

CONNECTIONS

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

The Christian and Sex

Dear Small Group Leader,

The Bible has a lot to say about human sexuality. This is comforting to those of us who have serious questions about temptation, morality, and fidelity. This unit, “The Christian and Sex,” is designed to help young adults in their understanding of what a godly sex life is like.

The unit begins with a proper perspective on sex. Too often, Christians have gotten the impression that sex is, by nature, something “dirty,” or even a “necessary evil” invented to propagate the human race. The Bible teaches neither of these things. Instead, Scripture defines sexual desire as a very normal part of human life. Sex is a good thing that only becomes bad when it takes place outside of God’s plan.

We will also focus on issues of sexuality facing single Christians. The group will learn what the Bible says about sex outside of marriage, and insight will be given to help them deal with sexual temptation. They will even discover ideas to help them develop intimate friendships without sex.

This is an important unit because it has something to say to every group member. In a world that is increasingly permissive, we all face issues regarding sexuality. For some, it’s temptation. For others, it’s guilt over past sins. Still others might worry about creating intimacy in their marriage. The good news is the Bible has answers to these issues. Through its guidance, you can guide your group into developing a godly view of sexuality.

Blessings,

The Connections Team

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The Christian and Sex

Study 1

Notes

Sex and Singleness

Objective: To better understand how to handle sexual desires as a single individual.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

(Note: If you are in a coed group, you might consider separating the group by gender for this lesson.)

Say: Today we are going to talk about sex and singleness. I realize that this can be a difficult or awkward topic for some people to discuss, but I want to encourage you to be open to sharing and open to what God wants to speak to you in this area.

- F** Where do you think most people learn what they know about sex? *(Answers may include: peers, parents, school, entertainment, mass media, church, etc.)* Where did you learn about sex? *(Allow response.)*



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

- F** How much do Christians learn about sex and intimacy in church? Should we learn more at church? *(Opinions will vary.)*

Say: Despite a common view in society that abstinence is strange or unnatural, God expects His people to abstain from sexual activity outside of marriage.

- F** What are some of the various attitudes people have towards abstinence? *(Answers may include: it's unnatural, virtuous, unattainable.)* How do these attitudes affect a single Christian trying to remain pure? *(Answers may include: they cause temptation, make me feel undesirable, are frustrating.)*

➤ Ask someone to read Matthew 19:10–12 and 1 Corinthians 7:32–35.

? How do you feel when you hear Jesus and Paul commending singleness? *(Answers will vary.)* Do you agree with them? *(Answers will vary.)*

? What are some ways you can serve God now while you are single that you may not be able to do once you are married? *(Answers may include: go on a short-term mission trip, spend more time helping at church, etc.)*

Say: Although the Bible teaches that we are to remain abstinent until marriage, that doesn't make the desires go away.

➤ Ask someone to read 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5.

? This verse says it is God's will for us to be sanctified. What does this say about His expectations of and grace towards us? *(He doesn't expect us to be sinless [1 John 1:8,9] but does expect us to conduct ourselves differently from the popular culture.)*

? What are some "holy and honorable" ways in which we can control our bodies? *(Answers may include: be modest in wearing apparel; be cautious about physical contact that could stimulate someone, e.g., massages; avoid using double entendres in conversation, etc.)*

➤ Ask someone to read 2 Timothy 2:22.

? When you face temptation, how do you "flee" from those desires and pursue the things listed in 2 Timothy 2:22? *(Answers may include: leave a situation and call a Christian friend, listen to worship music and meditate on God's Word, etc.)*

Say: Even though God wants us to wait until marriage to experience physical intimacy, we can experience other types of intimacy through close friendships.

➤ Ask someone to read 1 Samuel 18:1–4 and 2 Samuel 1:26.

? How much time and effort do you put into building solid Christian friendships, and how can you make those friendships even stronger? *(Answers will vary.)*

- Ask someone to read Romans 12:9,10.

Q Based on these verses, what qualities would you attribute to love? (*Answers may include: humility, purity, honesty, etc.*) Why is sexual immorality in a Christian relationship inconsistent with how these verses define love? (*Answers may include: lust is a selfish desire, we shouldn't put our brothers/sisters in Christ in compromising situations, etc.*)



(Note: Choose the options that you feel will work best with your group.)

1. Have your group write a list of practical steps they can take to become or remain sexually pure. Then have them write a prayer to God asking Him to help them be self-controlled and wise in this area of life.
 2. Have group members find Scripture passages that will encourage them to remain pure or help them when they are tempted sexually. Have them write the verses on index cards so they can be easily carried in a purse or pocket.
 3. Ask everyone to brainstorm ways that the group can build better friendships with each other. Develop a plan for regular, organized fellowship to involve everyone in the group.
- Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, we thank You that we are able to come together to build our relationship with You and our relationships with each other. Lord, we pray that You help us to remain sexually pure until marriage. We are bombarded with sex on a daily basis, and it can be difficult to maintain control of our thoughts and actions. Thank You for giving us Your Word and Holy Spirit to help overcome temptation. Thank You for the patience and the grace You have towards us. Thank You for sending Your Son to save us from our sins. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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Study 2

Notes

Remaining Sexually Pure

Objective: To help group members understand they can be victorious over sexual temptation.



- Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

- 🗣️ What's the craziest or most dangerous thing you've ever done? (*Answers may include: skydiving, letting a friend cut your hair, etc.*)
- 🗣️ What risks in life do you consider worth taking? (*Answers may include: changing majors/careers, having relationships with the opposite sex, making financial investments, etc.*)
- 🗣️ What risks should never be taken? (*Answers will vary. Steer discussion toward the danger of taking spiritual risks, like toying with temptation.*)



Say: Life is full of choices, and the decisions we make will move us either closer to God or further from Him. One example is our choice for or against sexual purity. Given a sex-saturated culture, this temptation confronts us regularly. But when we call on God, He will help us remain sexually pure. We are going to look at several principles to keep in mind when facing sexual temptation.

- Ask someone to read James 1:13–15 and 1 Peter 5:8.

- 🗣️ According to these verses, where does temptation come from? (*Our own evil desires, a failure to practice self-control, Satan.*) Do you find this true in your own life? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*)

Study 2/Remaining Sexually Pure

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➔ Ask someone to read Matthew 15:19.

? Jesus said that sin begins in the heart. What can we do to prevent sinful thoughts and desires from coming into our hearts in the first place? (*Answers may include: by being careful about the kinds of entertainment you choose; by making sure you're getting good input, like Bible reading, Christian music; by not compartmentalizing your life, etc.*)

? How would you define sexual purity in a Christian dating relationship? What does it mean to remain pure, and how far is too far? (*Answers and opinions will vary.*)

➔ Ask someone to read Ephesians 5:3–7.

Say: There are two principles from this verse that can help us know how to set our boundaries:

- God wants us to commit to sexual purity, for failing to do so can have eternal consequences.
- Purity involves all of our words, actions, and relationships.

? In light of these verses and these principles, how would you answer the question “How far is too far?” (*Answers will vary.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

? What are some “ways out” God might provide for you when you are faced with sexual temptation? (*Answers may include: you could literally leave the situation, you can choose not to act on an emotion, you can silently call on God, etc.*)

➔ Ask someone to read James 1:12.

? When you face temptation, how much thought do you give to the promise of eternal life for those who have “stood the test”? Why is—or isn't—this an effective motivation for you? (*Answers will vary.*)

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Option 1:

Say: I am going to read some statements describing situations or activities related to sexual purity. Do you agree or disagree with the statement, and why did you arrive at your answer?

1. A man should never be alone with a woman in her home and vice versa—even if they're dating.
2. It's okay to enjoy a TV show containing a great deal of sexual humor because a strong Christian's values aren't affected much by Hollywood.
3. If a Christian couple spends a lot of time alone, it gives the impression that "something is going on."
4. Engaged Christian couples are freer to explore the physical part of their relationship because they're going to get married anyway.
5. It isn't hard to put restrictions on the physical part of a relationship once you determine you've gone too far.
6. A Christian couple can genuinely express their feelings for each other in ways other than physical.
7. Christian couples need to establish boundaries when it comes to how much time they spend together.

Option 2:

Have group members to make a list of a few friends they could be accountable to about their purity. Then ask them to make an accountability plan, including who they will be accountable to, how often they will be accountable, and in what situations they will call for support.

- Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, we thank You that You promise to help us flee temptation. Help us to be sensitive to Your Holy Spirit and to use wisdom when we are making decisions that could have negative consequences. Help us to keep our hearts pure so that sin will not be able to take root there. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die and be raised from the dead so that our sins can be overcome. We love You so much. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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The Christian and Sex

Study 3

Notes

Sex and Marriage

Objective: To better understand healthy physical and emotional intimacy within a marriage.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- ➔ Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

- F** What is the greatest gift God has given you? (*Answers may include: salvation, family, health, etc.*)
- F** What makes a gift good? (*Answers may include: it makes life less difficult or more enjoyable, it brings pleasure, etc.*)
- F** In what ways does the world take advantage of God's gifts? (*Answers may include: we are encouraged to overindulge, we are led to believe that we have a "right" to things, we are told that we "deserve" this, that, or the other thing, etc.*)



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: Today we are going to talk about the gift of sex and the responsibility we have to keep sexual intimacy within the bounds of the marriage relationship. We are going to look at several aspects of sexual intimacy.

Say: Sometimes we can have a negative or "dirty" view of sex. However, within marriage, sex is a wonderful gift.

- ➔ Ask someone to read Matthew 19:4–6.

- F** What do you think it means to "become one flesh?" (*Answers will vary.*) Why do you think God would design sex to unite a man and woman in this way? (*Answers will vary.*)

- ➔ Ask someone to read Proverbs 5:15–20.

Study 3/Sex and Marriage

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F What is Solomon saying about sexual intimacy? (*Answers could include: sex should occur only in marriage, intimacy should not happen with a stranger, etc.*)
What are some of the consequences of having sex outside of marriage? (*Answers could include: STDs, unplanned pregnancies, broken relationships—sin, etc.*)

Say: Notice that Solomon encourages intimacy with one's wife. He views sex as being a good thing (cf. Genesis 1:31; 2:18). It is only outside of marriage that sex is seen as a bad thing.

Say: Marriage is not a simple kind of relationship. We must invest in it to see it grow to its full potential.

➔ Ask someone to read Deuteronomy 24:5.

F What kind of priority does God expect us to place on the marriage relationship? (*Answers may include: It is preeminent among earthly obligations, we need to make time to nurture it, etc.*) What are some specific ways to help build the marriage? (*Answers may include: regular date nights, using thoughtful words, listening to each other, learning to say "I'm sorry," etc.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 7:3–5.

F Why do you think it is important for a husband and wife to have a healthy, active sex life? (*Answers will vary.*)

Say: While physical intimacy is important, it is also important to cultivate healthy emotional intimacy as well.

➔ Ask someone to read Ephesians 5:22–33.

F What do these verses say to us about intimacy? (*It is about giving to the other person, just as Christ gave to us.*)

F What are some character traits that can bring intimacy to a marriage? (*Answers may include: humility, selflessness, gentleness, etc.*)

F What are some practical ways husbands and wives can show emotional intimacy to each other? (*Answers may include: wives can show appreciation and respect for what their husbands do for them; husbands can make time to listen to concerns of their wives, etc.*)

Say: Although marriage and sex are good gifts from God, they are not guaranteed to us. As we have seen from an earlier session, the Bible even says that there are advantages to remaining single.

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Study 3/Sex and Marriage

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➤ Ask someone to read Matthew 19:11,12 and 1 Corinthians 7:7.

? Is the desire to get married a desire that you have handed to God? If so, how did you come to the point that you could do that, and how do you feel about the fact that you've put it in God's hands? If you haven't handed it to God, does something in particular keep you from doing so? *(Answers will vary.)*



Option 1: Ask the following questions:

1. How will having a biblically based concept of sex affect your everyday attitudes, actions, and decisions? Do you think living by such a concept would be noticeable to others, and if so, in what way? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. How can understanding and accepting God's plan for intimacy help you prepare for marriage? How can it help a married couple improve their marriage? *(Answers will vary.)*
3. How can single Christians fulfill their desire for intimacy without giving in to the temptation to engage in sex before marriage? *(Answers may include: cultivate an intimate relationship with Jesus, cultivate friendships in His body, etc.)*

Option 2:

Ask your group to write a prayer or journal entry to God. Have them lay down their rights to marriage and ask God to be in control of that area of their lives. Then have them ask God to develop qualities like selflessness, sincerity, gentleness, etc. that will help them build intimate relationships, whether it be with friends or a future spouse.

➤ Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, thank You for giving us Your Word to help us understand how to live our lives in wisdom. Help us to learn how to prepare to be better spouses, especially when it comes to physical and emotional intimacy. Help us to lay our selfish natures aside and come to a point where we honor our spouses above ourselves. Most of all, let our marriages be a reflection of Your love that others may see. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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The Christian and Sex

Study 4

Notes

Avoid Infidelity

Objective: To recognize the danger of adultery, to learn how it can start, and how to handle it if it has happened.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- ➔ Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

? How would you describe a strong marriage? (*Answers may include: good communication, freely expressed affection, etc.*)

? What role does a relationship with Jesus Christ play in keeping marriages strong? (*Answers may include: couples grow together as they share spiritual goals; following Christ encourages traits that strengthen marriage, etc.*)



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: A wedding day is an exciting time of joy, filled with the anticipation of a great life together. Yet too often these hopes turn to pain, disappointment, and possibly divorce as the marriage is later rocked by unfaithfulness. Such sadness can be avoided when we commit to being faithful to our marriage commitments. Today we'll look at the story of David and Bathsheba to better understand what causes adultery, where it leads us, and how to avoid it.

? Why do you think adultery occurs in marriages and where does it begin? (*Answers may include: lack of commitment, a feeling of unmet needs, leading separate lives, etc.*)

Say: Avoiding adultery usually depends on how we respond in tempting situations, even when these situations are accidental or unexpected.

- ➔ Ask someone to read 2 Samuel 11:2,3.

Q What could David have done differently that could have kept him out of an adulterous situation? (*He could have looked away; he didn't have to act on his desire; he should have been with his army.*)

Say: When a wrong desire enters your mind, don't give it a chance to intensify. Substitute a pure thought immediately (see Philippians 4:8), e.g., a Scripture verse, a Christian song lyric. When you act on such desires, you take a step toward adultery—even if your initial action isn't sexual in nature (David merely inquired).

➔ Ask someone to read Matthew 5:28.

Q What does this verse tell us about the seriousness of lustful thoughts? (*Answers may include: for the person thinking them they are just as serious as the physical act, they cause you to sin against the person you are lusting for, they reduce the other person to an object, etc.*)

Q Where is the line between where an innocent thought ends and lust begins? (*Answers may include: lust happens when we keep thinking about something [James 1:14,15]; lust is when we have a desire we feel cannot be satisfied without possession of the other person, etc.*)

Q What do you do when you are tempted to lust? (*Answers will vary.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 2 Samuel 11:4,5; 12:7–12.

Say: Adultery led David to deceive and then to murder. Through his deception, he both altered as well as destroyed many lives.

Q What consequences did adultery bring to David, and what are the consequences of adultery today? (*Answers may include: David's wives would be taken from him publicly, violence would be set off in his own household; divorce, families are disrupted, alimony, affects our relationship with God and our church, etc.*)

➔ Ask someone to read Hebrews 13:4.

Q What does it mean to keep the marriage bed pure? (*Answers may include: neither partner should be guilty of illicit sex, celibacy is not superior to marriage, etc.*)

Say: Unfortunately, people sometimes make wrong choices and commit adultery. Fortunately, our God is a God of grace and forgiveness, and healing and restoration can take place.

➔ Ask someone to read 2 Samuel 12:13,14.

F What did David do before he was forgiven? (*He confessed his sin.*) Is confession important? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*) Why do you think confessing sin is an important step in forgiveness? (*Answers may include: the Bible says to confess our sins, we are able to receive a “tangible” forgiveness from someone, etc.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11.

F Do you think it’s possible for someone to fully overcome an immoral past and live for Jesus free from sin and guilt? Explain. (*Answers will vary.*)



Discuss the following questions to conclude this study:

1. Why do you think adultery is a serious problem, even among Christians? (*Answers will vary.*)
2. What are some specific ways you can avoid adultery and other sexual sins? (*Answers will vary.*) Try to think beyond just the avoidance of situations and examine the kinds of attitudes and values that lend themselves to this sin. How can you become the type of person who consistently lives above these attitudes and values? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. How should we, as Christians, respond when someone close to us admits adultery and repents? (*Answers may include: offer him or her forgiveness, love, and fellowship; help the person with accountability, etc.*)

➔ Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, we thank You that Your grace covers all of our sins no matter how big or small they seem in our eyes. Help us protect our minds and our hearts from lust and improper relationships. Help us confess our sins in every area of our lives so that we may experience Your love and forgiveness. And help us to extend that forgiveness to others when needed. We love You and thank You for all You’ve done for us. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.