

SESSION 3: Relationships

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. Remember to avoid making judgments.

Overview of the session

- Pastoral Principle: Acknowledging prejudice
- Story film: Laura & Stephen
A married couple with two young children
- Learning together: Friendship
- Bible study: Matthew 19.1-12
- Story film: Julie & Alice
Two women living together in a longstanding relationship
- Learning together: Marriage
- Reflection and prayer

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

Ice Breaker

Give each participant a large sheet of paper and invite them to draw a 'tree' of relationships – both family and friends. Wonder about some of the following questions:

- Do any of the relationships overlap?
- Are any of the relationships 'broken'?
- What makes a good relationship?
- How do friendships move to romantic relationships?

Discussing together: friendship

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:

- Think about some of your closest friends. What makes for a good friendship?
- What might hold you back from making close friendships?
- How do you respond to what Jesus said about friendship in John 15.13 ('No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.')

Bible study: Matthew 19.1-12

Relationships, friendship and marriage

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

Invite the group to share their thoughts on the Bible reading and reflections. Use these questions as appropriate to help the group to explore questions of relationships, friendship and marriage:

- What strikes you about this passage in Matthew's gospel?
- How does Jesus' teaching about marriage, divorce and eunuchs help us with our discussions about relationships and friendship?

Discussing together: thinking about relationships and marriage

Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

It's important to remember that there may be questions of relationships, singleness, marriage and divorce 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 and gentleness in the conversations. But remember, you do not need to know all the answers!

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:

- What stood out for you in this session about marriage? What provoked a strong reaction in you?
- What do you think about relationships, marriage and the church?

Be aware that some young people may have members of the family in a same-sex relationship or involved with divorce, abuse, and more. Be aware that the section on marriage in this session may be difficult for these young people.

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:

Ask the young people to look back at the tree of relationships they drew at the start. As they look over it, they might like to pray for some of the people they have named out loud or in their hearts. You might like to finish with a prayer asking God for wisdom in our relationships.

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.