

4 - The Gift of Relationships

Before your group meets - Read Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:15-25

And watch this short video:

Sam Allberry - Marriage, Singleness & intimacy - <https://vimeo.com/215863679>

Discuss together (each person to share):

“Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.” **vs** “Men & Women are equal”

We’ve heard these statements thrown around so often. What are they trying to get at?

How does our modern culture define and determine what it means to be a man or woman in the world?

Think on this:

In Genesis Chapter 1 & 2, God creates mankind in his own image. He makes them similar to each other yet different, with specific characteristics, roles and responsibilities. Equality before God is clearly not tied to being exactly the same.

Look at Qu.1 - 3 in pairs or smaller groups:

Qu.1 - In 1:26-28 & 2:15-25 What are the roles and responsibilities that Adam & Eve share? What do you notice is different?

Qu.2 - In 2:18 why was it “not good” for the Man to be alone and how is Woman a solution to that problem? (Think back to the command in 1:28 too)

Qu.3 - Genesis 2:22-25 describes God’s beautiful plan for marriage. A man leaves, cleaves and becomes one with his wife. Here sex is limited to a committed, loving, monogamous (1 other), adult relationship between a male and female. It also excludes all the other distorted versions of this that will surface in the bible (Polygamy, adultery, homosexuality, etc) and which we see in our world. The fall (Gen 3) fractured this ideal marriage, causing relational frustration, but God still calls us to uphold the institution and goodness of marriage (Hebrews 13:4).

How does our culture dishonour marriage and how we can we seek to honour it?

Read together in main group:

Adam and Eve are equal in God's sight, they just have different roles. The title "helper" given to the woman is not a lesser or derogatory term. Throughout the bible, God is often referred to as a "helper". This also tells us there is something more important to God than the particular role we have – that is God's glory and His rule over creation. When we lose that perspective we can often despise our roles as men or women under God.

God creatively made men and women different yet complementary, that we would use our differences to work together for the name of Jesus and the glory of God. We can't do without each other to achieve the outcome God intended. And Marriage is one of the chief ways God planned to achieve His desired outcome.

Marriage is a picture of God's purposes for His world, reflecting Christ's relationship with his Bride - the Church. So couples love each other looking outward to serve and care for others too. But the New Testament also tells us that marriage, as good as it can be, is not the only relationship God uses to achieve His good purposes. This also helps us see singleness in a new light. Marriage is not the ultimate thing to aspire to, but God's glory, reflected in our service of Jesus as men or women in God's family.

(Depending on time, choose one option)

Qu.4 - How are you thankful for the gift of relationships that God has blessed you with? What are you finding to be a challenge?

Qu.5 - How can you use your manhood/womanhood to serve God in the different spheres of your life?

- Work
- Home/family
- School
- Church
- Marriage
- Dating relationship

Further reading to do through the week.

What do the following passages teach about marriage and singleness:	
1 Corinthians 6:18-7:40	
1 Corinthians 11:1-16	(leave the issue of head coverings aside for now and reflect on the relationship between men and women and God)
1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13	
Galatians 3:26-29	
Ephesians 5:21-6:9	
Colossians 3:12-4:1	
Hebrews 13:1-6	
1 Peter 3:1-12	

Further food for thought on relating together as men and women:

- **5 part series on Gender according to the bible:**

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-gender-1-introduction/>

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-gender-2-origin/>

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-gender-3-real-origin/>

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-gender-4-eclipse/>

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-gender-5-enacting/>

- **Podcast: Sam Allberry on Marriage, Singleness and Christ (27 mins)**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/singleness-marriage-family-god/>

“He argues that neither marriage nor singleness can satisfy our longings. Only Christ can do that.... this quote from his book sums up his whole argument: “If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, singleness shows us its sufficiency.”

Bonus Question:

Read the following passages about marriage from the New Testament:

How does this affect your view of marriage and singleness?

Are there any attitudes or behaviours that need to be corrected in light of this?

Ephesians 5:22-33

Mark 12:18-25

Revelation 21:1-5

5 - The Fall (or Fail)

Before your group meets - Read Genesis 3:1-24

And watch this video:

Bible Project "Sin" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNOZ7ocLD74>

Discuss together:

So many misunderstandings of God and the way He works come from a misunderstanding of sin and especially our own sin. When we see sin as - just bad things we do - it makes us seem better and more deserving than we are. How would you describe/define "Sin"?

Look at Qu.1-5 in Pairs or smaller groups:

Qu.1 - In v1 the serpent (or Devil) doesn't force Eve to do anything. What tactics (craftiness) does he use?

Qu.2 - In vs2-3 - Eve said what God "really" said... Is that what God "really" said? Did she add or take anything away? (Look back at 2:17)

Qu.3 - In vs4-5 notice how the serpent twisted God's words for Eve. How do you find yourself twisting God's words when it comes to obeying Him or doing what you like? What lies do you tell yourself/believe?

Qu.4 - In vs6-7 - When Adam and Eve took the fruit from the tree, it was a decision to judge good from evil for themselves. They formed their own internal, personal justice-system. The consequence was that they felt judged by one-another and ashamed to be naked before each other and God. When do you find yourself doing what Adam and Eve did in vs 8-13 (hiding from God or blaming others) and why do you do that?

Read together in main group:

That decision by our first ancestors to determine right from wrong for themselves led to humanity being banned from the nourishment of the 'Tree of Life' (3:22-24). As a result of their decision, sin, sickness and death entered our world. Their decision affected all of us and we've all continued to make the same decision they did: we all choose to serve ourselves, rather than God and we experience the consequences of those actions.

Qu.6 - In v15 How does God provide hope for humanity in the judgement on the serpent?

Eve's descendant hero did eventually come - Jesus, who struck the serpent's head as He defeated sin on the cross and rose from the dead to offer humanity forgiveness and eternal life (Heb 2:14-15). In Mark 7:14 Jesus taught that sin is a problem of the heart which shows up in our thoughts, words and actions. It can't just be masked over by changing our actions, but needs to be treated deep within. By faith in Jesus, God's Spirit gives us a new heart, the heart of Jesus, so we are able to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God (i.e. repentance). **PRAISE GOD!!**

Qu.7 Read over the passages below. Then share how they affect the way you think about sin and your relationship with God? (If time is short, choose 1 or 2)

Romans 3:23-24 - *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Colossians 1:21-22 - *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.*

1 John 1:8-10 - *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

Titus 2:11-14 - *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

A reflection for prayer time:

Psalms 103:11-12 - *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions (sin) from us.*

6 - Cain and Abel - Broken Relationships

Before your group meets - Read Genesis 4

And watch this video:

John Piper - the sin of Cain - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7cFpSlBUPs>

Discuss as a group (each person share):

It has been said, "Comparison is the thief of joy". What things in your life do you find yourself comparing with others?

Think on this:

What we see here is 'humanity gone bad' by the second generation. It didn't take long for a murder to appear in the human story. And surprisingly, the victim was someone who was doing the right thing!

Look at Qu.1 - 3 in pairs or smaller groups:

Qu.1 - In vs3-5 What was the difference between Cain's and Abel's offering?

Qu.2 - In vs6-8 Cain has a choice - choose right, or let sin master him. He chose the latter, and it led to a man being murdered in v8. What do you think motivated him to do that (vs3-7)?

Qu.3 - 1 John 3:11 says, "*we should love one another*" and then says, "*Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*" Describe what it would have looked like for Cain to have loved instead?

Qu.4 - Read these 2 passages - how do they help us respond to temptation:

James 1:13-15 - When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Read together in main group:

God gave Cain a choice, a second chance, but he refused to listen and repent. He showed his true colours by not humbling himself before God's grace, but taking justice into his own hands.

When the Lord Jesus showed up, He had every right to punish humanity for the way we've treated him. Yet, instead of taking our lives away, He chose to lay His life down for us. He chose to love us and offer us everything that was His.

Jesus was put to death by his fellow Jewish brothers because they were jealous of Him and ironically, He had only ever done the right thing. Sound familiar?

Jesus now calls everyone who has benefitted from His love to show the same love to others, regardless of what they've done to us. Love is sacrificial, it's costly, it builds others up, it covers over their wrongdoing.

Qu.5 - Share what things really stir that anger, jealousy, rage or envy in your heart, then pray for each other, asking for forgiveness and asking God to give you the heart of Christ for others.

Qu.6 - Jesus says, "***if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***" Is there someone/people you've been withholding forgiveness from that you might need to contact this week?

(Bonus Question - if time allows - or do this during the week)

Qu.7 - In James' letter he speaks to the Church about the kind of attitude that caused Cain to kill Abel.

Read James 4:1-12 - Where do you see yourself in this passage and what do you need to do to change?

Reflection for prayer time:

*Psalm 133:1 - How good and pleasant it is,
when God's people live together in unity!*