

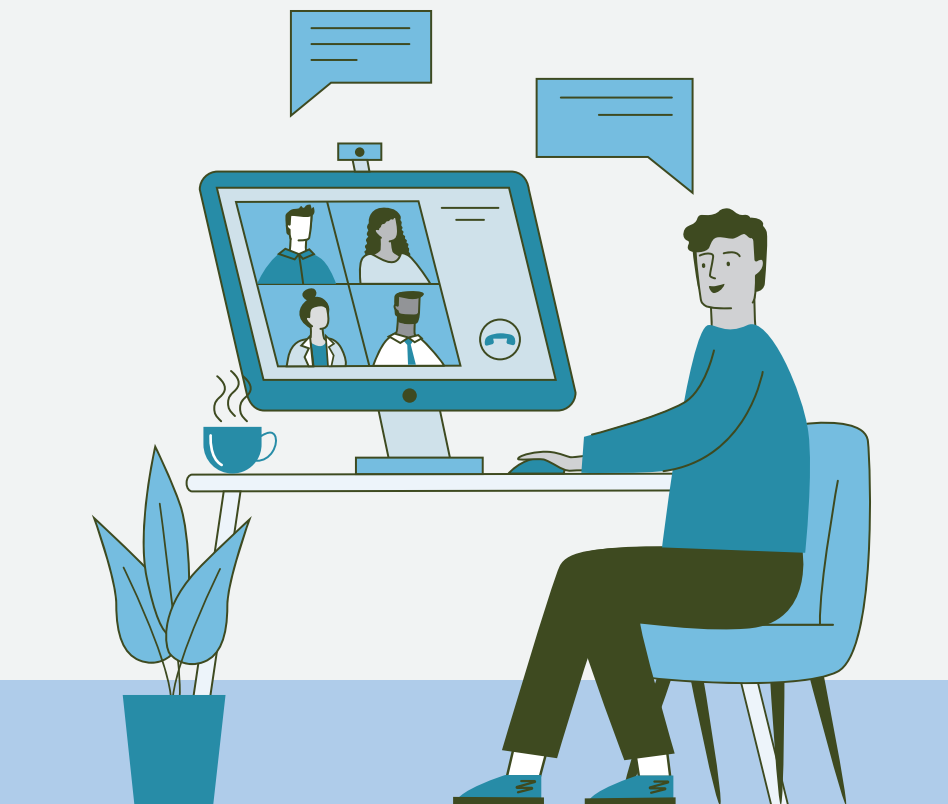


ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Summer 2020 // Proverbs; Song of Songs // Session 12: Relational Foundations

Suggested Use Date: 08/23/2020

For use with Explore the Bible Leader Guide, Personal Study Guide, and Daily Discipleship Guide



PREPARATION

Best Practices for Leading an Online Group



PRAY for your group members and for God to grant you insight as you study and prepare your Bible study session. Do this throughout the week.



SCHEDULE your group's online Bible study using the online meeting tool you prefer. Invite group members and guests to participate using a meeting ID if required by your online meeting tool. [Click here](#) to view a Best Practices document for online groups.



SEND digital copies of the next session to group members who do not have a print copy. If using the *Personal Study Guide*, encourage group members to read the passage and comments for the next session. If you are using the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, encourage your group members to follow up your session by engaging with the five daily Bible readings.



CONNECT with your group via email or text messaging early in the week.

Create your own message:

- Briefly tell the group the title of your next Bible study, why it is important, and what they will learn.
- Challenge group members to study before the group session if your group uses a *Personal Study Guide*; remind group members to follow up your online study with their daily readings if your group uses the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Remind group members when your group will meet online.

Or copy and paste this suggested wording into the email or text message to your group:

When we give ourselves to Christ, we become God's children. In His wisdom, He tells us that He made our lives for sharing with others, not hoarding for ourselves. That's why healthy relationships matter. I hope you'll join us as we discuss our relationships with God and other people!

Read Song of Songs 2:15–3:5 and the comments for Session 12 in the *Personal Study Guide* or *Daily Discipleship Guide*, noting the imperatives given by Solomon. How do the imperatives given in this passage relate to each other?

We will meet at (add time) using (name of online tool). Here is the link to our meeting: (add meeting ID if your online tool doesn't do that automatically)

WEEKLY MESSAGE



PREPARE to lead your group's Bible study.

- **Study** Song of Songs 1:1–5:1, giving particular attention to 2:15–3:5 and noting the beauty of the language and imagery as the writer described the love between a husband and wife.
- **Listen** to the Explore the Bible Adult Leader Podcast. Go to goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training for an overview of the main points and key ideas from each session.
- **Visit** the Explore the Bible blog for additional leader helps at goExploreTheBible.com/Leader-Helps
- **Create** your teaching plan for guiding your group's online Bible study experience. Use the Online Group Plan on the next pages as a starting point, modifying it for your group as needed. Consult the *Adult Commentary*, *QuickSource*, and *Leader Pack* for additional ideas and resources.



REMINDE your group members to study and prepare via another email or text message closer to the day your group meets.

- Include a quote from the *Personal Study Guide*, a question, or an insight you plan to discuss with the group when you meet online.



HELPFUL LINKS

- Explore the Bible main landing page: goExploreTheBible.com
- Digital version of Explore the Bible: curriculum.lifeway.com
- Explore the Bible leader helps: goExploreTheBible.com/Leader-Helps
- Explore the Bible Podcast: goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training
- Free Coronavirus links and leader helps: lifeway.com/coronavirus



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NOTES

GREET: Welcome participants as they join the online group and greet them on camera with a “heart” sign (formed by bending fingers of both hands at the joints, touching fingernails to fingernails and thumb to thumb). When most of the group has joined, ask, **When you see a “heart” sign or a picture of a “valentine heart,” what comes to your mind? What are some ways people use the word “love” in today’s culture? In what ways can love be viewed as both positive and negative?**

TRANSITION: Explain that the Bible contains a variety of literary types, including Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon), which is essentially a love song or poem celebrating the biblical ideals of marital love. The poem serves as a chronicle of Solomon’s romantic relationship with the Shulammitte [SHOO lam ight] woman. Five “voices” are heard in the poem: Solomon (the man/groom; see 1:8-11); the Shulammitte woman (the woman/bride; see 1:2-4); a narrator (see 3:6-8); a group of young female attendants (see 6:1); and a group of brothers (see 8:8-9). Indicate that this session reveals God created human beings to have healthy, positive relationships with Him and with one another. This truth is an especially important foundation for the love and marriage of a man and woman. Option: Use the Extra! idea. See goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras

INTRODUCE: Enlist a volunteer among the group to read aloud **Song of Songs 2:15**. After the reading, ask listeners, **What mental picture did you form on hearing this verse?**

GUIDE: Remind the group that poetry and songs commonly use words and images figuratively—that is, the words and images represent something else in an artful and often emotional way. Lead the group to scan the paragraph beginning “Despite a variety of interpretations ...” on page 112 of the PSG (DDG, p. 103) to discover what the key words and images of verse 15 represent. Explain that the verse describes the beauty of a man and woman in love and anticipating their marriage.

ASK: What kinds of things might be considered “little foxes” that can harm a marriage—sometimes even before it begins? What are some ways of “catching” those foxes? (*PSG, 112; DDG, p. 103*)

TRANSITION: Verse 15 is all about preventative care for relationships, avoiding and getting rid of things that will harm relationships. Verses 16-17 focus on building trust. Intimate relationships such as marriage require attention and time to flourish.

READ: Invite the group to read silently **Song of Songs 2:16-17**. After a few moments, ask: **What words did you read in these verses that describe a strong mutual commitment between the soon-to-be-married couple?**

COMPARE: Read aloud *1 Corinthians 7:1-7*, and ask how these New Testament verses give insight into *Song of Songs 2:16-17*.

HIGHLIGHT: Remind the group that “my love is mine and I am his” (v. 16) reveals that sexual intimacy is a gift from God that must be developed and guarded. Emphasize that trust and respect must be employed by both husband and wife for true intimacy to flourish.

READ: Read aloud **Song of Songs 3:1-5**, as the group listens for the desires of the bride as she longed to be with her groom.

ASK: How do these verses relate to the idea that building strong, godly relationships requires restraint at times? Direct the group to read silently the paragraph beginning “The pursuit of the bride for her soon-to-be husband ...” on pages 115-116 in the *PSG* (*DDG, p. 106*). Ask: **How have you seen a person rationalize or justify sexual infidelity? What do these efforts to justify infidelity reveal about the person and about our world in general?**

SUMMARIZE: Use the three apply statements on page 117 of the *PSG* (*DDG, p. 104*) to review and emphasize the main points of this session (“Preventative Care,” “Build Trust,” and “Restraint Required”).

CHALLENGE: Based on your own evaluation, what are two actions you could take (if you are married) to strengthen your marriage relationship and/or (if not married) your relationship with Christ? *Close the session with prayer, thanking God for the uniqueness of men and women and for creating us for relationships. Pray for His guidance in taking positive actions to strengthen our relationships.*

NOTES

NEXT STEPS



- Contact the group during the week to encourage them. Pray specifically for any needs they are willing to share with you.
- Send digital copies of the next session to those in the group who do not have a print copy. If using the Personal Study Guide, encourage the group to read the passage and comments for the next session.
- Repeat the process outlined in the Preparation section of this document.