

Sexuality: God's Design for His Glory and Your Joy

God's Idea

God is the Creator of all things¹—including sexuality. It's His idea, His design, and His gift to all of humanity. It is common, especially when considering how the gift of sexuality has been perverted, to think that God has or wants nothing to do with it. This is simply not the case.

God's Word is not silent about sex². While discussing the Christian view of sexuality makes some nervous, and may offend others, the church of Jesus Christ cannot be *silent*. God isn't and we should not be either. God calls His church to be a "pillar and buttress of the truth."³ This does not mean we only speak the truth concerning God's offer of eternal salvation⁴. We must proclaim *all* the truth, at appropriate times and in appropriate places, that God has revealed to us. If God deems it important enough to put in the Bible, we should not ignore the fact that it is there while viewing it as something we can overlook or stay silent about.

The truth is, Christianity presents a view of sexuality that applies to *all*. There is a code of conduct concerning human sexuality that is found in the Scriptures: a union between one man and one woman who are covenanted⁵ to each other (until the death of either) is God's standard for all people in every culture. This means that Christians must wrestle with and confront many sexual sins: adultery, premarital sex, unlawful divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, pornography, and homosexuality to name a few from what could be a long list. When revealing a sexual ethic that applies to all, God is not being a killjoy. He is not worried that people may enjoy themselves too much or experience too much pleasure. The Word of God is *good* for us⁶. When we uphold its stance on sexuality we don't lose pleasure or joy—we gain it.

The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that they are free to do all things, but that doesn't mean participation in all things will be beneficial to them⁷. Paul is directly talking about human sexuality. The Corinthians lived in a culture that is much like our own in terms of how they viewed their sexuality. But just because a government, the law of the land, or a society accepts certain sexual behaviors, does not mean God accepts it. Sexual sin does not lead to the freeing life that many assume it will. Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians that using their freedom to sin sexually will end with them being enslaved or mastered by those desires⁸. It ends up taking over lives and controlling most or all decisions. The path to fulfill sexual desires, which must be met despite any and all costs, will result in damage and heartache. When looking at *our* current culture, we can see countless examples of families that have been destroyed by adultery, young women who repeatedly get abused, and men who have been devastated by their addiction to pornography. They all are a result of sexual sin; people using their freedom in ways that are far from beneficial to them. But there is a better way.

¹ Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1

² Song of Solomon; Ephesians 5:3; Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:9,18; Mark 10:6-9; Proverbs 5:15-19

³ 1 Timothy 3:15

⁴ The gospel of Jesus Christ is and should be the central message of the Church, but Scripture obviously directs us to address other issues that humanity and our culture deals with.

⁵ Marriage is a *covenant*, meaning: an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not do something specified.

⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:1

⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:12

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:12

God's Plan

From the beginning of creation God has had a clear and wise plan for our sexuality. God reveals that sex is a gift to be enjoyed in the confines of heterosexual marriage⁹. When no suitable helper was found for Adam, God made a woman¹⁰; a helpmate. God made the man and woman to fit together, quite literally. The woman, named Eve, was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and the two became one¹¹. God's design in creation illustrates His plan for one man and one woman to exist in an "one flesh" union that is both exclusive and lifelong. All of this happens before the fall (Genesis 3) and God announces that what has been created, including marriage and sex, is *very good*. Not only is it good, but it is *exclusively* good. It is only through heterosexual marriage that the complementary design of men and women can flourish and show forth God's brilliance and wisdom as Creator. Furthermore, it is only through heterosexual marriage where one of God's intended purposes for marriage, procreation¹², can be fulfilled.

God's plan for marriage and sex is upheld throughout the Bible. Jesus reaffirms God's design of one man-one woman marriage in the Book of Matthew¹³. The Apostle Paul teaches that one of the purposes of marriage is to show the mystery of Christ and the church¹⁴. If marriage could be entered into by a man and a man or a woman and a woman, the picture of Christ and his church would be lacking. We would be left with Christ and Christ or church and church. The Bible refuses to commend whatever strays from God's original design and plan for sexuality¹⁵. Heterosexual monogamy is God's design for marriage and the relationship in which God intends for us to enjoy our sexuality. Although the Bible does include many examples of sinful sexual behavior that deviates from God's plan and design¹⁶, it never speaks of them in a positive light. They seem to be included in God's Word to show us the pain, confusion, and devastation that disregarding God's plan for sexuality can bring to our lives.

Feelings, Confusion, and Elevation

Our world, and especially our culture, exalts feelings as the guide for morality. This is certainly true when it comes to navigating sexuality. We often hear people say things like, "If it feels good, go ahead and do it. Whatever makes you happy." This type of thinking makes it hard for many to accept that there is a standard for sexual morality. In our culture, when sex appears in the headlines, you can be assured that Americans will be fascinated. What you can't be sure of is their reaction. Concerning one story, there may be amusement and laughter. For another, outrage and anger. Sometimes we call sexual sins "mistakes", and in other cases we call them "evil." It almost seems as if our society knows there are, or should be, sexual standards, but do not want those standards to personally apply to them and what they are doing.

Make no mistake, sexuality can be an intimidating and confusing topic. The confusion and controversy that is present in the world concerning sexuality stems from humanity's rejection of God as Creator and Lord of all things. Simply put, the world would be a lot less sexually broken if we would adhere to God's directives and His standards for morality. But God doesn't add to our confusion. It is God who makes the standard for sexuality

⁹ Hebrews 13:4

¹⁰ Genesis 2:20-25

¹¹ Genesis 2:23-25

¹² Genesis 1:27-28; Malachi 2:15

¹³ Matthew 19:3-6

¹⁴ Ephesians 5:32-33

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; Galatians 5:19; Romans 1:26-27

¹⁶ 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 11; 1 Chronicles 5:1; Romans 1:20-32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; John 4 1-26

extremely *easy* to understand. It's as if he doesn't want anyone to be confused by what he considers to be morally right and wrong regarding sexuality.

The Bible most often uses the word *porneia*¹⁷ in reference to sexual sin. The term refers to *anything* outside of heterosexual marriage. There is no sexual conduct that takes place outside of heterosexual marriage that is glorifying to God, beneficial to our souls, and meets the standard for sexuality given to us in God's Word. The term is almost like the "junk drawer" that exists in many of our homes. We throw anything and everything in that one drawer. Miscellaneous items, odds and ends, and things that we have no other place for. Porneia is a "catch-all" term—a sexual junk drawer. It refers to anything and everything outside of God's plan for sexuality. There is nothing that humanity can invent, take part in, or imagine that the term doesn't include or refer to. It also destroys the view that certain sexual behaviors are permitted just because they are not specifically mentioned as sinful somewhere in the Scriptures. While some sinful sexual acts may not be specifically mentioned, they are implied in the Bible's use of the term *porneia*.

In recent years, our culture has elevated sexuality to an unhealthy place; a place God never intended for sexuality to be. Our culture often uses it to form identities, to feel important, and as the ultimate source of joy and happiness. We make the most important thing about us our sexuality and it isn't. We have been created in such a way that God alone can meet and fill our deepest desires. We are trying to use sexuality to fill a desire that only God can. This tragic mistake leads to a deep confusion about sexuality, our identities, and even God Himself.

The Biblical View of Why Sex Exists

Why did God create sex? God could have created marriage without sex. He could still have it function the same way, still have unique gender roles, and could have even had humans reproduce without sexual contact. But He didn't. There are many reasons as to why God gave humanity the gift of sexuality.

Reproduction. The first command that God gives Adam and Eve involved sex. God instructs them to be *fruitful and multiply*¹⁸. In the Book of Malachi¹⁹, God expressly states that having and raising godly offspring is one of the reasons why He created sex.

Pleasure. Human biology makes it abundantly clear that God intended for sex to be pleasurable. If sex were solely for reproduction, there would be no need for human genitals to have thousands of more nerve-endings than any other part of our body. God could have created our reproductive organs to have the same feeling as our hands. If God intended for sex to be only for reproduction, the human orgasm makes little sense. When looking at our biology, it becomes clear that God gave humanity these characteristics for us to experience the pleasure and enjoyment of sex. Furthermore, God has given us the Song of Solomon. This book in the Bible describes a physical relationship between a husband and wife where children are never mentioned. Visual, emotional, mental, and physical pleasure are present and spoken of in an exciting way.

Protection. God created sex within marriage to protect²⁰ both male and female from the temptation to sin sexually. Sex within marriage protects us from the devastation of sexual sin and immorality.

¹⁷ *Porneia* is the Greek word most often used to mention sexual sin and is translated to "fornication" or "sexual immorality" in most of our English translations of Scripture.

¹⁸ Genesis 1:27-28

¹⁹ Malachi 2:15

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:2-5

Oneness and intimacy. Sex is much more than a physical act. It is deeply intimate and emotionally charged; the act of sex affects our souls²¹. God built our bodies to connect with our spouse during sex. When this happens, an intimacy between husband and wife is developed. Much more than our bodies end up connecting. You become physically, emotionally, and spiritually connected to your partner. This purpose for sex does away with the idea of *casual sex*—it does not exist. Sex is always more than a casual, physical act.

Knowing. What we share sexually and romantically with our spouses gets shared with no one else. That part of our life is holy; reserved for our spouses only. This leads to the opening of our hearts, minds, and souls to know our spouse in other areas of life. The marriage bed is a place where we reveal our most vulnerable parts; we expose to our spouse what we keep hidden from everyone else. This makes it possible to share other vulnerable parts of ourselves with our spouse. We can share and know our spouse's fears, anxieties, hopes, thoughts, feelings, and even insecurities. Sex leads to knowing our spouse, and not just physically, in a way others do not.

Comfort. 2 Samuel 12 describes an account where sex comforts a pair of grieving parents who had just recently went through the death of a child. There are certain circumstances in life that can leave us devastated; that can make us feel completely and utterly alone. There seems to be no words that can comfort our hearts, minds, and souls. Sexual activity can, at times, comfort our souls during times of affliction. It reminds us that we are not alone and have a committed partner to share all of life with—both its joys and sorrows.

Worship. All good gifts should lead us to worship and give thanks to God. The created world should lead us to a deeper understanding of who God is and point our hearts towards His glory. Sex is no different. When we experience sex within marriage, it is not the act of sex that should be worshipped, but the God who created it. We should thank God and receive the gift of sex with the right hearts; hearts that are full of gratitude, obedience, and worshipful wonder. It was God who noticed that it was *not good for man to be alone*²², and we should worship Him for giving us the gift of marriage and sex.

The Good News Concerning Our Sexual Sin and Confusion

Jesus offers hope, grace, and love²³ to those who find themselves confused about their sexuality and to those who have experienced the brokenness that comes from expressing it outside of God's plan and design. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God is in the process of restoring, redeeming, and reconciling the world back to Himself. His plan certainly includes those that have sinned sexually. Your past (or present life) may be full of sexual sin, broken marriages, and emotional devastation, but that does not have to be your future. Jesus came to die for and cover *your* sin; to suffer the shame and guilt for your sin so you can walk in freedom and newness of life. Jesus doesn't promise that this new life will be easy, and that you won't have to continually tell yourself "no", but He does promise to walk with you, fill you with his Spirit, and give you a peace and joy that your sexual sin and idolatry never could.

²¹ Genesis 4:1; 1 Corinthians 6:18

²² Genesis 2:18

²³ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; John 4:1-29; 1 John 1:9