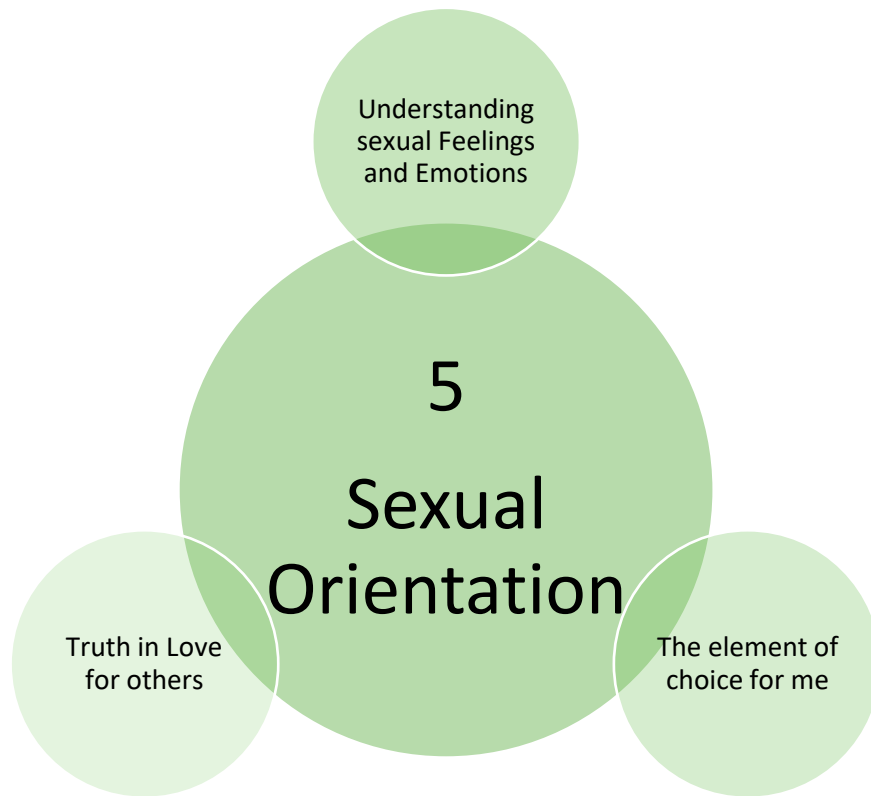




CSE TEAM

FEB 1, 2022



Lesson 6

Sexual Orientation – Grade 7-9

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
6A: Understanding sexual Feelings and Emotions	Major	Minor	Major
6B: The element of choice for me	Minor	Major	Minor
6C: Truth in Love for others	Major	Major	Major

6A: Understanding sexual Feelings and Emotions

At this stage, the adolescent stage, you are trying to figure out your own personality, you are trying to explore your own personal values, beliefs and goals.

And the way you do that is by exploring different possibilities of who you can become in society and life; relationship with God, job, career, interests. Then you also think about relationships and the kind of family you want in the future.

When you start thinking about all that, sometimes there are confusions that come with the different things you hear from society, family and church.

In regards to sexual orientation, some people try to explore on their own different possibilities which does not conform with God's plan.

Sometimes you end up not knowing who you are or your place in society and that can cause a lot of negative feelings, isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, etc.

So maybe you would start thinking...I am not happy with who I am, I do not love who I am...Let me change it (And that is some of the reasons for sexuality confusion).

This feeling becomes more pressing that you have to think about ... figure out who you are in a healthy way, ask yourself:

How am I feeling right now?

What is my Identity in Christ? Am I relying on Him?

Am I having a hard time with school or making friends?

Am I having a hard time seeing eye to eye with my parents?

Or even questioning if the relationship between you and some of the people around you is based on friendship, love or just admiration?

The healthy way is to start talking about it with someone trustworthy? ask questions...figure that out.

Remember, don't stress, in reality we spend the rest of our lives still figuring some things out.

If you do that in a healthy environment with the people that share your beliefs, care about you, love you and want the best for you...You will be able to figure out your Identity as a whole in a healthy way.

Information for the Servants to use as needed in the lesson (Do not share as is):

1. Assigning the correct meaning for feelings: friendship, love or admiration for the same sex:

The table shown below, explains the different developmental stages that a person may go through. The idea behind it is that to successfully move to the next stage, one must pass the psychosocial crisis of the previous stage.

The fifth stage of development is identity vs. role confusion, and it occurs during adolescence, from about 12-18 years. During this stage, adolescents search for a sense of self and personal **identity**, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals.

This is a major stage of development where the child has to learn the **roles** he/she will occupy as an adult. It is during this stage that the adolescent will re-examine their identity and try to find out exactly who he or she is. Erikson suggests that two identities are involved: the sexual and the occupational.

What should happen at the end of this stage is “a reintegrated sense of self, of what one wants to do or be, and of one’s appropriate sex role”. During this stage the body image of the adolescent changes.

During this period, they explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. Failure to establish a sense of identity within society (“I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up”) can lead to role confusion. Role confusion involves the individual not being sure about themselves or their place in society.

P.S. Pressuring someone into an identity can result in rebellion in the form of establishing a negative identity, and in addition to this feeling of unhappiness (Acknowledge the feeling and guide towards God’s way).

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1.	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope	0 - 1½
2.	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will	1½ - 3
3.	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	3 - 5
4.	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competency	5 - 12
5.	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity	12 - 18
6.	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	18 - 40
7.	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	40 - 65
8.	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	65+

2. ***How to recognize your own sexual/romantic feelings towards yourself and others?***

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/art-and-science/201801/identifying-your-feelings>

(Servants please discuss in class and always keep these open-ended questions in mind to guide a conversation outside the class)

A. Start by taking your emotional temperature

Ask yourself:

- What feelings am I aware of having?
- What is the most prominent?
- When did I become aware of this feeling?

B. Identify your stressors

Ask yourself:

- What might be triggering this feeling?
- What's happening (or not happening) in my daily life?
- How is my home life?
- Am I getting along with my classmates in school? My friends? My parents and siblings?
- How am I doing in school? Am I satisfied with my grades? Am I getting along with my teachers? What are they telling me about me and their feelings about me? Can I see validity in what they're saying?

C. Notice if you start judging what you feel

"I don't have any reason to feel bad (anxious, depressed)," you may say. Wait for an outcome before assuming the worst. We tend to chastise ourselves (as if feelings follow reason!). The reality is that life events generate feelings. They simply are. Though we may decide which feelings to attend to, we don't decide to feel or not feel. It's our responsibility to identify them and give them room to breathe.

D. Speak about your feelings, and let go of the fear

The fact is that the more that we admit our terrors to ourselves and our loved ones, the more likely they are to diminish in size. And it makes sense. The more stifled a feeling, the greater its intensity. Feelings function like a pressure cooker: Pressure increases without release. Then, once released, the intensity is reduced. The corollary is the fact that feelings that are denied or dismissed do NOT diminish in size or disappear, but are intensified.

In conclusion, when we avoid confronting or coping with our feelings in a healthy way, we result in coping in unhealthy ways that may lead to confusion or more negative feelings.

Objective → Understand different feeling and properly categorize it.

6B: The element of Choice for me

1. Our reference is God's plan:

We believe that God created us in His image. To understand what it means to a human we search for the source of our essence from God who existed before us and caused our own existence.

The world view that says that each person is totally free in regards to choosing their nature and gender is a flawed idea. Our Christian faith is that God created two genders, male and female.

We cannot be the source or the explanation for ourselves simply because we didn't create ourselves!

God did. Exactly how God created the mountains, the oceans, etc. He created us and has a purpose for us.

Why is this important?

Each person's gender is chosen by God. God called all of us to live with Him in holiness we need to understand that this is the base line and starting point for Christian view not just in sexual diversity but in whole sexuality topics.

God is our moral reference, God's nature is goodness and what God plans for us is what we should follow, any deviation from God's plan is evil.

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27) & "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." (Gen 1:31)

We should celebrate the beauty of God's creative design. The birth of a new member in our church whether a boy or a girl is a festival of happiness. We should rejoice that God in His wisdom has opened our eyes to see that He has made us according to His perfect design. Manhood and womanhood aren't Plan B. God Himself has made us as we are. We are the pinnacle of His creation and we should be proud of the gender God created us with and the role He designed for it. Adam could have not fulfilled God's plan without Eve.

God created man in His image and likeness but Seth was on the likeness of Adam! With the fallen nature. Every one of us has a corrupted part and that's exactly why God took flesh to come and save us. To give us the power through Him to overcome our fallen humanity. All sorts of deviations and changes are happening surrounding us but this doesn't change the truth of God's plan and how God called us to live by and gave us the grace to fight the temptation of sin.

2. Sexual temptation VS Sin:

While we are growing up, it is normal to have these types of thoughts, feelings or desires. Feeding these thoughts and desire is where we can make a choice.

Human beings do not choose sexual feelings, or predisposition. They can however, choose to accept and act on them, or resist and reject them when the feelings can lead to sinful acts (actions or thoughts that don't glorify God).

The question is, where is the choice point?

Sin is going against God's will and commandments in anything. We should glorify God in our thoughts, and actions.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)

As we do not choose how we feel, the feeling of same sex attraction sometimes exists. Feelings change all the time and are temporary. What are the thoughts behind the feelings? The key here is the choice: how should we "act"? According to God who didn't plan for us to have thoughts of same sex attraction or act on these thoughts? or according to the worldview which expects us to act and think outside of what God intended? Consider any desire to act on a thought that is outside of God's plan or Biblical teachings. Some of us may have a feeling that leads to a thought and then an action like saying bad words, stealing or lying. We may have temptations to do any of these things, which means we have acted on a thought that may have started as a feeling but they are all still sins and we have a choice to think and act, even if we do not choose our feelings. God knows this about us, which is why He gives us the gift of free will and choice, He also gives us the sacraments of confession. We must strive for repentance, even though there are temptations and thoughts based on feelings that may lead us to act on these desires.

"For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 24:6)

What are some of the reasons that encourages the thoughts of same sex attraction and exposes us to this temptation:

1. Living in a world that is put in evil: being surrounded with a fallen world full of corrupted nature that deviates from God's plan.
2. Not knowing your Identity in God (Identity Confusion): When we do not know who we are or what our reference is, we get confused on controversial sexuality topics.
3. Being exposed to an outside world that does not consider God in everything: If we are always surrounded at school, activities, sports with people who do not share our faith and Identity, it reduces our sensitivity against sin.
4. Having Impure relationships: outside the sacrament of Christian marriage (That God planned between man and woman).
5. Boredom: Filling **all** our spare time with TV shows, movies, playing games, social media, chatting, etc.
6. Memories: Sometimes impure thoughts or actions that we previously repented, come back to hunt us and make us feel hopeless.

These are some of the reasons, every person has a different weakness point, temptations and feelings.

3. Power of choice / How to overcome:

Based on the reasons listed above, what would be some of the ideas to help overcome such thoughts and guide us not to act upon them?

1. New nature in Baptism: Holy Baptism initiates a very fundamental transformation in the mind, heart, soul, and body. We die with Christ on the Cross and resurrect with Him to a new life. Because of this rebirth, we can now attain full communion with God, a real relationship with Him.

Remember, our bodies are sacred, we are partakers in the divine nature, so we have victory in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Secure our Identity in God: The first thing we need to do is we make up our minds to walk with God, through Christ "You can do nothing without Me" (John 15). Be confident that God's grace will be there for us and we should be prepared. It is a continuous resistance but the more we insist on doing what pleases God the more God's grace will support us and guide us through this spiritual warfare.

Walking with God liberates us from the bond of sin, from being overruled with sexual temptations. We need to choose willingly to be with God in a personal relationship out of love and truly reject any work of evil.

3. Surround yourself with friends and family that share your Identity in Christ, respect your Christian values and help you grow in Christ.
4. Set boundaries for your relationships: Remember God's plan for the different types of relationships. Do not feed sexual temptations with living in the environment that emphasis on such temptation but rather know your triggers and flee. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)
We should also remind ourselves that we are going through resisting this temptation because we put God first. If anyone is missing out on knowing the depth of God's love for us, their life has a huge void.
5. Keep ourselves busy with constructive things: what we read, watch, draw and talk about have a great impact on us. We may underestimate the impact, but our atmosphere/environment/surroundings slowly change us.

- Examine every aspect of your atmosphere/environment /surroundings and make sure it helps you on what you choose to be. We should have control over what we feed our brains and eyes with.
- Fill your time with useful things that build you, physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Keep God in your atmosphere. For example, when reading the Bible, do not read as a task to be done but rather contemplate for the day on what you read, perhaps listen to a sermon or an explanation for that particular chapter. "I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways." (Psalms 119:15) . "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."(Psalms 119:10,11)
- Remind yourself with the scene of the cross, the wounds of Christ and the thorns poking, shedding His blood for loving you!

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2)

6. Control your thoughts / memories: Our thoughts are like a Tree, if we water them, they grow...Make sure you feed your thoughts with Godly thoughts.

- If you are already involved in sexual related pitfall, do not be discouraged, the doors of repentance are always open. Our God is strong and savior and promised to accept everyone's repentance.
"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

"Take on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:10-20)
- Ask the Lord with persistence to purify our bodies, thoughts and feelings.
- When old memories come, kill it by reminding yourself with what you put on mind to do, which is walking with God. Pray the Jesus's prayer "Lord Jesus Christ son of God have mercy on me a sinner". There is great power in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified Living God most high

7. Follow up with your father of confession and be patient: Sexual temptations are very hard to resist. Sometimes you can overcome and others you cannot! Get help, your father of confession is your spiritual physician. A physician never expects a whole person but rather a patient. The priest rejoices to prescribe the way for healing. Don't fight the sexual temptations alone. Get help. It is in our weakness that we are made strong, embrace weakness to draw on the everlasting strength our Lord God and Savior to help defeat evil

The father of confession —> guides the sinful to—> the Love of God

&

The Love of God —> guides the sinful heart —> towards Him.

8. Receive communion:

We are born with a corrupted nature. Holy Communion is the main way to abide in Christ. The sacrament of Communion is given for us for salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life.

9. Rejoice:

- The purity rejoices the heart! The freedom of sexual bondage, restores holiness. Our church history is full of saved repented saints like St. Mary of Egypt and St. Moses the strong.
- True repentance is a resurrection from the death. The resurrected Jesus Christ has the power to raise us from every bond of evil.

" That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted

and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” (Ephesians 3:16-20)

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Hebrews 3:15

Being rebellious against God willingly is the core issue here.

Objective → Understand that same sex attraction and gender confusion is a temptation and realize the difficulty of sexual temptations and equip the youth with tools to resist sexual temptation.

6C: Truth in love for others

What does “Truth in Love” mean?

“If God is truth and God is Love, then truth is love, and we don’t need to choose between truth and love. They are one and the same. Truth that is not loving is not truth. Love that is not committed to truth is not love.” (Reference book: *Jesus among secular Gods*)

Knowing the truth and loving people should go side by side, before presenting the truth we should have some depth into whom we are talking to and what they've been through.

We should always discuss the “Truth” in “a loving way”. Keep in mind it is not a power struggle or who is right or wrong. So we say the truth without being judgmental yet revealing God’s truth.

Ex: the discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman.

Should we support an LGBTQ2S+ friend?

Yes, we should support everyone in need. The question here is what is the meaning of “**support**” and what is the extent of support you should offer.

Be aware: There is a fine line between treating them with love and respect VS accepting their beliefs and ideas or celebrating their actions. Always keep your **intentions** in mind with every action.

Do I treat them with love, kind and respect? OF COURSE!

Do I need to deny God’s creation of genders male and female? NO, indeed!

Should I judge them or comment on their gender expressions?

Appearance should reflect the morphology of God’s look but if they choose otherwise that’s their own choice.

One of God’s greatest gifts to every human being is the free will. God never forces anyone to worship Him or to do the right thing against their will. Dealing with people using rejection, harm, discrimination

and destructive ways are unacceptable for us as Christians. We should always stick to the biblical truth as long as it is in a loving manner.

If you are in any situation that you are not sure what to do in certain situations? Talk to your father of confession, pray to God and act truthfully in a loving way and God will guide you through. Make the sign of the cross over your mouth before you speak.

How to implement “Truth” in “Love”? (Based on sexual orientation)

My non-Christian friend has just told me they are gay. How should I respond?

Telling another person, they are gay is normally a big deal for someone. If the person they are telling is Christian, it is likely to be an even bigger deal. Many people assume that Christians are anti-gay. So, the first thing you should do is to thank them for being so open, and entrusting something so personal to them. (*Reference: Is God Anti-gay?*)

When a person comes out and discloses, they are usually scared of rejection. It is also so important to assure them that their fears of being rejected by you are unfounded.

Remember: This is a great opportunity for that person to witness God’s unconditional love in you. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14)

- **If the person is not ready to discuss faith:**

It is not a good opportunity to explain Christian faith. However, we need to be truthful that we ourselves follow our Lord Jesus Christ and do only what glorifies His name. God loves the sinners but hates the sin and without love no one will be saved.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” (1 Peter 3:15)

It won’t hurt to listen to them and get the rationale behind their thinking, listening **doesn’t mean** agreeing. Also listening doesn’t mean you have to judge. Listening is simply for trying to understand and help you pray for them.

You also need to be honest with yourself that this might change the shape of this friendship. It is inevitable for friends to impact each other and you do not want to deviate from glorifying God in everything.

We can continue being friends however make sure to set your boundaries and refuse to be engaged in that part of their life. (This applies on everything outside of homosexuality as well that goes against God).

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Colossians 4:5-6)

- **If a person outside of our church wants to engage in Faith discussion:**

Explain that as Christians we choose to follow God's commandments and His will-expressed to us in the Bible.

Most people would say the only boundary is consent and the other person being an adult. Christianity believes in drawing boundaries more carefully than that.

Because we believe that what undergirds everything Christians believe about sex and sexuality is a deep conviction that God is good and therefore if he is our creator then He knows what is best for us.

Therefore, we want to live within the boundaries that He gives us because those will help us be in a loving relationship with God. What the world may see as constraint is in reality a life which is in full communion with him, keeping our relationship with Him holy and pure to flourish, and living out our full humanity in God.

(reference book: Why does God care who I sleep with? by Sam Allberry)

"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life." (proverbs 4:23)

Remember:

Your innermost circle, best friend and future spouse should align with your faith.

Also, when an Individual "Comes Out" to You:

- Ensure confidentiality – not your info to share, people have a right to self-disclosure and autonomy.
- Coming out may not be new, be mindful of the tone and manner that the person coming out uses.
- Respectful language: modelling and reflecting the language people use to self-identify.
- Offer support, but don't assume the individual indefinitely needs help.
- Ask insightful questions that signify inclusion and centre the individual's experiences.

(e.g. try to find ways to help your LGBTQ2S+ friend that still aligns with our faith.)

- Demonstrate your support, in words and actions while remaining truthful to your faith.

Seeking advice

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Don't be alone, and be aware that the internet is far from being a reliable source of information in that topic.

Seek a trusted person that shares your Christian beliefs and values; parents, Sunday school servants, your father of confession, etc.

Objective → Equip the youth with simple short answers that Glorify God in us and not shy away from sharing the biblical truth.

Lesson References:

- “Same-sex Attraction” book, Father Thomas Hopko, or his 2 sermons:
 - https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/hopko_lectures/theological_vision_orthodox_christian_faith_and_human_sexuality1
 - https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/hopko_lectures/spiritual_practice_orthodox_christian_faith_and_homosexual_attraction
- Sermon by Father Rewis [St. Mary & St. Mark Coptic Church Live Stream - YouTube](#)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF7HvYb3Nv0> - (starting at minute 37)
- “Is God Anti-gay?” Book by Sam Allberry
- “Jesus among secular Gods” book.
- A CHRISTIAN GUIDE TO ONTARIO’S (HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM) GRADE 7
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/art-and-science/201801/identifying-your-feelings>