

We Believe: Identity/2

WHAT IS A MAN? WHAT IS A WOMAN?

What's So Opposite about the sexes?



THE GIFT OF SEX

O God,
I thank you for my sex.

I don't entirely understand it.
Sometimes I exult in it; sometimes it tempts me,
frightens me, torments me.
I want to claim it, to know when to command it
and when to surrender it.

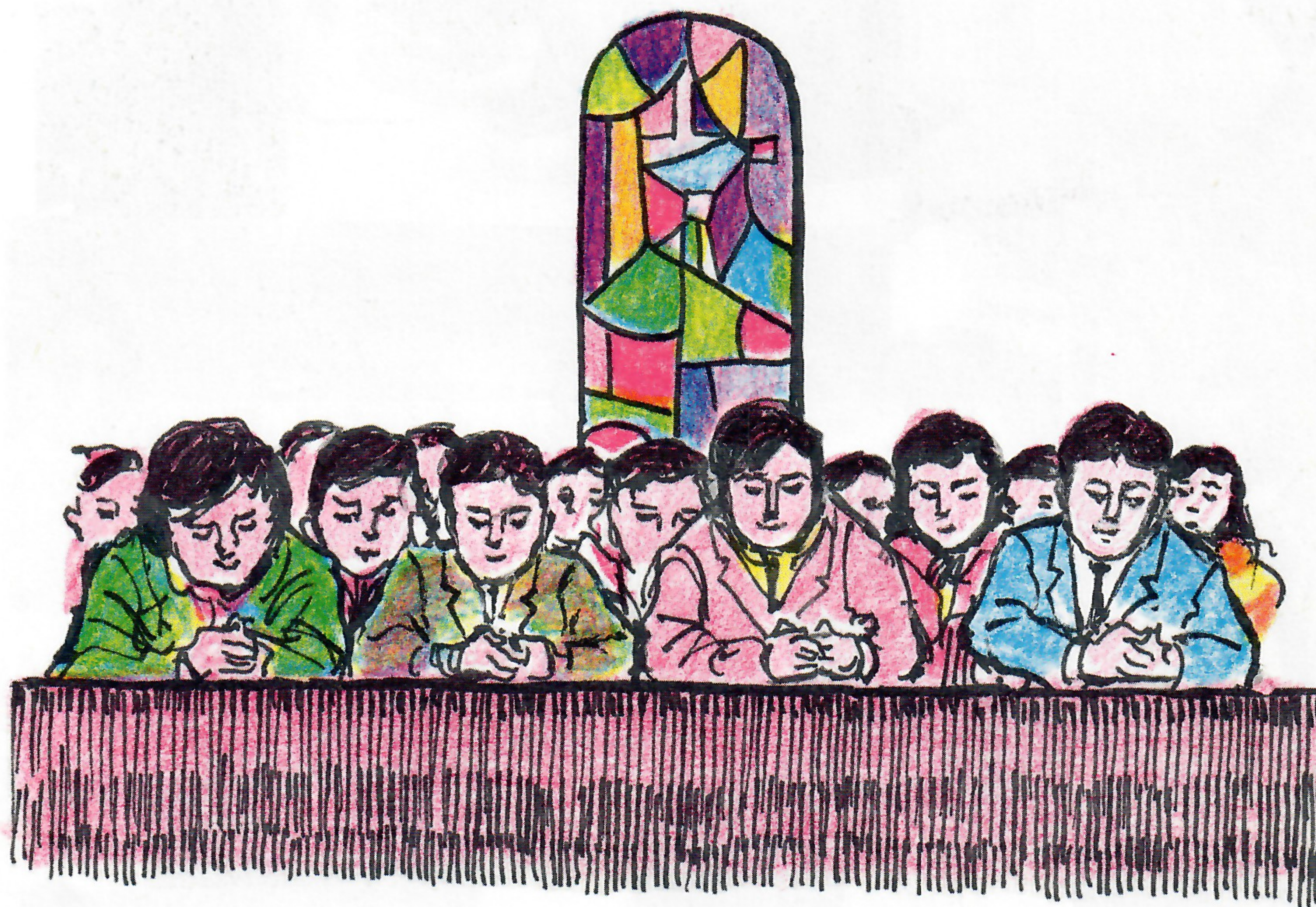
I have read the words of your Son —
How you made us, male and female, in your own image,
How man and wife become one flesh at your bidding.

I did not make my sex.
I did not decide to be boy or girl, man or woman.
I did not create the surging vitality within myself.
What I did not decide, I recognize and affirm.

A prophet once wrote, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God."
O Creator God, bless our human flesh.
May I appreciate its beauty in myself and others.
May I recognize my flesh, not simply as my possession, but as myself.
May I know your creative power, your saving power, in my flesh.

O God, I thank you for my sex.

Roger L. Shinn



Group Work: Read "A Woman's Place" and discuss Sossi's dilemma. What are her alternatives. Look up the Scripture verses below. Then as a group decide what you would do.

Everyone in the group should agree with the final decision. If this is not possible, a few group members may issue a "minority" decision.



A WOMAN'S PLACE

There is men's work and then there is women's work. Men should play the role of the provider, and women should play the role of homemaker and mother. This is what Sossi's grandparents have told her. Sossi is graduating soon and is trying to decide what to do with her life. Her

boyfriend, who is a pre-med student at a local university, wants to marry in a few years and start a family. Sossi has considered a career as an engineer, which means delaying marriage and possibly not having children.

What would you do?

Reason:

SCRIPTURE STUDY: Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 14:19; Galatians 3:23-29; Galatians 5:1, 13-15; Ephesians 5:21, Mark 10:6-9.

10. Ask students to turn to their texts and fill in items 1, 2, and 3 on the "Reflection Sheet." (10 min.)
11. Next, have students form pairs and ask them to share their responses to items 1, 2, and 3 with each other. (10 min.)
12. Ask volunteers to complete any of the following sentences spontaneously:
- I learned . . .
 - I was surprised that . . .
 - I hope . . . (3 min.)
13. *Assignment:*
- a. Complete items 4, 5, and 6 on Reflection Sheet.
 - b. Finish "Identification Form #2."
 - c. Bring in magazines for next week's assignment. (See next session's activity.)
14. Close by reading Psalm 139. (5 min.)

Session 2—What Is a Man? What Is a Woman?

Key Concepts

1. Male and female are created in the image of God and as such are equal.
2. In Christ, no individual is of greater importance than any other individual because we are all part of his body.
3. Life presents many dilemmas in which male/female roles will conflict. Many of these conflicts can be resolved by compromise and love and with a little help from Scripture.

Objectives

Students will

1. Define what it means to be male and female.
2. Create a collage depicting femaleness/maleness.
3. Listen and share with each other their feelings and opinions about characteristics and roles of the sexes.

Background for Teacher

As part of their search for identity, our young people will come face to face with their sexuality. How they resolve the question, Who Am I As a Man/Woman?, will depend on what roles they have identified with while growing up, and very little of that can be changed by us.

We can, however, make them aware of the many stereotypes that exist in our society—"a woman's place is in the home," "real men don't cry," etc. And becoming aware of these stereotypes is a step toward discovering the possibility of personal change and growth.

After all, our students will soon be making many decisions about their roles in life—career, marriage, family, etc. Decisions about those roles may affect

them and those with whom they associate for a long time into the future. This session will, we hope, get students to think about some things that are often assumed about people simply because they are born male or female.

Materials Needed

- Two white posters 22" x 17"
- Glue, scissors, felt-tip markers, etc. (enough for your class to work on two group collages)
- Magazines, newspapers (students will bring in their own, but if possible, make sure there is a variety of different types of magazines—news, sports, business, fashion, home, food, professional, etc.)
- Bibles

Procedure

1. Welcome students. Collect the newspapers and magazines which they were to bring in for today's class project. Opening prayer.
2. *Homework:* Students were to complete items 4-6 on the "Reflection Sheet" and finish "Personal Identification Form #2" (the "I Am" list) from last week's lesson. Review the assignment as follows:
 - Divide students into groups of four, and ask them to share their responses to items 4 and 5.
 - When each group has completed sharing, ask students to read aloud their response to item 6 on the "Reflection Sheet," which was: "If you could do anything for God and knew you couldn't fail, what would you do?" Make certain each student has an opportunity to read his/her response. Make comments or ask questions where appropriate.
 - Next, ask for volunteers to share any item(s) on their "I Am" list. Ask: "Was it easier to do the 'I Am' list after you thought about your answers in the 'Reflection Sheet?' Why or why not?" (10 min.)
3. To begin today's lesson, say something like: "On the 'I Am' lists, I noticed that several of you mentioned your sex—I am female/girl/male/boy, etc. Today we're going to look into just what it means to be male and female."

Divide a line down the center of the blackboard. On one side write MALE, and on the other side write FEMALE. Play "word association" by asking students to say words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the word MALE. Write all responses on the blackboard under MALE. Then do the same with FEMALE. (You will probably now have a list of stereotypical characteristics and roles of each sex, but maybe not.) (10 min.)

4. When the responses stop, ask students to comment if they wish. You, however, should not make any comments. (Do not erase the lists.) (5 min.)
5. Collage project. Tell students they are going to think some more about this "male/female thing" by working on two collages. Directions:

- a. Divide the group into males and females.
- b. Give each group a large sheet of paper or poster board.
- c. Tell the group of girls they are to make a collage that answers the question, "What is a man?"; and tell the boys they are to make a collage that answers the question, "What is a woman?" Tell them to think in general terms of the characteristics of the sex and also of the roles each performs. Tell the groups to pick a spokesperson who will present the collage to the class.

d. Move furniture around so each group has a table on which to work. Place the newspapers, magazines, glue, scissors, felt-tip markers, and whatever other supplies and materials you have in a location convenient to both groups and tell them to get started.

(If they are having trouble getting started, you might suggest that they begin by each person going through the magazines and newspapers and tearing out appropriate pictures and words. Then after they have gathered enough for the poster, begin organizing the collage to fit what they want to say.) (30 min.)

6. When the groups have finished, ask each spokesperson to describe the collage and how it answers the question, "What is a man/woman?" Tell students they are not to make any comments during the presentations. (10 min.)

7. After the presentations have been completed, place the posters side by side. Now ask the boys what they think of the collage the girls made. Then have the girls do the same. Some things to think about as you examine the collage: Do you agree with how the collage depicts men/women? Why or why not? Does the collage deal with various facets of your sex or does it dwell on one aspect? If so, what has been left out? Are the characteristics and/or roles stereotyped? If so, how and why? Ask students to compare the collages with the word association lists on the blackboard. Does it follow along the same vein or is it different? If so, how? (10 min.)

8. Group presentations. Ask each group (divide as before) to present its solution to the dilemma on page 9 ("A Woman's Place"). Have them read Scripture references first. (10 min.)

9. Ask volunteers to complete any of the following sentences:

- I learned . . .
- I was surprised . . .
- I changed my mind about . . .
- I still feel the same about . . .

10. *Homework.* Reproduce copies of "My Family Tree" on next page and tell students to complete them for next week.

11. Closing prayer. (5 min.)

Session 3—What Is a Family?

Key Concepts

1. The family unit is an integral part of Christian life.
2. Young people are often very troubled by the stress and conflict which may exist in their homes and should be able to discuss their feelings and discover ways to deal with them.
3. Scripture has something to say about families and family relationships as well as ways to deal with conflict.

Objectives

Students will

1. Share their families with one another.
2. Describe their concepts of family and family roles.
3. Examine Scripture in reference to family.
4. Discuss typical family conflicts.
5. Create role plays depicting family conflict situations.

Background for Teacher

Many young people today experience frustration in their families. When unresolved conflicts exist in a home, they may manifest themselves in various ways, such as running away from home, delinquent behavior, even suicide, or other self-destructive behavior. Family pressures, distress over relationships with parents, and disappointment in family unity are just a few of the concerns which young people have.

As a teacher, you can do very little to change these concerns. What you can do, however, is create an open and trusting classroom atmosphere where students will feel free to express and share their feelings. And that, after all, is quite a bit!

(*Note:* If during this class session, you notice a student who seems deeply troubled by the discussion or who shares some distressing family experiences, you may consider some sort of intervention; i.e., speaking with parents or your pastor about your concerns.)

Materials Needed

- Bibles for each student

Procedure

1. Welcome students. Opening prayer.
2. *Homework:* Divide class into groups of four and ask students to share their family trees. When completed, ask questions such as: What family members live with you? How many of you have your own room? How many of you have "chores" or responsibilities in the family? What are they? How do you feel about these "chores?" How often do you get together with grandparents?

Tell class: "Next week, we will discuss our ethnic