

SESSION 2: Identity

Notes for Group Leaders with Young People



LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

The topics that are being explored in this and the following sessions are ones that affect people deeply and personally. It will be especially important not to make assumptions about each other's life stories or convictions, and to remember that these conversations may be much more difficult for some than others. It may be helpful to remind the group of the commitments that the course invites people to make, as well as the pastoral principles that are introduced at the beginning of each session.

Remember to prepare the group for the story films (see below), allowing space after each of them is shown, as they may trigger a strong emotional response. You may want to offer the option of writing down 'Questions I would want to ask' after each of the films. Remember to avoid making judgments.

Overview of the session

- Pastoral Principle: Casting out fear
- Story film: Alex and Jo
A married couple, one of whom is trans and both of whom identify as 'queer'
- Learning together: Identity
- Story film: Luke
A gay man who has chosen to be single and celibate
- Bible study: Genesis & Galatians
- Learning together: Identity, sexual orientation and gender
- Reflection and prayer

The following notes relate to the interactive elements at the end of each of the sections.

Ice Breaker: Two Truths and a Lie

Give participants three slips of paper – they are to write two truths about themselves and one lie (as well as their name). Read the slips out in turn and have the group vote as to whether they are hearing truth or a lie (keep it lighthearted). Invite the group to think about how they decided to identify themselves. Why might some people choose to be selective with the truths they tell about themselves?

Discussing together: identity

Allow 15 minutes for this discussion.

Begin by inviting people to share what struck them about the session so far.

Here are some questions to get the group discussion going:

- What words do you use to describe yourself to others?
- In some people's experience, the 'silence' – or the clamour of loud voices – surrounding sexuality and gender identity is a source of mental ill health. How might your church respond to that?

Bible study: Genesis 1.27 and Galatians 3.28

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

Invite the group to share their thoughts on the Bible study. Use these questions as appropriate to help the group to explore questions of identity and gender.

- Does Genesis help us understand our different experiences of gender?
- What does it mean to have a new identity in Christ that is more important than other identities, even 'male and female'?

Discussing together: identity, sexual orientation and gender

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

It's important to remember that there may be questions of gender identity and sexual orientation among members of the group that are not known to others. As leader, you will need to listen out for comments that may be insensitive or hurtful, and to encourage mutual respect in the conversations.

One way to begin the discussion is by inviting people to share any new understanding that the session has brought to light.

Here are some questions for the group to consider, as appropriate:

- How do you understand the connection between sexuality and identity?
- Matters of gender identity and transition attract a lot of controversy and media attention. How might you approach what you read and hear differently now?

You might want to offer an option of writing down responses if your group is feeling anxious/embarrassed about sharing out loud.

Reflection and prayer

Different groups have different ways of praying and ending their time together. Feel free to find ways of praying and concluding that feels natural for the group. You could try the following:

Bring a mirror to the session and some post it notes. Ask each person to look in the mirror and write one word that God says about them on a post it and stick it near the edge of the mirror. For example, this could be 'loved' or 'precious'. You might like to keep the mirror present during future sessions for people to see as they arrive and leave.

It may be appropriate to let the group know what pastoral support is available locally in case this or any of the other sessions have raised difficult issues for individuals.