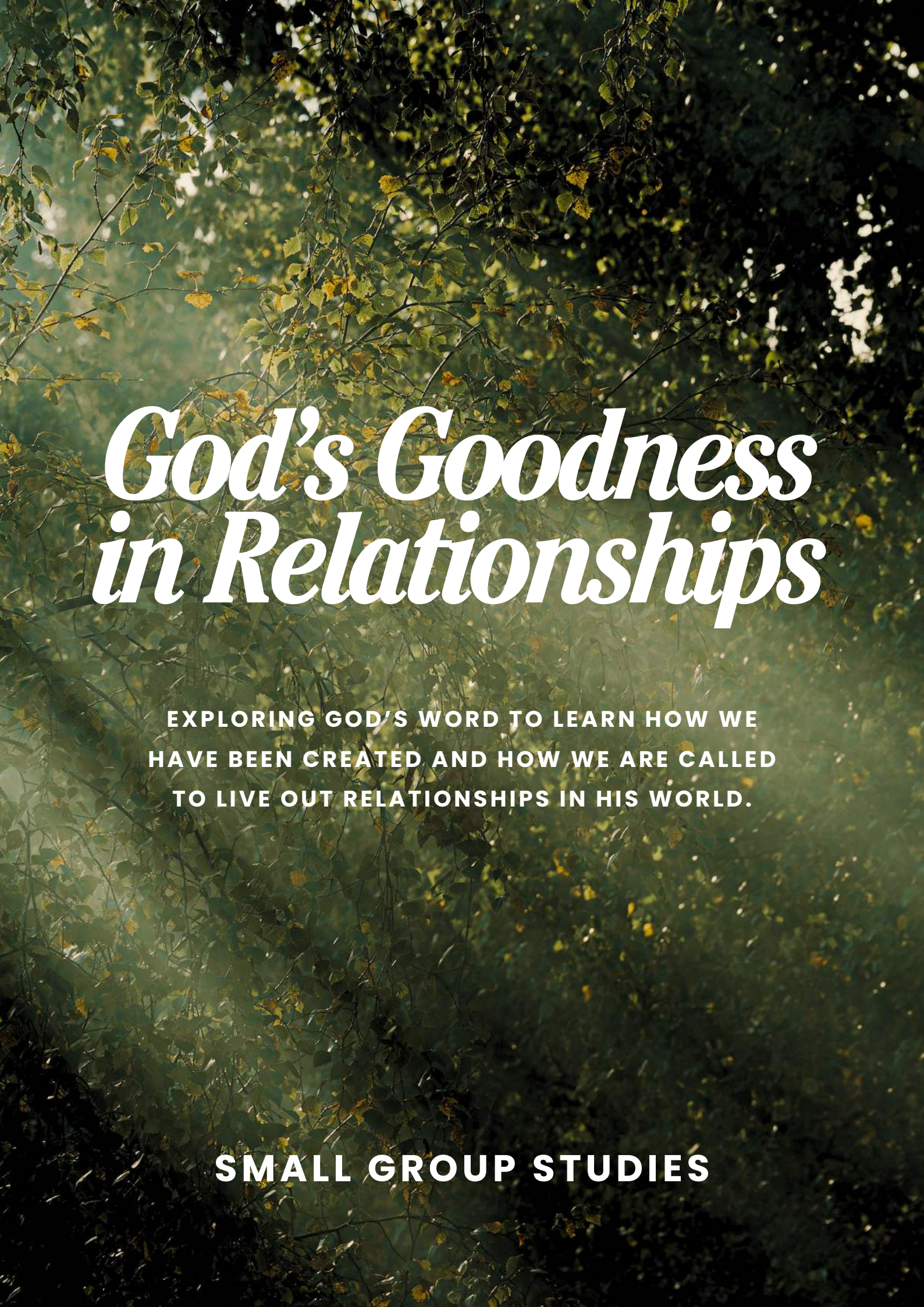




God's Goodness in Relationships

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD TO LEARN HOW WE
HAVE BEEN CREATED AND HOW WE ARE CALLED
TO LIVE OUT RELATIONSHIPS IN HIS WORLD.

SMALL GROUP STUDIES



Highlight events

Dr Darrell L. Bock will be joining us at St Paul's Castle Hill in July. He is a Senior Research Professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary and Executive Director of Cultural Engagement at the Hendricks Center. He has authored or edited more than 45 books and has written for major outlets including the Los Angeles Times. He will be speaking at the following events:

Recharge Breakfast – July 25th

A training morning for small group leaders as we prepare to begin our series in Galatians. All are welcome.

Sunday Services – July 26th

Whole Church Teaching Night – July 28th

An opportunity for our whole church to gather, be encouraged, and be challenged from God's word

STUDY #1

A biblical approach to sex

READ: GENESIS 2:18–25

STUDY NOTE

In Genesis 2:18–22 the word used for the man is ha'adam ("the human/humanity"), rather than the personal name Adam. It is only after the suitable "helper" is created (a term often used elsewhere to describe God as the helper of his people) that the language shifts to ish ("man") and ishah ("woman") in Genesis 2:23. The passage moves from humanity alone to humanity expressed as male and female together, showing that relationship and difference are part of God's good design for humanity.

UNPACK

1. Throughout Genesis 1 God repeatedly declares his creation "good." What is the first thing God says is "not good"? What does this reveal about how we were created?
2. What do verses 23–25 teach us about God's good design for relationships, bodies, and sexuality?
3. Why do you think the passage ends by highlighting both nakedness and the absence of shame? (v25)

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-8

In verse 1 Paul appears to be responding to something the Corinthians were saying: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” Some in Corinth seem to have viewed avoiding sex, even within marriage, as more spiritual.

4. How does Paul’s response in verses 2–3 challenge the idea that sex is sinful or less spiritual? How does this connect with the “one flesh” picture in Genesis 2:24–25?

IMPORTANT STUDY NOTE

In verses 3–4 Paul uses the language of marital “duty” and says husbands and wives have authority over each other’s bodies. Sadly, these verses have sometimes been misused to pressure, coerce, or demand sex from another person. To use Scripture in this way is both spiritual abuse and sexual abuse.

Paul’s intention was not to subject one spouse to the sexual demands of the other. In a culture where husbands were often assumed to have greater authority, Paul’s emphasis on mutual duty and mutual authority was a radical call for husbands and wives to give themselves in love to one another. It does not give either person permission to demand that their desires be met, or to use the idea of obligation to pressure their spouse. The obligation Paul describes is not a tool to use over another person, but a call for each spouse to seek the good of the other.

5. How do verses 3–4 describe this duty? How does Paul's emphasis on mutuality and giving challenge the idea that these verses give permission to demand or take?

6. How do other pictures of marriage and Christian love, such as Ephesians 5:25–33, (optional extra: Philippians 2:3–4 and 1 Corinthians 13:5), help us understand the kind of love and self-giving Paul has in mind?

7. In verses 5–6, why does Paul encourage married couples to continue pursuing regular sexual intimacy together? How does this challenge both a selfish view of sex and a view that treats sex as unimportant or unspiritual?

IMPORTANT STUDY NOTE

As we consider Paul's encouragement for married couples to pursue sexual intimacy, it is important to remember that every marriage and season of marriage will look different. Disability, illness, injury, trauma, grief, age, and many other circumstances can impact a couple's sexual relationship.

As Paul's own life reminds us in verses 7–8, sexual expression is a good gift from God, but it is not necessary for a complete and fulfilled life.

8. What do verses 7–8 teach us about singleness? How might Paul's words challenge the way both the church and our culture think about marriage and sex?

APPLY

9. This study has presented sex as a good gift from God, rather than something dirty or shameful. How does this challenge the messages about sex we might hear from the world or even from within the church?

10. God's boundaries around sex are given because sex is good and powerful. How might this shape the way we think about sex, whether married or unmarried?

PRAY

Spend some time praying as a group in response to what you have covered. Pray that we would see God's good design for sex, relationships, and our bodies, and that we would reflect his grace and love in how we treat one another.

Remember to pray for your group's link missionary and the church as a whole.

STUDY #2

Growing up in chastity

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

UNPACK

- 1.** As you strive to live in a godly way, do you tend to focus only on what is right and wrong, or do you also consider what is pleasing to God? How might this change the way we approach life?

- 2.** In verse 3, what does it mean that God's will for us is our sanctification?

- 3.** Looking at verses 4-5, Paul is writing to the whole church. How does the call to control our own bodies and live in holiness and honour apply whether we are single, dating, or married?

- 4.** In verse 6, Paul shifts from self-control to considering how our actions affect others. What could it mean to "wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister" in this matter?

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

5. Whether single, dating, or married, what does it look like to live with self-control, holiness, and honour, remembering that our bodies are not our own but belong to the Lord?

6. How does what we have seen in these passages connect with what we saw last week in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul presents sex as a good gift from God within marriage?

APPLY

7. Where can you celebrate the ways God's Spirit has already been sanctifying you in this area?

8. Where might God be calling you to change your approach, repent, and seek accountability as you continue pursuing sanctification?

9. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. Sexual sin can often carry a unique sense of guilt and shame. How does the grace of God change the way we view our past failures and who we are now in Christ? Are there areas where past guilt or shame still shapes the way you see yourself?

PRAY

Pray that we would see God's good design for sex, relationships, and our bodies, and that his Spirit would continue to sanctify us as we seek to live lives pleasing to him.

Remember to pray for your group's link missionary and the church as a whole.

STUDY #3

Loving one another in disagreement

READ: ROMANS 1:16–32

UNPACK

1. Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. Are there people or situations where we find it harder to believe the gospel is truly good news? Are there times we find it hard to be unashamed like Paul?

2. For some people, particularly those who are not straight, the Christian message about sexuality can feel like bad news rather than good news. Why do you think this is?

3. Discussions around sexuality can be deeply personal because they are not just about ideas, but about people, identity, relationships, and desires. How do you honestly respond when conversations like this arise?

READ: ROMANS 3:21–31

- 4.** Romans 1 describes humanity turning away from God, while Romans 3:21–24 shows us God's response. How do these passages show both our shared problem and our shared hope? Why is this important as we discuss sexuality?

- 5.** How should understanding our own need for grace shape the way we engage with people we disagree with?

- 6.** Why is it important that our ultimate hope for people is not that they would change their sexuality, behaviour, or lifestyle, but that they would come to know Jesus? How does this change the way we engage with others?

- 7.** Our culture often sees sexuality as central to identity. Over the last two weeks we have seen a Christian vision where every part of ourselves, including our sexuality, belongs to Jesus. How might this shape the way we think about identity, freedom, and fulfilment?

APPLY

8. What might it look like to hold Christian convictions about sexuality while showing genuine love, humility, and compassion?

9. Where might Christians need to repent of ways we have failed to reflect God's grace in the way we think about, speak about, and treat others when it comes to sexuality? How should God's grace shape our approach moving forward?

10. How can we make sure the gospel we communicate represents the good news of Jesus, not just a message about what people must give up? How might this shape the way we engage with those who disagree with us?

PRAY

Pray that we would see the goodness of the gospel and be shaped by the grace we have received in Christ. Pray that God would help us reflect his love, humility, and compassion as we engage with others, and that we would continue to bring every part of our lives under his lordship.

Remember to pray for your group's link missionary and the church as a whole.



**small
groups**
LIFE TOGETHER