



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- ☐ These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- ☐ Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- ☐ Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- ☐ Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- ☐ Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- ☐ If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on October 15, 2023

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

THE BEGINNING OF SEXUALITY, MARRIAGE & FRIENDSHIP – Genesis 2**I. Introduction**

If you've been listening over the last several weeks, you will know that your theme for this ministry year is *New Beginnings*. By revisiting the creation story in Genesis, we are seeking wisdom to perceive the new thing that God is doing in our lives. Today, we will discuss a sensitive topic that many of you have strong feelings about: sexuality, marriage and friendship. There are a variety of feelings, positions, and complexities regarding these three enormous topics. It will be important for us to be open and attentive to one another. Let us not be combative, reactionary, or judgmental. But instead, may we ask the Lord to open our hearts and discuss with love and kindness towards one another. It is our hope that we can all walk away with something worth considering.

Questions: Why did God create sexuality, marriage, and friendship? How can we deepen our understanding in the topics of sexuality, marriage, and friendship?

Bottom Line: From the beginning, human beings have been designed for intimate, honorable, and life-giving relationships that point us, ultimately, toward God.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings: Genesis 2

Genesis 2:7

⁷ Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:18

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

Genesis 2:19-23

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

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

Genesis 2:24-25

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

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

II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. In addressing controversial subjects, Pastor Bryan invites us to engage with the 3 C's:
 - ☐ *Courage* for us to have an open mind and teachable spirit about things we have strong feelings about
 - ☐ *Compassion* for those who may be different from ourselves and who have experienced disappointment, pain and heartache because of it
 - ☐ *Respect* for one another's views and to disagree in love
 - How can we apply the 3 C's for our respective contexts? Feel free to share if any of the 3 C's resonate with you the most or is an area you'd like to focus on.
2. Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh". The traditional Christian view of marriage is an intimate, exclusive, and permanent commitment between a man and a woman.
 - Take a moment to reflect your first beliefs on marriage to your current view of marriage. How has your personal faith impacted your beliefs on marriage? What stayed the same? What changed?
 - What do you find helpful about the orthodox traditional view of Christian marriage? What are some challenges you/someone you know have experienced by upholding the traditional view?
 - How has your view of marriage impacted your values? Your way of life? Your relationships with others?
3. Towards the end of the sermon, Pastor Bryan shared a personal story of a Christian friend who, after many years of hiding his sexuality, came out and shared the pain of living a double life because he did not feel safe being his true self. Do you know someone, perhaps within your own family or neighborhood, at work or in the church community who is LGBTQ+ or struggles with gender identity? If yes,
 - ☐ What have you learned from this relationship?
 - ☐ As a Christ follower, think of some ways that you could show compassion for this person?
4. Pastor Bryan mentioned that there are some gay Christians who have chosen a life of sexual celibacy, instead focusing on deep friendships and non-sexual intimacy with people of the same and opposite sex. What do you think about this? Do you know anyone who adopted similar lifestyle?
5. G.K. Chesterson, a Christian writer and thinker said, "Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God." What do you think this means?

6. Pastor Bryan said at the start of the message that he hoped that everyone listening would hear something that would challenge or stretch their thinking. Have your ideas of sexuality, marriage and friendship been challenged or stretched? If so, explain how with your group.
7. What are some possible next steps for you and/or your group? How can we befriend our LGBTQ+ neighbors and allies with the love of Christ?

Take Home Message:

Every human being's deepest desire is to be fully known and truly loved. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to be fully known and truly loved by God. God designed us to be in intimate, honorable, and life-giving relationships that would reflect our relationship with Him.

Let's Pray

III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart

- ☐ Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- ☐ Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- ☐ Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- ☐ Pray that Grace Chapel will to seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- ☐ Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.

- ☐ Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for Discernment

- ☐ Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- ☐ Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- ☐ Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- ☐ The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- ☐ The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- ☐ The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- ☐ Our bodies matter. What we do with our bodies affect us not just physically, but psychologically and spiritually. And how we treat other people's bodies affects them psychologically and spiritually.
- ☐ Human beings were designed for FRIENDSHIP: relationships designed to connect with other people, people like them and different from them.
- ☐ At the time Genesis was written, sex and gender were synonymous. Now we tend to distinguish between a person's biological sex (their physical anatomy) and their psychological gender (how they feel about themselves).
- ☐ Gender is both a biological and psychological construct.
- ☐ Those whose sex and gender are not aligned often experience loneliness, rejection, bullying and depression.
- ☐ Our church needs to be a safe place for children or adults to share their gender questions and identity with someone who cares; someone who will listen to them, believe them, love them and point them to Jesus. We are working to ensure that our children and student ministry are equipped to support kids and families on this journey. It is not our desires or temptations that make us sinful, but what we do with those desires that matters. We honor God when we express those desires in ways that are good for us and good for others.
- ☐ The sexual union that God designed for us is a source of pleasure, intimacy, bonding and procreation.
- ☐ The Hebrew word ECHAD describes something that is one, with multiple parts. It is also a celebration of the One-ness of the Triune God.
- ☐ When we honor sexual union by experiencing it in the covenant of marriage, and by refraining from it outside of marriage, it brings blessings to us and to the people we love.
- ☐ God's idea of marriage is an intimate, exclusive and permanent commitment between a man and a woman – provides the safety and security for two people to give themselves fully and freely to one another; without fear of abandonment, or critique or exploitation. And that kind of commitment provides a stable and loving environment for children to be nurtured and launched into the world.

- ☐ We are not an affirming church when it comes to gay marriage, but we do recognize that gay marriage is a civil right in our country.