

Born to Love

A Biblical Celebration of Relationships

A reader and discussion guide for following the sermon series



Term 3, 2014

St. David's Forestville

Born to Love

At St. David's we are celebrating biblical relationships this term. Humans were made for relationship, relationship with God, relationship with each other, relationship with the rest of the creation. Humans were born to love. We live out our relationships in a fallen world redeemed by Jesus. The following readings and discussion questions will help us follow the sermon series and also aid our personal Bible readings and/or small groups in exploring and applying God's good blueprint to relationships. Some of these readings will touch on sensitive personal issues in the area of personal relationships and sexuality. If any of these topics raise issues for you we encourage you to talk to someone about it particularly a St. David's staff member. Please pray that God teaches us all how to relate his way, and find the reconciliation he offers us in our relationships. Celebrate with your small group and our church the fact that we were born to love, even in a fallen world."

Contents

- 1. God's Good Blueprint for Love and Relationships**
- 2. Understanding and Right Thinking About Your Body**
- 3. A Word About Marriage**
- 4. Biblical Thinking About Homosexuality**
- 5. A Word About Divorce**
- 6. Celebrating Singleness and Friendship**
- 7. Flee Sexual Immorality**
- 8. Jesus and Marriage**
- 9. A Word About Godly Dating**

Reader 1 God's Good Blueprint for Love and Relationships

Genesis 1:26-2:25

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of

the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.
³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 2 ¹Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—⁵and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—⁷the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up

the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Mark 10:1-12

¹Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. ²Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

³“What did Moses command you?” he replied.

⁴They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

⁵“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

Song of Songs 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.

If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

Colossians 3:12-19 ¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

1 John 3:11-24

¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1 John 4:7-12,16 ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for[®] our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ...¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Study 1 God's Good Blueprint for Love and Relationships

DISCUSSION STARTER: If you were put on a remote island and could only take one or two people with you, who would you take? Why?

1. Looking at Genesis 1:26-2:25, in what ways do you think people reflect God's image? In what ways don't they?
2. In Genesis 1:26 God says "Let us..." Later in Scripture we learn that God is one but three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). What does that suggest about God and relationships?
3. Looking at Genesis 1:27 and 2:18 why wasn't one human being sufficient to reflect God's image?
4. Jesus draws on Genesis 2:24 in Mark 10:5-9 to say what about the marriage relationship?
5. Looking at the last six readings what is the role of love in relationships? Where does the strength ultimately come from to love like this (cf. 1 John 4:16)?

Reader 2 Understanding and Right Thinking About Your Body

Proverbs 2:1-22

- ¹ My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
- ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,
- ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
- ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,
- ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
- ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
- ⁷ He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
- ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.
- ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.
- ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
- ¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.
- ¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are
perverse,
- ¹³ who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways,
- ¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,
- ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.
- ¹⁶ It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive
words,
- ¹⁷ who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.
- ¹⁸ For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead.
- ¹⁹ None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.
- ²⁰ Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous.
- ²¹ For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it;
- ²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in

body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Psalms 139:13-16

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me
were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Phil 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

1 Corinthians 9:27 ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Romans 12:1-2 ¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual[®] act of worship.
²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

1 Corinthians 13:3 ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1 Cor 10:31 ³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Study 2 Understanding and Right Thinking About Your Body

DISCUSSION STARTER: What value do you think our culture places on the human body?

1. Proverbs 2 hardly mentions the external body, but what value does it put on the internal? What does the heart and soul need (cf. Prov 2:10)?
2. How does 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 link the physical body and one’s spiritual life?
3. How does God’s role in Psalm 139 give each and every body unique value?
4. The final six readings from the apostle Paul speak of the wonders and dangers that one’s body poses in living the Christian life. Looking at these as well as 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 what are the possibilities and limitations inherent to us in the body?

Reader 3 A Word About Marriage

Song of Songs 5:10-6:10

- ¹⁰ My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.
¹¹ His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven.
¹² His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.
¹³ His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume.
His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.
¹⁴ His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite.
His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.
¹⁵ His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.
¹⁶ His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely.
This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.
- ^{6:1} Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women?
Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?
- ² My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices,
to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies.
³ I am my lover’s and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies.
⁴ You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah,
lovely as Jerusalem, majestic as troops with banners.
⁵ Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Gilead.
⁶ Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing.
Each has its twin, not one of them is alone.
⁷ Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.

⁸ Sixty queens there may be, and eighty concubines, and virgins beyond number;
⁹ but my dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favourite of the one who bore her.
The maidens saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines praised her.
¹⁰ Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?

1 Corinthians 7:1-7

¹Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. ²But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

Deuteronomy 24:5 ⁵If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

Genesis 29:31-32

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

Proverbs 31:10-31

¹⁰A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.
¹² She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.
¹³ She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.
¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.
¹⁵ She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.
¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.
¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
²¹ When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
²² She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.
²³ Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
²⁵ She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
²⁶ She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
²⁷ She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
²⁸ Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:
²⁹ "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."
³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
³¹ Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Psalms 128

¹ Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways.
² You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessings and prosperity will be yours.
³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;
your sons will be like olive shoots around your table.
⁴ Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.
⁵ May the LORD bless you from Zion all the days of your life;
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem,
⁶ and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel.

Revelation 21:1-4

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Study 3 A Word About Marriage

DISCUSSION STARTER: How is marriage a gift to our society?

1. The Bible celebrates marriage in all aspects: spiritual, emotional, mental & physical. How is that reflected in the listed Bible passages? Can you think of other passages?
2. Marriage is not always easy or deeply satisfying. In Genesis 29 how did Leah struggle in her marriage? What is revealed about God's concern for Leah?
3. Proverbs 31 describes an ideal wife as loyal, industrious and compassionate. Do you agree with this description? How would you describe the ideal husband?
4. Psalm 128 describes a rich image of family. What does it celebrate? Not everyone experiences this picture. In what ways does the Bible push us forward beyond images of earthly marriage and family (Revelation 21:1-4)

COUPLES TO STUDY LATER: Proverbs 17:22 tells us that 'A cheerful heart is good medicine'.

- Share a humorous experience you had together as a couple
- Share one thing you value about your spouse.
- When is marriage a challenge?
- Pray together

Reader 4 Biblical Thinking About Homosexuality

Any biblical discussion on homosexuality must be pastorally sensitive on one hand, and counter cultural on the other. We respect those who experience same sex attraction and want to honour God with their thoughts, words, and deeds. We deplore homophobia. The Bible calls those who experience same sex attraction to honour God through celibacy. This is the same encouragement that God calls single people, divorced people, and widows to. God is trustworthy and his blueprint for relationships is good.

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, & received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 15-20

⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Genesis 19:5-7 ⁵They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." ⁶Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing.

Leviticus 18:22 Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

Romans 3:23 ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 5:8 ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:11b-18 Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:21-23 ²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Study 4 Biblical Thinking About Homosexuality

DISCUSSION STARTER: What views are there towards homosexuality in our culture?

1. How has the church made it difficult for those who are tempted by homosexuality to be honest about their struggle?
2. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 remind us that without the grace provided through Jesus none of us would be found acceptable to God. In your experience of the church do you think that homosexuality is maligned as a more significant sin than other sins?
3. In what ways does the Bible make it clear that homosexuality is not appropriate?
4. Sexual sins are sin just like greed and lying and being selfish. However, in what ways are sexual sins different? (1 Corinthians 6:18 and context)
5. What are some of the consequences of sexual sins like practising homosexuality?

6. Is there a difference to how we, as Christians, relate to Christians and non-Christians interested in, or actively involved in, a homosexual relationship?
7. How can we, as God's church, create an environment in which people with homosexual inclinations feel comfortable enough to share their struggle?

Reader 5 A Word About Divorce

Any biblical discussion on divorce must be pastorally sensitive on one hand, and counter cultural on the other. The national divorce rate tells us one in three first marriages end in divorce and that the average age is of divorcees is now 42. We all have broken marriages in our extended families. We want to think carefully and sensitively about this pastorally sensitive subject. We want to strengthen our marriages to minimise the risk of divorce. We want to care for those in our midst who suffering from the pain of marriage breakdown.

Malachi 2:10-16

¹⁰Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? ¹¹Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. ¹²As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty.

¹³Another thing you do: You flood the LORD'S altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. ¹⁴You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

¹⁵Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

¹⁶"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

1 Corinthians 7:8-16 ⁸Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. ⁹But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

¹⁰To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

¹²To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Matthew 19:3-9 ³Some Pharisees came to (Jesus) to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?” ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

⁷“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

⁸Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Romans 7:2-3 ²For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

Study 5 A Word About Divorce

DISCUSSION STARTER: What do you think are some of the hardest things about divorce?

1. Malachi 2:10-16 likens the breakdown of relationship between God and His people to a terrible divorce. What are the parallels between the two?

2. What advice does Paul have in 1 Corinthians 7:8-16 for struggling Christian couples considering divorce?
3. What command does Jesus have in Matthew 19:3-9? What grounds are there for divorce? Can you think of other times people may at least need to separate?
4. How is the Bible’s commitment to the marriage bond helpful for society and the Christian community?
5. How can we minister to those who have experienced divorce? To couples in crisis? How can we strengthen marriages before troubles surface and become entrenched?

Reader 6 Celebrating Singleness and Friendship

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

⁷ Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

⁸ There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless— a miserable business!

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

¹⁰ If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

²⁵Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. ²⁷Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. ²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

²⁹What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; ³⁰those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; ³¹those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

³²I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. ³³But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—³⁴and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. ³⁵I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

³⁶If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. ³⁷But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. ³⁸So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.

³⁹A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. ⁴⁰In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Matthew 19:8-12 ⁸Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." ¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

¹¹Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Luke 20:34-35 ³⁴Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, ³⁶and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

Psalms 68:5 ⁵A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

⁶God sets the lonely in families

1 Timothy 5:5-6 ⁵The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. ⁶But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

Ruth 1:8-18 *After Naomi's husband has died and her two sons:*

⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me.

⁹May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD'S hand has gone out against me!"

¹⁴At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." ¹⁸When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each others burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Study 6 Celebrating Singleness and Friendship

Food for thought: Jesus, the Apostle Paul, Amy Carmichael, Florence Nightingale,

John Stott and John Chapman were all single.

DISCUSSION STARTER: What are some of the advantages of singleness?

1. Sadly our culture and some times our churches lead us to believe that our worth is bound up with being married or having kids. Paul's priorities in 1 Corinthians 7 seem to differ from that mindset. Both marriage and children are good, but Paul has something else foremost in his mind. What is it?
2. What do both Paul (1 Cor 7) and Jesus (Mt. 19) say are some of the troubles that face married people and what do they say are the benefits of singleness?
3. Why does Paul value his celibacy and how does he use it for God's kingdom?
4. What do Psalm 68:5 and 1 Timothy 5:5-6 have to say to widows and widowers?
5. The Bible calls us to maintain the long view, the eternal picture. How is this reflected in Jesus and Paul's teaching on marriage in the final three readings.

PAUSE to pray on the topic of singleness

FRIENDSHIP discussion starter: Share a story you remember about you and a friend.

6. Despite the popular view that Ecclesiastes 4 is about marriage it is actually about friendship. What do some of the passages in Reader 6 say about friendship and its influence in our lives?
7. How is Ruth a good friend to Naomi in Ruth chapter 1?
8. What do the final 3 Bible passages contribute to our understanding of friendship? How would you describe yourself as a friend at the moment? What about your friends?

Reader 7 Flee Sexual Immorality

Definition: *Sexual immorality is translated from the Greek word "porneia," from which we get our word pornography. It has a broad definition to include any sexual thought, word, or deed outside of God's good blueprint for relationships and sexuality. This includes premarital sexual acts and thoughts, homosexual acts, and any other sexual activity outside the bond of marriage. These passages encourage us to take seriously the Bible's call to flee sexual immorality. Jesus, Paul, John and others urge us to flee sexual immorality in the NT.*

Proverbs 7:1-7

- ¹ My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.
- ² Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.
- ³ Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.
- ⁴ Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your kinsman;
- ⁵ they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words.
- ⁶ At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice.

- ⁷ I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Genesis 1:27; 3:1 ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number." **Genesis 3:** ¹Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ²Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Leviticus 18:1-20, 22-24, 29-30

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. ³You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. ⁵Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD. ⁶"'No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD. ⁷"'Do not dishonour your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her. ⁸"'Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonour your father. ⁹"'Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere. ¹⁰"'Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonour you. ¹¹"'Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister. ¹²"'Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative. ¹³"'Do not have sexual

relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative. ¹⁴“Do not dishonour your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt. ¹⁵“Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her. ¹⁶“Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonour your brother. ¹⁷“Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness. ¹⁸“Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living. ¹⁹“Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

²⁰“Do not have sexual relations with your neighbour's wife and defile yourself with her...

²²“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

²³“Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

²⁴“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.

²⁹“Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. ³⁰Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came & do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.’

Proverbs 6:32 a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Mark 7:20-23 Jesus said: ²⁰...“What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’

²¹For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

1 Corinthians 10:8-13 ⁸We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. ⁹We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

¹¹These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And 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 stand up under it.

Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity & debauchery

Ephesians 5:3 ³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 John 1:8-10 ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

1 Corinthians 9:27 ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Study 7 Flee Sexual Immorality

Food for thought: “What's love got to do with it?” asks Tina Turner in her popular song. When it comes to sex, for some people love and purity don't have anything to do with it. But what many of us don't realize is that sex is a spiritual thing, and that is one of the reasons that love is supposed to be a part of sex. Sexual sin is spiritual too.

DISCUSSION STARTER: What are some other things from popular culture that mirror the sentiment in Tina Turner's song? How is sex more than just a physical act?

1. Proverbs 7 and 1 Corinthians 6 both warn us against sex as merely harmless pleasure. What are the responsibilities involved with a sexual relationship?

2. The Bible makes it clear that God is clearly not against sex, in actual fact he is the one who made it. Read the Genesis 1:27 and 3:1 passages. What is one of the chief aims of sex and how should this influence our view of sex?
3. The book of Leviticus demonstrates God's concern for sexual purity in the Israelite community. What are the possible ramifications for God's people if they disobey? What happens to a society which fails to have parameters in their sexual conduct?
4. The readings commencing at 1 John 2:15-17 paint a bleak picture for those committing sexual sin. What hope is offered in the final two passages plus 1 Cor 10:13?
5. In Romans 7:7-25 (not listed) Paul speaks of doing what he doesn't want to do, sin. Later in 1 Cor 9:27 how does he combat sin which surfaces in his carnal desires?
6. What are the sources of sexual temptation in our culture? How can we help each other flee sexual immorality?

Reader 8 Jesus and Marriage

Ephesians 5:15-33

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Revelation 19:5-8

⁵Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”

⁶Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Matthew 19:4-6 ⁴“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Luke 20:34-35 ³⁴Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.

³⁵But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

Matthew 22:23-33 ²³That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴“Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷Finally, the woman died. ²⁸Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

1 Peter 3:1-9 ¹Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not

come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Ephesians 4:2-3 ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Study 8 Jesus and Marriage

DISCUSSION STARTER: Imagine a world in which the marriage did not exist. What do you think that would that look like? Who would it affect the most?

1. Jesus constantly affirmed marriage including performing his first miracle at the wedding in Cana. In what ways does he affirm it in Matthew 19:4-6?
2. Looking at Matthew 19:4-6; Luke 20:34-35 and Matthew 22:23-33 what is the status of marriage on earth? What is its status in heaven?
3. What do Ephesians 5:15-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-9 contribute to our understanding of marriage? What are some of the challenges in these passages and how do we understand them in a positive and helpful way that affirms both husband and wife as equal albeit with different emphasises on their ministry within marriage?
4. How do a husband and a wife reflect Jesus and the church? (Ephesians 5:15-33)

Reader 9 A Word on Godly Dating

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

¹Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

⁹Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

¹¹Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹²so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

1 Timothy 2:9 ⁹I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

1 Peter 3:3-5a Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

2 Samuel 11:1-5 ¹In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

²One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Ruth 2:1-13 ¹Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.

²And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour."

Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” ³So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

⁴Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, “The LORD be with you!”

“The LORD bless you!” they called back.

⁵Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, “Whose young woman is that?”

⁶The foreman replied, “She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.”

⁸So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. ⁹Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

¹⁰At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, “Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”

¹¹Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹²May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

¹³“May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my lord,” she said.

“You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.”

1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 36 ⁸Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. ⁹But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

³⁶If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.

1 Corinthians 9:27 ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Study 9 A Word on Godly Dating

DISCUSSION STARTER: Different cultures date in different ways. In some countries marriages are arranged and so there is no dating. Other cultures allow a person to date different people on any given week. Meanwhile others befriend people in groups and when they date it is normally an exclusive relationship in which they do not continue to date other people. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?

1. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 the importance of sexual morality and brotherly love is spelled out. What does this passage have to say to dating couples?
2. Are the words in 1 Timothy 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3-5a relevant to today? What benefits does such a modest approach have for Christian singles & couples?
3. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5 and Ruth 2:1-13. What is the difference between how Bathsheba drew attention to herself and how Ruth did? What dangerous steps did David take which led to a sexual sin that would scar his life and family?
4. 1 Corinthians 7:8, 36 is pretty blunt. How important do you think Paul’s words here and in 1 Corinthians 9:27 are for dating Christian couples today?



Thanks for travelling with us for the ‘Born to Love’ series.

We hope you have seen that from Genesis to Revelation

God made humans for relationship:

*relationship with God, relationship with each other,
and relationship with the rest of the creation.*

Humans were indeed born to love.

We continue to live out our relationships in a fallen world redeemed by Jesus.

*We look forward to perfected relationships
with God and His people in heaven.*

Food for thought: You've invested the past nine weeks in learning about our capacity in God to love and foster relationships, be it friendships, family, dating or marriage. What have you learnt and how much have you put into practise?

Where to from here: Look back over what you've studied...and identify at least one of the nine topics to review more closely and ask yourself these questions:

1. What was this all about?
2. What do I need to do in light of what I've understood?
3. What is the first step I need to take in that direction? Go and do it!

Some of these readings may have touched on sensitive personal issues in the area of personal relationships and sexuality. If any of these topics raised issues for you we encourage you to talk to someone about it particularly a St. David's staff member.

Office: 9451 5242 Email: office@stdavids.com.au