

BODY IMAGE WORKSHOP

An SCM Workshop

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

You might like to print out the Bible quotes and discussion statements or display them on a screen. Make sure there are Bibles available for the group and paper and pens for those who like to take notes.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Without talking, participants must stand in a line, in order of various things e.g. shortest to tallest, oldest to youngest, lightest to darkest hair colour, how far they've travelled to be there, etc... (making sure it's fairly neutral things so as not to make anyone uncomfortable.)

ASK THE QUESTION(S) (10-15 MINUTES)

It might be a good idea to say something about SCM being a safe space for discussing thoughts, highlight the need to be respectful of people's feelings and experiences, and signpost a chaplain or other pastoral person if people need to talk to someone as a follow up to the session. Be aware that time spent thinking about bodies and body image may affect anyone who has struggled with disordered eating, or those who are trans or non-binary, so ensure people have the option to take breaks or sit out of certain activities as necessary.

Ask the group if there are any negative or positive ways Christianity/church can or has affected body image. What has Christianity taught us to feel about our bodies? – if the group is large you may want to break down into smaller groups. You may want to use this quote to stimulate conversation:

"It is common for people in all wings of the church to have been taught that the body's appetites lead us to sin and that we become holy through allowing the spirit to control the flesh. The result is that people have felt bad just for being bodies. I know this because I have also experienced an eating disorder, partly as a result of my faith which...made me feel that thighs and breasts and chocolate were inherently sinful." Jo Ind.

EXPLORE THE ISSUE(S) (30 MINUTES)

Give each participant a piece of paper with the quote written in the middle and a pen. Ask them to reflect for 5 minutes of what it means to them to be created in the image of God? Do they believe it? What effect might this have on their body image? People can sit in the circle or wander

around/sit around the room for some quiet reflection time.

'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness..."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.'

Next, give small groups lifestyle magazines (the kind that focus on appearance, try to get a mixture of men's and women's magazines) to look at. Have them look through as a group and pick out articles and photographs that dictate body images. (if it's hard to get hold of a lot of magazines you could just buy one or two and cut out articles and collect old newspapers etc from friends for collages below). Ask them to consider how this contrasts to what the Bible says about our worth.

We're told every five minutes to update or change our image to fit, mostly unattainable notion of beauty, but perhaps what God created just is beautiful. Using the bible quotes and magazines (and anything else you like) ask each group to create a collage or picture that they feel communicates a healthier idea of beauty. If you can, give out large colourful sheets of paper to do this on and allow plenty of time to let the creativity flow!

INVITE THE RESPONSE (15 MINUTES)

Because this is quite a personal issue, asking people to share with the whole group may be daunting for some, so ask participants to share in pairs:

- Was your faith involved in how you felt about your body?
- Will you see your body differently after thinking about this issue today?

CLOSING THE SESSION (5 MINUTES)

Ask someone to close the session in prayer. Here is a prayer you could use:

*A prayer from the Methodist church.
Loving Lord,
You have searched me and you know me,
I am created in your image.
You know all my thoughts and everywhere I will go,
I am created in your image.
You knit me together in my mother's womb,
I am created in your image.
I am fearfully and wonderfully made,
I am created in your image.
Your works are wonderful and I praise you because,
I am created in your image.
Amen.*

FUTURE DISCUSSIONS AND MORE RESOURCES

If your group is interested in exploring this theme further, then you could try some of these topics for further discussions or invite a speaker. Get in touch with the SCM office if you need any help or resources (scm@movement.org.uk).

- *God and gender – what does our faith say about our gender or gender identity?*
- *Christianity and feminism – how does the bible portray women and women’s bodies in particular?*
- *Social Media – how does the content we consume online affect how we see ourselves, our faith, and the world around us?*

- *A New Name by Emma Scrivener (IVP 2012)*
- *The Fat Jesus: Christianity and Body Image by Lisa Isherwood (Seabury Books 2008)*
- *What does the Bible really say about.? Eating Disorders by Emma Scrivener (DayOne Publications 2016)*

