

A *Living in Love and Faith* discussion with young people using Story Films (2.5 hours)

This is an example of how you might start the LLF discussions with young people using the LLF Story Films. *Please note, this is not an official resource from Living in Love and Faith but has been compiled using elements of the LLF content by the Diocese of Oxford.*

We believe that involving young people in the LLF conversations is important but that running the five session LLF course may not be feasible in your context. This one session template is to enable youth leaders to begin conversations about identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage within the Church of England, so they are given the space to learn together and break the silence on some of these topics.

We hope these discussions lead to young people's views being fed back into the central LLF listening process. There are some suggestions at the end of the session to help you decide how to best do this with your group.

It is likely that you will want to pick up on some of the topics raised at another point, based on what your group of young people show interest in or have questions about. At this point you can draw on more of the LLF material as appropriate, and we hope some of the young people will show particular interest in doing the whole LLF course together.

Please note, you need to [register on the LLF Hub](#) to access all the LLF resources.

Introduction – welcome, commitments, opening prayer (10 mins)

Welcome

*This is your opportunity to explain to the young people why discussions on identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage are important and why the Church of England is inviting everyone to learn and discuss together using the *Living in Love and Faith* resources.*

We're going to be using some of the *Living in Love and Faith* course Story Videos, which are part of a longer course. This course aims to help us think about what it means to be human, and how to live in love and faith. All around us we see changing understanding of human identity, changing patterns in relationships and families, and changing sexual attitudes. What does it mean to followers of Jesus to walk in love, faith, and holiness today?

The topics we're exploring will affect us all, though we may approach them quite differently. We're not always good at having conversations like this. Not everyone experiences our own church, the Church of England, as a welcoming, kind, and safe environment. In fact, some have experienced

rejection, hostility, or scorn. We need to do our part in creating a safe space in which we can relate honestly, graciously, and lovingly to one another.

Commitments

Share the commitments below with the group and give them the chance to absorb them. It would be helpful to display them on a screen or give out printed copies. Perhaps these are even commitments you'd like to make as part of all your youth activities.

In our learning and meeting together we commit to...

- Holding each other before God in prayer
- Praying for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our conversations
- Learning together from Scripture and from each other
- Enabling everyone to speak
- Making space for those whose voices have not yet been heard to contribute – but without putting people on the spot if they don't wish to speak
- Avoiding interrupting each other, instead acknowledging what others say before moving on to have our say
- Keeping confidential anything personal that is shared
- Taking care about how we speak about others who are not in the room
- Looking out for and being sensitive to people's feelings
- Giving each other time to reflect before sharing with others
- Taking time out as a group from time to time, offering one another an opportunity to say if there is anything in the discussion they have found difficult but haven't been able to express, learning together how we can live more fully in the way of Christ.

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.' Galatians 5.22-23

Opening prayer

Use this prayer as you gather together in God's presence:

O Holy Spirit,
Giver of light and life,
impart to us thoughts higher than our own thoughts,
and prayers better than our own prayers,
and powers beyond our own powers,
that we may spend and be spent
in the ways of love and goodness,
after the perfect image
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

from Daily Prayer (1941)
edited by Eric Milner-White and G.W. Briggs

Learning together: what do we mean by identity? (5 minutes)

Watch 10:55-14:36 from the LLF [Session 2](#) video.

Icebreaker: Two Truths and a Lie (10 minutes)

Give each young person a piece of paper. Ask them to write their name, plus two truths about themselves and one lie - keep it light-hearted. Read the slips out in turn and have the group vote as to whether they are hearing the truth or a lie.

Invite the group to think about how they decided to identify themselves. Why might some people choose to be selective with the truths they tell about themselves?

Studying the Bible together (15 minutes)

Watch 19:34-23:13 from the LLF [Session 2](#) video.

Discuss: Invite the group to share their thoughts on the Bible study. Use these questions or your own to help the group explore questions of identity and gender:

- Does Genesis help us understand our different experiences of gender?
 - What does it mean to have a new identity in Christ that is more important than other identities, even 'male and female'?
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Story Films (1 hour)

Choose six of the [Story Films](#), being sure to choose a range of views and situations. For example:

- [Bill, Jayne, and Luke](#)
- [Luke](#)
- [Alex and Jo](#)
- [Mark and Esther](#) (Session 4 video, 4:34-8:15)
- [Jenny](#)
- [Julie and Alice](#)

Choose how you want to show them in your group. One way of doing this would be to play the videos in blocks of 3, each followed by 15 minutes of discussion using the questions below.

Questions

These questions are to help facilitate discussion following the Story Films – do feel free to adapt them for your group and context.

Remember we are not discussing whether the individuals are 'right' or 'wrong' but trying to understand others, especially if they are different from us. It would be helpful to communicate this to the young people before the discussions begin so they are clear on the purpose of the activity.

- What struck you about these Story Films?
 - What did you learn about the person/people in the videos?
 - How did they talk about their faith?
 - Do you have a question you'd want to ask them?
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Break (15 mins)

At this point you might want to have a short break where the young people can get some snacks, a bit of fresh air, and to chat with each other. You may prefer to put this break halfway through the Story Videos section.

Response (25+ mins – depending on the composition of your group and time available, you may want to allocate more time to this section.)

Through the LLF process, it's hoped that churches across England – including young people – will engage in a discussion and learn together on questions of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage.

The process involving the whole church is also to gain feedback to enable the Church of England to listen to your learning, reflections, and experiences of engaging with the LLF resources. Young people's feedback is so valuable and will help inform discussions in General Synod. Read the full learning outcomes for the process.

You may wish to consider how the group would like to share its experiences and learning with the wider church. Encourage young people to be creative in their ideas. As a group leader you may feel able to summarise the range of discussion points and views of the young people and feed that back as a group submission. We would greatly encourage young people to feed back their own thoughts in the way they feel most able.

Young people may not be familiar with the changes in society and the church in relation to questions of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage. One way to illustrate LGBT+ history is by drawing a timeline on which to add significant moments. Here are some pointers to resources if you feel providing some of this background would be helpful for informing your young people's discussions and feedback:

LGBTI+ History

In society: There have been enormous changes in the way that society has responded to LGBTI+ people over the past half century, and these have been mirrored in numerous changes to law and policy. You may want to explore what young people's perceptions are about the history of sexuality and questions relating to LGBTI+ people.

A good summary of the recent history of sexuality in UK can be found in the LLF Book in Part Two Chapter 5 pages 98-101.

In the Church of England: It may be helpful to ask young people about their understanding of what the Church of England's current positions on questions of sexuality, relationships, and marriage are.

A good summary can be found in the LLF Book Part Two Chapter 6 pages 135-147.

There are three ways you and the members of the group can share the experience, learning and insights they gained from participating in a Living in Love and Faith group:

1. Individual creative submissions – Allow time and space for young people to create a creative response as individuals or as a group. It is further explained here: llf.churchofengland.org/course/view.php?id=27.
2. Group submission - Offer a 'snapshot' of your group's experience, with a photo of the group (making sure everyone agrees to sharing the photo publicly and with appropriate photo consent). Supplement the photo with an audio recording, a video, or written highlights of the group's discussions, learning, and experience.
3. LLF Survey – If your young people engage with the LLF Course videos, they can complete the online survey (please note, the survey relates to the whole LLF course so many questions will not be relevant if you've only run the session in this document): www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LLFcourse.

Here are questions to help prompt the kinds of responses we are looking for:

1. What have you learnt from the session – about God, yourself, each other, the church?
2. How diverse was your group? What did you discover about each other's different perspectives?
3. What aspects of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage felt particularly important to learn about?
4. How has the session affected your thinking about your own life and the life of your church community?
5. What did you find hopeful? What did you find challenging?
6. What did you hear God saying to the church?

Reflection and prayer (5+ mins)

End the session in prayer. Different groups have different ways of praying and ending their time together. Feel free to find ways of praying and concluding that feels natural for the group.

If you want to spend more time in reflection and prayer, invite participants to write a paragraph or draw a picture expressing what they have learned/experienced in this session.

It may be helpful to read Ephesians 4:1-6 and to invite each person in the group to light a candle and pray – out loud or silently – a prayer for their own church in the light of what they have heard God speaking to them during this course.

To end (5 mins)

Point the young people to the [LLF Hub](#) where they can watch more Story Films and access other LLF resources.

Let the group know what pastoral support is available locally in case the topics have raised difficult issues for individuals.