



SEXUALITY AND LOVE

A TARGETED DISCIPLESHIP SERIES FOR MEN



SEXUALITY AND LOVE

DEVELOPED BY THE
Assemblies of God
Men's Ministries Department



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LESSON BREAKDOWN

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START HERE

Sexuality is worshipped in our culture. A disproportionate amount of attention, resource, and energy is devoted to an activity that makes up a microscopic percentage of our overall life experience. This area has a powerful influence in framing the identity of a man.

Sexuality and Love has been created to assist men to know that sexuality and love is more than biology. There is a spiritual component to consider. The Bible has a lot to say about sex. The Bible provides information on both the benefits and dangers surrounding sexuality and love. According to Scripture, the way a man conducts himself in these areas of his life goes a long way in determining the level of the fruit of the Spirit he will experience on a day-to-day basis.

Our culture tries to redefine the categories and insist they are all equally valid, but God's opinion hasn't changed. Christians are either accused of being naïve and prudish or obsessive in their attitudes toward sex. Unbelievers claim Christians either make too big a deal of it or have unrealistic attitudes about what's possible.

Our goal for *Sexuality and Love* is for a man to realize that God understands the power of sexuality and love. God knows the disproportionate influence this can hold over a man's life. This study is meant to assist men to understand from a biblical perspective God's gift of sexuality and love.

Every lesson contains four sections. The first section is called **SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target**, and it gives an overview to the subject. The second section is called **CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target**, and it helps you to begin to bring the subject into a clearer focus. The third section, called **BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target**, is intended to bring the entire study into clearer focus. The fourth section is called **Next Step**, which is designed to help you deepen your relationship with God by taking measures necessary to reach your goal. This section offers an idea you can use to apply your new knowledge in an action step.

These lessons have been built using several resources to provide you with an in-depth study without having to purchase every single resource. But, these recommended tools for purchase will enhance your engagement with these lessons. They are:

- *FireBible®: English Standard Version®*
- Journal
- Colored Pencils



The ultimate goal of this study is to equip you to walk in Christ and grow as the priest in your home, church, and marketplace, a man who has biblical insight into sexuality and love. By building a strong foundation for your own life as a spiritually healthy disciple of Jesus, these lessons will also equip you to lead your family safely through the war the enemy has engaged in against men on this front.

Sex is powerful; its influence is enormous in our culture. However, you don't have to be a statistic or another tragic story. Men's Ministries would recommend that, if you are struggling in this area, you go to a trusted voice and talk to them honestly about what is happening. Don't try to solve it yourself. The stakes are too high.



FOR GROUP LEADERS

If you intend to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you better utilize these lessons in that setting.

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making any copies needed, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud the **Sightline** and **Crosshair** sections.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read through the questions in the **Bullseye** and **Next Step** sections. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to only engage part of the questions or assign group members to work through part or all the questions before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three to four people is the best way to work through selected questions from the **Bullseye** and **Next Step** sections for thirty to forty minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, gather the entire group together after the small group time. Discuss as a large group a few of the selected questions from the **Bullseye** section for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the Scripture reading before each session and ensuring they are writing in their journals.



SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 1: WHERE DID SEX BEGIN?

Main Idea: God invented sex to teach a man and woman about their relationship with Him. In this lesson, you will learn some important things about the biblical link between sexuality and spirituality.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

In the ancient Greek world, people had a saying that described their understanding of what it means to be human. They would say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” They understood a person to be a collection of biological needs—you’re hungry and there’s food to satisfy your hunger, you’re tired and there’s sleep. And they viewed sex like they did food. So, when a man was hungry, he would go to a prostitute saying, “Food for the stomach . . .”

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, the apostle Paul talks about this way of viewing the world. He confronts his readers with a challenge: Can they live for a higher purpose than just fulfilling their urges? He says the body is not just

a receptacle for pleasure. Then he makes an amazing claim. He says in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

A temple was a holy place, a place where gods lived. Paul specifically uses this temple language to challenge the readers with the idea that a human isn’t just a collection of urges, but a being in whom God wants to reside. He’s trying to elevate their thinking, open their eyes to a higher view of what it means to be human. There’s more to life than the next pleasurable experience.

But this *food for the stomach* perspective continues to be a dominant worldview even to this day. The problem with it is that it’s rooted in a very low view of human nature that is based on the assumption people are going to have sex because they are nothing but mammals who can’t help themselves.

That’s the driving force behind a lot of sex education curriculums that are founded on the premise “kids are just going to do it anyway.” Unfortunately, this sends a hopeless message. Who decided that kids—and anybody else for that matter—are unable to abstain? Think about how abstinence-based programs are viewed in the news. Usually, they are laughed at or dismissed with a roll of the eyes. So, too, are those campaigns in which students commit themselves not to have sex until they’re married. And people who promote these campaigns are most often viewed as hopelessly naive hangers-on to a way of life that no longer exists. Critics of the “save sex for marriage” view are usually presented as having the voice of *reality*. However, it is not realism. It’s the voice of despair, throwing up its hands as it asks, “Aren’t we just animals?”

Men must be wary of another impulse: On the other end of the spectrum from the animal impulse is the angel impulse. The Bible and in church tradition describe angels as asexual beings. Angels don’t have sex; angels don’t need sex. But humans aren’t angels—nor were we ever intended to be. Yet it’s possible to accept some strange ideas when they’re presented as religiously pure.

For example, some medieval theologians warned couples that the Holy Spirit left the bedroom whenever they engaged in sexual intercourse. Eleventh century Bishop Yves of Chartres counseled the devout to abstain from sexual intercourse on Thursdays in remembrance of Christ’s rapture, on Fridays in remembrance of Christ’s crucifixion, on Saturdays in honor of the Virgin Mary, on Sundays in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection, and on Mondays out of respect for departed souls. That may have made for some exciting Tuesdays,



but it left the church with the feeling there was something less spiritual about our sexuality. It implies that if you're really holy, you won't have sex—or at least not much sex.

We can accept this view without even realizing it. Living like angels can be just as destructive as living like animals. If denial is one end of the spectrum, indulgence is the other. It's a pendulum, and people at one extreme are liable to swing to the other. As humans, we were created to live in the tension between the two. When you lose the tension, you lose something of what it means to be human. We see this back-and-forth pattern in individuals, families, cultures, and churches. When a parent or church or school paints sex as a horrible, unclean thing, what are they making kids want to do? Go have sex, of course! It's the pendulum swing.

Our tendency when faced with tension is to try to come up with a sure-fire formula that will make the tension go away. However, one of the marks of someone who has experienced spiritual growth is their ability to live amid tension. What often happens when we try to release the tension is that we end up swinging to one extreme (i.e., Just don't have sex and you'll be fine.) To simply tell men to ignore physical urges and be like an asexual angel puts them in the unnatural position of trying to ignore something very real, powerful, and central to who they are as humans.

Between the two extremes of denying our sexuality and being driven by it exists a vast open space. We're not animals. Neither are we angels. We are something much more special.

Which brings us to the beginning, to the creation story of Genesis. The story begins with God creating the world and then creating people. That order is important, so we'll come back to it in a minute. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The word for *image* here is *tselem*, which has a specific cultural meaning. The stories of Genesis emerged out of an ancient Near Eastern culture where a king was said to rule in the image of a particular god. The famous King Tut is an Egyptian example of this. His full name was Tutankhamen, which is translated "*the living image of the god Amon.*" The king was seen as the embodiment of a particular god on earth. If you wanted to see what the god was like, you could look at that god's king. The writer of Genesis makes it clear that out of all of creation there is something different about humans. They aren't God—and they will never become God—but in some distinct, intentional way something of God has been placed into them. We reflect who God is and what God is like. A divine spark resides in every



single human being—everybody, everywhere. Humans are bearers of the divine image, not animals.

In the creation poem of Genesis 1, God creates animals before humans. But the animals don't get the divine spark. They don't get the image of God. The writer of Genesis wants us to see the distinction between what it means to be human and what it means to be an animal. Have you ever seen a dog concerned that its life just isn't going anywhere or a cat reflecting on the meaning of existence or a horse trying to find inner peace? Animals have a physical body but no spirit.

Angels don't bear the divine spark either. They were around before creation. The Book of Job says that while God was creating the world all the angels shouted for joy. So, what are angels? Hebrews 1:14 declares, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" A spirit is a being with no body, no physical essence. Now it starts to become clear why sex and marriage are outside of the existence of angels: An angel is a being with a spirit but without a physical body. But a human being is both body and spirit.

When we deny the spiritual dimension of our existence, we wind up living like animals. When we deny the physical, sexual dimension of our existence, we end up living like angels. Both ways are destructive, because God made us human. We sometimes hear people say, "I'm only human," as if that's a bad thing. But being human is a good thing. At the creation of the world, God said it was a good thing. Humans are the capstone of God's creation.

After God made man and woman, He gave them this command in Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Because we are made in His image, God gives humanity the task of continuing to care for the earth. The universe isn't a dead, finished thing—it's alive and ongoing. The question is, "What kind of world are we going to make?" Either we're acting in ways that move the world away from the darkness and chaos or we're contributing to the darkness and chaos.

In Genesis 1, we learn people were created after animals. And from the rest of Scripture, we learn people were also created after angels. The order here is significant. The movement in creation is away from chaos toward greater harmony, order, and beauty. Angels were here before us. Animals were here before us. When we act like angels or animals, we're acting like beings who



were created before us. We're going backward in creation. We're going the wrong way.

Our actions then aren't isolated. Nothing involving sex exists independent of or disconnected from everything around it. How we act determines the kind of world we live in. With every action we affect its ongoing development.

How we live matters because God created us human, which means we aren't angels and we aren't animals. We are created in the image of God—body and soul. Our sexuality is a key piece of that divine image. The following lessons explore in more detail why that is and what we need to do with it. For now, it is foundational to understand we can use our sexuality to bring chaos into the world or to bring order and goodness and joy.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Today's culture says human sexuality is nothing more than biology. There is an element of truth to this mindset. Every spring thousands of students converge on the beaches of America to party, hook up with sexual partners, and let themselves indulge whatever cravings and urges they have. But beyond the many physical risks that accompany such behavior, these scenes raise a deeper question about what it means to be human. The world sees sex as just another appetite, a function of biological need. But that is just part of a bigger truth. The New York Times recently ran an article stating that despite all the evidence of the inherent physical, emotional, relational complications of free sex, the casual sex hookup culture continues unabated. Each generation looks at the previous generation's warnings and says, "You had yours, so we're going to have ours. You had your own good time, so don't tell me what I should do with my body."

Sex is not just another simple appetite. You may have a taste for sugar. But let's say you find you have diabetes, and the doctor says, "Sugar is wonderful, but you can't have anymore, or it will kill you." What do most people do when they are told they can't have sugar anymore? Do they say, "Listen here, you had your sugar, so I'm going to have mine! I want sugar, and if I die, well so be it! I don't want to live another 30 years without sugar." No, they just stop eating sugar—because no appetite is worth dying for.

Sex is obviously far more important than just an appetite, despite what modern culture would claim. It's far more powerful. If you treat it like just another appetite, you're going to be ambushed by it.



BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. How is the *food for the stomach* perspective manifested in today's world?
 2. What thoughts come to your mind as you read some of the medieval theologians' view on sexual union?
 3. What does the *divine spark* mean to you?
 4. What does it mean that our actions aren't isolated?
 5. Why is sex more than an appetite?
- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?
 - As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you have learned to your family and to others around you?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note, on 1 Corinthians 6:19.

- Why must our bodies never be defiled by impurity or evil?

- How should a believer live and care for themselves?

Read the *FireBible* article, “Human Personhood: What It Means to Be Human.”
(Look on the Contests: Articles page for the page number of the article.)

- What are the three different aspects of God’s image in humanity?

- How was the image of God damaged in Adam and Eve after they sinned?

- Describe the three aspects of being human in your own words.

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 2: GOD'S WORD IS THE HEART FOR SEXUAL LOVE

Main Idea: This lesson will help a man frame his core belief regarding sexuality. It will inspire him to thoughtfully bring his sexuality and sexual activity into harmony with God's Word.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

According to tradition, Solomon authored (coauthored) three books in the Bible. One book is full of wise sayings. Another is full of ironic reflections. The third is a passionate song of love. In this third book, The Song of Songs, also

called Song of Solomon, the characters include Solomon, who is the son of David and Bathsheba, and a Shulammite woman. Shulammite means “the perfect, the peaceful.” The setting for this book is northeastern Israel, which was the territory given to Issachar. The Shulammite worked in the vineyard, and her skin would have been tanned by open exposure to the sun. Solomon is visiting one of his vineyards in the mountains of Lebanon, and one of the workers catches his eye. Solomon is captured by her beauty, so he proposes to her, and the Shulammite accepts his proposal.

The Song of Songs paints a vivid picture of male and female sexual desire. You don't see a woman constantly being pursued by a man who desires sex more than she does. You don't see a woman who feels exploited or pressured into having sex. Instead, you find a passionate woman who strongly desires to be touched, kissed, and to have sexual relations. Song of Songs is a magnificent picture of the mutuality God desires a man and woman to share. David Jeremiah makes this comment about this book:

“Shulamite now stands before her husband for his loving delight, and his only. The blocked fountain is unblocked, and the waters can flow. Since water is the physical basis of life on our planet, no symbol could be more powerful. Solomon can now take a refreshing drink from this private stream. He can be cooled from the desert heat by bathing in it, and these ‘living waters’ will rinse away the dust of daily living. He will be baptized into the newness of his marriage identity.”¹

Sexuality in the Garden of Eden was transparent and innocent. *Innocence is not pretending to be something that you are not.* Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. A good way to recapture marital innocence is for a couple to learn to tell each other what they really desire from the relationship. The more innocence is lost, the more intellectual and less emotional a person becomes. When innocence is lost, a person's emotions suffer the most. Powerful emotions during sex are valuable. As a man, you should never want to see your wife as one who resembles a harlot or who is promiscuous. You should desire to see your wife as pure, holy, righteous, and a daughter of the Most High God.

1. David Jeremiah, *What the Bible says about Love, Marriage, and Sex* (Turning Point, 2010), 162.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Sex is loaded with meanings. If sex is about power and escape, emotional intimacy in the marriage is negatively impacted. On the other hand, if sex is about being loved and desired, usually, that relationship is emotionally healthy, and the couple gets along. Doug Rosenau says, “Men give affection to get sex and women give sex to get affection.”² Furthermore, as Tim Gardner powerfully shares, “Husbands often want their wives to initiate sex not so they can enact some adolescent fantasy, but because they want to feel that their wife desires them. That’s why fights about sexual frequency often are really about the deeper, unspoken issue of a husband wanting to feel loved.”³

Sex is not just another simple appetite. You may have a taste for sugar. But let’s say you find you have diabetes, and the doctor says, “Sugar is wonderful, but you can’t have anymore, or it will kill you.” What do most people do when they are told they can’t have sugar anymore? Do they say, “Listen here, you had your sugar, so I’m going to have mine! I want sugar, and if I die, well so be it! I don’t want to live another 30 years without sugar.” No, they just stop eating sugar—because no appetite is worth dying for.

Sex is obviously far more important than just an appetite, despite what modern culture would claim. It’s far more powerful. If you treat it like just another appetite, you’re going to be ambushed by it.

A disciple should understand that having sex with their spouse is not a “have-to” situation, but is a holy gift from God. Shmuley Boteach says, “For a Jew, sex is holy so long as it is always designed to increase the mutual dependency and intimacy of husband and wife.”⁴ A man needs to understand the difference between sexual love (eros) and godly love (agape). The following chart may be helpful:

2. Douglas Rosenau, *A Celebration of Sex* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 2.

3. Tim Alan Gardner, *Sacred Sex: A Spiritual Celebration of Oneness in Marriage* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 114.

4. Shmuley Boteach, *Kosher Sex: A Recipe for Passion and Intimacy* (Harmony, 2000), 83.



Sexual Love (Eros)	Godly Love (Agape)
Born of Need	Born of Fullness
Selective	Indiscriminate
Natural	Supernatural

A disciple should understand that when he loves sexually, it is because he needs to be completed by another person. This need is far deeper than a need for physical release. It is the need for intimate union with another in order to complete himself. Agape love, on the other hand, does not reach out for its own fulfillment, but to fill another's emptiness. It does not yearn to get what it needs, but empties itself to give what the other needs. A disciple understands that not every person offers a promise of meeting out of deep need.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. When you think of the word *innocence* in the context of sexual union, what does it mean to you?
2. After working through this lesson, write out how you view your wife.
3. Look over the chart between sexual and Christian love. What thoughts come to your mind?
 - Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?
 - As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?



NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

Courage: Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

Strength: Write down your understanding of the meaning of sex. Discuss with your wife your definition. What did you glean?

Endurance: Do a biblical search on adultery, fornication, casual sex, and homosexuality. Discuss what you discover with two to three men.



USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note, on Proverbs 5:15.

- In your own words, what does the phrase “drink from your own cistern” mean to you?

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 3: WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES ABOUT LUST

Main Idea: To secular eyes, one of the most unattractive elements of Christianity is its view of sex. This lesson looks beneath the surface and helps you get a better grasp on the Christian view of sex.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Jesus spoke some famous words about sexual sin in what came to be known as the Sermon on the Mount that are recorded in Matthew 5:27-30:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one

of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”

Jesus is saying, “You don’t recognize the power that sexual sin has. You don’t respect it enough.” People roll their eyes at the idea of going to hell for lust. Although Jesus had a lot of words He could have used for hell, He chose the word *Gehenna*. This was the name of a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem, also known as the Valley of Hinnom. It was the place where things that were rotting and decaying were thrown and burned.

Jesus is saying, “Unless you learn to get a handle on sex—it is so mysterious, so awesome, so unique—it is going to spread all sorts of decay and destruction in your life. Your whole life is going to break apart. It’ll set you on fire. Things will fall apart. This is serious.” The reason we have these problems is because we don’t see what sex really is.

The Bible is very straightforward about lust. Jesus says unless you get it under control, it will spread like fire across your life. Part of the problem people have with the biblical ethic of sex is they don’t understand what God’s Word actually says. Let’s begin by discussing what lust is not.

In Matthew 5 when Jesus says, “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” what does *look lustfully* mean? Jesus’ choice of words is very important. He could have chosen plenty of words that mean *sexual desire*, but He doesn’t use any of them here. The reason why is that the Bible does not define lust as sexual desire. They are not the same thing. In fact, the Bible’s attitude towards sex and sexual desire is one of such unashamed celebration and enthusiasm.

Genesis 1 records that God created males and females as sexual beings, and He called them good. In the first chapter of the Bible, God invents sex and gives a benediction over it. In Genesis 2, God brings Eve to Adam. Verse 23 says, “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’” Adam is naked, singing rapturous songs of love to naked Eve in the presence of God.

Martin Luther has a fascinating perspective on the body. He says that the biblical view of the body is utterly positive, pointing out that Jesus Christ had a body, but the devil does not. The most perfect Being in the universe had a human body. But the most imperfect, evil being has no body. The idea that the



body is somehow sinful and drags us down is nonbiblical nonsense. The Bible rejoices in the body.

The Old Testament book Song of Solomon is an extended love song, a celebration of sexual love between a husband and a wife. In chapter 7, the husband is looking at his wife, who is approaching him for sex. He's looking at her naked body and says in verses 7 and 8, "Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples." These are vivid statements of a man singing for joy about taking hold of his wife's breasts.

Chapter 5 of Song of Solomon is a song from the wife looking at her husband as he approaches her sexually. She describes him as radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand, with arms like gold rods set with topaz and a body like polished ivory. She claims his mouth is sweetness itself and declares him altogether lovely—her beloved, her friend.

The Early Church was countercultural, strikingly different than the pagan culture around it in two primary ways. Pagan society was stingy with its money and promiscuous with its body. Pagans gave practically no money away, but freely gave away their bodies—a very common trait. In contrast, the early Christians did not freely give away their bodies, because they believed sex was exclusively for marriage. However, they gave almost everybody their money. They were generous with their money and self-controlled with their bodies—the exact opposite of pagans.

Historians will tell you that this is one of the reasons Christianity spread like crazy in the early centuries. Think about it: which of the two approaches to money and sex is more likely to create good neighborhoods? Which is more likely to build a stronger, more stable society? Which of the two kinds of societies would kids want to grow up?

The Bible is not shy about sexual desire. In fact, Paul commands husbands and wives to have regular and frequent sexual intercourse (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). The Bible does say that if you just follow your passions wherever they lead you, you are not respecting the power of sex, and you have too low a view of it. On the other hand, if you're prudish—you tend to believe sex is defiling or dirty—you are likewise failing to respect its sacredness. Therefore, you have too low a view of sex. Both the prudish and the pagan hold too low a view of sex.



Jesus doesn't squelch your passions. He has every opportunity in the Matthew 5 passage to do just that, but He doesn't, because the Bible does not equate lust with sexual desire. Furthermore, the Bible presents a positive view of sexual desire: God invented it. While the Bible neither says to squelch your passions nor to follow them unequivocally, it does say to channel them. Which leads us to what lust actually is.

The Bible defines lust in two ways. The first one is that **lust is impersonal desire**. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." To paraphrase, He is saying, "If you want sex with someone to whom you are not married, if you want to be physically naked with someone with whom you are not also personally, legally, and economically naked and vulnerable, then you are bringing into your soul something that will lead to its disintegration. There will be fire. You will fall apart."

Sometimes people will ask why the Bible doesn't just clearly say, "Don't have sex before you're married." It is helpful here to understand that the idea of premarital sex was so outrageous in ancient cultures that the penalty was often death. Even today, certain fundamentalist religious cultures still take this approach.

However, the Bible does clearly command people not to engage in premarital sex. While a detailed discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this lesson, it is helpful to understand such commands in Scripture use a common Greek word *porneia*, which gets translated into the rather archaic word *fornication*. This basically includes any sexual act outside of marriage. Married people commit *adultery*, and single people commit *fornication*. At the end of the day, it is all sin, and it all brings disintegration.

Furthermore, while history is not a replacement for Scripture, it's informative to note that every single major religion in the world has taught for centuries that sex outside of marriage is wrong, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Only since the last half of the twentieth century has secularism decreed otherwise.

The issue of our sexuality goes back to how we were created. God designed our sexuality. Even though we can use it however we want, we cannot avoid the consequences of misuse because we didn't design it. I own my car. As owner, I am free to fill it with chocolate sauce instead of oil. But I didn't design the car, so I'm going to encounter a lot of problems if I do.



The Bible teaches that **sex is an integrative act**. If you say to someone, “I want to have sex with you, but I don’t want to marry you,” what you are saying is, “I want to be independent; I want to keep my options open. I want to keep control of my life. I don’t want to give myself to you personally.” This is a separation of body and soul, and our sexuality is not designed to work that way.

The second biblical definition of lust is that **it is inordinate desire**. The word Jesus uses for *lust* is one that is almost never used for sex. Out of sixty-two times that the word lust is used in the New Testament, it only refers to sex *twice*. The word is *epithumea*, and it means *an inordinate desire, an excessive desire*. It most often refers to idolatry. It means to try to get something from an object or person that you can only get from God. If that is Jesus’ definition of lust, it explains a lot. No wonder we’re willing to die for this *appetite*. No wonder men and women are willing to throw away families and careers in an attempt to satisfy their lust. No wonder we’re so driven by it that we’ve got to have it no matter what—because, Jesus says, we’re trying to get something out of sex that only God can give.

If you are married and that’s your view, there will be problems in your marriage because of it. If you’re not married, this may be a reason why. You may be looking for a perfect woman out there who doesn’t exist. Until God is the lover of your soul, you will not be fit to be the lover of anybody else because you will remain trapped in the illusion that you can get out of romantic love that which can only be given by God.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Our culture is quite conflicted about sex. A common view is that the affirmation of sex between any two consenting adults is necessary for intellectual and emotional health. Furthermore, unless you share that view, you are not enlightened—you're not even grown up. However, a growing number of secular researchers who have studied the sexual freedom that started with the Baby Boomer generation are now concluding that it has resulted in all kinds of brokenness, from family structure to mental health to physical health and disease. Sexual freedom literally kills people. And ironically, this destruction and brokenness happens not because the world has too high a view of sex, but because it has too low a view.

It's no accident that Jesus said to tear out an eye or cut off a hand (Matthew 5:29-30). He was speaking figuratively. The eye represents how you view things. Overcoming the sin of lust cannot happen through willpower alone. You can't just say, "I won't, I won't, I won't." That'll never work. First, you must change your viewpoint to see sex for what it is. A proper Christian sex ethic always comes from the positive, not the negative. In addition, you have to understand the truth about lust. A person in the grip of lust is like a man dying of thirst trying to quench it with potato chips.

If the eye lets us see stuff, the hand lets us do stuff. Jesus' mention of the hand indicates the need to behave wisely. One way this plays out in a believers' lives is taking care to avoid places and activities that tempt them to lust.

If you only work on your behavior and not your thinking, you're going to fail. On the other hand, if you only work on your thinking and don't take yourself out of the way of temptation, you're going to fail too. Tear out the eye and cut off the hand, or the fire will spread to everything.

Sexual desire is far more powerful than just an appetite, and it will spread like a fire in your life unless you learn to deal with it. People mistakenly think they can control their sexual urges on their own. But look at today's cultural emphasis on external beauty—how it drives us, particularly impacting women. Culture constantly bombards them with messages about beauty standards. Men are not immune to the effects of this overvaluing of outward sexual attractiveness. More men are addicted to porn today than ten years ago. This



is not just another appetite. It's not just another part of life. And we are not in control of it.

Sex is a way for you to demonstrate to your wife that you belong to her and she to you. It is a way to say, "You are not your own and I'm not my own; we are one." In fact, when a man and woman get married, they are joined together as one in a deeper way than just physically. Being "one" in marriage is not merely an abstract idea. It is a holy, spiritual reality. Sex is both a sign of that union and a means of achieving it. And in the context of marriage, it is utterly personal and holistic in every way. Can you see how different this is from lust's impersonal expression?

Many men think sex will heal them. Finally, they'll be somebody, and their insecurities will vanish. But sex (and sexual desire) is actually a signpost on a man's spiritual journey, not the destination. As a signpost, sex points to something beyond itself. It points you onward, to God who is the true healer.

Jesus Christ calls himself the *bridegroom* several times in Scripture. What an amazing statement. Of course, Jesus is also our King, but if He's only our King, then our only relationship to Him is as subjects. If you obey a king or queen, they may accept you as a good subject, but nothing more personal.

But as our bridegroom, Jesus is the intensely personal lover of our souls. He gives us the gift of His presence, not because He finds us obedient as His subjects, but because He finds us beautiful and valuable. Do you believe God sees you this way? Unless you do, Jesus might be your king, He might be your example, He might be your teacher, He might be all kinds of things, but He won't be your soul lover.

To the degree you experience Christ as the personal lover of your soul, you will find healing in sexual matters. If you are married, you will no longer crush your wife under your expectations of her. If you're single, you will no longer crush yourself futilely trying to satisfy your needs and desires on your own, because you turn them over to Him to take care of. Only Jesus can ultimately satisfy us, because only He was ever fully vulnerable with us, stripped naked on the cross. Only Jesus is completely committed to you and loves you perfectly. Jesus is the only One who can truthfully sing, "Longer than there've been stars up in the heavens, I've been in love with you."





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. Describe some ways you maintain sexual purity.
2. What thoughts come to your mind when you read Martin Luther's perspective of the body (pages 2-3)?
3. What thoughts come to mind when you read Song of Solomon 7:7-8?
4. How is lust an impersonal desire?
5. How is lust an inordinate desire?
6. Describe your understanding of Jesus' phrase "tear out" your eye and "cut" off your hand in your own words.
7. How is sex more powerful than just an appetite?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?





NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

- Courage:** Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- Strength:** Write down your plan to maintain sexual purity. Discuss your plan with your wife and ask her for her input. What did you learn from your spouse?

- Endurance:** Discuss your sexual purity plan with two or three men. What did you learn from the men?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note, on Matthew 5:28.

- What are the two things Jesus condemned besides the act of adultery?

- Who has a responsibility to maintain sexual purity?

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 4: GOD'S GIFT OF SEX

Main Idea: A man can be fulfilled physically, emotionally, and spiritually in his sexuality. This lesson is designed to help men examine how.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

God created sexuality as a fundamental aspect of our humanity. A man's sexuality is an essential facet of who he is, his interaction with others, and his identity. Society has stolen sexuality from the believer, and it is time to take back and own the topic of sexuality.

One reason for people's confusion about their sexuality is because of unhealthy and unscriptural denial of it through the years. As a disciple of Jesus, you should be on a quest for truth. People on a serious quest for truth are willing to talk about anything that pertains to their quest. Freedom comes as you commit to knowing and living truth in your sexuality.

God has gifted sex to men and women, designing reproduction and marital fulfillment to happen through it, with all the passion and vigor involved. Genesis 1:28 says, “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” According to Genesis 1:31, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

Adam and Eve were sinless. The innocence they shared allowed them to stand naked and unashamed before each other and God (Genesis 2:25). The same innocence is intended and available for all who understand the purpose of sex and its meaning for those who enter covenant marriage.

It seems there is both a physical and spiritual implication with the sexual union of *one flesh* in Genesis 2:24. The physical is easy to understand. However, Paul makes it clear physical sexual union has spiritual implications that may or may not be intended by those involved. In 1 Corinthians 6:16, he states that when a man has sexual union with a prostitute, it’s not just physical; a spiritual connection also takes place whether he wants that or not. As a result, the souls of both people are hurt. God has intended for a husband and wife to become one flesh, physically and spiritually, under God’s blessing.

Christians throughout history have varied in their understanding of sexuality. Early Church leaders came to view it as just the means and method of procreation, speaking of it with negative language. Centuries later, Christians began to affirm that God approved of married couples enjoying sex. Continuing the swing up the spectrum, today many Christians feel they should not have to tolerate any kind of sexual dysfunction and should take full advantage of technology and resources (including pornography) to restore and enhance physical pleasure. However, from God’s perspective, sexuality and sex mean something more than just having fun as a married couple. It offers more than just an enjoyable way to populate the earth. God created sex to be a spiritual experience in which two bodies become one. God is present at every sexual encounter. *Sacred Sex* author Tim Alan states, “The sex God designed is holy and can be an act of worship, a sacrament of marriage that invites and welcomes the very presence of God.”¹

1. Tim Alan Gardner, *Sacred Sex*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002), 3.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What is the purpose of sex? Many answers to this question have been given throughout church history, including procreation, love, affection, healthy channeling of sensual passion, spiritual connection, and affirmation. Of all these, sex's underlying purpose in fostering emotional intimacy is primary.

When one hears the word *holy*, it suggests the idea of perfect or spiritually pure, a notion that leads to worship, adoration, and fear and trembling before the God who is holy. Furthermore, God decides what is holy. Paul shares with Timothy a couple of sentences, in which the holiness God gives to sex and sexuality can be seen. "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4-5). Paul also states in Ephesians 5:31-32, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

In the beginning, sexuality was spiritually pure and perfect. Certainly, people have distorted and misused it throughout history. However, the holiness of sex and sexuality is not dependent on how people use or abuse it. Its holiness is based on the essential holiness of God, and He created it to be holy.

How can a Christ-following man better understand how sex and sexuality are holy? Here are some ideas to think about:

- Sex is holy because it was created before sin entered the world.
- Sex is holy because God is present whenever a wife and husband engage in His gift of sexuality.
- Sex is holy because it can usher a man and wife into a genuine experience of worship.
- A Christ-following man never has to feel guilty, shameful, or dirty before or after sex.



- A Christ-following man understands that the marriage bed is to be kept pure and undefiled.
- A Christ-following man who has a healthy understanding of sexuality will have feelings of wholeness, purity, self-worth, happiness, and affirmation.
- A Christ-following man understands that sex is an act of giving as much as it is an act of receiving.
- A Christ-following man realizes that sexuality is fun, exhilarating, refreshing, and assuring.
- A Christ-following man gladly anticipates sex with his wife now and in the future.
- A Christ-following man realizes that he and his wife will become one through the act of sexual intercourse.
- A Christ-following man knows that engaging in any sexual practice without his wife is unholy and selfish.

Whenever sexuality is distorted and a person is sexually abused, their view of God's design for sexuality becomes skewed. They may view sex as something uncontrollable, hurtful, a commodity, a secret shame, or something with no moral boundaries. If you or your wife have experienced sexual abuse, professional help, along with the Lord's emotional and spiritual healing, can restore to you the gift of sexuality. Although healing may take time, fear and confusion can retreat, and security can emerge. You can experience deep wellsprings of love and passion. You can flow freely with your desires the way God designed for you and your spouse to honorably share His gift of sex and sexuality.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. Read Genesis 1:31. How do you think this verse applies to the gift of sex?
2. What does the phrase “naked and were not ashamed” mean to you?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:16. Why is it important to recognize that a spiritual connection takes place when a sexual union occurs?
4. Reread the quote in the **Sightline** section from *Sacred Sex*. What thoughts come to your mind?
5. When you read that the underlying reason for sex is emotional intimacy, what comes to your mind?
6. How would you describe how the word “holy” is applied to sexual union?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?





NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

- Courage:** Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- Strength:** Describe in your own words the purpose of sex. Discuss your understanding with your wife. What did you learn from her?

- Endurance:** On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the best and 4 not as well, rate how well you live the idea of holy sex and sexuality using the bullet points in the **Crosshair** section. Write out a plan to improve and discuss it with two or three men. What did you glean from them?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note, on Genesis 1:28.

- What are the four things “Be fruitful and multiply” imply?

Read the *FireBible* note on Genesis 2:24-25.

- What are the three things marriage was originally ordained to be?

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 5: A BIBLICAL SEXUAL COMPASS IN TODAY'S CULTURE

Main Idea: The world is progressively embracing ideologies and behaviors that contradict a biblical worldview. God has given us His Word as a compass that points the way for a man to follow. In this lesson, you will discover how to maintain a biblical sexual compass in today's culture.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The current worldview seeks rational ways to solve the problems we face, apart from God. Romans 1:24-25 speaks to how people exchange truth for a lie in serving the creature rather than the Creator. However, Scripture has much good to say about what should happen sexually between a husband and wife.

Legally speaking, a husband and wife have rights with one another, including love, affection, sexual intercourse, companionship, comfort, and care. These are all implied by and to be expected in a marital relationship. To honor a spouse's right to the comfort and companionship (including sexual relations) of his/her spouse, some states even allow prisoners to have private, conjugal visits in a special room or apartment. But for a disciple of Christ, it's not ultimately the law that is the basis for what is good and right between married couples—it is Scripture.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Paul gives men a great foundation in 1 Corinthians 7:1-8 when he writes:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights*, [NIV: “marital duty”; NKJV: “the affection due her”] and *likewise the wife to her husband*. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. *Do not deprive one another*, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; *but then come together again*, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. *Now as a concession, not a command*, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. (emphases added)

Sex and sexuality do not need help when kept within the boundaries set forth by God. How does this apply to marriage? One way is the frequency of sexual relationship depends on the couple. Generally, younger couples have sex more frequently than older couples. How often a couple has sex is not as important as having the right attitude toward giving affection to your spouse. If the couple agrees not to engage sexually, they are free to do so. However, Paul admonishes that spouses should not *deprive one another*. God encourages a couple to share their bodies with one another, in part to avoid the temptation to sexual sin.

In the above 1 Corinthians passage, Paul encourages fasting and prayer, presuming Christian husbands and wives will exert self-control in such times. It may even be that fasting, and prayer can indirectly improve your marital sex life, because of their ability to discipline the body and open the soul to receiving from God.

Now, if a married man does not have self-control, and his only goal in sex is to have fun, then the law of diminishing returns is activated. John Ortberg says, “Hedonism is the demand for more and more pleasure for personal



gratification. It always follows the law of diminishing returns, so that which produced joy in us yesterday no longer does today.”¹ As a disciple, you do not have to buy into the lie that the highest goal in sex is pleasure and fun; the lie that the only way to maintain passion is by variety; or the lie that sexual freedom means to do what you want when you want. If you buy into these lies, it will not be long before you have an insatiable sexual appetite caused by the law of diminishing returns.

The heart of sexual love is about loving your spouse not using them. Sex is about spiritual unity. If all sex means to you is having fun, you will be tempted to demand and expect better performance, higher frequency, and more excitement. Eventually, your pursuit of fun will demand more than your spouse is even capable of giving to you.

As a disciple you also need to set boundaries in your life to protect yourself and your marriage. Some wise boundaries include the following:

- making decisions together with your wife
- considering carefully what you tell your wife, so you do not put undue stress on her (Thoughtful consideration of your wife’s stress level needs to be balanced with maintaining emotional transparency with her.)
- choosing to live within your means
- guarding your marriage, closely
- protecting your marriage bed

1. John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 72.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. What are the legal aspects of what sexual union should be between a husband and wife?
 2. What does Paul mean when he says, “It is good not to have sexual relations?”
 3. How does the quote from John Ortberg apply in the context of sexual union?
- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?
 - As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?



NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

- Courage:** Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- Strength:** In the **Crosshair** section the idea of boundaries was given to help people protect themselves and their marriage. Take some time to write out five to eight boundaries you will set to protect yourself and your marriage. After you've come up with your boundaries, go over them with your spouse to glean her thoughts.

- Endurance:** Go over your boundaries with two or three men. What did you learn from them?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note, on 1 Corinthians 7:3.

- What does each partner surrender in the commitment of marriage?

- When are sensual desires acceptable?

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 6: HOPE FUELS A CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF SEXUALITY

Main Idea: The biblical understanding of hope is the life-shaping, joyous certainty that our future is experiencing the eternal love and glory of God in a new heaven and a new earth. The Christian's hope affects every area of life, including how sexuality is viewed.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

We underestimate just how much what we believe about our future determines how we live now. What we believe about our future is the main determining factor of how we process, experience, and handle circumstances now. The hope of a future in heaven is core to the Christian life.

There is a lot of mystery surrounding heaven. But some of the most descriptive language we have about it comes from the final book of the Bible: Revelation. The book records a vision God gave of the end times using symbolic, apocalyptic language.

In the last two chapters of Revelation, it paints a picture of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1), which God will bring about at some point in the future. Here’s how the writer describes it in 21:2, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This verse is describing the end of the world as we know it as a wedding celebration. Most often, when Scripture describes God’s relationship with His people, it uses the metaphor of a parent and children. God is our Father. The second most common metaphor used in Scripture to describe our relationship with God is of a husband and wife. The Church (those who are followers of Jesus Christ) are the bride and Jesus is the groom.

Could this be a reason why the Bible teaches sex is exclusively reserved for married couples? (See Ephesians 5:22–33.) Sex is the sealing of a covenant between a man and a woman—at last they are together as “one flesh.” If you are having sex with someone, in God’s eyes the encounter includes a spiritual connection along with the physical one (1 Corinthians 6:15–17). Sex seals the bond. So, sex with multiple partners is spiritual polygamy—your soul is linked to multiple people. That’s a messy, messy business. It is not healthy for you.

The word *sex* comes from the Latin, *secare*, which means *that which has been separated and longs to be reunited*. That’s what the believer’s hope of heaven is about. We’ve been separated from Eden, from the perfect world in which we were created, and we long to be there again. Heaven is the climax of the covenant between humankind and God.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:31–32, “‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” The sexual imagery of one flesh implies that there is something about the act of sex in marriage that is meant to teach us about heaven. Somehow sex on this earth offers a metaphor of what it will mean to finally be with God in heaven.

Paul writes to the young church in Corinth about sex, quoting two popular views of that day in chapters 6 and 7 of 1 Corinthians. Although the two views are very different from each other, they were prevalent, and the Corinthian Christians had to deal with them.



The first is addressed in 1 Corinthians 6:13: “‘Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food’—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” To paraphrase, this attitude says sex is just an appetite. When you need food, you eat. When you need sex, you have it. Part of this view arises out of the Greek understanding that the material, physical world was temporary and unimportant. Therefore, according to this view, it’s not what you do with your body; it’s what you do with your soul that really matters spiritually.

The second, very different, view Paul quoted is in 1 Corinthians 7:1, “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.’” This view seems almost opposite of the first, except that it also arises out of the Greek understanding of the physical world and body as being bad. This view can be paraphrased to say, “Sex is dirty and defiling. Though it might be necessary for procreation, in general, a holy person should abstain from it.”

To summarize, these were the two views:

1. Sex is just an appetite; it’s perfectly natural to have sex when you need and want it.
2. Sex is dirty and defiling. You should stay away from it at all costs if you want to lead a holy life.

Although Paul wrote to Corinth thousands of years ago, in a whole different culture and time, the two perspectives he identified are still widespread today. In fact, they may actually be the two most prevalent views of sexuality humans have.

Paul says both are absolutely, completely wrong. Instead, in 1 Corinthians 6:18 Paul commanded believers, “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.” The English words *sexual immorality* are rather vague in meaning, but the Greek term Paul uses in the text is not. He says, “Flee *porneia*.” Although we get our word *pornography* from *porneia*, Paul is not talking about pornography. *Porneia* meant to have sex with somebody to whom you weren’t married. Paul had a perfectly good word he could have used if he had been referring to adultery (to be married and have sex with someone you’re not married to), but he doesn’t use the word for adultery either. He uses the word that means any kind of sex outside of marriage, whether you are married or not.



Notice Paul didn't just say, "It would be good for you to refrain from sex outside of marriage." He said, "Flee," have nothing to do with it! Have nothing to do with any kind of sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage.

Now, this may sound on the surface like Paul is promoting the view that sex is dirty and defiling. But his approach is neither that sex is just an appetite nor that it is dirty. It's something better than both. Paul presents an approach to sexuality, much higher than any other view of sexuality we know.

This is astounding. This is not the traditional understanding of sex is that *sex is just for creating the perfect little model family*. Nor is it the modern understanding that says, *unless you have sex and romance, you can't possibly be fulfilled*. Paul says Christians have a higher view of sexuality, yet at the same time are freer to be sexually healthier and happier than those who espouse unbiblical views.

How can this be? The answer is in what we hope for in our future. We view sex not just in terms of what we experience on a day-to-day basis, but what we hope to experience in the end. As followers of Jesus, we are offered a life-shaping, joyous certainty in our future with God. That revolutionizes our sexuality in two important ways.

First, we don't have to strive to build a family for ourselves because we have been given a place in the family of God. Our only hope of living on past death is not exclusively tied to producing offspring. The Christian approach to sex and marriage is based on lived experience of the fellowship and love of other believers (brothers and sisters) in Jesus as well as the hope of perfect, heavenly fellowship with this family.

It's hard for us to understand, as individualistic people who live in an individualistic society, how in traditional societies, especially ancient ones, there was no such thing as individual honor, success, or achievement. There was only family honor, success, or achievement. The family was everything. Therefore, the expectation for men and women was to be married and have children, or, in the eyes of society, you were no one of significance. In particular, there were very few single adult women besides slaves and prostitutes. Christianity was the first religion, philosophy, and thought system to affirm chosen, long-term singleness for adults as a perfectly good, even desirable, way to be. Paul lifts marriage as a sacred and holy thing, and at the same says that contented singleness is a "gift from God" (1 Corinthians 7:7). Those who are single are better able to give "undivided devotion to the Lord" (verse 35), being free from things involving one's spouse.



Now notice what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:29: “This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none.”

Paul explains what he means: You shouldn’t mourn too much when you mourn. You shouldn’t rejoice too much when you rejoice. You shouldn’t put all your emotional eggs—your hope for ultimate meaning and joy—in your earthly marriage. Why not? 1 Corinthians 7:31 says, “For the present form of this world is passing away.” As great as marriage is, it’s temporary. This present world is passing away. Now, many people believe Paul is just wrong in his belief that time is short, pointing out that although he thought Jesus would come back during his lifetime, it didn’t happen. Therefore, he must be mistaken about the world soon passing away.

However, Paul doesn’t actually say this world will soon pass away. He says it *is passing* away, using the present progressive tense. Paul understood that in His first coming two thousand years ago, Jesus inaugurated the new age of the Spirit, yet the old age of sin and death also continues. Today, we live in the overlap of the two ages. Through the Spirit we have a foretaste of our future love and grace. The taste of that future now radically frees us from the things of this world, which are in the process of passing away.

Jesus made a radical statement in Mark 10:29–30:

“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

If you belong to Jesus, you’re radically free to have a family or not to have a family, to have children or not to have children, to be married or not to be married. It’s your choice, because even though we have a foretaste of the future through human families, we’re already a part of God’s ultimate family, the church community of brothers and sisters.

To summarize, in this present-day overlap of the ages, both singleness and matrimony testify to hope in God’s future renewed world, whereas traditional, conservative society always makes an idol out of the family. Our Christian hope undercuts that idolatry, while still honoring the family.



The second way our view of sexuality is revolutionized is by our hope in Jesus as the ultimate lover. This is where Paul's view is particularly shocking to modern society. At the same time Paul says, "Traditional family—take it or leave it," he also says, "Sexual fulfillment—take it or leave it." This is not something people today readily accept. Although we live in a radically different society than that of ancient times, what Paul is saying is just as revolutionary now as then, maybe more so. People commonly believe that to deny yourself sex is to deny who you are.

Ernest Becker was a philosopher and anthropologist who won a Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Denial of Death*. In it, he argues that our secular, Western society is the first in world history to have a widespread belief that there is no ultimate future. Many people today hold the belief that when you die, you go to extinction. Your personal consciousness is temporary, and when you die, it's gone. Ernest Becker says there's never been a society that had such a deep belief in the insignificance of human life. As a result, he says, ours is also the first society to put so much emphasis on romance and finding your one true love.

Here is why his reason is fascinating and right: Becker says even secular people need to know their lives matter in the grand scheme of things. We still want to merge ourselves with some higher meaning. But if we no longer have God or the promise of existence after death, how do we do this?

One of the first solutions the modern person comes up with is romantic love, Becker says.

The self-glorification that human beings need in our innermost being, we now look not to God; we look for it in the love partner. What is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to this position? We want to be rid of our faults. We want to be rid of our feelings of nothingness. We want to be justified. We want to know our existence has not been in vain. We want redemption. Nothing less.¹

So, it makes sense that today's society says it's impossible to be fulfilled without sex, romance, and love. This message is seen throughout pop culture. In contrast, the Bible says followers of Jesus already have the ultimate fulfillment they need because they experience His love and hold fast to all His promises.

One time Jesus was talking to a woman at a well and told her, "I have living water. I have water that, if you drink it, you'll never thirst again" [paraphrased]. In response, she says, "Sir, let me have that water." And Jesus says to her, "Go

¹ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1973), 299.



get your husband.” At the woman’s admission that she had no husband, Jesus spoke truth to her: “You’ve had five husbands, and the guy you’re living with right now isn’t.” It’s an interesting conversation. Why, when she asked for living water, did He turn the subject onto her romantic life? When she said, “I want the water of life,” why did He start talking about her sex life and about how she’d always centered her life around men?

Jesus is saying, “You’ve been looking for the water of life in sexual love and romance. Unless you let me become your one true love, you’ll never find what you’re looking for. Without me as your true love, your attitude toward romance and marriage will be utterly distorted.”

Unless Christ is the true love of a person, they will either be desperate for romance, putting all their deepest hopes into finding their *soul mate* and then smothering that person under impossible expectations, or they will become cynical, avoiding love and marriage out of fear, unable to enjoy them.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What does a wedding lead up to? Eating cake and throwing rice aren't the pinnacles. The newly pronounced husband and wife have stood before God and witnesses and have spoken vows to join their souls and lives together, and now they are going off to seal their marriage by joining their bodies together. Sexual intercourse is the physical symbol of the marriage union.

By the way, that's why ongoing, frequent sex between a husband and wife is such an important thing in the Bible. Husbands, when you want to renew your commitment to your wife, you take her by the hand and lead her to the bedroom to gaze lovingly at . . . the framed marriage license on the wall? No! It is to have sex. Every time you have sex, it serves as a physical reminder of the spiritual commitment you have entered.

The section above discussed how Paul says human sexuality is a dim reflection of what it will be like to fall into the arms of the Lord on the final day. He's the lover we need. Even the foretaste of that future—though we only have a little bit of it by faith—gives enough sense of His love for you to radically free you by putting sex and love in their proper place in your life. If human sexual love is just a dim hint of heavenly bliss, what must it be like to finally be with the Spouse our hearts most deeply long for?

Do you see why the Christian understanding of sex as intended only for marriage is not just narrow-mindedness? It's not just prudery. Our sexuality reflects our relationship with God, and you cannot have intimacy with God without losing your independence. Get this: Even God couldn't have intimacy with us without giving up His independence. God could not join His Spirit with ours, entering into intimacy with us, unless He lost His independence. He did that by become human, in Jesus. He became weak. He became vulnerable. And He died for us on the cross.

If even God did not enter into intimacy with us without giving up His independence, how dare we say to another person, "I want to have sex with you, but I don't want to lose my independence—I don't want to marry you. I want to keep my options open." To do so is to sin against this amazing gift, the symbol of God's loving commitment to us.



Jesus Christ says, “Make me your one true love, and everything will be all right.” Are you single and want to be married? Fine, but don’t get married out of social obligation, and don’t get married because you want personal fulfillment. Find somebody you want to go on a journey with—someone who understands that life is a spiritual journey, someone who is also one in spirit with the Lord.

If you’re happily married, you need Jesus as your one true lover, or you’ll make marriage an idol and you’ll become spiritually dependent on the person you’re married to. Are you unhappily married? You also need Jesus as your one true lover, or you will be tempted to let the voice of despondency rule your life.

To every believer, no matter their marital status, Jesus says, “Make me your one true love. Come to me.” On the cross, He got down on one knee and proposed to us. If we will say “yes” to Him, heaven will be the wedding we so long for. We can put up with some trouble now because we have hope in what’s coming then.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. If the church is described as a bride, could this be a reason why sex in the Bible is exclusively reserved for married couples? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that the phrase “one flesh” is sexual imagery that is meant to teach us about heaven? Why or why not?
3. Describe in your own words Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 6:13, “Food is meant for the stomach and stomach for food.”
4. Which of the two views of sex did you most resonate with—just an appetite or dirty and defiled?
5. At the well, why did Jesus talk about the woman’s romantic life when she asked for living water?
6. Describe in your own words how a wedding and marriage are a foretaste of heaven.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?





NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

- Courage:** Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- Strength:** Write down your struggles and victories when it comes to sex in your relationship. Talk with your wife about your discovery. What did you learn?

- Endurance:** Talk with two or three men about your struggles and victories when it comes to sex. What did you learn from them?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* article “Standards of Sexual Morality” and answer the following:

- What does it mean to be sexually pure before and after meeting your future spouse?
- What is the warning for those who commit sexual sins?
- Which type of sexual relation does the Bible bless?
- What two things does sexual activity represent?
- What does God define as sexual sins?
- Describe sexual immorality, sensuality, taking advantage of someone.

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 7: BIBLICAL CLARITY FOR UNBIBLICAL SEXUALITY

Main Idea: Gender confusion is infiltrating today's society. What is a biblical and theological response? In this lesson, you will discover how to trust God's Word, stand on His truth, and resist lies perpetrated by secular reasoning.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

We in National Men's Ministries hear the culture's rally cry for inclusion and compassion. While this prescription for inclusion and compassion seems like a good—even Christian—thing, it is also evidence of a much deeper social quake taking place in America. It is part of the ultimate transformation of America into not just a secular nation but a pagan one.



It doesn't take much research to discover that this is a far cry from the Christian principles and biblical framework America was founded upon. In fact, before the 1970s, the term gender was not even used in scientific circles. You were either male or female. The term gender came out of university English departments, and it was used to describe persons who shared certain social attributes as much as biological qualities. However, the secular, pagan agenda sought to eliminate all distinctions, making sexual identity fluid rather than absolute. Androgyny is part of the neo-paganist, utopian vision for life, and is seen as ideal. But the idea that sexual identity is fluid with no fixed meaning (you can be whatever you choose) comes out of paganism. It is attentive to militant secularism and is part of the LGBTQ agenda. Ultimately, it is an assault on God as our Creator.

For that reason, this is not a flesh and blood battle—a battle against human beings. This is spiritual battle, in which human souls are at stake. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

This is also a worldview battle. Secular society's worldview is that the world is one of our own making, and we can invite God into it or not. In contrast, the Christian worldview is that we live in God's world, and God invites us to be a part of it. As such, we are called to live according to God's wisdom, found in His Word.

God's Word provides hope and has a tremendous amount to say about our sexuality. First, God created human beings as male and female. Read these words from Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Gender identity in this passage is embodied. Gender is physically grounded, not psychologically or sociologically determined. God did not create nonphysical beings. He didn't create a nonphysical being called Adam and then found him a body. God fashioned a biological male body that He breathed life into and named Adam. Paul tells us that we are spirit, soul, and body. So, Adam was male spirit, male soul, and male body.

Every human being has been made in the image of God. The stamp of God is on us. So, every human being should be treated with value, worth, and significance because we have been made in the image of God. Human beings are not the only male and female in God's creation, but we are the only creatures whose maleness and femaleness has that kind of significance.



Some argue that gender is nonbinary, that it instead falls within a range or spectrum of masculinity and femininity. However, that is not what the Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that there are two sexes, not a range of gender. Humanity is binary. Furthermore, humanity only fulfills God's intention for people with both the masculine and the feminine. If there was a community made up only of men, something would certainly be lacking. Likewise, a community made up only of women would lack something crucial. We need each other. We need our differences. If that were not the case, then only the strong would survive and the weaker would be crushed. But men need women and women need men. This is because gender is not a social construct but a real, physical, and spiritual creation of the living God. Being a male or female sexual human being is a sacred part of our identity. Therefore, rejecting your God-given gender is equivalent to rebelling against your Creator.

Genesis 3 tells the story of the original sin that led to the fall of humankind. The serpent, Satan, came to the woman and offered her the original lie: You, independent of God, shall be as God. When Adam and Eve then rebelled and rejected the truth of God, believing that lie, they were rejecting their God-given identity as creatures of God, human persons belonging to Him, already possessing everything they could ever need or want. What they were saying was, "I want the identity of God." Adam and Eve wanted to be divine. God was telling them, "That is not your identity. I've made you to be a creature, submitted to Me."

As a result of the original fall of humankind, we continue to live in a fallen world, filled with futile thinking. Paul informs us in Romans 8:20-21, "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." There is coming a day when what is broken will be made right, but until that day, our physical world remains broken, subjected to futility and frustration. People get sick because our bodies are not what God created them to be. Someday, believers will experience a recreated universe where there is no more sickness, disease, or death. But right now, we face brokenness because there was a real, historic fall away from God's original design for humanity and this world.

For example, today some people are considered intersex people. This medical condition affects .018% of people¹ and involves biological issues in which a person has a discrepancy between the external genitals and the internal genitals. Conditions like this exist because we are fallen people who live in a

1. Leonard Sax, "How Common is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling," *The Journal of Sex Research* 39, no. 3 (August 2002), accessed December 9, 2019



fallen world. Not only that, but humankind has rejected the God who wants to restore our wholeness. Paul informs us of this in Romans 1:21–22, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools”

All of humanity can be futile in their thinking and darkened in their understanding. This has been called a very unflattering anthropology because it means we do not have access to enough knowledge to ultimately determine who we are. A person can't fully identify himself based on his futile thinking. What is needed is an outside source to identify who we are.

All of us deal with identity issues throughout life. But where we find our true identity is in God and what He said in Scripture. Today when children express gender confusion, parents may rush to dress them like the opposite sex or even give them hormone treatments to block normal sexual development. In humanity's futile thinking, we often try to change the truth to conform to what we think, rather than conforming our thinking to the truth. In addition, we tend to conform our bodies to what we feel (our emotions), rather than to what God's Word says.

The Scripture teaches that we are to conform our thinking to the truth and not try to change the truth to conform to our thinking (Romans 12:2). This is a critical principle for followers of Jesus. Scripture teaches that when we receive Christ, our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13,14; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20). God literally comes to live inside you by the Holy Spirit. This means that as a believer you no longer belong to yourself. You were bought with the blood of Christ. Therefore, your body no longer belongs to you; it is God's temple.

When you give your life to Christ, you are under new management. This means that God now tells you how to live, what your identity is, and how you should care for your body. However, this doesn't mean your body, feelings, and desires will always want to cooperate with God. Even as a believer, evil and ungodly desires, and thoughts contrary to the Scriptures can flood the mind. What you should do when this happens is not to align yourself with the lies but return to the truth (God's Word). Accept who God says you are, rejecting the wrong desires. Jesus called this “denying ourselves.” Christ has given us the power and freedom to say an authoritative “no” to sin, carnal desires, and carnal thoughts and the ability to choose to live according to Scripture (Romans 6:1–4; Galatians 5:16–24; Titus 2:11–12).





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

In 2015, *Vanity Fair* magazine featured Bruce Jenner on its cover with the headline, “Call me Katlyn.” The former gold medal Olympian had undergone sex change surgery to become a woman. In the article, he said, “I am happy after such a long struggle to be living my true identity,”² in what has been called a pivotal moment for transgender people in our society.

Around that same time, Justice Department leaders introduced bathroom bills, which opened bathrooms not according to biological gender but according to the gender someone identifies themselves as being. Soon, several big box stores did the same with their changing rooms. Business leaders, politicians, and entertainers started lining up behind the transgender agenda.

Up until that time, we had been told that it was our biological make up that determined our gender. Now, we are being told something different. Now, it is our subjective perspective that determines our gender. It is not our biology but our psychology that determines our gender. Because of this, there has been a tremendous push to remove all gender specific terms such as *he* or *she* from public vernacular.

Men may now compete in women’s sports if they say they identify as a woman. Facebook offers fifty-eight gender identities to choose. Some states allow people to record a gender on their driver’s license as something other than what they were born, and some will even reissue birth certificates with their new preferred gender identity. Activists in the movement say biology is bigotry. Being able to determine your own gender is seen by many as a civil rights issue equivalent to race.

Meanwhile, some people suffer with a condition called *gender dysphoria*. It is real and painful, presenting many challenges and struggles. The person with gender dysphoria feels a disconnect between who they think they are and their biological reality. While awareness of gender dysphoria may have grown in tandem with the legalization of same sex marriage, it is a different issue altogether, unrelated to homosexuality, lesbianism, or same-sex attraction. Gender dysphoria is not about who you are attracted to but who you believe

2. Michael Rothman and Lesley Messer, “Caitlyn Jenner, Formerly Known as Bruce, Poses for Vanity Fair,” ABCNews.com, June 1, 2015, accessed April 11, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/caitlyn-jenner-bruce-poses-vanity-fair/story?id=31447196>.

yourself to be. So, someone may be biologically male but deep down inside feel that they are really a female trapped in a man's body. Or a person who is a female biologically may feel deep down inside that they are male.

It is estimated that roughly 1 in 10,000 men and 2 or 3 in every 100,000 women in our society suffer from gender dysphoria, a tiny fraction of the population³. Believers should have great compassion for these individuals, particularly in light of their potential exploitation as pawns in the larger agenda.

As noted in the previous section, gender is biologically grounded. Furthermore, it is a calling. You are called to be a man or a woman for a divine purpose. Science continues to discover ways that boys and girls are different. Science tells us that men and women have different brains, hormones, chromosomes, and bodies. No amount of surgery, hormone injections, or hormone blockers can change someone's DNA from a man to a woman or a woman to a man. The DNA you received at birth is unchangeable. You could go through sex-change therapy, altering your voice and appearance, but an autopsy performed upon your death would still reveal your true biological gender.

John Hopkins Hospital was a pioneer in the sex change movement, becoming one of the first hospitals to perform operations. However, in the 1970s, former Psychiatrist-In-Chief Dr. Paul McHugh said he could not in good conscience recommend the surgery saying they must be stopped at once, at which point John Hopkins ceased performing them. The reason was because after talking with post-operative transsexuals, they discovered that the patients were worse off than before surgery. They found rearranging the skin on these people's bodies failed to resolve the issue in their souls. Of the surgeries McHugh said, "Hopkins was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We psychiatrists thought we would do better to fix their minds and not their gentilities."⁴

McHugh was saying gender dysphoria is a mental problem. We all have mental and thinking issues at times, and the only way to find health and life going forward is to align what we think with truth. McHugh saw with his own eyes how trying to align people's bodies with their thoughts, rather than aligning their thoughts with truth, led to more problems. A tragedy of the transgender movement is the tremendous amount of regret in people who have sex-change surgeries. In fact, they are twenty times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.⁵

3. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 5. American Psychiatric Association, 2013, 454.

4. CNSNews, accessed August 27, 2021, <https://www.cnsnews.com/article/national/michael-w-chapman/johns-hopkins-psychiatrist-transgender-mental-disorder-sex>.

5. Ibid.



As followers of Jesus, we must reject the idea of *gender fluidity*. First, it is a form of rebellion against God and against His created order. Second, it is just plain harmful to people.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. Where did the term gender come into existence?
2. Describe the difference between the secular worldview and biblical worldview as it relates to sex and sexual identity.
3. What does it mean to you that your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit after salvation?
4. What comes to your mind when you read Dr. Paul McHugh's findings for a sex change operation?
5. As a believer, how would you respond to someone who is choosing to live in obedience to Christ, yet is gay and doesn't act on it?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?



USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 1:21.

- Describe in your own words the downward course of spiritual rebellion and moral corruption among those that do not know or follow God.

Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 1:22.

- What are disobedient people really showing by pressing on in their own independent ideas and practices?

Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 12:1.

- How should a believer show God's holiness to a secular world?

Read the *FireBible* note on Ephesians 4:17-19.

- What happens when a person's mind and life are not open to God and His truth?

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SEXUALITY AND LOVE

LESSON 8: UNBIBLICAL SEXUAL EXPRESSION

Main Idea: A man should know his core beliefs regarding sexuality and inspire other men to thoughtfully consider bringing their sexuality and sexual activity into harmony with God's Holy Word. In this lesson, you will learn about unhealthy sexual expressions and the consequences of sexual sins.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates how social ethics and structures can have a demonic and communal aspect. In this story, evil is not restricted

to just one individual but takes hold and spreads like a contagious disease to ultimately destroy both towns. Genesis 18 and 19 record the deplorable actions of these communities completely enthralled in sexually immoral acts.

There are several Scriptural accounts of God instructing His children to remove shrine prostitutes, prostitutes, sodomites, whoremongers, and those who lusted after strange flesh (both male and female) from the land and to have no interactions with them. Mosaic law forbids the practice of sodomy in Deuteronomy 23:17 and Leviticus 18:22; 20:13. The Hebrew word for sodomite (*qadesh*) refers to a male temple prostitute who is unclean and is used several times in 1 and 2 Kings. In Scripture, the phrase *sodomite and its plural* denotes a negative connotation to include anyone, male or female, who engaged or participated in immoral sexual acts, including anal intercourse. And according to the most probable interpretation, in Job 36:14 it is said of the wicked: “They die in youth and their life ends among the cult prostitutes.” This implies that the life of sodomites was proverbially short, possibly from the fact that they contracted venereal diseases.¹

Paul outlines unhealthy sexuality in Romans 1:21-27 to explain that God gave sinful people over to the sinful desires of their hearts, to sexual impurity, the degrading of their bodies. He handed them over to shameful lusts. Women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. Men were inflamed with lust for one another and abandoned natural relations with women. As a result, they received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. So, God gave them over to a depraved mind.

Homosexuals argue it is natural for them to engage in sodomy and that this passage of Scripture written by Paul only refers to heterosexuals who engage in sodomy. While we disagree, it is worth noting that Christian couples should refrain from the practice of sodomy. God wants the marriage bed pure, holy, and undefiled (Hebrews 13:4). Furthermore, God simply did not design the anus to be penetrated from the outside. The anal lining easily rips, and bleeds and internal injury is a real danger. Not only that, but HIV-infected semen easily enters the bloodstream of the recipient. There are even cases of getting the HIV virus from oral sex, which is often done in conjunction with other dangerous sexual activity. If the mouth has any minute breaks along the gum like or in the cheeks, the virus could (theoretically) enter.

Sadomasochism is sexual behavior that involves getting pleasure from causing or feeling pain. It is a paraphilia that combines both sadistic and masochistic sexual behavior patterns. The main characteristic of sadomasochism is the

¹ James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol. XI (New York, NY: Morrison and Gibb limited, 1920), 672.



eroticizing of pain. Sadomasochistic sexual encounters usually occur in the context of scripted scenes that simulate interactions between a master and mistress/slave, employer and servant/maid, teacher and student, owner and horse or dog, and parent and child. Sadomasochists may wear black leather or rubber attire. Some gay males and heterosexuals engage in a genre of sadomasochism known as *leathersex*, wearing key chains of colored handkerchiefs symbolizing the role being played.

Judaism cannot countenance the mutilation of the body under any circumstance bar one: for medical purposes or the prolonging of life. Judaism believes the body to be a holy temple, even holier than the soul, according to the mystics. Once a devout Jew, Paul, now an apostle of Christ, exhorts all Christians in Romans 6:12-14:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Sadomasochism is a sign of more than physical bondage; it also denotes spiritual bondage.

Other paraphilias include voyeurism (“peeping Toms”), exhibitionism, which is exposing yourself to others, and indecent liberties, which is brushing against someone in order to become aroused. Pedophilia is the sexual abuse of children, and bestiality is sex with animals. While not all of these behaviors are specifically addressed in Scripture, Proverbs 6:18 says that among the things the Lord hates is “a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil.”

Another type of unhealthy sexuality is the use of pornography. The word *pornography* comes from two Greek words: *porne*, which means a harlot, and *graphein*, which means to write. So, the word *pornography* literally means *the writing of a harlot*. In the New Testament, the word most often translated as sexual immorality is *porneia*. This word is also translated as whoredom, fornication, and idolatry. It means a *surrendering of sexual purity*. This word is primarily used to refer to premarital sexual relations. From this Greek word, we get the English word pornography, stemming from the concept of *selling*



off. Sexual immorality is the *selling off* of sexual purity and involves any type of sexual expression outside the boundaries of a biblically defined marriage relationship (Matthew 19:4-5).

The notorious serial killer Ted Bundy spoke with James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, on the day of his execution. Dobson said, “Bundy revealed that he believed that his vicious tendencies stemmed from pornography. He became interested in violent sex, and when merely watching it was no longer stimulating enough, he decided to act on these impulses in the real world.”² The danger of pornography is that it overstimulates the brain into no longer being able to be satisfied with typical expressions of sexuality.

The consequences that result from sexual sins will be discussed in the next section. But first, consider the words of Lamentations 3:39: “Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?”. Instead of blaming God for the consequence of a sexual sin, humans must accept the result of their own choices. People engaging in unhealthy, sinful sexual behaviors often find themselves facing divorce, suffering disease, giving in to fornication or homosexuality, becoming confused about their gender, or even being tempted into pedophilia. A good way to check if you are crossing the lines is to ask whether the sexual activity in question will make you feel guilty, dirty, or shameful. If so, it is probably wrong.

2. Audrey Webster, “8 Twisted Confessions from Ted Bundy That Will Make Your Skin Crawl,” The Lineup, January 30, 2019, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://the-line-up.com/ted-bundy-twisted-confessions>.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Addiction is any behavior that attempts to control you. Any behavior other than taking loving, responsible care of yourself and being open to learning with yourself and others is potentially addictive. Behavior that becomes obsessive, compulsive, brings a feeling of powerlessness, or becomes a means to relieve pain is addictive behavior.

Physical addiction is when a person's body becomes dependent on a particular substance. The person builds tolerance to the substance over time, so that they need larger and larger amounts of the substance to feel the same effects. Compulsive sexual behavior can become an addiction that brings serious consequences impacting all aspects of life. You may wonder how this can be a true addiction if substances are not involved. But actually, they are. Sexual addiction involves naturally occurring peptides called endorphins, which govern the electrochemical interactions within the brain. These peptides parallel the molecular construction of drugs like morphine and heroin, but they are many times more powerful.

Likewise, the consequences of compulsive sexual behavior are powerfully destructive, leading to suicide, unwanted pregnancies, family disintegration, violence, dramatic health care costs, and child abuse. Additional consequences include severe depression, often with suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, shame, self-hatred, hopelessness, despair, helplessness, intense anxiety, loneliness, moral conflict, and contradictions between ethical values and behaviors. Fear of abandonment, spiritual bankruptcy, distorted thinking, remorse, and self-deceit are common in the sexually addicted. Health consequences can include HIV infection, AIDS, STDs (genital herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, etc.), high cholesterol, high blood pressure, clogged arteries, stress, anxiety, and depression. Financial consequences may include loss of employment, foreclosure or the loss of one's home, or growing debt. Personal and family consequences also occur in sexual addiction, including the loss of purpose, direction, self-worth, and value. Family disintegration is common. Home becomes a fearful place. Violent and chaotic behavior can be the fruit of sexual addiction. Sexual addicts tend to ignore reality, distort reality, and lose touch with reality. As a result, family members of sexual addicts often feel abandoned, rejected, and begin to think they are doing something to cause the behavior.

You may wonder how to know if you or someone you know is sexually addicted. This is sexual behavior that is driven, compulsive, and hidden. People with sexual addiction often use sex as a coping method to make themselves feel important, wanted, or powerful. This kind of sexual activity can often be described in one of three ways. One is *shameful*. Shame can be defined as a feeling of inner worthlessness or despair about never being good enough. A second description is *secretive*. It is sexual activity marked with the use of justification, rationalization, and denial to convince the person that what they are doing is okay. A third description is *abusive*. This behavior can include manipulation and lying to order to engage in sexual activity.

A person may have some signs of sexual addiction, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're an addict. The wrong question to ask is, "How many affairs do you have to have before you are an addict?" This is not about quantity, but pattern and motive. A better question to ask is whether the behavior is negatively impacting your life, marriage, work, etc., and whether you are using sex as a means to relieve pain.

Subtle behaviors operate like building blocks, starting with fantasy, and progressing to pornography, masturbation, and so on. In addition, sexually addictive behaviors usually manifest as one of two types: covert or offending. Covert sexual behaviors that can lead to addiction include prostitution, anonymous sex, group sex, affairs, cross-dressing, chat sex, phone sex, sadism, and sex with objects. Offending sexual behaviors that can lead to addiction, include voyeurism, exhibitionism, indecent liberties, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, and molestation.

The primary key to recovery from years of hidden compulsive behaviors is a strong motivation and willingness to take the necessary risk of honestly facing these painful issues and reaching out for help. This study is not intended to be a cure for unhealthy sexual patterns in a person's life. Recovery from any addiction is a long and challenging process. Therefore, we recommend seeking help from a qualified professional.





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

1. Read Romans 6:12-14. What do these verses mean to you?
2. What thoughts come to mind when you read, “Sexual immorality is the ‘selling off’ of sexual purity”?
3. Why is sexual addiction devastating to the individual and the family?
4. Look again at the question in the **Crosshair** section’s discussion of sexual addiction signs and write down the thoughts that come to your mind.
5. Describe in your own words the three descriptions of addictive sexual activity.

6. Read through the following questions and write down your thoughts.

- » Were you sexually abused as a child or adolescent?

- » Have you regularly purchased volumes of sexually explicit magazines or videos?

- » Do you visit sexual bath houses, sex clubs, and/or video bookstores as a regular part of your sexual activity?

- » Do you believe that anonymous or casual sex has kept you from having more long-term intimate relationships or from reaching other personal goals?

- » Do your sexual encounters place you in danger of arrest for lewd conduct or public indecency?

- » When you have sex, do you feel depressed afterwards?

- » Have you made repeated promises to yourself to change some form of your sexual activity (fornication, adultery, masturbation) only to break them later?

- » Have your sexual activities interfered with some aspect of your professional or personal life (for example: unable to perform at work, loss of relationship)?

- » Have you engaged in unsafe or risky sexual practices even though you knew it could cause you harm?



- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?





NEXT STEP

If you are single, go over them with a trusted mentor who can give you feedback and hold you accountable.

- Courage:** Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- Strength:** Describe in your own words the unhealthy sexuality Paul outlines in Romans 1. Discuss this with your wife. What did you learn from her?

- Endurance:** Discuss with two or three men, what unhealthy sexuality means to you. What did you glean?

USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 1:24.

- What does the phrase “God gave them up” mean?

- Describe the three stages of God’s abandoning people to spiritual and moral impurity.

Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 1:27.

- What activity is one of the greatest pieces of evidence of human rebellion, corruption, and drive for self-satisfaction?

Read the *FireBible* note on 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

- What can you glean from the note?

- What should salvation include?

Read the *FireBible* note on 1 Corinthians 6:18.

- Why does Paul give a strong warning to stay away from activities and situations that could entice a person to think or behave in a sexually immoral way?

Read the *FireBible* note on Proverbs 28:13.

- What does “conceal his transgressions” mean?

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