

LOVE, MARRIAGE, SEX & GENDER

Introduction

Some people think Christians talk about love, marriage, sex & gender too much.

But a lot of Christians actually find these topics hard to talk about. We find it hard enough to talk about them with each other, let alone with people who don't share our faith.

This teaching series is intended to help us talk about these topics in a helpful way, having first listened to some of the important things God has to say about them in the Bible.

Sermon Program

1. Love	Psalm 36.5-10	1 John 4.7-21
Love is our starting point, partly because it's a non-anxious topic (compared to the others) and partly because a biblical understanding of love is foundational to the other topics. <i>Suggested points: God is Love, God Shows Love, Abide in Love.</i>		
2. Marriage	Isaiah 54.5-8	Matthew 19.3-12
In Matthew chapter 19 Jesus upholds the creation pattern for marriage, 'one man, one woman, one flesh' and talks about implications of that for every 'relationship status'. <i>Suggested points: Marriage and Jesus, Divorce and Jesus, Singleness and Jesus.</i>		
3. Sex	Song of Songs 2.1-7	Hebrews 13.4
Sometimes people will describe something as 'better than sex'. Upholding sex God's way is one way Christians are called to show the world that <i>Jesus</i> is better than sex. <i>Suggested points: Good Sex, Bad Sex, The End of Sex ('End' = cessation and purpose).</i>		
4. Gender	Genesis 1.26-28	Galatians 3.24-29
We're increasingly encouraged to practice gender-affirming care. That sounds good to a lot of people. So approaching this topic we're asking: Does the Bible say anything better? <i>Suggested points: The (1) Creation, (2) Confusion, (3) Completion of Male and Female.</i>		

Discussion Material

This is a 'study after sermon' series, although the Discussion Guide (below) isn't so much a 'Bible study' as it is a resource to help participants 'debrief' on serious, sensitive issues.

The Discussion Guide is a modified version of the 'Three Thirds' format, with the headings:

1. Look Around: Sharing personal responses to the sermon / readings on the topic.
2. Look Up: Revisiting the sermon reading(s) to help get people 'on the same page'.
3. Look Forward: Reflecting on any ways God's word might be calling us to change.

As always, leaders should try to set a non-anxious tone, in which it's OK for people to admit struggles with the teaching, even as we uphold the Bible as the best guide on these topics.

Leaders can make up their own icebreaker questions or use / modify one the following:

Love

What's a way you might finish this sentence: 'Love is...'? Explain if you like.

What is your favourite love song? What is that song saying or celebrating about love?

What's one thing that makes you feel loved? Explain if you like.

Marriage

What's the best wedding you've ever attended? What made it so enjoyable?

Can you think of a marriage you admire? What stands out to you about it?

What's one ingredient you'd add to a recipe for a healthy marriage, and why?

Sex

What's a place people are getting their ideas about sex? What's one of those ideas?

If you were asked to recommend a helpful resource on sex, what would it be and why?

If you were writing a school sex curriculum, what's one area you'd include and why?

Gender

Share a person you consider a strong role model, especially for people of your gender.

Share an activity or interest that tends (or tends not) to be associated with your gender.

Growing up, what's one way you were encouraged to be (e.g.) 'like a man' or 'ladylike'?

Prayer

The leader might lead a short prayer at the 'Look Around' or 'Look Up' stage of the discussion.

Hopefully the 'Look Forward' stage will provide material for group prayer, which the leader may wish to conclude with this traditional prayer (known as a 'morning collect'):

Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live this day in love to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Icebreaker Question

[Around the room].

1. Look Around

Was there anything anyone found helpful in the sermon on this topic?

Was there anything anyone found difficult in the sermon on this topic?

2. Look Up

Is there anything anyone is struggling to understand in the reading(s)?

Share the main things you're getting from the reading(s) about this topic.

Are there any other Bible passages anyone finds helpful on this topic?

3. Look Forward

What's one thing you're more settled or less settled about after this sermon / session?

What's one way the Bible's teaching on this topic could make a difference to your life?