



| GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE |

— WELCOME LETTER —

Renewal, transformation, and God's will. It's what we long for in every area of our lives and what we're specifically seeking in the area of sexuality through Renew.

Human sexuality was created to be a beautiful thing, yet we live in a world marred by the pain and shame of human sexuality being broken and twisted into something it was never intended to be. A common response to this brokenness in some unhealthy Christian circles is to act as if we are above or untouched by it, even straying so far from the topic as to never speak of it. Ultimately, this creates a culture of hiding, secrecy, and shame, which is not what healthy Christian community was created to be.

God called the church to be a beacon of light; a place of freedom and openness in loving communion with him and one another. The purpose of Renew is to be just that. Where the church has often shied away from speaking on sexuality, Renew leans in, taking a strong stance on truth found in the pages of Scripture, all while embracing the fact we are all created differently with unique experiences, environments, and beliefs that effect how we approach this topic.

Renew is intended to be a jumping point, a starting place for healthy conversation that sheds light on God's true intention for human sexuality. It's a safe space for us to come with all our brokenness, questions, hurt, shame, and guilt in order to find freedom and transformation through the love of Jesus.

As you journey through these discussions, it is our prayer that God would give you an open, receiving spirit and that you would allow him to infiltrate your heart, filling it with grace and a deepened understanding.

We can't wait to see what God teaches us through our time together.
Thanks for joining in the conversation.

The Renew Team

— INTRODUCTION —

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Goals of Renew:

- *Renewal*
- *Transformation*
- *Gods Will*

The Message of Renew:

We are all broken and to pretend we aren’t only results in _____ that hurts us and pushes others away. Our brokenness results in us _____ in things, desires, and people that will only lead us down a path of shame and emptiness. While it isn’t a culturally popular position, the only way through this brokenness is to _____, choose to do it differently, and seek to be _____.

This process will look different for everyone because we are a beautiful, diverse, unique creation. But the God who made us loves us enough to _____.

DISCUSSION NOTES:

DISCUSSION NOTES CONTINUED:

FORMAT OF RENEW:

The 6 videos will cover 3 major introductory topics:

- 1) *Morality* - Where do we get our morals from and what impact (if any) should they have on how we live our lives?
- 2) *Broken Sexuality* - What impact has the fall had on sexuality and how can we better understand sexual brokenness in a way that allows us to be compassionate and loving to ALL people?
- 3) *Biblical Sexuality* - What does God have to say about our sexuality and who we are in him? How might being a Christian impact the way we express our sexuality?

The goal will not be to indoctrinate anyone, change anyone's mind, or facilitate space for debate. Each week is aimed at creating space for conversations that may be hard to have otherwise.

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

Thank God for the gift of community where we can grow and learn together. Also thank him for the gift of sexuality. Pray for openness and vulnerability as we move through this content together over the next few weeks. Ask God to help us grow in our love and compassion for a broken and hurting world. Pray that we be bonded together with safety in our conversations. And finally, pray that we can embrace this uncomfortable process unhindered by shame or self-consciousness.

— MORALITY PART ONE —

What do you think of when you hear the word Morality?

If someone asked you where you get your sense of right/wrong from, what would you say?

Universal Human Condition:

All people have within themselves _____ that push them toward certain behaviors.

Our universal human condition is that we have a variety of instincts always pushing and pulling us; but there is some sense that we can't just _____ all of them simply whenever we want.

The very existence of words like _____, _____ and _____ prove that at our most basic level we all assume some standard of behavior.

- We all have _____.
- We can't simply _____ whenever we want.
- We know there are ways we _____ to behave.
- Even though we _____ do it.

Pause here and ask yourself where you think the sense of what we "ought" to do comes from?

Me/Not Me:

It is important to distinguish where we _____ about something from where something _____.

There are times where we actually feel at _____ with what we know we ought to do.

I can assume that my _____ is pretty similar to other people.

The fact that the _____ for my behavior is outside of my reach, it is an indicator that it comes from outside of me.

What kind of _____ does not me want me to become?

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

Pray for clarity in finding where morality comes from together. Ask God to help us each embrace truth even though it may be challenging. Pray that we may continue this conversation in a healthy way, discovering how morality and our idea of it effects how we approach sexuality.

— MORALITY PART TWO —

How do you feel about the idea that as long as you aren't hurting anyone, you can assume your behaviors are morally right?

Personal Morality:

Moral Law #1: _____

What good is it to hold up laws about personal morality, if I am not the kind of person _____ who can actually do them?

Moral Law #2: _____

I have to ask myself, whose car is it?

“I'd love the freedom to wake up every morning and know that my life was completely mine to live however I wanted to. But that is not my experience, and not liking it doesn't change the reality of the fact that I am very aware that “not me” is pressing on me calling me to a certain way of living.”

Moral Law #3: _____

So Personal Morality should involve a _____ of all 3 of these Moral Laws because they are _____.

Pause here for a second and think about these 3 moral laws. How does your life align/not align with these?

“Not Me” and Personal Morality:

_____ is not me?

_____ is not me like?

What does not me _____ with me?

I have a choice, I can either _____ myself with this Power and take up the cause of goodness. Or I can work _____ to this Power and pursue my own selfish desires.

“Christianity simply does not make sense until you have faced the sort of facts I have been describing. Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need any forgiveness. It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk. When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor.”

— C.S. Lewis (Mere Christianity)

Some concluding thoughts:

- 1) There is no pressure at this point to ascribe to any religious system just an open invitation to explore the idea that the Power behind the moral law is a good being that we call God.

- 2) If God is good, and fair and just then it makes sense that I should be interested in knowing him better.

- 3) If I realize that I have always had freedom to choose the degree to which I submit to this power, then I don't need to be afraid of proximity. For if he has NEVER forced me to behave in a particular way, why would he start now?

- 4) If I discover that the closer I get to him the more I come to understand his goodness, then maybe it is worth trusting him with my choices?

“People often think of Christian morality as a kind of bargain in which God says, ‘If you keep a lot of rules I’ll reward you, and if you don’t I’ll do the other thing.’ I do not think that is the best way of looking at it. I would much rather say that every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.”

— C.S. Lewis (Mere Christianity)

Morality is simply this: What _____ each small choice that I make? Is it _____ or do I submit to some _____ behind the law.

There is _____ in knowing what I should do, even if it’s not always _____.

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

Be encouraged to reflect on times you haven't submitted your life to the Power behind the moral law. May this be a time of repentance where you can ask God to use those experiences to give us humility as we exist in a broken world. Also pray for those who may have not submitted to the Power behind the law. We know the temptation to do it ourselves is strong and our ability to empathize with others comes not from our perfection, but rather from our failures. If God's kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4), then our kindness to others is essential.

— BROKEN SEXUALITY PART ONE —

Broken: Having been _____ or damaged and no longer in working order.

Brokenness usually involves _____.

Sexual Brokenness and Relationships:

- Opposite Gender Friendships:

- Same Gender Friendships:

- Intimacy:

- Shame:

Its only when we realize we are _____, that we listen to the _____.

Sexual Brokenness and the Individual:

- Pornography
- Extramarital Affairs
- Premarital Sex
- Sex Addiction
- Prostitution/Sex Trafficking
- Same-Sex Behaviors

We tend to focus on two key areas: Homosexuality and Sex Before Marriage.

This narrow view not only creates a _____ of what sexual brokenness is; it also limits a full understanding of what _____ might be.

Car Analogy

If the car isn't ours, we don't get to dictate how we maintain it, where we drive it, and who we drive it with. If you are living the with God life then scripture is clear you do not get to decide the _____ and _____ that come in the with god life. Choosing to submit to God's word and his community means that you surrender your right to do whatever you want with whoever you want.

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

Ask God to help us keep our eyes fixed on him and his holiness. By looking at holiness (wholeness) we can begin to experience his healing and have hope for a more whole life.

— BROKEN SEXUALITY PART TWO —


Continuum Thinking and God's Design


Continuum: A range of behaviors/feelings/experiences with _____ on both ends with people falling somewhere between those two extremes.

In its _____ God's vision for human behavior contained the full expression of human experience. Before sin entered the world what we _____ and what we _____ were one and the same.

It is key not only to think about individuals falling in diverse _____ on these continuums, but it is also important to consider what _____ might influence where someone is on each continuum.

Sexual Experiences on a Continuum

Desire: 

Orientation: 

Context: 

Intimacy: 

Just because these desires and interests exist within people does not imply that they are what is _____ or _____. However, failing to discuss them only handicaps us as Christians because it _____ our understanding of the issues people face when wrestling with their internal sexual experiences.

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

You may be feeling confused, convicted, or even validated after this discussion. God is sensitive to the fact we are all experiencing a wide array of responses. Pray for compassion within yourself for the group and for wisdom as we continue to work through these tough issues together. Pray that we all come to know God's design for our lives does exist, we can know it, and we can pursue it.

— BIBLICAL SEXUALITY PART ONE —

“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’

‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’

John 8:1-11 (NIV)

1) Sexual Self-Righteousness has _____ in the Kingdom of God.

2) There is _____ in Jesus.

NOTES:

3) Jesus clearly expects us to _____ our sins, not _____ them.

A key to the enjoyment of married sexuality is first _____.

If we are teaching that marriage is one way God _____ the gospel in our lives, shouldn't we as churches be explaining _____ this should happen?

The Heterosexual gospel has mistakenly communicated to single Christians that _____ and _____ are the goals of the Christian life. In so doing we have lost the emphasis from scripture on the beauty and calling of the single life. The reality is that singleness is not a _____ but rather a blessing that _____ us from anxieties and distractions.

“If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, singleness shows us its sufficiency.”

— Sam Alberry

TAKEAWAYS:

PRAYER:

Lets pray for humility and the willingness to admit we don't have it all figured out. Ask God to begin to show us all where we have been living "less than" lives when it comes to our sexuality. Seek the Lord's guidance on how your sexuality can be fully submitted to Christ so that it is a place of joy and fulfillment not shame and confusion.

— BIBLICAL SEXUALITY PART TWO —

Reasons we aren't making a Biblical Sexuality "Manual"

- 1) We here at Alive believe that part of the “with God” life involves growing in our faith.

- 2) A “one size fits all” approach to dealing with them is not only unhelpful, but it has proven to be hurtful historically.

- 3) We make sexual sin and brokenness THE thing in the church and fail to acknowledge that brokenness comes in many forms.

Identity

- 1) _____ - Satan understands that the best way to convince us to live broken lives is to make sin look beautiful.
- 2) _____ - While we are all subject to temptations, our temptations do not define who we are.

“Shame wants us to believe it is accurate in its evaluation of us. That we are too wretched to be made new. Too dirty to be made clean. Too prone to sin for forgiveness to matter. That in all the fruits of the great salvation we’ve come to bear, that the temptation to still want our gay exes or to feel how it felt to be loved by someone of the same sex, means that we are just a sinner beyond repair or worse, that we are simply still gay. But just because we are tempted does not mean that we are our temptations. WE are what the cross has declared us to be: forgiven. Temptations may have a voice but so does the living God. The Scriptures-God breathed and eternally profitable-have the final say on the identity of the saint.”

— Jackie Hill Perry (Gay Girl, Good God)

A healthy sexual ethic should be built around the process of _____, not simply _____.

3) _____ - If even Jesus needed community for strength, then how much more do we need to take on the identity of the church that we are not alone?

4) _____ - He is better than we could ever imagine.

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The Message of Renew:

We are all broken and to pretend we aren't only results in _____ that hurts us and pushes others away. Our brokenness results in us _____ in things, desires, and people that will only lead us down a path of shame and emptiness. While it isn't a culturally popular position, the only way through this brokenness is to _____, choose to do it differently, and seek to be _____.

This process will look different for everyone because we are a beautiful, diverse, unique creation. But the God who made us loves us enough to _____.

If we desire to live lives of _____ we must lean into the discomfort of becoming a new creation and this includes full submission of _____ of our lives, including our sexuality.

TAKE AWAYS:

PRAYER:

God it is our hope that as we learn more we love more. Help the people of ALIVE and those who are participating in Renew to first and foremost be people of LOVE. Help us all to live lives fueled by compassion. For those struggling with sexual brokenness in their own lives we pray for strength to persevere and grace to ask for help when needed. We pray they find hope and peace as they lean into community. For those who are not personally struggling we pray for a continued desire to learn and grow and an openness to have hard conversations in love.

As we continue this process, Lord, help us to become more aware of your beautiful and fulfilling design for our lives. Give us the vision to see it and the strength to pursue it.



ALIVE WESLEYAN CHURCH