



Leader's Notes

Thank-you for faithfully leading your group, by loving the Word and loving your members.

These notes are designed to give you confidence to the shape of each study and details / insights along the way, so you can then make them your own!

Study 1 | I am in the Image of God

Getting started

This can be a fun “get to know you more” activity. Eg You could ask members to bring in funny photos!

1. Created Image

Note: In some ways, being in God’s image is not defined here. So it’s good to let your group struggle with what exactly it is. However, the focus seems to be on rule (v26,28) and relationships (v27b). As we are like our biological parents, even more so, we are like our Creator God.

2. Broken Image

Again, let your group struggle with how God’s image is now broken, but still remains! In the Fall, all our relationships were broken (with God, each other and creation). In the Fall, the way we rule was also broken / reversed: It was meant to be the loving leadership of God /man / woman / creation, and in the Fall it became creation / woman / man /God.

3. Reconciled Image

Jesus is the perfect image bearer, who always exercises perfect rule and relationships. And so he could be our perfect substitute. Jesus teaches us about how to rule (lovingly under God), and how to relate to God, each other and the world. Trusting in Jesus reconciles and restores the image of God in us ‘renews us in knowledge in the image of its Creator’ (Col 3:10).

Thinking it through

What’s wrong with this sentence? “I am trying to be good in order to be restored into the image of God.” It’s the reverse of what God wants. Jesus did the good work.

What truth has struck you most in this study?

We are made in the image of God. What an honour to be like God! We will want to value our relationships and to rule lovingly.

We are broken images of God. Sin is the core issue behind every relationship breakdown and poor ruling. If I want to have good relationships, my sin needs to be dealt with.

Jesus reconciles and restores us into the image of God. Jesus is the only way to deal with sin and have right relationships.

John Calvin (Institutes of the Christian Religion 3.7.6)

Knowing others are made in the image of God drives us to love and care for them as representatives of God despite any and all shortcomings of living up to the image they bear (like us!).

Study 2 | I am an embodied spirit

Getting started

The 1st question raises the philosophical question of how we see ourselves, and the confusion of words like “spirit” and “soul” – ie what do they actually mean? (Later in the study, we’ll see they mean the same thing!) The 2nd question raises the issue of what we will be like in heaven – many believers (and unbelievers) wrongly assume we will be floating in the clouds. You don’t need to correct that here, as we’ll see later in the study how wonderful the New Creation will be in our new physical bodies.

1. What are we made of?

Both parts of this question allow us to struggle with the way the Bible uses different words to describe what makes us up. 1st part: Both 1 Thess 5 and Deut 6 are using hyperbolic language to say love God with everything you are. 2nd part: We see that “soul”, “spirit” and “heart” are used interchangeably to mean our “inner being”.

Summary in Notes: We need to be careful with defining words, as some words can mean the same thing! Overall, the Bible says we are an “embodied spirit” – ie we have an inner being (spirit= soul= heart) in a physical body.

3rd part: Let the group try to describe their experience of being both “body” and “spirit”. If you want to look up some verses, here’s some: our “psychic” nature / rational thinking (Deut 34:9), attitude (Num 14:24), emotions (Ps 77:3, 143:4), virtues given us by the conscience (1 Tim 1:5, Titus 1:15, 1 Cor 8:7). Essentially anything non-physical is usually attributed to the “inner being”, conveyed using the words heart, soul or spirit.

2. The embodied spirit after death

Heb 9:27: Judgment for all people, but the other verses show the possibility of escaping judgment.

Luke 23:36-43: The promise of Paradise for the thief on the cross.

Luke 24:36-43: Jesus is the 1st human to be raised from the dead – he shows us what the “resurrection” body is like – he eats / drinks / is not a ghost.

1 Cor 15:38-38: This is a very big passage, full of many metaphors. But the main idea is that we will have a new “body” fit for the New Creation – ie physical like Jesus’ resurrection body.

3. The embodied spirit now

1 Tim 4:8 Training our (current) body is valuable, but training our spirit (godliness = relating properly to God) is more valuable as it continues for eternity.

Caring for our body: Eg eating, exercising, resting, enjoying people and creation. Our bodies matter.

Caring for our spirit: Eg The word of God (penetrates and changes our inner most being), prayer (asking God to change us by his Spirit through his Word), fellowship (encouragement to keep going).

Jesus: Jesus eternally cares for our body and spirit by providing (Heb 9:27-28) salvation from judgment. Jesus now cares for our body and spirit, by providing our daily needs (Mt 6:25-34) and spiritual needs (he is rest for our souls, he is living Word of God (Jn 1), he is the one through whom we pray to the Father, he is our fellowship (the one who lived amongst us, understand our life and walks with us by his Spirit, Heb 2:24-18)

Study 3 | I am a sinner

Getting started

Let the group struggle a bit with the origin of sin, and the classic questions like, 'did God create it'.

1. Defining sin

Genesis 3:1-7	Romans 3:9-18	Mark 7:20-23
<i>Sin begins with the lie that God is not good and trustworthy. The snake tempts Eve to distrust God and think that she has to make decisions for her (and her husband's) own good. The snake also tempts Eve to believe that there are no consequences for choosing to disobey God, rather God is choosing to withhold good for her.</i>	<i>Sin is a universal problem for every single human. We don't understand or seek God, we have turned away from God, and so we have become worthless and unable to do good, eg destructive words and actions. We do not fear God as he deserves.</i>	<i>Sin comes from within a person's heart, and leads to evil thoughts / actions eg sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly. These comes from inside us.</i>

2. The consequences of sin

Psalm 73:3-11 suggests that sin can seem to benefit a person in the short-term. What are examples of this in our world? However, Isaiah 59 and Romans 6 warn us that God must judge sin eternally.

3. Jesus and sin

Rom 3:19-20 The law reveals that we don't love God or our neighbour (they are the 2 greatest commands at the heart of the law).

Rom 2:21-26 Jesus is the righteousness which the whole OT points to – he became the sacrifice of atonement (his perfect life substituted for our imperfect life). Rom 8:3-4 God sent Jesus as a 'sinful offering' to meet the righteous requirements of the law.

Rom 5:6-8 Jesus died at 'just the right time'! When we were sinners! Ponder these verses! Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous, but God loved us when we were his enemies (Rom 8:9).

3. Sin in the life of a believer

We may not actually articulate this claim, but we often live this way.

Romans 6:1-14. "If we think sin doesn't matter, then we haven't yet understood the gospel – we are in Christ – what happened to him, happened to us".

v2 Jesus died for our sin, and when he died, we died.

v3-7 Jesus was raised to new life, and so were we.

v8-10 Jesus lives for God, and so in him, so do we.

v11-14 this week: Struggle with how we 'count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus' in practise. When do you let sin reign?

V12 Encourage personal stories, and then have time of confession.

Thinking it through

Romans 8:1-2: What word stands out to you? Eg 'no' of 'condemnation' or 'free'.

Charles Spurgeon. Eg when Satan tempts us to despair with our ongoing sin.

Total depravity. This is well summarised in Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, 2009, p140-141.

1. The extent of sin is total, not merely in a geographical sense, but also in an individual's life. Sin affects the whole of a human being: (1) The will (John 8:34; Rom. 7:14-24; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:19) (2) The mind and understanding (Gen. 6:5; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 4:17) (3) The affections and emotions (Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:4) (4) One's outward speech and behaviour (Mark 7:21f.; Gal. 5:19-21; Jas 3:5-9) (5) And also, very often, social conditions in the form of oppressive political and social systems as 'structural sin'. Not surprisingly, theologians have expressed this catalogue of sin's effects as total depravity.
2. The phrase does not imply that we are as evil as we possibly can be, which would make us indistinguishable from demons; rather, no area or aspect of our nature is left intact by sin; we can point to no single area of our personality in order to claim moral self-justification. The Bible also teaches our total depravity by saying that sin has affected the very core of the person. The heart (Heb. *lēb*), the essential person, has been perverted by sin.
3. We are wholly fallen and hence wholly in need of redemption.
4. Further, it is precisely because we are 'totally depraved' in this biblical sense that we are utterly unable to save ourselves. Total depravity implies 'total inability'.

Stretch: Read Romans 7:14-25.

This passage certainly resonates with our Christian experience of sin. But careful evangelical commentators debate whether it is talking about believers in context.

Study 4 | I am a child of God

Getting started

The 1st question gets the group thinking about the reality of adoption, and some new stories may be shared in your group. The 2nd question suggests how extraordinary 'adoption' is (we get used to the idea of being God's child), and leads nicely to the final longer quote at the end of the study.

Learning about adoption

All the group's passages are quite detailed, so be more or less ambitious depending on the maturity of your members. ie Mature members could be asked to do a full summary of the passage. Newer members could just look for a key verse that stands out.

1. Receiving adoption

Although we jump to the quick answer "Jesus", get the group to slow down and see the subtlety in each different verse.

John 1:12-13 If we believe in Jesus, Jesus gives us the right to become (not natural) children of God.

John 14:6-7 The one eternal son is the only way to the Father.

Romans 8:14-16 The Spirit (given by Jesus after his ascension, see Gal 4:6) allows us to call God Father.

Galatians 3:26, 4:4-5 Through faith in Christ Jesus, who was born like us (of a woman, under the law) in order to redeem us from slavery to sin. Note: adoption to sonship (we become sons, like the one eternal son).

1 John 3:1a Because of the great love the Father has lavished on us.

Thinking further: Jesus was the 1 eternal son and heir of God, but he took our punishment so we could share his blessings (becomes sons and heirs).

2. Adoption and future hope

Notice how being a child of God (adoption) and being an heir go together, as they are both privileges of Jesus given to us. When we are "in Christ", all that Christ has is shared with us.

Rom 8:17: Our inheritance with Christ involves suffering now but glory later.

1 John 3:2: We will be able to relate to God our Father, like Jesus relates to his Father – ie unhindered by sin. Wonderful!

Thinking further: The doctrine of adoption means that we are already heirs, which means our future hope is guaranteed. ie Adoption leads to great assurance.

3. Adoption now

1 Jn 3:2-3,10: Adoption gives us great motivation to pursue holiness (purity), as we want to please our Father and be like our Father, and start to be what we will one day be.

1 Tim 5:1-2 Notice the way all relationships in church are seen in terms of family. Should we use this language more? We are not simply like-minded people, but family. The blood of Christ is stronger than even the blood of family.

Gal 6:10 Notice the desire to do good to everyone, but the priority of doing good to our Christian family.

Thinking it through

It's a big quote, but worth digesting / translating!

Study 5 | I am part of the church

Getting started

Most of us know that church is not the building, but what exactly is church? And how does our local church relate to God's cosmic church throughout time and history. Our view of church is often too small – we get disappointed by what we want church to be, rather than seeing what God is doing through us and throughout the world.

1. God's cosmic plan

God's cosmic plan is bigger than we can imagine – to bring everything (in heaven and earth) under Jesus – he will be head over everything for the church (1:22), which will declare God's manifold wisdom to the heavenly realms (3:10).

2. Who We Once Were

v1-3 We were dead in sin, following the ruler of the air, disobedient, objects of wrath.

v4-10 “But” ... God changed everything, because of his character - notice all the beautiful descriptions - loving, merciful, gracious and kind to us while we are still dead and separate from Him. He saves us from who we are.

V10 God has prepared good works for all Christians to do – how wonderful.

3. Who We Have Become

Verses	Relationship before Jesus	Relationship in Jesus
v11-13	Uncircumcised, separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope, without God, far away	Now been <u>brought near</u> by the blood of Christ
v14-18	Barrier, dividing wall of hostility, law with its commands and regulations, far away	Christ himself is our peace, made the 2 groups one, destroyed the barrier / wall, created one new humanity, reconciling them to God through the cross, put to death their hostility, came and preached peace. <u>Both have access to the Father by the one Spirit.</u>
v19-22	foreigners and strangers	fellow citizens with God's people, members of his household, CJ as the chief cornerstone, holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We may not have the same 1st century Jew / Gentile history, but most of us are “Gentiles” who would have been far away without Jesus. And together we are now part of the “holy temple”. Seeing this extraordinary privilege is what motivates us to keep seeing unity, despite our experience of church in

a fallen world. Disunity easily emerges when we relate to believers as just fallen people (who will inevitably let us down, like us them), rather than precious people redeemed by Christ's blood.

4. Being church together

v1-3: Notice we need to keep bearing with each other! This is to be expected. But it's hard to be completely humble and gentle and patient. You might want to pause for a short time of confession here.

v7, v16: Christ has given gifts to every Christian. He has not forgotten anyone.

v12-13, v14, v15-16: The purpose of all gifts given by Christ is not for personal esteem, but to build up the church.

V15: At the heart of all the gifts, is simply speaking the truth in love.

Thinking it through

Gifts should never be about us – eg being thanked or noticed. They are gracious gifts from Jesus for his church. A better question to ask - who can I build up, and what has Jesus given me so I can do that?

1 Corinthians 12 again says that every Christian has been given gifts to build up Christ's church, so we need to be careful not to overlook the less obvious gifts.

“Speak the truth in love”: eg small note on dinner dropped off to someone sick; the friendly hi to welcome a new person on Sundays, a text message to someone who hasn't been at growth group for a while.

How do we keep seeing the ‘cosmic’ nature of church (Isaiah 2:2-3) in a fallen world. Humility comes by understanding that our sin is deep and we justify it easily by blaming others. We constantly need the Bible to give us a greater vision of Christ's church.

Study 6 | I am gendered

Getting started

This is such a big topic, that can raise much emotion and confusion, so it's worth asking your group to read Article 1 before they come.

Examples of more fluid view of gender: Most people will have their own examples, but you might also like to look at what's currently in the news.

1. Men and Women in the Bible

Passage	What do learn about men and women?
Genesis 1:26-28	<i>Both created by God who is in relationship ('us') to be in "our image" or "our likeness". Both created to rule for God over fish / birds / livestock / creatures that move along the ground. Both blessed by God and commanded to "Be fruitful and increase in number" and "Rule ...".</i>
Genesis 2:7,15-25	<i>Man was created 1st from the dust, commanded to take care of the Garden and not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He names all the animals. Woman was created to be man's helper, from one of his ribs/side. Together they are united and become one flesh. They were naked and felt no shame. (cf 3:16)</i>
Galatians 3:27-29	<i>There is no distinction between men and women in salvation.</i>
1 Timothy 5:1-2	<i>Our relationships in church should distinguish gender and age.</i>

Summary: Men and women are completely equal in creation and salvation, but purposely different (reflected in relationships).

2. Men and Women within the Church

Romans 16: Notice the huge and beautiful diverse list of men and woman partnering together. Notice Phoebe is a deacon (16:1).

1 Timothy 2:1-15.

Purpose of these instructions? These instructions are not situational (just relevant in 1st century church), but Paul wrote them so God's people would know how to conduct themselves as God's household = family (3:14-15), and so that there would be peace allowing godliness and witness (2:1-7)

Men: Notice this is to all men (not just church elders). All men are instructed to lead in pray, without anger or fighting. Do men do this at church (and in their own mini-church at home)? Temptations for men are anger and abdicating their responsibility to lead in prayer.

Women: Notice this is to all women. Women are instructed to dress modestly and with good deeds, and to learn under male elders. Temptations for women are pride and envy (dressing up for other women), and undermining male leadership ('I could do better').

2. Men and Women Within the Home

Model for a wife's submission = the church's submission to Christ.

Submission = willingly given; Subjugation = forcibly taken (evil).

Model for a husband's sacrificial love = Christ's sacrificial love for the church.

This is different to the Bible's more general command to love (5:1-2, Tit 2:4).

Here this sacrificial love is specifically the husband's way of leading his family (exercising authority), which is why the wife's response is submission (accepting/encouraging his leadership).

The husband should so care for his family that he would literally lay down his life for them, if needed. It's a leadership love.

Thinking it through

To ponder: The way Jesus sacrificially loved the church was by submitting to his Father. Jesus experienced both submission + sacrificial love in the one act!

Misuse the Bible's teaching on gender? Eg A man could manipulate his wife by demanding subjection, rather than leading in a way that encourages submission. We always lose if we don't follow what the Bible teaches – eg on gender – unity in marriage comes through Eph 5 model.

Men and women are equally created and purposely different. Think through relationships.

Study 7 | I am single or married

Getting started

In general, what does society think about ...

Marriage	Singleness
<p>“Till it lasts.”</p> <p>Some-times very positive. https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/the-miracle-that-is-still-being-in-love-after-30-years-of-marriage-20210325-p57dzc.html</p> <p>Other times, very negative.</p> <p>More and more expensive ‘princess’ weddings.</p>	<p>From freedom (<i>Sex in the City</i>) to be pitied (<i>Bridget Jones</i>). Older singles (eg widows) often overlooked.</p>

The Bible’s teaching on marriage

What is the purpose of marriage: Eph 5:31 (unity), Eph 5:32 (points to the profound mystery of Christ and the church).

How does marriage reflect Jesus’ relationship with the church? (recap from Study 6)
Husband to follow Christ’s sacrificial love, wife to follow church’s willing submission.

How can sin affect a marriage? In every way, so deeply. Examples.

Matthew 22:23-33: No marriage in heaven. Warns us against the idolatry of marriage.

The Bible’s teaching on singleness and marriage

Singleness in 1 Cor 7

v25-27 Because of the present crisis (fallen world, last days), it is good to remain single.

v32,34b Singleness allows freedom from some of the concerns of marrieds.

v35 Singleness allows undivided devotion to the Lord.

v37 A man may choose not to marry and do the right thing.

v38 Choosing not to marry is even better than choosing to marry.

Marriage in 1 Cor 7

v28,v36 If you marry, you have not sinned.

v29-31 If we are married, we should still live in light of the last days.

v33-34, 34c A married man/woman needs to be concerned about the affairs of this world – how they can please their wife/husband.

Why is singleness “better” in v38?

In light of the last days, it is a privilege to be devoted to the Lord’s affairs.

Thinking it through

How is the Bible’s view of singleness and marriage different from society’s view?

Purpose: ‘married for God’, ‘single for God’ – a bigger purpose.

Roles: there is gender distinction, while complete equality.

What should a biblical marriage remind us of? Gospel (Christ and the church)

What should biblical singleness remind us of? Undivided devotion to the Lord.

Watch: <https://www.livingout.org/resources/articles/69/marriage-as-a-trailer>