

FRESH

OUTLOOK
BIBLE STUDIES

**SEX AND
THE BIBLE**

SAMPLE



THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK

Written by Maggie Alsup

Session 1

The Language of Sex

Leader Prep:

Read “[‘Unprotected Texts’: The Bible on Sex and Marriage](#)”; “[Circles of Sexuality](#).”

Watch “[How the Bible Talks about Genitals \(Sanitizing Scripture Ep 11\)](#)”; “[Funny Euphemisms](#).”

Supplies:

Nametags, pens

Newsprint, markers

Copies of “[Circles of Sexuality](#)” (or send link to participants’ devices)

Newsprint prepared with chart in step 3

Media clips, equipment to play them

Bibles or Bible app

nametags, pens
newsprint, markers

1. Making a covenant

Welcome all participants and invite them to create and wear a nametag. Encourage everyone to introduce themselves and, if they want to, name their expectations for participating in this study.

Talking Point: Over the next four sessions, we will delve into the relationship between the Bible and sex. To create a secure and welcoming environment, we will establish a covenant. We want to make this a safe space where everyone can openly share their experiences without fear of judgment or discomfort.

Present the form of a simple covenant: (1) what we promise to one another during the study and (2) how we will seal or solemnize the covenant. Promises might include the following: Keep discussions confidential, and don’t share them outside the group; allow participants to either share or pass; refrain from using insults or sarcasm; ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard; help everyone feel included; and respect each person’s view of the authority of Scripture.

Write the group’s covenant on the newsprint and post it in the meeting space. Discuss what should happen if someone breaks the covenant. Seal the covenant by asking everyone to sign the newsprint. Offer a prayer to confirm the group’s commitment, such as the following suggestion:

O God, please guide us and help us to follow your will with open hearts and minds. Grant us the strength to uphold our covenant. Amen.

copies of
“[Circles of Sexuality](#)”

2. Circles of sexuality

Talking Point: In 1981, Dennis Daily created the Circles of Sexuality to provide a holistic approach to discussing sex. The circles overlap to show that each circle affects the others.

Have the participants name connections they notice in the diagram. Invite them to share their experiences with the parental “sex talk” or sex ed at school or church. Name the areas of the Circles of Sexuality that were included/excluded and how that affects their views of sex and sexuality.

prepared newsprint

3. Words about sex and body parts

Display a chart with four columns and 10 rows. Left to right, label the columns Value-Neutral, Children’s Language, Slang/Profanity, and Biblical. Under the value-neutral column, list one of the following words for each row: ejaculation, genitals, intercourse, menstruation, penis, testicles, uterus, vulva and vagina.

Invite the participants to add words under columns 2 and 3 that reflect (1) children’s language and (2) slang/profanity versions of the value-neutral descriptors.

Discuss:

- How is using children’s words an avoidance technique?
- How do slang and profanity demean the body and sex?

media clip, equipment
Bibles or Bible app

4. Biblical sex language

Talking point: The Bible uses euphemistic language for sex, avoiding value-neutral, children’s or slang language.

Show the YouTube video “[Funny Euphemisms](#)” (2:16). Discuss:

- What’s funny about euphemisms? What’s unfunny about them?
- How can euphemisms cause problems in communication?

Distribute the Bible passages from the NRSVue (except for those noted otherwise) among the participants. Ask them to identify the sex-related euphemisms and decide which body part or sex act is referenced. Invite the participants to add their passages’ descriptors under the “Biblical” column.

[Genesis 2:24](#) (“become one flesh”; intercourse)

[Genesis 4:1](#) (“knew”; intercourse)

[Genesis 18:11](#) (“the manner of women”; menstruation)

[Genesis 49:25](#) (“womb”; uterus)

[Leviticus 18:8](#) (“uncover nakedness”; intercourse)

[Deuteronomy 25:11](#) (“the secrets” [AKJV]; genitals)

[Deuteronomy 28:57](#) (“between her feet” [AKJV]; vulva or vagina)

[Ruth 3:7-8](#) (“feet”; penis)

[Ezekiel 23:19-20](#) (“members,” “emission”; penis, ejaculation)

[Matthew 1:18](#) (“came together” [AKJV]; intercourse)

[Romans 13:13](#) (“sleeping around” [CEB]; illicit intercourse)

Encourage the participants to share their observations and questions from the activity.

covenant

5. Evaluating Bible sex talk

Talking point: Talking about sex in a Bible study or church setting can make us uncomfortable. Many of us grew up in households and churches where sexual topics were rarely, if ever, discussed, giving us few opportunities or role models to feel comfortable with the subject. Revealing our intimate thoughts can make us feel self-critical, small, unsafe, judged or rejected. Christians sometimes wrongfully believe their genitals, bodies and sexuality are evil. Knowing euphemisms for sexual activity can aid in comprehending biblical teachings and make them more relevant, precise and beneficial.

Discuss:

- What's funny about biblical euphemisms for sex? What's unfunny about them?
- How can we encourage one another to use anatomically correct and value-neutral words for parts of the body and sex acts instead of slang/profanity or euphemisms in our discussions? (Add these ideas to the covenant.)

Bibles or Bible app

6. Un-sanitizing Scripture

Ask all participants to choose a Bible passage from step 4 and read it aloud, replacing the euphemism with value-neutral terminology.

Following each reading, use the following call and response:

Word of wisdom, word of grace.

Response: Thanks be to God.

covenant

7. Loose ends and prayer

Ask the group whether anything remains unresolved or unspoken that they want to explore later. Agree to continue the conversation outside the group if necessary.

Review the covenant. Invite the participants to examine whether the group has met its obligations to the covenant. Address any shortcomings and determine ways to encourage each other.

Close with a prayer in these or similar words:

For our beautiful bodies, O God, we give you thanks. Sometimes we find living in our bodies and skin difficult, but your Holy Word reminds us that you created and named us good. May we be mindful of this and live confidently in our humanity and sexuality. Amen.

FRESH

OUTLOOK

BIBLE STUDIES

**GOD IN THE
MIRROR**



THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK

Written by Catherine Knott

Session 1

Reflecting God's Expansiveness

Leader Prep:

Read "[God in Feminine Form](#)"; "[God Is Present in All](#)"; "[World's Largest Potluck, the Big Table, Coming to Iroquois Park](#)"; "[Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud](#)."

Watch "[Sr. Marla Clercx's Reflection: Your God Is Too Small if . . .](#)"; "[#EatTogether Commercial](#)."

Supplies:

Nametags, pens
Hand mirror
Natural items (rocks, flowers, pinecones, etc.)
Candle, lighter
Bibles or Bible app
Paper, colored pencils
Media clips, equipment to play them
Hymn lyrics

nametags, pens
hand mirror

1. Welcome

Arrange the room by placing chairs facing one another in two equal rows, ensuring that there is one chair for each participant. Place a small table at a central point where all can see it.

Invite every person to wear a name tag and sit facing another individual. Begin the session by asking the first question below and instruct the facing pairs to share their responses for 30 seconds. Next, ask the participants of one row to stand and move one chair to their left to discuss the next question (with the person on the farthest left end moving to the farthest right). Keep the activity going as long as everyone is actively participating.

Who regularly gathers around your favorite table?

What celebrations happen around your table?

How do you know you are welcome at your table?

Who is not welcome to sit at your table?

Pass the hand mirror from person to person, asking them to gaze at their likeness. As they pass the mirror, say:

The Bible says that humans are created in the image of God, reflecting God's character and loving the world the way God wants the world to be loved. If our perception of God is small, exclusive and stingy, we will reflect a small, exclusive and stingy God. If our concept of God is big, expansive and generous, we will reflect God's expansive hospitality. Which God do you see in your mirror?

natural items
hand mirror
candle, lighter
Bibles or Bible app

2. Spiritual reading

Place the natural items and the hand mirror on the small central table to create a focal point. Light a candle and invite everyone to get comfortable.

Invite the participants to close their eyes and place a hand on their diaphragms while breathing deeply from their abdomens. Guide them through inhalation and exhalation a few times for practice.

Encourage deep breaths as you read aloud [Genesis 1:26-28](#). Afterward, ask the participants to identify any standout words or phrases from the reading. Allow time for silence and deep breathing.

Ask the group to open their eyes and repeat the following:

We are grateful for this time to listen.

We are grateful for this reading.

paper, colored pencils

3. Our pictures of God

Distribute paper and colored pencils. Ask the participants to draw pictures of the concepts of God they had when they were 5, 10 and 15 years old. Invite each person to present their drawings and to briefly describe how their concepts of God at those ages translate into language.

Discuss:

- How has your concept of God sustained you, especially in difficult times?
- How has your concept of God defined your character and values?
- What kind of table would your God-concept design? Why?

Bibles or Bible app

4. A bigger God

Talking Point: Expansive language for God includes metaphors from human and non-human experiences. Employing expansive language for God helps us encounter a rich and mysterious God of beauty, diversity and welcome.

Explore several of the following Bible passages. Note the various metaphors used to describe God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and discuss the actions or character traits the metaphors imply: [Deuteronomy 32:6](#) (father); [Deuteronomy 32:11-12](#) (eagle); [Psalm 18:2](#) (rock, fortress); [Psalm 22:9](#) (midwife); [Psalm 91:1](#) (shelter, shadow); [Psalm 123:2](#) (woman); [Isaiah 46:3-4](#) (mother); [Matthew 23:37-39](#) (mother hen); [Luke 3:22](#) (dove); [John 6:35](#) (bread); [John 8:12](#) (light); [John 15:5](#) (vine); [Acts 2:3-4](#) (fire).

Discuss:

- What do the metaphors suggest about God's character?
- Which metaphors for God delight or surprise you?
- Which metaphors for God do you struggle with?
- How does expanding your language for God expand your concept of God? How does it expand your sense of self as one who is created in God's image?

Bibles or Bible app

5. A bigger table

Talking point: The table symbolizes God's expansive welcome in the Bible. God is present with God's people and one another at a table. It's a place of peace, harmony, love, goodwill and reconciliation among those around it. God's table is a place of expansive grace, generosity and abundant provision, where everyone is full and satisfied.

Ask pairs of participants to select one or more of the following passages to read. Invite them to note evidence of God's radical hospitality and diversity in their respective passages:

[Genesis 2:8-18](#)

[Psalm 23](#)

[Luke 7:36-50](#)

[Acts 10:9-35](#)

[Revelation 19:5-9; 21:1-4; 22:1-5](#)

media clip, equipment

6. Our tables reflect God's table

Show the YouTube video "[Sr. Marla Clercx's Reflection: Your God is Too Small if...](#)" (6:07). Invite the participants to comment on the media clip with observations, questions and affirmations.

Show the YouTube video "[#EatTogether Commercial](#)" (2:30).

Discuss:

- What would it mean to extend yourself beyond your social group and get to know others?
- What steps could you take to express the bigness of God and God's table in your relationships and beyond?

hymn lyrics
paper, colored pencils

7. Final reflection and poem

Invite everyone to close their eyes while you slowly read, play or sing Thomas Troeger's hymn text "[Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud](#)." (If you do not feel comfortable singing, ask a confident singer in the group to lead using the tune for "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" or an original tune.)

Invite the participants to write or draw the images and descriptions of God that resonate most with them as you read, play or sing the hymn a second time.

Discuss:

- What metaphors for God could speak to this moment in our community?
- How could we employ a variety of metaphors for God in ways that help individuals and the community receive them?

Ask the participants for prayer requests. For joyful and celebratory prayers, have the participants respond, "Thanks be to God!" For more concerning prayers, ask the participants to respond, "God in your mercy, hear our prayer."

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**WHAT'S YOUR
SUPERPOWER?**

SAMPLE



Session 1

Dominion Is Your Superpower

Leader Prep:

Read [“Inspiring Kids to Change the World”](#); [“10 Young People Who Changed the World to Add to Your Class Curriculum.”](#)

Watch [“If You Could Have a Superpower, What Would It Be?”](#); [“How Humans Disrupted a Cycle Essential to All Life”](#); [“Power in Society: Who Has It, How to Get It, and How to Use It Well”](#); [“You’re Supposed to Rule the World \(Here’s How\)”](#); [“Greta Thunberg’s Full Speech to World Leaders at UN Climate Action Summit](#)

Supplies:

Nametags, pens
Media clips, equipment to play them
Vision board supplies (poster board, markers, glue sticks, magazines, watercolors, etc.)
Candle, lighter
Bibles or Bible app
Newsprint, markers
Copies of [“10 Young People Who Changed the World to Add to Your Class Curriculum”](#) (or send link to participants’ devices)

nametags, pens
media clip, equipment
vision board supplies

1. Superpowers

Invite each person to write their name on a name tag, including their pronouns, if they wish.

Welcome everyone to the group. Challenge the participants to create a safe space for the duration of the study. Ask each person to introduce themselves to the group by saying their names (and pronouns, if desired) and revealing three facts about themselves.

Conclude by prompting everyone to say the following as each person strikes their best superhero pose:

With great power comes great responsibility.

Show the YouTube video [“If You Could Have a Superpower, What Would It Be?”](#) (1:33). Invite the participants to name the superpowers they would enjoy.

Distribute the art supplies and invite the participants to create individual superpower vision boards. Tell them that they will add to their vision boards over the four sessions of this study. Explain that vision boards can include drawings and pictures, empowering words and affirmations, uplifting quotes and descriptions of how they feel when using their superpower.

Allow 10 minutes for the participants to start creating their vision boards. When time is up, suggest they continue adding to their vision boards during the session as inspiration comes.

candle, lighter
Bible or Bible app

2. Preparing our hearts, minds and bodies

To create a relaxed atmosphere, light a candle and encourage everyone to find a comfortable position.

Lead the group in breathing. Invite them to inhale slowly and deeply through the nostrils and then exhale slowly through pursed lips, like a straw. Repeat two times.

Read aloud [2 Timothy 1:7](#). Conclude the reading with the following call and response:

Words of wisdom, words of grace.

Response: Thank you, God.

Repeat the breathing activity, asking the participants to inhale the power of God and exhale any feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness. Repeat two times. Conclude with a prayer:

**For our time together and the gift of your power, we thank you, God.
Amen.**

media clip, equipment
vision boards and supplies

3. What is power?

Show the YouTube video "[Power in Society: Who Has It, How to Get It, and How to Use It Well](#)" (stop the video at 4:05).

Discuss:

- How do you respond to Andy Wallace's conviction that power is not wrong but simply the ability to create possibility?
- Wallace defines power as the ability to affect outcomes or people in a desired direction. What do you think of his definition? Does his definition of power sound like manipulation? Do you think people or outcomes can be manipulated to good ends? Why or why not?
- Do you want power? To what desired direction or end?

Remind the participants to add ideas, thoughts, drawings and pictures to their vision boards as the discussion inspires them.

newsprint, markers
Bibles or Bible app

4. Creation and dominion

Ask the participants to separate into three groups. Assign each group one of the following biblical passages: [Genesis 1:1-2:4](#); [Genesis 2:4-25](#); [Psalm 8](#).

Ask each team to identify how power is portrayed in its respective text and invite them to observe whether and how power travels (as if it were energy) in the passage. After sufficient time, share discoveries.

Discuss:

- Can you identify which themes or memories from our readings are reflected in the texts? Do any of your themes or memories differ from the texts?
- How is God's power depicted? How is human power depicted?
- How does power flow like energy in the creation accounts?
- The primary power term is dominion. What does dominion look like in your life?

media clip, equipment
Bible or Bible app

5. Dominion, not dominance

Talking point: As God's created beings, we have been blessed with the power of dominion. God has bestowed upon us the responsibility to care for the earth, its people and its resources with love and compassion. The essence of God's dominion, entrusted to humanity, is based on the principles of love and justice.

Show the YouTube video "[You're Supposed to Rule the World \(Here's How\)](#)" (6:16). Invite the participants' observations, comments and questions.

Read aloud [Genesis 2:15](#) and discuss:

- How does the description of "tilling and keeping" the garden clarify the meaning of dominion as nourishing and cherishing the earth rather than seeking dominance?
- The Hebrew words for tilling and keeping are the same words used to describe the work of priests ("keep guard"; see [Numbers 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-7](#) in the English Standard Version). To be a priest is to be a bridge builder. How does bridge building help define dominion?
- How is protecting the earth an expression of exercising dominion? How does it conform to God's expectations of how humans are to use power?

media clip, equipment
copies of "[10 Young People Who Changed the World to Add to Your Class Curriculum](#)"

6. Using our superpower

Show the YouTube video "[Greta Thunberg's Full Speech to World Leaders at UN Climate Action Summit](#)" (5:19). Invite volunteers to describe how her environmental activism expresses the biblical view of dominion.

Distribute the handouts (or send the link to participants' phones). Assign one of the 10 featured young people to pairs of participants and ask them to read the biography of their assigned person. After 5 minutes, invite them to introduce their assigned young person to the group and briefly explain how they exercise dominion.

Discuss:

- What superpowers do these young people have in common?
- Do you share any superpowers with them? What?
- How are these young people affecting outcomes or people in a desired direction?
- How can you use your dominion to nourish and protect the earth and its people?

vision boards
and supplies

7. Go out, rooted in love

Invite the participants to finish adding thoughts and pictures to their vision boards. Assure them they will continue adding to their boards during each session. Store the participants' vision boards securely until the next session.

Close with prayer:

Dear God, thank you for bringing us together and giving us opportunities to promote justice, kindness and humility. Help us use our power to better our world and one another, holding your creation with a gentle grasp and collaborating for good. Amen.