

YOUTH  
11-14s

# GROWING UP

God's  
Good  
Story



SESSION 4

**I know God's plan for marriage**

**Genesis 2:18-25 ▪ Matthew 19:4-6 ▪ Revelation 19:6-9**

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Growing Up - God's Good Story 11-14s

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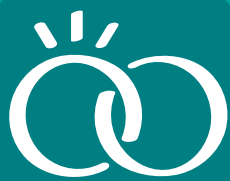
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"All for the glory of God alone" (1 Corinthians 10:31)



## SESSION 4

# I know God's plan for marriage

**Genesis 2:18-25**

**Matthew 19:4-6**

**Revelation 19:6-9**



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### Truth that changes me:

God created marriage between one man and one woman for the rest of their lives.



### Faith in Youth looks like:

Young people who trust God that his plan for marriage is good.

## Preparation

As you prepare this session, we recommend watching the series introductory video if you haven't seen it.



## Notes



### Where are we going?

This session explains that marriage is the faithful, loving commitment of one man and one woman for life and the only true home for sex and procreation. God has designed it this way to help us understand his good, loving faithfulness to us.

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going**, **The world our young people live in** and **Look at the passage** to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.



### The world our young people live in

Our young people have different experiences of marriage - positive, negative, non-existent. Many families look different from the one man, one woman faithful marriage that Genesis describes. Relationships are often presented as temporary and self-serving, a way of getting what you want for as long as you want it. Friends can be picked, used and then dropped; hook-up culture picks a partner, uses, dumps, moves on - sex is just another activity consenting adults can enjoy.

God's pattern for relationships is different. Marriage is God's illustration to teach us that he never gives up on us, he sticks with us through good and bad, because he faithfully loves us to the end of time. We need to hold up the goodness of God's design for marriage whilst offering understanding and compassion to those who make other choices and experience the world's brokenness. Our young people won't hear of God's good and secure plan for relationships, sex and families anywhere else.



## Look at the passage



### God Created Marriage

*"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."* **GENESIS 2:24**

Marriage is God's invention, it is the uniting of one man and one woman who leave the families they grew up in and stick together to form a new one. Our bodies are designed so that a man and woman can have a baby together and marriage is the home God designed for sexual intimacy and childbirth.

Marriage is the place to enjoy physical intimacy and nakedness freely and without fear or embarrassment because of the lifelong commitment that has been made to one another. Constantly sticking, un-sticking and re-sticking with lots of different partners is not what God designed us for. We are made to be like the God who is faithful, loving and sticks with us, we can trust his design to be for our good.

### Jesus Protects Marriage

*"So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."* **MATTHEW 19:4-6**

Jesus is clear on what marriage is, male and female, a man and his wife united as one. As he answers pharisees trying to catch him out with questions about divorce, Jesus, an unmarried man, echoes Genesis and protects marriage as what God has joined that we should not separate. As God's people, let's value what God values and protect what he protects.

### Marriage shows God's unending love

*"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:*

*'Hallelujah!*

*For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

*Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.*

*Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear.'*

*(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'"*

**1 REVELATION 19:6-9**

God invented marriage so that we could all understand better the unending, unstoppable love with which he loves his people. Marriage is not *primarily* about sex or children or intimacy, it is *ultimately* about the endless nature of God's love for us. Revelation shows us the final wedding ceremony to help us understand how we will experience the new creation. It will be an eternal marriage where our spouse's love never grows cold, never loses its thrill, where all our desires are fulfilled, where we feel secure, loved and at home. For young people with little plan to get married, this is the part they can get excited about.



## Win my heart first

Generally speaking, we don't like being told what to do. This is especially true for our young people, living in a culture that idolises individual freedom and self-expression. It can feel grating that God has something to say about who we have sex with and how our relationships should go, until we remember who is speaking to us. God knows better than us what is good for us. As our Creator, as the source of all love and as the promise-keeping God, we can trust his good design for marriage and sex. The imperfect human marriages we see around us point us to the perfect fulfilment of all our desires in the new creation.

- How does marriage - your own or other people's - help you appreciate God's faithful love for you?
- Have you experienced broken, unhealthy or unwise relationships? Without oversharing, how could your experiences help you teach the young people about God's desire for their relationships?



*For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.*



## 5 minutes to focus on your group

How do you think the young people in your group understand marriage? A big party, a lifelong commitment or an old tradition for other people? What do their families, and their friends' families, look like? How will you be clear about God's good design, whilst being compassionate to other experiences? Are there situations in your group that make you nervous about teaching this?

*What do the young people in your group need?*

- Pray for them:*
- to grasp the truth
  - to live it out
  - to rely on the Spirit



## In case you're feeling nervous...

- In this lesson we are presenting God's good plan for marriage. There is a long-list of topics that could be covered, or raised by young people in response: same-sex marriage, divorce, singleness, co-habitation, sex. It is normal to see this list and feel nervous.
- We include sex in this session plan but this is not a biology (or PSHE) lesson. As with any topic, you don't have to discuss all the issues that are raised. If appropriate, acknowledge the question or comment, thank the young person, and suggest they speak to a trusted adult about it.
- Not all marriages work out - there will be hurt and pain among children and parents. Young people may speak about situations that they are aware of, or personally experiencing. You could chat with your minister to find out if there is anything you need to be aware of in the families in your group.

*We understand this might feel daunting. The intention is to start a conversation, not to complete it.*

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- If young people ask questions about divorce or relationships that are not one man and one woman in marriage, remember to bring them back to God's good plan and keep the discussion there. We don't want to say that all of these relationships are "bad". Speak with compassion and grace about relationships in a fallen world, whilst focusing on God's good plan.
- We recognise that many people do not get married and we want to affirm that singleness is a good thing. We do not want the young people to feel that marriage is necessary for Christians or the goal of life, however, we do want them to be clear that it is the place God designed for sexual intimacy.



## Series overview visual

The series overview visual (see p. 12) helps to explain the foundation of this series. Because God created us, he knows us better than anyone else. He gets to tell us who we are.

The visual shows a person hearing messages from themselves - these are thoughts and feelings (represented by the thought clouds); messages from others - including other people and the media (represented by speech bubbles); and messages from God - what he has written in the Bible. The crown shows that God's messages are the most important - we only let other messages stick if they say the same things as God says. God made us and loves us more than anyone, great delight comes from listening to him.






## 11-14s Session Plan



### Get going

#### Pictionary

Show one volunteer a word. That volunteer has to draw the word for the rest of the group to guess. They cannot draw words or letters. They cannot speak. The person who guesses correctly what they are drawing goes back to you for the next word. Play for long enough so that everyone gets a turn to draw. You can make it competitive by splitting up your group into teams, who race to get through your list of words.

 **Link:** If you look back at your drawings it will amaze you that you could guess the right word from some of your scribbles! You just needed your artwork to look enough like the object so that the real thing could be imagined. Today we are seeing that God gave us marriage so that we can imagine the real thing! Marriage is a picture to help us understand the real thing - God's promise to never stop loving us.



### Teaching time

#### God Created Marriage

*"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."* **GENESIS 2:24-25**

Marriage is God's invention, it's the way a new family begins. As the first husband and wife, Adam and Eve had the job of showing us what marriage is.

**Look at the verses together...** *using a pen to mark key words, writing answers and noting questions that come up.*

- 'Marriage' and 'wedding' are not mentioned. How is marriage described? *How does that help us to understand what marriage is? 'united' and 'one body'. 'One body' sounds like it's not even two people anymore- it's a new 'one thing'. In some way, two people become one person when they get married. It's permanent.*
- Who is in the marriage? *What do you need for it to be a 'marriage'? One man, one woman. We saw in session 2 that the unique difference between men and women is their different bodies. Genesis 1: 28 shows us that part of the story of marriage is having children and 'increasing in number'- that can only happen naturally with one man and one woman.*

continued →



### Notes

**You will need:** Some paper, pens and a list of objects

**You will need:** Bibles / verses printed out, large sheet of paper, pens, male and female play figures.





- In summary, what is marriage? God's design for one man and one woman, becoming one, promising to stick together for life.
- Does that help us explain why there is unashamed nakedness and sex only in marriage? *Perhaps there is giggling or awkwardness at this point. That's the point! Nakedness and sex are awkward amongst strangers or even friends. Both nakedness and sex are saved for a place of total, permanent security with the person who has promised to stay with you. We choose to be vulnerable only with people who care for us and make us feel safe. God has created men and women with different bodies, which fit together to show love to one another, sometimes resulting in a baby. God's design is that this sticking together of bodies should be kept within the sticking together of a marriage. We weren't designed to have lots of different partners, to split up and move on, to keep sticking, unsticking and re-sticking with different people.*

## Jesus Protects Marriage

Using the series overview visual, what messages do you hear from others about marriage? *Perhaps amongst your friends, teachers or messages you're picking up from films and media? Questions to fire out could be... What do they say marriage is? Why do people choose to get married? Is it a particular age or type of person who gets married?*

***"Haven't you read, [Jesus] replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'" MATTHEW 19: 4-6***

People asked Jesus a question - is it OK to split up after you are married? His answer reminded them of God's good plan for marriage.

**Look at the verses together...** *using a pen to mark key words, writing answers and noting questions that come up.*

- What new things does Jesus add to what we have already learnt? *God joined the two people together. No person should separate them.*
- Is this good news or bad news for a husband and wife who are married? *If you know your relationship is going to last and can't be separated, it means you feel safe, you can be truly you, making mistakes and being really honest. If questions are raised about abuse in marriage we can be clear that this is NOT part of God's good plan, and that it is always right to seek help and safety in that situation. It would be good to cover this even if the young people don't raise it.*

Jesus never married, but he thought marriage should be protected - he said marriage was between one man and one woman and that their joining together by God shouldn't be deliberately split up. You don't need to be married, or have married parents to see that.

It might be that, like Jesus, you never get married. There are lots of reasons a person might not get married. Singleness is a good thing and marriage is not the mark of a successful or godly life. Whether we ever marry or not, we should value marriage highly like Jesus did.

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## Marriage shows us God's unending love

In the last book of the Bible, called Revelation, we read the details of a dream that God gave to John to show him what heaven will be. As a dream, it's not a precise story, it's more like a picture that helps us to imagine what it will be like for Christians for thousands and thousands of years.

*"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:*

*'Hallelujah!*

*For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

*Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.*

*Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear!*

*(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'"*

### 1 REVELATION 19:6-9

*Using a pen to mark key words:* This is the final wedding ceremony to help us understand what heaven will be like for Christians. The Lamb here is a picture for Jesus. The Lamb is marrying 'God's holy people'- the church; all Christians.

**Look at the verses together...** *using a pen to mark key words, writing answers and noting questions that come up.*

- How does the passage give us clues about the mood, the size and the importance of this wedding? *Circle: 'a great multitude' - a huge crowd, think football stadium or music festival making so much noise, 'like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder', 'Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!' - it's the wedding of the century/millennium, 'Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear'- the bride looks amazing - this is why brides wear pure white! 'Blessed are those who are invited'- no grumpy teenagers here! 'These are the true words of God'- you wouldn't believe it could be this good unless it was in the Bible*
- So this is weird. God invented marriage on earth so that we would understand what the new creation will be like. Any wedding you go to is like an inflatable trophy to help you imagine what it's like to hold the real thing. How does marriage help us understand what heaven is like? Why didn't God use boyfriend and girlfriend or even best friends as the picture? *A forever relationship. A promise to always be together. Different but coming together, never to be broken. Powerful sexual desires are given to us by God to help us know how much we can long for forever with him. Feeling perfectly safe, secure, loved and at home. Total belonging. Marriage is not just friendship with sex added on.*
- How does knowing that Jesus is the groom and the church is the bride help us to understand why a marriage needs one man and one woman? *They are different, not the same - a marriage is the uniting of two different people. Two men or two women marrying does not reflect Jesus and the church clearly.*

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The best marriage is just a little glimpse of heaven. We know not all marriages are good and not all marriages stay together because our world is broken and people are messy. When marriages split up it is sad and hard. In those times, we can remember the 'real thing' - that God loves us and will never break up with us. He sticks! He holds on, no matter what else changes, we can trust him to love us always.

No matter what a family looks like, we can know for certain that God loves all people and wants them in his family. No one has perfect relationships, exactly as God planned, not even Christians. Lots of people have no idea what God's best way of living is or what heaven will really be like. We need to love them well, and tell them more about God's forever, perfect love for us.




## Brain break

### Matching pairs

Scatter the cards randomly across a playing surface face down. The young people take turns to turn over two cards. The whole group needs to see which cards they are. They match if they are the same number (or picture) but different colours (one red, one black). If they don't match, they are turned over again. The goal is to turn over a matching pair. If you do, that pair is removed and that player gets another go. Rotate around the young people so they all get a go.

**You will need:** pack of playing cards

 **Link:** You had to find the two cards that go together but are different. Today we see that marriage is two people who go together. But they're not identical. A marriage needs one man and one woman. Two become one. Permanent. A promise to stay together. Which brings security, allowing for vulnerability and physical intimacy.



## Heart & hands

### Did you spot it?

- How have we seen the Bible describe marriage?
- How is marriage different from friendship or dating?
- What does Jesus say about marriage?
- How is marriage like heaven?

*We have found that this is where young people make the most progress relating the Bible to their everyday lives. Please leave enough time for this section. You could use post-it notes for young people to privately note down their answers (or even their questions that they are reluctant to ask out loud).*

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## Work it out

- Why do you think fewer people are getting married? Which part of God's plan is unpopular or too difficult?
- How could the fact that marriage is a picture of something better to come help a person who wants to get married but is still single?
- Do you know some couples who aren't married or some marriages which are not one man and one woman for their whole lifetime? Even where people depart from God's design for marriage, his grace means there can still be good things to appreciate. What good things about God's love do we see reflected in those relationships? *Love, care, kindness etc. What things about God's love can't those relationships show us? Temporary relationships don't reflect God's faithful love. Same sex relationships don't reflect the way that Jesus and his bride are different.*
- For you, what is the best news in God's plan for marriage? Or *What do you wish others understood about God's plan for marriage?*

## Live it out

Look at Case Study Picture A (see p. 13) of an elderly couple sitting on a park bench, holding hands and smiling. They are frail and weak. There is a walking stick leaning up against the bench. (*We have also provided a Youtube link to a clip from 'Up'. Watching this could be a good alternative to using the image provided - please choose.*)

- Is this an example of God's plan for marriage? What makes you say that?
- In the marriage service the husband and wife say this to each other:

I, [name], take you, [name],  
to be my husband/wife;  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
till death us do part;  
according to God's holy law.

In the presence of God I make this promise.

- What makes you think they have kept this promise? Do you think keeping this promise is easy?
- If this couple were in your church, what would you like to say to them or ask them?

Look at Case Study Picture B (see p. 14) where a boy is walking to school and sees a large billboard advertising "BABE ISLAND - New series", a muscled man in swim shorts is posing - there are scantily clad women on sun loungers... "So many women, so little time" is the tagline...

- What does this poster say about relationships and sex?
- What *different* message have you heard from the Bible today?
- Why does God want us to have loving and faithful marriages, or to stay single, instead of sticking and unsticking with lots of people?
- What could you say to him about God's plan for marriage that is better?

## Prayer

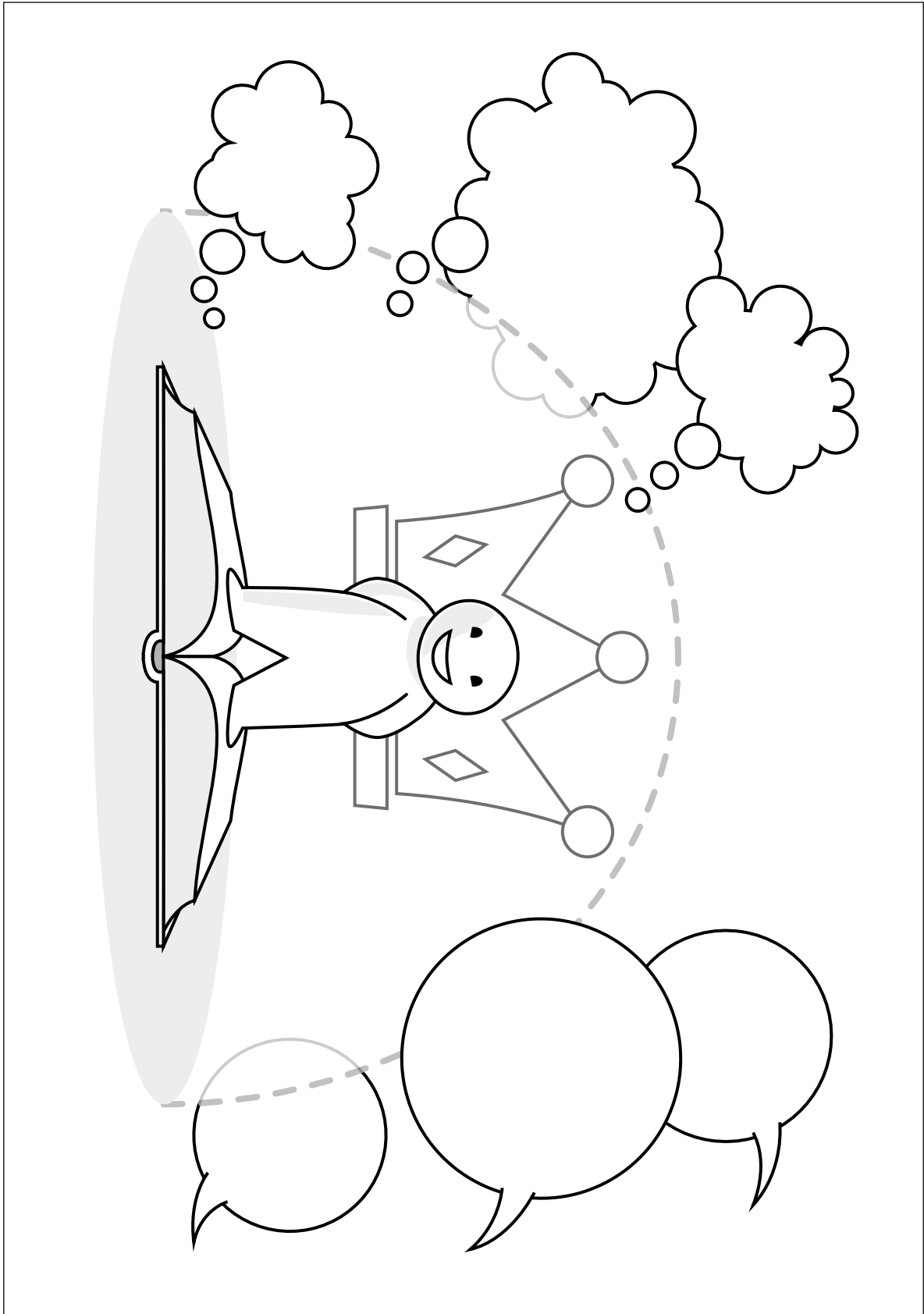
Ask God to help you understand more of his love and faithfulness towards you. Ask him to help you live wisely, trusting his good design and looking forward to enjoying his faithful love forever.

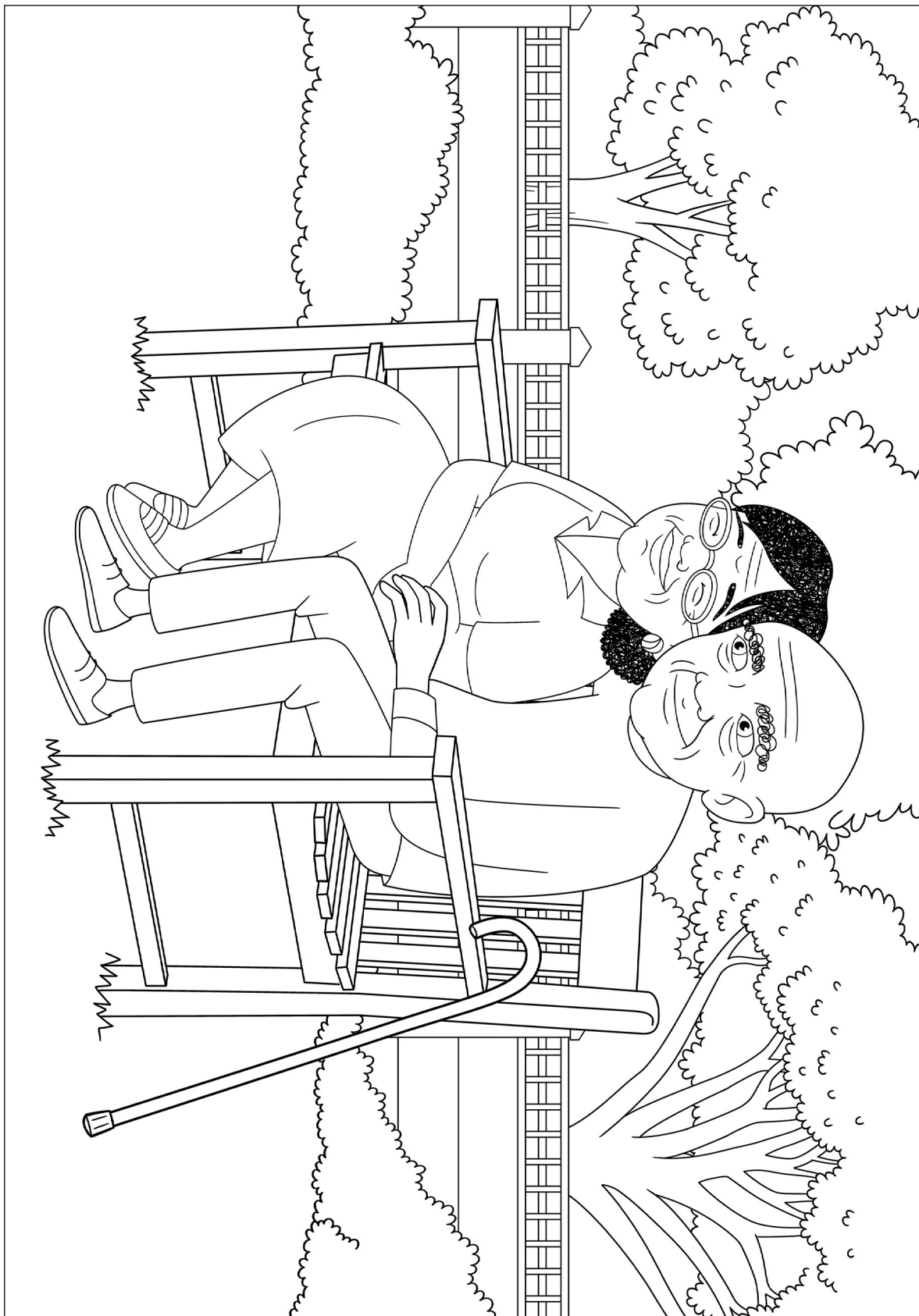


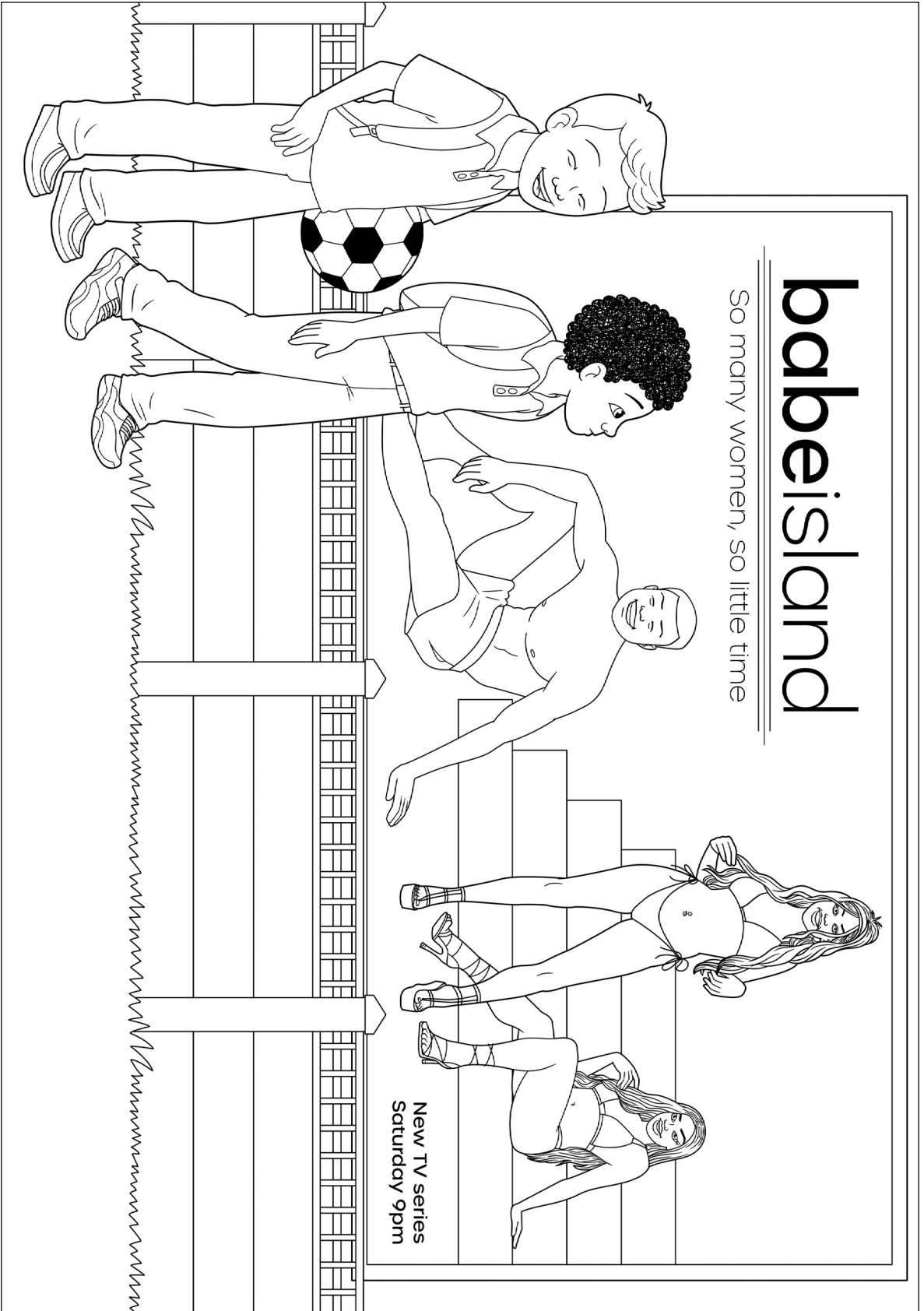
*We are not saying that other relationships are a valid alternative to marriage. We want the young people to understand that because of common grace we can still see good in those relationships, even though they are not what God intended.*

*"Married Life" from Up - we suggest you stop at 2 minutes 45 seconds.*













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