

how God intends us to express our sexuality in appropriate relationships. We also want to reflect on the world around us in its confusion over sexuality and, in particular, how to relate to those whose lifestyles are radically different from our own.

These studies, designed for group or individual use, explore how we make moral choices of any kind and then relate these principles to the issue of sexuality.

There are no easy answers but the studies are offered in the hope of helping us to a biblically based and pastorally sensitive understanding.



## THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN

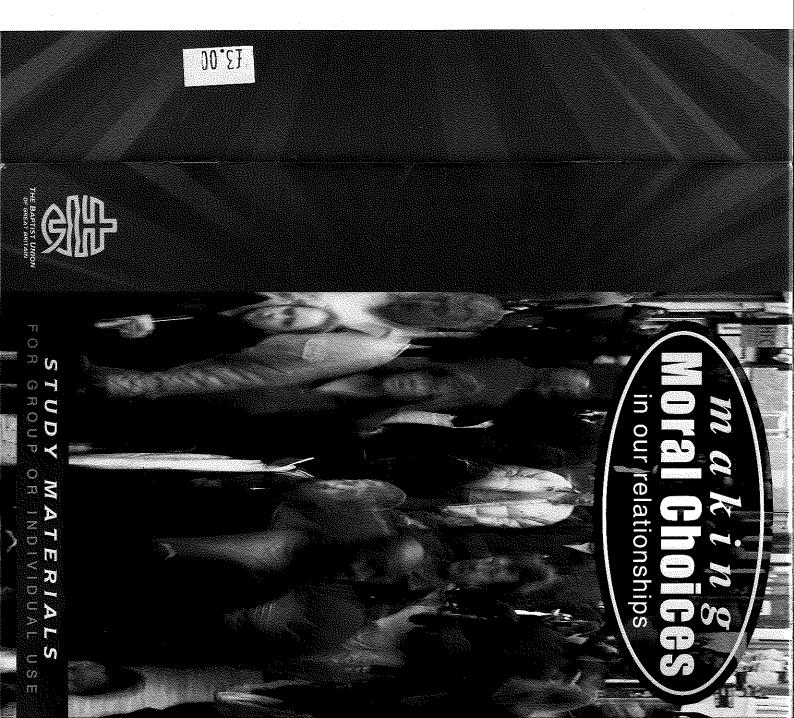
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#### FOREWORD

The Working Group that prepared this booklet is not presenting us with an official Baptist Union policy on human sexuality. What they have done is to underline the important process by which Christians make moral choices. The material then goes on to apply these principles to the various aspects of human sexuality and relationships. The members of the Working Group deserve our thanks for the insight and sensitivity they have brought to their extremely difficult task.

In using the booklet, it is important to follow the recommendation to read the first two chapters first. These opening sections on making moral choices and God's gift of sexuality are foundational to any discussion around a particular chapter.

The booklet has been prepared with the local congregation in mind. As Baptists we believe that the mind of Christ is revealed through believers in a locally gathered church, With our bibles open before us, the Holy Spirit can lead us into a deeper understanding of what it means to live under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as we seek to be his followers in the world.

I am not expecting the reader to endorse every word in the booklet. Your group will possibly want to find different passages of scripture to explore a topic under consideration, beyond the examples that are provided. At times some of the contributors are expressing personal opinions on controversial topics and you may want to disagree with their conclusions.

I would stress again that the purpose of this booklet is not to be the last word on anything but to present people in local churches with the strongest possible encouragement to engage with the process of how we make moral choices.

If we humbly and prayerfully begin this process then I am confident it will enrich our pastoral and evangelistic practice as well as deepen our understanding of Christian discipleship.

David Coffey, General Secretary. March 2000

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# QUESTION OF RELATIONSHIPS



## STUDY MATERIALS

Study 6: Divorce	Study 7: Homosexuality	Notes on 1 Corinthians chapter 7	Leaders' notes and questions	Ministerial Rules
31		. 36		

wer the past few years, most of the major Christian denominations have conducted debates and produced reports about the nature of human sexuality. There is no question that God's gift of sexuality has enormous potential for joyful fulfilment or for pain and misery, depending on how it is used. Our society, on the whole, is not known for its wise choices in this area and the media is frequently

As Christians, we need a mature grasp of how God intends us to express our sexuality in appropriate relationships. We also want to reflect on the world around us in its confusion over sexuality, and in particular how to relate to those whose lifestyles are radically different from our own - some of whom may be neighbours or family, or fellow-worshippers.

Please do not be tempted

Finally, a word about how to use the booklet

This booklet is not a theological treatise or a sociological report, neither does it present an official Baptist Union of Great Britain policy on human sexuality. What it attempts to do is to examine the subject of human sexuality, especially as expressed in relationships, in a way that is intended to be both biblical and realistic. It is far more important and effective for us, as disciples of Jesus

yet sinners needing his forgiveness and grace, to reach our own Spirit-led conclusions about these delicate yet explosive issues than to invite pronouncements about them from platforms.

As you study the material, remember that this is not an academic exercise.

You will know people wrestling

with many of the questions

raised, and please be sensitive to this fact if you are working through the booklet with a group.

as the thinking in them underpins the rest of the material. If you are part of a group it is essential that every group member has their own copy and reads each chapter through before the meeting. Group leaders will need to prepare thoroughly and be aware that some chapters may need more than one session (even when being selective in the choice of questions to use). There is some extra help for group leaders at the back of the booklet and a commentary on I Corinthians 7, which is a crucial New Testament chapter.

under the water in the name of God



we have to decide how to make a moral choice about anything Who should we listen to and how should we act? Before we make a moral choice about something

something quite new, a problem we actions as our conscience troubles us. we find ourselves questioning our own what we thought was right is wrong! Or may be because someone says that we have to stop and think again. It is wrong. But there are moments when brought up to think this is right and that are doing as we tell the truth or act the time we hardly think about what we wrong, good or bad. Frankly, much of how do we decide? How do we make Or we are faced with what is for us honestly. After all, we have all been judgements about what is right or have not had to consider before. Now 🧤 🎤 E ALL DO IT, day after day We act, or speak, or make

be a human being is to be faced with and decide what is right and wrong. To But people are not machines. We have be programmed and they follow orders. is to be a human being. Machines can Making moral choices is part of what it freedom and responsibility. We choose

> on others, reflects how I see my self and value my neighbour. Not to choose, or to force my choices of how we see ourselves as people. how we choose is part of the big issue moral choices. So our question about

others and then decide in the light of studies are not going to tell us what we Because we respect one another these before God; Kingdom of God living! to our Baptist concern for right living Baptist Christians today. Each relates some demanding dilemmas which face In these studies we are reflecting on think about how do we decide what is come to any particular issue we need to some important affirmations. Before we invited to a conversation, to think with have to believe or do! Rather we are published by The Baptist Union. Values for a Gospel People recently right and wrong, good and bad, as This desire is well expressed in 5 Core Baptist Christians: how do we make up

We begin at what some may think is a

which are important for moral decision some fundamental Baptist convictions, guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret good place to begin because it sets ou and administer His Laws'. This is a that each Church has liberty, under the pertaining to faith and practice, as and absolute authority in all matters God manifest in the flesh, is the sole surprising place, with the first revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Chrisi the Declaration of Principle. It states paragraph of the Baptist Union's basis,

These are:

- the sole and absolute authority of Jesus Christ
- the importance of the
- the guidance of the Holy
- the importance of the Church acting together.

Christian decision making on moral important to contribute to Baptist and see how each one has something issues. We take each affirmation step by step

#### 1 The sole and absolute authority of Jesus Christ

When we are baptised we are plunged Son of God, God manifest in the flesh Christian than Jesus Christ. He is the There is no one more important for the

prevailing spirit of Living with Jesus Christians to go sometimes led as Lord has against the the times

and death. What we want to do is what one all Christians seek to obey in life sometimes led Baptists, and other our whole life, including our ethics, is a can stand along side Jesus. He is the Living with Jesus as Lord has person, no government, no tradition, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, confessing risen and ascended Lord. response to the love of the crucified, Jesus wants us to do. In many ways Jesus Christ to be the Lord. No other

Christians, to go against the prevailing spirit of the times.

that, whatever others do Following Jesus means our life and morals. different but the point is always be totally Christians will not fashions and serve the Lord and let Him shape we will try to follow the idols of the day. from those who follow we shall be different

## 2 The importance of the Bible.

answer is the Bible. The Jesus we But who is Jesus and where can we go for God's ways and understanding His the crucial help it gives us in seeking Lord. The importance of the Bible is in through the 'lens' of Jesus Christ the bears witness. For Baptists, this means the whole Bible, although we read it all follow is the one to whom the Bible for a reliable record of his life? The

will as revealed in His Son. So we are a Bible reading people.

a the Son of God. Of course, some of the moral issues we have to face today

It is not a theory about the Bible, its inspiration or composition that is our authority. Sole authority is given to Jesus Christ. Simply finding a text stating a moral affirmation is not enough for Baptists because we know how the Bible can be twisted to all sorts of immoral ends.

of immoral ends. But we also know

gives arises out of convictions we and sometimes rebuke. It is important expectation, God speaks his words of cannot help it (1 Corinthians 7.25-35) imminent So he advises against example, what Paul says about would express differently today. For ours. Sometimes the teaching the Bible that we try to read the Bible mindful of comfort, guidance, and encouragement that, coming to its pages in faith and own context it makes pastoral sense rather poor view of marriage but in its That can be made to sound like a marriage at all unless the couple really he believes the return of Jesus marriage can be set in a context where its own context that is different from

It is the whole testimony of the Bible that is important as it bears witness to



were undreamed of in Bible times but that does not make the Bible irrelevant We are seeking the mind of Christ and for that task the Bible is crucial. But what help does God give us in the task of interpreting the Bible story?

#### 3 The guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How are we to read the Bible? With a readiness to be led by the Holy Spirit. This means we come to the text with open minds, praying, listening, thinking, longing and expecting God to teach us. After all, it is not the letter of the text but the Spirit who gives us life, insight and guidance into the truth. Instead of looking for 'proof texts' we are waiting on God to guide us Himself, by His spirit

Of course, while the Spirit is God leading us we must admit that none of us has an infallible grasp of His leading. We therefore listen to other Christians of the past and the present. So prayer, openness, modesty and that humility which is the seeking of the mind of Christ characterise our approach. And one thing more....

## 4 The importance of the Church.

Baptists believe that God in an important sense gathers each congregation of Christians. As sisters and brothers, we are given to each other and therefore we talk about our convictions and decisions together. We do not believe that the voice of the congregation is the voice of God but we do want to listen carefully to each other as we listen for God. It is

associating together, regionally and also affirm the importance of our it be careful about its calling to be a called to be disciples of Jesus. Nor will pline is not going to nurture those with no sense of disciof helping us live in forget that the church ister His Laws' but the Church to living witness to the ways of God. We the Faith. A church has an important task Neither ought we to interpret and adminsense of discipline disciples of Jesus' 'A church with no is not going to nurture those called to be

resolutions on moral issues. We would want to listen to what such a gathering says.

Therefore in making moral decision we shall:

look to Jesus

read the Bible

pray for the guidance of the Spirit, and do all this in the fellowship of the

#### But there is more.

We will want to **listen to other Christians.** What are they saying out of their listening and waiting on God? As we listen we shall do so, respecting their conscience, and our own. We shall want to **learn from past and contemporary wisdom** concerning the issues we face. And we shall not dismiss that

if it comes from those who are not Christians. We shall want to listen to those who have an insider's feel for the moral problem we face. For example, we shall listen to those who care for people in deep pain and anguish and wonder about euthanasia; we shall listen

to voices from the two-thirds world on issues of poverty, debt and international aid. And so on.

Because the truth matters to us, we shall want to know the facts that are important when it comes to the issues under discussion. There may not easily

nationally. Sometimes Assemblies pass

to judge in wilful ignorance of them. be discovered, but we would not want today are very demanding. There are Some of the moral issues we face



bring from them His Kingdom life. God who forgives and who is able to later that we are wrong we believe in a in uncertainty. Even if we come to see decisions and not just wring our hands modesty and care. But we will make take even our well meant disasters and we shall make our decisions with not necessarily any plain answers. So

#### Questions

- Ask the group what particular moral choices have exercised them personally
- Why can't we agree to 'just let your conscience be your guide'?
- How, in practice, do we let Jesus shape our life and morals?
- What does it mean to read the Bible through the 'lens' of Jesus Christ the Lord?
- Does this mean that we have to be we follow? selective in which parts of the Bible
- How would you answer someone as old as the Bible can be of who dismisses the idea that a book century? relevance in the twenty-first
- How can we know when it really is the Spirit leading us in our decisions?
- While the decision of the local church or a Bible not full of lone voices speaking the binding can it be upon any of us? Is the national Assembly is to be respected, how
- Is there a danger in listening to insiders their experience, to the detriment of judgment is likely to have been warped by on moral issues: namely that their



Sexuality is part of God's design for creation. To understand ourselves we need to understand God's purpose in making us sexual beings. We read in Genesis 1:27: male and female he created them.

and carriage, these do go together, but explosion. Love and marriage, horse is like wiring up a detonator prior to the God and sex? 'God' and 'sex' into the same sentence was could imagine that to put the words ISTENING TO SOME PEOPLE, we

## Why is there this tension?

God's good creation Christians say our sexuality is part of

power that is inherent in our sexuality aspect of being human. urge, that goes with this almost uncontrollable sexual energy, the will be unaware of the No one should underestimate the us reading these studies power is here. Few of We are aware that an immense elemental of sex have had the prohibitive aspects

widest Christian

coverage'

using words heavy with warning and often spoken negatively about sex, Perhaps that is why, out of respect and tear for such power, Christians have

> the result will be. touch paper without knowing quite what moral obligation, is like lighting the blue wrong place, sex separate from love or prohibition. Sex unleashed, sex in the

about it. But this attitude sends out the coverage. Nice people do not talk have had the widest Christian negative, prohibitive aspects of sex that There is little doubt that it is the

should be kept something cheap, signal that there is here. God and sex tainted, and unpleasant

the negative,

Of course, it all

take the view that God is pure spirit, depends on what you mean by 'God'. If you

alised view of 'God' has been held by some, and can lead to a complete separate from sex. This highly spiritusay that God and godliness are blood and all that mess, then you might with nothing to do with creation, flesh,

encourage a rampant freedom in sexua and thus dirty. Alternatively, it can avoidance of sex as something earthly not ultimately matter at all! behaviour since created matter does

the Christian Faith and responses blood' existence has nothing to do with humankind in his image.....male and humankind. Indeed God made First God is the creator, not least of Christian convictions come into play Christians might make. Two major This view of God and our flesh and female he created

Scripture asserts that in his eyes what he God made us all, and and parcel of how and sex, are all part Flesh, blood, gender them (Genesis 1:27) multiply, he said. made was very good

image as sexual essential, basic part of our humanity people, and our sexuality is an God made us in his masculine identity"

## How are we to understand our

personality, the masculine and the Sexuality is more than sex though it the developing embryo becomes male shaped before birth as from conception Physiologists tell us that our sexuality is identity as a unique individual. feminine in each of us, part of our includes it. Sexuality is part of the total

> a boy or a girl?'. Gender is part of our or female. When a child is born, the most commonly asked question is 'is it

and children become comfortable with through spoken and often unspoken learned in the family environment themselves. Attitudes and values are cuddled, made to feel good about their bodies if they are cherished and Psychologists advise us that babies pick up negative messages about its messages about sexuality. A child can body before it can talk.

for developing secure and men in children's models and patterns "Significant women lives provide role parents have with their cence into mature The ease or unease the powerful surge of changes and the person's growth through own sexuality also affects the young adulthood. Here bodily the minefield of adoleshormones have a

feminine or

self-confidence or struggle. For one of the crowd, the exploitation of sex Social influences, the pressure to be profound effect on the young woman or children and young people growing up, all contribute to the developing adult's in the media and through advertising, man's sense of their own identity. developing secure feminine or significant women and men in their lives masculine identity. provide role models and patterns for (parents, teachers, youth leaders etc.)

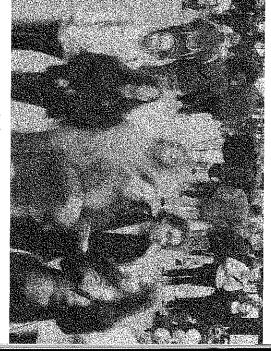
> a relationship with another person. The is what takes us beyond ourselves in to ships are one way in which we express power of this desire can be seen very this aspect of ourselves. Sexual desire we are as people, then sexual relation-As our sexuality is fundamental to who

way that makes us more us beyond ourselves in a connected. Both can take sexual longing are closely source longing for God and closeness with God - at echoes the longing for in The Song of Songs clearly in The Song of yearn for each other. Songs where the lovers Interestingly, this yearning

express their sexuality live in a committed relationship are able to Those who are called to

sexuality we bring new life to birth. In expressing the deepest love. By our sexuality. Our sexuality is a means of birth. Human life begins through expression of love comes life through make love, and from their joyful a man marry, they express. A woman and All this is a wonder energies of creativity of making love, all the God. Then we experience all the glory sex within the intention and purposes of through sex with their partner. This is beyond words to means of expressing 'Our sexuality is a the deepest love'

praise of God. The 'contraceptive procreation but for the re-creation and twentieth century has led to an aspect of his creation in us sings out its our sexuality God is glorified as this increased emphasis on sex not for revolution' in the second half of the



being alive, the sexuality itself is all part intimacy, the freedom, the sheer joy of renewal of women and men. The

person which is so existence fundamental to our of being a human

Some people live all or

significant part of their identity, part of not being physically expressed, is still a sexually active. Their sexuality, though without having the opportunity to be their life and creativity. part of their adult life

Now, think of the Incarnation. The

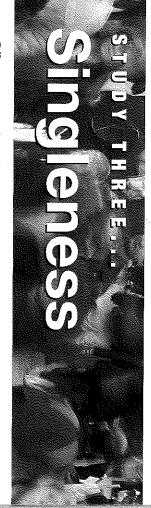


being and it is this humanity which is lived on earth in the body, sex and all. made. The life of the spirit can only be beings. He knows of what we are is of God's choosing that we are sexual ignoring or demeaning our sexuality. It Ascension. We do not honour God by taken back up into God in the (John 1:14). God becomes a sexual Word became flesh and lived among us

> grace has made us so. Making love consumerist society what the grace and a participation in the libercan be a means of knowing God's are sexual beings because God in his relating to sex, but even more that we Christians affirm, not only the laws redemption of the body means when we may worship and delight in God. ating purposes of God. In our sexuality We can only begin to show our sexually

#### Questions

- What is the root of the distinction between sex and sexuality?
- God made us with several instincts, preservation. including the urge for food and self-
- Why is it that the sexual drive, uniquely causes us so much embarrassment and insecurity?
- The Church's attitude to sex has been universally perceived as negative. Why?
- Why is The Song of Songs in the Bible?
- statement God becomes a sexual being? Do you feel comfortable with the
- Do you agree that the contraceptive revolution has been liberating?
- If God has chosen to make humans sexua and advertisers make so much of sex? If beings, is it so surprising that the media sex is natural how can it be wrong?



Like everyone else, single people want to express their sexuality Often, they are made to feel odd by society and the church. What are the particular pressures on single people?

#### Introduction

found in the dictionary? What are the definitions for 'Singleness

paper and keep them for later Write them on a separate piece of

single, who are single There are many people who remain

in his culture. He came never married, yet death of a spouse. who become single period of their lives, or from a society that marriage was the norm Jesus was single! He through divorce or tor a considerable

encouraged marriage and celebrated it.

and are considered strange if they do expectation that they will get married age that marriage is the end product of society educates its children at an early minority in our churches. Today's an existence. People grow up with an Single people are generally in a

> families if they do not meet the to feel failures in themselves and in whole people, only God can do that. that marriage is not going to make us individuals. We need to understand free to make choices as whole marriage expectation. We need to feel not get married. People can be made

marriage is not going to make us whole does not depend on (John 10:10). This life and have it to the full that we may have life Jesus has come so having a spouse

understand that

We need to

Singleness is often usually married pitied by people

people, only God can

lovely wife.' Yet single people do lead people. 'Such a shame he never got the latter part of their years. The their lives and they are not always in who are comfortable and content with happy, fulfilling, satisfying and exciting married,' or, 'She would have made a lives! There are many single people

choose to make their life what it is single lifestyle - most married people a list of all the positive aspects of a ending (too many for this paper). Make freedom is enormous. They can make around spouses and families. The without having to compromise a career will point them out! Single people can benefits of a single life are never their life their own.

purpose or direction But it is easy to feel lonely, isolated unloved, without

or not, there are some you like being single are single. Whether undervalued when you or patronised and person's life, they find stage in a single same. At a certain issues that remain the

families. Sometimes

eft out

chicken dinners and the price of school although 'a family,' caters for married much wanted baby. The church want to be single, and who would love difficult for those people who do not uniforms. This time is particularly sleepless nights, teething gel, Heinz tions based around nappy rash, themselves in the middle of conversaand many single people can find other friends. Children enter the scene Spouses become the priority and not married. Relationships change. for those who are married and without a to have a baby. It is also a difficult time that the majority of their friends are couples and families. Sometimes

> is difficult to fit into a particular niche in single people can feel left out. Often if people are often called upon to work in a church, life can be lonely. Married single people. If you are in the minority people need the company of other tality, my house is not a B&B!' Single sitter and whilst I love offering hospipointed out, 'I am not here as the baby commitment. One single person 'put upon' because they have no other the church, and singles are sometimes

The church, although sıngle people can be 'a family', caters for married couples and ministry or share responsibility discuss matters or life can mean you each other. A single there as a support for counselling. They are together in prayer have no one to

and feedback after a short time. break into small groups to discuss this issues? It may be useful at this point to but also the socialising and general life pastoral care and support of singles, people, taking into consideration the How can your church help single

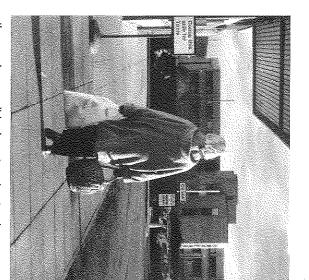
self esteem and depression revolving women), and add to the spiral of low seem overwhelming (especially for years slip by the desire for children car and that 'nobody will want me.' As the people can sometimes feel unattractive getting old alone are real. Single always remain single. The worries of low patches as they question if they wil Single people sometimes suffer very

around singleness

a single person never thinks about sex especially regarding sex. To think tha pressures attached to being single, Everyone craves intimacy. There are instinct to love and to need love. Humans have a natural, God giver

and it takes a willing person and a out into to the open and to work them counsellor/friend to bring these issues that God needs to be let into and hea there are deeper issues in a person desires surrounding masturbation are affects everyone whether single, masturbation, and not just saving it fo Churches should be giving direct and about it, and much guilt surrounding it certainly is almost never spoken about often difficult to say, is hardly ever attraction of sex lies in the curiosity is naive. They do! Possibly more so discerning Pastor, leader or not just basic frustration, sometimes how to cope with it. But sometimes the find good teaching and suggestions or married or homosexual, yet we rarely youth group talks. Sexual frustration honest teaching from the pulpit about in church. There is much confusion mentioned in conversations and factor. Masturbation is a word that is than married couples as part of the

they are in or have had in the past. feel guilty about sexual relationships Many single Christians in the church have been treated insensitively by huge feelings of guilt or because they Many leave the church because of



single?' may be felt. know about the subject of being married 37 years, so what do they churches. Feelings of, 'they've been counselling roles or leadership roles in about the pressures of being single and be difficult for a single person to talk or have ignored the pressures. It can others, who possibly do not understand married couple, who often take on the issues of being single with a

always helpful to hear people saying to but that of others around them. It is no Christians believe that God has got a declares the Lord.' Many single person hits a certain age and still is not married. It is not just their expectation, the right time it will include marriage. plan for their lives and that one day, at This becomes very difficult if a single For I know the plans I have for you

praying for a husband/wife for you,' or you, 'You'll find someone soon,' or 'I'm 'It'll be you walking down the aisle

with others. Occasionally single people are not asked to social Single people are sometimes 'fixed up'

suspicion. People are especially for 'Singles' up a 'couple.' Events alone and cannot make events because they are speculate if some single pick up joint! People Christian excuse for a what can be seen as a behind people going to unsure of the motive can be treated with

priority list in work and have to pay an are often last in line in the holiday in a group of married couples. They sometimes being the only single persor with and turning up to events alone, or also the issue of who to go on holiday of single people who are not. There is who are gay, as well as on the majority people are gay, particularly men, and additional price supplement for a single this puts pressure both on the minority hotel room!

Singleness can make you a stronger way of teaching in order to get to that be celebrated, but does it involve a new friendship as a gift, and can give time to whole person, a person that has person, an independent person, a themselves and others. Singleness can

18

## What does the Bible say?

concordance? 'singleness' and 'unmarried' in a How many references are there for

### Look at Matthew 19:10-12

that has friendship as 'Singleness can make Matthew 19 where he Jesus' statement in marry? Why do you says it is better not to Do you agree with think he says this?

says it's better to encouraging marriage with passion'. Is that marry than to 'burn Corinthians 7:8

a gift, and can give time to themselves

and others'

person... a person you a stronger

sexual need? endorsement of human, God given honest recognition by Paul and an thoughts and practices? Is this the the 'guilt' sometimes caused by sexual basis for a good marriage or is it an in order to overcome

## 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 and 32-35

affairs? Do you feel these Bible verses encourage the married to remain should not look for a partner, yet Why does Paul suggest the unmarried are relevant to today's single people? people more concerned with the Lord's married? In your opinion, are single

standing of the second coming.) Corinthians in light of their under-(It should be noted that these passages would have been speaking to the

Case history

single life' and feels she would like to shortage of single men her age. of spending the rest of her life alone and quite depressed at the thought she desires. She gets very lonely married friends. She wants to get mix of single female friends and a Youth Leader in church, offers active social life, is well respected as singleness limit her and leads an day, but has not let the fact of her always aspired to get married one age. She is in her forties. She has She moved there because there current church for about five years who is a committed Christian. share her life with a partner, one She does not feel 'called to the She thought that by this time in her She cannot see how she can meet a companionship of a marriage that ticking away, but it's more the is aware that her 'biological clock' is there are a few single women. She single men in her church, although to marry her. There are not many yet she has not met anyone who she married and to have children, but as hospitality regularly and has a good seemed to be more people her owr Rebecca has been attending her life she would at least be married. husband when there seems to be a feels she could marry, or who wants

#### Questions

 How would you encourage Rebecca to cope with her loneliness?

- (Be sensitive!) Is there anyone in your group who can relate to Rebecca's story?
- Are they able to share how they feel or how they have felt in the past?
- How does your church involve single
- Do you think married people appreciate the situation that single people are in?

#### Case history

of settling down. They would like to marriage - it's just not for him. ones, but believes God created says he is cynical about marriage, performing with a number of groups. and he spends most of his free time single friends. His hobby is drama, good combination of married and and values his freedom. He has a with the church which is very lively people in his job sometimes joke that see him in a stable relationship. The want to get married. He is under and if he is supposed to get married about. He's had a number of something that he doesn't think wanted to get married. It's because he sees so many unhappy both Christian and non-Christian. He he must be gay. He is very involved comments that he should be thinking pressure from his parents who make his feelings will change and he will that God will provide a wife for him girlfriends in the past. He believes Tom is 38. He says he has never

#### Questions

- Does God call people to a single and celibate lifestyle?
- Is being single a bigger issue for women than men?
- How do people in churches view singleness?
- How should Tom react to the jokes in work?

Compare these two stories, do you think age and gender are factors in the differences of the two people mentioned?

#### Discussion

- What are our reasons for getting married?
- Look at the definitions of singleness you gathered from the dictionary.
   Do they give a positive or negative reference to singleness?
   Write your own definition for 'Singleness'.
- In the shared experience of the group, how is singleness perceived in other cultures? Give examples.
- Does God really call people to be single even if it means they might be unhappy?
- How would you explain that God gives freedom, responsibility and choice to a single Christian who wants to get

- married, but because they cannot find a marriage partner they have to remain single. Is that a choice?
- It is a fact that many single people in church are in sexual relationships without being married (and this isn't just the young people!).
   How should the church respond to this? Is your church addressing this issue? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Do you think we should encourage our children from an early age to consider a single life as well as a married life?

## Summary of difficult issues

- Why is singleness pitied?
- Why is it never encouraged?
- What do single people do with sexual feelings when they are not in a relationship?
- How do people cope when sex is portrayed on TV, advertising bill boards, the Internet and in songs or when everyone around you seems to be in a fulfilling sexual relationship?
- How can we celebrate singleness and make it more acceptable?
- Is singleness to be enjoyed or endured?

Marriage is a relationship and relationships are often difficult...
but is marriage going out of fashion, anyway?

#### Introduction

makes it more important that the but not living together. Such a context each other and having sexual relations intention to get married eventually), and married (maybe without even the are living together without being breakdown, people who may have suffered the pain of marriage include people who have widowed). Today most church's commitment to upholding individuals who may be committed to remarried after divorce, couples who congregations may once-married (i.e. (once only), and the into just three categories: the nevergation will consist of people who fall assume that each and every congrebecause it is no longer possible to married, the married HE ISSUE OF MARRIAGE is an important one for the church, become a matter for Family values have political debate'

The issue is also an important one for society at large. 'Family values' have

marriage is explained and clarified

become a matter for political debate. Increasingly, politicians affirm that a secure marriage is the best environment for the bringing up of children and provides support in both material and personal terms for marriage partners, their children and

their wider families.
On the other hand,
marital breakdown is
recognised as
having a social cost,
as well as the

personal, psychological and material cost borne by the partners who are in conflict. In this context, the church's pro-marriage stance may be regarded as having a vital contribution to make to the well-being of society.

For couples themselves marriage provides an opportunity for each partner to reach his or her potential through the love, acceptance and forgiveness offered by the other. According to Dr. Jack Dominian, marriage is a growing partnership

surrender without absorption, of service experience: it is an experience of personal relationship of which we have predictability. Alan Richardson said that paniments are continuity, reliability and complementarity. The essential accomwhich, like the Trinity, depends on deepest, richest and most satisfying the marriage relationship 's the

without compulsion,

'The implication

grace in the lives of all the truths of by analogies within such divine realities illustrated, as far as conditions. In it are God's love and human experience of love without can be illustrated

> from other forms of 'Christian' marriage

marriage

Christian disciples.' (Alan Richardson, Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, SCM Press, p 258.)

#### The Biblical Teaching on Marriage

animals. Furthermore, the complemenan expression of the human need for personal loneliness and alienation - it is and women in his own image and divine nature, since God made men tarity of men and women in marriage relationship, the fact that we are social God as the means of overcoming In Genesis 2:18-25 marriage is given by human race through the gift of humankind the task of continuing the likeness. As Creator, God has given to reflects a basic characteristic of the

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sexuality is to repudiate something that sexuality. Therefore, to disparage lies at the very heart of the divine

givenness of their humanity means that God as Creator for people in the basic creation and not to the order of marriage belongs to God's order of The fact that marriage is ordained by

possible to distinguish may be... that it is not cation of this may be salvation. One implithat a shared faith and of the dimension between Christians, may speak of marriage forms of marriage. We marriage from other distinguish 'Christian' that it is not possible to brings to the

different kind of relationship to that between a man and a woman who are relationship, but at root it is not a not Christians.

Christian partner to instigate such a conversion to Christ of one of the arises in the relationship due to the concession to human weakness (Mark in certain circumstances, either as a the Scriptures do appear to allow the essentially indissoluble except through basis of the claim that marriage is In marriage, the partners become 'one partners, although it is not for the possibility of separation and/or divorce death (Mark 10:2-12). Nevertheless, marriage (Genesis 2:24). This is the flesh', the so-called unitive aspect of 10:5), or when a spiritual incompatibility

separation (1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

celebration of human love but also at of the marriage partners for each other and Christ's relationship to the Church In the Bible, the relationship of marriage the same time mirrors a longing for two lovers for each other is a the Song of Songs, the desire of the (1 John 4:7-19; 1 Corinthians 13.) In love of God becomes visible in the love (Ephesians 5:21-27). In marriage the God with his people (Hosea 2: 16-20) mirrors the covenant relationship of

children and their nurture in the faith (v embraces the call to faithfulness (v 2), dimension to marriage - it is only for spiritual growth (v 5), and the birth of Corinthians 7: 29-31). this present world (Mark 12:25; 1 There is an eschatological mutuality (vv 3-4), personal and purpose/challenge of marriage In 1 Corinthians 7 the

#### Contemporary Challenges to Marriage

by the partners. Social forces, notably matter of the marriage roles undertaker greater fluidity, for example, in the pattern of marriage. considerable changes There is a much to the traditional more) there have beer past twenty years (or popular, but over the about marriage has led to many people having inflated expectations...

time) employment, have played their males and the growth in women's (partthe loss of full-time employment by



part in this, as has the rise of feminism.

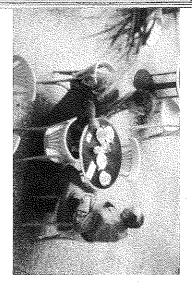
of sex has become focussed in just one couples today the procreational aspect patterns of sexual activity. For many relationship, and led to changes in the had a profound impact on the sexual The availability of contraception has (early) phase of a relationship that

Lack of education same social stigma Cohabitation and no longer carry the single-parenthood several decades overall may last

marriage is the public embodiment of a following statement: 'the institution of Christians would agree with the Nevertheless most

as they once did.

commitment privately entered into. It has symbolic value as an expression of love and commitment, and a practical value in supporting that commitment when times are hard. It represents a social contract between couples and society that implies mutual rights and responsibilities not only between the



partners concerned, but also in relation to the wider community. Marriage has potential to create both a virtuous circle and a vicious spiral of influence between couples and the society of which they are a part' (Marriage Support and the Secure Society, a discussion paper prepared for the Lord Chancellor's Department.)

Expectations about marriage are shaped by role-models and by early experience. Lack of education about marriage has led to many people having inflated expectations of what marriage is able to deliver, leading to early disappointment and increased marital breakdown. It is not realistic to expect one marriage partner to meet all the needs of the other. The different

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phases of the life-cycle of a marriage (eg becoming a couple, having children, the empty nest, etc) each present their own challenges. A new factor in our generation is marriages that last a long time (50-60 years).

There is increased recognition of the need for marriage maintenance and of the nature of the problems that may afflict a marriage relationship, eg. poor communication, conflict, growth at different rates, the failure to maintain the relationship, sexual problems.

#### Case History 1

was full and both partners were extrovert, outgoing person who rar children, Adrian (12) and Sophie sexual relationship became very to bring up their children, but slowly couple. They worked well as a team fine, but increasingly Alan and Tina busy. Outwardly everything seemed While the children were young, life married for 15 years and had two Alan (40) and Tina (38) had been when Tina found a note from in a way that he couldn't to Tina. close to Melanie, a young woman in relationship ebbed away and their the closeness which had been so quieter, withdrawn, more reserved. the church music group. Tina was (10). Alan was a salesman, an Things came to a head at home the music group. He could talk to her infrequent. Alan found himself getting important in the early days of their had very little time just for them as a

> at any time since they married. and they started to feel closer than church and work and seeing their and that she should trust him again other people but came home tired him as someone who sparkled with week. Gradually the trust returned have a night out together once a group and he and Tina started to worthwhile. Alan gave up the music not easy, but proved to be well relationship as a priority. This was saying 'no' to some demands from between them took time - it meant Bridging the gulf that had grown the most important person in his life to convince Tina that she was still doing. It took a lot of talking for Alan had no interest in what he was involved with the children that she out, and he felt that she was so was deep and quiet. Now she saw and he had chosen her because she he had been so outgoing and lively their marriage and recapture what it The couple found it helpful to review painful conversations followed and courage to talk to Alan. Several initial shock of this, Tina plucked up Melanie in Alan's Bible. After the had been attracted to Alan because had been like at the beginning. Tina their minister suggested counselling

#### Case History 2

Richard (48) and Sarah (46) have been married for 24 years. When their youngest daughter Amanda (18) left home to go to college Sarah

> ill might be the way he was dealing helped him to see that his becoming for Richard - it helped him slow with the big changes in both their severe chest infection caused him to back to college to study for a talking to his minister Richard work as a way of coping. After own parents had separated when he painful issues by keeping busy. His cope with Sarah's low feelings. He mother had died when she was 19. of who she was any more. It felt to lives. This was a new way of thinking have several weeks off work. His GP himself re-examining his priorities. A gained confidence, Richard found made all the difference. As Sarah hensive but Richard's belief in her as a secretary. Sarah felt very appredegree, giving up her part-time job With his encouragement she went him home earlier from work, too. deacon. Sarah was surprised to find decided not to seek re-election as a was 16 and he had buried himself in realised that he'd always dealt with Initially, Richard found it very hard to her just as bad as the time when her seemed empty and she wasn't sure bringing up their three children. Now soon snap out of it. She, however, involved in the diaconate at church Richard was very busy at work and that the children had gone, life had found great satisfaction in was not a very confident person and He kept thinking that Sarah would became inexplicably depressed.

down and recognise that he too

as a couple again. for the next phase of their marriage that he and Sarah were both ready missed his children very much, but

#### Case History 3

worked shifts in youth work and their priorities in order to become a about their lifestyle and establish that together they needed to talk church for Tracy and Mark to see pastor and an older couple in the took several conversations with the friends suggested she leave him. It Both felt let down and angry. Her indicated he would be back very late to sleeping there if Mark had upset Tracy would go over to see over little things. When she was and self-centred. They were arguing She thought that he was demanding and wanted things all her own way. thought that she was very organising done or the rubbish put out! Mark to him if the washing up hadn't beer to be done. She couldn't feel close oblivious to the chores that needed he expected sex yet seemed make love. Tracy was indignant that would often say she was too tired to other. Mark felt very hurt that Tracy Some weeks they hardly saw each travelled a good deal in his job. Mark worked long hours and were not going smoothly. Tracy confided in her pastor that things married for only 6 months when she Tracy (23) and Mark (26) had been her parents and she had even taken

> were determined to stick at it. On other did not come easily, but they 'sorry' and learning to listen to each couple in their own right. Saying that they had travelled a long way. their first anniversary both realised

#### Questions

- Ask the group for their comments on the Case Histories.
- It is claimed that churches often contribute to the damage being done to to remedy this or better still avoid it? by organising separate activities for excessive demands on members' time, or women and men. What can churches do the status of marriage through their
- How can the church best help married couples in developing a good and healthy relationship?

Should Christian couples stick together (for the sake of the children?) even when they are unsuited to each other and

- What does the most damage to children conflict in the marriage or separation from a parent?
- What is wrong about adultery?
- How can co-habiting couples be See Cohabiting study. further commitment? Should they? encourages to see marriage as a step of
- What do marriages need to grow and
- · Would a regular 'MOT' help? What would it consist of? Who would do it?

and all of us are likely to know people who have chosen this way of life. Living together is not new, but it is becoming increasingly common How should we react?

#### Introduction

groups of cohabitees increasingly common in Britain. outside of marriage, and it is becoming Researchers have identified three OHABITATION is defined as living together as husband and wife

 young, never married, childless

'In the sixteenth

 those who have married to other been previously

transition from

 never married couples with children

one third of couples cohabit for less couples in Britain is between twentywith the couple then separating or cohabiting relationship lasts two years the Report (Cohabitation or Marriage?), than twelve months. On average a five and thirty-four years. According to The peak age group for cohabiting

period of cohabiting. higher among those who marry after a that the divorce rate is considerably marrying. However, statistics suggest

always been couples who have agreed to live together without formal civil or Cohabitation is not new. There have

recognised as a rite of century betrothal was friends to lovers... marriage is cultural, the difficulty is that because tation in the Bible; our marriage and cohabiless clear cut than in our tation in Bible times is distinction between references to cohabi-There are no specific religious ceremony.

patibilities that remained hidden during century betrothal was recognised as a engagement period, there was society. Long before the modern to explore any personal faults or incom-Betrothal granted couples the freedom rite of transition from friends to lovers ... into by couples. In the sixteenth betrothal, which was commonly entered

September 1999.) Thatcher. p175 Crucible. July -Cohabitation and Marriage, Adrian marriage. (Towards a Theology of courtship and could be disastrous if the earlier, more inhibited phases of carried into the indissoluble status of

with the birth of the first child. In this marriage is viewed as consummated In many African countries even today, a understanding

marriage is seen

eighteenth it. In Britain, as with betrothal an important part of as a process century,₅it was late as the

institution of marriage been put off the

century's major social changes. number of cohabitees since the early virtually disappeared. The rising been formally announced. By the early common for couples to start living 1960's has been marked as one of this twentieth century cohabitation had together as soon as the betrothal had

ends, such cohabitees either go back to singleness. When one arrangement Some cohabit as an alternative to with a view to marriage in the future. being single or find another short term Not all people who cohabit today do so

some young people cohabit because commentators have suggested that long term commitment. Social For others, cohabitation is viewed as a

> Some who cohabit as an alternative to marriages of adults close to them. quences of divorce dissuade some from The fear of the economic consemoney on a home or a special holiday involved, preferring instead to spend marriage do so because of the costs have seen and experienced of the institution of marriage by what they another, they have been put off the although they are committed to one

some cohabit because whole would encourage of the British Public as a Social Attitudes Survey since died out, The British young people to live found that forty per cent Though betrothal has long

entering into marriage.

committed, they have although they are

as an institutionalised part of the mating that cohabitation is becoming accepted to Celebrate, p111.) of engagement used to be. (Something process in the same way as the period together before marriage...it is possible

## Marriage as a Covenant

Traditional Christian understanding support to the couple. (Belonging, p53.) of God. The community pledge their and commitment, which mark the marriage service express faithfulness the couple make as part of the the covenant community of the people families and occurs within the context of than a private contract. It involves In the Bible marriage is much more covenant relationship that marriage is sees marriage as a coyenant. The vows

> enter into society as a couple with new bours. After the wedding the newlyweds witnessed by family, friends and neigh-A marriage which takes place today is legal and social status.

giving than some marriages. acknowledged that some cohabiting commitment to be worked out in the relationships are more healthy and lifewider community. Even so, it has to be the publicly made promise of which, while based on consent, lacks to be a private, informal arrangement Cohabitation, on the other hand, tends

#### responding in a country where cohabitation is increasing? How should the Church be

strictly adhere to a traditional view of in other cultures - both cultures which successful. For many, marriage is a wishing to present an alternative mode marriage and those where cohabitation Church to listen carefully to Christians destructive. It is important for the non-question. For others the only Many cohabiting relationships are very people cohabitation clearly works well life for many people today. For some community, it must face the reality of rooted in responsibility within trying hard to understand. Even while has long been accepted. model of marriage they know is 1 The Church should be listening and

2 The Church should be witnessing to The Biblical tradition of covenant calls the importance of commitment



us to commitment in our relationships people to nurture deep, honest and Christians we should encourage all lasting relationships. with God and one another and as

structure within which committed and affirm marriage as the best relationships can take place. The Church would wish to witness to

even while not condoning, alternative 3 The Church should be accepting of loving relationships. by love in a way that encourages them be a place where people are surprised disapproval. The church should seek to expect to encounter prejudice and turning to the church because they to re-examine the basis of their own lifestyles. Many people are wary of

#### Case history 1

increasingly violent toward her. Two who had, during that time, become married for twelve years to Anthony children under nine. She was Barbara is thirty-two and has three

and will not speak about marriage. view to marrying her in two years' daughter and violently beat her for not want to marry, because getting Ken moves in with her. She does She has, however, suggested that time. Barbara has refused the ring Barbara an engagement ring with a her well. He would like to buy met Ken, who loves her and treats has recently been rehoused and has to live with her girls in a refuge. She the last straw. Barbara left and went leaving her PE bag at school. It was years ago he turned on her middle herself completely again. trusts Ken, she is afraid to commit free is complicated. Though she

#### Questions

- What should Ken do in this situation?
- Can you understand Barbara's point of
- How can the church rebuild people's trust in the institution of marriage?

#### Case history 2

along with her eleven year old son Marsha has left her husband and, love with a colleague at work. in which Marsha agrees to certain pushing to marry Marsha, but wants has moved in with Paul. Paul is Paul's wife left him for a younger, terms set out in the event of a future her to agree to a marriage contract 'more exciting' man. He has fallen in

#### Questions

- Are marriage contracts ever acceptable? Why? Why not?
- How committed do you think Paul is to
- What might lie behind this push for a

#### Case history 3

and their families. They come to simply not been an issue for them. couple with a two year old child. Baptist Church. church wedding is important to them meet the Minister of their local and Colin through Boys' Brigade. A background, Debbie through Guides They both have a nominal church living together before marriage has Debbie's dreams. The thought of not years for the white wedding of They have been saving up for four Debbie and Colin are a young

#### Questions

How would your church react to two

- What advice would you like your minister people living together?
- to give to Colin and Debbie?
- What difference do you think a wedding ceremony will make to Colin and Debbie's relationship? What difference will it make
- Do you think Debbie and Colin's decision to marry will have any effect on their

#### Does the church need to rethink its teaching and attitudes? Introduction How do we understand divorce and remarriage? No-one chooses divorce lightly. It hurts. liberation, contraception and changing previously only open to men. Women's

once a public shame, but Culturally divorce was almost half of marriages end in divorce divorces. In 1987 there were 150,872. in particular. In 1910 there were 593 Now there are over 350,000 a year and NORCE is a growing problem in the Western world and in the UK 'We enter into

government is concerned about the church. Divorce has a people. It is an issue All of us know divorced now is widely accepted serious impact on inside and outside the marriage with very high expectations of each other'

growing rate of marriage breakdown individuals, children and society. The

#### Some Causes of Marriage **Breakdown and Divorce**

the same kind of sexual opportunities employment and economic pressures. been replaced by changes in mobility, More women go out to work and enjoy The stable life style of earlier years has

> common, yet marriage remains a high each other. Cohabitation is increasingly sexual outlooks have made marriages marriage with very high expectations of more vulnerable. We enter into

priority. There is an available and churches counselling services overwhelming array of but marriage support marriage preparation, seriously not just are having to take marriage support and

who go through a divorce. and enrichment and then support for those whose marriages collapse and

#### Legal Changes

breakdown as the grounds of divorce to consent after one to two years. It is the idea of 'no fault' divorce by mutual away from adultery and irretrievable There has been an important legal shift

separation of five years. divorced against their will, after a now also possible for someone to be



#### Christian Marriage

is of a life long, monogamous No one doubts God's ideal for marriage relationship.

The reality is

and divorce break down separation marriages do

possibilities are real That must

Is divorce permissible for Christians? nature of Christian marriage and what drive us back to asking what is the do we do when marriages break dowr

> marriage breakdown? How do we help all those affected by

How do we help people cope with the of their marriage? Is remarriage a possibility? Are there no limits or guilt they may feel about the failure breakdown and divorce? issues of church discipline which are relevant to situations of marriage

## What does the Bible say?

Genesis and God's initial creation pattern for marriage. Paul builds on questions about divorce and remar-When Jesus was presented with trick he is describing the relationship between Christ and the church when that in terms of the new covenant riage, he took the Pharisees back to

and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery - but I am this reason a man will leave his father between a man and a woman. 'For

divorce and remarriage, he took When Jesus was presented with trick questions about 5:31,32.) Christ and the For the Catholic talking about church in (Ephesians

the Pharisees back to Genesis and God's initial creation pattern for marriage' sacrament - a special act of God that marriage is a led to the notion particular this has

is therefore indissoluble. What God has joined together no one can put through some human action. Marriage

> of divorce, but in the eyes of God they which cannot be broken. joined them and they took eternal vows are always one and married. God asunder. People can live separate lives, they may go through a legal form

a marriage is not are situations when other words, there always permitted Catholic church has but the Roman extremely harsh This may seem so much divorce, though question of remarriage' God's desire... but the "The problem ... is not that is clearly not

too closely related or there is no proper where you marry the wrong person, are where there is a lack of discretion, marriage is forced, or based on fear, or no intention to have children, no list of grounds for annulment including really a marriage at all. There is a long regard marriage as indissoluble, when intention to be faithful, no intention to

riage centres on the following key But discussion of divorce and remar-

prophet Malachi in his diatribe against or certificate of divorce. In contrast the the sins of Israel proclaims that the were sufficient grounds to lead to a bill burning dinner or looking old and worr divorce in some Jewish circles where very easy going attitude towards certainly favoured the man and led to a Testament law in relation to divorce. It Deuteronomy 24:1-5 outlines the Old

Lord hates divorce (Malachi 2:16.)

is it ever permissible? In Mark10, Luke with the idea or practice of divorce, but No one pretends that God is delighted 16 and Matthew 5 and 19, we have

short of God's standards and that wil None of us is perfect. and women's hearts. the hardness of men happens because of is clear that divorce question of divorce. It Jesus' response to the We all fail and fall

we can extend it to cover violence or of divorce on the grounds of 'porneia'. ships. It does seem that Jesus in breakdown of relationship is hotly Matthew's account opens the possibility happen in marriage as in all relationtions and is not just adultery. How far This word has clear sexual connota-

a believer then the believer is not continue the marriage relationship with that if an unbeliever does not wish to situation where divorce seems to be bound in that relationship (1 Cor.7:15) believers and unbelievers. He argues examining a whole host of difficult possible. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul is In a different context Paul deals with a relationships especially between

Paul included these exceptions because of problems in the early though some suggest that Matthew and It seems that divorce is a possibility

early church held that divorce was continuity with Jewish teaching. or without certain limits, but the though that is clearly not God's desire passages cited is not so much divorce possible. The problem in all the Regardless of whether this is likely, the church and to make sure that there was

And if she divorces her husband and woman commits adultery against her divorces his wife and marries another Mark and Luke are clear. 'Anyone who question of remarriage.

an equal footing putting them on are quick to adultery.' (Mark with men when raised the status point out that Jesus has

time of Christ, remarriage

was allowed'

divorce in the words of Jesus, 'It has it comes to divorce. There is a tension an adulteress, and anyone who marries divorces his wife, except for marital divorce'. But I tell you that anyone who wife must give her a certificate of been said, 'Anyone who divorces his between Mark and Luke and Matthew the divorced woman commits adultery." who expresses the exception for unfaithfulness, causes her to become

> allows the possibility of remarriage or then remarry or not. that the believer is able to divorce and the exception mentioned by Paul mear only divorce. In the same way, does (Matt. 5:31,32. See also Matt. 19:9.) The question is whether the exception

wrong. For others, it is equally clear is possible then remarriage is always time of Christ, remarriage was allowed that, given the common practice at the For some, it is clear that even if divorce There are two clear opposite views.

and likely. Both from silence. involve arguments

even if divorce is possible then remarriage is always

For some, it is clear that

the common practice at the and his household seen this as grounds well'. Some have husband of but one deacon must be the Paul writes, 'A In 1 Timothy 3:12 remarried people tor excluding wife and must manage his childrer

equally clear that, given

wrong. For others, it is

that this is really a reference to is not necessarily the same as 'deacon meant by 'deacon' in this passage, for it careful thought given to what is actually polygamy. Certainly there needs to be monogamy and the avoidance of from the diaconate. Others suggest

## Case History 1

married in church. associate minister, who was single Baptist church and got to know the converted one night in her local him and he married again. She was daughter. Eventually she divorced Her husband was an alcoholic who regularly beat up her and her baby was 16. She had to get married. Elaine became pregnant when she They fell in love and wanted to be

for and against the marriage would church meeting? What arguments Should this be discussed by the

#### Case History 2

church discipline here? and them about remarriage? Is would you counsel him about divorce were able to get married. How someone. They think that their without a partner and meets sexual demands on his wife. She elder in the local Baptist church. His there a place for some kind of relationship might flourish if they leaves him. He finds life hard life style and partly because of his marriage collapses partly through his John is a powerful lay preacher and

#### Questions

Is either divorce or remarriage possible in biblical terms?

Are we in danger of regarding divorce as



an unforgivable sin?

What do we do when a marriages dies?

How can we help prepare people for the reality of marriage?

How can we help preserve marriages?

marriage breakdown? How can we help people cope with What kind of discipline is appropriate

denominations: between churches, especially of different What kind of discipline is appropriate within a church?



The subject is rarely out of the media, with different groups promoting their agenda. Can a better understanding of the issues help make us more understanding of homosexual people?

## Introduction What is homosexuality?

of one person towards another of the same sex. Just as heterosexuality is not all about sex, so homosexuality involves emotions and feelings of love and tendemess as well as sexual attraction.

percentage of the population who are homosexual vary enormously with some studies suggesting one in ten whilst others have put the figure as low as one in one hundred.

Estimates of the

There is no other common factor that links homosexual people. They are represented in every stratum of society, in every job and profession, and in both sexes. Some will be fathers, some mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and

'Certainly you will seek know people who are geo majo homosexual... though anot they may have chosen to the not to reveal their orientation to you' guis

community.

Why should homosexuality be an issue of concern to Christians?

1 The majority of Christians in recent centuries have taken the Bible to condemn homosexuality unequivo-

or are perceived to be homosexual

God's image simply because they are

less than human beings made in

daughters. Certainly you will know people who are homosexual, and they will very likely be in your congregation and possibly in your family, though they may have chosen not to reveal their orientation to you.

Whilst some homosexual people face the hostility of society head on by

flaunting their sexuality and by seeking to be outrageous, the vast majority seek anonymity in regard to their orientation and will in consequence be indistinguishable from the rest of the

cally, but some modern scholars have opened a debate by questioning this view.

2 People of a homosexual orientation exist and form a significant if small minority of the population.

3 Many homosexual people are to be found within our churches and profess a Christian faith. It must not be assumed that everybody sharing this study with you is heterosexual.

4 Society is becoming much more oper in discussing sexual issues generally and is also more openly accepting of a diverse range of

sexual partnerships.

5 Important changes in legislation relating to homosexuals on such issues as the age of consent, discrimination in the workplace, pension and inheritance rights of same sex partners are likely to be enacted in the near

'If we as Christians seek to be salt and light in our society we need to deepen our understanding of what is happening in that society'

If we as Christians seek to be salt and light in our society we need to deepen our understanding of what is happening in that society and also to engage in a learning exercise regarding homosexuality, otherwise we shall find ourselves increasingly unable to communicate the Gospel in a relevant way.

What changes in attitude regarding sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular have you noticed in recent years?

Does it surprise you to be told that amongst the circle of your family and friends there will

very likely be homosexual people and does it worry you?

How can Christians approach the teachings of the Bible with a grasp of the issues as homosexual people understand them?

## What does the Bible say?

6 Homophobia, bred of ignorance and

The number of texts in the Bible that refer to sexual activity between people of the same sex is few, and none appears in the Gospels. Those that do appear seem unanimous in their condemnation of same-sex genital activity, and many Christians argue that this is God's final word on the matter. Other Christians argue that the condemnation is aimed at practices

prejudice, continues to be a very real threat to people of a homosexual orientation. It can result in verbal abuse, physical assault, toss of employment and accommodation. At

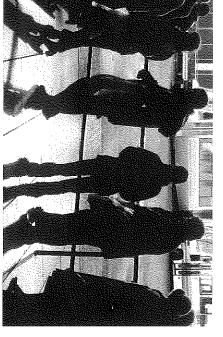
times, men and women are treated as

such as cultic prostitution, and the abuse of one person by another. They maintain that Scripture takes no account of the modern concept of a loving, committed partnership between two people of the same sex.

The most often quoted passages are:

Genesis 19:1-11, the sinfulness of Sodom. A similar narrative appears in Judges 19:16-30. See also Jesus' reference to Sodom in Matthew 10:15. and compare this with Jude 7.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Explicit prohibition of man to man sexual relations.



Romans 1:18-32. Concerns 'unnatural' acts.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:8-11; Rev 21:8 and 22:15 concerning 'perversion' and our place in God's Kingdom.

The following passages contain the word translated *sodomite* in the King James Version of the Bible, but *temple* 

prostitute in modern versions.
Deuteronomy 23:17f; 1 Kings 14:24;
15:12; and 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7.

It will prove a very useful exercise to look up all these passages in various translations, both old and new, to see how difficult it is for translators to be sure of the precise meaning of some of the original Hebrew and Greek words, and to decide how they relate to society in Britain today.

In light of the above we need to ask:

Have we heard Scripture correctly on
the subject of homosexuality? (eg.
the account of the men of Sodom

(Genesis 19) clearly indicates that the men were guilty of gang rape, and Jesus refers to this incident in the context of the sin of inhospitality to strangers in Matthew 10vs 5/15).

There is a basic decision to be made about how the texts listed above are interpreted: some take them to condemn all homosexual partnerships, however loving and stable.

Others apply them to

promiscuous behaviour. Yet others take them to refer to exploitative and/or violent situations. If the former view is taken, is it possible to maintain that the Gospel is 'good news' for people of homosexual orientation? If the texts do not refer to loving same sex partnerships, where then do we turn in the Bible for help to guide us as

we seek a framework in which homosexual people can live and love in a Christ-honouring and fulfilling way?

#### Case history 1

passing phase in his life. of his own sex and now in his midand later sexually attracted to people church membership, he should have seventeen. In being welcomed into was confirmed in a service of embraced the faith of his parents. twenties he realises that this is not a fellowship but he had always known believer's baptism when he was Christian family and at an early age young age Tom had felt emotionally that he was different. From a very felt completely at home in the His genuine commitment to Christ Iom has been brought up in a

From the occasional forthright comments made from the pulpit Tom is aware that the minister thinks homosexuality is a heinous sin, and he dare not speak to the minister or indeed to any other church member even though he feels very mixed up and confused about his orientation and longs to talk to someone and be accepted for what he is.

#### Questions

What would you think Tom ought to do and how could the church and his pastor have made his predicament easier?

## Case history 2

Jim and Tina are brother and sister and are now both in their late teens. Tina has had a boyfriend for some time and plans to get married one day. Her parents have resisted her requests that the boyfriend be allowed to stay overnight and share her room occasionally but eventually they give in, fearing that they will allenate her if they do not.

Meanwhile Jim takes courage in both hands and tells his parents that he is gay. His mother is understanding and would like to meet his current boyfriend, but his father says he doesn't want a 'pansy' for a son, and that he had better leave and find his own place.

#### Questions

 What are the rights and wrongs of this situation?

#### Case history 3

Jane has been living happily with her girlfriend for a long time. Both are Christians and hold positions of responsibility in their church. They see their love in the context of a committed, covenant relationship. Their minister is very understanding of their partnership but suggests that it would be better if they didn't spell out the fact that they are lesbians, for fear of offending other church members.

#### Questions

Is the minister right or wrong and in what ways?

#### Discussion

- Whatever view we hold or come to regarding the morality or validity of homosexual partnerships, the fact remains that there are homosexual people in our churches and many outside who, like all heterosexuals, stand in need of a Saviour.
- How do we help those with homosexual feelings but who feel them to be wrong?
- How should we react to those living happily in a homosexual partnership?
- How do we provide that loving nonjudgmental environment in which people of a homosexual orientation will feel able to be truly themselves within the fellowship?
- How do we support those homosexual Christians who are seeking to live a single, celibate life?
- How do we care for spouses, parents, and other relatives of gay women and men?

#### Difficult Issues

Many people of a homosexual orientation are Christians, and some are members of Baptist Churches. The majority will have chosen not to let their orientation be known. Many more have found the lack of understanding and intolerance in churches towards homosexuals alienating, and have left the organised churches or have never

joined. Some have formed their own 'gay friendly' fellowships eg. the Metropolitan Community Church. The traditional understanding of the Church is that same-sex acts fall outside the boundaries of acceptable practice. Sadly, this teaching has not always been accompanied by pastoral sensitivity.

Few would argue today that homosexual **orientation** is in itself sinful. For those who conclude that homosexual practice is sinful, there are still difficult ethical issues to be decided:

- Many Christians today follow the more tolerant attitude of society in general towards physical intimacy between non married heterosexual couples. What precisely are we to say is forbidden to homosexual couples and what forms of intimacy are permissible? How important is the fact that several homosexual practices carry significant health risks?
- If celibacy is a calling as Jesus clearly stated (Matthew 19.11-12) what of those people (homosexual or not) who do not feel that they have this calling? What are we to say to them?
- For those Christians who conclude that a homosexual partnership is permissible, the question arises: what are the parameters in which such a union can ethically operate?

  For Christians entering into such partnerships, can some form of blessing be appropriate?

Can marriage and a homosexual partnership ever be equated as equal or

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equivalents?

- How should churches respond to Christians who are living in a homosexual partnership and who feel that they can do this as before God?
- If you feel that such partnerships are sinful, are they any more sinful than others which fall short of God's standards
- notably partnerships involving those who divorce and re-marry?
- Is it tenable to say that we hate the sin but love the sinner?
- How can churches and Christians combat homophobia and provide a place of safety for homosexual people?

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NY GROUP working through the chapters of this study guide will find themselves turning repeatedly to 1 Corinthians 7 as a key text. These verses offer an important resource for us as we seek a biblical basis for contemporary moral reflection on issues of human sexuality.

Yet, this is not an easy chapter to understand. It is long (40 verses), complex, and rooted in a context very different from our own. Before we can use Paul's instructions, we must interpret them, and the following comments are an attempt to help you to do this with your group.

## The Content of 1 Corinthians 7

We often forget that those who received a letter from Paul sometimes wrote back! 7.1 informs us that the Corinthians have written a letter to Paul concerning several important matters, and Paul responds to their concerns throughout 1 Corinthians 7-15. The key phrase here is 'now concerning' (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1.). It is the Corinthians, it seems, who have raised the issues of sexual relations (Chapter 7); food offered to idols (Chapters 8-

10); spiritual gifts (Chapters 12-14) and the collection for the saints (Chapter 16). Paul, as their pastor, is responding to their questions.

What, then, were these questions? It is helpful to consider them in the following way.

Paul addresses first. new identity in Christ (chapters 8-15 the Corinthians had drawn from their was not the only false conclusion that be spiritual meant to avoid sex. This church had drawn the conclusion that to that some people in the Corinthians the Corinthians' letter to Paul. It seems Crucial here is the fact that the saying Christians (spiritual people who have The main question is: now that we are deal with others), but it is the issue that Paul's advice, but is a quotation from (ie. have sex with) a woman' is not in 7:1 'It is well for a man not to touch to abstain from sexual relationships? see 1 Corinthians 1-4) is it a good thing been given wisdom and knowledge,

This main question relates to two different groups of people. The Corinthians want to know about *married* couples and *unmarried* 

individuals and couples. Paul deals with the first category in 7:2-16 (with the exception of 7:8-9) and with the second group in 7:25-40 (note the use of the formula 'now concerning' in 7:25)

couples should engage in sexual is a resounding yes activity. Paul's answer to that question itself, but whether or not married scenarios. First, believing marriage sex?, with reference to three different these verses is not so much marriage either (7:12-16). The issue at stake in unbelievers should not initiate divorce Thirdly, Christians who are married to step of separating altogether (7:10-11) must not take the even more drastic Secondly, believing marriage partners relations within marriage (7:2-7). partners should not abstain from sexual married people be abstaining from Paul deals with the question should

status or their normal practice in order question of abstinence from sexual same all the way through these verses suggests that the issue at stake is the such people, and the fact that this word cannot be sure what Paul means by the would have to stay as they are. We married would have to change their relationships. Whereas those who are appears in 7:28, 34, 36-38 strongly the single question should unmarried Paul then proceeds in 7:25-40 to tackle to abstain, those who are not married Again the overriding issue is the He uses the word 'virgins' to describe people get married or stay as they are?

term 'virgin', but the most likely explanation is that it refers to those who are betrothed to be married (hence the discussion in 7:36-38).

Paul's advice to both groups, married and unmarried, can be summarized in one phrase: stay as you are. This ethical refrain pervades the whole chapter, but is most clearly expressed in the section that links the two passages discussed above. In 7:17-24 Paul claims that his basic rule is that a Christian should remain in the same condition as when they were called (see especially 7:24 and compare 1:26-31). Therefore, those who are married should stay married and those who are unmarried should remain unmarried, as Paul is (7:8).

## Interpreting 1 Corinthians 7

So much for the basic argument of the chapter. How should Christians who live in very different times (where notions of marriage and betrothal were understood in different ways from today) and who often face a different set of problems (sexual asceticism is rarely encountered in today's society!), make use of this passage? The following considerations must be taken into account:

The idea that Paul was somehow against sex and against marriage finds no support in this passage. If anyone was against sex it was some of the Corinthian Christians (see the above comments on 7:1). Paul, in

option (see point 4 below). 31), remaining single is the preferable the present circumstances (7:26, 29single (7:8, 26, 38) are not a result of expressing his preference for being either (a) the hypothetical possibility only reasons for not having sex are ships ought to be a central feature of derive from his conviction that, given his antipathy towards marriage, but (7:15). In addition, Paul's comments non-Christian partner initiates a divorce prayer is necessary (7:5-6) or (b) if a that an intense but limited time of the marital relationship, and that the contrast, insists that sexual relation-

belong to one another on equal terms; of Paul's advice in 7:12-16, 27-28, 32is entirely reciprocal. This is also true of possession, gift and authority in 7:2-4 both partners. Note how the language sex is both a duty and a privilege for the man, Paul's language indicated that standing of sexual relationships as a have equal power to decide whether to outside of marriage men and women 35. In marriage men and women duty for the woman and a privilege for missed. In contrast to any undersexual relationships. This is often affirms the mutuality of marital and Paul's language in this chapter

Paul reiterates the teaching of Jesus about divorce for Christian believers Some of the Corinthians, it seems, were considering divorcing one another as a means of sexual abstention. In 7:10-11 Paul cites the instruction of

that strictly speaking Paul and Jesus to remarry. Paul's words are in line, divorce, not that she or he is then free in such cases, the Christian is free to sister is not bound'. Paul's point is that Paul's advice to Christians in mixed nonetheless possible occurrence. separation) is seen as a regrettable but either the husband or the wife initiating contrast to the Jewish traditions of from sexual relationships. It must be is unnecessary to the argument given the person who is divorced by their only prohibit remarriage for the one who remarriage is ruled out. Note, however Christian divorce is permissible, but then, with the teaching of Jesus: for the phrase 'in such a case the brother or (the so-called Pauline privilege). This that a Christian, if divorced by their marriages reinforces this position. 7:15 Paul and Jesus forbid is remarriage clearly recognised, however, that what tempted to think that the second point should not take place and (b) that if it the point that (a) such separation 16:16//Matthew 5:32) in order to make Jesus concerning adultery (see Mark husband or wife. initiates divorce. Nothing is said about probably reads too much into the unbelieving spouse, is free to remarry has sometimes been taken to mean Deuteronomy 24:1-5, Paul envisages 'unchastity clause'). Divorce (and in Jesus in Matthew 19:9, the so-called (though note the exception attributed to that the Corinthians wanted to abstain does, remarriage is forbidden. One is 10:11//Matthew 19:9 and Luke

> and Jesus' teaching.] are two ways of understanding Paul's and 7:28). He also draws a distinction such people can marry again (see 7:9 goes on to allow for the possibility that support for this view), and interprets the are no longer, married (the usage in should be aware, however, that there forbidden in the former state. claims, that remarriage is only divorce. Paul teaches, Thatcher between the states of separation and than non-betrothal. In both cases Paul wife?', as a reference to divorce rather question of 7:27, 'are you free from a 7:11 of the same word provides partial to include those who have been, but understands the term 'unmarried' in 7:8 for the possibility of remarriage. He Sexuality 3; Sheffield: Sheffield debate these issues fully here; you Unfortunately there is no space to Academic Press, 1999), pp.264-267 Christian Marriage in Postmoderr Thatcher, Marriage After Modernity. other relevant verses see Adrian Thatcher argues that Paul does allow [For an alternative view of these and Times (Studies in Theology and

Paul's preference for the single state derives from his convictions about the 'present crisis'. This point has often been misunderstood. Paul's argument is not there is no marriage in heaven. Jesus is coming back soon, so therefore you might as well stay as you are and not bother marrying. Pather it is: we already live with distress and crisis (7:26, 28) and these

things are indications that the age to come has partly arrived and this age is in the process of passing away (see 10:11) and marriage will bring additiona difficulties (7:28) so therefore those who have not yet taken that step do well not to take it, but commit no sin if they do.

state is morally superior to the other. status, but in the assertion that one to remain single, others may prefer to present history and that Christ's death us that all Christian moral reflection for a crisis situation. They do remind preference. This brings us to our final Paul refuses to say as much, and offers morally or ethically better than being not tell us, however, that being single is creation in the here and now. They do and resurrection make possible a new that God's kingdom has broken into must take place in the light of the fact little more than his own opinion and marry. The sin does not lie in the married, or vice-versa. Paul preferred Thus these verses are pastoral advice

Most of this chapter consists of Paul's personal opinion: not that Paul thought that his opinion was without weight (see 7:40). The significance of this point is debatable. Paul, in setting up an explicit contrast between his own advice and the command of the Lord (7:10, 12), seems to allow for the possibility that, while Jesus must be obeyed, the Corinthians can disregard Paul's advice without falling into sin. Whether or not we feel

able to disregard or reinterpret his words depends largely upon one's view of the Bible in relation to the formulation of ethical guidelines for the present day. What does seem to be clear, however, is that this contrast opens up the possibility, perhaps even the necessity, for Christians to do now what Paul did then, ie. to reflect carefully upon the basic teaching of Jesus about marriage in the light of our present context. After all, we think that we too have the Spirit of God. This may mean that we arrive at different answers, positions and

formulations than those offered to us by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. Were Paul the Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. Were Paul the pastor with us, I suspect that he would encourage us to pursue such exploration. [For a good example of how it might be done in relation to this and other issues, you would do well to consult Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament:*Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics (New York; HarperCollins, 1996), chapter 15.]

this and well to this and well to well to well to well to New which is studying the book. They are written on the assumption that the group will have read the relevant

the chapters. selective use of the questions printed in identical, you will at times have to make matter and because no two groups are the sensitive nature of the subject possible pitfalls. Given the key issues and you aware of some of are designed to make done so). The notes if you discovered that they had not for people to read the chapter through, ten minutes or so at the start of a study study (though it would be wise to allow chapter through before arriving for the group will have read the relevant written on the assumption that the which is studying the book. They are 'Avoid putting people on the spot

You could well find that your group needs a second session to deal adequately with some of the chapters, and remember that there are no prizes for asking every question!

## 1 Making Moral Choices

This book is designed to be the first of a series, tackling different areas in which we have to make moral choices.

This chapter is a general introduction to the business of making moral choices, and will be reprinted in the subsequent books. Please do not be tempted to dive into the other chapters without giving this one careful attention.

To be human is to be faced with moral choices. The implication of this statement is that the way we make such choices says a

lot about the kind of

human being each is

The section on using

the Bible raises the issue of how we understand its authority. There will probably be differing theories about the authority and inspiration of the Bible held by you group members. Decide ahead of the study how far you want to explore this issue.

#### 2 Sex and God

Be aware that some members of your group will be less comfortable than others in talking about sexuality in general, and their own sexuality in particular. Avoid putting people on the spot, for example by coercing them into

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making a contribution when they would rather keep quiet.

It might be helpful to introduce the session with an 'ice-breaker'. For instance, asking people to list their earliest recollection of learning about sex and from whom. Ask for any embarrassing stories about talking about sex with parents or children, but make it plain that the group only wants to hear stories that members are happy to tell for its amusement!

As long as you are not going to cause undue embarrassment, it would be good to seek out the opinion of a single person on many of the questions.

#### Further Questions:

We need to understand that marriage is not going to make us whole people, only God can do that.

- Is there an assumption around that married people are somehow more whole than single people?
- vulnerable than married people?

  Why do single people sometimes feel left out of churches?

In what ways are single people more

- Is it realistic to expect a single person to behave as if they were not a sexual being?
- Are there any practical suggestions about changing the way we behave, as individuals or as achurch, towards single people?

#### 4 Marriage

The comment in the first paragraph about the mixed marital backgrounds of people in our churches needs to be kept in mind when doing this study. Avoid

embarrassing individuals and try not to let judgmental comments go unchallenged. If any of the case-histories happens to parallel the story of individuals in the church, tread carefully or not at all!

#### Further Questions

- Is the Family Values slogan a way of Christians influencing political thinking?
- Do you agree with Dr. Jack Dominian's opinion?
- Is the converse also true, that marriage can be the most damaging relationship in which to be trapped?
- Ask for the group's comments on the case histories.
- What advice might you have wanted to offer?
- What can be learned from the story?
- Do you think there is such a thing as Christian marriage?
- Do the Bible passages about marriage seem to present an impossibly lofty ideal?
- Do many people enter into marriage with unrealistic expectations?

#### 5 Cohabitation

It would be wise to check whether any of your group members is cohabiting, in order to avoid comments that might prove offensive. Equally, be sensitive to the likelihood that most of the group will know people (friends, family members or connected to the church) who are cohabiting. It may be a useful way in to ask the group who they know in this situation, and what general comments they have. Few Christians use the term *living in sin* these days, but some are uncomfortable in talking to unmarried couples.

You might like to reflect on some of the information in the second paragraph, particularly the comment about the high incidence of divorce.

Some cohabit as an alternative to singleness.

The point here is that cohabitation may be regarded by some as a temporary arrangement, with no thought of permanent commitment or marriage ever entering the equation. Is this in any way less defensible than cohabitation treated as 'marriage but without the bit of paper'?

Crucial to the whole debate on cohabitation is this issue: can marriage as we know it be established from Scripture as the norm, or is it largely an expression of culture? Does cohabitation actually meet the requirements of Scripture? While this may sound dangerously liberal, it is clear that marriage customs from other cultures are very different from our own but still trace their origins to the Bible and are practised by Christians.

#### 6 Divorce

A similar caution to those in previous sections, that there may be divorced people in the group and that all will know divorced people. Ask for contributions about what really hurts when divorce occurs. How many people suffer, in addition to the couple themselves? In what ways? Why should the government be concerned about the rate of marriage breakdown?

If there are single people in your group it would be helpful for you to think about whether they have chosen to be single, are comfortable with being single or are desperately keen to stop being single!

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The teaching that a divorcee is not free to remarry is alien to our society and seems to be a minority view in church circles. Ask the group if they know of individuals who regard remarriage as unthinkable, following their divorce. Suppose that the minister of your church has just declared from the pulpit that no divorced Christian should ever contemplate remarriage: what would the effect of this be?

#### 7 Homosexuality

Here is another area where sensitivity is required. Many people know homosexuals, but they may not always know that this is so. As the chapter says, there may be someone in the group with homosexual orientation (declared or secret). If you know that this is the case, it would be wise to talk

to them in advance about their reaction to the chapter and also about how openly they choose to be known as homosexual within the discussion.

Avoid choice of language that may be unhelpful.

How we read the Bible will to some extent influence the way we understand and interpret the texts dealing with homosexuality. Different translations can give very different impressions, so sample as many as you can.

Perhaps as urgent as coming to a clear point of view about homosexuality is the need to understand and care for people who find themselves struggling with this issue. We all have a measure of pastoral responsibility for each other, whatever we may think of another's conduct.

## Background information in relation to ministers

It may be helpful to be aware that the Baptist Union has guidelines concerning "Conduct unbecoming to the ministry".

These impinge upon a number of the issues discussed in this booklet

The guidelines set out below were agreed by the Baptist Union Council in 1988 following the work of a specially convened task group and subsequently reaffirmed in 1991:

- Divorce, separation and remarriage should not automatically remove or debar a minister from the Accredited List.
- The following matters should be referred by the Superintendents to the Head of the Ministry Department:
- (a) Serious sexual misbehaviour.
- (b) A breakdown in marriage leading to divorce or separation.
- 3. Homosexual orientation (whether male or female) is not of itself a reason for exclusion from ministry, but homosexual genital practice is to be regarded as unacceptable in the pastoral office, and is to be treated as falling within these guidelines. Ministers are expected not to advocate homosexual or lesbian genital relationships as acceptable alternatives to male / female partnership in marriage.

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## Recommended Reading

There is an immense range and quantity of material available. It is hoped that the following suggestions will prove helpful.

## Chapter 1 Making Moral Choices

A Crash Course on Christian Ethics: Colin Brown (Hodder & Stoughton, 1998)

#### Chapter 2 God and Sex

God, Family and Sex: Ed David W Torrance (Handsel Press, 1997)

#### Chapter 3 Singleness

Married to a Single Life: Belinda Barwick (SPCK, 1997)

The Single Issue: Al Hsu (IVP,1997)

#### Chapter 4 Marriage

Passionate and Compassionate Love: Jack Dominian (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991)

Christian Marriage: Jack Dominian (Franciscan Press, 2000)

Belonging - A Resource for the Christian Family: Ed. Anne Wilkinson-Hayes and Paul Mortimore (BU Publications, 1994)

#### Chapter 5 Cohabitation

Cohabitation and Marriage - A Pastoral Response: Greg Forster (Marshall Pickering, 1994)

Cohabitation or Marriage? (A Report): Declan Flanagan and Ted Williams (Belmont House Publishing, 1997)

#### Chapter 6 Divorce

Healing Love's Wounds - a pastoral approach to divorce and re-marriage: Greg Forster (Marshall Pickering, 1995)

Questions about Divorce and Remarriage: AJC Cornes (Monarch Publications, 1993)

#### Chapter 7 Homosexuality

The Way Forward?: Ed Timothy Bradshaw ( Hodder & Stoughton, 1997)

Welcoming but not affirming: Stan Grenz (Westminster, John Knox Press, 1998)

Reluctant Journey: George Hopper (Available price £3.50 from the author - Box 5846, Basildon, Essex SS15 4GS)

Faith Hope and Homosexuality: Report by Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (1998)