

# Study Guide



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## Using this Study Guide

The following Study Guide to *Sex, God, and Marriage* is included to help uncover the full impact of Arnold's words. The study format is designed for both personal study and discussion group use. The questions should be answered after you read the chapter they address.

Each study is divided into three basic sections: *Getting Ready* helps you get into the topic or theme of the chapter. *Digging In* asks you to explore the meaning and implications of what Arnold is saying. *Making It Count* challenges you to seek ways, both individually and as a group, to put what you've read into daily practice. The questions for each chapter are meant to inspire you toward purity. Thus they should not be answered mechanically. It is not as important to answer all of them, or to look up every biblical reference, as to grapple with them in your heart.

*Sex, God, and Marriage* is a wonderful book for engaged and newly married couples to read and study together. It is also excellent for parents to use with their teenage children as a means for sparking discussion about the meaning of sex and marriage. Young adults will also find the Study Guide a helpful means to prompt open and honest dialogue concerning these issues.

No book or study guide can bring about change by itself. It will be important, therefore, that as you work through *Sex, God, and Marriage*, you keep your heart – not just your mind – open to God. With such openness this book can truly change your life.

## Study 1: Introduction

### Getting Ready

Reflect on the book's title. What images, adjectives, or thoughts come to your mind? What does the title suggest to you? Does it raise any questions in your mind? Does anything about the design particularly strike you?

### Digging In

1. What do you learn about purity from Mother Teresa's Foreword? Is it positive or negative? How is purity obtained? What can it bring?
2. Can you think of any examples of how people today are searching for lasting and meaningful relationships?
3. How have you experienced the "bad fruits" of the sexual revolution in your own life?
4. Is living a pure life old-fashioned? Does such a life seem impossible or irrelevant today?
5. Arnold asks a series of questions beginning at the top of page xv. Do any of these particularly strike you?

### Making It Count

1. On page xv Arnold suggests several ways we can protect purity. One is to provide ongoing support to married couples around us. Think of a couple you know and ask God to show you a practical way in which you might show them that you support their marriage.
2. As a group, discuss the idea of a "pledge of purity." What kinds of things can you pledge together to ensure an atmosphere of purity in your group and in your individual lives? What can you agree upon before you move ahead in your study?

## Study 2: In the Image of God

### Getting Ready

1. Think about the different images people try to project. List some of these. What do these images hope to accomplish? What kind of responses do they try to evoke?
2. In contrast to the above, describe the kind of person who inspires love, gentleness, kindness, affirmation, respect, openness, loyalty, and trust in others. What kind of “image” does such a person project? What kind of person is he or she?

### Digging In

1. Read the first chapter of Genesis with the intent of finding its “inner, true meaning” (p. 3). Do you see any kind of progression? Why do you think humankind comes last?
2. What sets human beings apart from the rest of creation? What is it that makes us “images” of God? (See also Gen. 9:4–7; Ps. 8; Col. 3:5–10; Eph. 4:20–24.)
3. Because we are image-bearers of God, what value do we and others have? Why can’t human worth be measured?
4. Why is it significant that man and woman *together* reveal the meaning of being created in God’s image? What does it tell you about man and woman’s relationship with each other?
5. What does it mean that God has “set eternity in our hearts”? (p. 4) How should this affect the way we live and what we live for?
6. What happens to a person who denies that God is his or her origin?
7. Arnold refers to the voice of eternity as being our conscience. What does our conscience do? (For further reflection, consider the following: Can we *always* rely on our consciences? What kinds of things can cloud, weaken, or

- dull our conscience? (See also Rom. 2:14–16; 1 Sam. 25:26–34; Rom. 9:1; 1 Cor. 4:1–5; 8:7–13; 2 Cor. 4:1–2; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15; Heb. 9:14.)
8. Why do you think consumerism is a special danger to the conscience?
  9. In what areas of life do you find it hard to determine right from wrong, or to discern good from evil? Why?
  10. According to Arnold, what are some ways God's image is defaced today? Can you think of any others?
  11. If our destiny is to reflect God's image, what kind of person should we strive to become? (See 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 4:4–6; Rom. 8:29.) What image have you been pursuing?

### **Making It Count**

1. Imagine, for a moment, that you are kneeling by a beautifully clear pool. Now think of a person you have difficulty getting along with. Have them stand beside you so that their reflection is next to yours. What kind of feelings or reactions do you have?
2. Now imagine Jesus standing next to you. How would you feel? Why?
3. If we are all created in the image of God, we need to see each other as reflections of Jesus – the most vivid expression of God we know. Go back, mentally, to the person you have trouble getting along with. How have you not shown him or her the respect, appreciation, love, or reverence, that befits him or her as a reflection of God? What needs to change in you to better acknowledge this person's dignity?
4. Arnold says that to view others in light of their usefulness is to disregard their worth or dignity. Discuss this as a group and identify any ways this has been true in your life or among yourselves. How can you guard against this?

## Study 3: It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone

### Getting Ready

Think about the ways people isolate themselves from each other. What means do people use – what walls do people hide behind – to keep others at bay?

### Digging In

1. Notice the chapter title. The word “good” can be used in several senses. Why and in what ways is it not “good” for us to be alone?
2. Arnold says that “there is little that is so difficult for a person to bear as loneliness” (p. 9). What really causes loneliness, and why is it so unbearable?
3. Arnold asserts that “thousands of people lead lives of quiet desperation” (p. 10). What do you think he means or is referring to?
4. Why does love alone fulfill our innermost being? What kind of love fulfills our hearts and makes us happy? (See 1 John 4:7–17.) Why is “being connected with others” not enough to fill the void within us?
5. Read Genesis 2:15–23. Why did God create woman? From this passage, what do you learn about the way man and woman are to relate to one another?
6. What do you think Arnold means by being freed from our one-sidedness? (p. 13) How might you be too one-sided? Can you go to someone who knows you well and ask them to share with you any ways you might be one-sided?
7. If God is the source and the object of true love, what does this say about human relationships? What purpose do they ultimately have? What purpose do your relationships serve?

8. Arnold says that marriage is not the highest goal of life and that by itself it cannot bring wholeness (p. 13). In what ways does our society put too much stock in getting married? In what ways do you?

### **Making It Count**

1. Purity and community actually go hand in hand. The more inwardly isolated we are from one another the more vulnerable we are to impurity. How can you make your life more communal – more shared, more interdependent?
2. Even in a group, one can feel lonely or “alone.” One of the ways to overcome this problem is for each member to feel needed. How can you as a group become more interdependent?

## **Study 4: They Shall Become One Flesh**

### **Getting Ready**

Think about a marriage you know and admire. What qualities does it possess? Contrast these qualities with the way the media portrays relationships. What does the media (TV, video, movies, etc.) exalt when it comes to marriage? What makes a good marriage?

### **Digging In**

1. According to Arnold, what makes marriage sacred (something that is holy and to be treated with reverence)? What does it symbolize?
2. Arnold urges us to have more “reverence” for marriage. Where in your life have you mocked or degraded marriage?
3. Think about God’s relationship with his people. What does this tell you about a true marriage? (For further study, see Exod. 2:24, 6:4–5; Deut. 4:31; 7:8–9; 31:1–8; 1 Kings 8:23–

24, 56–58; Ps. 89:1–8, 94:14; 119: 89–91; 132:11–12; Hos. 2:19–20; Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 6:10–19.)

4. Why is adultery such a horror in God’s eyes? How does it deface God’s image? What does Jesus say about adultery? (Matt. 5:27–30)
5. Why does Arnold believe that the institution of marriage is teetering on the brink of disaster (p. 16)? Can you think of other reasons?
6. Arnold says that all of us yearn to be united to somebody (p. 16). What kind of “unity” is he referring to?
7. From what Arnold writes, describe what makes up a true, fulfilling marriage. What adjectives does he use?
8. What are the different levels of unity in God’s order of marriage? (p. 18) What are your relationships mostly based on?
9. Why does marriage alone fulfill the demands of our sexual conscience?
10. Why is it so important that God be the center of marriage? Won’t God get in the way?

### **Making It Count**

1. Choose one relationship in your life where you feel the order of God’s unity is skewed, or backwards. Ask God to show you how to get your priorities straight. Perhaps a relationship needs a “time out” until it can be based on a proper foundation. If you are married, does your marriage reflect God’s order of unity? If not, how? Perhaps you need to go to someone you respect and ask for their help.
2. Marriage is continually mocked and degraded in our culture, sometimes subtly, sometimes not. Discuss this as a group. Can you make a “pledge of reverence” together, where you as a group take a stand against anything that belittles or cheapens marriage?

## Study 5: The First Sin

### Getting Ready

Review the first two chapters of Genesis and consider the world God originally made? How is our present world different? Compare and contrast these two worlds.

### Digging In

1. How does Arnold describe God's original creation? What does he emphasize?
2. Read Genesis chapter 3 carefully. What, exactly, was Adam and Eve's sin? How does Arnold describe the first sin?
3. What resulted from the first sin? What is Satan's ultimate aim?
4. What, according to Arnold, happened to the image of God in man and woman?
5. What does Arnold mean when he says that Adam and Eve were "deceived by a false love"? (p. 23) Has this ever happened to you?
6. Arnold says that "Adam and Eve's first sin symbolizes the fall of each one of us" (p. 25). How so? How have you been "Adam" or "Eve" in your life?
7. All of us struggle with doubt and temptations. How can Jesus help? (See Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16.)

### Making It Count

1. Think of a relationship you have that has become estranged or broken. Think about the reasons for this. Think especially of the ways *your* sin (pride, mistrust, accusations, impure motives, etc.) has contributed to its downfall. Go to someone you have hurt and share with him or her how you have sinned. Can you ask him or her for forgiveness?

2. Arnold writes: “Satan still wants to separate us from God, from our brothers and sisters, and from our neighbor” (p. 22). Share how you might be feeling most vulnerable in these areas – especially among yourselves as a group. How do you feel most tempted to doubt and thus become separated from God and from others? After you share, spend time praying for each other.

## **Study 6: Restoring the Image of God**

### **Getting Ready**

1. Imagine for a moment that every mirror in the world were shattered, and that everyone wore severely cracked glasses. Describe such a world.
2. Now imagine that, after many years, you happened across a beautiful mirror and a pair of perfectly good glasses. For the first time, you see yourself and others as you truly are. How might you respond or react? What would happen if you tried to tell others about this?

### **Digging In**

1. Because of the Fall, Arnold says that we have only a faint reflection of God’s image. How does God, through Jesus, restore his image in us? How is Jesus “God’s reconciler”? (See Rom. 5:12–19; Eph. 2:11–19; Col. 1:15–23.)
2. What, exactly, does Jesus’ death accomplish? How does it heal and mend God’s image in us? (See Heb. 7:18–28, 9:11–28; Eph. 2:1–11; Col. 2:9–15; Titus 3:3–8.)
3. What kind of new life can one find in Jesus? (See p. 32 and 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 7:4–6; Phil. 3:20–21; Eph. 4:20–24; 1 Pet. 1:3.)

4. For our part, Arnold says, “We can never redeem ourselves or better ourselves by our own strength” (p. 29). What does Arnold suggest we *can* do? (See Acts 2:37–40; Rom. 10:9–13; John 1:10–13; 3:1–21.)
5. Why is confession of sin so important? (See 1 John 1:9.)
6. Arnold points out that in Christ our consciences can be stirred and set free. Is God speaking to your conscience in any specific way?
7. Arnold says that “It is the life-task of every person to prepare to meet God” (p. 33). Are you prepared for this even now? If not, why not? Is there anything preventing you from coming to Jesus and surrendering to him?
8. To have God’s image restored in your life means being “hidden in Christ,” who is himself the very image of God. Read Colossians 3:1–17. What does having God’s image restored involve?

### **Making It Count**

1. The beginning of freedom and reconciliation comes, Arnold says, “whenever we confess the accusations of our conscience” (p. 29). As Darlene’s story illustrates, there is nothing more healing than when sin is confessed openly to another person and repented of. (See James 5:16; Gal. 5:1; 2 Cor. 7:10.) Go to your pastor or to someone you trust and share openly the sins that burden your conscience and separate you from God.
2. Some sins need to be confessed corporately because of the specific ways they harm the group. Spend time in quiet reflection to consider whether or not you need to share anything with your small group that has separated you from it or has brought in a spirit of separation. If there is, express it in a spirit of humility and repentance.

## Study 7: Sexuality and the Sensuous Sphere

### Getting Started

Answer the following questions. Write down the number of the category you feel best expresses your thoughts or feelings.

- o Agree
  - 1 Not Sure
  - 2 Disagree
1. The Bible has a generally negative view of sex and the body. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. A truly spiritual person foregoes sensual pleasures. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Sex itself is dangerous. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Sex should be unimportant in a godly marriage. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. The material world is an obstacle to the spirit. \_\_\_\_\_
  6. The basic purpose of sex is for having children. \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Lust, gluttony, self-indulgence all fall in the same category. \_\_\_\_\_
  8. The best way to control one's sexuality is through the strength of moral compulsion. \_\_\_\_\_
  9. In a healthy approach to sex, one should feel no shame. \_\_\_\_\_
  10. Our greatest sins usually occur in the misuse of our senses. \_\_\_\_\_

Total your score. If, for example, you have marked four of your responses as "disagree" (2 points each), five "agree" (0 points each), and one "not sure" (1 point), then your total score would be 9 points. A score of 20 reflects the most biblical perspective on sex and the sensuous.

### Digging In

1. What, exactly, belongs to the “sensuous sphere?”
2. Arnold states that “In and of itself there is nothing wrong with the sensuous sphere of the senses” (p. 35). Why? What reasons does he give?
3. What do you learn about the sensuous sphere from the following passages? Ps. 24:1; Tim. 4:1–5; Rom. 1:18–20; Rom. 12:1; Matt. 6:10; Matt. 6:28–33; Cor. 4:7–18; Cor. 10:31
4. If “the physical is not the real enemy of the spirit” (p. 35), then what is? (For further study, see John 2:15–17; Rom. 6:11–14; 13:11–14; Gal. 5:13–18.)
5. How can the sensuous sphere bring us close to God and to each other?
6. What happens when the sensuous becomes an end in itself?
7. What makes the sexual life unique? How is it different from other areas of the sensuous?
8. What is the purpose of sexual union? What is involved between a husband and wife as they sexually unite?

### Making It Count

1. The Apostle Peter writes that “a person is a slave to whatever has mastered him” (2 Pet. 2:19). Are you a slave to any sensuous passion or to anything else in the sensuous sphere?
2. Choose one area you feel especially weak in and ask God to show you how you could replace it with some simple deed of love. If you were to try to give up smoking, for instance, think of how you could use the money you save to meet another person’s need.
3. Think of each of the five senses and the gifts you enjoy because of them. With your group give thanks to God in prayer and song for these blessings. Go on an outing

together to a place that is especially beautiful. How do your thoughts turn to God in this place?

## Study 8: The Pure in Heart

### Getting Ready

Many people react negatively when they hear the word “purity.” Think about the meaning of the word “pure.” What other similar words come to mind? What kinds of things increase in value or worth because of their purity?

### Digging In

1. What phrases or terms does Arnold use to describe purity? Which one strikes you most? Why?
2. What does purity bring or accomplish?
3. Describe a person who is “pure of heart.” How is such purity obtained?
4. Read the following passages. What do they say about obtaining purity? Ps. 24:3–4; Ps. 51:10; 2 Cor. 6:16; 7:1; Titus 1:15; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 1:7–9; James 3:1–14; 1 Pet. 1:22
5. Arnold quotes Bonhoeffer (p. 45). What do you think Bonhoeffer means when he says that the pure in heart are not only undefiled by their own evil but also by their *own virtue*?
6. What is impurity? What kinds of things accompany impurity? What happens to a person gripped by impurity?
7. Are purity and impurity restricted to matters pertaining to sexuality?
8. Why does Arnold say that a marriage certificate is no guarantee of purity?
9. How might sexual purity deepen or intensify a couple’s sexual experience?

### **Making It Count**

1. Arnold asserts that the pure in heart “avoid every situation that defiles the soul and abhor the thought of leading others into sin” (p. 45). He even warns against any fascination with impurity. How is this with you? Have you ever put yourself in situations that put your soul or another’s soul at risk? How can you avoid such situations? Whom can you ask to help hold you accountable? Spend time in prayer asking God for help. Remember, Christ alone can purify your heart.
2. Arnold emphasizes that “the church community has a great responsibility to fight daily for an atmosphere of purity among all of its members” (p. 46). Discuss as a group how your church or fellowship can fight this battle more faithfully. How about your group? Are there impure spirits or attitudes that might have infiltrated it?

## **Study 9: Marriage in the Holy Spirit**

### **Getting Ready**

Think for a moment about the tensions and pressures that test a marriage, no matter how strong it is. What sort of strains arise, both from within and from outside the marriage?

How can a couple best withstand these tests?

### **Digging In**

1. What things, according to Arnold, attract people to each other? Can you think of others?
2. Why are the above reasons insufficient to base a marriage relationship on?
3. When Arnold refers to “unity in the Spirit” (p. 52), what does he mean? What kind of love does this unity produce, and how is this unity different from other ways of being close?

4. Why do you think Arnold refers to marriage as encompassing three levels? (p. 52) Why should the first two levels come before the third one?
5. Arnold emphasizes the importance of the unity of the church and its members and how this needs to come before everything else, including marriage. What might this suggest regarding the purpose of marriage? (See John 17:20–23.)
6. If marriage is not based in the Holy Spirit, what risks does it run?
7. How does Arnold address the problem of being married to an unbelieving partner or to someone holding to a different belief? (For further study, see 1 Cor. 7:12–16; 1 Pet. 3:1–6.)
8. In light of this chapter's emphasis on the Holy Spirit, what should a couple's priority be as they grow in their marriage?
9. Read and reflect on the following Scripture passages: Acts 2:24–47; 4:32; Eph. 4:1–3; Phil. 2:1–5; Col. 3:12–17; Rom. 5:5–7. What would our marriages look like if these passages became a reality to us?

### **Making It Count**

1. Arnold refers to the different domains of experience that typically draw people together: mutual emotions, common values, shared ideas, and feelings of good will (p. 51). He points out that our first priority should actually lie at the spiritual level. Reflect on some of your more important relationships – especially with the opposite sex – and consider their basis. How can you make them more spiritually centered?
2. If you are married, engaged, or involved in a serious relationship with someone, think about what it is that really holds you together. In order of priority, what is most important in your relationship: mutual emotions? common values? shared

ideas? feelings of good will? physical attraction? spiritual oneness? What can you do to set it more firmly on a spiritual basis?

3. Discuss as a group the “quality level” of your relationships. Do they reflect God’s priorities? Outside of formally meeting together, what defines and motivates your relationships with each other? What needs to change to make things different?

## Study 10: The Mystery of Marriage

### Getting Ready

Consider the relationship between the body and the head. How are they different? In what ways do they depend on each other?

### Digging In

1. Why, according to Arnold, is marriage a church matter and not just a private affair?
2. Why does Arnold say that the marriage bond is more than a promise or contract between two people? What kind of bond is it?
3. If the marriage bond mirrors the mystery of the church, what does this mean for a couple if one of the partners strays from Christ?
4. How is loyalty to Christ and to the church *above one’s marriage* actually a protection to one’s marriage?
5. Have you ever compromised your faith by going along with your partner’s sin? How?
6. Arnold explores the similarities and differences of men and women. Each have different natures and tasks, but both are of equal value in God’s eyes. How are men and women different, yet the same?

7. Consider the biological differences between men and women. How might these help you understand some of the spiritual differences?
8. According to Arnold, what does it mean for man to be the head in marriage and for woman to submit? What does true leadership involve? Are wives to blindly submit? (For further study, see 1 Cor. 7: 3–5; 11:2–26; 1 Pet. 3:1–7; Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:18–21; Titus 2:1–5; Luke 22:24–27; John 13:1–17.)
9. How are men and women *both* needed to fulfill the church’s task? Reflect, again, on the relationship between the head and the body. How can this analogy help to explain the relationship between husband and wife?
10. Arnold decries our society’s obliteration of the differences between men and women. How does our society do this? What do you feel about this issue?

### **Making It Count**

1. Arnold puts great emphasis on the role of the church. Are your closer relationships with the opposite sex really based in the church? What can you do to make the church more important in your relationships?
2. To married men: Have you, as a husband, failed to *lead* your wife in “all that is good”? What can you do to *serve* her better? Ask your wife to give you her honest feedback.
3. To married women: Have you ever resisted your husband’s lead? How can you become more submissive to his love? Ask your husband for his honest feedback.
4. Arnold says that many men and women avoid the special responsibilities given them by God (p. 62). He cites examples. Discuss further. Share how this might be true within your own group. If your group is mixed, be especially careful to listen to what members of the opposite sex have to say.

## Study 11: The Sacredness of Sex

### Getting Ready

Think about the word “sacred.” Look it up in the dictionary. What are some synonyms for it? How does a person respond when confronted by the sacred? How is the sacred different from the ordinary, the mundane? What kinds of things, places, or experiences might you consider to be sacred?

### Digging In

1. According to Arnold, what are the two great dangers in sex? (p. 65) Have you fallen into either of these? Can you think of any other dangers?
2. How can sex, even in marriage, become dangerous? How can it lose its noble quality or become selfish?
3. On what condition should a couple sexually unite? What kind of experience can a couple have when sex is truly God-centered and subordinated under Him?
4. Why does sex have such a forceful effect on the spirit?
5. How should sex be talked about in a marriage?
6. What is the role of prayer in sexual intimacy? Why is it important?
7. What general responsibilities and considerations should husbands and wives have for each other with regard to sex?

Married couples should discuss the following questions alone:

8. In a healthy marriage, the husband and wife should speak openly about even the most intimate things. What do you need to talk most about with your spouse regarding sex?
9. Does your spouse know what does or does not please you sexually? Do you really know what is pleasing to your spouse? Why not? Can you find out?

10. If your sex life has become skewed or unfulfilling, why? Talk about this with your spouse, and listen to him or her openly.
11. Are there any ways you have used your spouse merely to satisfy yourself? How? What needs to change?
12. How might you and your spouse consider the question of abstinence? What might be some good reasons to abstain from sexual intimacy for awhile? How should abstinence be approached?

### **Making It Count**

1. Our society has virtually lost all reverence for sex. One of the ways sex is degraded is talking about it lightly. How is it with you when it comes to talking about sex? Do you have enough reverence? Can you think of times you spoke too lightly about sexual matters? How will you change? Who will hold you accountable?
2. If your group is a mixed one, divide up. In many ways, sex is a mystery. You may still have questions. Take this time together to ask your questions. Maybe you are hurting in some way and you need to share with the group your pain. Remember the importance of confidentiality. What is shared during this time should not be shared with anyone else.

## **Study 12: Parenthood and the Gift of Children**

### **Getting Ready**

Think about all the ways children are a gift. List them.

### **Digging In**

1. From your experience, how is the concept of family in danger of being lost?

2. Arnold asserts that “modern society despises the family” (p. 73). What examples does he give? What other ways does our society devalue the family?
3. What do you think Arnold means when he says that “only the adult who stands like a child before the grace of God is fit to raise a child?” (p. 73)
4. On what foundation should a family be built?
5. What are some of the more important responsibilities parents have toward their children?
6. What can parents do to help make a child feel secure? What are things that might make children inwardly uneasy?
7. What are the key ingredients of effective discipline? What is true parental authority? Arnold points out that parents should lead, not control, their children. What does he mean? What is the difference between the two?
8. Arnold warns against unhealthy emotionalism, or false ties between parent and child. What do you think he means?
9. How can parents best lead their children to God? What should they avoid doing?
10. Arnold says we should reject both the harshness of physical punishment and the power of manipulation. What does he mean by the latter? Can you cite examples?
11. In raising a family, what role should others in the church play?

### **Making It Count**

Parents, consider the questions below and ask God to show you one concrete way you need to change.

1. Are you and your spouse united in matters of discipline? Are you clear and consistent in what you expect? How could you improve in this area?

2. Do your children feel religious pressure from you? Are you in tune with *God's* purpose for your child, or are you trying to squeeze them into some other mold?
3. Is there unhealthy emotionalism or a false dependency between you and your child?

Whether or not we are parents, all of us can learn more from children.

4. Looking at your own life, what place do family and children have in it? Do children have an important role in your life? How can you live differently so as to make children a more central part of your life?
5. What is one thing you can do to establish a more trusting, meaningful relationship with a child?
6. Consider how you as a group can do something together for some children. Throw a party, take a group of children on an outing, or organize a special Sunday school class, etc.

## **Study 13: The Purity of Childhood**

### **Getting Ready**

Jesus said, "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). Think about the qualities a little child possesses. What are they? What do they teach us about how to know God?

### **Digging In**

1. How is a child especially close to God? How has this been true in your experience?
2. Why is it important to remember that children have both a childlike innocence *and* an inclination to sin?
3. What is involved in protecting and nurturing the *atmosphere* of innocence? Why should we pay attention to a child's *whole* atmosphere?

4. How would you describe the dominant atmosphere of your life? Is there anything “unclean,” or “child-unfriendly” about it?
5. Why is nature – God’s creation – important to a child’s development?
6. Arnold writes, “To protect the purity of children means to win them for the good” (p. 84). What does he mean, and what does this involve?
7. What is moralism, and why, according to Arnold, is it so harmful for a child? (See Eph. 6:4; Col. 2:20–22; 3:21.)
8. How does disrespect manifest itself, especially in older children?
9. Why do you think children form cliques?
10. How should adults, especially parents, deal with the problem of sexual impurity in young children? Why should parents avoid moralism?
11. Why is building trust between parents and young adults so important?
12. Arnold asserts that “purity can never be fostered in a vacuum” (p. 89). What does he mean by this? What can young people do to safeguard their purity?

### **Making It Count**

1. *For Young People:* Arnold contrasts cliquishness with the importance of having a social conscience. Is your life marked more by cliquishness – an unhealthy preoccupation with your little group of friends – than by interacting with the needs of others and the issues of our day? Think of something concrete you can do to reach out to others. How can you get more involved with some of today’s important issues (homelessness, hunger, environmental issues, pro-life causes, prison ministry, etc.)?

2. *For Adults and Parents:* Purity is best learned by example (p. 88). What do your children see in your life and at home that inspires purity in them? Do you set an example in how you talk, what you do, what you read and watch, how you treat others, how you spend your leisure time, and who you interact with? Are you involved with any of the important issues of our day? What can you do differently to better nurture and protect the purity of your children or the children in your care? Be specific!
3. Trust is a two-way street. Think of a relationship – either with an adult or young person, in or outside the group – that could use some trust-building. Share your need with the group and ask them for ideas on how to build up that trust.

## **Study 14: For Those Considering Marriage**

### **Getting Ready**

Write down your feelings and thoughts about dating in general. What values are embedded in today's dating practices? Do you think dating is a good thing, or do you think there could be better ways to get to know a person of the opposite sex? What might those ways be?

### **Digging In**

1. Reflect carefully on the scripture passage Arnold quotes at the beginning of the chapter. What kind of person should we seek to become?
2. Arnold voices concern over how today's young men and women get to know each other. Why? What problems does he see in conventional dating?
3. What kind of environment do young people need in order to get to know each other? How does your social environment compare?

4. On what basis should a more serious relationship be formed? What should the decisive factor be?
5. In order for a healthy relationship to grow, what kinds of things should a couple concentrate on?
6. When two people become interested in each other, why are time and the involvement of others a help?
7. Why do you think most people today pair off and exclude parents or other adults?
8. Arnold suggests writing as a good way for a couple to get to know one another. How might this be helpful?
9. When does a couple know they are “meant for each other?”
10. Why is sexual involvement before marriage a hindrance to the process of learning to know someone fully?

### **Making It Count**

1. If pairing off at the exclusion of others is unhealthy, then how might you need to change? If you are a young person, how can you involve others, especially your parents, in your relationships? If you are a parent, how can you make your time more available to your children and to the relationships they have with others?
2. If conventional dating is not a truly Christian option, then how can you as a group better ensure a new way for girls and boys, men and women, to get to know each other? Discuss some concrete ways you can replace conventional dating. What are some of the obstacles?

(*Parents:* involve the young adults you know in this discussion, and ask for their input. *Young adults:* do the same with your parents.)

## Study 15: The Service of Singleness

### Getting Ready

Marriage is a tremendous gift, but singleness can also be a blessing. Think of all the ways this is true.

### Digging In

1. If marriage is not our deepest calling, what is? What is the greatest gift?
2. Why doesn't singleness have to consign one to loneliness or defeat?
3. Is lifelong chastity really possible? How so?
4. What special dangers confront those whose desire for marriage remains unfulfilled? What must single people avoid doing?
5. If you are single, are you willing to let go of marriage? If not, why not? What are some of your fears?
6. Even for those who freely accept their singleness, struggle remains. In times of struggle, what can a single person do?
7. Marriage, too, has its burdens. What might they be? (See also 1 Cor. 7:32–35.)
8. What can a church do to recognize the gifts and needs of single people? Does your church do these things?
9. How can singleness actually become a higher calling?
10. Arnold concludes this chapter by speaking of the “essence of single-heartedness, and the service of singleness” (p. 111). What is he referring to?
11. How can the gift of singleness be a positive challenge to those who are married? What must married couples always keep in mind?

### Making It Count

1. *For those who are single:* Whether you are called to lifelong singleness or not, it is clear that our deepest calling is in serving Christ and his cause. Do you spend your free time, energy, and means in service to Christ and to others? What is one thing you can do, precisely because you are single, that would be of service to others?
2. *For those who are married:* As Arnold says, marriage is not for building a cozy life. Couples, too, are called to give unconditionally. What is one specific way you can more consistently reach out to those who are single?
3. If you are a group of mostly singles, discuss ways you can do a special service for your church. This could be a practical project of some sort, or a more spiritual task. How can you accomplish something *together*?

## Study 16: With or Without God

### Getting Ready

Think about the ways, apart from marriage, you have learned about sex. What were the primary influences in your life as you formed your thoughts about sex? (Your parents? siblings? church? peers? books? films? music? advertisements?) What attitudes and messages about sex did these people/media communicate?

### Digging In

1. How, according to Arnold, has marriage been “dragged into the dirt”? (p. 114)
2. Why does Arnold say that “our age is a loveless age,” and what examples does he cite to support this? (p. 115)
3. How have we become a sex-obsessed society? What examples does Arnold give? Can you think of others?

4. How has love, for many people, become a delusion?
5. Arnold refers to the devastating aftermath of the sexual revolution. What do you think he is referring to?
6. Why does Arnold think that modern sex education is a complete failure? What are some of his criticisms?
7. Consider your own experiences with classroom sex education. What kind of values and attitudes are communicated?
8. What does true education for the sexual life involve, and how should it take place?
9. Does Arnold agree or disagree with the dominant view of masturbation – that it is healthy and natural? Why? Where, according to Arnold, does masturbation lead, and how does it harm the soul?
10. If you engage in masturbation, consider whether it really makes you happy. Do you feel satisfied, or dissatisfied, after masturbating? Has it made you a freer, healthier, more honest person?
11. Think about Arnold’s assertion that the so-called lines between pornography, masturbation, one-night stands, and prostitution are actually an illusion. Why do you think he feels this way? Do you agree?
12. When we give into sexual impurity, we are in danger, Arnold says, “of throwing ourselves completely away” (p. 121). How? What other things can sexual impurity lead to or be connected with? (For further study, see Matt. 15:19–20; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 5:1–6; Col. 3:5–6; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:12–20; Heb. 13:4–5.)
13. Arnold quotes William Bennett, who writes: “There is a coarseness, a callousness, a cynicism, a banality, and a vulgarity to our time” (p. 117). Can you think of examples?

### **Making It Count**

1. How have you “played” with impurity? Where have you let yourself be sexually aroused in a selfish way? Will you go to a person you trust to help hold you accountable in your effort to change? Who? What will you ask this person to do to help you? Remember, freedom never comes from one’s own strength but only through continually turning to God.
2. What can you do as a group to protest the filth that pervades society? Don’t look for big answers. Concentrate on little things you can do to show your concern.

## **Study 17: Shameful Even to Mention?**

### **Getting Ready**

1. Homosexuality is perhaps the most explosive, divisive, and controversial issue that confronts the church today. Why do you think this is? What is at stake?
2. What feelings and questions do you have about homosexuality?

### **Digging In**

1. Why is Arnold alarmed by the prevalence of today’s homosexual *agenda*? What aspects of their agenda should Christians resist?
2. Why is gay bashing wrong? What, exactly, does gay bashing involve?
3. Arnold differentiates between homosexual orientation and homosexual conduct. What is the difference, and why is this distinction important?
4. How does Arnold respond to those who claim they were born gay? Does being “born” homosexual justify homosexual behavior?

5. Arnold considers several passages of scripture that condemn homosexual behavior. How do people today try to re-interpret these passages in order to justify homosexuality?
6. Arnold dismisses the argument that Scripture condemns only “offensive homosexuality” and not homosexuality as such. What do the following passages teach? Gen. 19:1–29; Lev. 18:22–23; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:24–28; 1 Cor. 6:9–10.
7. Why, according to Arnold, is a “loving” homosexual relationship no more permissible than other homosexual liaisons?
8. Can homosexuals be helped? How? What lessons does Howard and Ann’s story (pp. 129–132) teach in this regard?
9. Is freedom from homosexuality possible? How? (See Rom. 6:1–7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 4:1–6.)

### **Making It Count**

1. Arnold is clear that “there is no biblical basis for making homosexuality a worse sin than any other” (p. 124). Search your own heart: Is your attitude more one of condemnation or of compassion? Have you ever treated a gay person wrongly or unjustly, simply because he or she was gay? How might you be able to make amends for this? What can you do to communicate God’s love to a struggling homosexual? Ask God to lead you in this.
2. Locate a ministry that addresses the needs of homosexuals. Have one of its leaders share with your group about their ministry.

## **Study 18: The Hidden War**

### **Getting Ready**

Consider the many reasons people use to support a woman’s right to abortion. List four reasons, and your response to each of them.

### Digging In

1. Is Arnold right in saying that there is an increasing lack of reverence for life and a lack of compassion for those who are least able to defend themselves? Why or why not?
2. Arnold quotes Hauerwas, who says, “We are willing our deaths” (p. 134). Can you think of different ways this might be true?
3. Why is Arnold so concerned about “the contraceptive mentality”? What is he referring to, and why does he feel that the use of contraceptives is against God’s will?
4. If you are using contraceptives, why? How do your reasons hold up in light of Arnold’s warnings?
5. Arnold asserts that “abortion is murder – there are no exceptions” (p. 136). Why, exactly, are there *no* exceptions?
6. Re-read the scripture passages Arnold cites. What, specifically, can you learn from these about the unborn child and his or her relationship to God?
7. Arnold quotes Bonhoeffer’s warning against making distinctions between life that is worth living and life that is not (p. 139). Why are such distinctions dangerous?
8. Is protest against abortions enough? Why not?
9. Has the church and your church in particular, failed to provide an alternative to abortion? How?
10. What should our response be toward those who have had an abortion? Why?

### Making it Count

1. What can you *do* to more faithfully uphold the sanctity of sex and of the unborn child? Maybe you need to learn more about natural family planning, or about adoption. Perhaps there is a crisis pregnancy center you can support. Maybe

you know a mother in crisis who needs simple practical help. Ask God to show you what to do.

2. Explore the possibility of how you as a group might practically support a crisis pregnancy center (CPC). Designate someone in your group to contact a nearby CPC and make an appointment with the director. Learn how your group can help, and decide one thing you can do *together*.

## **Study 19: What about Divorce and Remarriage?**

### **Getting Ready**

Think about why there are so many divorces today. What are some of the causes (or factors and influences) that lead people to divorce? Why is it so hard for people to stay married today?

### **Digging In**

1. Arnold believes that divorce and remarriage is possibly “the toughest issue” that faces the church today. What makes it so tough?
2. Arnold cites some of the reasons people give for allowing divorce and remarriage. Can you think of any others? On what biblical grounds do Christians argue for the right to divorce and remarry?
3. What is Arnold’s view of the “marriage covenant?” (See Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–6.)
4. Why did Moses allow divorce to begin with? Did he ever sanction it *per se*? (See Deut. 24:1–4; Matt. 19:8.)
5. Only in Matthew’s gospel is Jesus recorded as allowing divorce (Matt. 5:31–32; 19:8–9). Why do you think this is? How does Arnold explain this? (See also note 38, p. 199.)
6. Even if there are certain “valid” grounds for divorce, does this automatically free one to divorce, and to remarry after-

wards? (For further study, see Hos. 3:1; 11:1–4; Matt. 6:14–15; Rom. 12:17–21; 1 Cor. 7:10–11, 29; Rom. 7:3.)

7. Why should someone stay faithful even after a marriage has ended?
8. What is the meaning of true faithfulness according to Arnold? Why is adultery more than a physical act?
9. Arnold cites a question he asks of every couple he marries. He says there is “deep wisdom in it” (p. 148). How?
10. What two pitfalls does Arnold warn against (p. 150)? Have you fallen into either?

### **Making it Count**

1. It is sad when couples live “parallel lives.” If you are married, how is it going? Are you merely coexisting because you want or need to stay together? What prevents you from having a more fruitful, interactive marriage? Discuss this (privately) with your spouse. Would you agree to seek help if you can’t seem to make progress? If not, why not?
2. There is great strength in a group that is committed to doing a task together. Discuss ways in which you might support a troubled marriage or help support a person who has been divorced and is trying to stay faithful. Maybe there’s a couple in the church (or even in your group) that needs extra time together but cannot afford or find a baby-sitter they trust. Perhaps a single parent could use similar help. Think practically and realistically as you explore different possibilities.

## **Study 20: Therefore Let Us Keep Watch**

### **Getting Ready**

Reflect on the following passages that speak about John the Baptist (Luke 1:5–17; 3:4–18; Matt. 14:1–12; Mark 6:14–29).

What kind of person was John? What did he preach? How did people respond to his message?

### **Digging In**

1. Arnold is convinced that “many people today have a deep longing for purity and faithfulness” (p. 153). Has this been true in your experience?
2. What is involved in taking the struggle for purity really seriously?
3. Besides the rampant impurity of our age, what else do we need to fight against?
4. Why do you think there are so few people like John the Baptist today? If John the Baptist were here today, what do you think his message would be? Who might he go to?
5. Can you think of anybody today who is like John the Baptist? Who might this be and why?
6. Arnold points out that the Beast (i.e., the Evil One) holds sway over every country, and that his mark is “everywhere” (p. 157). What evidence of this could you add to Arnold’s list?
7. What happens when God’s will is fully and visibly lived out?
8. Think about the wedding feast of the lamb (Rev. 19:7–9; Matt. 22:1–14). If you were in charge of getting this banquet ready, would you be prepared? Would you even be ready to go? What would it mean to prepare for such a feast?
9. Arnold claims that “few people dare to stick out their necks” (p. 156). What about you? Are there ways you have become apathetic, complacent, or dulled by the spirit of our time?

### **Making it Count**

1. Arnold pleads for more John the Baptists to come forth. To whom do you need to speak a word of repentance? How can you more actively protest against today's evils? Ask God to show you ways in which you can be a more faithful fighter for his cause. As you seek God's leading, ask God to show you how you also need to change.
2. Reflecting on all that you have shared together as a group and in light of what you have read, plan a banquet. Focus it on the theme of purity. Think of different ways to express what you have learned together. Be clear as to how you can prepare for it and what it will involve, and make sure each person has some way to contribute. Perhaps there are others outside your group whom you could invite.