?

9. How does this passage clarify what headship and submission look like in practice? What it should it not look like?

- a. Are love and submission conditional on the spouse "doing their part"? Why/Why not?

10. Read verses 31-33 again. What is the 'profound mystery'?

11. What implications does this marriage have for our earthly marriages in verses 22-33?

12. Look back over the passage in Ephesians 5:22-33 and compare it with 1 Peter 3:1-7.

- a. If you are single/dating, write down the sort of characteristics that might determine a wise choice of wife or husband.

- b. If you are married, what do you find challenging about these passages regarding how you should conduct your marriage?

Summary

By way of summary, read through one of the descriptions of marriage from the Prayer Book in Appendix 2.

Application

Pick a few of the following application questions to discuss as a group. Use what you've learnt tonight to answer these real-life situations!

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 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

- 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?

Getting Started

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

Read Matthew 19:1-12

2. Why do the disciples think that it might be better not to marry?
3. What are some reasons that Jesus gives as to why someone may remain single?
4. 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?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

5. Faced with a choice between singleness and marriage, which one does Paul consider “better”?
6. Why does Paul call marriage a “gift” and singleness a “gift”?
 - a. How do you know which gift you have?
 - 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?

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

8. 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)
 - 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)

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

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

11. 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)

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

1. Matters of Righteousness – *These are the non-negotiables that are clearly right and wrong.*

- **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

2. 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.

3. Matters of Triviality

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

Read Matthew 22:23-33

12. 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?

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

Application

14. 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?

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

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

17. 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?

18. 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

Getting Started

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

God's Design for Sex

2. What is God's design for the place and purpose of sex according to Genesis 2:24-25?
3. According to 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Why is it important that married couples continue to invest in their sexual relationship?
 - a. How does it transform our thinking about sex, to know that our body belongs to our spouse?
 - b. How does that make a Christian view of sex different from the world?

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

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

7. Why must the Christian take decisive action against sexual immorality?
 - a. How is sexual immorality different to other sins?

8. Read Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 6:20-7-27.
 - a. How do these verses emphasize the importance of fleeing sexual temptation?

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

Read Matthew 5:27-30

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

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

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

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

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. “Struggles 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

Getting Started

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
 - Judges 19:22–30
 - Leviticus 18:22, 20:13
 - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
 - 1 Timothy 1:10

Read Romans 1:18-32

4. Why is the wrath of God revealed? (18-23)
5. According to verses 24-27, what is one way that this rejection of God expressed?

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

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

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

1 John 3:1-3

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?

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

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

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>

Prayer

- 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.