



SESSION 1 of 4

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Words from Solomon

MEETING AIM

To explore our viewpoint and sensibilities toward sex and relationships.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Song of Songs 2

BACKGROUND

Many believe that Song of Songs was written by Solomon about one of his 500 wives and concubines. Some see it as a prophetic picture of God's love and commitment to his people. However, at base level it is a love poem originally written in ancient Hebrew in what, one can only imagine, was the popular contemporary style of ancient Hebrew poetry during the 10th Century BC.

While some commentators take it at face value, others see all kinds of raunchy metaphors within these verses. Don't shy away from this. Yes, it could cause a giggle, but it's important to be confident in this discussion as it may facilitate your young people growing up with a balanced, healthy and coherent attitude towards sex. If they don't have these conversations in church they will get their information from the TV and from their mates!

5 GATHERING TIME

This is a good time to share refreshments and chat about life. As a discussion starter, ask the young people what they find most embarrassing about your church and being a Christian (for example, the church leader's dress sense, ribbon waving or having to do the actions to songs).

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: the following scenarios printed on slips of paper

Split the young people into two groups and give each one a set of scenarios. Give them five minutes to arrange them in order – most excruciating at the top. Discuss the scenarios by comparing each group's order of embarrassment.

- Instead of 'Miss' you call out 'Mum' to your teacher at school.
- Your parents sit you down for 'the talk' (and insist on describing the details of sex using all the proper terminology).

- Chatting to someone for ages when you can't remember their name.
- Waving enthusiastically at someone, only to realise they were waving at someone behind you.
- Watching a movie with your parents when a long, steamy sex scene comes on.
- Walking into a glass door.
- Thinking your earphones are plugged in when they're not, so everyone can hear your music.
- Telling someone a hilarious story and realising they originally told it to you.
- Trying to take two steps at a time and falling up the stairs.
- The driver holding up the jam-packed bus for you, and as you rush on you spill the entire contents of your bag everywhere.

If the group has any awkward stories of their own to share, let them do so now.

15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: bin bags; cups of water; a Bible; a list of the correct terminology for sex-related words

Explain that you're going to read out a passage from a book called Song of Songs in the Bible, but that you're going to do it as a game called Innuendo Bingo (you may have come across this game on Scott Mills' Radio 1 show).

Choose two volunteers to sit awkwardly close together, face to face. Cut a hole in a bin bag for each contestant to wear as a waterproof bib. Each must take a big mouthful of water without swallowing it. You should read the passage passionately, right up close to their ears, two lines at a time using a faux French 'romantic' accent, in an effort to make them laugh and spit the water over the other person. The first to spit loses. Replace the person who loses with a new contestant.

To take it up a notch, read out your list of sex-related terminology. The point is to make these words usable and to take away any stigma or taboo, allowing young people to speak about sexual topics in a mature and appropriate manner.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to discuss the Bible passage. You may find it easier to work in smaller groups if that helps to facilitate less self-conscious discussion:

- Did you like this passage as a poem or a song? Why? Why not?
- What 'raunch rating' would you give it? If Solomon had written these lyrics today would they have featured in an explicit Nicki Minaj song, a Coldplay song or a CBeebies song?

- Why is this poem in the Bible? How could it be a message from God to us? What does it tell us about his attitude to romance and sex?
- What does "do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires" in verse seven mean?
- Is this just an innocent poem about two young friends falling in love, or is it a collection of overtly sexual metaphors and innuendos?
- What other 'appetites' do we have? Is it wrong to have them? Or just when we have them in excess? Can they be beautiful in the right context?
- How many times have you heard people talking about sex in church? Why is that? Should the Church be less embarrassed about sex? What would that look like?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: volunteers from your wider church community to answer the group's questions; flip-chart paper; marker pens

Before the session, invite a few volunteers from your church community to come along and discuss any questions that arise from this Bible passage. Make sure they are comfortable talking about sex and relationships, and are able to do so appropriately.

Before the volunteers arrive, split the young people into smaller groups and give each group a sheet of paper and pens. Encourage the groups to come up with questions about this Bible passage that they would like the volunteers to discuss. If they are struggling for ideas, use the questions from 'Chatting together' as a starting point. Once they have finished, gather the questions together and put them in some kind of logical order.

Welcome the volunteers to your group and ask them the questions the group has generated. You will need to gently guide this question time, allowing everyone to contribute who would like to, but also making sure anyone who needs support can access it.

5 PRAYER

Invite your volunteers to stay and pray for the young people in relation to any issues that have become burning topics during the session. Ask the group to pray for the volunteers in return.

JOEL TOOMBS

has an MA in Christian mentoring and wrote the Grove booklet *Mentoring and Young People*. He is a volunteer youth worker.

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SESSION 2 of 4

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Joseph and Potiphar's wife

MEETING AIM

To explore the value of purity and practicability of pursuing sexual holiness.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 39

BACKGROUND

Joseph's life was a rollercoaster. Starting out as a boastful teenager, he learnt a great deal and God blessed him greatly at every twist and turn. As a slave Joseph had very little choice about what he could do, but he still stood up for what was right and had to face difficult consequences as a result.

5 GATHERING TIME

Serve up your usual refreshments, some in disposable cups and others in glasses. If possible, give some people paper straws and others plastic straws (but don't buy any specially as that defeats the object). Take the opportunity to chat about the use of plastics and the effect it is having on the oceans. Ask the group what they know about this and look up a few facts. If they seem interested, discuss what we can do about it. How can we make the world physically pure and holy for God?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper straws; ping-pong ball
Use whatever you have to hand to create a blow football table. Use glasses for goalposts, and make side and back walls out of old cardboard or books to stop the ball dropping off the table.

As you play, help the group think about strategy. In order to win the game, is it enough to just defend your own goal or should you also attack the opponents' goal? There is a parallel here with our sex lives: do we simply try to avoid harmful relationships and situations? Or do we pursue holiness and healthy relationships? Or both? Tease out the young people's thoughts on this from their experience, but also theoretically and theologically.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles; pens and paper
Read Genesis 39:1-7 and ask the young people what they think Joseph did next. What would they have done? Carry on reading until verse twelve, then ask what they think Potiphar's wife did next. What kind of person was she? Finally, read to the end of the chapter.

Explain to the group that Joseph wasn't much older than them. Encourage the young people to come up with a present-day example of the situation Joseph found himself in. They could work in pairs or small groups. Share the situations and imagine how Joseph might have acted in each one.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the Bible passage using these questions, as well as some of your own. Give everyone the chance to contribute if they would like to:

- Where did Joseph do well in the situation he faced?
- Where did it go wrong for him? Is there anything he could have done that might have avoided the scandal and trouble he ended up in?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- What does it tell us about people, and us in particular?
- What's the most important thing about this story?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a large sheet of paper; marker pens; sticky tape; slips of paper; wrapped sweets
Joseph was faced with a difficult temptation, but he spotted it and tried to get away from the situation as quickly as he could. There are three elements to this kind of scenario:

1. Being in a vulnerable SITUATION.
2. Facing TEMPTATION as a result of this situation.
3. Having a strategy to ESCAPE the temptation.

In pairs, ask the young people to write down fictional scenarios that young people face today using these three points. For example:

1. SITUATION: going on the computer when alone at home.
2. TEMPTATION: looking at pornography.
3. ESCAPE: switching it off and going to find someone else to be around.

Draw a see-saw on the large piece of paper and label one side 'Flee temptation' and the other 'Give in to temptation'. What suggestions can they come up with to help them want to avoid temptation more than to give in? Write the ideas on the appropriate side.

Collect as many ideas as possible on how to avoid being in a vulnerable SITUATION in the first place, as well as ESCAPE techniques for getting away from the source of TEMPTATION as quickly as possible. This might include things like calling a friend, going off to do something else, visiting a friend, switching your phone off, not staying up after your family go to bed, and having rules for yourself, such as not being alone with your boyfriend or girlfriend when everyone else is out or not looking at your phone after 9.30pm.

Give out the slips of paper and sweets. Encourage them to choose some of the best strategies from the see-saw, with relevant scriptures if they like. They should write these on the slips and tape them to the sweets. Put them in a bag and invite the group to keep these sweets for 'temptation emergencies only'. These could be times when temptation is coming at them and they just need a little inspiration to get them away from it. Even just the act of going somewhere to fetch these sweets might be enough to break the moment of temptation.

Ask everyone to think of a pink elephant. Wait for a second, then ask everyone not to think of a pink elephant (it's nearly impossible not to now!). Now ask them to think of a crowd of little green aliens. After a second, ask how many of them have stopped thinking about the pink elephant. This demonstrates the difference between defence and offence! You can either try not to think about the temptation, which is nearly impossible, or distract yourself away from it by turning your mind to something else.

10 PRAYER

You will need: see-saw from 'Creative response'
Look at the see-saw again. In pairs, ask the young people to pray for each other about the areas they find most difficult. Don't let them talk the whole time – encourage them to pray!

JOEL TOOMBS

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SESSION 3 of 4

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David and Bathsheba

MEETING AIM

To explore the meaning, connotations and knock-on effects associated with sexual sin and bad decisions.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Samuel 11

BACKGROUND

David is commonly considered one of the greatest characters of the Bible for his faith as well as his feats, for his attitude toward loving and serving God and the legacy he left the people of Israel. However, this episode with Bathsheba is not the only infraction on his record, so he also serves as a welcome reminder that God's love is unconditional; that forgiveness is always available to us and past sins do not discount us from future service. Rather, they can teach us valuable lessons and prepare us for deeper character and understanding.

To understand how much of a betrayal this was, read 2 Samuel 23 from verse eight. Uriah is listed as one of David's thirty-seven great warriors, renowned for their brave acts. It's worth noting that the city of Jerusalem was very small and that Uriah was an established member of David's best warriors, so it is highly likely that David not only knew whose house he was looking at, but also whose wife he was watching.

5 GATHERING TIME

This is a good time to share your usual refreshments and chat about life. For fun, print off pictures of David Walliams and a bath. Buy a small tin of Sheba cat food (about 55p) and challenge them to guess what the session is about without giving any other clues (answer: David and Bathsheba!).

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: items from list one (below) written on a single sheet of paper; items from list two written on individual slips of paper; a hat or bag

Before the session, fold up the slips of paper from list two and put them in a hat or bag.

Sit the young people in a circle and play the consequences game, asking them to tell a story with each person in the circle saying only one sentence in turn. Explain that each person's phrase should end with something from list one so the next person can use that to start their phrase. In addition, each person must pick a word from the hat or bag (list two) and weave it into their sentence. The overall story can (and will) end up being quite bizarre and hopefully quite funny.

List one:

- then he / she...
- because...
- however...
- suddenly...
- just then...
- so...

List two:

- peanuts
- unicorn
- flavoursome
- strenuous
- tenuous
- butter
- underpants
- baby shark
- hangry
- parachute
- monster
- hero

When you've finished, think about the impact of one person's sentence on the rest of the story. How easy is it to take over from someone else when they have made a particular decision?

5 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: 2 Samuel 11 printed on large sheets of paper

Give out copies of the passage and read the story together. Then play the consequences game again, but this time ask them to tell the story of David and Bathsheba in their own words, going around the circle one word at a time! Allow the young people to refer back to the passage if they get stuck.

Split them into two groups or pairs. Ask them to circle the initial wrongdoing by David, then to number and highlight all the subsequent sins and mistakes he commits as a result of that first one. Get some feedback from each group on this and chat it through so they get a good grasp of the story.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the young people these questions, encouraging everyone to take part:

- Are you surprised by David's behaviour? Why?
- Are you shocked that there is a story like this in the Bible? Would you be as disturbed to see a story like this in a movie? Why is it more shocking than a movie? Who would you cast in a Hollywood version of this story?

- What advice do you have for David? What should he have done?
- Do you think this episode marked the end of David's relationship with or usefulness to God? Why? Why not?
- What have you discovered through exploring this story?
- What do you think God might be wanting to say to you through it as a group?
- What strategies can you identify in order to avoid making the same mistakes David did?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a copy of the song 'Sun-screen' by Baz Luhrmann and the means to play it; lyrics to the song

Give out the lyrics and play the song to the group. Allow the young people to enjoy it and pick apart its advice. Which is the most important line, do they think?

Give the group some time to write their own versions, either on their own or in pairs. The song is essentially a list of short pieces of advice covering all kinds of areas. Our starting point is advice to avoid falling into sin, but allow the young people to be creative. If you have the means play a similar piece of instrumental music, encourage the group to read their own lyrics over the top, like the Baz Luhrmann version.

5 PRAYER

You will need: three signs saying 'Sorry', 'Thanks' and 'Please'; reflective music and the means to play it; pens and paper

Hang the signs up in different places around the room. Explain that you will play some music and that they should spend some time under each of the banners talking to God – particularly regarding sex, relationships, forming good habits and avoiding unhealthy ones, and sexual sin. Make it abundantly clear that any past mistakes do not discount them from coming into God's presence, receiving his help and forgiveness, and still being useful and close to him in the future. Make yourself and other appropriate adult volunteers available to pray one-to-one with individuals during this time. Make pens and paper available for creative prayers and responses at each station.

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SESSION 4 of 4

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Words from Paul

MEETING AIM

To explore values and principles needed to develop healthy attitudes about sex and relationships.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

BACKGROUND

Corinth was famous for its many temples to the gods, most notably to Athena who had more than 1,000 temple prostitutes. Sexual promiscuity was rife in the culture of the city and was a problem that infiltrated the Church.

5 GATHERING TIME

As you have a drink together, ask the young people to share their memories of the first time they met each other and the funniest memory they have of their close friends. What have they done with their friends this week or month that they will remember for years and years?

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: cream crackers; water and cups; marshmallows

Play one or all of these games, depending on the amount of time you have:

Crackers. How many dry crackers can the young people eat in a minute? No water is allowed (but have plenty ready for afterwards) and they must completely finish one before putting the next one in their mouth.

Thumb wars. In pairs, the young people lock their right hands together by the fingertips so they can pin down each other's thumb for a count of three full seconds. The winner goes through to the next round. Continue until you are left with one ultimate champion.

Chubby bunnies. How many marshmallows can each person fit in their mouth and still say: "Chubby bunnies"?

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: two printouts of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, one in blue and one in red; Bibles; Blu Tack

Before the session, cut the copies of the passage into individual verses and hide them around your meeting space. Split the young people into two groups, allocate each a colour and give them some Blu Tack. Challenge the two teams to find all their verses and put them in the right order (have some Bibles around for reference). The first team to find all the verses and stick them on the wall in the correct order is the winner.

Ask people afterwards which verse they found and whether it made any sense to them. See if they can help each other shed light on what the passage is talking about.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the young people these questions, encouraging everyone to take part:

- What are the standards Paul – and God – required of the Corinthian Christians? Are they fair? Necessary? Realistic? Holy?
- Why was it necessary for the Corinthians to be different from those around them?
- What are the parallels and differences between the situation in Corinth and life now?
- How does God want us to tackle issues related to sex these days? What are the main sex-related issues the Christian community face today?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: cards with the words below written on; pens and paper

Before the session, make sets of cards with these words on: Loyalty, Quality time; Quantity time; Giving gifts; Encouraging words; Holding hands; Hugging; Self-confidence; Affection; Forgiveness; Trust; Kissing; Time alone together; Arguing; Honesty; Compromise; Integrity; Patience; Listening; Good communication; Taking the mick; Fist bumping; Shared interests; Laughing together; Sex. Hold back the 'Sex' card until the third part of the activity.

Split the young people into smaller groups and give each one a set of cards. Explain that each group is going to put together a 'football team' of cards that make up the perfect relationship, and decide what formation they should go in. (If your group isn't interested in football, you could frame it as any sport or none.) Obviously, there will be many cards that don't make it into the team. They should

place these in a discard pile at the side to discuss why they didn't make it.

A great way to work out what order they should go in – and also to facilitate discussion about it all – is for someone in the group to choose two of the cards, hold them up and ask: "Who should make the team out of these two?" and "What position should they go in and why?" Make the point that even if one of the 'players' doesn't make the team it does not mean they are not valuable, just that the others are just a little more important.

First, ask them to decide the team for 'Friendship United'. They should include all the best players who will make up the very best friendship in their opinion. Allow them to suggest other players if they think of ones that aren't on the cards.

Next, tell them they can make three substitutions (and change the formation) if they wish. This will make the team 'Relationship United'.

Finally, give each team a new card that says 'sex' on it and tell them they must only substitute in this card. This will make the team 'Marriage United'.

When you feed back together after each stage, question whether these are the sorts of relationships and values the world, Church, families, TV shows, movies, music and magazines promote.

10 PRAYER

Give the group time to reflect. They may wish to say sorry, be more hopeful or make decisions about what they want from life regarding relationships. They may decide to change their own behaviour regarding sexual values and behaviour, for example deciding not to toy with other people's hearts or not to look at porn. Prompt them to rest and listen out for God. He may pop ideas into their minds, give them extra confidence about attitudes or actions they are wondering about pursuing, offer peace about situations or answer questions they have.

Invite them to pray about any new rules, resolutions or decisions they have agreed with God.

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