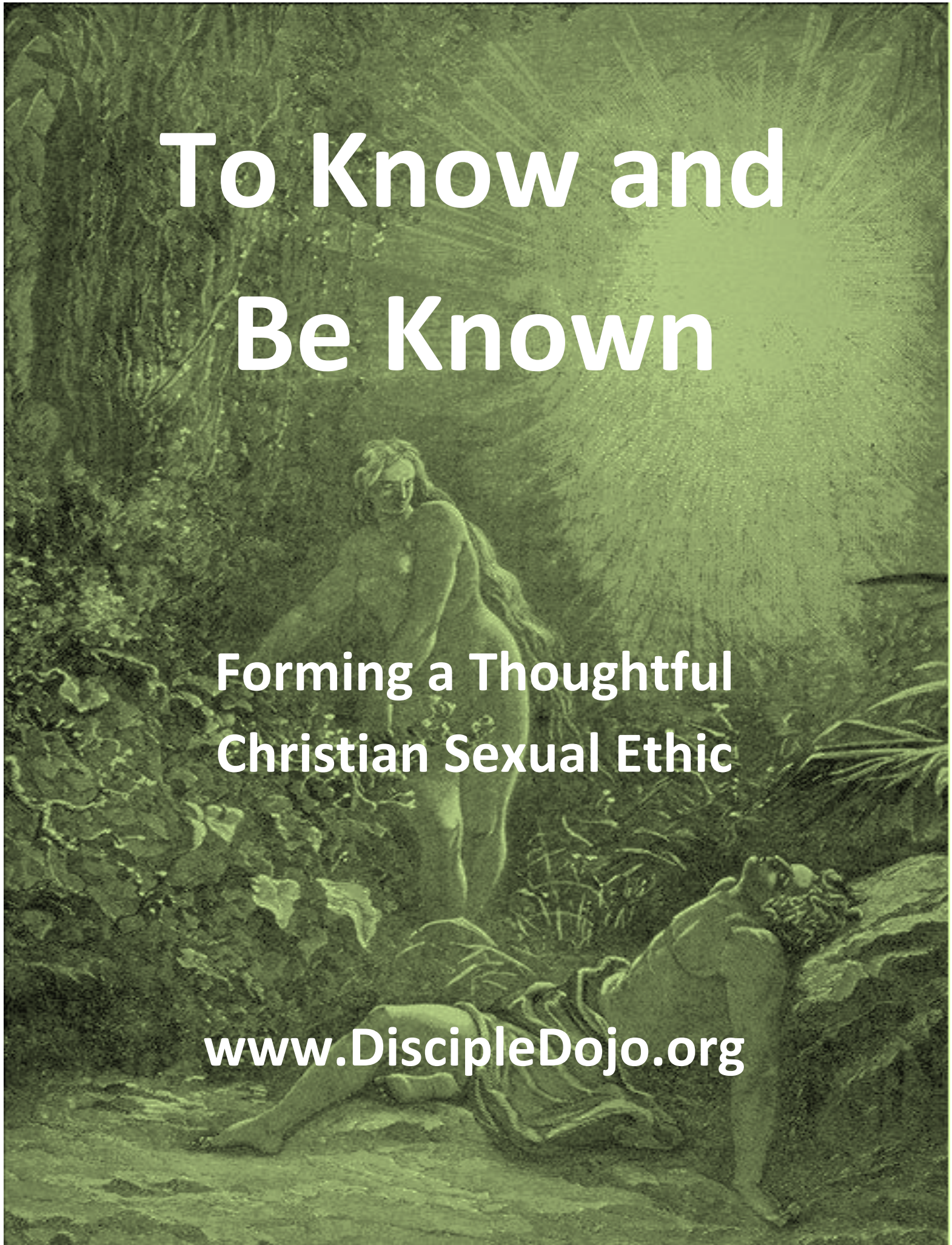


To Know and Be Known

Forming a Thoughtful
Christian Sexual Ethic

www.DiscipleDojo.org



Recommended Reading

[A Christian Guide to Sexual Counseling](#) by Mary Ann Mayo

[Boundaries in Dating](#) by Henry Cloud & John Townsend

[Dating Discipleship](#) (eBook) by JM Smith

[Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today](#) by John Jefferson Davis

[God Loves Sex: An Honest Conversation about Sexual Desire and Holiness](#) by Dan Allender & Tremper Longman

[Issues Facing Christians Today](#) by John R.W. Stott

[Love is an Orientation: Elevation the Conversation with the Gay Community](#) by Andrew Marin

[Money, Sex & Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life](#) by Richard Foster

[Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity](#) by Lauren Winner

[Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality and Spirituality](#) by Debra Hirsch

[Sacred Marriage](#) by Gary Thomas

[Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis](#) by William J. Webb

[The Bible and Homosexual Practice](#) by Robert Gagnon

[The Great Sex Rescue](#) by Sheila Wray Gregoire

[The Moral Vision of the New Testament](#) by Richard Hays

[Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality](#) by Wesley Hill

[What You DIDN'T Learn From Your Parents About Sex](#) by Matthew Paul Turner

Welcome to “To Know and Be Known”! This study is focused on learning HOW to think about sex rather than merely WHAT to think about sex.

Why take this approach?

Because I believe it is more important that we think through the overall Biblical teaching and societal issues before drawing our ethical conclusions. Otherwise we risk shallow, moralistic “proof-texting” rather than mature Christian thought.

The ‘Separation of _____ and _____’

There exists today a severe lack of open, frank, honest, Biblical, compassionate, and authentic teaching on sex in most churches. If the subject is brought up at all, it is usually in regards to what Christians SHOULDN’T be doing or how wrong the world is in its views on sex and sexuality.

Of course, there ARE sexual practices Christians should abstain from. And the world often IS wrong on many things about sexuality...but recognizing these must spring from a deeper and fuller understanding of the GOODNESS of sex as created by God and its purpose for His good creation.

Conscientious disciples of Jesus know that Christian action is impossible without Christian thought; they resist the temptation to take short cuts.

John Stott
Issues Facing Christians Today

How we understand and live out our sexuality is profoundly important because we will either reflect our Creator or not. ...If our sexuality lies close to our spirituality, as I suggest it does, then it’s vital we find a way to bring a living, holy sexuality back into the context of the church. How can any of us be real, authentic people if we have to leave our sexuality at the door? And how can we speak to a sexually confused world if we have nothing to say? ... The whole allure of sexuality and the associated desire to overcome loneliness through relational connection seem to point to far deeper human longings to know and be known, not just by one another but supremely by the “Other.”

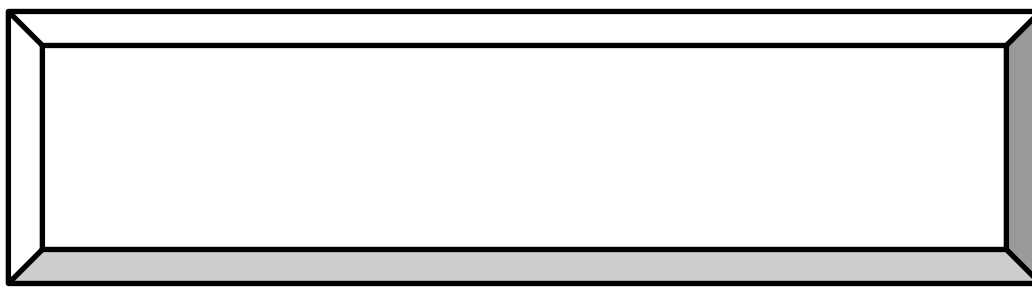
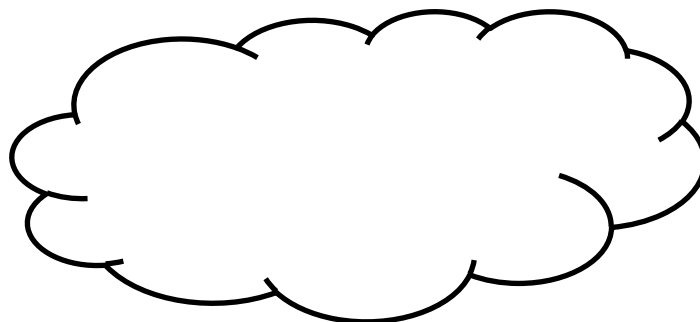
Deb Hirsch
Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality and Spirituality

God does not have a problem with our sensuousness, but we do. He knows we have the capability to experience pleasure with our bodies responsibly and morally within His guidelines. We are the ones who doubt it. The church must confront and deal with that doubt.

Mary Ann Mayo
A Christian Guide To Sexual Counseling

Where did the separation come from?

For many in the early church, the default worldview from which they had come was heavily influenced by Hellenistic forms of _____...



Colossians 3:1 **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

1John 2:15 **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶ For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.**

Jude 21 **Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.**

“World”/“Flesh”/etc. in Scripture refers to the _____ of Creation, not its _____!

These early church fathers were steeped in a Greek understanding of life and reality, rather than a Hebraic one. Hellenistic thinking was innately dualistic, particularly as it related to the body. Anything physical (in this case the body) was of a lower nature, contrary to the spirit and therefore not to be indulged. Anything of the mind was spiritual and to be pursued. Therefore denying the body of any pleasure was taking the higher, more enlightened path. In direct contrast, Hebraic thought affirmed both mind and matter as good and part of the created order. While one could “sin” with the body (and in sexuality), the body itself (along with sexuality) was to be affirmed as part of God’s good creation.

Deb Hirsch
Redeeming Sex

Jesus takes sexual ethics back to the beginning...

Unlike surrounding forms of dualism in the Greco-Roman world, the worldview of the Hebrew Scriptures goes out of its way to stress the GOODNESS of the physical creation...including humans and even sex itself! When He was asked a question about marriage and sexuality, Jesus directed His questioners back to the Creation account:

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵ 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'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

Here we see Jesus recognizing a *hermeneutical trajectory* within Scripture, where Sin has distorted God's original desires and Scripture presents a _____ where God is in the process of redeeming and restoring a fallen creation. We live in that story, not the dualistic one of the Gnostics or Greco-Roman pagans.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make Human in our image, according to our likeness; and he will rule over the fish of the Sea and over the flying creatures of the Sky and over the livestock and over all the Land and over all the small animals in the Land."

²⁷ So God created Human in His image;
In the image of God He created him;
Male and Female—He created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the Land and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the Sea and the flying creatures of the sky and over all creatures swarming over the Land."

³¹ ...God saw all that He had made and, behold!—It was exceedingly good!

God's command to Adam that he "be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28) was an explicit commandment to engage in sexual relations — but religious apprehension makes us think that the "most holy" amongst us will somehow shun its pleasure. This, tragically, would mean that only the least holy would actually raise children — which doesn't bode well for the faith of the next generation.

Gary L. Thomas
Sacred Marriage

Genesis 2 gives us a closer look at the events of Genesis 1 involving the first particular male and female

^{2:8} Now YHWH God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And YHWH God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the midst of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ YHWH God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

¹⁶ And YHWH God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

¹⁸ YHWH God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a deliverer suitable for him." ¹⁹ Now YHWH God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable deliverer was found.

²¹ So YHWH God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took some of the man's side and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then YHWH God crafted a woman from the side he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' (Isha), for she was taken out of man (Ish)."

²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be glued to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Man and woman in the Garden were...

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Evil desires for us to be sexually used and then discarded. It also works to make us feel dirty, fouled, and ruined. God's gift of holiness is the promise that he will clothe us in his most beautiful righteousness so that we are dressed to be stunning and arrayed in his beauty. What God increases in us through the gift of holiness is the desire for our sexuality to be caught up in wonder and joy. We are meant to long for our experience of nakedness and pleasure, to be freed from shame and made holy, good, and innocent.

Dan Allender & Tremper Longman
God Loves Sex

The ancient Jewish text *The Holy Letter* (written by Nahmanides in the thirteenth century) sees sex as a mystical experience of meeting with God: "Through the act [of intercourse] they become partners with God in the act of creation. This is the mystery of what the sages said, 'When a man unites with his wife in holiness, the Shekinah is between them in the mystery of man and woman.'" The breadth of this statement is sobering when you consider that this shekinah glory is the same presence experienced by Moses when God met with him face-to-face (see Exodus 24:15 – 18). In contrast to medieval Christian prohibitions, Nahmanides recommends that married couples regularly experience sexual intercourse on the Sabbath in celebration of their faith. The reason he could advocate this was his firm belief that everything God made — including the sexual organs and thus the sense of sexual touch — is good because God has declared it so (Genesis 1:31).

Gary L. Thomas
Sacred Marriage

Marriage and physical sex between the man and the woman were _____
from the beginning!

But in Genesis 3 Sin enters the picture and immediately
_____ the good creation...including the
male-female relationship:

^{3:1} Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals YHWH God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of YHWH God as he was going about in the garden in the wind of the day, and they hid from YHWH God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But YHWH God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children.

John Stott
Issues Facing Christians Today

Marriage is not a private affair, but a public proclamation that invites others to witness and celebrate. We participate in the glory of the wedding of others.

Allender & Longman
God Loves Sex: An Honest Conversation about Sexual Desire and Holiness

¹³ Then YHWH God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So YHWH God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head, though you will crush his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you."

¹⁷ To the man he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. ²¹ YHWH God made garments of skin for the man and his wife and clothed them. ²² And YHWH God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So YHWH God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

The Biblical conclusions regarding sex:

- Sex between man and woman is a part of God's good creation.
- Sin has distorted and disordered all of God's good creation.
- Thus, Sin has distorted and disordered sex between man and woman.
- Jesus came to defeat Sin and transform man and woman.
- Thus, Jesus came to redeem and restore true, Holy, vibrant sexuality.
- Christian marriage is where such redemption and restoration of sex itself happens.
- Christian marriage points beyond itself to deeper and greater truths.

The Bible begins and ends with _____ (Eden & New Jerusalem), and "husband/wife" is one of the primary images God uses to describe His relationship with His people in both the Old and New Testament.

So what if we just live together? Why do we need “a piece of paper”?

[Average cost of a U.S. wedding in 2014: _____]

A Wedding _____ Christian Marriage!

**Christian Marriage seeks to _____ God’s _____
_____ as put forth in Genesis and upheld by Jesus:**

- _____commitment
- _____commitment
- _____commitment
- _____commitment

Sexual intimacy is, of course, essentially private, but not the relationship within which it takes place. Yet cohabiters do not make this distinction, and make the mistake of regarding their whole relationship as an entirely private affair. Marriage, however, is public—both the event which initiates it and the relationship to which it leads...the public context for marriage is important, as the community witnesses to the promises that the man and the woman make. They are understood to agree both to the definition of marriage and to the purpose of marriage. Each gives their consent freely in the eyes of the public. They are not coerced, they are accountable to one another, and this is witnessed by the community. In the case of cohabitation, the relationship is ambiguous and the degrees of commitment between the two people may be unequal. Neither person has any public commitment to engender security...It is more accurate and more helpful to speak of cohabitation as falling short of marriage than as a stepping-stone towards it.

John Stott
Issues Facing Christians Today

Getting back to Jesus' questioners then, what about divorce?

Deuteronomy 24:1 **If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of YHWH. Do not bring sin upon the land YHWH your God is giving you as an inheritance.**

Literal v.1: *If a man takes a wife and becomes her husband, and if she does not find favor in his eyes because he finds in her "nakedness of a thing" (something shameful), and he writes for her a document of divorcement and he gives it into her hand and he sends her from his household. v.3...and the last husband hates her and writes for her a document of divorcement and gives it into her hand and he sender her from his household...*

Torah seeks to _____ the effects of divorce, without _____ it.

Divorce = _____

The Prophets' use of divorce imagery for God & Israel:

Isaiah 50:1

Jeremiah 3:1-11

Malachi 2:11-16

Matthew 1:19 **"Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."**

[Jesus'] teaching is unambiguous. The marriage bond is more than a human contract: it is a divine yoke...Marital breakdown, even the so-called "death" of a relationship, cannot then be regarded as being in itself a ground for dissolution. The basis of the union is not fluctuating human experience ("I love you, I love you not"), but the divine will and Word (they "become one flesh"). ...the church feels the tension between its prophetic responsibility to bear witness to God's revealed standards and its pastoral responsibility to show compassion to those who have been unable to maintain his standards. John Williams is right to bid us remember that "the same God who said through Malachi 'I hate divorce' (2:16) also said through Hosea (whose partner had been blatantly immoral) 'I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them' (14:4).

John Stott

Issues Facing Christians Today

Too many Christians enter the process of divorce assuming they can automatically remarry as soon as the divorce papers are finalized. But let's say we were to accept the biblical view (and our civil laws and church leaders were to support this), which would in most cases declare something like this: "You may opt for a divorce, but you cannot ever engage in sex again with anyone else for the rest of your life." Most, if not all, of the men would find or create a way to be reconciled. They would not choose celibacy.

Gary L. Thomas

Sacred Marriage

Jesus on divorce:

Matthew 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'

³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ 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'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

The _____ vs. _____ debate

_____ vs. _____

R.C.H. Lenski has noted that English translations [including the NIV] tend to overlook the passive forms of the verbs *moicheuthenai* and *moichatai* in 5:32 and 19:9, giving them an active sense unwarranted by the forms themselves. He suggests that **the passive infinitive *moicheuthenai* be translated, "He brings about that she is stigmatized as adulterous," and the passive finite verb *moichatai* as, "He is stigmatized as adulterous."** Matthew 5:32 would then be rendered as follows:

"But I say to you that every man releasing his wife without cause of fornication brings about that she is stigmatized as adulterous; and he who shall marry her that has been released is stigmatized as adulterous."

This somewhat unusual translation does have the merit of reflecting grammatical features overlooked by most translations and commentaries.

John J. Davis
Evangelical Ethics

Paul on divorce:

¹⁰1Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

¹² To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

M.J. Down has pointed to the distinction in Jewish theology between *halakha* and *haggadah*: *halakha* is legal and prescriptive, instruction about good conduct; *haggadah* is affective and imaginative, using poetry, figures of speech, and stories to inculcate attitudes. He argues that the divorce sayings are intended as *haggadah*—statements intended to shock the Jews out of their complacency over divorce by categorizing it as adultery. According to Down, neither the statement in Matthew 5:29 about plucking out the right eye that causes one to sin nor the following statement in 5:31, 32 about divorce is a literal legal prescription; both are deliberately shocking statements intended to challenge existing attitudes.

John J. Davis
Evangelical Ethics

The disciples of Jesus are a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:11–14). Participation in Christ’s Kingdom amounts to being a new people, whose identity and relationships are drawn from humanity as defined before the Fall. Similarly, when Jesus says that divorce “was not what God originally intended,” he implicitly tells his disciples that their identity is to recapitulate the human identity and relationships from before the Fall—before hard hearts began to pervert God’s intention. Jesus’ disciples look forward to the time “when the world is made new” (19:28), but they also long for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (6:10). In this light, the permanence of marriage ought to be a matter of course in the Christian community, an aspect of its present life that mirrors and anticipates the righteousness that will come with God’s Kingdom to the earth... If Moses did not command divorce, then certainly Jesus did not. Even in cases of marital infidelity, divorce should not be the first—let alone the only—option. Are not the deep wounds caused by marital infidelity susceptible to healing by the love of God? Should not couples contemplating divorce, even in cases of infidelity, be made to consider the implications of Matthew 18:21–35? Forgiveness must be rendered in every situation, including this one, and such forgiveness can often lead to a restored relationship and renewed testimony to the power of Jesus’ Kingdom message. If God hated divorce under the old covenant (Mal 2:14–16), how much more so now that the Kingdom has dawned.

David Turner & Darrell L. Bock

Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark

Christian considerations for thinking through divorce and Scripture:

- The _____ nature of OT laws
- The _____ found within Scripture as a whole
- God’s _____ Israel after _____ them (**Hos 2, Jer 3:12-4:2**)
- The Prophetic _____ of many of Jesus’ sayings
- The seriousness of ripping apart the “one flesh” _____
(particularly to _____!)

Appendix A:
Mark 10:11–12 - No Divorce and Remarriage?
[Excerpt from: Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible*]

This was felt to be a hard saying by the disciples who first heard it; it is no less a hard saying for many of their present-day successors.

Jesus was asked to give a ruling on a point of law which was debated in the Jewish schools. In Deuteronomy 24:1–4 there is a law which says in effect, “When a man divorces his wife because he has found ‘some indecency’ in her, and she is then married to someone else who divorces her in his turn, her former husband may not take her back to be his wife again.” This, forbidding a man who has divorced his wife to marry her again after she has lived with a second husband, does not lay down the procedure for divorce; it assumes this procedure as already in being. Nowhere in the Old Testament law is there an explicit command about the divorce procedure, but in this context it is implied that to divorce a woman a man had to make a written declaration that she was no longer his wife: “he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house” (Deut 24:1). Elsewhere in the Old Testament divorce is disparaged as something unworthy: “ ‘I hate divorce,’ says the LORD God of Israel,” according to the prophet Malachi (Mal 2:16).

But in Deuteronomy 24 it is assumed that a man may divorce his wife, and that he may do so on account of “something indecent” or “something shameful” (NEB) that he has found in her. The interpreters of the law around the time of our Lord, who were concerned not only with deciding what it meant but with applying it to contemporary life, paid special attention to this phrase. What, they asked, might be indicated by this indecency or unseemliness which justified a man in divorcing his wife?

There were two main schools of thought: one which interpreted it stringently, another which interpreted it more broadly. The former school, which followed the direction of Shammai, a leading rabbi who lived a generation or so before Jesus, said that a man was authorized to divorce his wife if he married her on the understanding that she was a virgin and then discovered that she was not. There was, in fact, an enactment covering this eventuality in the law of Deuteronomy (Deut 22:13–21), and the consequences could be very serious for the bride if the evidence was interpreted to mean that she had had illicit sexual relations before marriage. This, then, was one school’s understanding of “some indecency.”

The other school, following the lead of Shammai’s contemporary Hillel, held that “something indecent” might include more or less anything which her husband found offensive. She could cease to “find favor in his eyes” for a variety of reasons—if she served up badly cooked food, for example, or even (one rabbi said) because he found her less beautiful than some other woman. It should be emphasized that the rabbis who gave these literal interpretations were not moved by a desire to make divorce easy; they were concerned to state what they believed to be the meaning of a particular Scripture.

It was against this background that Jesus was invited to say what he thought. The Pharisees who put the question to him were themselves divided over the matter. In Matthew’s account of the incident, they asked him, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” (Mt 19:3 RSV). If his answer was yes, they would want to know for what cause or causes, in his judgment, divorce was permissible. He gave them his answer and then, in private, expanded it for the benefit of his disciples who had heard it.

As usual, he bypassed the traditional interpretation of the rabbinical schools and appealed to the Scriptures. “What did Moses command you?” he asked. “Moses,” they replied (referring to Deut 24:1 RSV), “allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to put her away.” They rightly said “Moses allowed,” not “Moses commanded”; the enactment to which they referred, as we have seen, took for granted the existing divorce procedure and wove it into a commandment relating to a further contingency. But Jesus told them that it was “because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.” Then, as with the sabbath law, so with the marriage law, he went back to first principles. “At the beginning of creation,” he said, “God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘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. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Mk 10:2–9).

Jesus reminds them of the biblical account of the institution of marriage. The marriage law must conform with the purpose for which marriage was instituted by God. It was instituted to create a new unity of two persons, and no provision was made for the dissolving of that unity. Jesus does not idealize marriage. He does not say that every marriage is made in heaven; he says

that marriage itself is made in heaven—that is, instituted by God. To the question “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” his answer, in effect, is “No; not for any cause.”

There is a feature of Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees that could easily be overlooked. The stringent interpretation of the school of Shammai and the “liberal” interpretation of the school of Hillel were both given from the husband’s point of view. In the stringent interpretation it was the bride’s virginity that had to be above suspicion; the bridegroom’s chastity before marriage did not enter into the picture. As for the “liberal” interpretation, it was liberal in the husband’s interest, in that it permitted him to divorce his wife for a variety of reasons; so far as the wife’s interest was concerned, it was most illiberal, for she had little opportunity of redress if her husband decided to divorce her within the meaning of the law as “liberally” interpreted. What was true of these interpretations was true of the original legislation which they undertook to expound: it was because of the hardness of *men’s* hearts that divorce was conceded. The law was unequally balanced to the disadvantage of women, and Jesus’ ruling, with its appeal to the Creator’s intention, had the effect of redressing this unequal balance. It is not surprising that women regularly recognized in Jesus one who was their friend and champion.

We may observe in passing that, in referring to the creation ordinance, Jesus combined a text from the creation narrative of Genesis 1 with one from the narrative of Genesis 2. In Genesis 1:27, when “God created man in his own image,” the “man” whom he so created was humanity, comprising both sexes: “male and female he created them.” And in Genesis 2:24, after the story of the formation of Eve from Adam’s side, the narrator adds: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” That may be the narrator’s comment on the story, but Jesus quotes it as the word of God. It is by God’s ordinance that the two become one; men are given no authority to modify that ordinance.

When the disciples asked Jesus to clarify his ruling, he reworded it in the two statements quoted at the head of this section. The second of the two statements refers to a situation not contemplated in the Old Testament law, which made no provision for a wife to divorce her husband and marry another man. It has therefore been thought that this second statement is a corollary added to Jesus’ original ruling when Christianity had made its way into the Gentile world. In a number of Gentile law codes it was possible for a wife

to initiate divorce proceedings, as it was not under Jewish law. But at the time when Jesus spoke there was a recent cause célèbre in his own country, to which he could well have referred.

Less than ten years before, Herodias, a granddaughter of Herod the Great, who had been married to her uncle Herod Philip and lived with him in Rome, fell in love with another uncle, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, when he paid a visit to Rome. In order to marry Antipas (as Antipas also desired), she divorced her first husband. She did so under Roman law, since she was a Roman citizen (like all members of the Herod family). For a woman to marry her uncle was not a breach of Jewish law, as it was commonly interpreted at that time, but it was certainly a breach of Jewish law for her to marry her husband’s brother. John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas for insisting that it was unlawful for him to be married to his brother’s wife. Jesus named no names, but any reference at that time, either in Galilee or in Perea, to a woman divorcing her husband and marrying someone else was bound to make hearers think of Herodias. If the suggestion that she was living in adultery came to her ears, Jesus would incur her mortal resentment as surely as John the Baptist had done.

But it was his words about divorce and remarriage on a man’s part that his disciples found hard to take. Could a man not get rid of his wife for *any* cause? It seemed not, according to the plain understanding of what Jesus said. No wonder then that in the course of time the hardness of men’s hearts modified his ruling, as earlier it had modified the Creator’s original intention.

In Matthew’s version of this interchange, Jesus’ ruling is amplified by the addition of a few words: “anyone who divorces his wife, *except for marital unfaithfulness*, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Mt 19:9). The same exception appears in another occurrence of his ruling in this Gospel, in the Sermon on the Mount: “Anyone who divorces his wife, *except for marital unfaithfulness*, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt 5:32). The ruling in this latter form appears also in Luke 16:18, but without the exceptive clause; the exceptive clause is found in Matthew’s Gospel only, and found twice over.

What is to be made of the exceptive clause? Is it an addition reflecting the hardness of men’s hearts? Or is it an expansion stating the obvious—that if something is done which by its very nature dissolves the marriage bond, then the bond is dissolved? Is it an attempt to conform Jesus’ ruling to Shammai’s interpretation—

that if the bride is found to have had an illicit sexual relation before her marriage, her husband is entitled to put her away? All these suggestions have been ventilated. Most probable is the view that the exceptive clause is designed to adapt the ruling to the circumstances of the Gentile mission. If this is so, the term “marital unfaithfulness” or “unchastity” (RSV) has a technical sense, referring to sexual unions that, while they might be sanctioned by use and wont in some parts of the Gentile world, were forbidden by the marriage law of Israel. It is a matter of history that the church’s traditional marriage law, with its list of relationships within which marriage might not take place, was based on that of Israel. What was to be done if two people, married within such forbidden degrees, were converted from paganism to Christianity? In this situation the marriage might be dissolved.

Certainly the Gentile mission introduced problems that were not present in the context of Jesus’ ministry. One of these problems cropped up in Paul’s mission field, and Paul introduced his own “exceptive clause” to take care of it, although in general he took over Jesus’ prohibition of divorce among his followers. Some of Paul’s converts put to him the case of a man or woman, converted from paganism to Christianity, whose wife or husband walked out because of the partner’s conversion and refused to continue the marriage relationship. In such a situation, said Paul, let the non-Christian partner go; do not have recourse to law or any other means to compel him or her to return. The

deserted spouse is no longer bound by the marriage tie which has been broken in this way. Otherwise, he said, “To the married I give this command (not I but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife” (1 Cor 7:10–11).

Plainly Paul, a considerable time before Mark’s Gospel was written, knew what Jesus had laid down on the subject of marriage and divorce, and knew it in the same sense as Mark’s account. Like his Master, Paul treated women as persons and not as part of their husbands’ property. But the disciples who first heard Jesus’ ruling on the subject found it revolutionary, and not altogether welcome; it took them some time to reconcile themselves to it.

Is it wise to take Jesus’ rulings on this or other practical issues and give them legislative force? Perhaps not. The trouble is that, if they are given legislative force, exceptive clauses are bound to be added to cover special cases, and arguments will be prolonged about the various situations which are, or are not, included in the terms of those exceptive clauses. It is better, probably, to let his words stand in their uncompromising rigor as the ideal at which his followers ought to aim. Legislation has to make provision for the hardness of men’s hearts, but Jesus showed a more excellent way than the way of legislation and supplies the power to change the human heart and make his ideal a practical possibility.¹

¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 431–435.

HOT BIBLE SEX! (aka. The Song of Songs)

The problem with the topless bars and the pornographic literature of our day is not that they emphasize sexuality too much but that they do not emphasize it enough. They totally eliminate the relationship and restrain sexuality to the narrow confines of the genital. They have made sex trivial.

Richard J. Foster
Money, Sex & Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life

Our God, who is spirit (John 4:24), can be found behind the very physical panting, sweating, and pleasurable entangling of limbs and body parts. He doesn't turn away. He wants us to run into sex, but to do so with his presence, priorities, and virtues marking our pursuit. If we experience sex in this way, we will be transformed in the marriage bed every bit as much as we are transformed on our knees in prayer.

Gary L. Thomas
Sacred Marriage

Songs can have wildly different meanings depending upon the background of the lyrics

Example: "Puff the Magic Dragon" (Peter, Paul & Mary – 1963)

Thus it's no surprise that people read ALL KINDS of things into the Song

- Solomon and his _____?
- Farm girl and Shepherd boy separated by her being taken into Solomon's _____?
- God and His Bride _____; Jesus and His Bride _____; God and His love for ____?
- The Rapture???

So what is it? What is it NOT?

- **Authorship: Literally it says _____/_____/_____ Solomon**
- _____ considerations

Often _____ imagery

1:9 – “I liken you, my darling, to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots.”

4:1c – Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead.

4:2 – Your teeth are like a flock of newly-shorn sheep coming up from the wash;
each of them has a twin, not one of them is missing.

5:12 – His eyes are like doves by streams of water, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.

5:13 - His cheeks are like garden beds full of balsam trees yielding perfume.

7:1-2 – How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O nobleman’s daughter!
The curves of your thighs are like jewels,
the work of the hands of a master craftsman.
² Your navel is a round mixing bowl—may it never lack mixed wine!
Your belly is a mound of wheat, encircled by lilies.

But why is it SOOOOOO sexual?? [So much _____]

1:2 - Oh, let him kiss me passionately! [lit: “...me with the kisses of his mouth!”]

For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine.

1:12-14 - While “the king” was at his “banqueting table”,
my perfume spread its fragrance.

¹³ My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh spending the night between my breasts.

2:6 - Oh that his left hand would caress my head,
and his right hand stimulate [or: “embrace”] me!

8:2 - I would lead you and bring you to my mother’s house,

the one who taught me.

I would give you spiced wine to drink,
the nectar of my pomegranates.

³ His left hand caresses my head,
and his right hand stimulates [or: “embraces”] me.

4:6 - ⁶ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,
I will go up to “the mountain of myrrh”, and to “the hill of frankincense”.

Sex is not only sensual and physical; it is also profoundly personal and spiritual. To separate our sexuality from our spirituality is to rob both of meaning and passion. Holiness is not a flight from our body or an aversion to sensuality. Song of Songs leads us in a new understanding of sensual holiness as long as we are not sidetracked by its two-thousand-year history of Christian neoplatonic de-eroticization.

The language of arousal in erotic beauty is breathtaking. It defies any form of ascetic piety or disembodied holiness. When we fail to be aroused by the physicality of our spouse we have turned away from being captured by God’s creation. ...Amazingly to some, the Bible is inviting us to fantasize and begin to form categories for sexual play. The Bible does not assume that we encounter sexual arousal or stories for the first time upon finding ourselves married. Our sexuality does not lie dormant and then suddenly arise on our wedding day. We are sexual beings from birth, and we are part of sexual narratives from our first day of life, if not before.

Allender & Longman
God Loves Sex

7:6-9 - How beautiful you are! How lovely, O love, with your delights!

⁷ Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like clusters of grapes.

⁸ I want to “climb the palm tree”, and “take hold of its fruit”.

May your breasts be like the clusters of grapes, and may the fragrance of your breath be like apricots!

⁹ May your mouth be like the best wine, flowing smoothly for my beloved, gliding gently over our lips as we sleep together [or: “...over lips and teeth”].

Are they _____??

It's a SONG. Not a narrative. Not a handbook. Not an allegory

SO WHY IS IT IN OUR BIBLE??

The Song presents a longing look at what could've been or what should be; a longing for _____ intimacy in a _____ world!

The Song not a marriage seminar! It's not a dating handbook! It's a raw expression of human sexual longing and satisfaction that shows a complete lack of concern with societal norms or propriety

- She pursues him! Twice! (though in dreams - 3:1-4; 5:6-7) and longs to show open affection

8:1 Oh, how I wish you were my little brother, nursing at my mother's breasts; if I saw you outside, I could kiss you—surely no one would despise me!

_____ imagery abounds

- **4:12 You are a locked garden, my sister, my bride; you are an enclosed spring, a sealed-up fountain.**

¹³ Your shoots are a royal garden full of pomegranates with choice fruits:

henna with nard,¹⁴ nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon

with every kind of spice, myrrh and aloes with all the finest spices.

¹⁵ You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.

The Song describes the man and the woman back in the garden (many of the poems have garden settings) once again enjoying each other. The underlying message is that sexuality is redeemed. It is possible to enjoy God's good gift of sex in spite of sin. That said, the Song is still a very realistic book. It affirms the redemption of sex, but it also recognizes that it is an already-but-not-yet redemption. There are still obstacles and dangers connected to intimate exposure.

Allender & Longman
God Loves Sex

The man and the woman are intentionally not made specific characters so that those married couples who read it can identify with the characters and can be inspired to speak sensuous words to one another. ...married couples benefit from reading this book together and placing themselves in the roles of the man and the woman. ...Just as the Lord's Prayer is a model of prayer to help us learn how to pray, so the Song is a model of godly sensuality.

Allender & Longman
God Loves Sex

- 6:2-3 My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the flowerbeds of balsam spices, to graze in the gardens, and to gather lilies.
³ I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.
- 7:10 - I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me!

The _____ of Gen 3 reversed! 1Corinthians 7:3-5 fleshes this out in more detail when it comes to marital sex as well.

Realism of sex in a fallen world

- _____ juxtaposed with _____ (cf. 3:1-4)
- _____ juxtaposed with _____ (cf. 5:1-8)

Three important themes in the Song

_____ is to be praised, not ignored or despised!

A Biblical balance to Proverbs 31!

"Oh you are beautiful/handsome!" – 1:15 (him) 1:16 (her) 4:1 (either/both)

- **Woman is insecure and compares herself to others**
 - 1:4b Rightly they adore you![but...]
⁵ I am dark but lovely, O maidens of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Qedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon [or: "Salmah", a desert tribe].
⁶ Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has burned my skin. My brothers were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards. But my own vineyard I could not keep up!
 - 2:1 I am a meadow flower [or: "rose"] from Sharon, a lily from the valleys.
- **But the man builds her up each time and praises her beauty**
 - 1:9 I liken you, my darling [lit. "companion"], to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.
¹⁰ Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings; your neck with strings of jewels.
¹¹ We will make for you gold earrings studded with silver.
 - 2:2 Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among young women!

- 2:4 He brought me into the “banquet hall”, and his banner over me was love [or: “he looked at me lovingly”].
- She praises his physical beauty as well
 - 5:10 My beloved is dazzling and ruddy; he stands out in comparison to all other men.
 - ¹¹ His head is like the most pure gold. His hair is curly— black like a raven.
 - ¹² His eyes are like doves by streams of water, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.
 - ¹³ His cheeks are like garden beds full of balsam trees yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with drops of myrrh.
 - ¹⁴ His arms are like rods of gold set with chrysolite. His “abdomen” [Lit. “body” or “member”] is like polished ivory inlaid with sapphires.
 - ¹⁵ His legs are like pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.
 - ¹⁶ His mouth is very sweet; he is totally desirable. This is my beloved! This is my companion, O maidens of Jerusalem!
- Beauty is a gift from God and should be celebrated and received as such!

Sexuality is our _____; _____.

- Nature/Garden/Vineyard imagery for sex
 - 1:16b Our canopied bed is lush;¹⁷ the beams of our bedroom chamber are cedars; the rafters of our bedroom are cypresses.
 - 4:12 You are a locked garden, my sister, my bride; you are an enclosed spring, a sealed-up fountain.
 - ¹³ Your shoots are a royal garden full of pomegranates with choice fruits: henna with nard,¹⁴ nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon with every kind of spice, myrrh and aloes with all the finest spices.
 - ¹⁵ You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.
- How are we treating our Garden? Who are we letting into it?

In pornography we see a truncated sexuality concerned only with the physical as an activity of lust and a dehumanizing exercise of power over others. Pornographic art cheapens and dehumanizes; true art lifts and ennobles... It is a dream world—a deceptive, beguiling, artificial dream world. The sex of the pornographic trade is too slick, too wonderful, too ecstatic. Sex in the real world is a mixture of tenderness and halitosis, love and fatigue, ecstasy and disappointment. When people believe the dream world, they begin to cast a disparaging eye at the flaws of the real world; indeed, they begin to seek a flawless fantasy world. Such make-believe is genuinely destructive to both true sexuality and true spirituality.

Richard J. Foster
Money, Sex & Power

Creation is GOOD; physical is GOOD; Emotion is GOOD; Longing is GOOD; Fantasy is GOOD;
Sex is GOOD!

- **The longing for the true within a fallen world is hard because all we know is the fallen! But the Bible doesn't _____ fantasy...it _____ it! The Song shows us what _____ looks like!**
It's steamy and explicit without being pornographic. God's problem with most of our sexual fantasies is that they don't measure up!
- **The reason sexual intimacy is so overpowering is because _____!**
 - **8:6 Set me like a cylinder seal over your heart, like a signet on your arm. For love is as strong as death, passion is as unrelenting as the grave. Its flames burst forth, it is a blazing flame.**
 - ⁷ **Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it.**
 - If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised.**

Thus the warning refrains throughout the Song not to awaken sexual love before it is ready!

Lust, Longing, Desire, and Temptation

So what about unmarried couples? When it comes to sex and sensuality in a relationship, how far is too far??

Perhaps the best principle, though it is not a law, is **that the level of intimacy should not exceed the level of commitment that a man and a woman have for each other.** A couple that is engaged have entered a level of commitment that is far beyond that of a couple in their first month of dating, but still short of the full-blown commitment of marriage. Physical intimacy should not exceed the level of commitment that a couple have for each other. Thus, in many ways, the answer to how far is too far is a matter not of law but of wisdom, guided by the principle that the deeper a couple's commitment to one other, the more physically intimate they will be. However, as in all matters of wisdom, it is a question not only of timing but also of knowing oneself. It's like drinking alcohol. Some people can have a drink and enjoy God's gift of wine (Ps. 104: 15), but others will have a drink and not be able to stop until they are passed-out drunk. ...When sex is used merely as a form of pleasure, like drinking a beer, it inevitably becomes a commodity to be used by both parties and is trivialized. If sex is being used to supercharge the momentum of intimacy, then the speed attained will outrun the solidity of the relationship, and as a result the character of the relationship will fail to grow as God intended. Too many relationships that begin and progress through sex fail to grow the true skills needed for intimacy because they achieved a level of closeness through sex that will not last when the struggles of sexuality increase or when sexual drives lessen.

Allender & Longman
God Loves Sex

Lust vs. Temptation to lust

“Lust” simply means _____; context determines the rest

ἐπιθυμέω [epi-thoo-MAY-oh] v. "to desire; to long for; to crave; to covet" (Matt 5:28, Luke 16:21, 17:22, 22:15, LXX: Exod 20:17, Num 11:35)

ἐπιθυμία [epi-thoo-ME-ah] n. "desire; longing; craving" (Phil 1:23, 1Thes 2:17, 4:5, 1Pet 4:3, 1John 2:6)

ὄρεξις [AH-rex-is] n. "desire; longing" (Rom 1:27)

Dallas Willard helpfully defines lust as “looking to desire”—looking at someone other than a spouse in order to indulge in sexual fantasies. “That is, we desire to desire. We indulge and cultivate desiring because we enjoy fantasizing about sex with the one seen. Desiring sex is the purpose for which we are looking.” This purposeful looking—the “second glance”—is different, Willard says, from “looking and desiring.” **Looking to desire is intentional, willful. Looking and desiring is natural, reflexive, part of the experience of a God-designed and God-given desire for intimacy with someone of the opposite sex;** it could happen at any time, in any place—as you drive down the road and see a billboard, as you place your order at a restaurant, as you browse the shelves at a bookstore. When we only think of sex with someone we see, or simply find him or her attractive, that is not wrong, and certainly is not what Jesus calls “adultery in the heart.” Merely to be tempted sexually requires that we think of sex with someone we are not married to, and that we desire the other person—usually, of course, someone we see. But temptation also is not wrong, though it should not be willfully entered. **Looking and desiring, according to Willard, isn’t sinful; it’s what you choose to do with the desire that determines whether the first look will turn into cultivated lust.**

Wesley Hill
Washed and Waiting

Sexual desire is the physical prompting to move toward a pleasure that aches to escape division, loneliness, or shame. Sexual desire is not so much the desire for orgasm as it is the desire to be caught up in the sensuality of beauty that transcends the here and now for a timeless, undivided, unsoiled innocence.

Dan Allender & Tremper Longman
God Loves Sex

Masturbation and Sexual Fantasy

Onan - ^{Genesis 38:1} At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. ² There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and lay with her; ³ she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. ⁴ She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. ⁵ She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.

⁶ Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce

...when we consider the range of sexual behavior that is discussed in Scripture—homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, prostitution, rape, transsexuality, incest—it is difficult to think that masturbation is left out by accident. Clearly masturbation does not seem to be one of God's great concerns; his Word says more about the mistreatment of animals. We must be careful not to harshly condemn something that the Bible does not condemn...Any person who teaches (or writes) about masturbation is likely to be criticized. In the absence of clear biblical guidance on this issue, we are left with a variety of conflicting opinions, often given by sincere, compassionate counselors whose views we should understand and respect. Surely masturbation is a sin when it is accompanied by a lusting for sexual relationships that God forbids, when it masters us, and when it hinders one's relationship with God...open communication about masturbation helps to diffuse its destructive impact. For most people it will be replaced in time by more fulfilling sexuality within marriage.

Collins
Christian Counseling

Obsessive masturbation is spiritually dangerous. But we must also be aware to the opposite obsession—the obsession to quit. This obsession is especially painful because one failure can cast a person into despair. It becomes a desperate, all-or-nothing situation. And this is sad, because it really is unnecessary. We do not need to put people into impossible either/or binds. What we are after is control, balance, perspective...masturbation's sexual fantasies are a very real part of human life that needs to be disciplined, not eliminated.

Richard Foster
Money, Sex & Power

offspring for your brother." ⁹ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.

Levitical purity - Leviticus 15:16 "When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ¹⁷ Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. ¹⁸ When a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening." (cf. 15:32, 22:4, 23:10)

Asceticism and the Sin nature - "Do not handle...do not touch"

Colossians 2:20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"?

²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

...When we are fearful as disciples or as a church, "we begin thinking primarily about what we want to prevent and avoid rather than what we want to encourage and develop." In other words we end up focusing on the wrong things!

Debra Hirsch
Redeeming Sex

Having wisdom, not law, as pivotal in navigating an intimate relationship can itself be a frightening prospect. Having a law ("no kissing until engagement") is so much easier and more clear-cut, but the Bible does not give us a law, short of reserving sexual intercourse for marriage. Though easier and more clear-cut, to have laws ruling physical intimacy in a relationship of love would also be legalistic and unrealistic. An unrealistic law is not a law that is likely to be obeyed. Someone who has a healthy relationship with God would be heartbroken at the thought of exploiting another person sexually. Rather they will relate to that person sexually in a way that deepens their relationship on an emotional, psychological, and spiritual level.

Dan Allender & Tremper Longman
God Loves Sex

Appendix B: The Song of Songs (aka. the greatest song of them all!)

A color-coded translation:

Woman (Purple) Man (Blue)

Friends/Chorus, or possibly the man or woman (Black)

1:1 The Song of all Songs *to/for/by* Solomon.

² Oh, let him kiss me passionately!

[lit: "...me with the kisses of his mouth!"]

For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine.

³ The fragrance of your colognes is delightful;
your name is like the finest perfume.

No wonder the young women adore you!

⁴ Take me away with you;
let us hurry!

Let "the king" bring me into his bedroom chambers!
[or: "The king has brought me into his bedroom chambers."]

We will rejoice and delight in you;
we will rejoice over your lovemaking more than wine.

Rightly they adore you!

[but...]

⁵ I am dark but lovely, O maidens of Jerusalem,
dark like the tents of Qedar,
like the tent curtains of Solomon

[or: "Salmah", a desert tribe].

⁶ Do not stare at me because I am dark,
for the sun has burned my skin.

My brothers were angry with me;
they made me the keeper of the vineyards.
But my own vineyard I could not keep up!

⁷ Tell me, O you whom my heart loves,
where do you pasture your sheep?
Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat?
Tell me lest I wander around beside the flocks of your
companions! [or: "Tell me, because why should I be like a
veiled one by the flocks..."]

⁸ If you do not know, O most beautiful of women,
simply follow the tracks of the flock,
and pasture your young goats by the tents of the
shepherds.

⁹ I liken you, my darling [lit. "companion"],
to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

¹⁰ Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings;
your neck with strings of jewels.

¹¹ We will make for you gold earrings
studded with silver.

*"...all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song
of Songs was given to Israel; for all the writings are holy,
but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies."*

-Rabbi Akiva (100 AD)

¹² While "the king" was at his "banqueting table",
my perfume spread its fragrance.

¹³ My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh
spending the night between my breasts.

¹⁴ My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of En-Gedi.

¹⁵ Oh, you are beautiful, my darling (lit. "my companion")!
Oh, beautiful!
Your eyes are like doves!

¹⁶ Oh, you are handsome, my lover!
Yes, how delightful!

Our canopied bed is lush;
¹⁷ the beams of our bedroom chamber are cedars;
the rafters of our bedroom are cypresses.

2:1 I am a meadow flower [or: "rose"] from Sharon,
a lily from the valleys.

² Like a lily among the thorns,
so is my darling among young women!

³ Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the young men!

I delight to sit in his shade,
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.

⁴ He brought me into the "banquet hall",
and his banner over me was love
[or: "he looked at me lovingly"].

⁵ Sustain me with raisin cakes,
refresh me with apples,
for I am faint with love.

⁶ Oh that his left hand would caress my head,
and his right hand stimulate [or: "embrace"] me!

⁷ I charge you, O maidens of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles and by the young does of the open
fields:

Do not awaken or arouse love until it pleases
[or: "until it is willing"]!

⁸ The voice of my beloved!

Look! Here he comes,

leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills!

⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Look! There he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the window,
peering through the lattice.

¹⁰ My beloved answered me, saying:

"Arise, my darling; My beautiful one,
and come away with me!

¹¹ Look! The winter has passed,
the rains are over and gone.

¹² The flowers have appeared in the land,
the time for singing [or: "pruning"] has come;
the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

¹³ The fig tree has budded,
the vines have blossomed and give off their
fragrance.

Arise, come away my darling; my beautiful one,
come away with me!"

¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the hiding places of the cliffs,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

¹⁵ Catch the foxes for us,
the little foxes ruining vineyards—
for our vineyard is in bloom.

¹⁶ My beloved is mine and I am his;
he grazes among the lilies.

¹⁷ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved—be like a gazelle
or a young stag on the mountain clefts.

3:1 All night long on my bed I longed for my lover.
I longed for him but he never appeared.

² "I will arise and look all around throughout the town,
and throughout the streets and squares;
I will search for my beloved."

I searched for him but I did not find him.

³ The night watchmen found me—
the ones who guard the city walls.

"Have you seen my beloved?"

⁴ Scarcely had I passed them by when I found my
beloved!

I held onto him tightly and would not let him go
until I brought him to my mother's house,

to the bedroom chamber of the one who conceived
me.

⁵ I charge you, O maidens of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles
and by the young does of the open fields:
"Do not awake or arouse love until it pleases"
[or: "until it is willing"]!

⁶ Who is this coming up from the desert like a column of
smoke,

like a fragrant billow of myrrh and frankincense,
every kind of fragrant powder of the traveling
merchants?

⁷ Look! It is "Solomon's" portable couch!
It is surrounded by sixty warriors,
some of Israel's mightiest warriors.

⁸ All of them are skilled with a sword,
well-trained in the art of warfare.

Each has his sword at his side,
to guard against the terrors of the night.

⁹ "King Solomon" made a sedan chair for himself
of wood imported from Lebanon.

¹⁰ Its posts were made of silver;
its back was made of gold.
Its seat was upholstered with purple wool;
its interior was inlaid with leather
by the maidens of Jerusalem.

¹¹ Come out, O maidens of Zion,
and gaze upon "King Solomon"!
He is wearing the crown with which his mother
crowned him on his wedding day,
on the most joyous day of his life!

4:1 Oh, you are beautiful, my darling [or: "companion"]!
Oh, beautiful!

Your eyes behind your veil are like doves.

Your hair is like a flock of goats
streaming down Mount Gilead.

² Your teeth are like a flock of newly-shorn sheep
coming up from the wash;
each of them has a twin, not one of them is missing.

³ Your lips are like a scarlet thread;
your mouth is lovely.

Your cheek behind your veil is like a slice of
pomegranate.

⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David
built with courses of stones;
one thousand shields are hung on it—
all shields of valiant warriors.

⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of the gazelle grazing among the lilies.

⁶ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,
I will go up to "the mountain of myrrh",
and to "the hill of frankincense".

⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my darling!
There is no blemish in you!

⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
come with me from Lebanon.
Descend from the crest of Amana,
from the top of Senir,
the summit of Hermon,
from the lions' dens
and the mountain haunts of the leopards.

⁹ You have stolen my heart,
my sister, my bride!
You have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.

¹⁰ How delightful is your lovemaking,
my sister, my bride!
How much better is your lovemaking than wine;
the fragrance of your perfume is better than any
spice!

¹¹ Your lips drip sweetness like the honeycomb,
my bride,
honey and milk are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of
Lebanon.

¹² You are a locked garden,
my sister, my bride;
you are an enclosed spring,
a sealed-up fountain.

¹³ Your shoots are a royal garden
full of pomegranates
with choice fruits:
henna with nard,
¹⁴ nard and saffron;
calamus and cinnamon
with every kind of spice,
myrrh and aloe
with all the finest spices.

¹⁵ You are a garden spring,
a well of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.

¹⁶ Awake, O north wind;
come, O south wind!
Blow on my garden so that its fragrant spices may send
out their sweet smell.
May my beloved come into his garden and eat its
delightful fruit!

5:1 I have entered my garden, O my sister, my bride;
I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam spice.
I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;
I have drunk my wine and my milk!

Eat, friends, and drink!
Drink freely, O lovers!

² I was asleep, but my mind was dreaming.

Listen! My lover is knocking at the door!

"Open for me, my sister,
my darling,
my dove,
my flawless one!
My head is drenched with dew,
my hair with the dampness of the night."

³ "I have already taken off my robe—
must I put it on again?
I have already washed my feet—
must I soil them again?"

⁴ My lover thrust his hand through the hole,
and my feelings were stirred for him [or: "my bowels
groaned over him"]!

⁵ I arose to open for my beloved;
my hands dripped with myrrh—
my fingers flowed with myrrh
on the handles of the lock.

⁶ I opened for my beloved,
but my lover had already turned and gone away.
I fell into despair when he departed.

I looked for him but did not find him;
I called him but he did not answer me.

⁷ The watchmen found me
as they made their rounds in the city.
They beat me,
they bruised me;
they took away my cloak,
those watchmen on the walls!

⁸ O maidens of Jerusalem, I command you—
If you find my beloved, what will you tell him?
Tell him that I am lovesick!

⁹ Why is your beloved better than others,
O most beautiful of women?
Why is your beloved better than others,
that you would command us in this manner?

¹⁰ My beloved is dazzling and ruddy;
he stands out in comparison to all other men.

¹¹ His head is like the most pure gold.
His hair is curly—black like a raven.

¹² His eyes are like doves by streams of water,
washed in milk,
mounted like jewels.

¹³ His cheeks are like garden beds
full of balsam trees yielding perfume.

His lips are like lilies
dripping with drops of myrrh.

¹⁴ His arms are like rods of gold
set with chrysolite.

His "abdomen" [Lit. "body" or "member"] is like polished ivory inlaid with sapphires.

¹⁵ His legs are like pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.

His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.

¹⁶ His mouth is very sweet; he is totally desirable.

This is my beloved!

This is my companion,
O maidens of Jerusalem!

6:1 Where has your beloved gone,
O most beautiful among women?

Where has your beloved turned?
Tell us, that we may seek him with you!

² My beloved has gone down to his garden,
to the flowerbeds of balsam spices,
to graze in the gardens,
and to gather lilies.

³ I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;
he grazes among the lilies.

⁴ My darling, you are as beautiful as Tirzah,
as lovely as Jerusalem,
as awe-inspiring as bannered armies!

⁵ Turn your eyes away from me—
they overwhelm me!

Your hair is like a flock of goats
flowing down Mount Gilead.

⁶ Your teeth are like a flock of sheep
coming up from the wash;
each has its twin;
not one of them is missing.

⁷ Like a slice of pomegranate is your cheek behind your veil.

⁸ There may be sixty queens,
and eighty concubines,
and young women without number.

⁹ But she is unique!
My dove, my perfect one!

She is the special daughter of her mother,
she is the favorite of the one who bore her.
The maidens saw her and complimented her;
the queens and concubines praised her:

¹⁰ "Who is this who appears like the dawn?
Beautiful as the moon,
bright as the sun,
awe-inspiring as the stars in procession?"

¹¹ I went down to the orchard of walnut trees,
to look for the blossoms of the valley,
to see if the vines had budded
or if the pomegranates were in bloom.

¹² I was beside myself with joy!

There please give me your myrrh,
O daughter of my princely people.

¹³ Turn, turn, O Perfect One!
Turn, turn, that we may stare at you!

Why do you gaze upon the Perfect One
like the dance of the Mahanaim?

7:1 How beautiful are your sandaled feet,
O nobleman's daughter!
The curves of your thighs are like jewels,
the work of the hands of a master craftsman.

² Your navel is a round mixing bowl—
may it never lack mixed wine!

Your belly is a mound of wheat,
encircled by lilies.

³ Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.

⁴ Your neck is like a tower made of ivory.

Your eyes are the pools in Heshbon
by the gate of Bath-Rabbim.

Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon
overlooking Damascus.

⁵ Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel.
The locks of your hair are like royal tapestries—
the king is held captive in its tresses!

⁶ How beautiful you are!
How lovely, O love, with your delights!

⁷ Your stature is like a palm tree,
and your breasts are like clusters of grapes.

⁸ I want to "climb the palm tree",
and "take hold of its fruit".

May your breasts be like the clusters of grapes,
and may the fragrance of your breath be like apricots!

⁹ May your mouth be like the best wine,
flowing smoothly for my beloved,
gliding gently over our lips as we sleep together
[or: "...over lips and teeth"].

¹⁰ I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me!

¹¹ Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside;
let us spend the night in the villages.

¹² Let us rise early to go to the vineyards,
to see if the vines have budded,
to see if their blossoms have opened,
if the pomegranates are in bloom—
there I will give you my love.

¹³ The mandrakes send out their fragrance;
over our door is every delicacy,
both new and old,
which I have stored up for you, my beloved.

8:1 Oh, how I wish you were my little brother,
nursing at my mother's breasts;
if I saw you outside, I could kiss you—
surely no one would despise me!
2 I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house,
the one who taught me.
I would give you spiced wine to drink,
the nectar of my pomegranates.
3 His left hand caresses my head,
and his right hand stimulates [or: "embraces"] me.

4 I charge you, O maidens of Jerusalem:
"Do not arouse or awaken love until it pleases!"

5 Who is this coming up from the desert,
leaning on her beloved?

Under the apple tree I aroused you;
there your mother conceived you,
there she who bore you was in labor of childbirth.

6 Set me like a cylinder seal over your heart,
like a signet on your arm.
For love is as strong as death,
passion is as unrelenting as the grave.
Its flames burst forth,
it is a blazing flame.

7 Surging waters cannot quench love;
floodwaters cannot overflow it.
If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy
love,
the offer would be utterly despised.

8 We have a little sister,
and as yet she has no breasts.

What shall we do for our sister
on the day when she is spoken for?

9 If she is a wall,
we will build on her a battlement of silver;
but if she is a door,
we will barricade her with boards of cedar.

10 I was a wall,
and my breasts were like fortress towers.
Then I found favor in his eyes.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon [meaning:
"husband of a crowd", possible pun];
he leased out the vineyard to those who maintained it.
Each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its
fruit.

12 My vineyard, which belongs to me,
is at my disposal alone.
The thousand shekels belong to you, O Solomon,
and two hundred shekels to those who maintain its
fruit.

13 O you who stay in the gardens,
my friends are listening attentively for your voice;
let me be the one to hear it!

14 Make haste, my beloved!
Be like a gazelle or a young stag
on the mountains of spices."

Egypt, Canaan, Corinth, and Rome: Holy Sex in a Pagan Culture

Christians have always been called to be _____ but not _____ the world. In fact, this call goes all the way back to the Old Testament...

The Holiness Code (Leviticus 18-20)

18:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. ³ You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices....

²⁴ "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. ²⁵ Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶ But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, ²⁷ for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. ²⁸ And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. ²⁹ " 'Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people. ³⁰ Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.' "

20:22 "Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. ²³ You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them.

A proper sexual ethic doesn't deny the fact that we are sexual beings; it develops a framework for the good expression of our good sexuality. Our young people don't need fear-based counsel that compounds the shame they already feel. This only keeps their sexuality in the dark. Suppressing sexuality doesn't help anyone; transformation starts with acceptance and integration. In marrying sexuality to fear, shame and guilt we have not only tainted God's gracious gift but we have imprisoned his people. All humans are profoundly sexual as well as deeply spiritual creatures— at the same time. Failing to integrate the two can cause us to live a fragmented life that operates at two contradictory levels: a disembodied spirituality that floats two inches above the earth, and a suppressed bodily sexuality that seeks to find expression in illicit relationships or in sleazy porn.

Deb Hirsch
Redeeming Sex

Egyptian _____ and _____

Ancient Near East fertility religion (Cf. Isaiah 57:1-9)

- _____ & _____,
- _____
- _____ ("Holy Ones")

Sanctification involves the avoidance of *porneia*, sexual sin. This is part of the “separateness” that is at the core of the meaning of *hagiasmos*: holiness/set-apartness. There were numerous such prohibitions of *porneia* in early Judaism (*Jubilees* 20:3–6; 25.1; 39.6; Sir. 23:16–27; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.51; *Testament of Simeon* 5.3; *Testament of Reuben* 4.6; cf. Exod. 20:14; Lev. 20:10–26; Rom. 1:24–26). *Porneia* has a root sense of prostitution (*pornai* being prostitutes), but it could sometimes have a specific reference to incest (see 1 Cor. 5:1; Matt. 5:32; 19:9), though often it was simply an umbrella term for any and all sorts of sexual sin, including fornication (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Col. 3:5). In other words, in Jewish and Christian circles it referred to all sexual activity outside marriage.

Ben Witherington III

1-2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary

Jesus’ upholds—and intensifies—of Torah regarding _____

Matthew 5: 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 15:17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?¹⁸ But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.²⁰ These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "

Mark 7:14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.¹⁵ Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.' "[Other ancient authorities add verse 16, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen"]¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.¹⁸ "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")²⁰ He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

Revelation 21: 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.¹⁴ "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.¹⁵ Outside are the 'dogs', those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

Jesus' approach with sexual sinners: _____

- The cohabiting woman at the well (John 4:5-30)
- The woman caught in adultery (tradition found in John 8:2-11)
- The 'sinful' woman who washed his feet (Luke 7:36-50)

Jesus' _____ and sketchy reputations (Matthew 1)

Greco-Roman sexuality and the Gospel

The Jerusalem letter to Gentile Christians (Acts 15)

Acts 15:13 When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

...¹⁹ "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹ For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath." ²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul--²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

³⁰ The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

Peter's letter to Gentile Christians

¹ Peter 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not run with them into the same flood of debauchery, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Viewed from the perspective of the culture, in other words, the early Christians' actions were crazy; but viewed from within the worldview of Israel's Scriptures and the gospel, their actions represented the only rational option.

If Jesus abstained and if he is the measure of what counts as true humanity, then I may abstain too—and trust that, in so doing, I will not ultimately lose.

Wesley Hill

Washed and Waiting

Paul and Greco-Roman sexual immorality

Colossians 3:5 **Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.**

1 Thessalonians 4:1 **Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.**

³ **It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.**

Ephesians 4:17 **So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once. But, of course, when people say, 'Sex is nothing to be ashamed of,' they may mean 'the state into which the sexual instinct has now got is nothing to be ashamed of'. If they mean that, I think they are wrong. I think it is everything to be ashamed of. There is nothing to be ashamed of in enjoying your food: there would be everything to be ashamed of if half the world made food the main interest of their lives and spent their time looking at pictures of food and dribbling and smacking their lips.

C.S. Lewis
Mere Christianity

Corinth and Corinthian culture

1 Corinthians 6:9 **Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor _____ [malachoi] nor _____ [arsenokoitai] ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

¹² **"Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"--but God will destroy them both. [or "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food...and God will destroy them both"] The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body [or "Every sin a man commits is outside his body"], but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.**

Sexual sin inside the Church vs. Sexual sin outside the Church

¹ Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

³ Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. [Allusion to cleansing all yeast from one's house in preparation for Passover]

⁹ I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. ¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." [Quoting from Deuteronomy 17, 19, 22, 24]

Through baptism, Christians have entered a corporate whole whose health is at stake in the conduct of all its members. Sin is like an infection in the body; thus, moral action is not merely a matter of individual freedom and preference...The New Testament never considers sexual conduct a matter of purely private concern between consenting adults.

Wesley Hill
Washed and Waiting

Corporate Covenant holiness affected by _____ individual sin

The paradox of "handing over to satan" being for _____

The proper place of _____

The tension between _____ and _____ (Christians and politics)

Homosexuality and Same-Sex Attraction

“Clobber Passages” or _____ Biblical Prohibition?

Sexual brokenness as a _____ of humans having turned away from God to idolatry

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

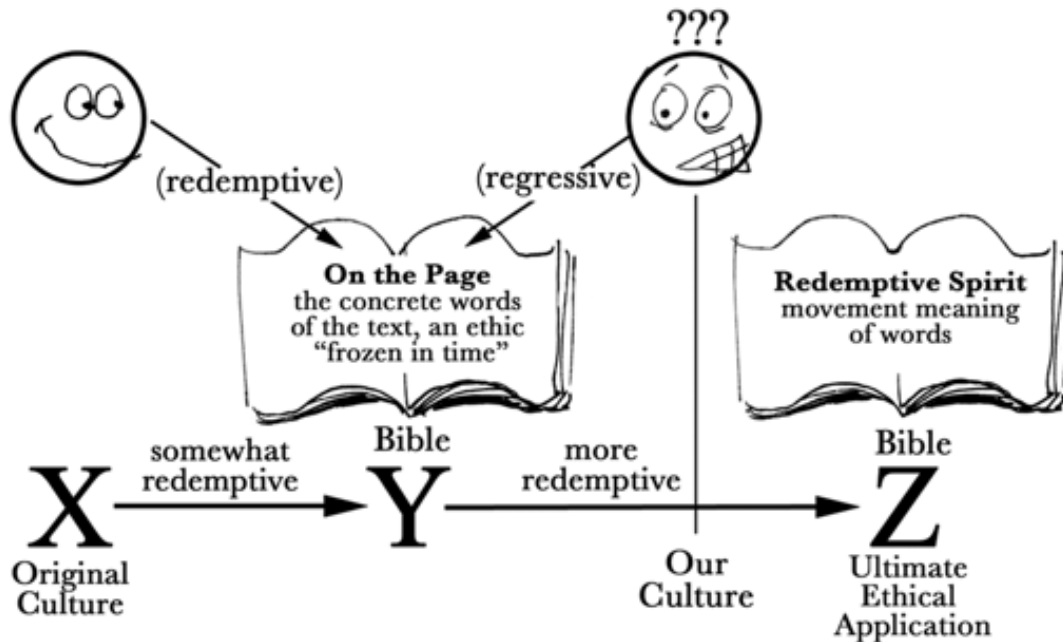
Wisdom of Solomon 14:22 Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but though living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace! ²³ For whether they kill children in their initiations, or celebrate secret mysteries, or hold frenzied revels with strange customs, ²⁴ they no longer keep either their lives or their marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill one another, or grieve one another by adultery, ²⁵ and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, ²⁶ confusion over what is good, forgetfulness of favors, defiling of souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery! ²⁷ For the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil!

At times it seems that many writers start with an opinion about homosexuality and then interpret Scripture in a way that supports their positions.

John Collins
Christian Counseling

What about slavery or women's rights?

The Redemptive Trajectory Hermeneutic (William Webb)



Homosexuality and the Church

Because this issue has wounded so many people, the first word that needs to be spoken is one of compassion and healing. Those who are clearly homosexual in their orientation often feel misunderstood, stereotyped, abused, and rejected. Those who believe that homosexuality is a clear affront to biblical norms feel betrayed by denominations that want to legislate homosexuality into church life. ...There is a third group that has been hurt by the contemporary battle over homosexuality: I refer to those who agonize over their own sexual identity, those who feel torn by conflicting sexual urges and wonder if perhaps they are latent homosexuals. Perhaps this group suffers the most. They are cast into a sea of ambiguity because the Church has given an uncertain sound. On their right, they hear shrill denunciations of homosexuality, and, though they appreciate the concern for biblical fidelity, they have been offended by the brash, uninformed, pharisaical tone of the pronouncements. From their left, they hear enthusiastic acceptance of homosexuality and, though they appreciate the compassionate concern for the oppressed, they are astonished at the way the Bible is maneuvered to fit a more accommodating posture. ...All who are caught in the cultural and ecclesiastical chaos over homosexuality need our compassion and understanding.

Richard Foster
Money, Sex & Power

Christians and LGBT communities

There is no clearly identified single cause of homosexuality...there is no solid evidence to support the view that homosexuality has only a physical or biological cause. Most researchers do agree, however, that homosexuality is 'no more chosen than a native language.' ...**Counselors should remember that there is no typical homosexual lifestyle. It is inaccurate, insensitive, and unkind to conclude that most homosexuals are barhoppers, activists who march in favor of gay rights, child molesters, effeminate (in males; masculine in females), psychologically maladjusted, or constantly preoccupied with sex. Such stereotypes lead Christians to push homosexuals away and deny them the love and acceptance that should be found in the church community...** For many persons, especially those who are unmarried, the flight to gay bars is an attempt to find love and support from understanding people who can bolster individual self-confidence and salve the inner pain.

John Collins
Christian Counseling

At the heart of the homosexual condition is a deep loneliness, the natural human hunger for mutual love, a search for identity and a longing for completeness. **If homosexual people cannot find these things in the local "church family", we have no business to go on using that expression.** The alternative is not between the warm physical relationship of homosexual intercourse and the pain of isolation in the cold. There is a third option, namely a Christian environment of love, understanding, acceptance and support.

In emphasizing love for God and neighbor as the two great commandments, Jesus and his apostles did not discard all other commandments. On the contrary, Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments," and Paul wrote, "Love is the fulfilling [not abrogating] of the law" (John 14:15; Romans 13:8-10). So then, although the loving quality of a relationship is an essential, it is not by itself a sufficient criterion to authenticate it... **Love is concerned for the highest welfare of the beloved. And our highest human welfare is found in obedience to God's law and purpose, not in revolt against them.**

John Stott
Issues Facing Christians Today

Appendix C:

Civil Rights & Religious Freedom in a Pluralist Society:

A Proposed Way Forward

By Rev. Owen Weddle & JM Smith

When it comes to the subject of same-sex marriage, one hardly needs to be told that we live in a country divided.

When the Supreme Court heard arguments in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, they were faced with addressing a dilemma that transcends simply the legal question at hand about gay marriage. On the one hand, the court case is about determining whether states can or cannot restrict the definition of marriage and if states may or may not refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

But the concerns are broader than that; our country waits with baited breath to see what direction the United States will go overall. While the case directly answers the question “will same-sex relationships be treated as the same as opposite-sex relationships across the nation?” there is a broader question over which our society fundamentally disagrees.

That question is: “What defines our pluralist society and our relationships to one another?”

This political conflict is not just about the definition of marriage, but also the fundamental definitions of our society. Throughout its history, American society has largely been defined by, or in relation to our definition of family and gender:

When and with whom can we have intimate relationships and marry? Who can raise children? How are people to receive us and our ‘family?’ How should I view my sex and gender? How should others view my sex and gender?

However, at this moment in history, we find ourselves in the midst of a potential paradigm shift away from the traditional definitions that provided the categories and behaviors into which people generally fit. We are now rapidly moving toward a more broadly defined parameter where individual choice and personal preference are to determine the overall shape of our society.

Many advocates for both the traditional and progressive sides have such deeply conflicting views that they are at an impasse. Given the rhetoric of the “culture wars” mentality embraced by those at both ends of the political spectrum, there seems to be no way for both sides to come out in a win-win scenario.

Many traditionalists would seek to limit the role of a person’s self-definition regarding identity and relationships. By contrast, many progressives seek a society that treats all sexual and gender identities as identical and interchangeable, particularly in government and the marketplace (the Oregon lawsuit of the bakery that refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex marriage being a prime example).

This fundamental disagreement results in a zero-sum or win-lose situation, where no matter the direction the courts go, one side gets all that they want with little regard for (and the inevitable demonization of!) the other side’s rationale or concerns. In the meantime, while the “culture war” rages, opposing views are often caricatured as fundamentally bad and dismissed as “bigotry” or “perversion” which has no place in a ‘good’ society.

Whatever decision the court makes, we should fear such zero-sum win-lose scenarios. I (Owen) am a Christian pastor who believes the Bible paints sex and marriage as being between a male and female. I have been the recipient of rather abusive and judgmental speech because I have chosen to affirm this traditional view. I am the family member and friend to people who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, along with friends and family who are LGBTQ advocates. I myself had the feelings of same-sex attraction late in high school and early in college (although today I consider myself heterosexual and will only consider a romantic relationship with a woman) and was made fun of for being gay earlier in my school years. While I cannot pretend to fully understand all the feelings of people on both sides, I have tasted the bitterness from both toxic pools. The people I know from both sides of my life are not bad, irrational, or evil people. But they will resent any decision which conflicts with their vision for society.

This is part of the tension involved in living within a society that has increasingly embraced a multi-cultural, pluralistic worldview. If there is no one, official religion/language/culture/etc., then you leave room for many diverging beliefs to be developed and expressed.

So, how will we Americans define our society and relationships? Will we affirm the traditionalist or the progressive paradigm?

Our hope, prayer, and reason for writing is to suggest an option that avoids the win-lose approaches. We want to suggest, as best we can, a win-win solution. One in which people who seek to live according to a traditional or a progressive (or any other) cultural outlook or religious worldview may do so with minimal government compulsion and maximum government protection. We want to encourage a society that upholds the MOST rights for the MOST people—especially when it comes to such fundamental disagreements as those surrounding the nature of family, marriage or gender issues. Genuine “equality” must entail a respect for ALL people’s views and practices, not just the few for which we ourselves advocate.

While we are Christians who hold to the traditional New Testament sexual ethic, we also realize that Scripture does not spend much time policing the sexual practices of other cultures. The people who claim loyalty to the God revealed in Scripture are the main recipients of criticism regarding their sexual practices. We do not seek, nor do we desire a secular government that imposes a traditional sexuality on society by compulsion. Furthermore, we realize that the federal laws of the United States were never defined by the teachings of Scripture (contrary to many of our fellow Christians’ claims that America was intended to be a “Christian Nation”).

At the same time, we do not want a government compelling us and other like-minded persons to directly participate in practices, celebrations, or artistic/speech acts that we deem antithetical to our faith. Nor do we want anyone else to be compelled to act against their deeply held religious or ethical beliefs in such ways.

While no solution will be perfect for every single person, we genuinely desire to live in a multi-cultural society where each person can live as consistently as possible within their own chosen definitions of life, while minimizing the burdens on others who choose to live within theirs.

In the following paragraphs, we will present an option that we believe reaches toward that goal. What we propose may not be perfect, and there will be something that the staunch activists on both sides will find unacceptable, if not even infuriating. But since we are not perfect ourselves, nor do we care to side with the extreme elements of our society, our goal is simply to spark cultural conversation that presents the majority of people with a workable solution, and at the same time reduces as much as possible the needless antagonism and hostility which surrounds current discussions of religious freedom and LGBT rights.

So how then should we go about creating laws for an increasingly multicultural society which consists of vastly different views on sexuality? How might the government find a way to prevent any cultural or identity group from obtaining unfair legal power over another group?

This is important because terms like “tolerance” and “equality” and “freedom” get thrown around a lot in this debate by those on both sides of the culture war. Yet often the ideas behind those terms, at least in how they are being used by either side, are disingenuous at best. As one of us (Owen) puts it over on his blog: *“If the rhetoric of diversity and tolerance from progressive parties are genuine, then we have to look at how we address the conflict of sexuality and faith as a prototype for how we deal with cultural conflicts in general.”*

Likewise, if the conservatives rallying under the banner of “freedom” are genuinely concerned about that concept, then they must be ready to recognize that some people’s religious convictions will lead to views or practices that they themselves may very well find abhorrent.

We suggest that it starts with a recognition of three basic principles:

1. **Government should, as far as it is able, maintain complete neutrality regarding differences in religious or philosophical perspectives.**
2. **In regard to an individual’s private life, the government should allow, as far as it is able, freedom of personal conscience on matters that do not endanger, harm, or materially damage others.**
3. **Where the lines between people’s public and private lives blur—such as in the marketplace—the interests of people with differing cultural expressions and identities must be balanced as much as possible. There should be no outright legal favoritism of one culture/identity over another.**

These are, we would suggest, fairly uncontroversial and quite reasonable expectations under the form of government established by America’s founders and enshrined within her Constitutional laws. So, with these three propositions in mind, here is how we might begin to find a workable solution to the current same-sex marriage vs. religious freedom debate:

1. **Government should take no official stance regarding the definition of marriage.** Rather, it

should only acknowledge domestic civil unions between both same-sex and opposite-sex couples. “Marriage” would then return to the individual’s faith community or cultural philosophy to determine.

2. Government should not make any laws regarding sexual and relational practices that go on in the home between mutually consenting legal adults. This would obviously not apply to some practices whereby individuals are endangered, minors are involved, or someone is not consenting or involved against their will.

3. When it comes to private businesses, government should adopt a set of principles that will allow them to balance out both same-sex couples’ desire for marriage and those who define marriage as between a male and a female for religious or philosophical reasons. To be a truly multi-cultural society which respects as many people as possible, it is necessary to balance BOTH the principle of freedom from discrimination AND the freedom of religion, and not allow one to always take priority over the other.

Of course, this third point requires a good bit more nuancing. Often times, people who advocate that sexual orientation should be a protected class compare their position to non-discrimination laws based upon ethnicity or gender. While we agree that laws and societal practices were put in place which held back and discriminated against women, African-Americans, and LGBT persons, not all forms of discrimination are of the same severity.

For instance, African-Americans have historically been subjugated to such widespread institutionalized oppression that they were often forced into higher rates of poverty—which is still present today in many places. On the other hand, people who identify as LGBT tend to come largely from middle-class backgrounds. Thus, a *simple one-to-one appropriation of Civil Rights categories from a half century ago* by current LGBT advocates does not accurately fit the situations faced by these two communities of people separated in time, place and cultural standing. In other words, while laws restricting formal, legally recognized same-sex marriage relationships have indeed resulted in feelings of genuine hurt for many in the LGBT community, the *actual tangible* impacts of favoritism and discrimination are dramatically different than those experienced by African Americans during the Jim Crow era. Given the widespread institutionalized disparity

black individuals faced a half-century ago, it was necessary to impose strong anti-discrimination laws in order to protect the freedoms of people of different ethnicities. However, *we would argue that in our current cultural climate, we do not need such a one-size-fits-all approach to all forms of discrimination.* Rather, various types of protections need to be balanced out differently depending on the circumstances people face today.

For example, consider protections against discrimination for people with physical handicaps. Federal law provides wide anti-discriminatory protections against people with handicaps—but not without limit. A person who is qualified for a job cannot normally be rejected by a potential employer based solely upon their handicap. However, if a person’s handicap *by nature* makes them unqualified for what a particular job entails (such as, for example, someone with a severe speech impediment applying for a customer service phone line position, or a wheelchair-bound person applying to be a valet at a busy restaurant), an exception is allowed for the employer to ‘discriminate’ and not hire that person. *Why? Because to treat anti-discriminatory laws as a blanket statement with no exceptions at all creates an undue burden* on the hiring party.

This is not controversial and makes sense to most people. After all, it is quite reasonable that a person who is confined to a wheel-chair should not be hired for a job where the ability to stand, walk, and run are essential to that job—even if the person in question feels discriminated against as a result. Overall, however, laws against discrimination of individuals with special needs do a good job balancing the civil rights of handicapped individuals with the freedom of businesses to hire those they feel are best suited for the job.

So, turning to the current debate over LGBT civil rights with religious freedom of business owners, what criteria might we use to balance out the rights of those who want to participate in same-sex marriage with those of individuals or business owners who hold to the traditional male-female view of marriage? How do we move forward as a society without falling victim to the zero-sum, winner-take-all scenarios that the current opposing sides in this “culture war” are fighting for?

We would suggest that we as a society simply have find those principles which will take into consideration where different people’s various rights and interests are balanced out in a thoughtful and reasonable way—allowing for the occasional exception to any across-the-board norms we put in place.

To accomplish this, we would like to offer a key concept which might help society weigh the various—and often opposing—interests of all its citizens. It is a concept that would balance all people’s interest in the public marketplace.

It starts by recognizing that there are two broad types of personal involvement in business: *High Personal Involvement* and *Low Personal Involvement*.

- **High Personal Involvement** entails the processes of personal creativity and that communicates a message about the person. **Low Personal Involvement** entails private transactions, routine processes that require little creativity, etc.
- **High Personal Involvement** consists of the creation of artistic, religious, celebratory or communicative goods or services. **Low Personal Involvement** consists of non-artistic, non-religious, non-celebratory or non-communicative goods or services.
- **High Personal Involvement** should favor the producer/provider. **Low Personal Involvement** should favor the consumer.

By recognizing this distinction between levels of involvement, we can begin to craft *fair and just* legislation that protects the genuine civil rights of LGBT individuals in a society where their marriages are legal, and even where they are deemed a protected class under civil rights categories...while also upholding the freedom of religious conviction and freedom of speech for business owners and individuals who are unable to celebrate or personally endorse same-sex marriage.

Finally, we can now look at a proposed legislative approach based upon the High/Low Personal Involvement principle that we feel will allow both sides of the marriage debate to co-exist without the constant “culture war” mindset leading to endless frivolous lawsuits and character assassinations that have characterized things thus far. There IS a better way!

Having seen that in a pluralistic society which values religious/speech freedom as well as civil rights against undue discrimination, and having suggested the foundational principle of distinguishing between “High Personal Involvement” and “Low Personal Involvement” as a guide for when such rights come into

conflict (as they do in the current LGBT Civil Rights vs. Religious Freedom debate in our culture), we are now in a better position to suggest a practical solution to the seeming impasse between the two sides.

It involves *moving the debate away from nebulous and overly-broad concepts of “civil rights” and “religious freedom” altogether!* Such concepts are useful for firing up one’s particular “side” emotionally and getting people to vote based on fear or moral conviction...but not much else when it comes to the question of LGBT civil rights and traditional marriage proponents’ religious freedoms. Appealing to these two terms (“civil rights” and “freedom”) over and against one another in the gay marriage debate is like trying to do surgery with a sledge hammer.

Instead, we would suggest that when it comes to government legislation on this issue, ***the focus should be moved to the nature of the actual goods/services being sought by the consumer.*** What we mean by this is simple:

- Any good or service which ***inherently consists of a speech-act, religious message, or creative artistry*** (for the sake of ease, we will refer to these types of goods/services as “Communicative” ones) should be protected under the First Amendment and exempt from civil rights legislation, should a business owner choose to discriminate in how they make it available to consumers.
- Any good or service which is ***not inherently Communicative, and is thus speech-neutral in and of itself***, would fall under Civil Rights legislative protection, and business owners would not be free to discriminate in regards to it.

So, for example, Communicative goods or services would include things like:

- religious goods or services
- artistic creations (things made for the purpose of aesthetics or commemoration)
- photography
- celebratory events
- fundraisers
- protests
- visual arts
- graphic design
- writing
- or anything else which involves a person’s creative faculty, speech, or personal involvement.

Non-Communicative goods or services would be basically everything that does not intrinsically involve communicating a message or participating in celebratory, religious, or ethical events. It would include things like:

- Regular food (as opposed to celebratory culinary creations or religious meals such as Eucharist/wine/Matzoh/etc.)
- Healthcare
- Regular housing (as opposed to religious communes, retreat centers, etc.)
- utilities (electricity, water, gas, communications, etc.)
- Regular clothing (as opposed to religious vestments, artistic fashion, celebratory garb, etc.)
- Maintenance goods and services (mechanical, home, lawn, agricultural, technological, etc.)
- shipping and transport
- self-service technologies (printing, graphic design, web design, etc.)
- raw materials
- Internet access and web-hosting
- or anything else that does not *inherently* communicate a message or involve *a person's creative faculty or personal involvement in communicating a message*.

Non-Communicative goods could even include items *which may have been previously created as Communicative*, but which are now for public sale in a storefront marketplace setting. For example, artwork or decorative pieces sold generically on the shelves of a bakery or photography studio.

Okay, but what would this look like in actual practice? Well, consider a Christian or Muslim bakery which does not make wedding cakes for same-sex weddings. Such businesses would not be required to *create* a cake or any other decorative item specifically for the celebration of a type of marriage that they have strong religious objection to. This is because the creation of such a celebratory/decorative cake (especially if it contained writing such as "Congratulations Sue and Eileen!" or any other message for that specific same-sex wedding) would be a Communicative service. *The cake would serve no other purpose than to celebrate and commemorate a custom that the baker finds objectionable.*

However, the Christian or Muslim baker who did not support same-sex marriage *would* be required to sell any cake or item on their shelves to *anyone who walked in their door or ordered from their website*.

This is because the sale of something already created and available for public purchase is NOT an inherently Communicative service. Thus they would not be allowed to discriminate against LGBT (or any other) persons themselves, regardless of what they believed about the person's lifestyle or actions. This protects the civil rights of the LGBT (and any other) community, while also upholding the religious/speech freedoms of the business owner. No one side's view would be able to totally trump the others'.

Likewise, to use another example from recent news, the mechanic in Indiana who said he would not work on the cars of any LGBT persons would NOT be protected by religious freedom claims because fixing an automobile is not inherently Communicative. It is speech-neutral by nature and involves no personal involvement in something of a Communicative or celebratory nature. The same would apply for any doctor who refused to treat patients because of their sexual orientation or parental situation. Such people would not be able to hide behind "religious freedom" laws because their goods/services were not of a Communicative (and thus protected) nature.

So, a photographer *would* be free to refuse to shoot a same-sex wedding for *whatever their personal reasons* (because photography, as art, is inherently Communicative and because weddings, as cultural celebrations, are inherently Communicative). But a photography store *could not refuse* to rent or sell equipment to someone who wanted to shoot a same-sex wedding (because renting or selling photography equipment is not inherently Communicative). There are many more examples that could be used to illustrate this basic distinction, and no doubt courts would probably have to weigh in on those that were more ambiguous. But the overall distinction is fairly self-explanatory and quite reasonable.

This distinction between Communicative and non-Communicative goods and services would also alleviate *the genuine concerns* LGBT advocates have about widespread discrimination taking place in areas where traditional views on sexual relationships are prevalent. Restaurants, gas stations and any other public business would not be able to refuse public service to LGBT couples. Their housing rights would be protected under Civil Rights legislation. **So the fear of a return to Jim Crow-like conditions where gay families were turned away from hotels or not allowed to eat in restaurants or use the same public facilities as heterosexuals would not take place.** The core goal of Civil Rights legislation—widespread discrimination against a class of society—would be upheld completely.

However, the religious freedom and First Amendment rights of those business owners who reject the morality of LGBT sexual ethics would also be protected because *they would not be legally required to advocate, celebrate or condone through their Communicative goods or services something they strongly object to*. A family bakery wouldn't lose their life savings simply because they did not want to create a decorative cake to celebrate a type of wedding they do not agree with. They could simply refer the couple to another of the MANY bakeries in the area which would gladly accept their business and allow community to decide whether or not they want to continue doing business with the bakery that refused to create the decoration. ***This would uphold the genuine rights of everyone involved to a degree that is beyond reasonable.***

Of course there would undoubtedly be cases in which the lines between Communicative and non-Communicative goods or services might be somewhat blurry. But this is a regular feature many types of law involving intellectual property, copyright, claims of libel or defamation...so it is not unreasonable to suggest that courts could rule on a case-by-case basis if the legal conceptual framework of Communicative vs. non-Communicative is first put in place.

And such a distinction is not beyond the ability of our courts to determine to a fair degree if the

foundational principle of High/Low Personal Involvement is used to guide them in exceptional cases.

We suggest that this simple distinction between goods or services which are Communicative and those which are not, if it were used in crafting legislation, would eliminate the VAST majority of conflicts between LGBT and Traditionalist advocates...as well as many other cases where religious freedom and civil rights rub up against one another.

It would maintain the most rights for the most people, and would allow us as a pluralistic society to coexist legally with those who do not share our particular ethics, religious convictions or philosophical worldview.

Of course it would not satisfy those on both sides who seek *full capitulation* of everyone else to their way of thinking. Such individuals would continue to demonize those with whom they disagree as either "bigots" or "perverts" (or any number of similar slurs often found in current rhetoric).

But from a legal perspective, *the vast majority of Americans who reside somewhere between the extremes of the culture warriors* would have both their Civil Rights as well as their Religious Freedoms protected from coercion and abuse.

In other words, it would uphold the most good for the most people...which should be the goal of all good legislation, should it not?