



Kingdom of Dreams

Dream a New Dream about Sex

Christ Seen and Savored in the Design of our Sexuality

Human beings are by nature sexual creatures. Anyone who lives into and past the age of puberty will grow and learn and wrestle with sexuality. The church's dialogue on sex has not always been open and candid throughout history. Indeed, Christian views of sex throughout the ages has varied in various theological systems. Some ministers have taken vows of celibacy, in others marriage is a valid path. Take for instance St. Augustine, who was bound in lust and promiscuity before becoming a Christian. After God saved him, being so delivered from his former illicit lifestyle, he swung the pendulum too far and went on to say that literally *all* sexual passion was evil, a result of the fall.

Augustine, *City of God*, Lust, a penalty for the Original Sin XIV, chapters 15-24

Augustine's views greatly influenced the history of Christian thinking about sex. He realized that our sexual passions are very powerful, yes even dangerous, if lived apart from God who designed us to be sexual beings. But unfortunately he set forward a course that threw out some babies with the proverbial bath water. Fortunately, we can ask of God's Word some questions about sex, and see a greater balance between the beauty and perils of our nature. In a world where sex is used, people are abused, and souls wander lonely searching for something more...We need a new dream about Sex.

A Strange Question

Why Sex? Why on earth do we have sex?

Allow some conversation here. We see different ways to reproduce in the plant and animal world. Sexual intercourse only being one. Additionally, part of being human means being made in the image of God, designed by him, even our sexuality is designed by God.

Why do you think Christian discussions of sex have more to do with behaviors, what we do or do not do, rather than God's design for our sexuality?

Remember the two tensions we looked at in the studies on the Gospel and Dead Religion—Some fall into a legalism that makes the faith just a series of dos or don'ts. Others go the other direction and see God as all accepting of things, even things which pervert his design for sex. "Love" or "Consent" then becomes all.

In this discussion, we desire to look at the reason sex exists, biblically and theologically, and then be filled with awe and wonder for the God who made sex. Then we will ask his help to be blessed to walk joyfully in his ways.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways

Psalm 128:1 (ESV)



Biblical Design for Sex and Marriage

Sex was created by God for our good and for his glory as our Creator. Though we see many purposes for sex throughout the Scriptures, one usually observes three. A quote from Norman Geisler summarizes these well.

Furthermore, the purpose of sex is more than procreation. Sexual relations in marriage are threefold: propagation (Gen 1:28), unification (Gen 2:24), and recreation (Proverbs 5:18-19)

Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics, Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989) 279.

Though we could use a few different terms for these purposes, the teaching of the Scriptures regarding God's design for sex centers in these three areas; along with a fourth which encompasses them all.

Propagation

God created sex and babies to be coupled together. The statement "we are pregnant" was never meant to carry the negative connotation that accompanies it so many times in our day.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:28 ESV

A part of the sexual revolution in western culture has been the concerted effort to separate sex from procreation. What are some of the results of the attempt remove the responsibility of having children from sexual intercourse?

Consider the attending consequences: "Unwanted" pregnancies, abortion as birth control, unwed parents, single parents, children no longer seen as gift in our culture and then being treated accordingly, devaluing of motherhood among women, devaluing of fathering among men.

Unification

Men and women, in the context of marital commitment, may express the unity and intimacy of their relationship through sexual relations. This expression of relationship, of oneness, is part of the design for sex.

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:24, 25 ESV

Sexuality apart from the designs of God can bring shame rather than intimacy and oneness. In what ways do people experience shame surrounding sexuality?

Sex, even in marriage, which lacks intimacy and trusting relationship, will be a shallow, self serving act which distorts its purpose in our lives. It can leave us feeling quite lonely, empty and confused.

Recreation

The selfish pursuit of pleasure is much different than a mutually submitted, self giving relationship in which sex is enjoyed. We must not forget that the designer of sex, designed its pleasure as well. Men and women can find great refuge and enjoyment in one another's love. The Old Testament book, *The Song of Solomon*, gives a beautiful illustration of the joys of marital love.

Glorification

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

Whatever we do, including sex, should be done to the glory of God. In fact, it is here that we understand the deep, beautiful and profound meaning of sex. It is the sign of a covenant, that of marriage, and an illustration of profound things about the covenant love that God himself has for us. We will spend the remaining parts of this study looking at how Sex is designed to point to God.



Sex As an Echo of Greater Things



Sex is like religion not only because it is objectively holy in itself but also because it gives us subjectively a foretaste of heaven, of the self-forgetting, self-transcending self-giving that is what our deepest hearts are designed for, long for and will not be satisfied until they have, because we are made in God's own image and this self giving constitutes the inner life of the Trinity.

Peter Kreeft, quoted in *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, Justin Taylor and John Piper eds., 15,16.

The young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God.

Bruce Marshall, *The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith*, 108

Most of us are never taught and fail to realize the most profound purpose of sex. Marriage, including the act of becoming one flesh, is a mysterious reflection of Christ's relationship to his people. Sex therefore is ultimately about God, and not just about us. Ephesians 5, the great passage about marriage, communicates this mystery to us.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:31-33 ESV

Think back to the four purposes for marriage and sex on the previous page.

Now what spiritual parallels do you see in the “marriage” between Christ and his church?

Propagation—Christ Through His Church reproduces his people through the preaching of the gospel. New people are “born again” into the family of God.

Recreation/Pleasure — The Bible says clearly that at the right hand of God there are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). This means all earthly pleasure, even sex, is a shadow pointing to greater pleasures.

Unification—We are said to be one with Christ, and part of his body. The profound intimacy of the marriage bed points to deep intimacy found with the Lord.

Glorification — The bottom line for sex and marriage is to reveal and show forth the glory of God. Both to those who marry and have sex and to those who do not. Both single people by walking in holiness and married people by walking in covenant faithfulness, glorify God in their sexuality.

It is unfortunate that many see sex as a substitute for God rather than a pointer to Him. Sex is given to us for our good and reflecting God's glory. In the framework of understanding God's purposes for sex can we begin to understand the wonderful commands he gives us regarding our sexuality. Now we can worship him and walk with him through his command and marvel, rather than murmur about what acts we can or cannot perform.



Understanding His Command

³For this is the will of God, your *sanctification*: that you abstain from *sexual immorality*; ⁴that each one of you know how to *control his own body in holiness and honor*, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 ESV

Why does God desire our sanctification? To have us handle our sexuality differently from the world?

For our joy in walking with him. And for sex to mirror his glory in our lives. God both provides for us and protects us from harm by giving us his good word on sex.

Practically, what does it mean for us to control our own bodies?

Controlling our bodies means aiming our passions in the right direction...It is very difficult, and very silly to “Just say No” - What we need is to have our passions satisfied and aimed at better things. We need other things to say “Yes to” in order to walk well in this area.

The best way to casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and by the love of what is good to expel the love of what is evil.

Thomas Chalmers, 19th century Scotsman, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*

Now is the time to talk about practical ways of saying yes to holy and good things, and practical ways of saying no to the lusts of our bodies. This can be a great conversation for your groups for weeks to come.

Parting Shots

Suggested Reading

Sex and the Supremacy of Christ Justin Taylor and John Piper editors.

- Chapter 6—Sex and the Single Man by Mark Dever, Michael Lawrence, Matt Schmucker, and Scott Croft
- Chapter 7—Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know by CJ Mahaney
- Chapter 8—Sex and the Single Woman by Carolyn McCulley
- Chapter 9—Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Wife Needs to Know by Carolyn Mahaney

Scripture Memory

So, whether you eat or drink, *or whatever you do*, do all to the glory of God. **1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV**

The Intersection of Truth and Life

Each week we will wrestle with the intersection of God’s truth with our lives and how we might respond? Here are a few questions for this week:

- How does understanding your sexuality and its relationship to God encourage you to walk in holiness?
- What things can I say yes to in my life which will help me say no to others?
- How will I follow up with some sisters or brothers about my struggles with my sexuality?
- Do I need to seek help in coping with past sexual abuse or sexual addiction? Will I take that step this week?

