

Becoming Like Jesus | Week 4 - Jesus Understood Intimacy**Message Big Idea**

To be deeply formed into the image of Christ, we must give ourselves to relationships that cultivate sexual wholeness.

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:19-25, Matthew 19:1-6, Hebrews 2:14-18

Points to Keep In Mind

1. Our hope for this year is that we would be a community intentionally praying for and looking for ways to serve and care for the people in our lives and our world. The BLESS practices will help us do that well. We'll continue to put a question about BLESS at the top of the guide as a reminder to you and the group to keep praying and looking for ways to BLESS people in your life.
2. The topic is broad, and you won't be able to cover everything. It might be helpful to have something to bring the conversation back to when it goes in many different directions. One thing you might focus on throughout the discussion is the Christian concept of sex being a sacred gift from God to be enjoyed within the context of marriage within our broader need for connection with God and others. We may see a wider culture of recreational or casual sex or even mechanical sex among married couples, Christian or non-Christian.
3. As you read these passages, note that the man and the woman are naked and without shame. They are vulnerable and fully known, and they have nothing to hide. If you keep reading into Genesis 3, you'll notice that they come to realize their nakedness and are ashamed and hide from one another and God. Notice the language of one flesh. For the Jewish and Christian traditions, sex is a profound experience of intimacy. You might notice God says, "It is not good for man to be alone." When it says, the Lord took a rib from the man's side. So the imagery has led some commentators to say that what is portrayed is a dream Adam has where his whole side is taken to create the woman. Since she is taken from his side, they are equal partners in their relationship. This is important when we talk about the nature of sex – that both partner's needs and wants must be taken into account for there to be a sacred union.
4. Often the church and our culture have idolized marriage and, as a result, have made single or celibate Christians feel ignored or forgotten. As a community, we need to come together in various ways that include everyone. This includes singles, widows or widowers, and those who are divorced. Our goal for everyone should be wholeness and connectedness to God and others, no matter our marital status. This goal can get ignored when our focus is too heavy on marriage. The best-case scenario for marrieds is to come into a marriage relationship as someone healthy and whole and not expect consciously or unconsciously for marriage to be the fix-all for our needs.

Additional Questions, Quotes, and Scripture

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized? communitychristian.org/baptism
4. Whom have you been able to B.L.E.S.S.?
5. "Instead of being deeply formed, we settle for being shallowly shaped." - Rich Villodas
6. "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness' So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1:26-27
7. "Human beings are especially created to image God, and a significant part of that imaging is fellowship. In our relationships with each other, we model the community of the Trinity." – Marva Dawn
8. "Sex is not about genitalia. It's about relationship. When God said, 'the two shall become one flesh,' he didn't mean it only physically." —Sheila Wray Gregoire, *The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex: And You Thought Bad Girls Have All the Fun*

COMMUNITY's Rules of Engagement

1. **Listen Well.** We don't listen in anticipation of our turn to talk. We listen to understand. We are also not listening to blame a group of people when there is disagreement. When we listen to understand, we absorb and diffuse negative emotions.
2. **Ask Anything.** What if your first response to someone's challenging statement was a question, not a rebuttal. By asking questions and understanding how people have arrived at their opinions and perspectives, we create a safe place where people can belong and be known. Listening is one of the most practical ways we love people.
3. **Disagree Freely.** We have to help people become more comfortable with disagreement. This is like a muscle - a community muscle that needs to grow and develop, and it grows stronger as we come together and get more comfortable living in a diverse community.
4. **Love Anyway.** Loving well doesn't mean we will all agree or expect uniformity. It means giving others space and freedom to be who they are and where they are on their spiritual journey. As a leader, you are helping people to grow and take steps they wouldn't have taken on their own, so we want to love people right where they are in their journey by challenging them and supporting them.