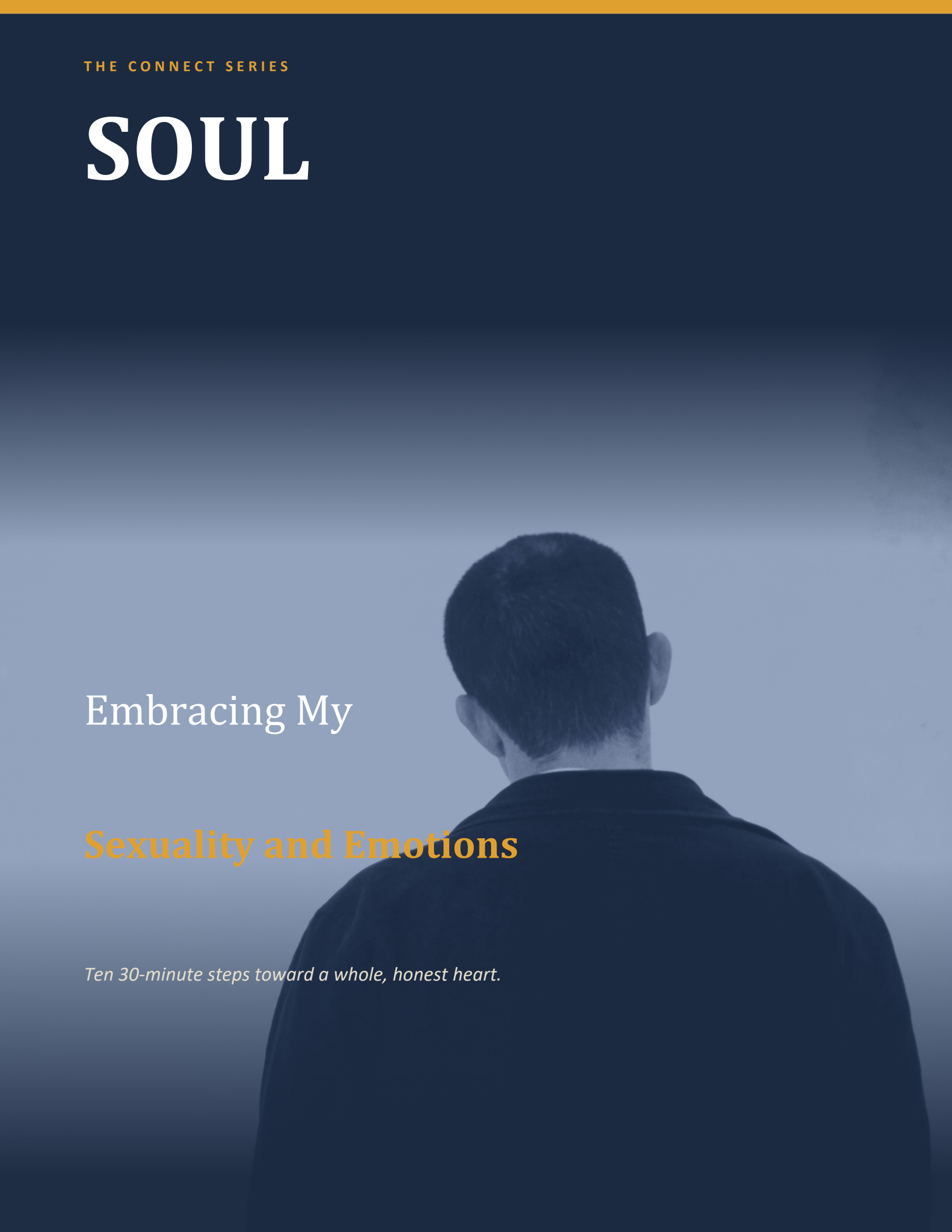
THE CONNECT SERIES

SOUL



Embracing My

Sexuality and Emotions

Ten 30-minute steps toward a whole, honest heart.

A personal and small-group study of sexuality, emotions and God

THE CONNECT SERIES

SOUL

Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions

Ten chapters, 30 minutes each

by Ralph Ennis, Judy Gomoll, Dennis Stokes and Christine Weddle



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Content development team: Ralph Ennis, Judy Gomoll, Dennis Stokes and Christine Weddle. **Original cover and interior design:** Christine Weddle. **Consultation:** Sara Wevodau, Debbie Entsminger and Rebecca Goldstone. **This edition:** adapted for younger readers, with shorter chapters, plain language, safety notes and new images.

Some of the stories in this book are true to life. Others are composites or made up, and any resemblance to people living or dead is coincidental.

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INSIDE

Your ten steps

Each chapter starts with a question you may already be asking, and takes about 30 minutes. At the end you'll find a page to celebrate with your group, a memory verse for each chapter, and ideas for what to do next.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUALITY			
1	**Sexuality: What's Sacred about It?** *Is sex sacred?*	See your body and sexuality as God's good gifts, made to point to Him.	1
2	**Sexuality: Jealousy and Love** *Why is God jealous?*	Discover a God who fights for your heart, and how that shapes your desires.	8
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WELCOME

Your body and your feelings matter

Sexuality and emotions are some of the most powerful and confusing parts of being human. Almost everyone wonders what is normal, what God thinks, and how to **live well** in the middle of it all.

This study isn't just about rules. It's about **bringing your body, your desires and your feelings to Jesus**. It builds on other Connect studies about receiving God's love (GOD) and who God says you are (IDENTITY). Here you'll see how He wants to shape your sexuality and your emotions, and how looking at Him changes you.

IS THIS THE RIGHT TIME?

- **Start with IDENTITY if you can.** This study builds on it. It works best after a few months of trust with a small group or a mentor.
- **Go at your own pace.** Some chapters touch sexuality, past hurt and shame. Skip anything that's too much, and come back when you're ready.
- **The view taught here is traditional.** The study teaches sex within marriage between a man and a woman, and purity in singleness. Your honest questions are welcome.
- **If you're in crisis or being hurt,** talk to a counselor, pastor, parent or doctor first. A study can't replace professional help.

You can work through it on your own, with a friend, or in a group. If a question hits a sore spot, that's okay. Skip it, come back later, or talk it through with someone you trust.

HOW IT WORKS

Think of each chapter as a short trip

Every chapter follows the same path, so after the first one you will know what to expect. You stop four times along the way. A timer helps: the whole trip is about 30 minutes.

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

The story	A short story to get you thinking. Some are true to life, and others are made up from common experiences.
Pause 1 *Exploring what God says*	You look at what the Bible says about the topic, often through real people like Jesus, Paul or Abraham. Most verses are printed for you.
Pause 2 *Exploring your reality*	You get honest about where you are right now, and how you got there. No one has to see your answers.
Pause 3 *Coming alive to God*	You respond to what you've read, with a few words, a prayer, or by memorizing a verse. This is where it moves from your head to your heart.
Pause 4 *Journeying forward*	You pick one small step for this week, journal, and close in prayer.
Digging deeper *(optional)*	Extra questions and ideas if you want more. Skip it and you won't miss anything.

ABOUT THE PICTURES

Each chapter has photos and graphics to help you think and feel. Spend a minute with them, and picture yourself in the scene. If a picture bothers you, ask yourself why. Every chapter also gives you one verse to memorize, with a card you can save as a lock screen.

THREE HABITS

Get the most out of every chapter

1

Read slowly

Read each verse like a message meant for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand it.

2

Be honest

Write or draw something for every question, even 4 or 5 words. Honest beats polished.

3

Pray as you go

Not only when a question says "pray." Tell God what you're thinking, even if it's "I'm scared of this."

Finding your rhythm. Most people finish a chapter in one 30-minute sitting. If that's too much, try three 10-minute sessions, or one Pause a day. Pictures are part of the study. Look at them and picture yourself in the scene. If an image bothers you, ask yourself why.

If you're doing this in a group

A group works best when everyone feels safe. Read these agreements out loud together at your first meeting.

1. **What's said here stays here.** Don't repeat what you hear in the group to anyone outside it.
2. **Share only for yourself.** Use "I" statements. Talk about your own life, not "we" or "you."
3. **Listen, don't fix.** Skip the advice and the "me too" stories. Accept how others feel without trying to change it.
4. **Go at your own pace.** Nobody has to share. Nobody gets pushed. Silence is okay, and some questions can stay unanswered.
5. **Keep it respectful.** Talk about struggles honestly, but never in graphic detail, and never about someone else's private life. All feelings are welcome. Ask before you hug or touch.
6. **God does the changing.** The group's job is to make a safe place for His love. The Holy Spirit does the rest.
7. **Know the limits.** A group isn't therapy. If someone needs more help, encourage them to talk to a pastor, counselor or trusted adult. If someone is in danger or being hurt, tell a trusted adult right away.

> **TALK ABOUT IT TOGETHER**
>
> After you read these agreements, finish this sentence out loud: *"One thing I need from this group to feel safe is …"* Then pray together before you start.



THE STARTING LINE

Before you start

Take about five minutes. Be honest. You'll come back to this page after Chapter 10 to see what has changed.

1 Finish this sentence: *When I think about my body and my feelings, I feel …*

---

2 How at peace am I with my sexuality and emotions right now? Circle a number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0 = not at peace *10 = very much at peace*

3 Which topic is hardest for me right now? (My body, desire, past hurt, anger, sadness, loneliness, something else?)

---

4 What do I hope to get out of this study?

A PRAYER TO START

God, You made me, and You know me. Help me be honest as I read. Meet me in my body, my desires and my feelings, and teach me to see myself the way You do. Amen.

IF THINGS FEEL HEAVY

Some chapters touch hard things like sexual hurt, shame and deep sadness. If you're going through something painful, talk to a trusted friend, pastor, counselor or parent. If someone has hurt or pressured you sexually, it is not your fault. RAINN's hotline is **1-800-656-4673**. If you're thinking about hurting yourself, call or text **988** (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S.). Call **911** if you're in danger.

Ready? Turn the page to Chapter 1: Sexuality: What's Sacred about It?

SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 1

Sexuality What's Sacred?

More than a body.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

Your sexuality is part of who God made you to be. It's more than sex. It touches your body, your heart and your spirit. In this chapter you'll look at what God says about it and why He calls it good.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **See** sexuality as part of your whole identity.
- **Compare** the world's messages with God's design.
- **Learn** what 1 Corinthians 6 says about your body.
- **Say** Genesis 2:24–25 from memory.

KEY VERSE

A man will be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. They were both naked, and they felt no shame. **Genesis 2:24–25 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

What do we share? What do we guard?

A story from the original study, updated.



Illustrative photo

Brittany and Chris have been dating for a while. He's passionate about life and about her, and he loves God. Their friends and the media say, "Do whatever feels good." But they also want to please God and treat sex as something deep and serious.

Now when they're together, they both feel the tension. They want to care for each other and be real. But what should they guard, and what should they share? **They're not sure where the line is.**

Q1 When you hear the word "sexuality," what comes to mind? Is it only about sex, or something bigger?

Q2 In your own words, what would "healthy sexuality" look like?

IMPORTANT

This study talks openly about sex and relationships. Skip anything that feels like too much. If someone has pressured or hurt you sexually, it is **not your fault.** Tell a trusted adult. In the U.S., RAINN's hotline is **1-800-656-4673**, and you can call or text **988** if you feel hopeless.

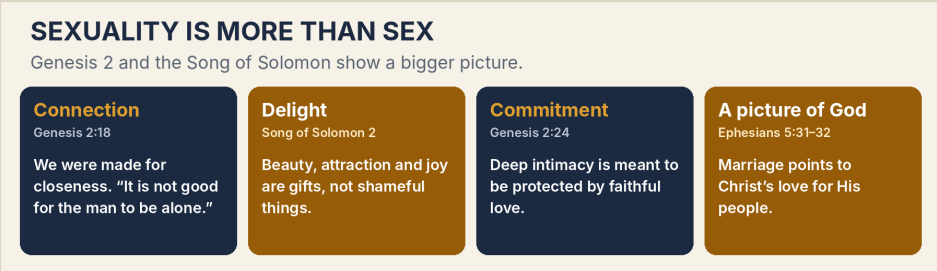
PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Sexuality is part of God's "very good"

God made us spiritual beings and sexual beings, with a gender and a body. In Genesis 2, God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (v. 18). The first man and woman were "naked, and they felt no shame" (v. 25). The Song of Solomon is a whole book of love poetry, and it says, "Place me like a seal over your heart… for love is as strong as death" (8:6). It also warns: "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires" (8:4).



Q3 Read Genesis 2:18–25. In what ways is sexuality about your heart and spirit, not just your body?

Q4 Read Song of Solomon 2:8–10 and 8:4–7. What do you notice about beauty, love, closeness or protecting love until the right time?

Q5 Whether or not you're dating, how do love and respect shape the way you treat your sexuality and other people's?

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

Which voice is louder?

Music, movies and social media preach about sex all day long. Some of it says sex is only physical or only about lust. Others talk about a "soul mate." God's picture is bigger. Check which voice you hear the most.

TWO VOICES ABOUT SEX

Which one are you hearing most?

CULTURE OFTEN SAYS	GOD'S DESIGN SAYS
○ If it feels good, do it	○ Sex touches your whole self
○ Sex is just a physical thing	○ Sex is meant to be sacred
○ You're not normal if you wait	○ Waiting is wise and strong
○ Your body is for being looked at	○ Your body is a temple
○ Love is a feeling	○ Love is a commitment

Q6 What messages about sex have shaped how you see yourself or other people? Where did they come from?

Q7 Circle one: Positive or Negative. Explain. "I am a sexual being." "I'm full of longing and desire." "My sexuality is sacred."

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Your body belongs to the Lord

After Adam and Eve rebelled (Genesis 3), shame and blame entered their relationship. In Corinth, sex and religion were tangled together, so Paul told believers what their bodies were for (1 Corinthians 6:12–20).

FOUR TRUTHS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 6

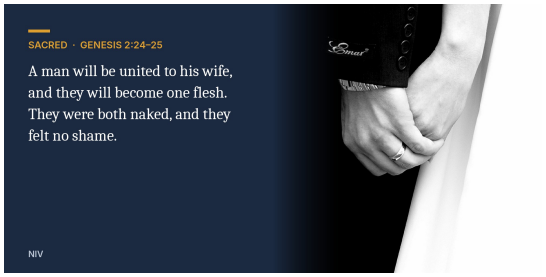
Paul wrote to a city as sex-saturated as ours.

You're free	Your body matters	Joined to Christ	A temple
6:12	6:13–14	6:15–17	6:18–20
But not every choice is good, and some habits can enslave you.	It's made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about it.	Your body is a part of Christ's Body.	The Holy Spirit lives in you. You were bought at a price.

Q8 Which truth above surprises you most? Why? What do you think it means to be a sexually healthy follower of Jesus today, single or not?

Q9 God is jealous for you in a good way. He doesn't want to share your heart with a rival (2 Corinthians 11:2). If Adam and Eve had understood that, how might it have changed their choices? How does it change yours?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Sacred, Genesis 2:24–25. A man will be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."
2. Say the second half three times: "They were both naked, and they felt no shame."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- Sexuality touches your **body, heart and spirit.**
- God called it **very good.** It's meant to be protected, not despised or used.
- Your body is **a temple** of the Holy Spirit. You belong to Him.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Talk with Jesus about how close you feel to Him. Ask Him to speak into the part of you that longs for love. Tell Him anything you've been hiding, and let Him love you right where you are.

Take one step

1. **Notice.** This week, notice one message about sex on your phone or TV. Ask: "Is that God's voice or the world's?"
2. **Talk.** Talk to a trusted friend or mentor about one question from this chapter.
3. **Thank.** Thank God for your body and that He made you on purpose.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *God, thank You for making me whole: body, heart and spirit. Teach me to treat my sexuality as sacred. Heal what's been hurt, and help me honor You. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



God as Bridegroom. The Bible compares God's love for His people to a bridegroom and his bride (Isaiah 62:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7). Jesus prayed that His followers would be one with Him, as He is one with the Father (John 17:21–24). Your deepest longing for closeness is a longing for God Himself.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. What does "soul mate" mean to you? How is Jesus a soul mate in a different sense?
2. Read Isaiah 62:5. How do you feel about God rejoicing over you like a bridegroom over his bride?
3. How can friends talk honestly about sex and still treat it as sacred?
4. God could have made us reproduce without being male and female. What does being made male and female show us about God?

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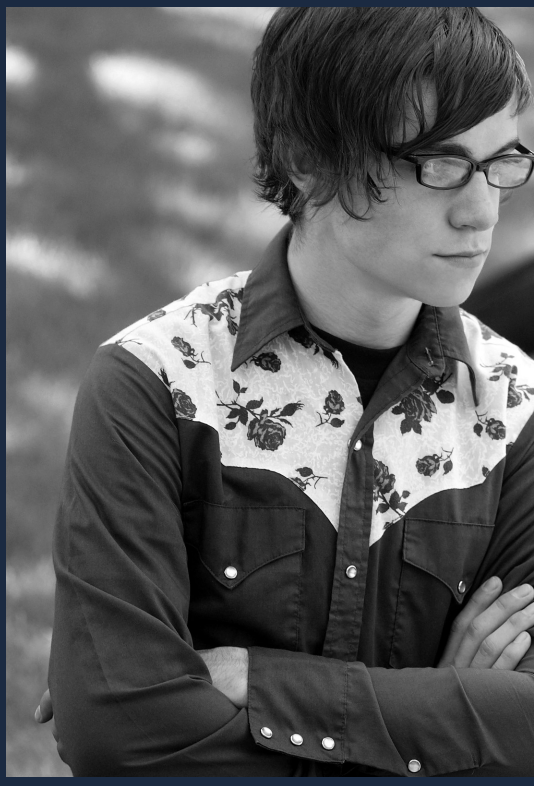
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 2

Sexuality and Jealousy

Fought for, not controlled.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

Jealousy isn't always bad. The Bible says God's name is Jealous. In this chapter you'll see the difference between envy, controlling jealousy and the protective, faithful love God has for you.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Tell apart** envy, worldly jealousy and godly jealousy.
- **See** God's jealous love in Hosea's story.
- **Notice** what competes for your loyalty to God.
- **Say** Hosea 2:19–20 from memory.

KEY VERSE

I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. **Hosea 2:19–20 (NIV)**

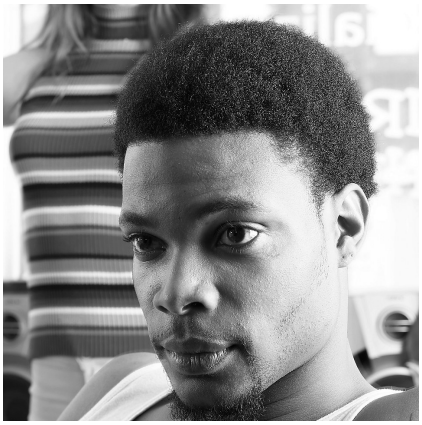
START HERE

A short story

4 min

The one who said yes

A story from the original study, shortened.



Illustrative photo

A small group of twelve young adults was asked, “Is jealousy a positive or negative emotion to you?” Eleven said negative. One woman said positive.

The group asked her why. She said, “Because when my husband stopped being jealous for me, it was the end of our relationship.” **She didn’t mean controlling. She meant he stopped caring enough to fight for her.**

Q1 What do you think she meant by “he stopped being jealous for me”?

Q2 When you hear “jealous,” do you think good or bad? Why?

IMPORTANT

Real love is never controlling. If someone tracks your phone, cuts you off from friends, threatens you or hurts you “because they love you,” that is **not** godly jealousy. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** or call or text **988**. Tell a trusted adult.

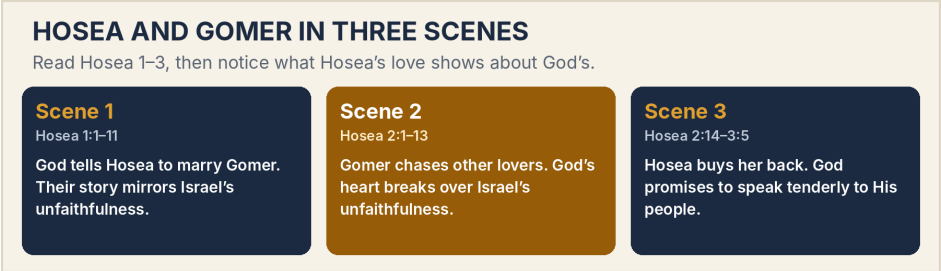
PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

A jealous God, a faithful husband

Exodus 34:14 says, “the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” That means He guards what He loves. In the Song of Solomon, the bride says, “Place me like a seal over your heart… for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave” (8:6). In Hosea, God tells the prophet to love a wife who keeps running away, as a picture of His love for us.



Q3 Read Song of Solomon 8:4–7. How does good jealousy protect a relationship? Would you want someone to be jealous for you this way?

Q4 Read Hosea 1–3. What does Hosea’s love for Gomer show you about God’s love for us?

Q5 Where might Gomer have ended up if Hosea hadn’t been jealous for her? Did she deserve his love?

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

Envy, control or protective love?

People mix up these words. Saying "I'm so jealous of your tickets!" is really **envy.** Paul warns against "jealousy and quarreling" in 1 Corinthians 3:3, but he also felt a "godly jealousy" for the Corinthians to stay true to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). The difference is whether it controls or protects.



Q6 Think of a time you felt envy. Then think of a time someone should have been jealous for you, in the protective sense, but wasn't. What did you feel?

Q7 Which of these three do you act out most? Which do you want most from a future partner?

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

God won't leave or give up on you

Your longing to be fought for points to God. His jealous love is protective, possessive, delighting and freeing. He promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Ezekiel 16 tells a painful story about God and Jerusalem. Its images are mature, so read it with a mentor or read verses 1–14 and 59–63.

GOD'S JEALOUS LOVE IS...

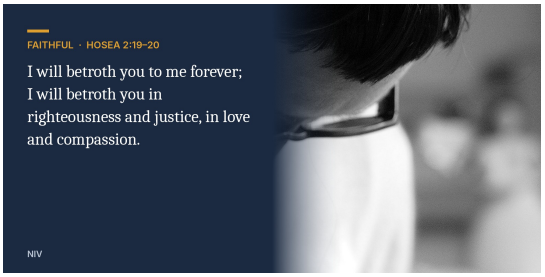
Circle the one you need most right now.

Protective	Possessive	Delighting	Freeing
He fights for your heart against rivals.	You belong to Him. He claims you as His own.	He rejoices over you like a groom over his bride.	He covers your shame and sets you free.

Q8 What rivals compete for your loyalty to God: relationships, money, approval, screens? How does it feel to know God is jealous for you?

Q9 How would your story be different if God weren't jealous for you? Why do you think God used love and marriage pictures to describe Himself?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Faithful, Hosea 2:19–20. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,"
2. Say the second half three times: "in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- God's name is Jealous. He **guards and delights** in you.
- **Envy** and **control** are not the same as godly jealousy.
- When someone **leaves,** God never does.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
> Tell God how you have or haven't felt His jealous love. Admit any fears about closeness, with God or other people. Ask Him to show you anything to change so you can keep your sexuality sacred.

Take one step

1. **Name.** Name one rival for your loyalty to God this week.
2. **Thank.** Thank God for not walking away, even when you did.
3. **Check.** Ask a friend if your jealousy ever feels controlling.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
> *God, thank You for being jealous for me and for never walking away. Show me what competes for my heart. Teach me to love like You love. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



Words of Jesus. Jesus sounds like a heartbroken lover. “How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Luke 13:34). Hebrews 13:4–5 puts honoring marriage right next to God’s promise, “I will never leave you.”

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Read Ezekiel 16 with your group or mentor. What stands out about God’s love and our unfaithfulness?
2. What might God want us to know about Himself through the way He made us male and female?
3. Did someone walk out on you who should have stayed? What would it mean to hear God say, “I won’t leave you”?
4. How can you protect an important relationship without controlling it?

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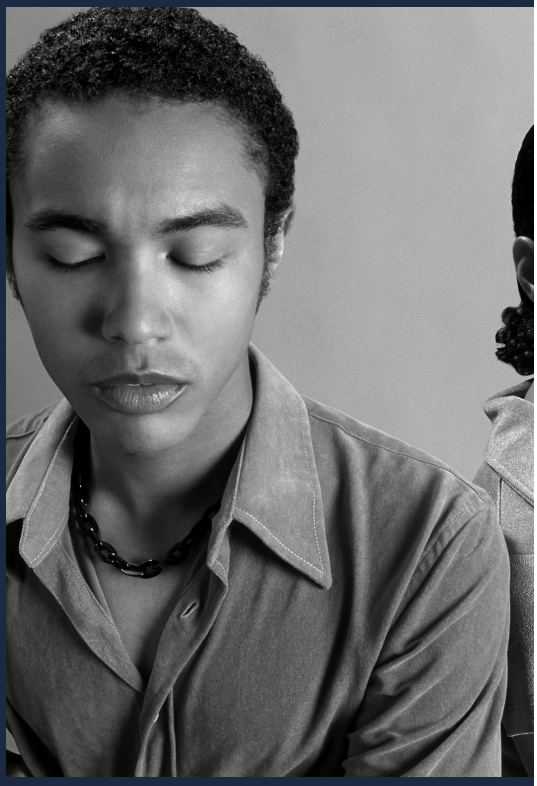
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 3

Masculinity and Femininity

Two reflections of God.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

God made you male or female on purpose. Both reflect His image, and both are "very good." You'll see what men and women share, how we differ, what went wrong in Genesis 3, and why gender is more than muscles or makeup.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **See** your gender as a gift from God.
- **Learn** what men and women share and how they differ.
- **Notice** where shame or comparison creeps in.
- **Say** Genesis 1:27 from memory.

KEY VERSE

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. **Genesis 1:27 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

One of the guys

A story from the original study, shortened.



Illustrative photo

Danica liked being a girl until about age 12. Then it seemed the boys had a better deal: more freedom and more respect. She started dressing and acting "boyish," and the guys treated her as one of them. For years it worked.

Then friends began to marry and have kids. Something stirred in Danica. **Was there something good about being a woman she had missed? Was it too late to embrace it?**

Q1 Can you relate to Danica, or does she remind you of someone? How?

Q2 Do you usually see your gender as more of a gift, a burden or something in between? Why?

IMPORTANT

Some people feel deeply uncomfortable with their gender or body. If that's you, you are loved. You don't have to figure it out alone. Talk to a trusted pastor, counselor or mentor, and call or text **988** if you feel hopeless. This study is not a substitute for professional care.

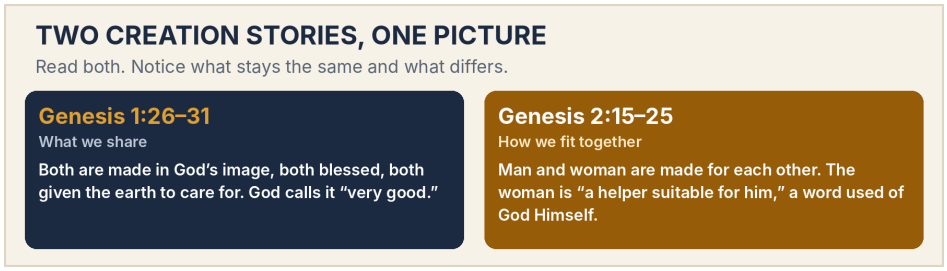
PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Two stories of creation

The Bible tells the story of creation twice. In Genesis 1, God makes humans "in his own image… male and female," blesses them both, and gives them both the earth to care for. In Genesis 2, God puts Adam in the garden, then makes Eve, "a helper suitable for him." The Hebrew words (ezer kenegdo) describe a partner who stands alongside. The same word is used of God Himself.



Q3 Read Genesis 1:26–31. What do man and woman share? What do you think it means to be made in God's image?

Q4 Read Genesis 2:15–25. How might men and women help and complete each other? Why would God show His image through two people, not one?

Q5 What's good about being masculine? What's good about being feminine? What do people get wrong about each one?

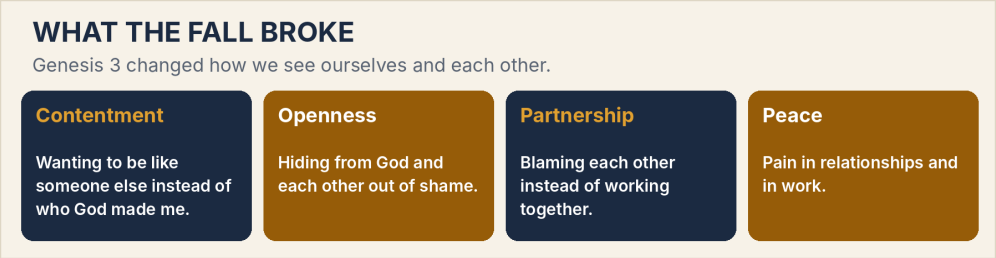
PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

What went wrong

In Genesis 3, Satan tempted Eve to want to be someone she wasn't. Shame, hiding and blaming followed. God told them what the Fall would cost, and it touches work and relationships even today. Many of us still struggle with comparison, shame and pain around who we are.



Q6 In what ways do you still want to be someone else? Where does that voice come from?

Q7 Is there any way you feel ashamed or not good enough as a man or woman? Can you trace it to something, like a comment, a failure or a rejection? You don't need to share this with anyone.

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Male and female, reflecting God

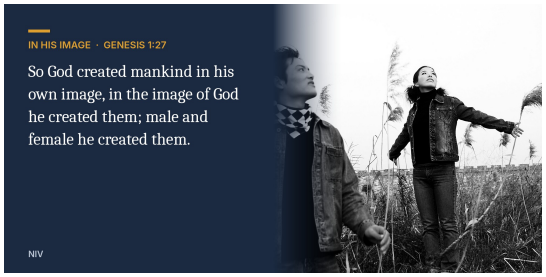
God is not male or female as we are, but He shows us glimpses of Himself through both. “Male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). We also were made “to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us” (Ephesians 2:10). Masculinity isn’t about muscles, and femininity isn’t about makeup. A good picture is a dance where both partners matter.



Q8 Which picture of God above do you most need right now? How could your gender help you do the good works God has prepared for you?

Q9 In a dance, what happens if both people try to lead at once? How are relationships between men and women like a dance? What would you celebrate about being masculine or feminine?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: “In His image, Genesis 1:27. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them;”
2. Say the second half three times: “male and female he created them.”
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- Gender is **a gift.** God called His creation of male and female **very good.**
- Men and women **share** God's image and **complete** each other.
- God can **heal** shame and comparison and restore what's truest about you.

PRAYER PAUSE

No matter how distorted God's image has become in us, He who made your gender can restore what is truest about it. Ask Him to show you anything about your gender that you haven't noticed, and to bless you as His son or daughter.

Take one step

1. **Thank.** Thank God for one thing about being a man or a woman.
2. **Release.** Name one comparison or stereotype you'll stop believing.
3. **Honor.** Compliment someone this week for a strength, not for how they look.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, thank You for making me exactly as I am. Heal my shame and comparison. Help me honor Your image in myself and in others. Amen.

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



Why a Triune God? The Bible says God is three Persons in one, and that He made people "in his image… male and female." Many Christians see a hint here: God is a relationship, and so people are made for relationship, with unity and difference together.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. What gender stereotypes have shaped you, like "boys don't cry" or "girls are too emotional"? What does God say instead?
2. Which strengths do men and women often share, and which do they sometimes show differently?
3. Adam stayed silent when Eve was tempted. Where do you see silence or passivity hurting people today? Where do you need to speak up?
4. How can your group treat both men and women with respect?

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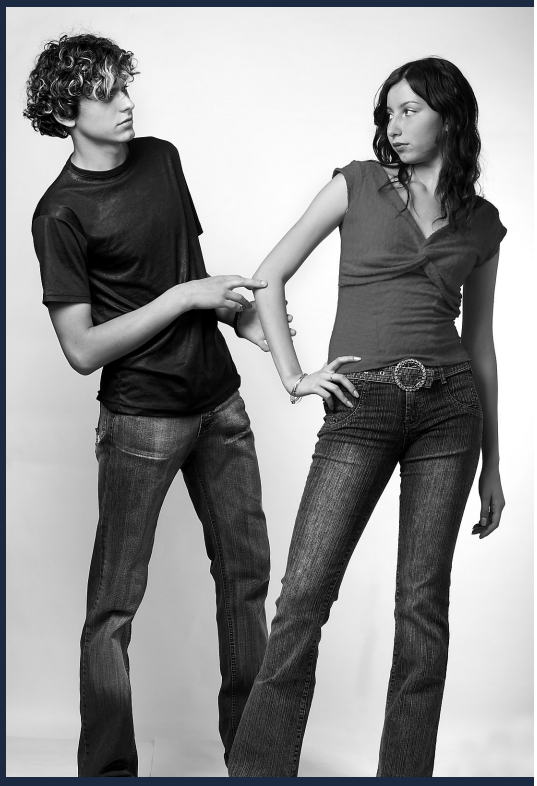
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 4

Manhood & Womanhood

Secure in who you are.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

You don't have to prove you're a "real" man or woman. In this chapter you'll look at what mature, healthy manhood and womanhood look like in the Bible, what goes wrong when sin twists them, and how to grow in security.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Explore** what shaped your sense of being male or female.
- **Learn** from biblical couples, good and bad.
- **Choose** humility over pride or humiliation.
- **Say** 1 Peter 3:8 from memory.

KEY VERSE

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. **1 Peter 3:8 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

Not sure what “enough” looks like

A story from the original study, shortened.



Illustrative photo

Antonio never fit the guy groups in high school. In ninth grade his father left, so he had to help provide for his younger brother and sisters. He felt powerless. He wasn’t sure he had what it took to be “enough” for any woman.

Now in his early twenties, Antonio and his girlfriend are running into their own and each other’s gender issues. They sense that they need each other. **Parts of them are coming alive as they ask what it means to live as a man and a woman.**

Q1 Can you relate to Antonio, or does he remind you of someone? How?

Q2 What shaped your sense of being a boy or girl (parents, media, friends, fashion)? Was it mostly healthy or unhealthy?

IMPORTANT

If you feel you don’t measure up as a man or woman, that’s a feeling, not a fact. Talk to a trusted friend, mentor, pastor or counselor. If you are being hurt or controlled by a partner, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233**. Call or text **988** if you feel hopeless.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

What mature looks like

The Bible never uses the words “masculinity” or “femininity,” but it shows us couples who live out both well and badly. Joseph protected and believed Mary; Mary said yes to God (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). Solomon and his bride praised and cherished each other (Song of Solomon). Peter adds advice for everyone (1 Peter 3:3–9). Many Christians disagree about roles in marriage and church, so use these passages to think, not to stereotype.



Q3 Read Song of Solomon 2:8–10 and 4:9–10 and Matthew 1:18–25. How did the man in each story offer his strength for others? How did the woman offer hers?

Q4 Read 1 Peter 3:3–9. What qualities describe “inner beauty”? What does a mature, strong man look like? Peter’s word “weaker” refers to physical strength, not worth or character.

Q5 Which qualities from verses 8–9 do all followers of Jesus need, regardless of gender? Which is hardest for you?

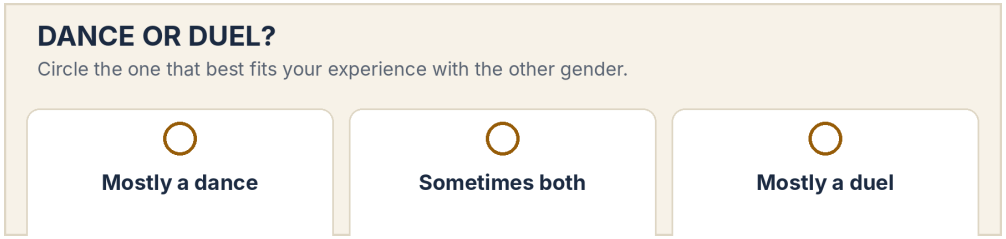
PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

Dance or duel?

Ask yourself how media shows men and women. Is it close to what the Bible shows? In a fallen world, masculinity and femininity can be misused. Then relationships between men and women can feel more like a duel than a dance.



Q6 How have you seen masculinity misused? How have you seen femininity misused? How did that shape the way you see your gender and the other one?

Q7 In your experience, are relationships between men and women more like a dance or a duel? Explain.

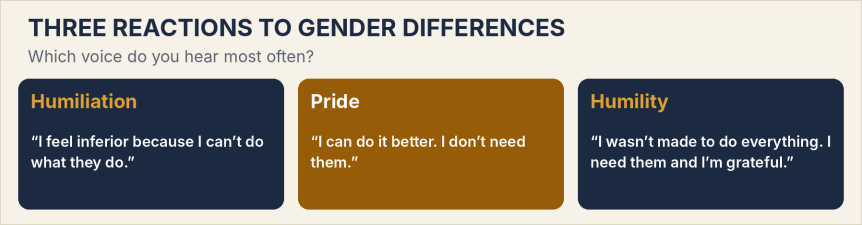
PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Humility, not pride or shame

Samson and Delilah, and Ahab and Jezebel, show strength and influence used against people. Hosea, Abigail and Esther show them used for people. Differences between men and women can lead to humiliation ("I'm not enough"), pride ("I don't need you") or humility ("I need you, and I'm grateful").



Q8 Which voice do you hear most: humiliation, pride or humility? How do you show respect for men and women? Where might you show disrespect?

Q9 What is one way you want to grow in security as a man or woman, and in respect for others?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Together, 1 Peter 3:8. Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another,"
2. Say the second half three times: "be compassionate and humble."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- Mature manhood and womanhood **serve and protect** others.
- Sin twists strength into **control** and beauty into **manipulation.**
- God calls you to **humility, respect and security.**

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Pray: "Father, I'm tired of fighting my insecurity. I put down what others say I should be. Affirm me as Your son (daughter), and help me offer my strength and beauty to bless others." Then listen for how He might answer.

Take one step

1. **Notice.** Catch one stereotype you believe about your own gender or the other.
2. **Honor.** Thank a man or woman who showed you healthy strength or beauty.
3. **Ask.** Ask a mentor how they found security in who God made them.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Father, thank You for making me a man or woman on purpose. Heal my insecurity. Teach me to offer my strengths for others and to respect everyone. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



What mature masculinity avoids. Author Craig Lockwood says mature masculinity "refuses to be reduced to raw sexual desire," does not look down on women, and puts friendship and soul connection ahead of sex. Try writing three similar statements about mature femininity.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Finish this sentence three ways: "Mature femininity…" Then do the same for "Mature masculinity…"
2. How can men, single or married, offer what is best about their masculinity to family, friends and society? How can women do the same?
3. Christians see roles in marriage and church differently. How can we disagree respectfully?
4. Where are you tempted to use strength or beauty to get your own way?

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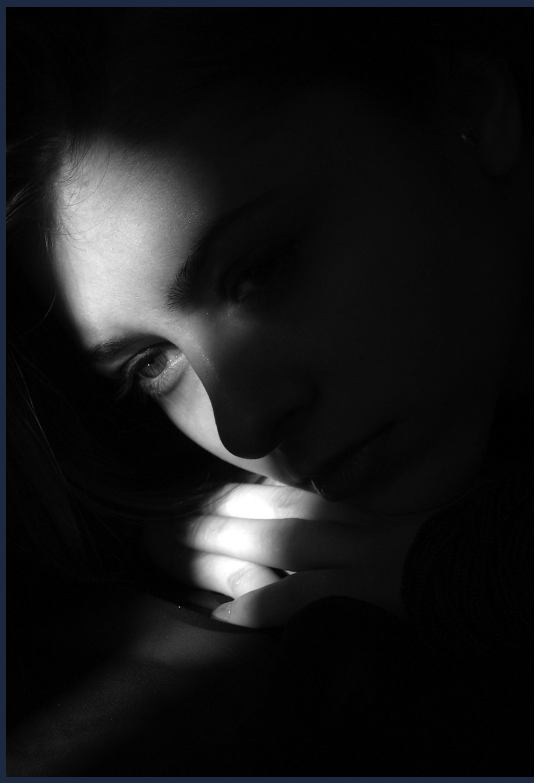
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 5

Pleasures, Hurts & Lusts

Mercy and a way out.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

Everyone has a sexual story, and God's mercy reaches all of it. In this chapter you'll look at what happens when boundaries are crossed, why shame doesn't have the last word, and how to run toward a better way.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Learn** from David's fall and his honest repentance.
- **Know** that abuse is never the victim's fault.
- **Pick** one thing to run from and one to pursue.
- **Say** 2 Timothy 2:22 from memory.

KEY VERSE

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **2 Timothy 2:22 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

"We just can't stop"

A story from the original study, shortened.



Illustrative photo

After a talk on God's plan for sexuality, a college student pulled the speaker aside. "My boyfriend and I are believers. We both promised to wait. Then one night we went too far. We felt terrible and promised never again. Now it happens every time we're together. We can't stop, and it's ruining us. What can we do?"

She added, "My boyfriend is in your Bible study." **There were no easy answers. But there was hope.**

Q1 What part of this couple's story, if any, can you relate to?

Q2 Why do you think God gave us boundaries for sex? Who do they protect?

IMPORTANT

This chapter includes sexual sin, assault and shame. If someone has hurt or pressured you, **it is not your fault.** Tell a trusted adult. In the U.S. you can call or text RAINN at **1-800-656-4673** (free and private) or **988**. If you're a minor and someone is exploiting you, call Childhelp at **1-800-422-4453**.

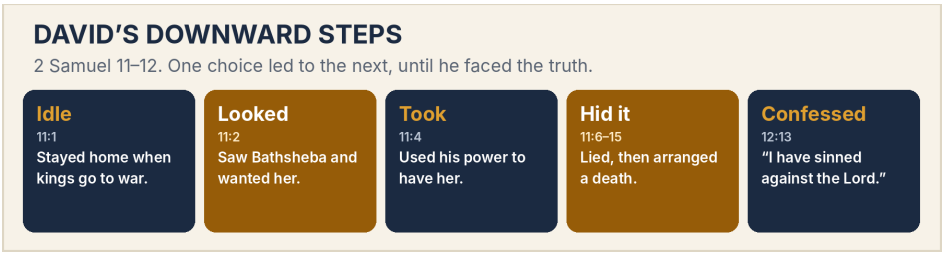
PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

The way out, and the way back

Paul says, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out” (1 Corinthians 10:13). David missed the way out in 2 Samuel 11. But he also shows us how to come back after moral failure. In 2 Samuel 13, Amnon violates his sister Tamar, and she cries, “Where could I go with my shame?” (v. 13). The shame belongs to the one who did the harm, not to the one who was hurt.



Q3 Read 2 Samuel 11. What sins did David commit? What lies might he have told himself to justify them?

Q4 Read 2 Samuel 12:13–14 and skim Psalm 51. How did David respond to being confronted? What were the consequences?

Q5 Read 2 Samuel 13:1–21 only if you feel ready. What harm did broken boundaries cause? Have you ever felt shame like Tamar’s? You don’t need to share, but tell God.

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

What are we really looking for?

Sex is often a stand-in for other needs. Gender also brings hurt: disrespect, harassment, stereotypes and jokes can wound both women and men. Misogyny is disrespect for women, and misandry is disrespect for men. God wants better for both.

WHAT ARE WE REALLY LOOKING FOR?

People often use sex to meet other needs. Circle any that fit.

○ Belonging	○ Comfort	○ Approval
○ Power	○ Escape from pain	○ Feeling wanted

Q6 If you're struggling with sex or your sexuality, who could you talk to? Name one or two people who would offer confidentiality, wisdom and grace.

Q7 How have you been put down or hurt because of your gender? How would you respond if a friend told you about their sexual struggles?

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Jesus is tough on sin, tender with people

"Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace" (2 Timothy 2:22). Running away is smart, and it's even better to run toward something. In Luke 7:36–50 and John 8:1–11, Jesus meets people in sexual sin with truth and mercy. They ran toward Him, not away.

RUN FROM · PURSUE

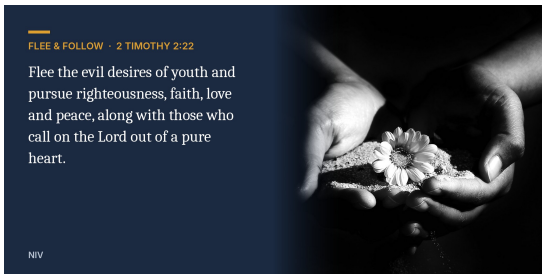
2 Timothy 2:22. Add your own on the lines in Q8.

RUN FROM	PURSUE
Being alone in a tempting place	Faith, love and peace
Porn and late-night scrolling	Respect for men and women
Flirting that crosses lines	Friends with pure hearts
Friends who pressure you	Someone who holds you accountable
Your own 'I can handle it'	Honest prayer

Q8 What is one thing you need to run from, and one thing you need to pursue?

Q9 Read John 8:1–11. How did Jesus treat the woman? How do you respond to His mix of truth and kindness?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Flee & follow, 2 Timothy 2:22. Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace,"
2. Say the second half three times: "along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- God's boundaries **protect** your heart and your relationships.
- Every sexual history is within reach of **God's mercy.**
- **Run from** what pulls you down. **Run toward** faith, love and peace.

PRAYER PAUSE

Have you ever talked with God about your sexual longings? Do it this week. Tell Him honestly where you are. Ask Him to speak into your desires, to heal what's been hurt and to show you the way out.

Take one step

1. **Tell.** Tell one safe person about a struggle. Don't carry it alone.
2. **Set.** Set one boundary this week, like phone or screen time, or where and when you'll be alone with someone.
3. **Pray.** Thank Jesus that He is tender with sinners. Ask for a clean start.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, You are tough on sin and tender with me. Wash my shame. Show me the way out of temptation, and lead me toward faith, love and peace. Amen.

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



When it feels bigger. Struggles with abuse, porn, pregnancy fears or shame can feel too big. Not one of them is too big or too messy for God. “Even when we hurt so much that we can hardly bear it, we are still His beloved.” Tell a trusted person. For ongoing problems, find a pastor or licensed counselor.

WHEN IT FEELS BIGGER THAN A HABIT

You are not too much for God. Help is available.

Abuse or assault	Porn or addiction	Pregnancy fear	Questions or shame
It is never your fault. RAINN: 1-800-656-4673.	Tell a trusted person. A counselor can help you break free.	Talk to a trusted adult and a medical provider soon.	Find a pastor or counselor who is kind and wise.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Jesus is tough on sin and tender toward people. What would it look like to copy Him with someone who sees things differently than you?
2. If you could find healing in one area of your sexuality, what would it be? (Share only what you want to.)
3. What changes might you make in how you view or treat men and women?

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SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 6

Living Sexuality Well

Boundaries are a gift.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

God's boundaries for sex aren't there to ruin your fun. They protect what is precious. You'll see how to honor sexuality whether you're single or married, how to protect it, and how to escape the secret life that porn and shame create.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **See** God's boundaries as gifts of grace.
- **Learn** how Joseph resisted temptation.
- **Bring** secret struggles into the light.
- **Say** 1 Timothy 5:1–2 from memory.

KEY VERSE

Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. **1 Timothy 5:1–2 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

The late-night secret

A story from the original study, adapted.



Illustrative photo

Will is engaged to Kristie, the woman of his dreams. They've stayed within sexual boundaries, and he feels good about that. But late at night he finds himself looking at porn. Not "hard-core," he tells himself. He's ashamed and afraid of losing her trust.

Something tells him to confide in his Bible study leader, Dan. But he doesn't want to lose Dan's respect, and he isn't sure he's ready for accountability. **Maybe he's not as serious as he thought.**

Q1 What do you think keeps Will from telling someone? What would you do in his place?

Q2 What's your attitude toward sexual boundaries: grateful, resentful, confused or something else?

IMPORTANT

Porn and secret habits are common, and shame makes them worse. You are not hopeless. Tell one safe person, like a mentor, pastor or counselor. If you feel stuck or hopeless, call or text **988**. If someone has pressured or abused you, RAINN's line is **1-800-656-4673**.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Boundaries in pleasant places

David wrote, “The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance” (Psalm 16:6). Boundaries protect what is good. God’s boundaries for sex come from His jealous love for us. The Bible honors the beauty of marriage (Song of Solomon 5:8–16; Genesis 2:24) and the value of singleness (1 Corinthians 7), and it asks us to treat everyone “with absolute purity.”



Q3 Read 1 Timothy 5:1–2. What would “absolute purity” look like in your relationships? How can you honor someone’s beauty without crossing into lust?

Q4 Paul, Jesus and Daniel were single. How might that have shaped their work for God? What do you enjoy most and least about your own season?

Q5 Read Proverbs 5:15–18 and Hebrews 13:4. Why are faithfulness and commitment so important? What consequences do you notice when these boundaries are broken?

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

What are you running from, and to?

Loneliness, being alone and wanting to be known all fuel desire. Porn offers a shortcut, and the cost is high. Some of us build a secret “back room” where we give ourselves permission to go where we know we shouldn’t. Ask what you might be running from and what you might be running to.



Q6 How do loneliness, being alone and wanting to be known affect your choices and desires? How has media shaped how you think about sex?

Q7 Where have you been giving yourself permission to go that you should consider off limits? What are you running from, and what could you run toward?

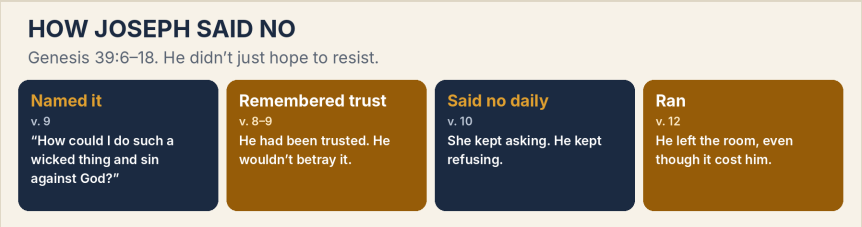
PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Joseph said no and ran

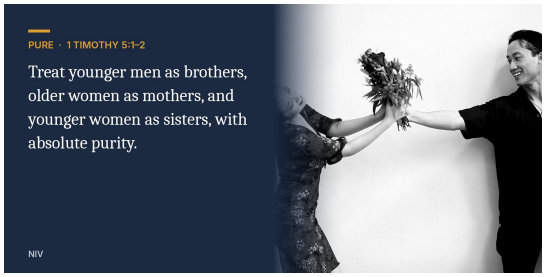
Joseph was enticed by his master's wife, again and again. He used both ways the Bible gives: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7), and "Flee the evil desires of youth" (2 Timothy 2:22). Most of us hide struggles in the dark, as Adam and Eve did. But shame shrinks when we bring it into the light with safe people.



Q8 Read Genesis 39:6–18. Which of Joseph's four moves could you copy this week? Have you been fighting temptation alone? How's that working?

Q9 Read Proverbs 7:6–21. What two or three lessons does God want us to learn? What motivates you to live well sexually?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Pure, 1 Timothy 5:1–2. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers,"
2. Say the second half three times: "and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- God's boundaries are **grace,** not a cage.
- Secrets grow in the dark. **Light and honest friends** break their power.
- Say no, and when needed, **run.** Then run toward people who love you.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Take time to pray over whatever God has shown you. Admit anything hidden. Ask Jesus to forgive you and to give you courage to tell someone safe.

Take one step

1. **Tell.** Name one struggle to a trusted person, and ask them to check in with you.
2. **Protect.** Set one limit, like where your phone sleeps or who you'll be alone with.
3. **Replace.** Pick one healthy thing to do when loneliness hits, like text a friend or go for a walk.

JOURNAL

A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Who shall I be, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Lord, thank You for boundaries that protect me. Forgive what I've hidden. Give me courage to tell someone, and strength to flee when I need to. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



Joseph's cost. Joseph did the right thing, and it still cost him. He ended up in prison. God was with him there (Genesis 39:20–23). Doing right doesn't guarantee an easy road, but it keeps your integrity and your destiny.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Why do public figures keep falling to sexual temptation? What lessons do you see?
2. Who were your role models for sexual behavior growing up? How do they compare to what you studied?
3. What does it mean that Christ lives in you? How might He feel when you give in to lust?
4. How can we create a group where people feel safe to confess and be forgiven?

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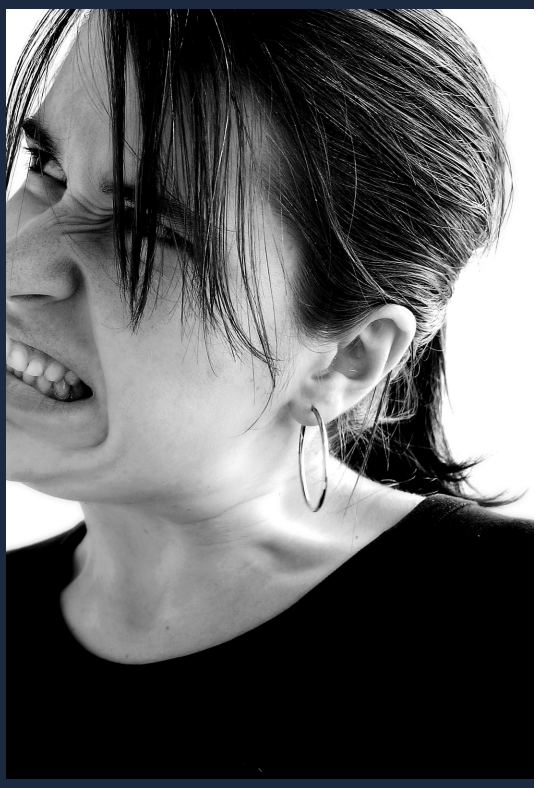
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 7

Emotions: Friends or Foes?

Feelings are a gift.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

Your feelings aren't your enemy. God made you with emotions because He has them too. You'll learn why hiding or being ruled by feelings hurts, and how to bring everything you feel to the One who understands.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **See** that God has real emotions.
- **Notice** how you handle your own.
- **Bring** honest feelings to God in prayer.
- **Say** Proverbs 4:23 from memory.

KEY VERSE

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. **Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)**

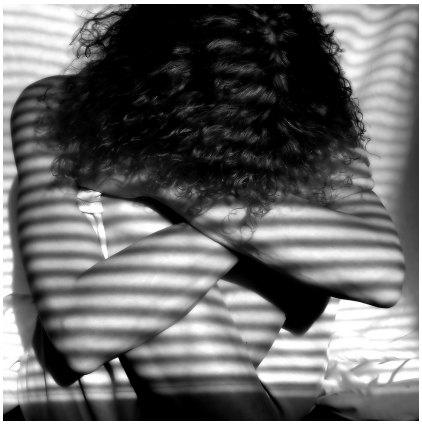
START HERE

A short story

4 min

The day everything changed

A story from the original study, adapted. Used with credit to Adam Schaechterle.



Illustrative photo

Adam was a college student when he learned his dad had been unfaithful to his mom. His world broke open. He felt rage, shock and grief, all at once. His family fell apart, and no one around him knew what to say.

For months he acted like he was fine. He stayed busy and joked with friends. Inside, he was drowning. **Then one night he finally told God exactly how he felt.**

Q1 What do you think Adam needed most in those months? What would you want a friend to say or do?

Q2 When something hurts, what do you usually do with the feeling: hide it, explode, or talk about it?

IMPORTANT

Big feelings are normal, but some pain is too heavy to carry alone. If you feel hopeless or think about hurting yourself, call or text **988** right now, or tell a trusted adult. You matter, and help is real.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

God has a heart, too

The Bible shows God grieving, delighting, being distressed and feeling deep compassion. If we're made in His image, then our emotions are part of that image. They aren't flaws to fix. They're signals to pay attention to.



Q3 Read the four verses above. Which one surprises you most? How does it change the way you picture God?

Q4 Compare King Saul (1 Samuel 20:27–34) with Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1–18). How did each handle strong feelings? What happened next?

Q5 Read Psalm 55:22, 1 Peter 5:7 and James 5:16. What does God invite you to do with your emotions? Who is one person you could be honest with?

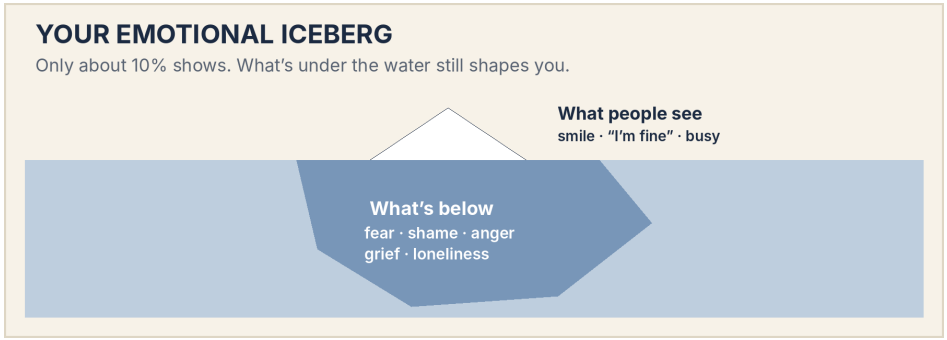
PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

What's under the surface?

Most of us show only a small part of what we feel. Under the water are fear, shame, anger, grief and loneliness. The Bible says, "Above all else, guard your heart" (Proverbs 4:23). Guarding isn't hiding. It means paying attention to what's inside so it doesn't control you.



WHERE DO YOU USUALLY LAND?

Circle one. All three can be a way to avoid being real with God.

- ○ Running from emotions
- ○ Listening to emotions
- ○ Wallowing in emotions

Q6 Which one did you circle? What does it protect you from, and what does it cost you?

Q7 What feeling is under your "I'm fine" right now? Name it as honestly as you can.

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Pray what you really feel

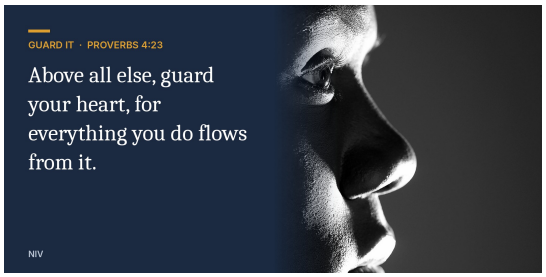
The Psalms hold every feeling: fear, anger, shame, joy. David never hid his heart from God. God promised, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19).



Q8 Read the psalm you circled. Then write it in your own words, as if you're telling God directly.

Q9 Read Ezekiel 36:26–27. What would a "heart of flesh" feel like for you? What might God be softening?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Guard it, Proverbs 4:23. Above all else, guard your heart,"
2. Say the second half three times: "for everything you do flows from it."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- God has **real emotions,** and so do you.
- Hiding or drowning in feelings both **keep you from healing.**
- Honest prayer and **safe friends** are where feelings find a home.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Tell Him what's heavy today. Don't clean it up. Then sit quietly and listen.

Take one step

1. **Name it.** Three times today, stop and say what you feel in one word.
2. **Pray it.** Read your psalm aloud to God each day this week.
3. **Share it.** Tell one safe person something real, not just "I'm fine."

JOURNAL

A What is one feeling I've been ignoring, and what might God want to say to me about it?

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Lord, You feel what I feel. Help me stop hiding. Give me courage to be honest with You and with others. Soften my heart and heal what hurts. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper






Emotions and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit grows the fruit of love, joy, peace and more in us (Galatians 5:22–23). These are emotional health. They don't come from trying harder. They grow as we stay close to Jesus (John 15:4–5).

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Galatians 5:22–23. Circle the one you most want to grow.

Love Caring without conditions.	**Joy** Delight even in hard times.	**Peace** Calm that isn't tied to circumstances.
Patience Staying steady when frustrated.	**Kindness** Gentle with yourself and others.	**Goodness** Wanting what's right for people.
Faithfulness Staying true when feelings change.	**Gentleness** Strength under control.	**Self-control** Choosing how to respond.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Which fruit of the Spirit do you see most in your life? Which is hardest right now?
2. What messages did you get growing up about showing feelings? Which ones still shape you?
3. Why is it easier to share facts than feelings? What makes a group safe enough to be honest?
4. How could you help a friend who is hiding pain?

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SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 8

My Emotional World

Change is possible.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

Disappointment with God doesn't disqualify you. Many people in the Bible felt hurt, angry and let down. You'll see how they found healing, and how past wounds can shape your inner world until you bring them to Jesus.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Admit** where you feel disillusioned.
- **Spot** lies and vows that came from hurt.
- **Learn** how God heals wounded hearts.
- **Say** Psalm 147:3 from memory.

KEY VERSE

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. **Psalm 147:3 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

Where is the peace?

A story from the original study, adapted.



Illustrative photo

Latoya met Christ three years ago. She reads her Bible and does the "Christian" things, and she admits they help. But Jesus promised peace, and her inside world rarely feels peaceful. She was hurt badly as a child by someone she trusted. Since then, trusting people, or God, has been hard.

She keeps asking, "Where was God when that happened? And why doesn't He bring peace now?" **If nothing changes, she may walk away from her faith.**

Q1 What in Latoya's story do you relate to: trust, old hurts, disappointment, lack of peace? How would you want someone to treat her?

Q2 When have you felt let down by God or by Christians? What did you do with that feeling?

IMPORTANT

Some wounds are too deep to work through in a group. If you've been hurt or abused, you deserve a trained counselor or pastor. Please talk to one. For emergencies or hopeless thoughts, call or text **988**. If someone has hurt or pressured you, RAINN is **1-800-656-4673**. None of it was your fault.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Two men with wounded hearts

Many heroes of faith went through deep emotional pain. Jeremiah was called "the weeping prophet." Joseph was betrayed by his own brothers. God met both of them in their pain, and He can meet you too.

JEREMIAH: PAIN AND ANCHOR

He said it all out loud. Then he remembered who was beside him.

Mocked	Burning	Despair	Anchor
Jeremiah 20:7	Jeremiah 20:9	Jeremiah 20:14	Jeremiah 20:11
Everyone laughed at him.	God's word was like fire in his bones.	He wished he had never been born.	"The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior."

Q3 Read Jeremiah 20:7–18. What in Jeremiah's feelings connects with you? Where did he find comfort and confidence (20:11–13)?

JOSEPH: FROM WOUNDS TO HEALING

He cried often. He also found truth that set him free.

Betrayed	Grieved	Truth	Healed
Genesis 37:23–28	Genesis 50:17	Genesis 50:20	Genesis 50:21
His brothers threw him in a pit and sold him.	He wept when his brothers asked forgiveness.	"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."	He spoke kindly to his brothers.

Q4 Read Genesis 37:3–4, 23–28 and 50:15–21. What lies might Joseph have believed? What truth set him free? What good did God bring from his pain?

Q5 Has someone harmed you, and God still brought something good out of it? Explain, if you're ready.

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

Your past still speaks

Much of our emotional world is formed by about age twenty. “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17), but that doesn’t mean we can just forget the past. God wants to bring His healing into the places that still hurt.



Q6 How would you describe the emotional environment you grew up in? Name one happy memory and how it feels now.

Q7 Write one pronouncement, lie or vow from your past. Then pause and ask God to show you anything else. How does that feel?

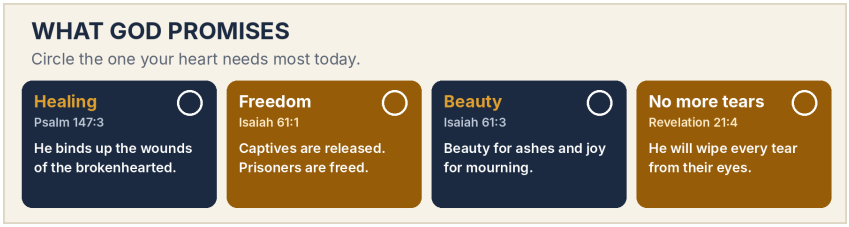
PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Truth that sets you free

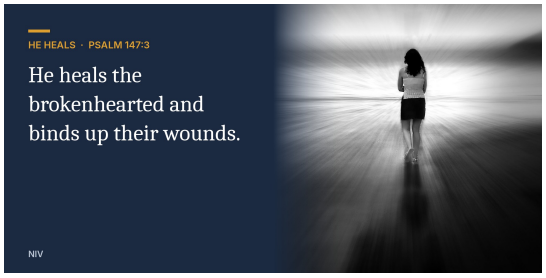
Sometimes our pain comes from our own choices (Mark 7:20–23). Other times we're stuck because of old wounds. Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Knowing it in your head isn't the same as trusting it in your heart. God wants to heal both.



Q8 What's one thing your head believes about God that your heart finds hard to trust? What would being honest with yourself and others look like?

Q9 Read Isaiah 61:1–3. Which promise do you need most? A friend is hurting themselves to cope. How could you offer safety and hope?

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "He heals, Psalm 147:3. He heals the brokenhearted"
2. Say the second half three times: "and binds up their wounds."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- Disappointment with God is **not the end.** He meets you in it.
- Hurt can leave **lies and vows.** Truth brings them into the light.
- Some wounds need **skilled help.** Asking for it is wise.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Sit quietly for a few minutes. Ask God to meet you in one painful memory. Ask, "Where were You?" Then listen. How does He show up?

Take one step

1. **Write.** Name one lie or vow from your past, and the truth God says instead.
2. **Tell.** Share it with a trusted person, counselor or pastor.
3. **Listen.** Set aside 20–30 minutes this week for quiet, listening prayer.

JOURNAL

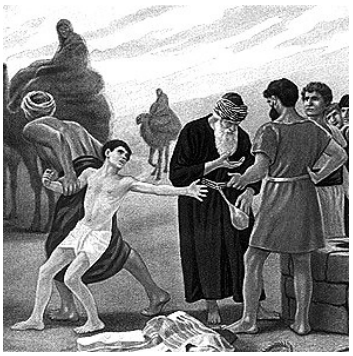
A Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Write whichever one fits today.

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Jesus, You see my wounds. Meet me where it hurts. Show me the truth, and heal what I can't fix on my own. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



Listening prayer. The original study urges you to set aside time to talk with God about your pain and listen for His reply. Healing is a living relationship, not a formula. God does the revealing, and you don't have to figure it all out.

A LISTENING PRAYER PLAN

Set aside 20–30 minutes in a quiet place. Go slowly.

1. Be still Psalm 131:2	**2. Resist** James 4:7	**3. Invite Him** Psalm 16:11
4. Search me Psalm 139:23–24	**5. Speak, Lord** 1 Samuel 3:10	**6. Write** Psalm 62:5

Afterward, write what you sensed and share it with a trusted friend (James 5:16). If deep trauma surfaces, please get help from a trained counselor.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. How can disappointment with God become a doorway to deeper trust?
2. What do you think keeps people from talking about their emotional pain?
3. Why is it wise to bring a trained counselor into deep hurts?
4. How can we be a group where it's safe to be honest about doubt?

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SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 9

Beholding God: How I'm Changed

Look. Be changed.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

You become like what you look at. Real change doesn't come from trying harder. It comes from gazing at God until He changes you from the inside. You'll learn what "beholding" means and how to make it a habit.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Learn** what it means to behold God.
- **See** who does the changing.
- **Notice** where you resist or hide.
- **Say** 2 Corinthians 3:18 from memory.

KEY VERSE

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

Two ways to live

Stories from the original study, adapted.



Illustrative photo

Ram's life feels like emotional chaos. A friend has told him he can be selfish and cold. He wants to change, but work, money and relationships leave no time to look inside. He's just trying to hold things together.

Victoria's life is exciting and mostly smooth. She sees no point in going deeper with God. "Live now, and go deep with God in the next world," she says. **Neither one feels much need to go deeper with God. What about you?**

Q1 Which are you more like, Ram or Victoria? What keeps you from going deeper with God?

Q2 Picture the face of someone you love. Gaze at it in your mind for thirty seconds. What do you feel? How is that like worship?

IMPORTANT

Feeling distant from God is normal, and so is wanting more of Him. If you feel overwhelmed or hopeless, tell a trusted adult or call or text **988**.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Beholding changes us

"Transformation" means God is making us more like Jesus. It's not something we do for God. It's something He does in us. And the key is simple: we **behold** Him. When Moses came down from the mountain, his face glowed, and he covered it with a veil (Exodus 34:29–35). Paul says that in Jesus the veil is removed (2 Corinthians 3:16–18).

ONE VERSE, FOUR QUESTIONS

2 Corinthians 3:18. Find each answer in the verse.

Behold	Change	Power	Pace
Who we see	What happens	Who does it	How long
The Lord's glory.	We're transformed into His image.	The Lord, the Spirit.	Ever-increasing glory, over a lifetime.

Q3 Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 slowly. Write it in your own words. What word or phrase stands out to you?

Q4 Read Romans 12:2 and Psalm 27:4. What changes us "from the inside out"? What would it look like to seek one thing, like David did?

Q5 Read Hebrews 12:1–3. What do you learn about God from watching Jesus? How could "fixing your eyes" on Him change your day?

PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

How do you look at God?

Beholding goes both ways. God is looking at you, too, with delight, all day long. Some of us look away because of shame, fear or just being busy. Be honest about where you are.

WHAT IS "BEHOLDING GOD" FOR YOU?

Circle the one closest to your life right now.

- ○ Seeing Him from far away
- ○ Looking, then running
- ○ A quick glance now and then
- ○ A regular, mutual gaze

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE CHANGED?

Circle one. Write about it below.

- ○ Emotions
- ○ Thoughts
- ○ Will
- ○ Body
- ○ Identity

Q6 What resistance or indifference do you notice toward beholding God? How might shame or guilt play a part?

Q7 How do you respond to a God who looks at you and delights in you? Which area did you circle, and why?

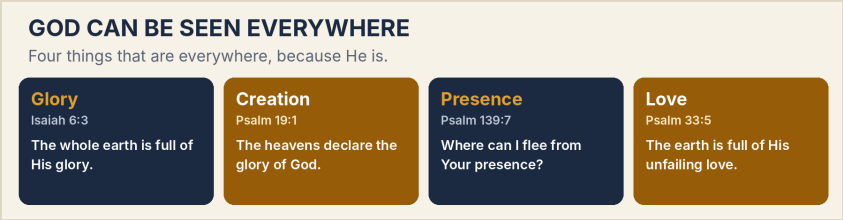
PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

See Him everywhere

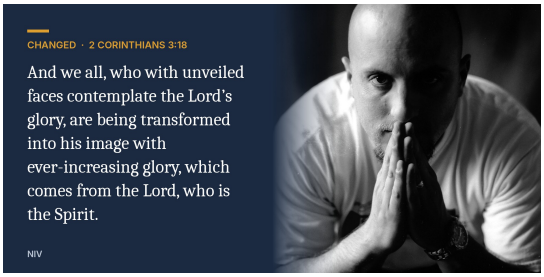
God isn't only at church. His glory fills the earth, and His love is everywhere. We can behold Him in nature, music, friends and quiet moments. Change isn't a goal we force. It's the result of seeing Him as He really is.



Q8 Read Isaiah 6:3, Psalm 19:1–4 and Psalm 139:7. Where have you noticed God this week, even in small things?

Q9 If you saw God exactly as He is, how would you respond? Finish: "When I see Him as He is, I'll _____ Him."

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Changed, 2 Corinthians 3:18. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory,"
2. Say the second half three times: "are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- Change is something **God does in us** as we look at Him.
- Beholding goes **both ways.** He is looking at you, too.
- One day we'll see Him **face to face** (1 John 3:2).

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Read Psalm 16:11 slowly. Ask God to show Himself to you and to show you where you need to be changed. Sit quietly with Him. What is He saying?

Take one step

1. **Pause.** Pick one time each day to look at God for two minutes, with phone off.
2. **Notice.** Write down one place you saw God this week.
3. **Ask.** Tell God the one area where you want Him to change you.

JOURNAL

A When I see God face to face, I'd like to say… and I'd like Him to say to me…

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Lord, I want to see You as You are. Take away whatever veils my heart. Change me from the inside out. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



The big picture. God made us in His image, and we were made to enjoy Him forever. Sin broke that. Now He is rebuilding Christ's character in us. Three things work together: God's gifts of grace, our part (like beholding), and the way the two combine over a lifetime.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

1. Which of God's gifts of grace do you feel most this week?
2. What part does beholding God play in how you're changing?
3. What gets in the way of daily beholding? How could friends help?
4. Where do you most want to see change in the next year?

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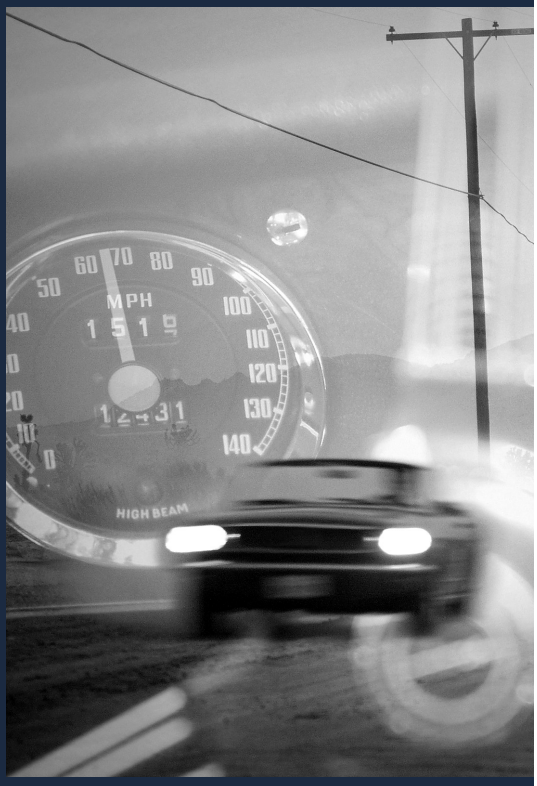
SOUL: EMBRACING MY SEXUALITY AND EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 10

Beholding God: His Presence

Not a lesson. A journey.

About 30 minutes



THE BIG IDEA

This chapter is different. There's no lesson to finish. It's a menu of ways to meet God, like highways and scenic overlooks on a road trip. You don't have to try them all. You'll pick one, try it this week and see what happens.

YOUR 30 MINUTES

4 min	9 min	5 min	8 min	4 min
THE STORY	PAUSE 1 · Explore	PAUSE 2 · Be honest	PAUSE 3 · Respond	PAUSE 4 · Move

Grab a pen (or open a notes app) and set a timer. Short on time? Answer the questions that matter most to you and skip the rest. Honest beats fast.

BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- **Survey** six ways to meet God.
- **Choose** one to try this week.
- **Plan** how you'll start.
- **Say** James 4:8 from memory.

KEY VERSE

Come near to God and he will come near to you. **James 4:8 (NIV)**

START HERE

A short story

4 min

The road trip

An illustration, not a case study.



Illustrative photo

Imagine planning a long road trip. You could take the fast highway, or a slow back road with scenic overlooks. Either way, you'd stop to look at the view, because it's why you came.

Knowing God is like that. Some people stay on one road for years: Bible reading, church, or service. God invites you to explore more. **Each road leads to the same place: closer to Him.**

Q1 Where do you meet God most easily now (church, nature, music, friends, alone)? Where do you rarely meet Him?

Q2 When you hear "experience God's presence," do you feel curious, nervous, bored or something else? Why?

IMPORTANT

Some practices, like fasting from food, aren't right for everyone. If you've struggled with eating, choose a media fast instead. If you're struggling with deep sadness, talk to a trusted adult or call or text **988**.

PAUSE 1

Exploring what God says

9 min

Six highways

The Bible shows many ways to draw near to God. These six “highways” group them. Read Psalm 139:7–14 first. It shows God is already near, so you don’t have to find Him. You only have to notice.



Q3 Read Psalm 139:7–14. What does it say about where God is? How would knowing He’s already near change your day?

Q4 Which highway do you already travel? Which one is new to you?

Q5 Read John 1:1–5 and Matthew 6:5–8. What do these show about how God speaks and how He listens?

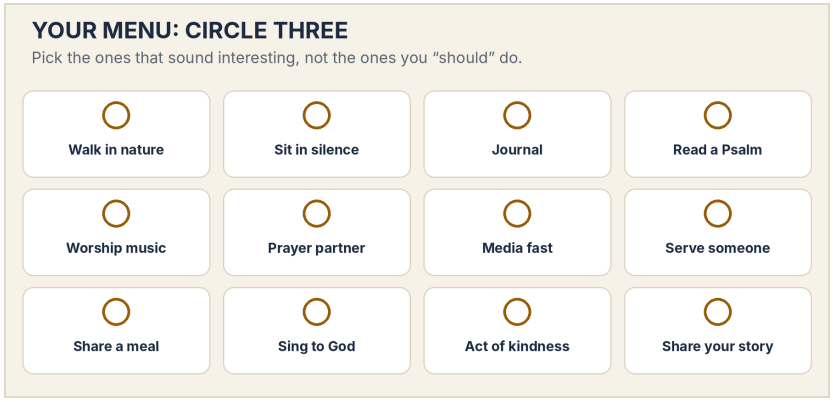
PAUSE 2

Exploring your reality

5 min

Choose your starting point

Below is a short menu. You aren't supposed to do everything. Circle three that interest you. Then choose one to try for several days this week, not just once.



Q6 Which one will you try this week, and when exactly? Where might you do it?

Q7 What might get in your way? What's one way to handle that?

PAUSE 3

Coming alive to God and others

8 min

Try it now

Let's taste one right now. Read a short Bible passage with five questions in mind. You can use these with any passage, any day. Picture the scene, too: what do you see, hear and feel?

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR ANY PASSAGE

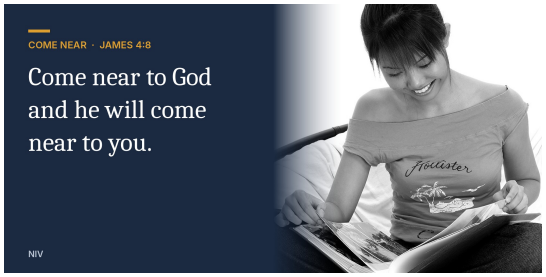
Ask these when you read the Bible. Choose one today.

God's view	Closeness	My heart	Others	Creation
Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
How does this passage say God sees reality?	What does it say about being close to God?	What does it say about my deepest issues?	What does it say about how I treat others?	What does it say about the world around me?

Q8 Read Psalm 139:1–6. Choose one of the five questions. Write what you notice.

Q9 Who could try this with you or check in with you this week? (A friend, mentor or group member.)

Hold on to one verse (3 min)



Phone tip: Save the card as your lock screen.

1. Say the topic and reference out loud, then the first half three times: "Come near, James 4:8. Come near to God"
2. Say the second half three times: "and he will come near to you."
3. Put both halves together. Then cover the verse and write it from memory below.

Write the verse from memory:

PAUSE 4

Journeying forward

4 min

Key thoughts

- God is **already near.** These are ways to notice Him.
- **Try one thing for several days.** Then reflect and share.
- This is a **lifelong journey,** not a checklist.

> **PRAYER PAUSE**
>
> Ask God to meet you in the practice you chose. Tell Him you want to know Him more, not just know about Him. Then wait quietly for a minute.

Take one step

1. **Choose.** Write the one practice you'll try, plus the day and time.
2. **Try.** Do it on at least three days this week.
3. **Share.** Tell a friend or your group what you noticed about God.

JOURNAL

A My plan: this week I will _____ on _____ at _____. Who are You, Lord? What shall I do, Lord?

> **CLOSE IN PRAYER**
>
> *Lord, I want to know You, not just know about You. Draw me close. Help me notice You this week. Amen.*

✓ You made it. That's 30 minutes well spent.

OPTIONAL · NOT PART OF YOUR 30 MINUTES

Digging deeper



A lifelong journey. Over the next few months, sample something from each highway. Where do you tend to hang out? Try somewhere new. Don't feel you must do it all. The goal is to know God, and to be changed as you look at Him.

IDEAS FOR EACH HIGHWAY

Try one this week. Skip what doesn't fit.

Highway	Ideas to try
1. Everywhere	Walk outside and ask God to speak through what you see. After a movie, ask, "Where was God in that?"
2. He speaks	Read a Bible story and picture yourself in it. Memorize a verse. Sit in silence 10 minutes. Listen to worship music.
3. He listens	Pray using A.C.T.S.: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Keep a journal. Pray with a friend.
4. Heart check	Ask God what is not pure in you. Name your deepest desires and hopes. Receive His mercy for shame and guilt.
5. Give yourself	Sing to God. Give time or money. Fast from social media or games for a day, not from food. Take communion at church.
6. Build	Encourage someone. Invite someone to eat. Serve someone who can't repay you. Share your story with a friend.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU OR YOUR GROUP

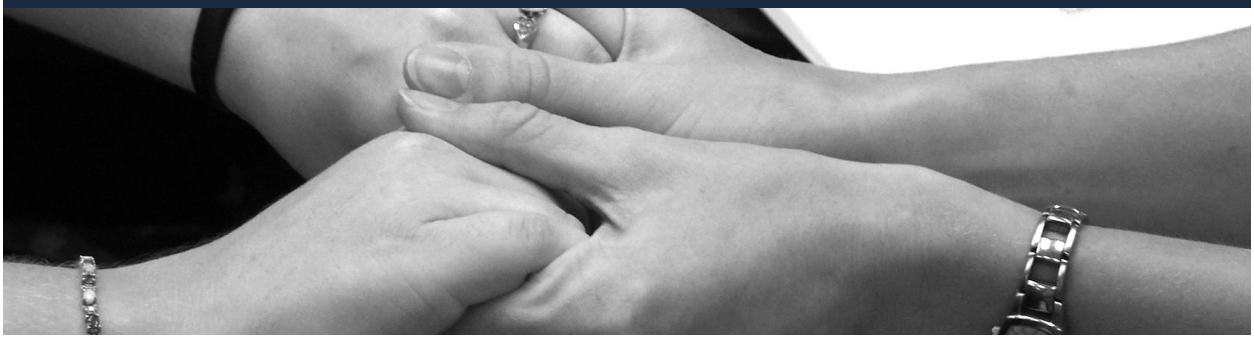
1. Which practice did you try? What did you notice about God, or yourself?
2. How could we behold God together as a group?
3. Which highway feels hardest? Why?
4. What would it look like to keep doing this for a year?

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AFTER CHAPTER 10

Celebrate your group

You finished. Notice what God has done.



You've spent ten chapters on what God says about your body, your gender, your feelings and your closeness to Him: what's sacred about sexuality, jealousy and love, being male or female, living well, emotions, healing, and beholding God. Before you move on, **pause and celebrate.** Set aside one meeting (45–60 minutes is plenty), bring snacks, and walk through the four moments below. Jot down your answers to "Reflect back" ahead of time. Studying on your own? Do this with a friend or mentor, or write in a journal.

1 · REFLECT BACK

1. How have you benefited from this group of fellow travelers?
2. How has your walk with God changed? What is different in your daily life?
3. Which chapter challenged you most? Where did you feel most free?
4. What feelings come up when you think about your time together?

2 · LOOK AHEAD

1. What do you need most from God in the next season?
2. What setting would help you get it? A church, a campus group, a mentor, another Connect study?
3. How will this group stay connected? A group chat, a monthly dinner, a weekly walk?
4. Who else could use this study? Could two of you start a new group?

3 · SAY THANKS

Go around the circle. Tell each person one thing you appreciate about them: how they showed up, or something they said that stuck with you.

Be specific. Two real sentences beat "you're awesome."

4 · PRAY TOGETHER

Thank God for this part of the journey. Praise Him for who He is. Read Psalm 139:1–6 aloud, taking turns.

Then **linger.** No rush, and nobody has to pray out loud.

A PRAYER FOR THE ROAD

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV)

YOUR RESPONSE

My next season

Turn what you learned into one small step.

You're not trying to be perfect. You're letting Jesus shape your heart, your body and your feelings. Write **one small thing** you'll do in each area over the next month. Share it with a friend who will ask you about it.

AREA	ONE THING I'LL DO
Sacred sexuality Ch. 1	
God's jealous love Ch. 2	
Male and female Ch. 3	
My gender Ch. 4	
Pleasure, hurt, lust Ch. 5	
Living it well Ch. 6	
My emotions Ch. 7	
Emotional healing Ch. 8	
Beholding God Ch. 9	
His presence Ch. 10	

A HURT I WANT TO BRING TO JESUS

Name it, and write who you'll tell: a counselor, pastor or trusted friend.

MY

One

KEEP IT WITH YOU

Why memorize Scripture?

Words hidden in your heart are there when you need them.

You won't find the word "memorize" in the Bible, but the idea is everywhere. God's people are told to **treasure** His words, **store them up,** and **write them on their hearts.** Here's what that looks like, and what it does for you.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS TO DO

- **Treasure** God's words and guard them like your most precious possession (Proverbs 7:1–3).
- **Write them deep within your heart,** like a necklace you always wear (Proverbs 3:3).
- **Let them sink in,** and pay close attention (Proverbs 4:20–22).
- **Think about them** day and night (Joshua 1:8).
- **Talk about them** at home, on the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 6:7).

WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU

- **Helps you resist sin:** "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).
- **Brings life and health** (Proverbs 4:22).
- **Builds your trust in the Lord** (Proverbs 22:18–19).
- **Helps you do what it says** (Joshua 1:8).
- **Brings joy:** "Your words were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).

TWO PEOPLE WHO KNEW IT BY HEART

Jesus. In the wilderness, Satan tempted Him. Jesus answered each time with a verse of Scripture (Matthew 4:1–11). He knew God's words well enough to use them in the moment.

Peter. On the day of Pentecost, a huge crowd gathered. He had no time to look anything up, yet he spoke from the Old Testament, including the Psalms and the prophet Joel (Acts 2). About 3,000 people believed that day.

HOW TO START (PICK TWO)

- ☐ **Put it on your phone.** Lock screen, notes app, or a daily reminder.
- ☐ **Say it out loud.** Walking or driving works great.
- ☐ **Write it out** until you can get every word right.
- ☐ **Pray it back to God,** line by line.
- ☐ **Text it to a friend** with one sentence on why it matters.
- ☐ **Review before you sleep.** Fall asleep thinking about it.

CARRY THESE WITH YOU

Verses to know by heart

One from each chapter. Check the box when you can say it.

1 SACRED UNION

Genesis 2:24–25

A man will be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. They were both naked, and they felt no shame.

☐ I can say it

2 FOUGHT FOR

Hosea 2:19–20

I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

☐ I can say it

3 MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Genesis 1:27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

☐ I can say it

4 LIKE-MINDED

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

☐ I can say it

5 FLEE AND PURSUE

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

☐ I can say it

6 PURE

1 Timothy 5:1–2

Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

☐ I can say it

7 GUARD IT

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

☐ I can say it

8 HE HEALS

Psalm 147:3

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

☐ I can say it

9 CHANGED

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

☐ I can say it

10 COME NEAR

James 4:8

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

☐ I can say it

Scripture quotations are from the NIV (2011), written from memory. Check any verse against your own Bible.

IF YOU WANT MORE

Dig deeper

Ideas to keep growing after the study ends.

God does the changing. Our part is to show up, be honest and say yes to what He shows us. Here are ways to keep going, drawn from the original study. For each one, write your own idea for the next step.

CARING FOR YOUR INNER LIFE

Name your feelings. Say them to God, then to a safe person.

Write a psalm. Put your own pain or joy into words.

Look at the lies. Ask God to show you any lies or vows from past hurts.

Guard your heart. Notice what you watch, read and scroll, and what it does to you.

Tell the truth. Bring secrets into the light with a trusted person.

MEETING GOD

Be still. Sit quietly for 10 minutes and listen.

Read slowly. Imagine yourself in a Bible story.

Pray with a friend. Two sets of eyes see more of God.

Get outside. Notice what creation says about Him.

Serve someone. Love shows up in action.

When something hurts too much

Some wounds are too deep to carry alone, and a small group can't be a counselor. That's okay. Please reach out:

- **Tell one safe adult,** such as a parent, pastor, school counselor or mentor.
- **See a trained counselor** if past hurt, anxiety or sadness keeps showing up.
- **If someone has hurt or pressured you sexually,** it is not your fault. In the U.S., call or text RAINN at **1-800-656-4673**, or Childhelp at **1-800-422-4453**.
- **If you're thinking about hurting yourself,** call or text **988** (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S.), or call **911** if you're in danger.

Resources

The original study lists many books and organizations, some of them dated. Ask a pastor, campus minister or counselor you trust for current, Bible-based resources on sexuality, healing and spiritual growth. Also look at the other Connect studies on the next page.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Connect series

Keep going. There's more to discover.

Connect is a series of personal and group studies built to help you know God's truth, rest in His love, and live in His hope. They're made for small groups, where friends can encourage, trust, and support each other on the journey. Jesus said what life is all about:

> **MATTHEW 22:37–39 (NIV)**
> *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Growing in love for God, for others, and for yourself, and living in ways that honor Him: that's a real spiritual journey. Here's the whole road.

1 GOD	**Connecting with His Outrageous Love** Receive God's love, and love Him back.
2 IDENTITY	**Becoming Who God Says I Am** Discover who God says you are, and learn to live out of that true identity.
3 SOUL	**Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions** YOU ARE HERE See how loving God, others, and yourself helps you handle your inner life in ways that honor Him. This is the study you just finished.
4 RELATIONSHIPS	**Bringing Jesus Into My World** Learn to love people, all kinds of people. If you're loving God and yourself, loving others follows.
5 LIFE	**Thriving in a Complex World** Explore time, money, decisions, commitment, church and more, and how they fit into living well with Jesus.
6 FREEDOM	**Breaking the Power of Shame** Face shame, whatever its source, and experience God's mercy, healing, and freedom.

OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

That you will grow in deeper closeness with God, from a heart of worship, as you humbly follow Jesus' way, His truth, and His life.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THIS STUDY

About the authors

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Ralph and his wife, Jennifer, have served with The Navigators since 1975, from military bases in Norfolk to Princeton University, Richmond, and The CoMission in Moscow. Ralph has a master's degree in Intercultural Relations. They live in Raleigh, North Carolina.

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This edition

Adapted for a younger audience

Chapters, stories and images in this edition were rewritten and redesigned for a younger reading level and a 30-minute rhythm, with safety notes added.

Author information is from the original study (© 2006).

Notes and sources

About the stories. Latoya's (chapter 8), Ram's and Victoria's (chapter 9) and the story in chapter 7 are adapted from the original study. The chapter 7 story is paraphrased from Adam Schaechterle's "The Answer to Why" (RELEVANT, April 20, 2005; © 2006 Relevant Media Group, used with permission in the original). Please confirm permission before publishing this edition. Will and Kristie (chapter 6) are engaged in this edition, not married. Chapter 10 has no case study, so an illustration opens it.

What was left out or changed. Song lyrics, explicit passages, ex-gay ministry references, the sexual symbolism section in chapter 3 and dated book and organization lists were removed. Chapter 4 uses 1 Peter 3:8 as the memory verse instead of 3:4, 7. This edition follows the traditional Christian view of sexuality taught in the original study.

Support lines. 988 (call or text), RAINN 1-800-656-4673, National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 and Childhelp 1-800-422-4453 are U.S. numbers. Please confirm they are current before printing.

Memory verses. This edition uses one verse per chapter, written in NIV from memory (the original used NLT for some). Check them against your Bible.

Titles. The original SOUL study's cover reads *Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions*. The Connect series list calls it *Sexuality, Emotions, and God* in one place.

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