

Overview:

This Bible study explores the concept of sexual identity and human sexuality from both a cultural worldview and a Lutheran Christian worldview. It presents why the futile attempt of individuals to identify themselves by worldly standards leads to confusion, disorder, dismantling of truth, slavery to sin, and ultimately, death. Finding our God-given identity in the truth of Jesus Christ, who is God Almighty in the flesh, provides purpose, freedom, and everlasting life through the redemption from our sinful nature that does not live as God intended.

This study is presented in four sessions, and the first session focuses on identifying the life issues behind the LGBTQ+ movement in our time. We discuss creation and the fall and what it is about today's culture that drives the PRIDE agenda and how it compares to God's ordered plan. The second session of this study takes a closer look at how the consequences of sexual immorality affect life issues and what Scripture teaches about marriage and why it is important. The third session of this study addresses chastity and the importance of the relationship between the body and soul and how that relationship guides intimacy in our relationships. These concepts affect some of the life issues we have encountered in our journey with others struggling with identity. In the fourth and last session of this study, we look more deeply into the Christian identity and how to reclaim chastity in our lives as we confess Christ to our neighbors. We discuss what it means to have a clear conscience and the difference between tolerance and speaking the truth in love.

Session 1-- Meet Harry

When I met Harry, it was at the pool at the local YMCA. I was introduced to a man wearing a woman's one-piece bathing suit and he had lost a prosthetic breast he had been wearing while participating in the water aerobics class. He was to be taking the same classes I was taking to be certified as a lifeguard. I found out later that I was also acquainted with his ex-wife and eight-year-old daughter. We took those classes together, and in the next year or so, I came to know him better through our association at the Y as co-workers. Harry wanted to be called Sally, and more than that, he desperately wanted to have the same experiences and body as a "Sally." Through our conversations, I began to see the pain and confusion he had suffered since he was a boy. I'm certain he didn't share everything, only what he wanted me to know, but he seemed desperate for me to accept his new identity. Why does Harry want to be Sally? Perhaps he feels safer and more accepted as a female than as a male. We all crave to be known for who we are and feel safe in that closeness with others, and that appeared to be missing in Harry's relationships, possibly due to abuse of some kind. I don't know for sure. I wanted desperately for him to understand that his treatment for this suffering was not the answer. God had created Harry as a man with the need for intimacy, and He desires to be the fulfillment of that need. Harry had grown up in a Lutheran home, yet his sinful nature led him to seek intimacy outside of a relationship with God. Unfortunately, our world and Satan falsely promise the fulfillment of our God-given need for intimacy in other places and by other means.

Though Harry and I disagreed on how his suffering should be treated, I was grateful for the opportunity to better understand his pain.

Let's go back to the beginning. If Harry is seeking intimacy in his relationships as we all are, why is that so?

- **Read Genesis 2:4-9.** What does this passage tell us about mankind's relationship with God?
- **Read Genesis 2:18-25.** What can we discover about mankind from this passage?
- **Read Genesis 1:27-28.** What blessing and privilege does God give to the first husband and wife to be fulfilled within their marriage?
- **Read Genesis 3:1-13.** What was the result of Adam and Eve believing in the lie the serpent told them?
- **Read Genesis 3:14-19.** Who is the first one to be addressed by God about this situation? What does God promise in verse 15? What was the other consequence of their actions which has been passed on to all of humanity?

Summary: God as the Holy Trinity created us out of pure love so that we could have a beautiful relationship with Him and with each other. Since the fall into sin, we struggle with our own sinful nature as well as the world around us in which the great liar continues to try to convince us that intimacy with God and with each other can be regained through anything other than through the order God has provided for us even in our sinful state.

Every era in history has had cultural movements which have affected believers thanks to Satan doing his work of misleading mankind.

- What are some of the cultural movements or buzz words that you hear today? (In the leader's guide, I have included a few notes about cultural movements.)
- What are some life issues affected because of our worldly philosophies today, especially those which seem to be centered on LGBTQ+ ideology?
- What does the Bible say in response to cultural norms?
 1. **1 Corinthians 1:20**
 2. **James 4:4**
 3. **1 John 2:15-17**
- What is the will of God?
 1. **Romans 12:2**
 2. **John 15:9-17**
 3. **Ezekiel 33:11**
- What does our culture say about Harry's life issue of transgenderism?
 1. How does our culture today define gender?
 2. How do you think gender would have been defined in the past, perhaps 50 to 100 years ago?
 3. What does the Bible say specifically about Harry's life issue of transgenderism?

- **Genesis 1:27**
- **Deuteronomy 22:5**
- **Leviticus 12:2, 5, 7; 15:33; 27:3, 4, 7**
- **Genesis 6:19; 7:3, 9, 16**

Summary: We can conclude that God’s Word emphasizes that both sex and gender are assigned to us at birth and are aspects of our creation in God’s image. The change in definitions of sex and gender reflects a disorder in our culture which God’s Word has said would happen. Disorder will always be a struggle for us because of sin. When we look to God and His Word for answers, His orderly creation and the Word about it remains the same. His Words do not change; His Words are ordered. We are created male and female, as are all the animals.

We are at a place in our contemporary world where the centuries-long philosophical movement to overthrow the idea of an objective human nature, natural law, and Christianity has caused devastation to societies, and we are seeing the result of it right before our eyes. It is important to understand this progression and the effect it has on us. We all, like it or not, are influenced by our cultures. People of God in all times have been influenced by their cultures. This is part of our sinful nature that we confess to have. Yet, because of this progression, in our time, we may have become comfortable with the idea that there is no purpose to human sexuality other than desire. That is a lie. We may have lost the importance of the physical body. We might begin to think that everything is centered on what each individual feels; that man is essentially good, and society is what destroys him. **Our** desires, impulses, etc. become truth and not objective reality. Scripture tells us this will happen, **but thanks be to God**, there is an answer for us.

Jesus has already won the victory, and we are here in this time and in this world to become sanctified and to love our neighbors. Our great God wants for Harry and all of us to have a profound experience with Jesus so that we can have meaningful relationships with our neighbor; to love in a manner that is safe, sees, secures, and soothes while also being able to admit our sinfulness to one another to be soothed, seen, safe, and secure knowing we are still loved as Jesus loves. Yet, the world tries to convince us that Christians need to hide instead of openly confess and love one another.

The second session of this study will introduce us to two married couples and the struggles they have encountered due to cultural influences. We will explore how the consequences of sexual immorality affect us and life issues and what Scripture teaches about the sanctity of marriage.

Closing Prayer: Our Father in heaven, shed the light on the dark corners of our lives. Give us Your nature and Your order; teach us Your truth and help us to discern it from the lies of the world. Keep us ever mindful of Your presence and remind us always of our life in You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Departing Hymn: “In the Very Midst of Life” LSB 755