



## It's Complicated Week Four

**An Important Note to Group Leaders:** Please read the Discussion Guide in advance and wisely consider which questions to use. Every group is different, and no one knows your group better than you do, so follow the Holy Spirit's lead on how to approach this topic.

Based on the potential sensitivity, vulnerability and complications of this topic, consider breaking your group into gender specific groups this week. If you don't have another room in the house, consider moving the men into the garage or backyard. More often than not, separating the two genders makes for more open, honest conversations.

If it becomes clear someone in your group is dealing with issues or trauma that deserve professional support or someone in your group communicates an interest in receiving help for any particular issues involving their sexuality, please see the Resource List at the end of this Discussion Guide.

*This Discussion Guide was created with the hopes to work for various types of groups, gender mixes, marital statuses, etc. But, please note, questions with an asterisk (\*) next to them, may be too loaded for mixed gender groups.*

**Opening Prayer:** God, none of us are perfect, but we are all loved by you perfectly. Please help us to grow more aware of your great love, and to connect with one another.

### Talk It Over:

Few topics can feel more sensitive, vulnerable or complicated than sex and our sexuality. Along those same lines, very few people can say they *both* learned about healthy sexuality in an upfront, helpful and comprehensive way *and* were actually given a real chance to walk out their sexuality in a healthy, life giving way from a young age. All that being said, it's safe to say, most people bring a level of personal baggage and wreckage to this topic.

As we dive in, please remember, we aren't here to fix one another. We are here to create a safe circle where we can be known and loved.

- How did you first learn about sex, and the value or lack of value of sex? This can be a light and funny story or something more serious.
- \*Thinking back to this week's teaching, what ideas, tensions, objections, hopes, fears, desires, next steps, confirmations, frustrations, or questions arose inside of you?

### Read 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 (The Message)

Sex cannot create real intimacy, but it can complicate it. Some sobering facts include: Divorce rate is about 50%, 40% of teens will be pregnant before age 20, 1 of 4 babies born in the US will be born without proximity to one or both parents, 1 of 3 women will have an abortion before 40, 1 of 4 adults today suffer from a STD, 1 out of 4 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18, 40% of marriages have suffered from infidelity, and nearly half of U.S. families admit that pornography is a problem in their home.

These statistics weren't shared to shame us, but to remind us that sex is complicated and the possible complications can be serious and affect all sorts of people. None of us are removed or immune to the dangers or consequences of sexuality that is misused.

- What ideas shared from this weekend's talk would have been helpful to hear as a teen or before you got married?
- \*Issues generally become more complicated when we keep them secret or ignore them. Share about a time you experienced someone dealing with an issue involving their sexuality in a mature, healthy, repairing way, or share about a time you experienced someone making an issue involving their sexuality worse by hiding, excusing or denying the problem. This can be an experience you observed or had to walk through.

While feeling guilty when we do something wrong is healthy, feeling shame doesn't help us move forward. Shame tries to tell us something is broken and bad at the core of who we are. Shame is so destructive that it often keeps us from experiencing God's transformative freedom and love.

- God helps us grow past our shame through love and connection to him and others. Who in your life can you have open, honest conversation with no matter the topic? What about them makes them a safe person for you?

### **Read Matthew 19:4-5**

While we all need intimacy, sometimes we gravitate towards sex because it can trick us into feeling like we are experiencing intimacy. But when we use sex as the means for intimacy, whereas intimacy is intended to come before sex, we can easily move from love to consumption. Sex is not meant to be about consuming one another, but about loving one another. Sex is a way of creating sacred space and saying, "I belong completely and exclusively to you." In other words, sex is intended to be much more than physical instincts or impulses — it's meant to be an intentional covenant renewal that the couple is fully one in the various areas of life.

- In what ways can a couple create the authentic intimacy that presupposes sex?
- What couples do you personally know that do intimacy and friendship well in their marriage? What learnings have you gathered from observing them?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 (The Message)**

This week we were encouraged to protect and guard our sexuality and / or marriage. Some of the ways we protect ourselves include: Setting boundaries (emotionally, physically and spiritually) in advance, watching our thoughts to ensure they are leading us to God's best, and if we are married, enjoying our spouse.

- Looking back at your own story, what boundaries have been life giving to you and your sexuality?
- \*Looking back at your own story, what boundaries do you wish you could have implanted earlier on or have had someone else implant for you?
- \*We all have unique triggers and tendencies that if go unchecked, can lead to unwise thinking, day dreaming, mental wondering, etc. What are some guards you have in place now or think you may need to put in place to guard your sexuality and / or marriage?
- If you are married, what is your favorite way to enjoy your spouse? When do you feel most connected to them? If you are single, what part of marriage seems the most attractive?

### **Read John 1:16**

While complicated, serious topics, like sex, can leave us feeling vulnerable, they also have a unique capacity to soften our hearts to our need and desire for God's grace — a grace that meets us right where we are, and gently invites us into a better way of living.

- Share about a time you experienced grace in a very real way.

- Take two-free minutes to quietly connect with God and to consider these questions: When it comes to the topic of your sexuality, how can you use more grace, in what ways do you need to experience God's healing love, where is God inviting you to change, and how can you better guard and protect your marriage / sexuality?

\*If your group is comfortable, consider sharing about your quiet time.

**Closing Prayer:** God, help us to trust you with our sexuality. Help us to give the Holy Spirit full access to every area of life. We want to be filled with the power and love that comes from you, and to walk in the freedom and healing you offer us.

### **Recommended Resources**

- **Christian Counselors:** Charlie Ruce, Wanda Brothers, Dennis Harris
- **EastLake Church Biblical Guidance:** [eastlakechurch.com/chula-vista/about-elc/prayer](http://eastlakechurch.com/chula-vista/about-elc/prayer)