
SEX, FAITH, FEAR AND LIVING: TOWARDS CELEBRATING OUR SEXUALITY

-- A 10 session workshop developed for use in small groups --

-- by a team of people in the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg --

The Facilitator's

FACILITATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Introducing the course

Length

Each session has been designed to run for nine sessions of between 90-120 minutes. As this is a pilot we would ask you to monitor the time very carefully. It is quite possible that sessions as they now stand will vary in length. We would like suggestions as to how to standardise the length.

We think that the course could be done over a weekend or two.

Orientation

This workshop has a specific orientation. We approach the question of human sexuality from a principally pastoral perspective that seeks to be affirming and inclusive of the variety of human sexuality rather than attempting to find a simple "right or wrong" solution. It may be helpful to read the following paragraph to the group.

The intention of this course is to explore and learn from each other, rather than to legislate what should be. In this way we seek to follow the model Jesus provided rather than be the model that Moses gave. Moses first handed down the law, or made a point or pronouncement, which often resulted in resistance and hostility from his hearers. Jesus did things differently. He sought to get people to make up their own minds and to take responsibility for their own lives. Jesus very often first asked a question, and after some discussion, offered a parable or a statement. We will try to use Jesus's method throughout this course. (If you need to, back this up with reference to Matthew 12:27, 15:4, 16:13, 22:21, John 8:7, Luke 2:49.)

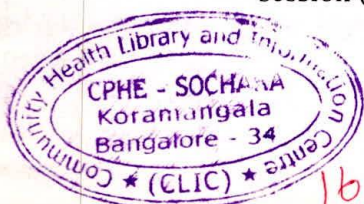
Ground rules for enabling caring dialogue

- ▶ These sessions are confidential. We are free to discuss our own comments or feelings with people who are not part of this group, but not those of any person in this group
- ▶ In this group we discuss issues but we do not name persons
- ▶ We give equal time to all views
- ▶ Differing views
- ▶ Each person has the right to participate with a particular activity
- ▶ We must try and avoid making statements instead of speaking in the first person

Attendance

We encourage a culture of attendance at the second session (they might want to attend the first session)

to the second session and to expect that



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A note to facilitators of pilot groups

First a big thank you agreeing to pilot this Human Sexuality Course for us.

This is what we would like you to do for us.

1. Carefully read through the WHOLE workshop before you begin
If you have any questions contact one of the following people asap:
- Douglas Torr 614-2124 (h) 336-8725(w) djtorr@cpsanet.co.za
- Julia Denny-Dimitriou 788-4322 (h/w) rev2d2@iafrica.com
- Paul Germond 837-9895 (h) 716-8477 (w) 044mond@muse.wits.ac.za
Feel free to contact us at any point in the workshop.
2. Please try to have a co-facilitator. Two people evaluating a project like this will be of great benefit to us.
3. Please be sure to fill in the evaluation forms that you will find at the end of each session as soon after the session as possible.
4. Send the nine evaluation sheets to us as soon as possible after you have completed the workshop.
5. Please make the participants aware that the workshop is being piloted. Arrange a time in the final session for them to give feedback by filling in the evaluation sheet at the end of session nine.
6. Be aware that this is an intensely pastoral project. It might very well bring up serious emotional traumas or other difficulties among the participants. It is critically important that you create a list of resource people and groups (eg. Anglicare or FAMSA) that is available to all members of the group.
7. We are convinced that if you as a facilitator are prepared to be vulnerable and share of yourself, the workshop experience will be immeasurably enhanced for the participants.
8. It is possible that we might have overlooked some very important aspect of the process, both in terms of content and of group dynamic. It might be, as an example of the latter, that we have not handled the ending of each session very well. Please don't simply rely on what we have done. If there is a gap fill it and let us know about it and how you solved it.

everybody attends all the sessions. Clearly, in some case, some participants will simply not be able to come. But because of the sensitive nature of the material and the aims of building a group culture of care and respect, it is critical that people commit to the to the whole course.

Role of the Facilitator in the Group

- ▶ **suggests** the purpose for the discussion. You are the facilitator. People will look to you for the purpose of the group. This is your group. Not ours. You and the group aim it.
- ▶ **gatekeeper** — makes sure that all participants are heard. Draws silent ones into the discussion; prevents domination by any one person.
- ▶ **remains as neutral as possible** in order to make sure that differing views are heard, and all contributions considered.
- ▶ **timekeeper** - keeps the discussion on track and on time..

Hints for good discussion groups

- ▶ arrange the chairs in a circle
- ▶ get to know the members of your group
- ▶ be friendly with all the members of the group
- ▶ ask questions that are open ended. Don't ask questions that can be answered with a "Yes" or a "No"
- ▶ Don't dominate the discussion yourself. You are not the teacher, but the facilitator
- ▶ Check for clarity, that everyone understands what is going on.

Instructions to the Facilitator

The Facilitator's Manual which you are now reading is identical to the Participant's Manual in all respects except for the guidelines which are given to the Facilitator in **italics**. Everything that is in italics is unique to this manual and is there to give you guidance.

Facilitator's Guide

- Session 1-

STARTING THE JOURNEY: TALKING ABOUT SEX

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to overview the course
- ▶ to get to know each other
- ▶ to look at the language of sexuality

Prayer:

Today we are confronted with our bodies. Today we find that humanity and sexuality are inseparable. Today we see that in Jesus Christ, God become human, the divine and the body are inseparable. Today we find that in Christ our sexuality is affirmed not denied. Today we begin our journey of discovery. Today, loving God, we ask for your guidance and continued presence now and in the weeks that lie ahead. Amen.

Introduction:

To start we will ask three simple questions.

- ▶ Who are we?
- ▶ What are we going to be doing in this workshop?
- ▶ How are we going to proceed?

Who are we?

Congratulations! You have been brave enough to tackle the often controversial and sometimes difficult topic of sexuality. You won't be doing it alone! You'll be doing it as a group. So let's start by getting to know each other.

Activity

Tell us your name and who you are.

Why are you here and what do you expect from this series?

Tell us two of your nicknames, one you like as well as one you don't like and why you like or dislike them.

What will we be doing?

Now that we've got to know each other a little better, let us explore the contents of the workshops. This series is designed to help us explore the human experience of sexuality and how it relates to our faith. We are all sexual beings. We are all people of faith. So often the meeting of faith and sexuality never occurs. Both church and society overwhelmingly teach us that the two have nothing to do with each other. They are in fact to be kept apart. Sex and sexuality are also not talked about very much in the family, let alone the church context. But this is what we are about to do. It is important to think about how previous understandings of

sex and sexuality have shaped our present understanding. The way we think about sex and sexuality today will shape our understanding in the future. So in the words of a contemporary song writer,

"Lets talk about sex, Baby!"

However, before we do so, let's about how we will do this. The series has a total of nine sessions of 1 ½ to 2 hours each, each dedicated to a particular topic. The nine topics are:

- Session 1: **Starting the Journey: Talking About Sex**
An overview and introduction to the course and the group
- Session 2: **Learning about Sex**
We examine what we've learnt about sexuality from church, family, and friends and how we've learnt it
- Session 3: **Back to Basics: The ABC of reading the Bible**
We explore the different ways we read the Bible
- Session 4: **Reading about Sex: The Birds and the Bees and the Bible**
We will read the which Song of Songs provides an amazing celebration of human sexuality
- Session 5: **Sexy Singles**
We explore single peoples' experience of sexuality
- Session 6: **Sexuality in Heterosexual Perspective**
We explore heterosexual peoples' experience of sexuality
- Session 7: **Sexuality in Homosexual Perspective**
We explore the experience of sexuality between people of the same sex
- Session 8: **The Texts Speak! Or do they? Homosexuality and the Bible**
We examine what the Bible says about sexuality
- Session 9: **The Naked Prayer: Celebrating Sexuality**
A service of worship celebrating our sexuality

How will we do all this?

We'll do it in a small group. In this way we can meet and talk with each other and discover ways in which our faith and sexuality can be expressed in a healthy way. We will also learn from each others experiences, support each other, and learn to care for each other. We will grow in Christian community. We will do it with respect for each other. To help us talk and understand one another better it may be useful to look as the difference between **dialogue** and **debate**.

Dialogue	Debate
<p>To be in dialogue, each person must be willing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ grow in understanding of self and others ▶ take responsibility for one's own thoughts, feelings and experiences ▶ listen to others as they try and express 	<p>In contrast, to be in debate, means people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ try to prove each other wrong ▶ defend personal assumptions as truth ▶ try to win each argument ▶ assume that there is only one right

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ themselves▶ accept others' experiences, thoughts and feelings as true for them▶ search for strengths, not weaknesses, in the other's position▶ try to find areas of basic agreement▶ accept that some questions have no easy answers▶ accept that it can be good to be silent and allow others to do the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ answer and that somebody has it▶ search for weaknesses in the other's position▶ search for big differences▶ look for one final answer▶ use silence as a weapon
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Be sure to have everybody accept this as the basis for the group. Elaborate here on the Ground Rules suggested in the introduction. You may want to get the group to sign a covenant of respect, confidentiality, and agreement to attend all the sessions. You could do this at the beginning of Session 2.

Language and Terminology

Gabriel Moran, a philosopher, once said:

Whoever owns the words owns the world. If the words are not available to ask the right questions, then no new answers are possible, society as a whole and institutions within society prevent certain kinds of change by not allowing for the language that would be necessary to raise questions of that kind of change.

Language is not innocent. A person's choice of language is a moral, political, and theological act with personal and societal implications and consequences.

Activity

On a piece of paper write down any reactions you have when you hear the word "sex." Share some of them with the group.

The point of this exercise is to show that there are many different reactions to the word "sex."

Defining the words we use to speak about sex

We need to be clear about the meaning of the words we use when we talk, especially when we are dealing with sensitive issues. Words carry values and can be hurtful and destructive. The words we choose to use reveal a great deal about what we and our society think about any given subject. We need to start to think carefully about the language we use when we deal with our own and other's sexuality.

Activity

Below is a list of words. Break into pairs. Each pair will be allocated 2-3 words from the list. Come up with a simple definition of the words. Write them down. You'll share them

with the group. Try and find a meaning to each word that the group can agree on. Try and avoid using value judgements in your definitions. These words and their definitions will be used by the group as a common language to talk about sexuality.

List of words:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Sexuality | 11. Transsexual |
| 2. Sex | 12. Masturbation |
| 3. Sexual orientation | 13. Polygamy |
| 4. Homosexual | 14. Marriage |
| 5. Bisexual | 15. Family |
| 6. Asexual | 16. Homophobia |
| 7. Celibacy | 17. Sexism |
| 8. Promiscuity | 18. Sin |
| 9. Prostitute | 19. Oral sex |
| 10. Transvestite | 20. Non-penetrative sex |

Let's end with a time for personal reflection

Activity

We take a minute or two to be quiet. Now let us think about the session which we have just experienced together. Here are some questions to help guide your thoughts:

- ▶ What do I expect to get out of this workshop?
- ▶ What am I prepared to contribute to these workshops?

Please write down your responses and think prayerfully about them over the week as we will be sharing our expectations next session.

As we look to the rest of the course we must realise that talking about sex and sexuality can be a very delicate thing. Some of us may find things in some of the sessions very difficult. They may raise painful memories and experiences, or they may touch on something in our lives at the moment which needs healing and hope. This course is designed not just for growth and learning, but also to help us along the path of healing. If something does come up that requires attention please deal with it. Speak to the Facilitator of the group, or with the group as a whole or individuals. Some of us might want skilled counselling. The Facilitator will hand out a list of resources that you could use.

The group must commit itself to being with participants who are in pain. If someone starts to cry, or cannot talk, be gentle and loving. Listen if a person needs to speak, but if they don't need to speak, simply sit quietly with them. You might pray together. Never let the outline of a particular session dictate what should happen. This course is there for you. It is yours.

Hand out a list of resources that people may refer to if they experience any difficulty during the course.

Prayer:

God you have given us words as a gift to speak to each other. The scriptures tell us that words can either build up or they can destroy. We ask you to help us to think about the meaning of the words we use in describing our sexuality and that of others. Help be aware of the way we use words. May the words from our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts be acceptable to you and be loving and considerate to the others in the group. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Who wrote this course?

We want to say at the outset that this workshop was put together by a group of people who shared a common understanding of human sexuality. While we do not agree on every issue, we do share a common point of departure about human sexuality. Clearly this perspective, this common understanding is going to come out in the pages that follow. We are not neutral; neither is this workshop entirely neutral. But we believe that it is fair and that it will encourage you to embark on a journey of discovery which will not be overwhelmed by our perspective. Our understanding of human sexuality is one of many possible understandings, but one we believe to be fully Christian, and one we believe the church needs to take very seriously. So we offer this course to you in the hope that it will allow you to explore the area of human sexuality in a new way and allow you to develop a relevant and deeply personal understanding of what it means to be human, sexual and Christian.

The people who participated in constructing this workshop were all living in Johannesburg at the time and members of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg. They are:

Godfrey Henwood	Rector of St. Thomas Church, Linden, Johannesburg
	Former Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg
Douglas Torr	Social Responsibility Coordinator of the Diocese of Johannesburg and Anglican Priest
Julia Denny-Dimitriou	Freelance Journalist and Self-Supporting Anglican Deacon
Bart Cox	Development Consultant specializing in HIV/Aids work
Paul Germond	Head of the Department of Religious Studies, Wits University and Anglican Priest
Shirley Moulder	Development Consultant
Linda Schwartz	Anglican Priest and Chaplain to the Diocesan School for Girls, Grahamstown
Cynthia Botha	Secretary to the Anglican Publishing House, and Self-Supporting Anglican Priest

Facilitator's Guide

- Session 2 -

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT ABOUT SEX FROM FAMILY, CHURCH, AND FRIENDS

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to think about how we learnt about sex and our sexuality
- ▶ to discover what we feel about sexuality

Tell the group that we will not begin this session with a prayer as we will do a prayer exercise later in the session.

Activity

In the group, talk about some of your expectations for this course that you thought about last week.

Be sure to collect the expectations that people have written down. You might very well want to use them to prepare for the last session, the worship session. Participants may well want to reflect on what they have learnt from this course and being able to read what their expectation were at the beginning of the course at the end will help in this process. Communicate this to the group.

The words we use ...

Move straight into this activity. Divide the group into two groups. Tell participants to find their partner: the person whose word most closely corresponds to the word on their back. They may only ask questions that receive "Yes" or "No" answers; and when asked questions they may only give "Yes" or "No" answers.

Activity

The facilitator will stick a label on your back without you seeing it. It will make you one of a pair of words that are to do with sexuality. You have to find your partner -- the person whose word matches yours. You can do this by asking questions that can only have "Yes" or "No" as answers. You can only give "Yes" or "No" answers to questions you are asked.

These are pairs of words that you can use:

Masturbate	Wank/Trek Draad
Penis	Dick/Piel
Ejaculate	Cum/
Breasts	Boobs/Tits
Vagina	Pussy/Vis/Poes
Testicles	Balls/Nuts

Come up with appropriate words for the group you are working with if these are not. Slang is usually contextually specific.

Use diagram of the reproductive organs?

You might also get a diagram of the male and female reproductive organs (of humans that is) and get the group to fill in the appropriate names for the organs.

Focussing on Our Bodies

Activity -- Using Your Imagination

The facilitator will now take the group through a reflective imaginative exercise.

Tell participants: If this exercise is not to your liking, sit still and focus on something else so as to allow others to participate. Now lead them in this exercise. We would suggest that you ask them to close their eyes. This will help participants to concentrate on the exercise, and also not worry about looking stupid. This exercise should not be rushed - take your time and allow participants to enter fully into the exercise. Read the following aloud to the group slowly and reflectively, pausing often.

Meditative Activity

This is a Centring exercise - in which we will focus on different parts of anatomy. Think of your Feet, what they look like. Touch them, how do they feel? Now continue to focus on your body and move up your body to your Calves. Are they hard or soft, what sensations do you have from them? Follow your legs to your Knees. How are they shaped, feel them, are they bony, or perhaps smooth? Continue to move along your body to your Thighs, what sensations do you experience here? Now focus on your Bottom as you are seated on the floor or the chair? What does it feel like to be seated on top of a surface? Continue to move up your body. Become aware of your Arms and the hair or pores in your arms. Move right down to your Hands, feel each Finger, feel the sensations in your Palms. Now move back up and experience the sensations in your Shoulders. Are they tense or relaxed and comfortable? Finally feel your Neck and end with your Face and Hair.

Still in a prayerful mood ask the group to think about the following questions. Allow for a long pause between each question. Think back to childhood:

When were you first aware of your body?

When were you first aware of other peoples' bodies?

When were you first aware of your sexuality?

What was your first sexual experience? e.g. a thought, holding hands, kiss, menstruation, masturbation.

How did that first experience make you feel?

How do you feel now when you remember that experience?

Now slowly open your eyes and become aware of your surroundings and the other people in the room.

Avril learns about sex

The aim of this exercise is simply to give the participants an example to make more concrete the questions that we asked participants to reflect back on when thinking about their childhood and early experiences of the body and sexuality.

Avril is 11 and lives with her Mother and Father and two brothers. Apart from having two brothers she is very happy at home. She is also very happy at school where she sings in the choir and plays lots of sport, especially tennis. However, there is something about which she is not happy and that is her body. She has noticed that it is starting to do strange things. Her nipples are beginning to swell and there is hair growing in her armpits. Avril would quite like to ask her mother about it, but she feels too shy.

One day, when she gets home from school, she finds a book next to her bed. It is called "Suzy's Babies" and it's about a hamster called Suzy who mates with another hamster called Sam and has babies. Avril gets the feeling that her mother put the book there on purpose, but she is not sure why and she is still unhappy about the strange things her body is doing.

Activity

Now that you've read about how Avril learnt about sex, spend a few moments think about these questions on your own, then discuss as much as you feel comfortable with one other person.

- ▶ Who first told you about sex?
- ▶ If you read anything about sexuality and sex what sort of things were they?
- ▶ What were some of the things that the Church taught you about your sexuality and sex?
- ▶ What are some of the ways in which what you learned in the past affect what you think about sex today?
- ▶ What are some of the ways that what you learned about sex then affect how you feel about it today?
- ▶ Has this exercise raised any difficulties for you? If so, be sure to talk to someone.

Pressing our buttons: when sex gets uncomfortable

Mary Anne Coates writes:

Why do we feel uncomfortable about certain things we do and think? Most of us will know and name this feeling as one of GUILT. Is it because it offends our own ideal of ourselves and the "nice" picture we have built up of ourselves, or is it because it offends other people to the extent that they may

turn around and act against us?

Make sure that participants understand the quote from Coates, then in the group discuss which of the three scenes below makes individuals feel most uncomfortable, and which makes them least uncomfortable, and encourage them to share some of the reasons for these reactions. Allow each person to share their own response to at least two of the situations.

Three scenes:

- ▶ You see two women embrace in a doorway and kiss each other
- ▶ Entering the home of friends through the back door, you find them making love on the lounge floor
- ▶ Sitting on the top deck of a bus, you can see into a second storey flat where you see a naked man

Activity

Think about what Mary Coates says, then in the group discuss the three situations below asking these questions:

- ▶ which one makes you most uncomfortable?
- ▶ which are you most comfortable with?
- ▶ share some of the reasons for your feelings

Closing

Prayer

Make sure that have a Bible handy with Psalm 139 book marked.

Stand in a circle, hold hands, and have someone read Psalm 139:1,2 13-16 aloud.

Take few minutes to reflect on what you have learned/experienced in this session and share it with God. Pray out aloud if you would like to. Be sensitive to any person who might be showing signs of discomfort. Care gently for them.

Homework

Bring something to the next session which represents what you have felt, learned or experienced in this session.

The ABC of Reading the Bible

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to discover how in the process of reading we interpret the text
- ▶ to deal with some problems connected with the interpretation of Scripture
- ▶ to see that we all read Scripture from our own life situation and that there is seldom one common to every reader

Prayer

Creator God, you are our guide and our strength. We know the love you have for your people. We know it through their stories in Scripture and because of the ways in which you have worked in our own lives. We ask that you continue to guide us as we search your word for answers to our questions. Let us hear your voice speaking to us, and give us grace to understand what you want us to do. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Besure to bring a bible and a candle to this session.

Activity

Place the objects you have brought with you on a table next to the Bible and candle. If you want to share with the rest of the group why you have brought this particular object.

Interpreting three Old Testament texts

The purpose of getting participants to discuss these texts is that they can have some fun and also realise that not all scripture texts can be applied to our lives today. Allow them to struggle to make the texts meaningful, and don't reveal the purpose until they have struggled with all the texts.

In groups of about 4 read the following 3 texts.

Exodus 21:15,17

^{21:15}Whoever hits father or mother shall be put to death.

^{21:16}Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.

Leviticus 13:29-37

^{13:29}When a man or woman has a sore on the head or chin, ³⁰the priest shall examine it. If it seems to be deeper than the surrounding skin and the hairs in it are yellowish and thin, it is a dreaded skin disease, and he shall pronounce the person unclean. ³¹If, when the priest examines it, the sore does not appear to be deeper than the surrounding skin, but there are still no healthy hairs in it, he shall isolate the person for seven days. ³²The priest shall examine the

sore again on the seventh day, and if it has not spread and there are no yellowish hairs in it and it does not seem to be deeper than the surrounding skin, ³³the person shall shave the area around the sore. The priest shall then isolate the person for another seven days. ³⁴On the seventh day the priest shall again examine the sore, and if it has not spread and does not seem to be deeper than the surrounding skin, he shall pronounce the person ritually clean. The person shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean. ³⁵But if the sore spreads after he has been pronounced clean, ³⁶the priest shall examine him again. If the sore has spread, he need not look for yellowish hairs; the person is obviously unclean. ³⁷But if in the priest's opinion the sore has not spread and healthy hairs are growing in it, the sore has healed, and the priest shall pronounce him ritually clean.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

⁵If two brothers live on the same property and one of them dies, leaving no son, then his widow is not to be married to someone outside the family; it is the duty of the dead man's brother to marry her. ⁶The first son that they have will be considered the son of the dead man, so that his family line will continue in Israel. ⁷But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry her, she is to go before the town leaders and say "My husband's brother will not do his duty; he refuses to give his brother a descendant among the people of Israel." ⁸Then the town leaders are to summon him. If the brother still refuses to marry her, ⁹then his brother's widow is to go up to him in the presence of the town leaders, take one of his sandals, spit in his face, and say, "This is what happens to the man who refuses to give his brother a descendant." ¹⁰His family will be known in Israel as "the family of the man who had his sandal pulled off."

Interpreting these 3 texts:

Break up into three groups and ask the following questions:

- ▶ What do these three texts mean?
- ▶ How can we apply them to our lives today?

Interpreting a Picture

The facilitator will show the group a picture. Write or think of a story that might explain this picture and then tell your story to the group.

You can use just about any picture for this exercise. Choose one that is clearly ambiguous and can be read in a variety of ways. If you want to choose one that is sexually ambiguous. Show the participants the picture and tell them to look carefully at it. Then tell them to write the story, or if they are not comfortable with writing to think of it in their minds and then to tell it to the group. Participants must be given plenty of time for this exercise.

Once participants have told the story point out just how many different accounts of the same picture there are. You could also use the example of a traffic accident and how different witnesses see the event differently. In the same way as we see things differently, so that no

two people are able to describe the same event in the same way. This is also true of what we read. Now go on to the next section that explains this point in more detail. Either read it out yourself or have one of the participants read it out aloud.

How to understand what the Bible has to say to us today

Activity

You may by now have realised that the way in which we interpret pictures and even biblical texts is different for each person. Think about how the way you interpreted the three biblical texts and the picture was influenced by your sex, age, culture, economic position, education, previous knowledge, life experience, and whether you are married, single, widowed or divorced.

- ▶ Share your thoughts with the group.

If any of these facts were important for you in deciding how to read the text, then you will have some understanding of the facts which influenced the original writers of biblical texts. Our task is to be guided by the Holy Spirit to use our hearts, intelligence, learning and experience to hear and find out what is God's Word for us today.

Here are some questions we can ask to help us in interpreting the text:

- ▶ What kind of writing / literature is the passage that I am reading (law, history, poetry, letter, gospel, parable, miracle story, prophecy of the future) ?
- ▶ Who was this passage originally written for, and how would they have understood its meaning?
- ▶ Is our situation different from the one in the passage?
- ▶ What can we learn from the passage?

Check that the group understand what they have read before doing the next exercise.

Reading more texts

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to see that if the church can change its mind on these texts then it can do so with others as well. Up until the early seventies, on a the basis of a very literal interpretation of these texts the church did not allow divorcees to remarry, nor could they be ordained, and if a clergyperson got divorced they had their licences withdrawn. For pastoral reasons, such as the reality of abusive relationships, and the fact that society no longer attaches the same stigma to divorce that it once did, the church changed its original position that divorce was unacceptable. The position now is that whilst divorce is not seen as something that is to be encouraged, and life-long commitment to marriage vows is the ideal, divorce is accepted. Divorcees may remarry in church after an interview and the bishop grants permission for this to happen. Divorced persons may also be ordained, and an ordained clergyperson who divorces his/her partner no longer has his/her licence withdrawn, and he/she may also remarry. You may when explaining this situation to participants after they have done the exercise by reading out the section in the Anglican Prayerbook [pages 484-485] dealing with the remarriage of divorcees. Only explain all this

to participants after they have themselves struggled with the texts and answered for themselves the questions that are part of this exercise.

As a group read these two texts aloud.

Matthew 19:3-9

³Some Pharisees came to him and tried to trap him by asking, "Does our law allow a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason he wishes?" ⁴Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female?' ⁵and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Man must not separate, then, what God has joined together." ⁷The Pharisees asked him, "Why then did Moses give the law for a man to hand his wife a divorce notice and send her away?" ⁸Jesus answered, "Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because you are so hard to teach. But it was not like that at the time of creation. ⁹I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife, even though she has not been unfaithful, commits adultery if he marries some other woman."

Mark 10:2-12

²Some Pharisees came to him and tried to trap him. "Tell us," they asked, "does our Law allow a man to divorce his wife?" ³Jesus answered with a question, "What law did Moses give to you?" ⁴Their answer was, "Moses gave permission for a man to write a divorce notice and send his wife away." ⁵Jesus said to them, "Moses wrote this law for you because you are so hard to teach. ⁶But in the beginning, at the time of creation, 'God made them male and female', as the scripture says. ⁷And for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹One must not separate, then, what God has put together."

¹⁰When they went back into the house, the disciples asked Jesus about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, "A man must who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against his wife. ¹²In the same way, a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man commits adultery."

Interpreting the texts

Remembering the factors which influenced the way you read the earlier texts and also the questions which we can ask to help us interpret texts, answer the following questions:

- ▶ What does this text mean?
- ▶ What relevance does this text have for your life now?
- ▶ What do you agree with in this text?
- ▶ What do you disagree with?
- ▶ What is the Church's stand on divorce and remarriage today?

Evaluation

How would you sum up what you've learnt? Use these characters to speak on your behalf ???

This a fun exercise and participants might want to share their evaluations with one another in the large group.

For Next Session

Read the translation of the Song of Songs.

For this session ask all participants to read the Song of Songs. Explain to them that this is very important as the whole of the next session will focus on the reading of this text. If possible we suggest you follow the suggestion in session five and as a group divide the parts between yourselves and read them together when you meet for session five.

READING ABOUT SEX: THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

Our aim in this session is:

1. to read a particular text from the bible -- the Song of Songs.
2. to read it aloud. We suggest that if possible it is read like a play, with different people reading different parts.
3. to discover a biblical text in which human sexuality is celebrated.
4. to reflect on our responses to this text and it being read aloud in a group.

Prayer:

Creator God, we come before you aware of the wonder of our lives. Thank you for your love that brought us into being and continues to support us. As we explore the meaning of human sexuality together by reading the Song of Songs allow us to hear the celebration of life that is in these poems. Enable us to join in the celebration of the full expression of human love. Amen.

What is the Song of Songs?

The Song of Songs is a collection of love poems. The poems appear to have been collected in a haphazard fashion without a story line that links them clearly. They have arranged here in a way which allows us a glimpse into what might have been the story behind the poems. Traditional translations of the poems have been deliberately avoided because most translations to hide the sensual, the erotic, the human passion that is embedded in these songs of love. Rather, this translation treats them as Middle-Eastern erotic love poems.¹ In these songs we have primarily a celebration of human love rather than a parable or metaphor of God's love for Israel or Jesus' love for the church.

The setting of the poems

The poems seem to be set in two places. First, a royal estate in the mountains of Lebanon which is visited by the royal family from Jerusalem, a place of simplicity where nature takes its course. Second, the city of Jerusalem itself, a place of palaces, of harems, of guards who patrol the streets at night; a place of hostility and palace intrigue.

The characters in the poems

There appear to be three characters in the poem. First a young peasant woman on the royal estate. Second the young prince of Jerusalem, Solomon. And third, the voice of a chorus:

¹Compiled by Paul Germond based on the translations of Marvin Pope *Song of Songs* The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1977) and Marcia Falk *The Song of Songs* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990). As with all translations, especially of poetry, the translation offered here is not definitive but one way, among others, to read these texts.

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the women of Jerusalem.

In the last session it was suggested that it would be good if you give different parts to different people to read, and begin this session by reading the text together. The purpose of this session is really to introduce participants to the principle text in the Bible that sees sex as positive and enjoyable.

The Poems

The beginning:

I have arranged the poems in a way which tells a particular story. The story begins with a young peasant woman whose family lives and works on a royal estate in the remote hill country of Lebanon. One spring day she meets and falls in love with a young man whose identity is not known to her.

The poems begin with the young woman's voice - it is spring time.

(w) The voice of my love!

Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

My love is like a gazelle
or a young stag.

Look, there he stands at our wall
peeking in the window,
peering through the lattice.

My love speaks and says to me:

(m) "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth:
the time for singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

The fig ripens her fruits,
the vines in bloom give scent.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your form,

let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your form is lovely.

Catch us foxes, little foxes,
vineyard spoilers, for our vineyards are in bloom."

(W) My lover is mine and I am his;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.

(2:8-16)

They express their love to each other.

(W) Ah, you are beautiful my darling,

- ah, you are beautiful.
 (M) How handsome you are, my lover!
 truly lovely.
 (Uni) Our couch is luxuriant,
 the beams of our house are cedars,
 our rafters are firs.

(1:15-17)

There is some mystery about his real identity.

- (W) Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
 where do you pasture your flock,
 where do you make it to lie down at noon;
 for why should I be like one who is veiled
 besides the flocks of your companions?

(1:7-8)

At some point he leaves the estate and returns to Jerusalem. Her dreams reveal the anxiety this causes.

- (w) Upon my bed at night
 I sought him whom my soul loves;
 I sought him, but found him not;
 I called him, but he gave no answer.
 "I will rise now and go about the city,
 in the streets and in the squares;
 I will search for him whom my soul loves."
 I sought him, but found him not.
 The guards found me
 as they made their rounds in the city.
 "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"
 Scarcely had I passed them
 when I found him whom my soul loves.
 I held him and would not let him go,
 until I brought him into my mother's house,
 to the room of her that had conceived me.

(3:1-4)

I slept, but my heart was awake.
 Listen! My lover is knocking.
 "Open to me, my sister, my love,
 my dove, my perfect one;
 for my head is wet with dew,
 my locks with the drops of the night."
 I had put off my garment;
 how could I put it on again?
 I had bathed my feet;
 how could I soil them?
 My love thrust his hand into the opening,
 and my inmost being yearned for him.
 I arose to open to my love,
 and my hands dripped with myrrh,
 my fingers with liquid myrrh,

upon the handles of the bolt.
 I opened for my love,
 but my love had turned and was gone.
 My soul failed me when he spoke.
 I sought him, but did not find him;
 I called him, but he gave no answer.
 Making their rounds in the city the guards found me;
 they beat me, they wounded me,
 they took away my mantle,
 those watchmen of the walls.

(5:2-7)

She has an imaginary dialogue with the chorus, the daughters of Jerusalem.

(W) I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 if you find my love,
 tell him this;
 I am faint with love.

(Chorus) What is your love more than another love,
 O fairest among women?
 What is your love more than another love
 that you so adjure us?

(W) My love is all radiant and ruddy,
 distinguished among ten thousand.
 His head is the finest gold;
 his locks are wavy,
 black as a raven.
 His eyes are like doves
 beside brimming pools,
 bathed in milk, fitly set.
 His cheeks are like beds of spices,
 yielding fragrance.
 His lips are like lilies,
 distilling liquid myrrh.
 His arms are rounded gold,
 set with jewels.
 His body is ivory work,
 set with sapphires.
 His legs are alabaster columns,
 set upon bases of gold.
 his appearance is like Lebanon,
 choice as the cedars.
 His speech is most sweet,
 and he is altogether desirable.
 This is my love and this is my friend,
 O daughters of Jerusalem.

(Chorus) Where has your love gone,
 O fairest of women?
 Which way has your love turned,

that we may seek him with you?

(5:8-6:1)

She also day-dreams about him.

(W) I went down to the nut orchard,
to look at the blossoms of the valley,
to see whether the vines had budded,
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.
Before I was aware, my fancy set me
in a chariot beside my prince.

(6:11-12)

Then one day he returns to the estate and his return takes her by surprise.

What is that coming up from the wilderness,
like a column of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?
Look, it is the litter of Solomon!
Around it are sixty mighty men of Israel,
all equipped with swords
and expert at war,
each with a sword at his thigh
because of alarms at night.
King Solomon made himself a palanquin
from the wood of Lebanon.
He made its posts of silver,
its back of gold, its seat of purple;
its interior was inlaid with love.

(6:6-10)

To her shock she discovers that the royal procession brings her lover to her. He affirms his love for her and asks her to return with him to Jerusalem.

(M) You are altogether beautiful my love;
There is no flaw in you.
Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.
Descend from the peak of Amana.
from the summit of Senir and Hebron,
from the dens of lions,
and the mountain haunts of the leopards.
You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride,
You have stolen my heart.

(4:7-9)

She expresses natural feelings of inadequacy, How will she a coarse peasant girl fare in the sophisticated royal city of Jerusalem?

(W) I am black and beautiful
O daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar,
like the tent curtains of Solomon.
Do not stare at me because I am dark,

because I am darkened by the sun.
 My mother's sons were angry with me;
 they made me keeper of the vineyards,
 but my own vineyard I have not kept!

(1:5-6)

I am a rose of Sharon,²
 a lily of the valleys.

(2:1)

He attempts to reassure her.

(M) Like a lily among brambles
 is my darling among the maidens.

(2:2)

(M) You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,
 comely as Jerusalem,
 terrible as an army with banners.
 Turn away your eyes from me,
 for they overwhelm me!
 Your hair is like a flock of goats,
 moving down the slopes of Gilead.
 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes,
 that have come up from the washing:
 all of them bear twins,
 and not one of them is bereaved.
 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
 behind your veil.
 There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,
 and maidens beyond number.
 My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,
 the darling of her mother,
 flawless to her that bore her.
 The maidens saw her and called her happy;
 the queens and concubines also,
 and they praised her.

(6:4-9)

She asks for a seal of this love, a serious oath.

(W) Set me as a seal upon your heart,
 as a seal upon your arm;
 for love is strong as death,
 its jealousy unyielding as the grave.
 It burns like blazing fire,
 a raging flame.
 Many waters cannot quench love,
 neither can floods drown it.
 If one offered for love
 all the wealth of his house,
 it would be utterly scorned.

(8:6-7)

²The Rose of Sharon was the smallest most insignificant flower in the valleys of Lebanon.

She returns to Jerusalem with him and the poems reflect their profoundly erotic love making.

(W) Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love is better than wine,
your anointing oils are fragrant,
your name is perfume poured out;
therefore the maidens love you

Draw me after you, let us make haste.

The king has brought me into his chambers.

(1:2-4)

(W) He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his intention toward me was love.

Sustain me with raisins,
refresh me with apples,
for I am faint with love.

His left arm is under my head,
and his right arm caresses me.³

Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you,
by the gazelles and by the does of the field,
that you disturb not, nor interrupt our love,
until it be satisfied.

(2:4-7)

(M) You have ravished my heart,
my sister, my bride,

You have ravished my heart
with a glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.

How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

Your lips distill nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the scent of your garments
is like the scent of Lebanon.

(4:9-11)

The garden song. (The Middle-Eastern garden, small, surrounded by high walls, with running water, lush growth, cool shade, and a haven from the desert heat and aridity was a favorite metaphor for woman's body ready for love.)

(M) A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain sealed.

Your grove is an orchard of pomegranates
with all choices fruits,

henna with nard, nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,

with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices;

a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

³In Near Eastern love poetry this was the classic position for foreplay.

(W) Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden
that its fragrance may be wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

(M) I come to my garden, my sister, my bride;
I gather my myrrh with my spice,
I eat my honeycomb with my honey,
I drink wine with my milk.

(4:12-5:1)

Their lovemaking continues.

(W) I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me.
Come, my lover,
let us go to the countryside,
and spent the night in the villages;
let us go out early to the vineyards
and see whether the vines have budded,
whether the grape blossoms have opened,
and the pomegranates are in bloom.
There I will give you my love.
The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
and at our door is every delicacy,
both old and new.
There I will give you my love,
which I have stored up for you, my lover.

(7:10-13)

(M) How graceful are your feet in sandals,
O queenly maiden!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of artist hands.
Your vulva a rounded bowl
that never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly a heap of wheat
encircled with lilies.
Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are like pools in Hesbon,
by the gate of Bat-rabbim.
Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon,
overlooking Damascus.
Your head crowns you like Carmel,
and your flowing locks are like purple;
a king is held captive in its tresses.

How fair and pleasant you,
O loved one, with your delights!

You are stately as a palm,
 and your breasts are like its clusters of fruit.
 I say I will climb the palm tree
 and lay hold of its fruit.
 Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
 the scent of your vulva like apples,
 and your kisses like the best wine
 flowing smoothly, stirring lover's lips.

(7:1-9)

My beloved is mine and I am his.

Discussion

1. What has hearing this read in the group meant to you?
 What emotions has the reading raised?
 Think of three words that describe your feelings.
 Share these with the group.

Initiate a group discussion about these reactions. Revisit specific texts that generate a reaction. You may need to name some emotions in order to get the group started, for example happy, joyful, sexy, embarrassed. You might want to write up these emotions on a large piece of paper as individual participants call them out. Once this has been done you should then explore with the group what parts of the text gave rise to specific emotions.

2. What message about sexuality is communicated by this reading?
 Do you think that this translation should be read in Church? Why?

Lead a discussion on how people feel about such language, such imagery being in the Bible? What kind of message does it convey about sexuality?

You are exploring how participants feel about sexually explicit language being part of the Bible. Some participants will find this very exciting, but others may feel a bit more cautious, some may feel embarrassed or even want it to be excluded. A good way to explore how people feel might be to ask the question "Do you think these texts should be read in church?" and then to probe participants to find out the reasons for participants answers.

3. How is this view of sexuality different from/similar to:
 - a) your idea of sexuality?
 - b) what you think your church's view on sexuality is?
 - c) other biblical views of sexuality?

You are asking participants to compare their own views of sexuality with those in Song of Songs. Is it the same or is it different? If it is the same how is it the same, let them give examples from the text. If it is different let them say how it is different. The second part of this question allows each person to express what they see their own church's views on sex are. Stress that each community is different and remind participants that each participant is entitled to their own views on the matter, these may or may not be the same as those of others in the same community. The third part of this question allows participants to think of how the

Song of Songs compares with other passages that are not as positive about sex. You might find it helpful to explain that many of the negative attitudes Christians have about sex came about as the result of a false dualism between body and spirit. A false dualism is the struggle between two points of view which are seen as opposites when in fact they complement each other. Because of errors that crept into Western theology arising out of Greek translations of Hebrew words, there has been a tendency to think of body and spirit as opposed to one another. The spirit is usually seen as good, whilst the body is seen as evil, or lower than the spirit. The British Council of Churches made a statement about this in 1982. We include parts of the statement for your information and to read to the group if you feel this would be useful:

In most cultures, the predominant image is of a 'lower' or 'outer' nature, which a 'higher' or 'inner' nature is supposed to control, at least at times. For instance the proverb says: 'The body is a good servant but a bad master.' The true seat of the self is supposed to be associated with the mind, the rational faculties of observation, reflective judgement and will. The older language spoke of the 'soul' and the 'spirit'.... The witness of Christianity has its grounds for insisting on the unity of individual personhood. Men and women are created by God and reflect his image. The relationship between God and his creation is not that which contrasts 'spirit' with 'matter'. He is the maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. The Church inherited from the Old Testament a centuries old tradition which, in sharp contrast to other cultures in the ancient world, insisted that both 'flesh' and 'spirit' are created by God; that a woman or man is 'ensouled flesh' with a responsibility for the whole embodied self; that death of a body means a destruction of the whole self, and hope beyond this life would have to be in terms of the resurrection of the body. In Hebrew thought we desire God in a 'bodily' way; sexual intercourse is an act of 'knowing', of being in communion with another person; the physical delights of sexual exchange are to be wholeheartedly encouraged and enjoyed as expressions of love and worship (Song of Songs)

The document goes on to say that Christians base their insistence on the unity of a person on the fact that "God was one with our bodily, human nature in the person of Jesus. This implies that no part of our bodily life is to be unclaimed or unsanctified by God: no part of our bodily life is to be split off from the self."

4. Do you feel that your sexuality is affirmed by these poems? Does God delight in your sexuality?

This question reinforces what participants have learnt by making them think of how their sexuality is seen as good by the Song of Songs, and by God. This question is a private one and not shared with the group.

Homework:

God loves you and has made you a sexual being. With this in mind write a letter from God to you about your sexuality. You will not need to share this with anybody. If you find this to be a very negative or difficult experience feel free to speak to the coordinator about it.

SEXY SINGLES: SEXUALITY AND THE SINGLE PERSON

Our aim this session is:

- ▶ to think about sexuality and single people
- ▶ to try to understand the experience of single people

Prayer:

Dear God, Giver of life, Bearer of pain, Maker of love.
By becoming human in Jesus Christ
you affirm the goodness of the flesh.
May the desires of our bodies be fulfilled
in sacraments of love that enrich our lives;
in the name of Jesus Christ,
our Companion, our Lover, and our Guide.
Amen.

Activity

Last week you were asked to write a letter from God to you about your sexuality. You don't have to share the letter but maybe you would like to talk about how writing that letter made you feel.

Stress that we are not asking them to share the contents of their letter only how writing it made them feel.

Be aware that this session may be difficult for single persons. Be ready to respond appropriately.

Some Stories (very heterosexual)

Here are some stories of single persons for us to think about

Catherine

Catherine is a 40 year old single, professional woman. She has never married, and after a series of failed relationships that included having sex, she has decided to remain single and celibate. She is quite content with her life, enjoying the company of a group of close friends, both men and women, married and single. Though she recognises the need for tenderness and love, she avoids sexual relationships as she believes they complicate relationships, and that it is possible to be celibate and be a complete human being.

Monica

Monica is a 60 years old widow whose husband, Jack, died two years ago. Monica and Jack had a happy marriage and enjoyed a satisfying sex life. After an initial period of deep mourning, Monica began to start her life without Jack. She became involved in many

activities, many of them involving her church. Monica and Fred, a widower who had been a close friend of Jack, began to keep each other company and their relationship has developed into a sexual one. They attend church regularly together. Neither Monica nor Fred wants to be married again as they enjoy the independence that being single offers them. Besides this Monica would lose Jack's military pension if she marries Fred. However, they both enjoy their sexual relationship and see it as part of their friendship.

Thabo

Thabo is 35, divorced with two children aged 4 and 6 who live with him. When his wife left him 18 months ago he felt as though his life had collapsed. He devotes most of his free time to his children, and he enjoys their company. He also enjoys the company of his friends, but he finds that he is lonely and misses the sexual relationship that he had with his ex-wife. He has dated a number of women and had sex with most of them. He has not met anyone he would like to marry and he intends to continue in this pattern of dating and having sex as it meets his needs at the moment. He hopes to find a permanent partner some day.

Zinzi and Sipho

Zinzi and Sipho are in their late twenties. Both are working full time and studying part time. They have been living together for three years and are quite happy with their present arrangement. Neither has been unfaithful to the other and their relationship is one of deep caring and love. They have spoken about marriage, but feel that it is not for them right now. They are also unsure about making such a heavy commitment. Zinzi attends her local church and would like to be more involved in helping with the youth group, but she is afraid that the minister and congregation will find out that she is living with Sipho, and that they will reject her or try to force her into marriage.

Denzel

Denzel is in his early twenties. He is a very committed Christian who is a virgin and wants to stay that way until he is married. He has a strong sex drive and masturbates regularly.

Activity

Discuss the following questions in the group:

- ▶ What are your views on choosing to be celibate?
- ▶ Has Catherine made a 'moral' choice, one that makes her happy, or simply a choice that keeps her from complicated relationships?
- ▶ What difficulties, if any, would you have if Monica and Fred were part of your congregation, your social group, or even part of your family?
- ▶ What is your attitude to Thabo's sex life?
- ▶ What about Zinzi and Sipho? Can you accept that a sexual relationship, including sexual intercourse, which is caring and loving, and involves a real if not permanent commitment, is honest and right when marriage is not part of it?

What then is a "Single Person"?

There are confusing images about single people. To some people it is being alone, while for others it is not being married.

Activity

What picture do you have of single persons?

Think about this question but do not discuss it.

Of the following examples, which do you think are single people?

- ▶ Pat and Roseanne share a house and are good friends
- ▶ Pumla has her own flat but spends most of her time with Michael
- ▶ Temba is a minister who wants to remain single but he loves Leanne
- ▶ Priscilla is a single parent with two children
- ▶ Richard is a widower, but still feels an emotional attachment to his wife
- ▶ Hansie and Anna Marie are separated but still want their relationship to work
- ▶ Maya and Phillip are engaged

In light of these examples discuss what a "single person" is in the group.

Celibacy and Singleness

This section mostly gives information except for the questions at the end. Make sure participants understand the material before they answer those questions.

Celibacy and singleness are often confused. A person may be single for a number of reasons. A person is celibate as an act of deliberate choice. The choice to be celibate is usually made as part of a larger commitment, such as one's faith. One can choose to be or not to be celibate, as an expression of one's life, but one cannot choose whether or not to be sexual. Here is a reflection from Thomas Merton who was a Roman Catholic monk.

Forty two years old and single.

One sometimes wishes...

Would that the Roman Church did not require
single ordained ministers.

But then

Even if the church did not require it,

God might ask it.

What if God,

in the mysterious, inscrutably loving ways of
calling,

would ask that one be single?

Would I let him/her make my heart
free enough, generous enough,

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to accept singleness?

Then again,
Others are single
with less choosing than I,
because the longed for, dreamed for, hoped for,
prayed for relationship
never came into being, or
because the other died or departed untimely, or
because...

So,
What to make of singles?

Being single,
One can become the centre of one's world,
with neither spouse nor offspring
impinging upon any/every moment of day and night.
All the while running to one pleasure,
and then another, to find happiness,
Or building bigger barns for all the rotting wealth,
for security;
Or endless activity.

Being single,
One might cherish the time and energy
not committed to another,
And let that time and energy be a
God-created, God-given Gift,
that one gives in turn,
freely and generously,
to many or to few,
to human and to God,
in love,
for the new creation.

Oh...
Jesus said,
'Blest are the single hearted.'
Who?
Me?

Not all have a religious calling to be celibate. Many people are single and do not choose to be single.

Activity

In the group answer these two questions. What does Merton say both to people who choose celibacy and to people who didn't choose to be single:

- ▶ about how they think about themselves?
- ▶ about the choices they make about being single or celibate?

Be sure to be especially sensitive to the needs of the single people in the group. Respond to them as you see appropriate. A time of quiet for reflection or prayer might be good. If appropriate ask them to talk about their experiences.

Something to think about *(you might want to include this section in today's session. It can be given as homework for the next session)*

Here is a list of what single people might want from the church community:

For those who have always been single:

- ▶ feeling of belonging
- ▶ dealing with loneliness
- ▶ recognition of sexuality
- ▶ need for social life within the church
- ▶ support networks

For widows and widowers:

- ▶ companionship
- ▶ to be included at functions
- ▶ activities that include men/women
- ▶ activities with people of different ages and family structures
- ▶ help/exchange with household tasks
- ▶ inclusion at times of public holidays and Christmas and Easter season
- ▶ help when ill

For single parents:

- ▶ recognition of one-parent families
- ▶ inclusion in all activities
- ▶ the church as extended family
- ▶ support groups
- ▶ suitable services, sermons, and traditions
- ▶ a place to be accepted
- ▶ supportive services such as;
 - help with the children
 - help with maintaining the house
 - help with financial planning and budgeting
 - counselling

Point out to participants the importance of thinking about the following questions as they will be sharing some of their insights next session.

Activity

Think about these lists yourself and answer the following questions for yourself during the coming week:

- ▶ What other needs do you think single people in your community might have?
- ▶ Which of the needs already listed is your church community already dealing with?
- ▶ What needs do you still need to meet?
- ▶ Does your community recognise the sexuality of single persons? If it doesn't how can it be helped to do this?
- ▶ What can your church do to help single persons feel that they, and their sexuality, are welcome in the church?

SEXUALITY IN HETEROSEXUAL PERSPECTIVE

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to affirm heterosexual expressions of sexuality
- ▶ to affirm marriage as a vital context in which sexuality is expressed
- ▶ to recognise that even within marriage the expression of sexuality can be very difficult and painful
- ▶ to start to explore whether heterosexuality is the only acceptable expression of sexuality for Christians

Prayer:

O God, we thank you for your gift of love and its presence with us. We thank you for all those who have committed themselves to a life of loving faithfulness to one another. We thank you for the way in which you touch our lives with many loving relationships. We thank you that we experience your love through the care and physical affection of other people.

At the same time we remember and acknowledge to you O God, that we have often failed to be loving and that we have often taken for granted the people for whom we care most. We selfishly neglect and strain the bonds that unite us with others. For give us O God, renew within us an affectionate spirit and enrich our lives with your life-giving love so that we may embrace others with that same love.

Amen.

"Did You Know?" or "How Things Change!"

This is a fun information imparting section. It should be read aloud, you could once again ask different people to read different "Did You Know's".

Our understanding of human sexuality is incomplete and always being added to. Our knowledge of both the psychology and biology of human sexuality are constantly growing and being revised as new information and insights emerge.

DID YOU KNOW? In Medieval Catholic theology and science it was believed that the male sperm carried the entire human being -- the female contributed nothing to the reproductive process. She functioned only as a place in which the sperm could attach itself and grow into a human person. Because they believed this, they thought that masturbation was a sin because it caused the death of a whole human being. In Medieval times an involuntary emission of semen (wet dream) was punished with 7 day's fasting, and 20 days fasting if it was the result of masturbation. If a monk masturbated he was liable to a 30 day fast while the penalty for a bishop was 50 days. Coitus interruptus (withdrawing from penetration to ejaculate) landed a

penance lasting 2 to 12 years.¹

DID YOU KNOW? In the year 4004 BC, at precisely nine o'clock in the morning of Wednesday October 23, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." The year, the day, the hour of the creation of man and woman, not made specific in the Bible itself, were calculated by two seventeenth-century scholars² after long and detailed study of the timing of events in the Old Testament. For 200 years their findings were widely accepted in the Christian west.

DID YOU KNOW? Both St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas did not want to ban prostitution. Augustine said that though prostitution was dirty, immoral and shameful, "yet to remove prostitutes from human affairs, and you will pollute things with lust; set them among honest matrons, and you will dishonour all things with disgrace and turpitude." Aquinas compared prostitution with "the filth in the sea or the sewer in the palace. Take away the sewer and you will fill the palace with pollution. Take away the prostitutes from the world, and you will fill it with sodomy."³

DID YOU KNOW? In England in 1978, the Archbishop of Canterbury decreed that over 200 married Anglican bishops attending the international Lambeth conference should be segregated from their wives during the course of the three-week conference. The bishops were housed at the University of Kent and their wives more than a mile away.*

Activity -- a stroll down memory lane:

- ▶ Discuss what things about sexuality have changed in your own lifetime with the group (like what is spoken about sexuality, what is allowed and not allowed, marriage etc)

Singleness and Marriage

This is a brainstorm. Its purpose is to compare and contrast the experience of single and married people. Put up two sheets of paper on the wall. One titled "single life" the other "married life." Divide each sheet into two columns "positive" and "negative." Get participants to brainstorm around these issues.

Activity: a brainstorm

- ▶ Brainstorm about the positive and negative features of singleness and marriage.

¹Reay Tannahill *Sex in History* (Revised edition; USA: Scarborough House, 1992) 152.

²James Usher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh and John Lightfoot (1602-1675), Master of Catherine Hall, University of Cambridge.

³St. Augustine *De Ordine* 2.4.12; St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* II-II, 10.11.

⁴*Sunday Telegraph* July 9, 1978.

Then answer the following questions:

- ▶ What qualities constitute a good marriage?
- ▶ Give examples of a good marriage.

Reading the Texts

Once again we are looking at some very important texts that influence the way we all think about sexuality. These texts have traditionally been used to support the idea of heterosexual relationships. We want participants to think whether this is the only way of reading the texts. We want participants to realise that these texts do not deal with such issues as contraception, infertility, or the nature of marriage, love and sex. The texts have a particular theological purpose that does not deal with these issues. The facilitator needs to ask participants to use the texts to justify their own views, and to even challenge them when they can find no written evidence from what the text says for their viewpoint. We want to begin putting the question in participants minds, that if the texts do not deal with any of these issues is there any reason why these texts should be used to speak against homosexuality? This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Most of the dominant Christian views on marriage and sex rely on particular understanding of Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18-25. Lets read these passages specifically looking for what they explicitly say about marriage and sexuality.

Genesis 1:27-28

^{1:27}So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Genesis 2:18-25

^{2:18}Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman for out of man this one was taken." Thereafter a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Activity

What do these texts say about:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Marriage | 4. Sex | 7. Having children |
| 2. Divorce | 5. Infertility | |
| 3. Contraception | 6. Homosexuality | |

First think about these questions on your own and then share them with the group.

Is sex only for having children?

THE NUPTIAL BLESSING⁵

27 *The Priest, standing before the couple, gives the Nuptial Blessing as follows*

- (28) Merciful Lord and heavenly Father, by your gracious gift human kind is increased: bestow upon N and N the gift of children; and grant that they may so live together in godly love and honesty, that they may bring up their children in faith and virtue, to your praise and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Activity

The brackets around (28), indicate that this section of the liturgy may be left out. What do you think are the reasons for this?

If sex is not solely for procreation, then is it possible that the Genesis creation stories are about relationships, even sexual relationships between unmarried people of the opposite sex or even two people of the same sex?

These questions are to be answered in small groups of four and then some discussion can take place in the larger group.

Sex in Marriage

This might well be one of the more uncomfortable sections for participants. You need to prepare yourself well for it – especially in responding pastorally to peoples' needs. People may feel the need for counselling after this session. Have the resources at your finger tips especially sex counsellors; sex therapists or counsellors or ministers in whom you have confidence. Make sure that participants know that they can cry without having to explain why; that the group is there for them.

For many there is that assumption that if you are married then sex is no longer a difficult or

⁵Church of the Province of Southern Africa *An Anglican Prayer Book* (London: Collins, 1989) 468.

painful issue. It's assumed that all is OK. But this is not always the case! For many married people this area of their marriage is profoundly painful and never talked about.

Some stories

Ramesh and Gita have not made love for 6 months. Gita has had a very brief affair with another man, which Ramesh does not know about, and she feels too guilty to make love to him.

Phyllis, a 70 year old woman, married to Tom for 50 years, discovers her clitoris for the first time at a workshop on women's sexuality

Johannes comes home drunk every Friday night and forces Marie to have sex with him.

Abdul and Leila have a very stressed sex life because Abdul is impotent.

In Zanele's marriage to Jabu sex is extremely unpleasant for her because Jabu likes to have dry sex and she uses herbs to keep her vagina dry.

Janet knows that her husband Lawrence is having an affair with his secretary. She feels betrayed, insecure, and angry, and unable to have sex with him which he seems to want even more since the affair began.

Activity

- ▶ Talk about your emotional responses to these scenarios in pairs.

Think about the following questions on your own:

- ▶ If you are single think about your parents sex life. How good do you think it was. In what ways might it affect your sex life?
- ▶ If you are married or in a relationship think about your own sex life. Does it affirm you and enhance intimacy and closeness with your partner?
- ▶ What do you think that God thinks of your sex life?

In Session 5 we saw that God can delight in our sexuality. God created us sexual beings. But our sexual behaviour might bring hurt and pain both to us and to others. We need to recognise this difference and it might mean that we need to change the way in which we behave. If you are experiencing difficulties in your sex life then don't be quiet about it. Make an effort to speak to someone about it. If you are in a relationship deal with it as soon as possible. Don't let it fester. God does not want sex to be a source of pain and guilt. It should be a positive, enriching part of life.

Prayer/Reflection:

A time of prayer or reflection is suggested here. Lead it in a way which you feel would best meet the needs of the group. Silent, open, or read a written prayer.

Preparation for the next session: A Questionnaire

The reason why participants are given this questionnaire to do is so that they do not come to the next session without giving the issue of homosexuality some thought. We are not wanting people merely to approach the next two sessions in a biased way. We want participants to think about their views and why they have them, whether these are positive or negative. The important point is that participants need to make informed decisions about their own sexuality and that of others.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to introduce the discussion of homosexuality which we will begin next week. Answer the questions briefly or circle where appropriate.

1. How would you feel if your son or daughter were gay?
2. If your child were gay, or lesbian, would you want to know?
3. If a co-worker of yours were gay or lesbian, would you want to know?
4. What would be your reaction if you saw two men holding hands in church?
Pleased? Surprised? Uncomfortable? Disgusted?
5. Do you believe that children should be educated about homosexuality and homophobia?
If yes, who should supply the education?

What should it consist of?

6. All homosexual activity is a sin.
Agree Disagree Uncertain
7. Homosexuality is merely one form of sexuality.
Agree Disagree Uncertain
8. Homosexuality is a matter of personal choice.
Agree Disagree Uncertain
9. Homosexuality is an inborn trait.
Agree Disagree Uncertain
10. Homosexuality can be "cured"/changed.
Agree Disagree Uncertain

11. Do you know any gay or lesbian person?
12. Do you have any friends who are gay or lesbian?
13. Circle the sources you rely on for your knowledge of homosexuality.

Experience of gay friends	Media	Straight friends	Gay people
The Bible	Independent study	Family	Church

Now read this: **What causes homosexuality then?**

One answer to the question of what causes homosexuality is another question: What causes heterosexuality? These two questions are essentially the same question: What causes sexual orientation?

Very few people who study this question support the idea that sexual orientation can be chosen. Most such scholars believe that there is a combination of two main causes of sexual orientation: biological causes or social causes.

Those scientists who favour biological influences on sexual orientation refer to studies that variations in prenatal hormones may have some effect. Others suggest that levels of stress on the mother during pregnancy may contribute to sexual orientation.

Other scholars support the idea that sexual orientation is affected strongly by events occurring early in the child's development.

Many scientists believe that the origins of human behaviour are extremely complex, and that it is not easy at all to understand what causes sexual orientation. They state that there may be a combination of hereditary (biological) and environmental (social) roots and perhaps that our sexual orientations may not necessarily stem from the same roots.

Virtually all these scholars agree that whatever happens to trigger the development of a heterosexual or homosexual person happens either before birth or very early in the child's life. It is seldom something that is simply chosen.

Think about the following questions in preparation for the next session:

- ▶ Has what you have read changed what you thought about homosexuality?
- ▶ What do you now think about gay and lesbian sexual orientation?

SEXUALITY IN HOMOSEXUAL PERSPECTIVE

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to understand our own sexuality more fully
- ▶ to explore the changeable nature of sexual attraction between people
- ▶ to try to understand more of what the homosexual experience in the church is like

Prayer:

As we come to look at our own sexuality more closely, and to understand the experience of gay and lesbian people, give us O God, a renewed sense of love and compassion for one another. Enable us both to listen and to speak with gentleness and courage. Amen.

Some stories

Jan grew up always knowing that he was different from the other boys around him. In high school it became clear to him that he was attracted to boys rather than girls. He went to speak to his minister about it who told him that his feelings were evil, and that God would punish him if he did not change. Jan spent years denying his homosexuality. When he could no longer deny it he went for healing from what he was told was a sickness; some even said he was possessed. After years of desperation and futility, and feeling abandoned by God, he ended his life.

Mary was married at twenty knowing that it was a mistake. She had two children and by the time she was 40 her marriage had collapsed completely. Then she met a woman with whom she fell in love and came to accept and love the fact that she was a lesbian. She is now divorced and is happily settled with Joan, despite having suffered immensely from the condemnation of her children and ex-husband.

Reneé and Lerato have been in a faithful relationship for 15 years. A year ago they legally adopted a baby boy James. Because of the prejudice and exclusion they have experienced over the years, Reneé and Lerato are no longer members of a church.

Herman and André have enjoyed a faithful and committed relationship for 25 years. They are members of a church congregation and are both active in ministry - Herman is Church Warden and André is leader of the music group.

Mpho is headmistress of a leading school. She decided early in her career to dedicate herself to education, as a substitute for being in an intimate relationship. She knew that she was lesbian from her days at university and felt that she could not afford to come out or ever be in a relationship.

Abie is at theological college. He feels God is calling him to ordination, and the church thinks so too. Yet he is in crisis about his sexual identity. He is increasingly aware of his very deep attraction to a fellow student. This is new for him. He has never been attracted to women or men. Now it is happening to him and he doesn't know what to do. He feels as if he is more complete because of this, that part of his life that has been suppressed for years is now blossoming, but it scares him to death.

Activity

In the group, discuss how you feel about these stories.

The Church Council

Activity:

Pretend that the group is a church council, and that one of the Church Wardens has resigned and needs to be replaced. There are two nominees:

- 1) a long term member of the church council who is open about his homosexuality and has been living in a faithful relationship for 15 years.
- 2) a married woman, long term member of the church, who is openly having a wild heterosexual affair.

Discuss the issue and then take a vote on who you want to be church warden.

Desmond Tutu has written about the manner in which the church has traditionally treated gay and lesbian people. He says:

we reject them, treat them as pariahs, and push them outside of the confines of our church communities, and thereby we negate the consequences of their baptism and ours. We make them doubt that they are the children of God, and this must nearly be the ultimate blasphemy.¹

Where are you on the field?

Homosexuality has been treated as a problem within the Church. The way Christians talk about and behave towards gay, lesbian and bisexual (people attracted to others of both sexes) people leaves many feeling like a soccer ball. Listen to their voice.

Those of us who are lesbian, gay or bisexual have sat on the side lines watching Christians tackling each other for the ball of our lives.

- ▶ When the fundamentalists get hold of us they kick us into the goal marked 'an unnatural sexual act which is deliberately chosen, explicitly condemned by God's word' and then they say to us get cured or get out of the Church.
- ▶ When the conservatives get hold of us they kick it into the goal marked 'sexual behaviour not deliberately chosen, probably born that way, but sexual activity still

¹Desmond Tutu "Foreword" *We Were Baptised Too* (London: SCM, 1996).

condemned by God's word." They say it is OK to be it, but its not OK to engage in genital acts.

- ▶ When the liberals get hold of us, they kick that us back and forward, up and down the field; finally they stand in the middle and declares that, although scripture and tradition do condemn homosexual acts, they did not know as much about homosexuality as we do today; so although the Church has a duty to uphold the ideal of heterosexual marriage, because that is what scripture and tradition teach, homosexual relationships might be looked upon as falling short of this ideal but not sinful as such because we can't help it. They then run off the field before the crowd and players can get them.
- ▶ The radicals bounce us up and down on their heads, doing amazing tricks whilst they explains "Yes, marriage is the ideal, but lesbian and gay people are perfectly capable of marriage." They know lesbian and gay people are as capable of forming committed stable relationships as any heterosexual couple. They ask "What is the difference between them and straight couples who cannot have children?" Then they say "They are just like us, so let's welcome them into the *institution of marriage*" and expect us to give them a round of applause. When we don't the radicals cannot understand it: they are hurt, for they have risked they reputations, even their careers, to speak out for their lesbian sisters and gay brothers. They turn to us and ask, "What *do* you want then?"
- ▶ And with one voice we answer: "Can we have our ball back please? We are tired of other Christian people kicking around the ball of our lives. We are tired of being treated as a "problem" or an "issue" instead of full members of the Christian community.

Activity

Having read this piece aloud in the group:

- ▶ make sure you understand what it is about
- ▶ then spend sometime thinking about where you are on the field
- ▶ now discuss this in groups of four and then report back to the group

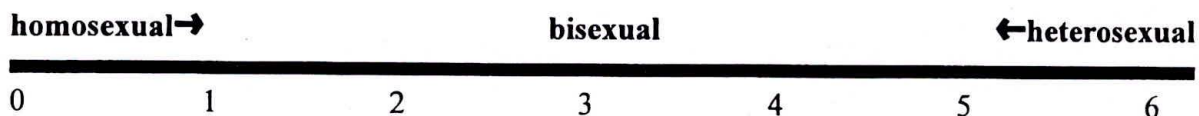
Finding myself on the scale

Sometimes it is easier to deal with other people's sexuality. This will be a time when you will be asked to be quite honest about your own sexuality.

Male (M) or Female (F) or Both (B)	in the past	in present	ideally
Who do I most socialize with?			
Who am I emotionally closest to?			
Who have I had sex with?			
Who do I spend most time with?			

Who am I sexually attracted to?			
Whom do I fantasize about having sex with?			
Who do I feel most comfortable spending time with?			

Having done this exercise find yourself on this scale:



- 0 = attracted to same sex only
- 1 = nearly exclusively attracted to same sex
- 2 = more attracted to same sex, but with some other sex attraction
- 3 = attracted, fairly equally, to both sexes
- 4 = more attracted to opposite sex, but with some same sex attraction
- 5 = nearly exclusively attracted to opposite sex
- 6 = attracted to opposite sex only

Are you confused? Well that might well be the case because you might be confronting the fact for yourself that for you, as for many other people, your sexuality is not clear cut and fixed. It can change, it can be rich and varied. We are far more complex than we often believe and that the church and society would like us to believe. Are you in pain? Are you secure and comfortable?

Reflective activity

Take time to explore how you feel and share your feelings with God. You are also welcome to talk with the facilitator or any other participant if you wish.

Action

What does this session mean for the way your church treats lesbian and gay people? Do you as a group feel that you can do something about it?

For the next session

Read the Preparation for Session Eight.

Begin thinking about the worship service in two weeks time -- Celebrating Sexuality. You as a group need to decide how you are going to plan it.

THE TEXTS SPEAK! OR DO THEY?

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE

Our aim for this session is:

- ▶ to look together at the meaning of the six texts traditionally used to condemn homosexuality
- ▶ to expose you to a different reading of these texts
- ▶ to help you reach your own understanding of them

Prayer:

Creator God, we are aware that our understanding of the Bible is always incomplete, and that we are always on a journey of discovery. We recognise that inadequate understandings of the scriptures have often led to divisions within the church. In many cases the church has cut off members who interpret the Bible differently from the dominant group. It has led to the church rejecting prophetic voices, and failing to embrace new experiences and new people. Allow us to be faithful to Jesus, who is the Word. Grant that guided by the Spirit, we and our churches may find and embrace the life giving and healing power of the Scriptures. Amen.

Genesis 19:1-29

Did you know?

In some cultures in the time of ancient Israel after a battle the victorious general or king would sometimes rape the defeated commander. This was a sign of his power and the humiliation of the enemy. It was no great thing for a man to rape a woman, because a woman was weak. But to rape a man reflected well on a man's power and dignity.

Activity

In pairs talk about these questions.

- ▶ What do you think the central message of the Sodom story is?
- ▶ Read Judges 19:16-29. What does it add to our reading of Genesis 19?
- ▶ What do these passages have to say about loving lesbian or gay relationships?
- ▶ How do you think these passages are helpful in developing a Christian understanding of sexuality?

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13

These two verses come from what is called the Holiness Code of Leviticus (Leviticus 17-26). The aim of the Holiness Code was to teach the people of Israel how to live a pure life so that they could live in the land that God had given them (see Leviticus 20:22-25).

Activity

Allocate pairs a chapter from Leviticus 17-26. Count the commandments in each of the chapters that are read. Count all the commandments that are no longer observed by Christians.

Many laws in the Holiness Code are no longer observed by Christians. Consistency and fairness seem to dictate that if the Israelite Holiness code is to be used against twentieth century homosexuals, it should also be used against such common practices as eating rare steak, wearing mixed fabrics, and having marital intercourse during the menstrual period which are all prohibited in the Holiness Code.

Activity

In light of this discussion how should Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 be used in our Christian understanding of lesbian and gay relationships?
Discuss this question together in the group.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 and Romans 1:18-32

Did you know?

- ▶ The Apostle Paul, like all his contemporaries, had no understanding of homosexual orientation. He probably had no idea that people might be natural lesbian or naturally gay.
- ▶ He believed, like most others of his time, that homosexual acts were chosen in preference to what was assumed to be the natural heterosexual orientation of all people.
- ▶ Paul simply made the assumption that everybody was heterosexual. Those who chose to engage in homosexual acts were doing it against their true nature.

Activity

Does this information change the way you think about these texts?
Discuss this question in groups of four.

Inclusive and Exclusive Ways of Reading Scripture

Once we have tried to answer the question of what the texts mean a very important question still remains. **From what point of view do we read these texts?** Whatever we think these 6 texts say we need to examine the perspective we read them from.

Did You Know?

Each one of us has some idea of what we think the central message of the Bible is. We read the Bible in this light, and we understand individual passages in light of this central message. Sometimes we read some texts from one perspective and other texts from another perspective. A good illustration of this is the purity laws we looked at in Leviticus. We read them in the light of the death of Christ and decide that they no

longer apply to us today. We do this kind of sifting out all the time when we read the bible.

In the matter of gay and lesbian people there are two ways in which we can read the bible:
an inclusive way, or an exclusive way

Activity

On two separate sheets of paper brainstorm as many words that have the same meaning as inclusive and then exclusive. Then write down words that represent emotions that you would feel if you were included or excluded.

Examples of an inclusive theology

- ▶ **Jesus** challenged the systems of exclusion of his day. The practices of exclusion then were required by the Old Testament. But Jesus went against them. He read the Old Testament critically. So he chose to ignore those parts of the Old Testament that required that lepers, prostitutes, gentiles, sinners, and many other people who were unclean, be excluded from God's presence in the temple. Mark's gospel closes with the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies in the temple torn from top to bottom, signifying that all people, not just the High Priest, could enter into the presence of God.
- ▶ **Paul** spent his energies breaking down the wall of exclusion between Jew and Gentile. He believed that in Christ this wall of division had been broken down, but it was a biblical wall! Paul said that in Christ there is no longer Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female (Galatians 3:28). He had an inclusive theology.
- ▶ **The church** reinterprets the bible all the time. Four examples:
 - Slavery.** There are many texts in the bible (eg Ephesians 6:5-8) that legitimate slavery. But the Christian church led the struggle against slavery and against those who said that slavery was a biblical institution by claiming that the central message of the bible was an inclusive message, there is no longer slave and free.
 - Women in the Church.** There are many texts in the bible (eg 1 Timothy 2:11-15) that heavily restrict the role of women in the church. But in many quarters the church has ordained women priests and bishops. Here the church is saying, there is neither male nor female! The message of Christ is an inclusive message, and we must challenge every attempt to exclude categories of people from the full participation in the life of the church.
 - Apartheid.** Apartheid, a system of radical exclusion, was justified by the bible. It was the inclusive message of Jesus Christ that most effectively challenged and defeated the exclusive message of apartheid.
 - Divorce.** The teaching of Jesus appears to be quite clear on the matter of divorce. No divorce is allowed (see session 3). Yet many churches allow divorce under certain circumstances and allow divorcees to remarry if they fulfill certain conditions. Many ministers in churches are divorced and remarried. The church has included these people who would have previously been excluded.

Reading exclusive texts inclusively

Now we can choose to read the 6 texts that have traditionally been used to condemn homosexuality, whatever they may actually say, from an inclusive or an exclusive perspective.

- ▶ From an **exclusive perspective** these texts can be used to develop a theology that excludes loving, practising gay and lesbian people from full participation in the church; refusing to listen to lesbian and gay people, refusing to recognise and support their relationships, excluding them from leadership in the church.
- ▶ If we read these texts from an **inclusive perspective** then even if we think they say that homosexuality is wrong, we are not bound to follow them. We may rather say that they are like many other biblical texts, texts of exclusion that need to be interpreted in the light of the inclusive message of Jesus Christ.

Activity

Which perspective do you think is reflects the best understanding of the Bible?

Why do you think this?

Think about this on your own for a few minutes and then discuss in the group.

Evaluation

Which of these faces best represents the way you feel after being a part of this session? Talk about this in the group.



Homework

Prepare for the worship session next week.

Facilitator's Guide

- Preparation for Session 8 -

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE

Our aim for this *homework* session is for you:

- ▶ to read the texts that have been used traditionally by the church to condemn homosexuality
- ▶ to reflect on these texts
- ▶ to ask whether we can use them as a blanket condemnation of all homosexual relationships

Traditional Texts Used to Condemn Homosexuality

Traditionally the Church has used three texts in the Old Testament (Genesis 19:1-29, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 and Judges 19:16-30) and three from the New Testament (Romans 1:18-24, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1: 8-11) to condemn same-sex sexual activity in all its forms.

There is a very serious debate about the meaning of these texts in modern scholarship. No longer is there a simple answer to what these texts mean.

But this session is here for you to make judgements for yourself. So let's turn to five of the six texts and see what they say and how they have been interpreted. Judges 19 is looked at in Session 9.

Genesis 19:1-29

¹The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." ³But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ⁴But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; ⁵and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out that to us, so that we may know them." ⁶Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him ⁷and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do with them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against them and Lot, and came near the door to break it down. ¹⁰But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

¹²Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city - bring them out of the place. ¹³For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it."

²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground.

There would seem to be four possible ways of understanding this story:

- ▶ the people of Sodom were destroyed for the general wickedness which made God send the angels to investigate the city in the first place
- ▶ the city was destroyed because the people of Sodom had wanted to rape the angels
- ▶ the city was destroyed because the men of Sodom were homosexuals
- ▶ the city was destroyed for the inhospitable treatment of visitors sent from the Lord

Activity

Which one do you think is the correct reading of the text?

What are some of the reasons for your response?

DO YOU KNOW what the Bible says about the sin of Sodom?

The Old Testament passages which refer to Sodom have a list of sins in mind:

- ▶ But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah (Jeremiah 23:14).
- ▶ Behold this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of good, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

The New Testament refers to Sodom as a pointer to divine judgement

- ▶ "Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town" [*a town that rejects the Apostles*] (Matthew 10:15, Luke 10:12)
- ▶ "Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, being and selling, planting and building, but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them -- it will be like that on the day the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30).
- ▶ "And if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement" (2 Peter 2:6,7,9).



- ▶ “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and went after the flesh, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7)

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13

Leviticus 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination (*to'evah*).

Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them shall have committed an abomination (*to'evah*); they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

Most Christians who read these two texts understand them to be a blanket condemnation of all homosexual activity. But think about them a little more deeply.

Did you know?

In Leviticus 18:20 and 20:13 male homosexual behaviour is described as *to'evah* (abomination). The use of this word provides us with a clue as to the reason why male homosexuality was rejected in Israel. *To'evah* is used by biblical writers to refer to practices that were idolatrous. It seems from 1 Kings 14:24, 15:24 and 22:46 that male homosexual activity in ancient Israel was a practice found in foreign religions, where male prostitutes were part of the worship.

Activity

What do you think?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11

1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes (*malakoi*), sodomites (*arsenokoitai*),¹⁰ thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers -- none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Timothy 1:8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. ⁹This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father and mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites (*arsenokoitais*), slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching ¹¹that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

The two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* are often translated as one word to mean "homosexuals" or "sodomites". But a quick look at the way these two words are translated in modern versions of the Bible shows that there is no clear understanding of what they mean at all.

Did you know that the meaning of the two words <i>malakoi</i> and <i>arsenokoitai</i> is not at all clear? Study this chart and see!			
	1 Corinthians 6:9	1 Corinthians 6:9	1 Timothy 1:10
	<i>malakoi</i>	<i>arsenokoitai</i>	<i>arsenokoitai</i>
RSV 1946	homosexual		sodomites
RSV 1971	sexual perverts		perverts
NRSV 1989	male prostitutes	sodomites	sodomites
NIV 1978	male prostitutes	homosexual offenders	perverts
New English Bible 1970	homosexual perversion		perverts
Revised English Bible 1989	sexual pervert		perverts
Jerusalem Bible 1968	catamites	sodomites	those who are immoral with boys or with men
Good News Bible 1976	homosexual perverts		sexual perverts

Did you know?

Malakoi was a very common Greek word which essentially means "soft". There is no reason at all to have to translate it with reference to homosexuality. It could simply refer to a person who is morally weak, probably, given the context, sexually promiscuous.

Did you know?

In the ancient Greek world men who were homosexually active were NOT regarded as effeminate or "soft". When a man had sex with a woman it was believed that he become effeminate because he absorbed the women's weak essence during lovemaking. In contrast a man derived strength and manliness in having intercourse with males. The strongest men of the ancient world -- Atlas and Hercules -- were famous for the many male lovers they had.

What do these two words mean?

- There is considerable discussion among modern scholars about these two words. It is not at all clear what they mean and how they should be translated. Clearly they have to do with some kind of sexual offence, but what it is is not actually clear.

- ▶ What do you think?

ROMANS 1:18-32

^{Romans 1:18} For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²² (Yet) claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

^{2:24} Therefore God gave them up in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, ²⁷ and the men in the same way gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own bodies the due recompense for their error.

There are at least three ways of understanding this passage:

- ▶ That because Paul moves directly from idolatry to homosexual relations, he was concerned primarily with homosexual cultic practices. Paul, it is claimed, associates such sexual behaviour with orgiastic pagan rites in honour of false gods.
- ▶ That Paul is arguing from nature and not from what he regards as the law of God. An example of this kind of argument is found in 1 Corinthians 11:15 when Paul argues that nature teaches us that for men to have long hair is degrading. What is the status of "natural" and "unnatural" in Romans 1? Could it be that Paul is concerned about people who are "naturally" heterosexual who indulge "unnaturally" in homosexual relations. If this is so the text does not refer to gay people who are homosexual in orientation. For them it would be unnatural to be involved in heterosexual relations.
- ▶ That Paul understood homosexuality simply as being part of the godless and impure world.

You have spent a lot of time reading the six texts which have been used to condemn homosexuality by the Church.

What do you think these texts mean for us today?

We'll talk about this at length in the next session.

THE NAKED PRAYER

CELEBRATING SEXUALITY

Our aim in this session is:

- ▶ to celebrate our sexuality as a gift of God
- ▶ to recognise that for some of us our sexuality may be a source of conflict and pain
- ▶ to ask forgiveness of and change from destructive behaviour and attitudes
- ▶ to have fun with God and one another as we bring this journey we have been on together to an end.

Julian of Norwich an English mystic wrote in 1393:

For I saw with absolute certainty that our whole being and body [substance] is in God, and moreover that God is in the way we use our senses and sexuality [our sensuality] too. The moment that the soul was made sensual, at that moment it was destined from all eternity to be the dwelling place of God and God shall never leave it.

We would like you to celebrate together what you have learned and experienced with one another in this course. Worship can take many forms and **it is up to you to design a service that will it best reflect your journey together.** What follows are suggestions that you can consider.

- ▶ You might use traditional forms such as the Eucharist, or Evening Prayer, but even here there is a great deal of space for involvement by all the members of the group. If you have a Eucharist make sure that the person celebrating the Eucharist understands what these sessions have been all about. Check that the group is comfortable with him or her.
- ▶ If you design your own service from scratch you could consider the following elements that could make up a service:
 - ▶ praise and thanksgiving
 - ▶ repentance and assurance of forgiveness
 - ▶ scripture or other readings
 - ▶ a meditation on the readings
 - ▶ some sharing around what you have gained from this course
 - ▶ prayers
 - ▶ a final blessing

Praise

In praise we praise God for who God is and in thanksgiving respond to what God has done for us, shown us, or even taught us. Throughout these sessions we have focussed on God's gift of sexuality. Maybe the praise could focus on what it means to love a God who has created us so wonderfully as sexual beings. Here we could choose to sing songs, or offer a

dance, a flower or any item from nature, or a picture, to God that shows our love for God. Remember that God has given us all our senses, touch, smell, hearing, sight, and so we can praise God using any of these - praise doesn't just need to be words. You might use some verses from the Psalms to introduce the praise. Some examples of such psalms are Psalm 100:1-2, 3-4; 147:1; 150:1-2, 6. Alternately words from the New Testament might be used such as Philippians 2:10-11 or John 1:14.

Thanksgiving

In thanksgiving you could think about what you have learned both as a group and as individuals about sexuality and our faith and give God thanks for this. You could thank God for what you have learned about the Bible and human sexuality. Individuals might want to write a prayer, or even share something from any one of the sessions that they want to give thanks for. One of the ways in which we linked each session was to make each individual think about that session and share something in the next session. You might want to go back and remember what each session was about and what you learned from it. Remember the prayer circle at the end of session two. It could also be another way of saying thank you.

Repentance

Here you have a chance to make a confession for your own failings and for those of the world and those of the church. You might want to offer to God your negative attitudes and judgment of other people's expression of their sexuality, or your excluding others because you didn't understand or accept them. You might even want to offer to God aspects of your own sexuality that you are not at peace with or that you have misused or even hurt others with. As a group you might also repent for attitudes and sexual behaviour that society and the church displays that are hurtful to others such as:

sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, homophobia, sexually exploiting others, and making fun of the physical characteristics of others.

It is also important that you all know that through Jesus God's love is shown to us and that we are healed and forgiven.

Another way you could do this exercise is to write down those areas in need of forgiveness and then burn these pieces of paper in a bowl. By doing this you are symbolically destroying these things in order that God may give new life. Here are some examples of sentences from scripture that could remind you of God's forgiveness and love:

- ▶ "And God said let us make (mention your own name) in our image, according to our likeness. And God saw that he/she was good." Genesis 1:26, 31
- ▶ "For God so loved that God gave her/him the Christ" John 3:16
- ▶ "..... God loved you with so much love that God was generous with mercy. God brought you to life with Christ." Ephesians 2:4
- ▶ "I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Readings

You might want to choose any of the readings from the sessions. A particularly fun way of doing a reading might be for different members of the group to read different parts; the Song of Song is one example of scripture that may be read in this way again.

Meditation or Sharing

The meditation that you did in session three could be used again or you could design your

own meditation about the scriptures and sexuality.

We recommend that you use part of this time for each of you to share something of what this course has meant to you and how you are going to go forward with what you have learnt.

Prayer

This could take a multitude of forms.

- ▶ if members of the group have talked about particular difficulties then you might pray especially for them
- ▶ if it is appropriate, married couples in the group might want to renew their marriage vows; others may want to celebrate the relationships they are in
- ▶ some might want to celebrate celibacy
- ▶ the group might want to dedicate itself to a particular action, and this could be committed to prayer
- ▶ this might be an opportunity to pray for others outside the group who are suffering

Blessing

Here is a nice blessing from Chris Glaser :

Leader:

God has blessed and kept you;
God has made God's face to shine upon you, and has been gracious to you;
God has lifted up God's countenance upon you and given you peace

People:

Go with God's blessing, Go by God's grace, Go in God's peace, Alleluia!
Amen!

Music

You might well want you use music in you celebration. Here are some suggestions. Choose a few songs that celebrate what it means to be able to be human and sensual and to share life together. Try to avoid hymns that speak of God using sexist language -- words that refer to men and not to women. Here are a few songs to think about.

1. **Bind us together**
Bind us together Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken, bind us together Lord, bind us together in love.
2. **Kumbaya**
Kumbayan my lord, kumbaya, (x2) O Lord kumbaya
Then add the words
Someone's singing Lord kumbaya; someone's dancing/laughing/loving/praying etc.
3. **Word Made Flesh**
(Sung to the tune of "Lights abode celestial Salem" No 431 in The English Hymnal)
Word made flesh! We see in Christ Jesus
Sharing our humanity,
Loving, graceful, always truthful,

Close to others bodily,
Full of passion, full of healing
Touch of God to set them free.

Wonderful are these our bodies,
Flesh and blood to touch and see,
Place of pain and contradiction,
Yet of joy and ecstasy,
Place of passion, place of healing,
Touched by God who sets them free

O how glorious and resplendant,
Fragile body you shall be,
When endued with so much beauty,
Full of life, and strong and free,
Full of vigour, full of pleasure,
That shall last eternally.

Glory give to God the Lover,
Grateful hearts to the Beloved,
Blessed be the Love between them,
Overflowing to our good;
Praise and worship, praise and worship,
To the God whose Name is Love.

4. **Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence**
(words adapted by Chris Glaser)
Let all mortal flesh show reverence
And in awe and wondrous delight
Ponder one born from among us
To inspire and to invite
Reconciliation: Christ the Word of God
Spoken to redeem, reunite

Child of God, yet born of Mary
That God's children all may be
One in faith and in baptism
One in hope and charity;
One in Christ's flesh, and one in Christ's church
Offring our diversity

Alleluia! God comes among us
Blessing us with human hands
Loving us in earthly pleasures
Leading us to take our stands

For God's healing love in our broken world
For sweet justice in our land

5. **God of Our Hearts**

(sung to the tune "Immortal, invisible God only wise" words by Chris Glaser)

All loving, embracing, O God of our hearts
You hurt with us, laugh with us, teach us your arts;
Your sacred creation you give us to tend,
And then your own Body and Spirit you send

Great giver of mercy and author of love,
Bless those who would follow your long suffering love:
The Lover you gave us we nailed to a tree,
But Love resurrected in your victory

Emblazoned in heavens, embodied in earth
God, bless those who love with repeated rebirth
Past brutal rejections to welcomes of love
And blessings from you, the descent of the dove

Evaluation: Session 1

- | | | | | |
|----|--|-------------------|------------|----------|
| 1. | Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 2. | Were the instructions to the Participants clear?
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 3. | Does the layout of the material
How? | assist | or | detract? |
| 4. | Was the language of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 5. | Was the content of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 1. | Was the session | too long | too short | OK |
| 2. | What worked best about the session? | | | |
| 3. | What was most difficult about the session? | | | |
| 4. | To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material | | (How many) | |
| | ▶ with ease / receptively / openly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ Or any other - specify | | ----- | |
| 5. | Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain. | | | |
| 6. | Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary) | | | |

Facilitator's Guide

Evaluation: Session 2

Introduce your group to us.

Now that the group has settled please tell us about its nature and composition:

1. Age range
2. Racial composition
3. Gender
4. Clergy-laity
5. Educational background
6. Class background
7. Number in group
8. Belong to same congregation
9. If not, what is the common denominator?
10. How many facilitators
11. If there is anything else that will help us in interpreting you evaluations of the group and the group's own evaluations please tell us here.

Evaluation: Session 2

- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------|----------|
| 1. | Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 2. | Were the instructions to the Participants clear?
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 3. | Does the layout of the material
How? | assist | or | detract? |
| 4. | Was the language of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 5. | Was the content of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 11. | Was the session | too long | too short | OK |
| 12. | What worked best about the session? | | | |
| 13. | What was most difficult about the session? | | | |
| 14. | To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material | | (How many) | |
| | ▶ with ease / receptively / openly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ Or any other - specify | | ----- | |
| 15. | Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain. | | | |
| 16. | Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary) | | | |

Evaluation: Session 3

5. Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
6. Were the instructions to the Participants clear? Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
7. Does the layout of the material assist or detract?
How?
8. Was the language of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
9. Was the content of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
7. Was the session too long too short OK
8. What worked best about the session?
9. What was most difficult about the session?
10. To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material (How many)
 ▶ with ease / receptively / openly -----
 ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed -----
 ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly -----
 ▶ Or any other - specify -----
11. Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain.
12. Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary)

Evaluation: Session 4

- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------|----------|
| 5. | Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 6. | Were the instructions to the Participants clear?
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 7. | Does the layout of the material
How? | assist | or | detract? |
| 8. | Was the language of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 9. | Was the content of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 13. | Was the session | too long | too short | OK |
| 14. | What worked best about the session? | | | |
| 15. | What was most difficult about the session? | | | |
| 16. | To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material | | (How many) | |
| | ▶ with ease / receptively / openly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed | | ----- | |
| | ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly | | ----- | |
| | ▶ Or any other - specify | | ----- | |
| 17. | Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain. | | | |
| 18. | Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary) | | | |

Evaluation: Session 5

5. Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
6. Were the instructions to the Participants clear? Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
7. Does the layout of the material assist or detract?
How?
8. Was the language of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
9. Was the content of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
19. Was the session too long too short OK
20. What worked best about the session?
21. What was most difficult about the session?
22. To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material (How many)
- ▶ with ease / receptively / openly -----
 - ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed -----
 - ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly -----
 - ▶ Or any other - specify -----
23. Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain.
24. Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary)

Evaluation: Session 6

- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------|------------|
| 5. | Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 6. | Were the instructions to the Participants clear?
If no, how can they be improved? | Yes | No | |
| 7. | Does the layout of the material
How? | assist | or | detract? |
| 8. | Was the language of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 9. | Was the content of the session | too sophisticated | too simple | OK |
| 25. | Was the session | too long | too short | OK |
| 26. | What worked best about the session? | | | |
| 27. | What was most difficult about the session? | | | |
| 28. | To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material | | | (How many) |
| | ▶ with ease / receptively / openly | | | ----- |
| | ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed | | | ----- |
| | ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly | | | ----- |
| | ▶ Or any other - specify | | | ----- |
| 29. | Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain. | | | |
| 30. | Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary) | | | |

Evaluation: Session 7

5. Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
6. Were the instructions to the Participants clear? Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
7. Does the layout of the material assist or detract?
How?
8. Was the language of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
9. Was the content of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
31. Was the session too long too short OK
32. What worked best about the session?
33. What was most difficult about the session?
34. To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material (How many)
 ▶ with ease / receptively / openly -----
 ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed -----
 ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly -----
 ▶ Or any other - specify -----
35. Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain.
36. Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary)

Evaluation: Session 8

5. Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
6. Were the instructions to the Participants clear? Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?
7. Does the layout of the material assist or detract?
How?
8. Was the language of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
9. Was the content of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
37. Was the session too long too short OK
38. What worked best about the session?
39. What was most difficult about the session?
40. To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material (How many)
 ▶ with ease / receptively / openly -----
 ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed -----
 ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly -----
 ▶ Or any other - specify -----
41. Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain.
42. Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary)

Facilitator's Guide

Evaluation: Session 9

1. Were the instructions to the Facilitator clear Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?

2. Were the instructions to the Participants clear? Yes No
If no, how can they be improved?

3. Does the layout of the material assist or detract?
How?

4. Was the language of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
5. Was the content of the session too sophisticated too simple OK
1. Was the session too long too short OK
2. What worked best about the session?

3. What was most difficult about the session?

4. To test the emotional response of the participants to the material:
How did people respond to the material (How many)
 - ▶ with ease / receptively / openly -----
 - ▶ with a lot of reservation / with difficulty / closed -----
 - ▶ with some reservation / hesitantly -----
 - ▶ Or any other - specify -----
5. Sexual orientation: was there any particular response from people based on their sexual orientation? Please explain.
6. Any other comments that emerge specifically from this session?
(Please write on back if necessary)

Facilitator's Overall Evaluation of the Course

1. To what extent did the course meet you expectations?
2. To what extent do you think did the course meet the expectations of the group?
3. Describe the mood of the group at the last session.
4. Do you think that overall participants were able to be honest and deal with real issues in their lives?
5. If people did face difficult issues in their own lives how was this generally handled by the group, by yourself?
6. Do you think that people changed because of the course? Tell us in which ways.
7. If you were now to sit down and write this course over again what would you change in:
 - ▶ the content
 - ▶ the presentation
8. What was the most helpful/best thing about the course?
9. What was the lest helpful thing about the course?