

Embodied Shalom: Flourishing Sexuality

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13; Matthew 19:3-6; Song of Songs

That which God created for good, the enemy sought to steal, kill, and destroy.

That which brings forth life from a woman's body – childbirth – will be a great source of our pain.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

1. **Scripture**
 - Considered the primary and foundational authority.
 - The other three sources help interpret and apply Scripture rather than replace it.
2. **Tradition**
 - The accumulated wisdom, teachings, and practices of the Christian church through history.
 - Includes creeds, church councils, and theological writings.
3. **Reason**
 - Human intellect and critical thinking.
 - Helps believers interpret Scripture, evaluate claims, and understand doctrine.
4. **Experience**
 - Personal and communal experiences of God's work in people's lives.
 - Includes spiritual transformation, prayer, worship, and Christian living.

A person can ask these questions as they search the Scriptures, pray, and seek to discover God's design, plan, and will:

- What does Scripture say?
- How has the church traditionally understood this?
- What does sound reasoning suggest?
- How does Christian experience inform our understanding?

Questions:

In a basic understanding of this framework for truth discerning and decision making, how would you say you discern truth and make decisions? Do you think this framework is helpful in decision making? Why or why not?

1. Whole, Affectionate Brothers and Sisters in Christ
2. Sexuality in Marriage
3. Same Sex Sexuality

Whole, Affectionate Brothers and Sisters in Christ

A restrictive definition of chastity: purity, temperance, abstaining from sexual activity.

In a spiritual sense it involves your heart, motives, intentions with love, respect, and sacrifice.

“Freedom from lust and freedom to love.” -Tyler Stanton

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

The Church, of whom Christ is the head, is called to be a sexual sanctuary where *all* are free to be brothers and sisters – protected, loved, and respected. We cultivate a culture where we can freely greet one another with tenderness and affection without the burden of fear.

As a church full of people who are single and married hear these exhortations:

The Church is a place to cultivate life-giving friendships between single people AND married people.

- We are the family of God and that does not change when you get married. We must not leave out our single friends. Priscilla and Aquilla were close personal friends of Paul!

Sadly, Church culture perpetuates that everyone should be married and have lots of kids.

I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. 1 Corinthians 7:7

Singleness comes with the spiritual gift of celibacy.

- This does not mean you are an asexual being. It means the Holy Spirit empowers you to have self-control and to use your body in God-honoring ways.

Single friends, you must live in your singleness moment by moment.

- Ask for daily bread from God who gives generously to all who ask. (Matthew 6:21)
- Don't worry about the past or fixate on the future. (Matthew 6:25-34)
- Don't denigrate your desires or feelings. Take it to Jesus and confide in trusted friends. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

As whole brothers and sisters in Christ, we practice together now what we long for in the future!
We love one another, care for each other, hug one another, we are not afraid of one another .

From Jesus himself:

"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

Sexuality in Marriage

Some Pharisees approached him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?" ⁴ "Haven't you read," Jesus replied, "that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and he also said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?" ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." Matthew 19:3-6

Jesus used an ancient rabbinic method of dispute by appealing to "the more original, and weightier" creation story. How wise it would be of us to go to the creation story in our own questions about sexuality!

Vs. 4-6 About marriage:

- Created/designed by God (in the beginning created them)
- Male and female – our sexuality is a divine ordinance from the Creator
- Covenanted together, no longer two, but one (leave their father and mother to be joined together)
- One flesh union – Jesus is speaking of the sexual act of two bodies becoming one through intercourse: the closest physical intimacy two people can share in a covenantal marriage relationship between a man and a woman.
- Joined by God – not a casual union, let no one separate

Songs of Songs is a beautiful gift to help us understand the freedom, joy, pleasure, and intimacy that can happen in a life long covenantal relationship between a man and a woman.

Song of Songs describes intimacy and love like a garden

- The woman's body is described as a vineyard - a cultivated, safe place for sharing of themselves physically, emotionally, mentally, personally, and spiritually.

Song of Songs focuses mainly on the woman's body which is a restorative reversal in the consequence of sin in the garden in two ways:

1. The consequences of the pain in childbirth compared to the enjoyment of a woman's body in the intimacy of marriage.
2. The consequences of a man ruling over a woman to the self-giving and sacrificial love of finding pleasure in and giving pleasure to his wife in marriage.

Song of Songs focuses on all the senses

- To taste through kisses Song of Songs 1:2-3
- To be heard 8:13
- To be seen 4:1-7, 5:10-16
- To be touched 2:6, 8:3
- To smell a sweet fragrance of desire 1:12-14

All are equally important in the garden of marriage. Cultivation is key. The oldest vineyards produce the richest, most beautiful, decadent wines!

Same Sex Sexuality

Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do... 1 Chronicles 12:32

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Genesis 1:28

We are whole, affectionate brothers and sisters in Christ, so even if we are not on the same page in these conversations we can love one another, listen to one another, and take care of one another.

Whoever isolates themselves seeks their own desire and breaks out against all sound judgment. Proverbs 18:1

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing their own opinion. Proverbs 18:2