

# JOURNEY WITH GOD

*Focusing On Sexuality And Spirituality*



## *Acknowledgements*

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All Bible quotes are from the Contemporary English Version Bible (CEV)  
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*Published and Distributed by*



*Est. 1995*

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Website: [www.iam.org.za](http://www.iam.org.za)

# WELCOME

Since 1995, Inclusive & Affirming Ministries (IAM) has been involved in encouraging faith communities to become more inclusive and affirming of all their members, regardless of sexual orientation and to find ways to support the integration of spirituality and sexuality, more effectively.

This huge endeavour over time has led to IAM's appreciation of the impact that support groups, caring groups, interest groups have on shifting attitudes, stimulating inclusion, coming to terms with diversity, letting go of homophobia and finding the courage to start a journey of hope, integrating sexuality with spirituality.

It is in these safe spaces that people truly find support, get exposure to each others' life stories, acknowledge fear, ignorance and misunderstanding, get educated and start to integrate and open up to each other in making peace with diversity and the gift of sexuality.

This Bible study series wants to continue IAM's work in faith communities through support groups, caring groups, interest groups that are encouraged to journey with God, focusing on sexuality and spirituality.

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# JOURNE



# KEY MAP



## READ GENESIS

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Focus on:  
the two stories of Creation

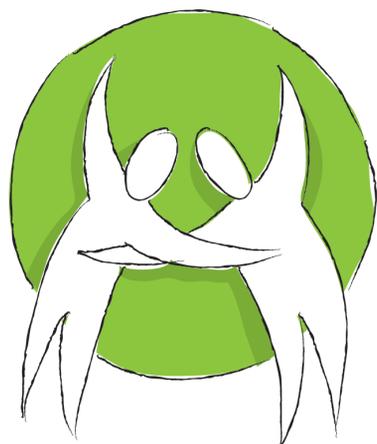
# GOD AS CREATOR AND GOOD GIVER OF LIFE



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of God as Creator and Good Giver of sexuality.

The focus will be on God as Creator of human kind and our world as described in the Book of Genesis and how this relates to sexuality in general and in particular, homosexuality.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of how God created you and others invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open to appreciate God  
as Creator and Good Giver of sexuality.

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to encounter God and others.

Together we light our candles to affirm that God created us all.

The Saviour loves us and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

In this light we move forward."



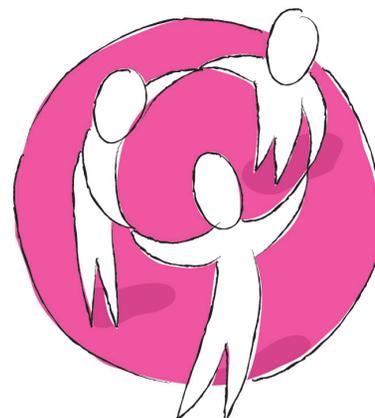
### 4. SHARE



How are you?

What would you want us to know about you  
right now?

What challenges are part of your journey  
with God as your Creator and your sexuality today?



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

Psalm 139:13 - 14 (CEV)

<sup>13</sup> You are the one who put me together  
Inside my mother's body,

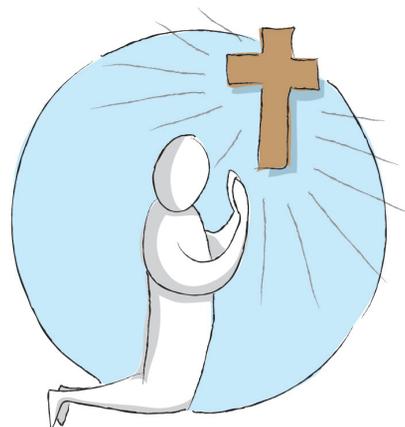
<sup>14</sup> and I praise you

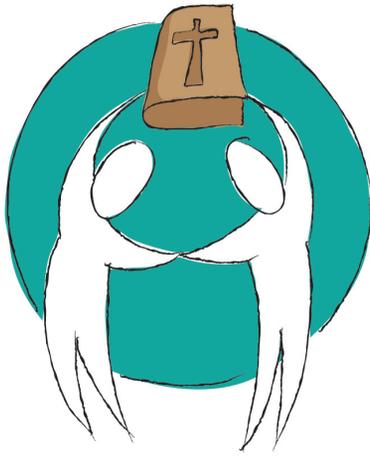
Because of the wonderful way you created me.

Everything you do is marvellous!

Of this I have no doubt.

Amen





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as “The Word of God” and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any “mistakes” and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God’s unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the “Word of God” that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

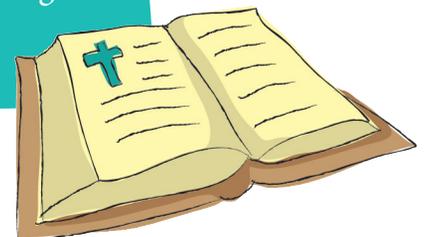
The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

## IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

The Bible was compiled over hundreds of years. The first Bible books, like Genesis, were shared by word of mouth from generation to generation before it was written down and included into the Bible, as we know it today, starting from Genesis and ending at Revelations.



## READ Genesis 1 to 3

In Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 4 and Genesis 2: 5 – 3: 24, two stories of the Creation are told.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- What do you conclude from Genesis 1 to 3 if you read it literally?
- What do you conclude from Genesis 1 to 3 if you read it contextually?

Human beings can be in a relationship with God and with each other, because they are made in the image of God.

Human sexuality is a blessing from God.

The human being as created in the image of God and representative of God on earth.

*Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 4*  
Emphasizes God as Creator

Procreation is part of God's blessing and therefore humans can multiply, inhabit and work the earth as God instructed them too.

God as the only Creator of heaven and earth.

Procreation is seen as the blessing of God to both male and female.

God as the Good Giver that gave the human being life and paradise.

This companionship is characterised by equality, *a helper suitable for him* and inter-dependant, *flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone*.

*Genesis 2: 5 – 3: 24*  
Emphasizes God as Good Giver of Life

Human beings are created with free will and lost paradise by making the wrong choices.

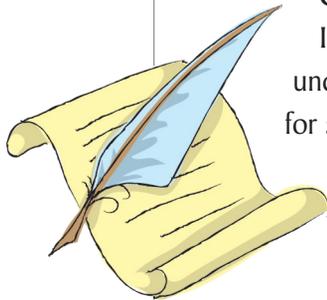
Human sexuality is highlighted as companionship, *humans are not created to be alone*.

## Summary of a LITERAL reading

Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted these texts as “The Word of God”, without “mistake” and “unchangeable”. It then seems clear that God made man and woman for procreation.

God made man first and the woman to be his helper.

If we apply these texts in a literal way, homosexuality is understood to be unnatural, sinful and against God’s intention for sexuality, which is procreation.



## Summary of a CONTEXTUAL reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood these texts as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within their contexts, before conclusions are made.

### 1. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

After a long time had passed in the history of the people of God, the Israelites found it necessary to tell their stories of the Creation, to remind them that God is their only Creator and Good Giver of life.

The Israelites were going through a difficult time. They were conquered and captured by their enemy, the Babylonians, and was taken into exile. In Babylon the Israelites experienced the annual Creation-Story-Festival of the Babylonians. At this festival the Babylonians told and celebrated stories of their gods and kings, depicting them as creators and good givers. Israel felt exposed, confused and uncertain about what God intended for them in exile. They needed security and affirmation about their understanding of God as their only Creator and Good Giver of life. They also feared for their survival, which made it very important for them to focus on having descendants that could give hope for the survival of God’s chosen people.

Consequently their stories of the Creation focused on God as Creator and Good Giver of life that also instructed them to procreate and multiply.

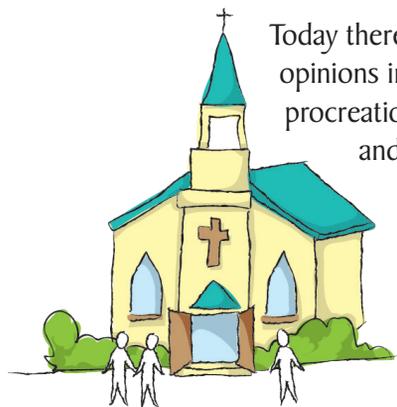


### GROUP QUESTION

- Which do you think Israel was concerned about at this time; sexuality as sex for procreation or as sexual orientation, who you have sex with?

## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over centuries the church interpreted the stories of Creation to mean that heterosexuality is the only form of human sexuality that is within God's will and monogamous marriage the only recognised relationship between one man and one woman. Woman was seen as less than man because of Eve's instigation of sin and therefore cursed to be subordinate to man as punishment. This way of thinking became known as *Natural Theology*.



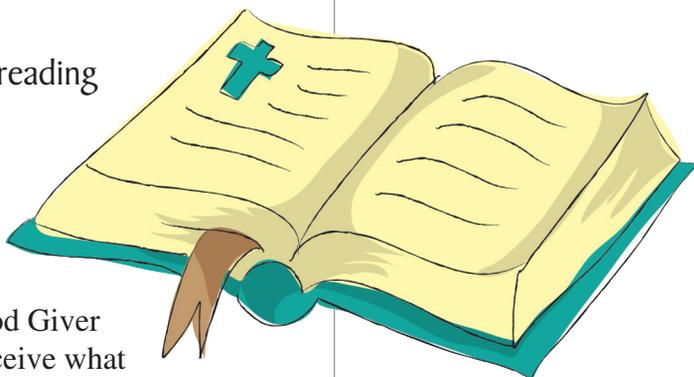
Today there are different interpretations and opinions in the church that relates to sexuality, procreation, marriage and equality of men and women.

### GROUP QUESTION

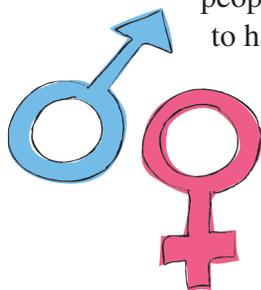
What is your view on marriage and equality of men and women?

## 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

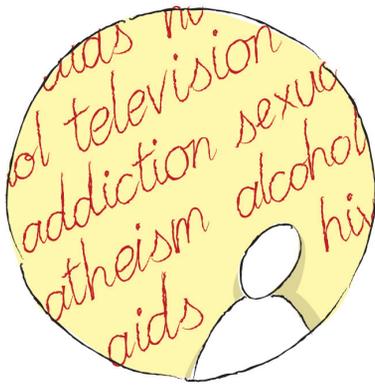
The texts become the "The Word of God" as we study the different contexts of Israel, the stories they told of the Creation, of the church history and of ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We take to heart the message that God is our Creator and Good Giver of life. We are called to relate to God and receive what God gives us with our sexuality. Through our faith we accept that God also calls us to enter into relationships. All



people, regardless of sexual orientation, can choose to have a companion, celebrate what God has made and experience the good that comes from journeying within a intimate relationship with each other and God.

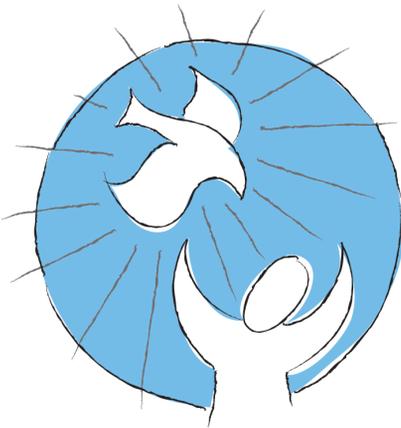


*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*



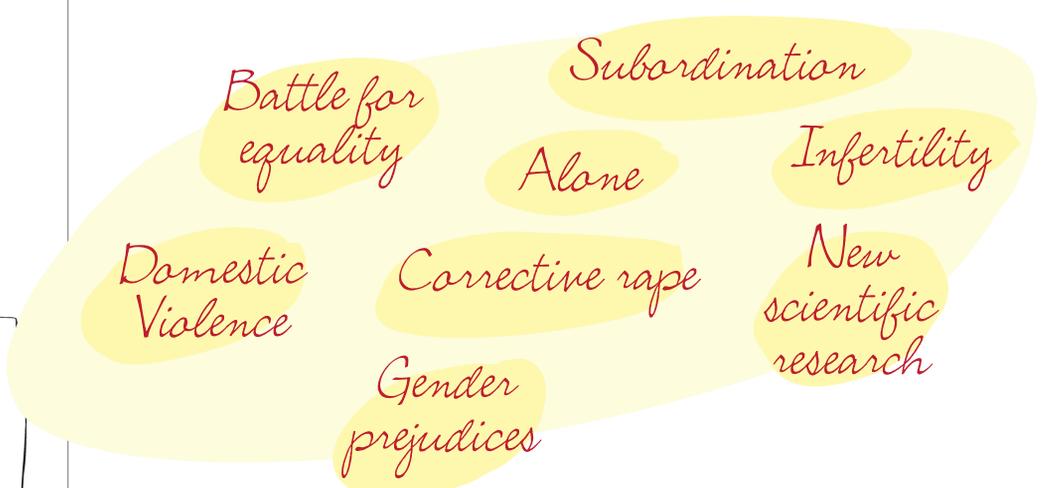
**GROUP QUESTION**

What do you think is the challenge of Genesis 1 to 3 for us living in the 21st century?



## 7. EXPLORE TODAY

*The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time*



## 8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

### Prayer

“Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.  
 Please allow God’s Word to become alive in us today.  
 Help us to be present in our world, fully created in Your Image.  
 Guide us to celebrate what you have created in us  
 through our sexuality.  
 Remind us that you are our Creator and Good Giver of life.  
 Free us from our fears and self hate  
 and help us to turn to full acceptance  
 of your creation of us and others.  
 Amen”

## 9. SHARE

How are you, now?  
 How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward on your journey with God focusing on integrating sexuality and spirituality.



## 11. AFFIRM



Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



## 12. CLOSE

### *Closing prayer*

“God bless us with celebrating you as Creator and Good Giver of life.  
Receive our gratitude for this time of togetherness.  
Guide us with your Holy Spirit.  
Help us to make true what we have heard.  
Remind us that faith needs concrete deeds.  
Open our hearts to give and receive Your Love.  
Amen”



## READ GENESIS

- Chapter 18: 16 - 33
- Chapter 19: 1 - 29
- Focus on: Genesis 19: 5

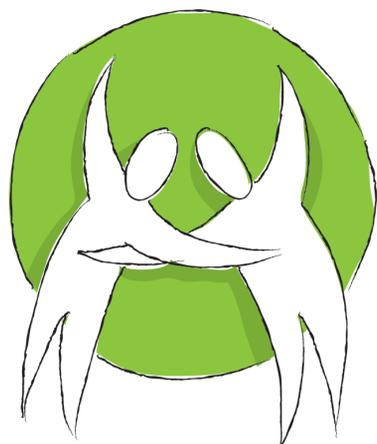
# GOD VALUES HOSPITALITY AND GENEROSITY



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of how much God values hospitality and generosity, especially in relating to others as visitors, strangers or even enemies.

The focus will be on God's actions to awaken the people of Sodom to their hostility and greed towards others, which often included rape, and to explore if God destroyed Sodom, to teach us to value hospitality and generosity towards visitors, strangers, and even our enemies.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of God and dealing with hostility, greed and even rape are invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's generous and hospitable presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open to appreciate

God's hospitality and generosity

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness to encounter

God and others.

Together we light our candles to affirm that God heals sexual wounds.

The Saviour loves us and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

In this light we move forward."



### 4. SHARE

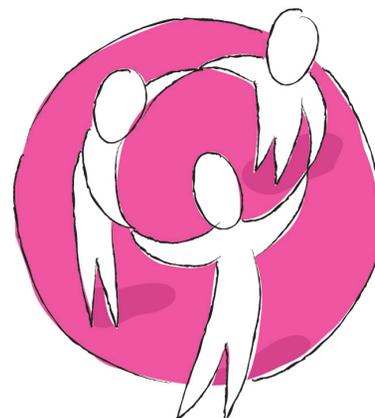


How are you?

What would you want us to know about you right now?

What challenges are part of your journey

with spirituality and sexuality today?



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

"Thank you God that you value

hospitality and generosity towards others

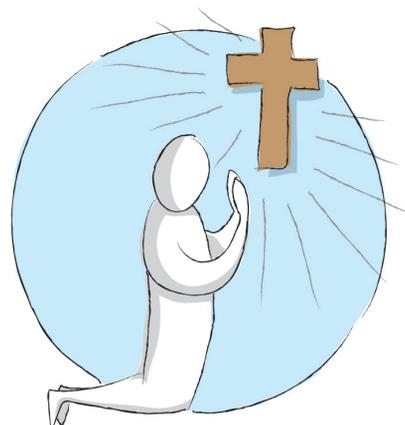
Help us to follow your example

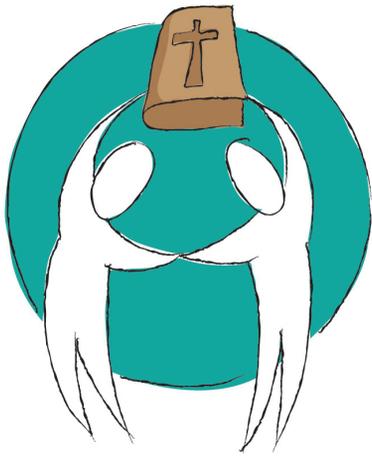
To generously welcome others into our hearts

To have our embodiment, our sexuality affirm the same values

Jesus Christ, help us to forgive hostility and greed

Amen"





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any "mistakes" and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

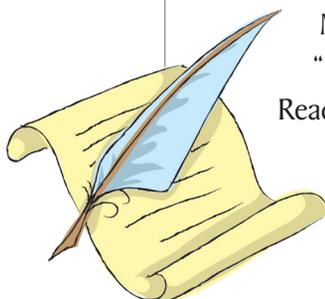
The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

## READ Genesis 19: 1 - 29

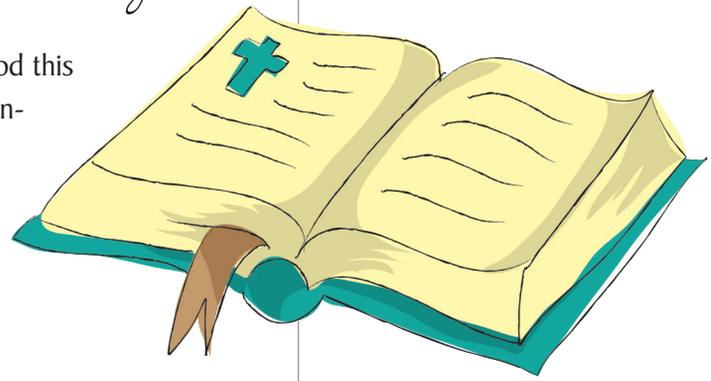
### Summary of a LITERAL reading



Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted this story as "The Word of God", without "mistake" and "unchangeable". Reading the story of Sodom it seems clear that all the men of Sodom wanted sex with the angels, Lot's visitors and that means all of them were homosexuals. God then destroyed Sodom because of homosexuality.

## Summary of a CONTEXTUAL reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood this story as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within its context, before conclusions are made.



### I. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

#### *HOW DID LOT END UP IN SODOM?*

Lot, accompanied by his uncle, Abraham, moved to Canaan to farm there. Famine broke out and forced Abraham and Lot, who owned stock (cattle and sheep) and many possessions, to move to Egypt and later to the southern part of Canaan. To solve a fight that broke out between their shepherds, Abraham suggested that he and Lot farm in different regions. Lot chose the Jordan region and put up his tents as far as Sodom. Abraham chose to farm at Mamre.

#### *WHO WERE LOT'S VISITORS*

The angels (men), *see Genesis 19: 1*, who had just visited Abraham and Sarah to give them the message of the promised birth of their son, Isaac, also came to visit Lot. In God's discussion with Abraham, *Genesis 18: 20 - 22*, it is clear that these angels were on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah with the task to investigate the matter of Sodom's sinfulness, the people's hostility and greed. Some Jewish scholars, Rabbi's, have found that the rich people living in Sodom did not want to share their wealth. They ill-treated visitors, strangers and enemies to force them to stay away from the Sodom region.

#### *HOSPITALITY RULES*

In the time of Lot there were strict rules that applied to hospitality. It was very important to treat visitors to your house in such a way that they did not become enemies. These hospitality rules required that you had to protect your visitors at all cost, even if it were at your own expense. Taking this into consideration Lot took an honourable and responsible action in protecting his visitors, when he offered his daughters to the men of Sodom for sex, *see also Judges 19*.

#### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Do you think that it is possible for all the men of any given town or city to be homosexual in their sexual orientation?
- If yes, please share more.

## GROUP QUESTIONS

- In our time can any kind of rape be justified?
- If no, share more.

### TYPICAL CANANITE BEHAVIOUR

In the time of Lot it was custom to prove one's rule and power over enemies by forcing them to submit to sexual deeds, this sometimes included rape. These violent deeds humiliated enemies and made it clear who was in control of the power.

### OTHER REFERENCES in the BIBLE

The sins of Sodom cannot only be connected to this planned sexual misdeed or gang rape in which all the men, young and old, participated.

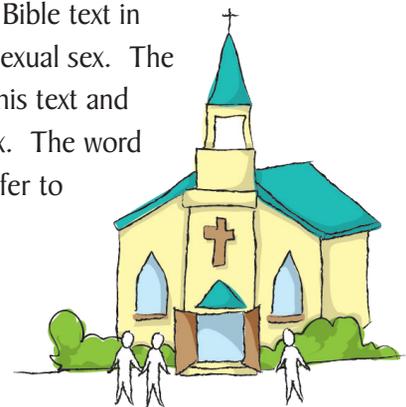
The Old Testament understands the sins of Sodom, for example a lack of justice, see *Isaiah 1: 10 and 3: 9*, as moral and ethical slackness and moral downfall overall, see *Jeremiah 23: 14* and as the ignorance of the needy, see *Ezekiel 16: 49*.

In the New Testament Jesus and Peter also refer to Sodom. Jesus judges a town because its people did not receive strangers, they were inhospitable towards them, see *Matthew 10: 14 - 15 and Luke 10: 12*. Peter also uses Sodom as example of what happens to the ungodly that know Christ but do not follow Him, instead they follow the corrupt desire of their sinful nature, their greed, see *2 Peter 2: 6 - 22*.



## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over centuries the church used the Bible text in the story of Sodom to judge homosexual sex. The word Sodomy has originated from this text and was used to refer to homosexual sex. The word Sodomites was used as a label to refer to homosexual men.



Then different translations started to appear as time went by and people could not read the Hebrew or understand translations using dated language, for example see Genesis 19: 5 in the following two translations:

*King James Bible  
Version*

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came into thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may **know** them.

*New International Bible  
Version*

They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can **have sex** with them."

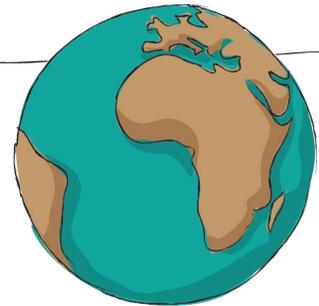
The bold words are different translations of the Hebrew word **YADA**, which is regularly used in the Old Testament with a sexual connotation, see also *Genesis 4: 1, 17, 25; Genesis 24: 16 and Judges 19*. In this text the sexual connotation of **YADA** is understood by some people as homosexual men who wanted to have homosexual sex with the visitors of Lot and by others, as men who wanted to gang rape the visitors of Lot.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

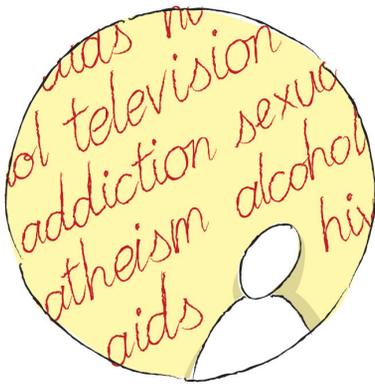
The focus of the story of Sodom is not on homosexuality as a sexual orientation. God destroyed Sodom because the people of Sodom lived immoral and unjust lives, misused their power and did not keep to the hospitality rules of the time. The story of Sodom possibly refers to heterosexual men who wanted to commit a sexual misdeed through gang rape to prove their power over Lot's visitors. The sins of these men of Sodom were emphasized through this planned gang rape, which showed their hostility, how unjust they were and how far they had fallen into immorality. Sodom was destroyed because the men showed no hospitality towards the visitors to their region. Today God still asks us to show hospitality and generosity to others as a sign of respect for what God values. It is clear that the church carried prejudices and fear of homosexuality into the story of Sodom. The church read the story of Sodom as if it was written specifically about homosexuality and as if Sodom was destroyed because God is against homosexuality. We need to become aware of our prejudices as it impacts our way of reading and understanding the Bible. Sodom was destroyed because of hostile, greedy and sexually violent men, who used gang rape, to humiliate the visitors of Lot and did not listen to God's messengers to change their ways.

#### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which sexual connotation would you make? And why?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit is telling the church through this story today?

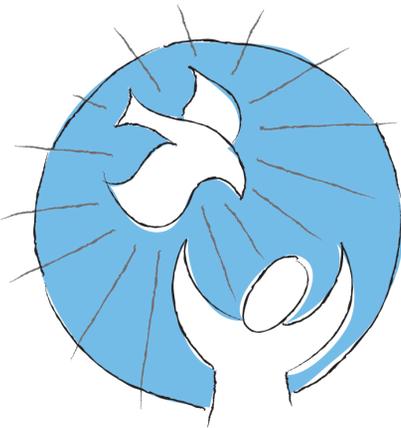


*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*



### GROUP QUESTION

What do you think is the challenge of Genesis 19: 5 for us living in the 21st century?



## 7. EXPLORE TODAY

*The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time*



## 8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

### Prayer

"Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.  
Please allow God's Word to become alive in us today.  
Help us to value what God values through hospitality and generosity  
Guide us to not abuse or exploit others,  
but be hospitable and generous in our connecting with each other  
Free us to forgive and heal all sexual wounds  
Amen"

## 9. SHARE

How are you, now?  
How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward, on your journey with God focusing on integrating sexuality and spirituality.



## 11. AFFIRM



Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



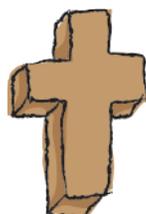
## 12. CLOSE

### Closing prayer

Psalm 23:5 - 6 (CEV)

- <sup>5</sup> You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch.  
You honor me as your guest,  
and you fill my cup until it overflows.
- <sup>6</sup> Your kindness and love will always be with me  
each day of my life,  
and I will live forever in your house, LORD.

Amen



## READ LEVITICUS

- Chapter 18
- Chapter 20
- Focus on: Leviticus 18: 22 and Leviticus 20: 13

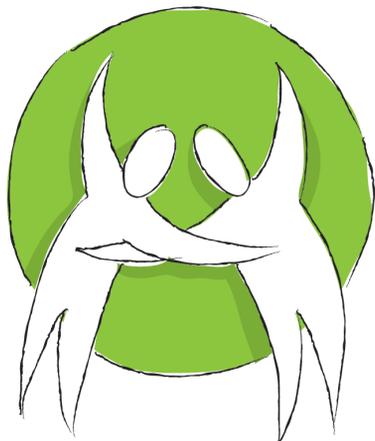
# FOLLOWING GOD'S HOLINESS



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of God's holiness.

The focus will be on the Holiness Laws of Leviticus that was applicable to Israel and how expressions of our sexuality still needs to embrace holiness and respect today. In these texts we touch sexuality in general and in particular, homosexuality.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of God's holiness and how it impacts our sexuality invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people  
I light a candle to affirm this space as open to appreciate all people  
I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to encounter God as Holy  
Together we light our candles to affirm that through God,  
we become holy  
The Saviour loves us and the Holy Spirit sustains us  
In this light we move forward"



### 4. SHARE



How are you?  
What would you want us to know about you  
right now?  
What challenges are part of your journey  
with spirituality and sexuality today?

### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

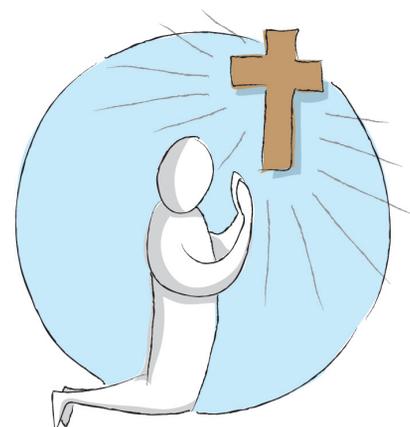
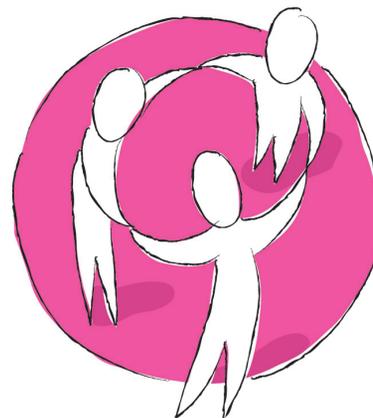
2 Timothy 1: 9 – 10 (CEV)

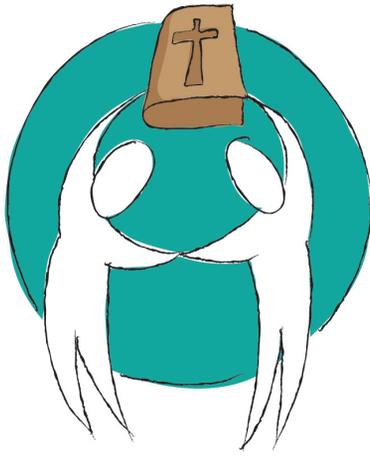
<sup>9</sup> God saved us and chose us to be His holy people.  
We did nothing to deserve this,  
but God planned it because He is so kind.  
Even before time began God planned for Christ Jesus  
to show kindness to us.

<sup>10</sup> Now Christ Jesus has come to show us the kindness of God.  
Christ our Saviour defeated death and brought us the good news.  
It shines like a light and offers life that never ends.



Amen





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

#### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any "mistakes" and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

#### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

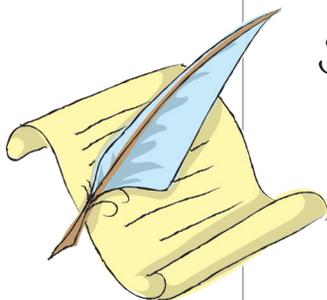
God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

READ *Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13*



### *Summary of a LITERAL reading*

Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted these texts as "The Word of God", without "mistake" and "unchangeable".

If we apply these texts in a literal way, it seems clear that homosexuality is forbidden.

## Summary of a *CONTEXTUAL* reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood these texts as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within their contexts, before conclusions are made.



### I. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

#### *LEVITICUS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO MAIN PARTS*

1) Chapters 1 - 16 that deals with the role of priests in public worship or religious practices.

*AND*

2) Chapters 17 - 27 that deals with prescriptions or laws for holiness and purity for the people that follow God.

#### *THE PRESCRIPTIVE HOLINESS LAWS*

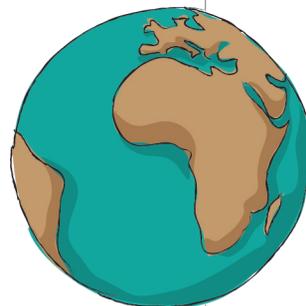
##### *PROMOTED TWO THINGS:*

● That Israel would lead a holy and pure life to be able to enter into the presence of God. A pure person was allowed to come before God to take part in public worship, religious occasions and community life. An impure person was not allowed to come before God or enter into God's presence, to take part in public worship, religious occasions or community life. The Holiness Laws prescribed that an impure person had to carry out a prescribed purity action, go through a time of purification and make a prescribed sacrifice to become pure again.

● That Israel's behaviour and life would show that they are the chosen people of God, in contrast with the other heathen nations.

#### *ISRAEL*

The Israelites were surrounded by Egyptian, Hittite and Canaanite nations that served foreign gods through all sorts of sexual practises in fertility rituals, for example homosexual sex, sex with animals, the offering of children to the gods, marriages between half brothers and sisters, etc. Participation in the serving of foreign gods brought about impurity for Israel. What is interesting is that the Leviticus prescriptions do not mention, or are applicable, to women. The reason for this might be that with sexual intercourse between women no seed are spilled, which would bring about impurity.





## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over time the church has interpreted the Holiness Laws of Leviticus as relevant for Israel in their situation and culture, where some Israelites served foreign gods and became involved with temple prostitution.

Then different translation started to appear as time went by and people could not read the Hebrew or understand translations using dated language, for example see Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13 in these two translations:

Leviticus 18: 22

*King James Bible  
Version*

Thou shalt not lie with man-  
kind, as with womenkind:  
It is **abomination**.

*New International Bible  
Version*

Do not lie with a man as one lies  
with a woman; that is **detestable**.

Leviticus 20: 13

*King James Bible  
Version*

If a man also lie with mankind,  
as he lieth with a woman, both  
of them have committed an  
**abomination**: they shall surely  
be put to death; their blood  
shall be upon them.

*New International Bible  
Version*

If a man lies with a man as one lies  
with a woman, both of them have  
done what is **detestable**. They  
must be put to death; their blood  
will be on their own heads.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Is there a difference in meaning for what is described as abomination and detestable if the context is temple prostitution and serving foreign gods?
- If yes, share more.

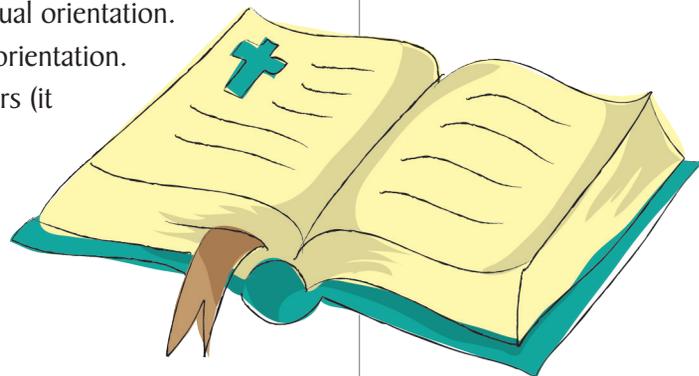
The bold words are different translations of the Hebrew word **TO' EVAH**, which means the opposite of purity. **TO' EVAH** is used six times in Leviticus, see *Leviticus 18: 22, 26, 27, 29, 30 and 20: 13* for immoral sexual behaviour of the heathen nations around Israel.

**TO' EVAH** is also used in Ezekiel for inappropriate sexual behaviour, see *Ezekiel 22: 11 and 33: 26* and detestable things, see *Ezekiel 18:12, 13 and 24*. **TO' EVAH** is also used in *Deuteronomy 23: 17 - 19* and *Proverbs 23: 27* where it is translated as the word used for the behaviour that dishonours the holiness and honour of God, like temple prostitution.

Today our situation and context is different from Israel's and the church does not prescribe and follow the Holiness Laws anymore, for example children are not killed that swear at their parents, the prohibitions of certain foods is not enforced, we are allowed to wear clothes made out of different materials, etc. Despite all this the church does not see the prohibition on male homosexual sex as bound to Israel's situation and culture. In the enforcement of this prohibition the church is selective and it does not enforce the stoning of both men involved in homosexual sex as is required by Leviticus 20: 13. It seems apparent that the church engages with the Holiness Laws of Leviticus out of context where it addresses sexual orientation.

Today research teaches us more about sexual orientation.

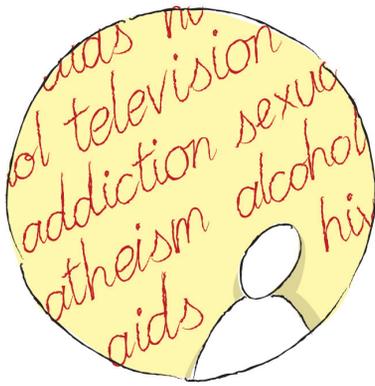
We have learned that sexual orientation is diverse (it varies from person to person), it is placed on a continuum (homosexuality on one side, heterosexuality on the other side and bisexuality in the middle) and is complex.



### 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

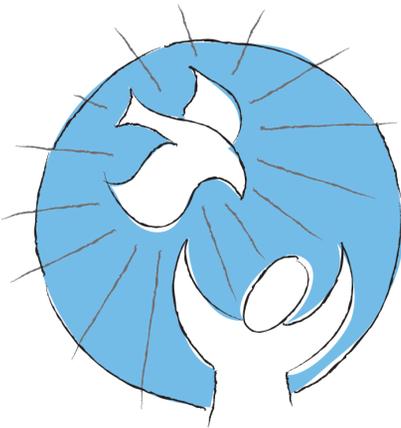
It is important to remember that the Holiness Laws of Leviticus are culture bound and apply to a particular context. These laws were given to Israel to separate them from the surrounding nations who were serving foreign gods and where temple prostitution were practised. Today we do not need to keep these laws to be pure and enter the presence of God. We have access to God through the salvation through Jesus Christ, the crucifixion and resurrection. The blood of Christ has made us pure. Through Jesus Christ, God is the God for all people and not only Israel. God still asks us to live holy and pure lives, so that people will see the God that we serve is holy and pure. Therefore we are called to live as Jesus asks: To love God above all in our lives and love fellow human beings as we love ourselves. The challenge is to be holy and responsible with sex out of respect for God, others and ourselves.

*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*



**GROUP QUESTION**

What do you think is the challenge of Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13 for us living in the 21st century?



7. EXPLORE TODAY

The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time



8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer

“Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.  
 Please allow God’s Word to become alive in us today.  
 Help and guide us to express our sexuality in a responsible way.  
 Remind us to be respectful to God, others and ourselves.  
 And free us to live with our sexuality as an expression of holiness to  
 the honour of God.”  
 Amen

9. SHARE

How are you, now?  
 How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward, on your journey with God focusing on integrating sexuality and spirituality.



## 11. AFFIRM



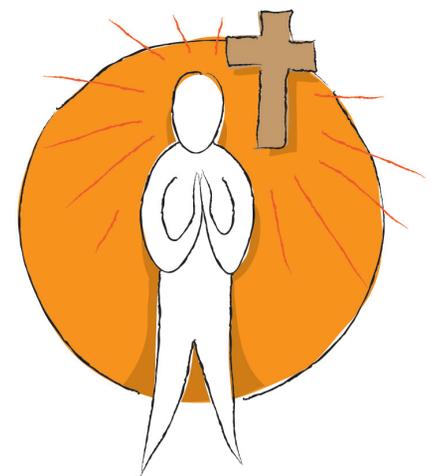
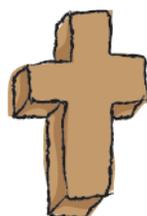
Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



## 12. CLOSE

### *Closing prayer*

"God, guide us to love and respect our bodies  
And the bodies of others  
Make us holy through your Holy Spirit  
Thank you for your love through Jesus Christ  
Amen"



## READ ROMANS

- Chapter 1: 18 - 32
- Chapter 3: 9 - 31
- Focus on: Romans 1: 26 - 27

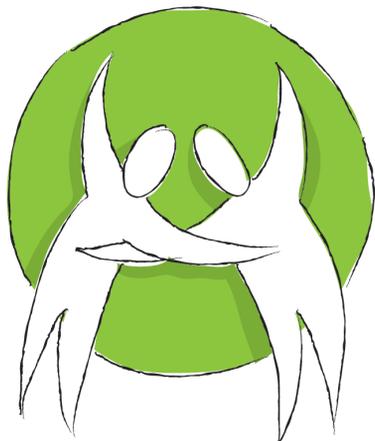
# GOD'S GRACE TOUCHING SEXUALITY



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of God and the gift of sexuality.

The focus will be on God's grace as described in the Book of Romans and how this grace touches sexuality in general and in particular, homosexuality.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of God and sexuality invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open to appreciate diversity.

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to encounter God as full of Grace.

Together we light our candles to affirm that God created us.

The Saviour loves us and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

In this light we move forward."



### 4. SHARE



How are you?

What would you want us to know about you  
right now?

What challenges are part of your journey  
with spirituality and sexuality today?



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

"Thank you for your grace, God.

Your grace does for us and in us what we can never do ourselves.

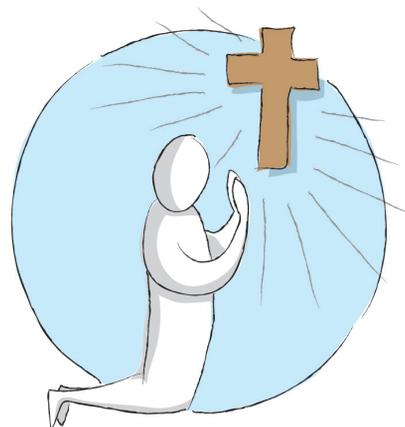
Your grace reveals to us how much you love us.

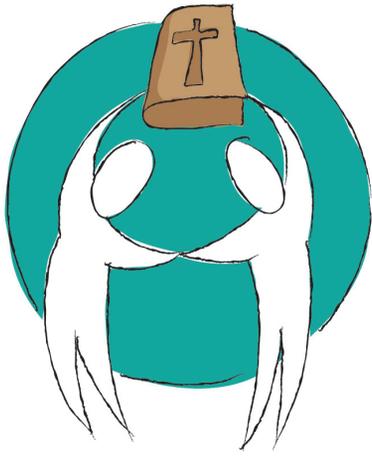
Your grace reaches out to us through Jesus Christ  
to free us from our sins.

Your grace makes reconciliation with you possible.

God help us through faith to accept  
and receive your gift of grace in Christ.

Amen"





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

#### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any "mistakes" and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

#### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

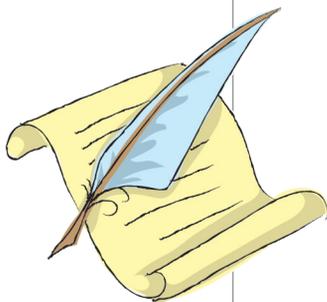
What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

### READ Romans 1:26-27

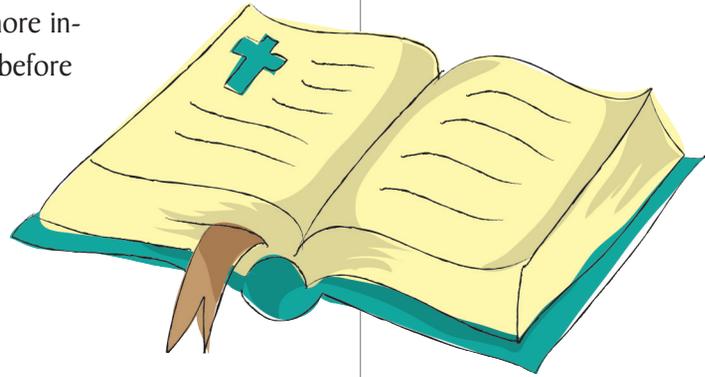
#### *Summary of a LITERAL reading*

Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted these texts as "The Word of God", without "mistake" and "unchangeable". It then seems clear that God gave these men and women in Romans up to dishonourable passions, evil desires, vile affections; to not want sex in a "natural" way, but in an "unnatural" way; women with women and men with men, as punishment for their foolish deeds. If we apply these texts in a literal way, homosexuality is understood to be sinful, wrong, evil and vile.



## Summary of a CONTEXTUAL reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood these texts as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within their contexts, before conclusions are made.

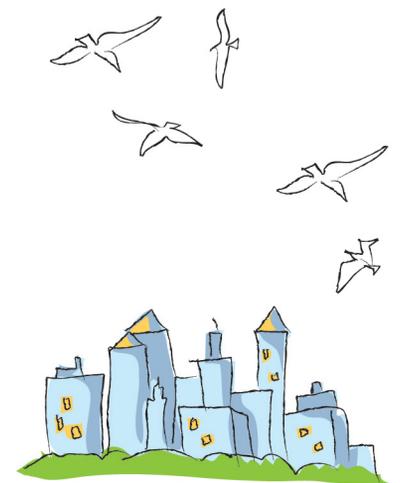


### I. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

In Romans I, it is important to know that Paul has two ways of thinking about people, those that believe in Christ and those that do not. The pagan world is without Christ, because they do not want to honour and serve the true God (1:20-21). For Paul this equals rebellion against God that leads to total decline of human life (1:24-31) and death (1:32).

Paul wrote this letter in the city Corinth that was known as an immoral city where false sexual practises were widespread, and a variety of idols and foreign gods were served. During these foreign god services, sexual exploitation was widely practised and temple prostitutes, both men and women, were used. There was also a practise, called pederasty, whereby an older man, usually a prominent political figure, would “take pity” on a boy, age 12 to 16, to “educate” such a boy to become an ideal Greek citizen, this included sexual contact.

In Romans I, Paul’s concern is for the purity of Christ’s followers from Gentile background. He wants them to avoid the sexual practices of Gentiles who do not want to know God, who participate in serving foreign gods and who uses people sexually. For Paul serving foreign gods inevitably leads to religious and moral decline of which homosexual sex became an example of resistance to accepting God’s grace and the refusal to believe in Christ.



#### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Do you think that a homosexual orientation equals rebellion against God?
- Is pederasty still happening today?



### *PAUL AS THE WRITER*

Paul wrote the letter to the congregation in Rome, while he stayed in Corinth, a harbour city for the winter. He was probably in Corinth after his first big mission experience. During this time Paul was challenged by fierce critics from the congregations in Jerusalem who were suspicious of him because he did not keep to the rules of circumcision as a pre-requisite for men to become Christians. Paul's critics wanted to keep the rules from the Jewish faith as part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul planned to go and meet the congregations in Jerusalem to defend his understanding of the Gospel, of God's gift of grace through Christ that did not have rules like circumcision as a pre-requisite for faith. He might have felt the need to spell out and write down the heart of what he understood and preached about the Gospel with this letter to the congregation in Rome, as a way of preparing himself for the planned meeting in Jerusalem.

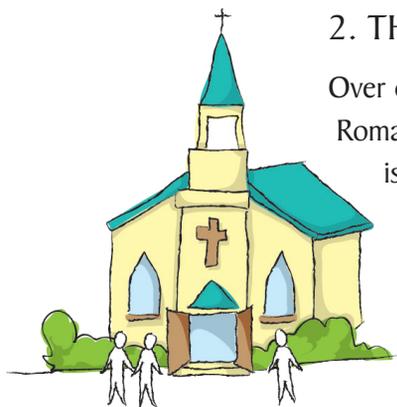
### *PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL MOTIVE*

We need to understand Paul's message in this letter. It is that God saves all people who have faith, regardless of being Jew or Gentile (1:16). The grace of Jesus Christ is at the heart of what Paul understands the Gospel to be and faith is the way to accept God's gift of grace. Paul reminds his readers that all people have sinned and fall short of God's glory (3:23). Everyone has failed to do what God requires; Jews, in breaking the Law of Moses, and Gentiles, in refusing to believe in God who has spoken to them in many different ways (1:18-3:20). Therefore all are in need of God's gracious and unearned justification. God gives Jesus Christ as Saviour to justify and reconcile humanity with God.



## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over centuries the church made the assumption from these Roman texts that heterosexuality is "natural" and homosexuality is "unnatural". The church preached only heterosexuality as God's intent for human sexuality, man and woman, and judged homosexuality. Marriage as a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman became the ultimate will of God. Since the mid-20th century, different interpretations



of these texts regarding human sexuality began to surface. Some people made a distinction between homosexuality as a sexual orientation and homosexual sex, some kept to “love the sinner, hate the sin” in dealing with homosexual people and some accepted homosexuality as part of the God-given gift of human sexuality. In his booklet: *The Bible and Homosexuality – What is the Spirit telling the church?* Bishop David Russell emphasises that the church needs to move towards inclusion of diversity.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

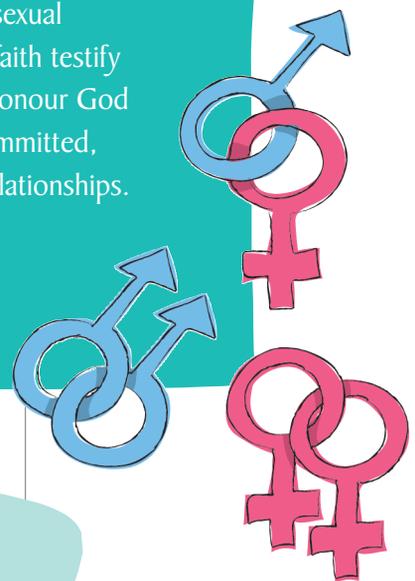
The texts become the “The Word of God” as we study the different contexts of Paul, of his readers, of the church history and of ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We take to heart Paul’s message that all of us need God’s grace to be justified and reconciled with God, ourselves and others. Through our faith we accept God’s grace and live out of gratitude, regardless of being Jew or Gentile, heterosexual or homosexual. Paul’s understanding of homosexual sex was in a situation of rebellion against God and serving foreign gods. He did not know or consider homosexual people that did not exploit anyone, knew God, served God and were in committed relationships. Such identities were not readily available options in the first century BC. As believers we are called to live, with our sexuality, in a way that makes it clear that we live with Christ, expressing love and not serving ourselves or foreign gods.

In answer to the question; “Does a homosexual orientation equals rebellion against God?” Of course not! Today we know more about homosexuality. We do not automatically associate it with serving foreign gods or rebellion against God. We have family and friends who are homosexual and give testimony of a living relationship with God in which God blesses them and their sexual relationship of love and trust with life-partners.

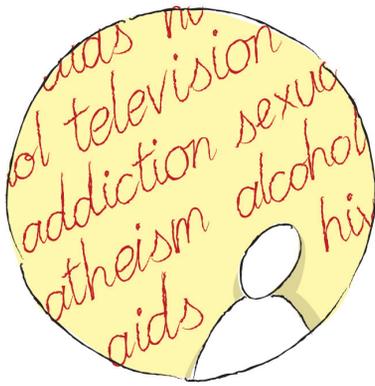
#### GROUP QUESTIONS

- What in your view is “unnatural” sexual intercourse?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit is telling the church today on homosexuality?

Today heterosexual and homosexual people of faith testify that they honour God in their committed, intimate relationships.

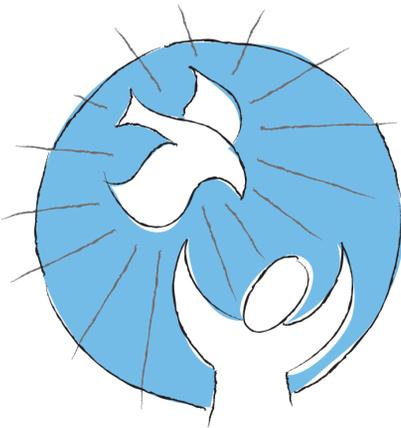


*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*



**GROUP QUESTION**

What do you think is the challenge of Romans 1:26-27 for us living in the 21st century?



7. EXPLORE TODAY

The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time



8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer

“Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.

Please allow God’s Word to become alive in us today.

Help us to be present in our world, with its challenges and suffering.

Guide us to claim courage to open up to diversity and change.

Remind us that your grace reaches out to us through Jesus Christ.

And free us from our fears and reluctance to include the “other”.

Amen”

9. SHARE

How are you, now?

How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

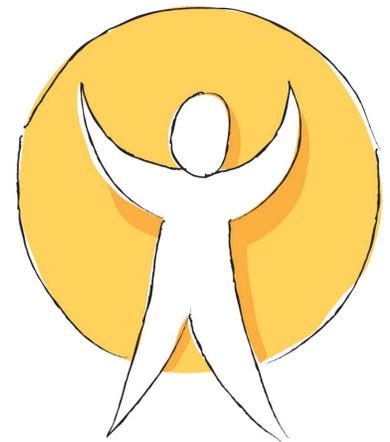
Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward.



## 11. AFFIRM



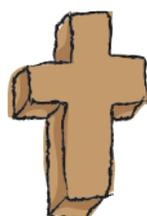
Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



## 12. CLOSE

### *Closing prayer*

“God bless us with your grace.  
Receive our gratitude for this time of togetherness.  
Guide us with your Holy Spirit.  
Help us to make true what we have heard.  
Remind us that faith needs concrete deeds.  
Open us up to give and receive.  
Amen”



## READ CORINTHIANS

- Chapter 3
- Chapter 4
- Chapter 5
- Focus on:  
1 Corinthians 6: 9 - 10

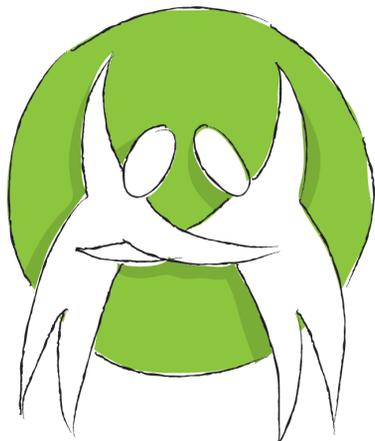
# THE CHALLENGE OF LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of the challenges of daily living as a Christian.

The focus will be on what Paul saw as challenges for the Christians of his time as described in the first book of Corinthians and how this relates to sexuality in general and in particular, homosexuality.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of the challenges of being a Christian and your sexuality invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open to learn more  
about following Jesus Christ

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to live with God and others.

Together we light our candles to affirm that we are challenged.

Yet, our Saviour made the way and the Holy Spirit guides us  
to face our challenges.

In this light we move forward."



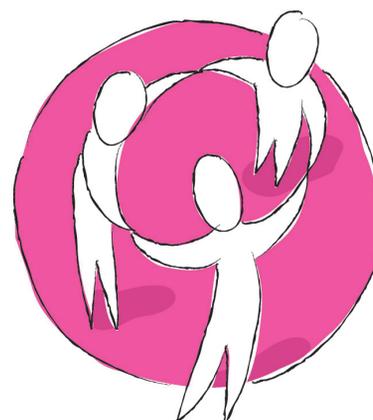
### 4. SHARE



How are you?

What would you want us to know about you  
right now?

What challenges are part of your journey  
with spirituality and sexuality today??



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

"Thank you God that through Jesus Christ you wash away our sins

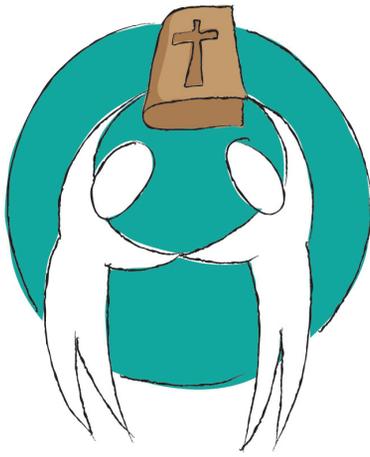
Give us strength to live as followers of Jesus Christ

Guide us to live moral lives that witness your grace  
and love present in us through faith

Help us to stop judgements and encourage behaviour  
that reflects your Kingdom, especially in our sexual expressions

Amen"





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any "mistakes" and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

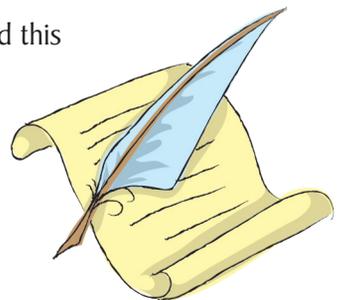
### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

READ | *1 Corinthians 6: 9 - 10*

### *Summary of a LITERAL reading*

Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted this text as "The Word of God", without "mistake" and "unchangeable". If we apply this text in a literal way, homosexuality is condemned.



## Summary of a *CONTEXTUAL* reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood these texts as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within their contexts, before conclusions are made.



### I. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

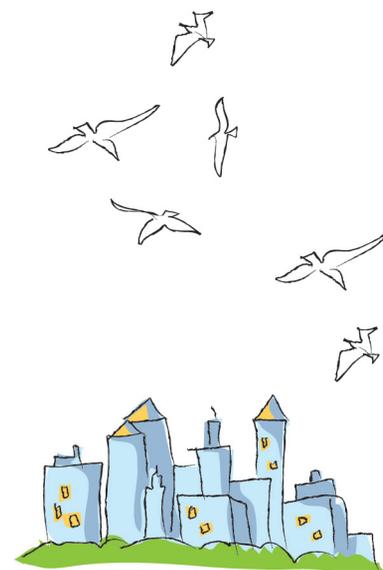
#### *PAUL AS THE WRITER OF THIS LETTER*

From the seaport-town of Ephesus, Paul writes this letter to the congregation in Corinth, which he founded. Ephesus and Corinth were port cities that were in regular contact with each other. News was sent and received by ship. Paul had lived in Ephesus for two years. It is here where he received a letter from the congregation in Corinth in which they asked for his advice in regard to a variety of problems in the new congregation. Paul writes back to the congregation and gives them advice. He also writes the things that he had heard about them, which he was concerned about and that he did not agree with.

#### *WHAT WAS HAPPENING*

##### *IN THE CONGREGATION OF CORINTH?*

The congregation of Corinth was about two to three years old and still busy establishing how to live as Christians. Before they became Christians, they lived as Greeks and Romans that took part in serving foreign gods, immorality, temple prostitution and regular fights in court, or they lived as Jews who strictly followed their religious laws. Many of the Christians still had family members that lived in the old ways. This made it difficult to determine how to live as Christians. The congregation in Corinth became divided into different groups in the way they thought about how a Christian should live, according to the leader they followed. What Christians may and may not do, was misunderstood and caused fights in the congregation, arrogance and superiority grew within the congregation.



If we read through 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 Paul highlights the following misunderstandings and touches on sexual immorality in the congregation.

- *First misunderstanding* was about the upholding of the church's discipline.
- *Second misunderstanding* was about congregation members that sought verdicts from heathen judges to resolve fights between themselves.
- *Third misunderstanding* was about members of the congregation that practiced and explained away sexual immorality.

#### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Do you think that we are products of our time?
- What prejudice do you have?

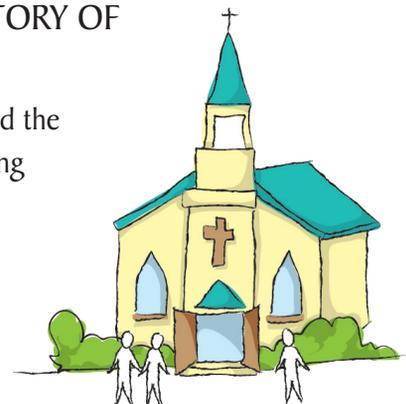
#### PAUL'S USE OF LISTS

The use of lists of sins was known in the time of Paul and there were even standard formats for these lists. With these lists the writers did not attempt to write down a complete list of sins, but to make an impression on the person that reads or hears the list. The longer the list, the more impressed the people. Paul uses his list of sins to convince the members of the congregation of Corinth that if they keep making themselves guilty of these types of sins, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. Members of the congregation must live as Christians, different from the way they used to in the past before they knew Christ.

Paul was, like most of us, a product of his time. He might have had prejudice against homosexuality based on his perceptions and stereotyping.

## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over time the church has interpreted the list of sins that Paul wrote as equating homosexuality with immorality.



Then different translation started to appear as time went by and people could not read the Greek or understand translations using dated language, for example see 1 Corinthians 6: 9 – 10 in these two translations:



<i>King James Bible Version</i>	<i>New International Bible Version</i>
<p>No ye not that thee unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor <b>effeminate</b>, nor <b>abusers of themselves with mankind</b>, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists, shall inherit the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor <b>male prostitutes</b> nor <b>homosexual offenders</b> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.</p>

The bold words are different translations of two Greek words, **MALAKOI** and **ARSENOKOITAI**, translated as effeminate or male prostitutes and abusers of themselves with mankind or homosexual offenders.

The reason for the different translations is probably because it is difficult to understand what Paul actually meant with the words when he wrote them. Paul assumed that the people of his time knew exactly to which sins he referred. In the time of Paul there were many male prostitutes that were involved as part of rituals in serving foreign gods in Corinth.

There was a practise, called pederasty, where an older man “took pity on” a younger boy, which included sexual deeds, in order to “educate” him to become a good Greek citizen. In this practise the boys wore soft clothes to make themselves more attractive to be chosen by the older men. **MALAKOI** then refers to the wearing of soft clothes and **ARSENOKOITAI** refers to the older man that was the more active partner in the sexual deed.

*To Paul the heart of the matter is;*

“Some of you used to be like that. But now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God’s Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.”  
1 Corinthians 6:11 (CEV)

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- If you were to write a list of sins that highlights unrighteousness and immorality, what would you include on your list?
- Do you think some sins are bigger than others, please explain your answer?



The church made the assumption from this list of sins and the translations that used the term homosexuality, that homosexuality is one of the sins that caused unrighteousness. For this reason homosexual people were judged and told that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God if they remain homosexual.



Today there are different opinions in the church about what sins actually are listed that were translated with homosexuality. Some scholars are convinced that the translation refers to prostitution, specific practices like pederasty and sexual pervers, and that it does not refer to homosexuality as sexual orientation, or to a loving committed partnership. It is interesting that on this list of sins the church highlights and judges some sins more than others. This gives the impression of bigger and smaller sins and that homosexuality is a bigger sin than greed, lying, betrayal, adultery, stealing, etc. also mentioned on the list.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

Today we know more about homosexuality and we do not automatically relate it to prostitution, the serving of foreign gods, sexual perversion or homosexual perverted acts. Many of the sins that Paul lists like greed, lying, betrayal, adultery, mischief-making, speaking ill, drunkenness, stealing, we encounter daily. These sins are not judged as strongly as the case of homosexuality, where a hard, negative, rejecting attitude still persists in faith communities. The reasons for this fear of homosexuality, also called homophobia, in communities can be credited to the taboos of speaking about sexuality and sex, prejudice, the lack of understanding and information to break down the stereotypes and labels.

## IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

Paul wanted to advise the congregation about how to live as Christians and not only on the sins listed or the correct translation of the list of sins.

He wanted to highlight that Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, wash away our sins, make us holy and give us strength to live out of love on a daily basis and in a practical way, also through our sexuality.

Unrighteousness remains unrighteousness. Lying, betrayal, greediness, sexual perversity or whatever you do when you do not rely on God, but on yourself.

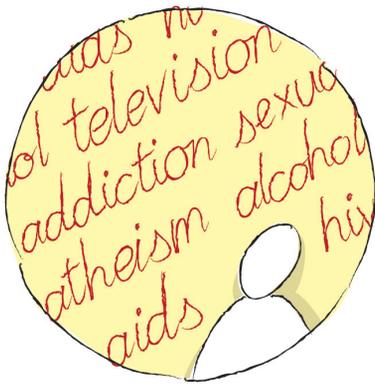
Unrighteousness remains unrighteousness regardless of a person's sexual orientation. When a person is selfish in the way they use their sexuality, to the detriment of someone else, they are not acting in a Christian way.

We are called to honour God with our sexuality, with our bodies and to live out the love of Christ.



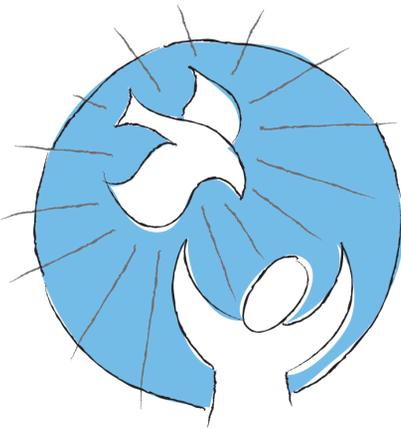
*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*





**GROUP QUESTION**

What do you think is the challenge of 1 Corinthians 6: 9 – 10 for us living in the 21st century?



## 7. EXPLORE TODAY

*The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time*



## 8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

### Prayer

“Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.

Please allow God’s Word to become alive in us today.

Help us to be present in our world, fully created in Your Image.

Guide us to celebrate what you have created in us through our sexuality.

Remind us that you are our Creator and Good Giver of life.

And free us from our fears and self hate to turn to full acceptance of your creation of us and others.

Amen”

## 9. SHARE

How are you, now?

How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



10. REFLECT on  
SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward.



11. AFFIRM

Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



12. CLOSE

*Closing prayer*

“God thank you.  
Through Jesus Christ you made us holy and acceptable to you.  
Receive our gratitude.  
Guide us, Holy Spirit.  
Help us.  
Remind us.  
Open us.  
Amen”



## READ 1 TIMOTHY

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2: 1 - 7
- Focus on: 1 Timothy 1: 10

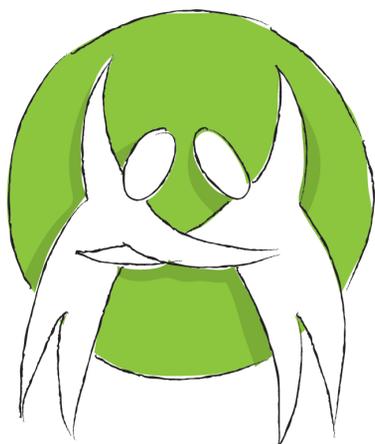
# GUIDANCE FOR WORKING IN GOD'S KINGDOM



## 1. INVITE

You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of the guidance Paul gave to Timothy and how that can apply to us.

The focus will be on Paul's understanding of false preachers and doctrine and what Timothy needed to do to counteract the impact of it and how this relates to sexuality in general and in particular, homosexuality.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of Paul's letter to Timothy and sexuality invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open to appreciate  
the guidance from Paul's letter to Timothy.

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to encounter God and others.

Together we light our candles to affirm that God speaks  
through the Bible.

The Saviour loves us and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

In this light we move forward."



### 4. SHARE



How are you?

What would you want us to know about you  
right now?

What challenges are part of your journey  
with God as your Creator and your sexuality today?



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

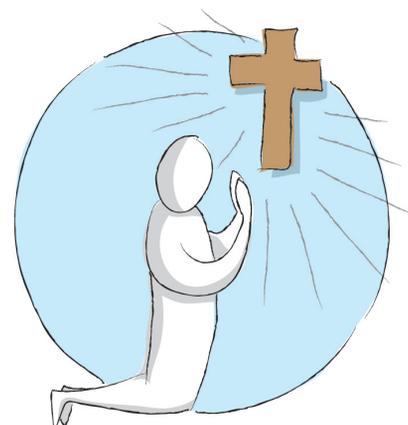
"God be kind and merciful to us

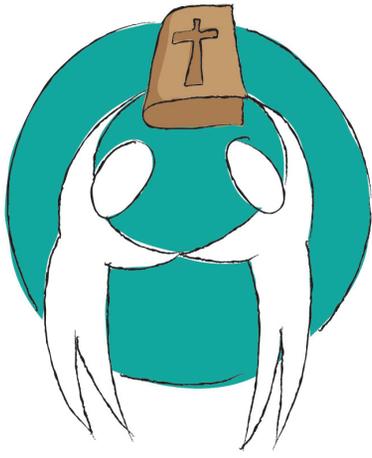
Bless us with peace as we journey with Paul and Timothy

Help us through the Holy Spirit to trust Your Word in this Letter

And relate its message to our sexuality

Amen"





## 6. EXPLORE your way of READING the BIBLE

### *If you read the Bible LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is clear, relevant and universally applicable to be obeyed word for word forever.

God wrote the Bible without any "mistakes" and what is written may not be changed because God is unchanged for all time.

### *If you read the Bible CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

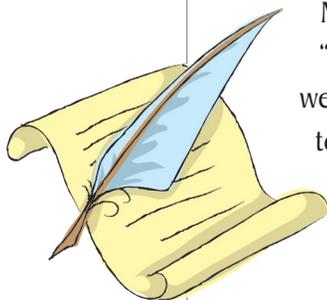
The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

READ | Timothy 1: 10

### Summary of a LITERAL reading



Many biblical scholars over time have interpreted this text as "The Word of God", without "mistake" and "unchangeable". If we apply these texts in a literal way, homosexuality is understood to be unnatural, sinful and against God's intention for sexuality, which is man and woman, procreating. From the list of sinners, it then seems right to judge homosexual people as sinners that violate the law and live unholy lives.

## Summary of a *CONTEXTUAL* reading

Some biblical scholars interpreted and understood these texts as “The Word of God” that needed more in-depth understanding within their contexts, before conclusions are made.



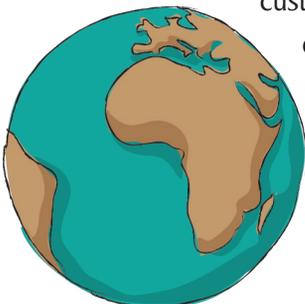
### I. BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

#### *WHO WROTE THIS LETTER?*

We meet Paul again. We previously encountered him in Romans as he wrote what he understood to be the heart of the gospel, and thereafter in Corinthians, as the founder of the congregation of Corinth, guiding this congregation how to live as Christians. It is uncertain if Paul himself wrote 1 Timothy or if a follower of Paul compiled this letter after his death from a number of pieces of letters that Paul had written. Whoever wrote this letter, wrote the letter in the name of Paul so that it would be taken seriously by the readers. We want to read the letter as if Paul was the writer because we want to understand the letter as it was intended to be understood.

#### *PAUL AND TIMOTHY*

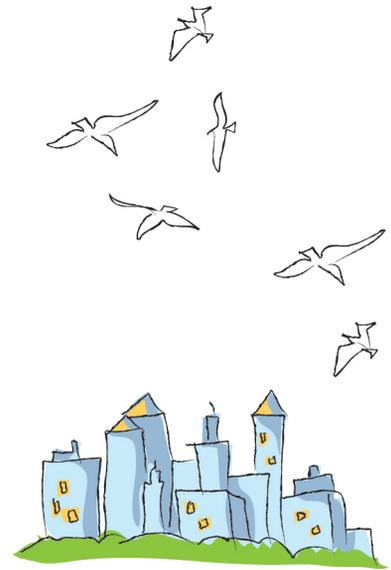
Paul experienced a difficult time and loneliness. Co-workers disappointed him or differed so much from him that they did not want to work with him any more on his missionary travels. During this difficult time Paul met Timothy, a young man of about 20 years old, in the city of Listra. Timothy became one of Paul's most loved co-workers. He was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother and was converted to Christianity by Paul during Paul's first missionary travels. Timothy even let himself be circumcised, as the Jewish custom required for the Jews. Paul laid hands on Timothy to affirm and bless him as a co-worker. He then asked Timothy to stay behind in the congregation of Ephesus to sort out a difficult situation in the congregation.



## GROUP QUESTIONS

- Can you think of any examples of false doctrine that we follow today? If yes, share more.
- Can you think of any example of being a false preacher yourself in regard to homosexuality? Share any lessons learned.

Paul writes from Macedonia to encourage Timothy and to give him instructions on how to conduct himself as pastor of the congregation of Ephesus. Paul also gives Timothy advice on how to manage the congregation, to oppose false doctrine and how to protect and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.



### *EPHESUS*

Ephesus was an important port-city and the main place of several heathen religions, amongst other the worshipping of the emperor. The congregation in Ephesus was surrounded by heathen religions and because of that some Christians started preaching false doctrine. These false preachers are not specifically mentioned by name, but Paul wanted to encourage Timothy with his letter to take a strong stance against these false preachers in the congregation. Although Timothy was young, he had to command them with strictness and authority to put a stop to their false doctrine.

## REMEMBER;

In the congregation of Ephesus there is confusion and fighting about false doctrine that is preached by some in the congregation. Paul wants to help Timothy to put a stop to these false preachers and their false doctrines:

*What was the false doctrine that Timothy had to put a stop to?*

- Twisted opinions and speculations about the family lineage of the Old Testament (who amongst them were the most important in the congregation).
- The hanging on to the Law of Moses, as the Jews understood, practiced and kept the law (by keeping the law they tried to save themselves).

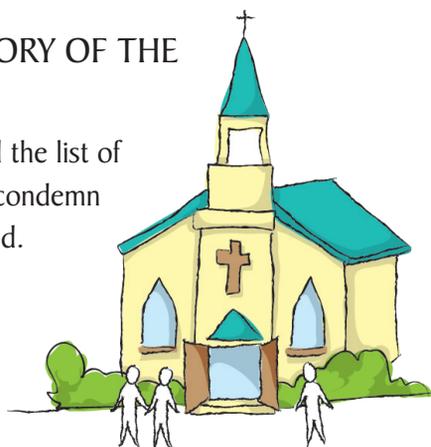
*Examples of false doctrines:*

- The way to the truth is a "special knowledge" to which only certain people in the congregation have access.
- To withhold any expression of your sexuality, called asceticism as an earning and a proof of your holiness.



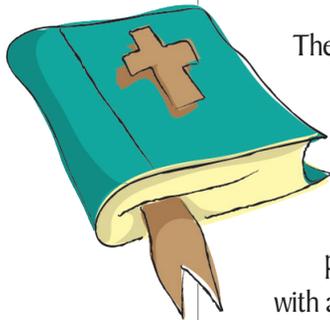
## 2. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Over time the church has interpreted the list of sinners to include homosexuals and condemn them, especially given the Law of God.



Then different translations started to appear as time went by and people could not read the Greek or understand translations using dated language, for example see 1 Timothy 1: 10 in these two translations:

<i>King James Bible Version</i>	<i>New International Bible Version</i>
For whoremongers, <b>for them that defile them-selves with mankind</b> , for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.	For adulterers and <b>perverts</b> , for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.

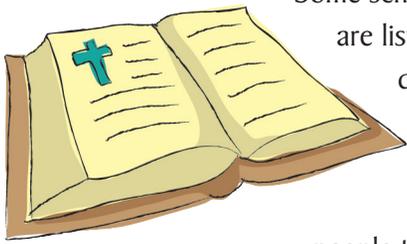


The bold words are different translations of the Greek word, **ARSENOKOITAI**. It is difficult to know the specific meaning of the word, because Paul did not explain the word further, he took for granted that his readers will know to which sinner is referred. The word probably meant the active participant in a sexual act. Paul probably understood the word as a man that has sexual intercourse with a man in the same way as with a woman, because this word is also used in the Hebrew word as seen in *Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13*. An example of this type of sex was well known in Ephesus, in the practice of pederasty, where an older man “took pity on” a younger boy, which includes sexual deeds, in order to “educate” him to become a good Greek citizen.

The church, from this list of sinners, judged homosexual people as sinners that violate the law and live unholy lives. The church concluded that no homosexual person could be a pastor or a minister in a congregation.



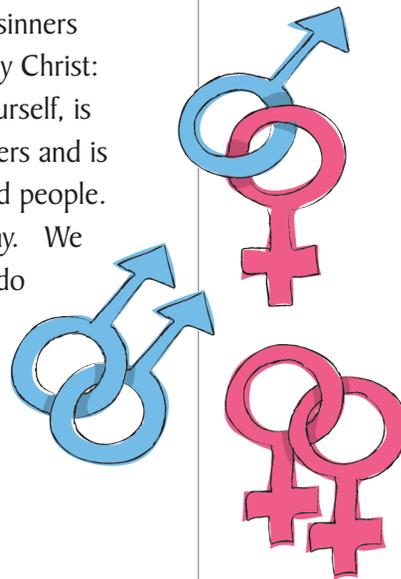
Today there are different interpretations of the list of sinners and it is questioned if homosexual people even appear on this list.



Some scholars understand that sexual pervers are listed and not homosexuals. There are different opinions about the admittance of homosexual people to holding the duty of minister, elder or deacon. Today some churches do not allow homosexual people to the ministry, while others do, if they live as celibates and decline all sexual activity. Only a few churches allow homosexual people to the ministry without any judgement.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS of a CONTEXTUAL reading

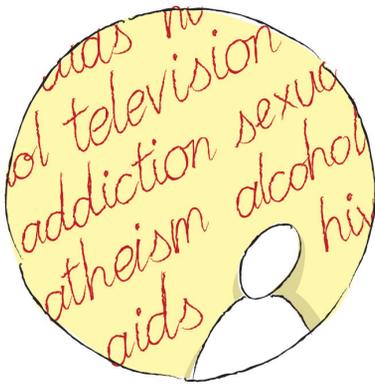
It is important to remember that the heart of 1 Timothy 1: 10 is not the correct translation of this list of sinners. Paul wanted to convey the right understanding and use of the law to Timothy. He wanted Timothy to understand that the law comes down to the grace of God that saves sinners through Jesus Christ so that they can know and live love, as opposed to the false preachers' understanding and use of the law. The gospel of Jesus Christ makes it possible for sinners to be saved through grace alone. The law, as summarised by Christ: you must love God and fellow human beings as you love yourself, is understood out of gratitude for what God did for us as sinners and is used as a guide for our daily lives as Christians, we are saved people. Laws are good if it is understood and used in the correct way. We also know more about homosexuality through research and do not automatically link it to sexual pervers today. Sexual orientation is irrelevant to sexual pervers, they can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual people.



#### GROUP QUESTION

● What do you think the Holy Spirit is telling the church about homosexuality today?

*If these texts have spoken to you;  
How do you bring it home?*



**GROUP QUESTION**

What do you think is the challenge of 1 Timothy 1: 10 for us living in the 21st century?

7. EXPLORE TODAY

The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time



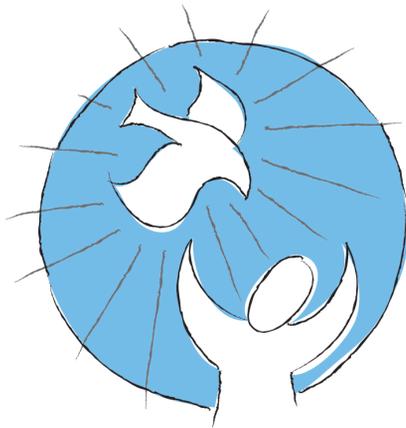
8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer

"Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.  
 Please allow God's Word to become alive in us today.  
 Remind us that all of us are saved sinners because of God's grace  
 and unconditional love  
 Help us to obey Jesus Christ's law of Love  
 And free us to live with love  
 Amen"

9. SHARE

How are you, now?  
 How did exploring the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward.



## 11. AFFIRM



Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



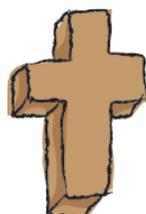
## 12. CLOSE

### Closing prayer

Matthew 6: 9 - 13 (CEV)

- <sup>9</sup> Our Father in heaven,  
Help us to honor your name
- <sup>10</sup> Come and set up your kingdom,  
so that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven.
- <sup>11</sup> Give us our food for today.
- <sup>12</sup> Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others.
- <sup>13</sup> Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil.

Amen



READ JOHN

- Chapter 3
- Focus on: John 3: 16

# JESUS CHRIST OUR BRIDGE TO GOD



## 1. INVITE

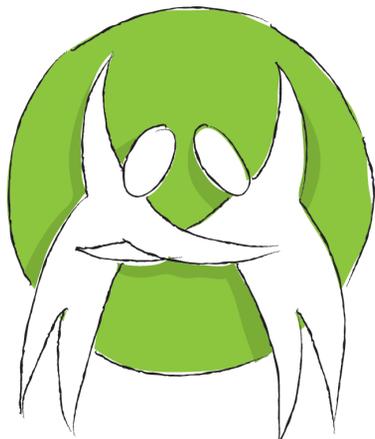
You are invited to journey with others to explore the power of integrating spirituality with sexuality and deepen your understanding of Jesus Christ, our Bridge to God, to understand the gift of sexuality and the Bible.

The focus will be on Jesus Christ as the Good News of the Gospel, the One that became the way, the bridge to God for human kind and our world.



## 2. AFFIRM

You are here, now. Know that your uniqueness and significance as a human being is valued. Your experiences and beliefs are respected. Your feelings and interpretations of who Jesus Christ is and how He made reconciliation possible between humanity, the world and God, invited to be shared and heard in this safe space. We are affirmed in God's presence together.



### 3. ENCOUNTER

#### *Light a candle*

"I light a candle to affirm this space as safe and inclusive of all people

I light a candle to affirm this space as open  
to appreciate Jesus Christ as Bridge to God.

I light a candle to affirm my presence and willingness  
to encounter Jesus Christ and others.

Together we light our candles to affirm that God made a way  
through Christ for all of us.

The Saviour truly loves us  
and the Holy Spirit affirms God's Love in us.

In this light we move forward."



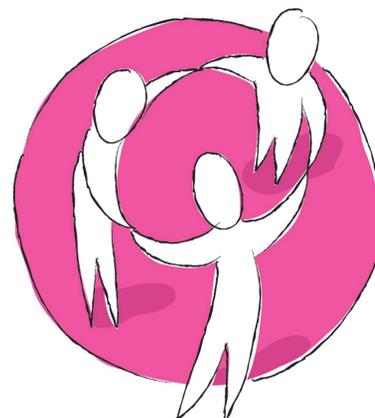
### 4. SHARE



How are you?

What would you want us to know about you  
right now?

What challenges are part of your journey  
with Jesus Christ and your sexuality today?



### 5. PRAY

#### *Opening prayer*

Simeon Praise the Lord – Luke 2: 29 - 32 (CEV)

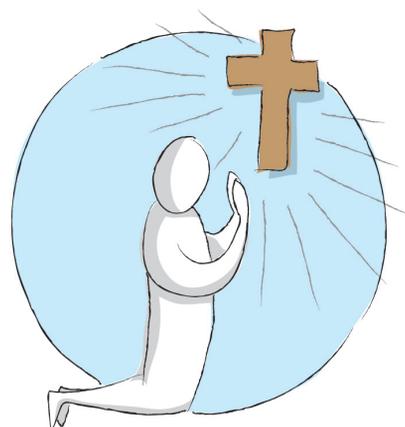
<sup>29</sup> "Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace,  
because you have kept your promise to me.

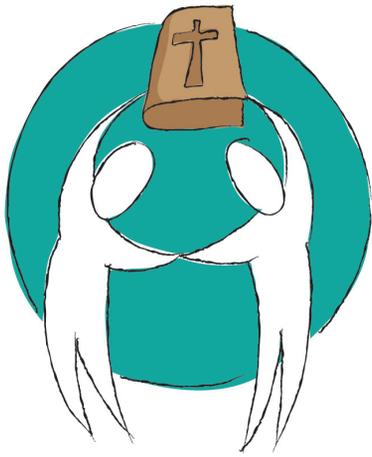
<sup>30</sup> With my own eyes I have seen  
what you have done to save your people,

<sup>31</sup> and foreign nations will also see this.

<sup>32</sup> Your mighty power is a light for all nations,  
and it will bring honor to your people Israel."

Amen





6. EXPLORE your way of  
READING the BIBLE

*If you read the Bible  
LITERALLY it means*

God dictated every word in the Bible to the Bible writers, as "The Word of God" and it inspires and guides us still today.

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CONTEXTUALLY it means*

God inspired the Bible writers to bear witness as specific people in their specific historical contexts that differed from each other, yet had in common the transformative involvement of God and God's unchanging love and grace for humanity and the world.

These witnesses grew into recognising Jesus Christ as the "Word of God" that inspires and guides us still today.

What is written in the Bible is difficult to understand because of the diverse contexts.

The Bible writers were ordinary human beings with flaws.

GROUP  
QUESTIONS

- Which way of reading the Bible do you choose and why?
- Do you think there are responsible and irresponsible ways of reading the Bible?
- If yes, share more.

*If it is as challenging to read the Bible, as we have come to realise, how are we going to continue READING the Bible RESPONSIBLY?*

We are going to meet Jesus Christ as our bridge to God, to understand the gift of sexuality and the Bible.

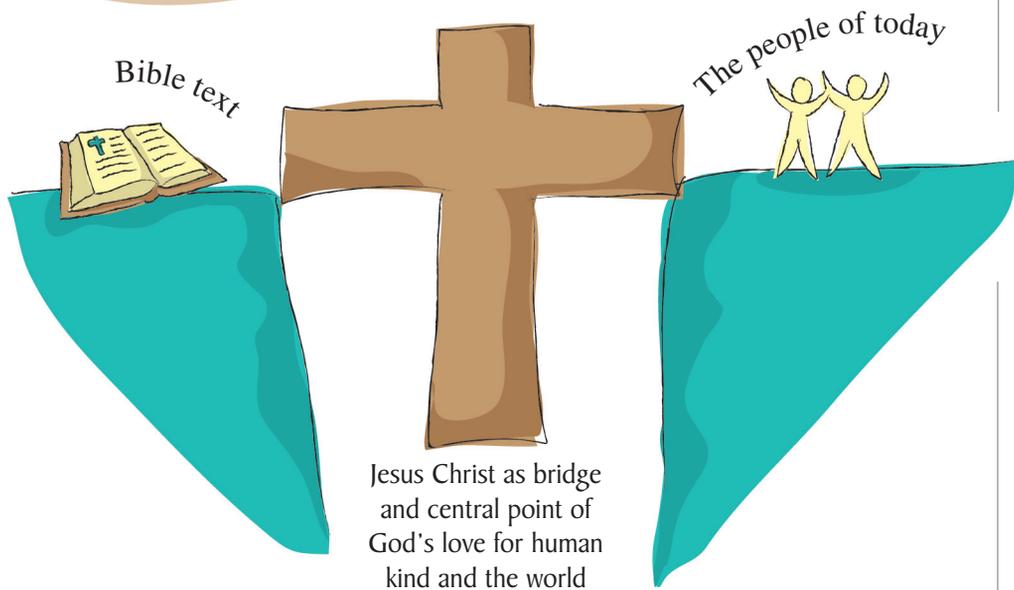
A bridge that through the Holy Spirit will help us to move from the times and

situations of the Bible across to our times and situations.

A bridge that we can walk across and experience the Bible as the Word of God that still today brings light to our daily lives as Christians.

## JESUS CHRIST

Forms the bridge for us to be able to journey with the Bible



God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that every one who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

John 3: 16 (CEV)

## JESUS CHRIST

Is the heart of the Bible:

The heart of the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ and what God did for us through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Not all Bible texts stand equally close to this revelation.

Some Bible texts stand closer to God's loving revelation in Jesus Christ and other texts further away.

## JESUS CHRIST

taught us:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, "Love others as much as you love yourself." All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.

Matthew 22: 37 - 40 (CEV)

### GROUP QUESTIONS

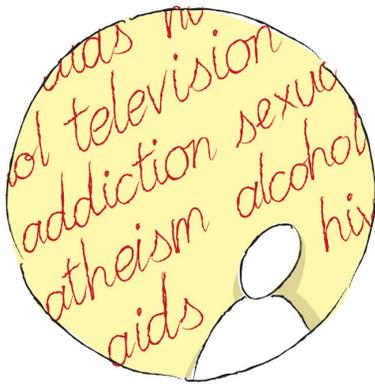
- Who is Jesus Christ for you?
- Is Jesus Christ a bridge for you to God, to understand the gift of sexuality and the Bible?

### GROUP QUESTIONS

- What do you think and feel about Jesus Christ as the heart of the Bible?

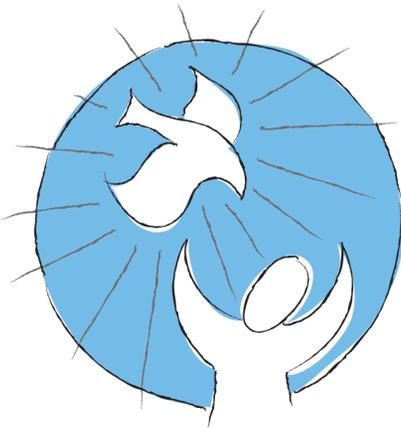
### GROUP QUESTION

- What is love as taught by Jesus Christ for you?



### GROUP QUESTION

What do you think is the challenge for us living in the 21st century, when Jesus Christ is our Bridge to God, to understand the gift of sexuality and the Bible?



## 7. EXPLORE TODAY

*The 21st Century - Challenges of Our Time*



## 8. CALL on the HOLY SPIRIT

*Prayer*

"Thank you for living in us, Holy Spirit.

Please allow God's Word to become alive in us today as Jesus Christ.

Help us to be present in our world, as followers of Jesus Christ.

Guide us to live out of love, also through our sexuality.

Remind us that Jesus Christ is the Good News of the Bible  
and our Friend.

And free us from our fears of rejection, hell and condemnation  
as we journey as followers of Christ,

integrating our spirituality with our sexuality.

Amen"

## 9. SHARE

How are you, now?

How did exploring Jesus Christ as bridge to God, to understand the gift of sexuality and the Bible inspire and challenge you?



## 10. REFLECT on

### SIGNIFICANCE for you

Write down or draw what was significant for you that will support you to make true what you have heard and move forward.



## 11. AFFIRM



Place your written text or drawing next to the lit candle as a symbol of moving forward from here.



## 12. CLOSE

### *Closing prayer*

“God bless us with celebrating Jesus Christ  
as Saviour and bridge to you.  
Receive our gratitude for this time of togetherness.  
Guide us with your Holy Spirit.  
Help us to make true what we have heard.  
Remind us that faith needs concrete deeds.  
Open us up to give and receive your love.  
Amen”



# FOR THE FACILITATOR

## PREPARATIONS

Candles, candle holders and matches  
Pens and papers.  
Journey Map in A3 format



## TIPS

### 1. INVITE

Be welcoming, gentle and sensitive as you invite people.  
Mention that reading and reflecting on the texts before meeting will be helpful.

Be open to questions or suggestions.

Give an overview of the Bible Study Series by using the Journey Map as a guide.



### 2. AFFIRM

Receive people as they enter the space.  
Encourage them to quiet down, relax and be present.  
When the group is fully attended, start by reading the affirmation.

### 3. ENCOUNTER

Invite people to read "Light a candle" with you. It is not compulsory; people can choose to follow the text in silence.



### 4. SHARE

If people are hesitant to share, encourage them by sharing and answering some of the questions, yourself.



## 5. PRAY

Read the opening prayer together



## 6. EXPLORE your way of reading the BIBLE

Focus on stimulating conversation instead of giving answers.  
Avoid debate on which way of reading the Bible is best.  
Stimulate conversation throughout the different summaries, instead of just reading through it.

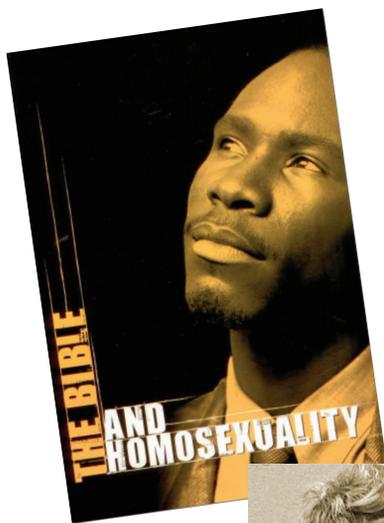
## 7. EXPLORE TODAY

Stimulate discussion by highlighting the challenge of diversity, of differences, of complexity, the need for education, of dialogue, the dangers of any us-them thinking, the benefit of safe spaces to engage, of listening skills, of support to learn and grow together and integrating sexuality and spirituality more.

## 12. CLOSE

Invite participants to pray the closing prayer aloud with you. It is not compulsory; people can choose to follow the prayer in silence.





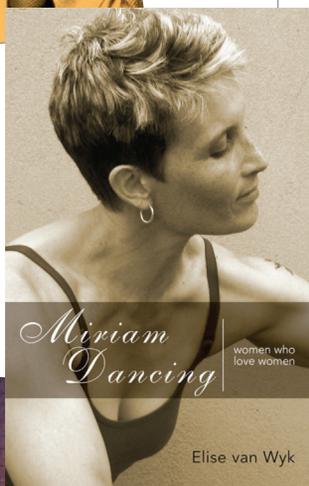
# RESOURCES

To Offer Insight and Support

## PRINTED RESOURCES

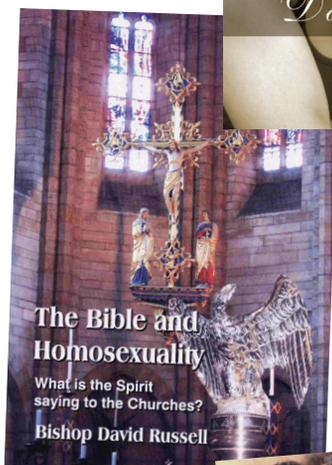
The Bible and Homosexuality

A booklet, produced by IAM; available in English and Afrikaans



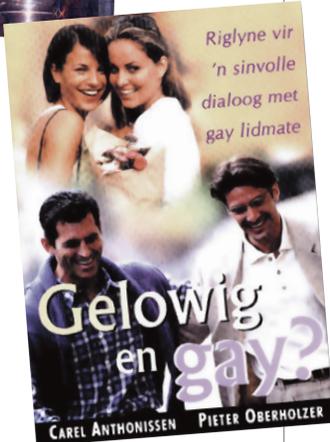
Miriam Dancing

A book by Elise van Wyk in which 28 lesbian, bisexual and transgender women share their journeys with spirituality and sexuality.



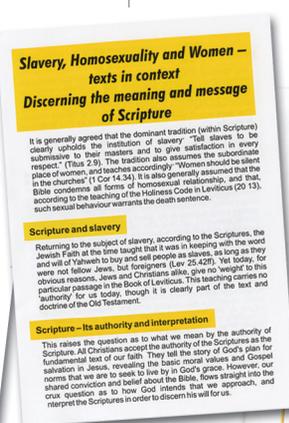
The Bible and Homosexuality - What is the Spirit saying to the Churches?

A booklet by Bishop David Russell



Gelwig en Gay (Christian and Gay)

A book by Pieter Oberholzer and Carel Anthonissen



Leaflets:

- Human Sexuality and the Bible
- Human Sexuality, Why should Christians talk about it?
- Slavery, Homosexuality and Women - texts in context : Discerning the meaning and message of scripture
- IAM information

## DVD RESOURCES

### Created in the Image of God

LGBTI stories and contributions from leading theologians, including emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

### Ter wille van ons Kinders (For the sake of our Children)

The journeys of parents with their gay or lesbian children. A new version with English subtitles available in 2010.

## TO ORDER

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## WORKSHOP RESOURCES

### Journey of Hope

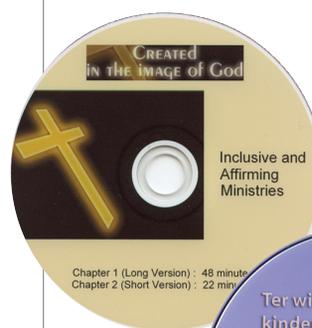
A workshop that focuses on empowering people on how to start integrating spirituality and sexuality and be able to help others to start as well. The four sessions focus on journey stories, coming out of the "Faith closet", ways to interpret the Bible and the power of integration.

### Introduction to Dialogue

A workshop that introduces dialogue as preferred method to deal with diversity, sees it as a life-enhancing alternative to debate, argumentation, apathy or rejection, promotes it as an attitude towards life and a life skill. The four sessions focus on dialogue as a choice, the importance of creating safe spaces to engage, practice listening, sharing and conflict management skills, understand the dialogue process and explore Faith as a support resource to engage and sustain dialogue.

### Counselling Course

A five-day course to teach people to assist LGBTI people to explore and resolve difficulties experienced in their lives, to support them to discover alternative ways of managing themselves while using their faith as a primary resource. The aim is for them to decide what course of action or behaviour will be supportive to them. In essence it will be helping people to help themselves by being empowered by faith.





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Inclusive & Affirming Ministries

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