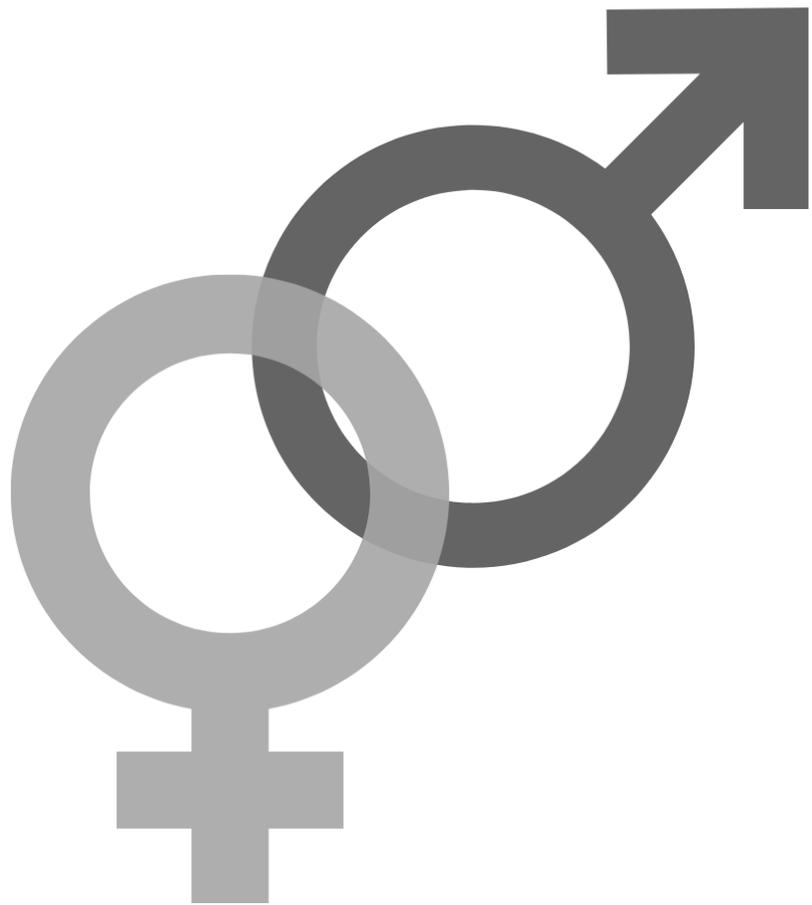


# GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUALITY





## Introduction

The invitation to this series stated:

*Sexual confusion has dominated our discourse in the last decade. The morass of issues and struggles - pornography, gender identity, same-sex attraction, same-sex marriage, and more – make consensus impossible and answers elusive. But God does not want us to stumble in darkness so His guidebook for life, the Bible, gives us His perspective on sexuality.*

It referenced “the last decade” because there have indeed been seismic changes to sexual mores, norms, and laws in just the last few years which have raised important questions and left many confused and sometimes angry as the culture wars are fought on television and social media, at school boards, and in libraries and locker rooms.

But although the issues related to sexuality have shifted dramatically in recent years, the concern about them should have gone back much, much further, especially among professing Christian people. That is because, the need for sober and biblical reflection on sexuality did *not* arise lately, even if the keen interest in it has. The truth is, “Heaven, we’ve got a problem” and evangelicals have had for a very long time:

- Jim Bakker
- Jimmy Swaggart
- Ted Haggard
- Ravi Zacharias
- Joshua Harris
- Joshua Duggar
- Southern Baptist Convention
- Sovereign Grace Churches
- Carl Lentz
- Brian Houston
- Bill Hybels
- People in Our Church
- Us

The scourge of pornography has increased exponentially and ensnared men, women, teens, and children (including to sex trafficking).<sup>1</sup> But many Christians may assume that the Church is immune. They see the smiling faces of the people who attend their church. But access to porn is increasingly easy due to the wide variety of formats now available, especially via the internet on smartphones and computers. The numbers show that ...

- Over 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites.
- There are around 42 million porn websites, which totals around 370 million pages of porn.
- The porn industry’s annual revenue is more than the NFL, NBA, and MLB combined. It is also more than the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://conquerseries.com/15-mind-blowing-statistics-about-pornography-and-the-church>

- 47% of families in the United States reported that pornography is a problem in their home.
- 11 is the average age that a child is first exposed to porn.
- 56% of American divorces involve one party having an “obsessive interest” in pornographic websites.
- 70% of Christian youth pastors report that they have had at least one teen come to them for help in dealing with pornography in the past 12 months.
- 59% of pastors said that married men seek their help for porn use.
- 33% of women aged 25 and under search for porn at least once per month.
- 55% of married men and 25% of married women say they watch porn at least once a month.
- 57% of pastors say porn addiction is the most damaging issue in their congregation. 69% say porn has adversely impacted the church.

Clearly sexual brokenness is not only a problem for “them, out there” but for “us, in here.” And it’s not confined to one category of sexual expression, heterosexual or homosexual. If we are to teach our children well, practice sexual fidelity, and love those captured by the cruel clutches of sexual distortion, we need to see the big picture of who and what we were made to be, how we have all fallen short, and in what way we move back toward our original purpose. The title of this series, *God's Design for Sexuality*, embodies all of those.

## I. **GOD'S Design for Sexuality**

Some taking this class may not consider themselves to be theists, but all people are, of necessity, because so many aspects of our lives are impossible apart from Him. Therefore, the Bible says:

*In the beginning, God ...* (Genesis 1:1)

*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”* (Psalm 14:1)

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.* (Psalm 19:1-4)

*God has set eternity in the human heart.* (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

*What may be known about God is plain ..., because God has made it plain to ... For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.* (Romans 1:19-20)

*“In him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.”* (Acts 17:28-29)

- A. Existence requires God.
- B. Values require God.
- C. Morals require God.
- D. Reason requires God.
- E. Science requires God.

## II. God's DESIGN for Sexuality

The essential elements of God's original design for humanity in creation, our fall into sin, and God's gracious promise of restoration are all set forth in Genesis 1–3.

### A. Humanity at Creation

Of the six days of creation week the final one stands out for it was on day six that God made his highest earthly creature. The creation account climaxes with a description of the first man and woman as unique from all else that God made. On the first five days God spoke in the same way as he brought the world into existence:

And God said, "Let there be light" (v. 3)

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters" (v. 6)

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place" (v. 9)

And God said, "Let the land produce vegetation" (v. 11)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky" (v. 14)

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures" (v. 20)

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures" (v. 24)

But suddenly this cadence marked by the words "And God said" is broken when the text says, "God blessed them and said *to them*" (v. 28, emphasis added). Here we not only have God speaking but speaking *to* humanity. The context tells us why God communicated to humanity in a way that was different from the rest of creation. Gen 1:27 says that "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." And the uniqueness of his image-bearers is underscored with chapter two of Genesis devoted to an elaboration of day six, which describes the creation of Adam (2:7), the work God assigned him to do (2:15), the warning and opportunity God placed before him (Gen 2:16–17), the woman God made to aid him in his work (2:18–22), and the joy and intimacy Adam and Eve had for and with one another (2:23–25). Though God pronounced all his work "good" (cf. 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 25), he applied the description "very good" only after his image-bearers were created.

We learn something of what the *imago Dei* means from the particular words used for it in Gen 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (NASB 1995). The word *image* refers to “representation.” The God who is spirit creates a representative in physical form. Vlach explains,

*Just as an ancient king would place an image of himself in an area of his realm to show his sovereignty, God makes man in his image to represent him in the newly created world. Thus, “image” has kingship implications. Yet in this case these representations are living, breathing human beings, not lifeless statues. While God is the King, he created man as a king, a vice-regent and mediator over the creation. The term “likeness” indicates man is in relationship with God; he is a son of God. Because man is a son of God, he is able to represent God. So sonship is closely connected to rulership.<sup>2</sup>*

The assignment that humanity received in Adam was to serve as God’s vice-regents on earth. Adam was told to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:28). This “dominion mandate” was given by the King of creation to all humanity. That is, this mandate was not required of Adam and Eve alone, but rather as they are “fruitful,” “increase in number,” and “fill the earth,” it will be taken up by their posterity.

The Hebrew word for “rule” (*rādāh*) in Gen 1:28 is the same as that used in Ps 110:2 of the future reign of the Messiah: “The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, ‘Rule in the midst of your enemies!’” The word for “subdue” (*kābas*) speaks of the work of a king (cf. 2 Sam 8:11).<sup>3</sup> Vlach summarizes well the connection between the *imago Dei* and dominion: “This relationship between the image of God and ruling over the creation is so close that some have concluded that the image of God is the function of ruling. But the function of ruling is probably a *consequence* of man being in the image of God. The main point is that man is God’s image bearer created to rule the earth on God’s behalf.”<sup>4</sup>

## B. Humanity after the Fall

Adam’s authority, like all creaturely authority, is derivative and circumscribed by the God who delegated it. After placing Adam in the Garden of Eden to “work it and take care of it” (Gen 2:15), the Lord said to him, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen 2:16–17). “People often wonder why God put the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden. The reason is that tree reminded Adam and Eve that their authority to rule and subdue the earth was not absolute.”<sup>5</sup> But our first parents deliberately chose to subvert God’s rule for their own,

<sup>2</sup> Vlach, Michael, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (n.p.: Lampion House, 2020), chap. 4, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Greg Gilbert, “What Is Man?” Ligonier Ministries, December 24, 2014, accessed September 6, 2021, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-man>.

succumbing to the tempter's enticement, "You will be like God" (Gen 3:5). In so doing they introduced to earth the worship disorder that had already affected heaven.<sup>6</sup> Vos explains,

*It has been strikingly observed that the woman in yielding to this thought virtually put the tempter in the place of God. It was God who had beneficent purposes for man, the serpent had malicious designs. The woman acts on the supposition that God's intent is unfriendly, whilst Satan is animated with the desire to promote her well-being.<sup>7</sup>*

The worship disorder was manifested in the Garden, as it is now, by an exchange of the worship of the Creator in favor of the creature: "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator" (Rom 1:25). The Serpent was served rather than the God who created it. The fruit was more pleasing than the promises of the good God who provided it. Their own self-centered freedom was more desirable than dependance on the God who offered himself to enjoy forever.

The vertical worship disorder has had profound horizontal effects, alienating humans from one another and from the creation itself. The horizontal relational effects were seen immediately after the first human sin as Adam blamed Eve, she blamed the Serpent, and both suggested it was ultimately God's fault since it involved "the woman you put here with me" (Gen 3:12) and the serpent God created (Gen 3:13). "There seems to be an ingrained Gnostic streak in human thinking, a streak that causes people to blame some aspect of God's handiwork for the ills and woes of the world we live in."<sup>8</sup> The created world that was given for humanity's care and enjoyment will now make work more difficult as nature groans under the curse and awaits its future restoration (see Gen 3:17–19; Rom 8:19–21).

The Fall resulted in both an *abdication* and *distortion*. God's viceroy now became his enemy. As Satan was cast down, humanity was cast out (Gen 3:22–24) resulting in separation from God (Eph 4:18) and mutual hostility (Rom 1:18; 8:7). Not only has humanity's *position* been forfeited, so also has his *nature* been altered. In particular, the image of God that made humanity fit for relationship with him and able to rule on his behalf has now been distorted such that we no longer accurately represent God. Humanity's new allegiance is clearly seen as Cain attacks and murders a fellow image-bearer, thereby demonstrating fealty to our newly enthroned "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4 NASB) of whom Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

Though the image has been effaced it has not been entirely erased. The command for capital punishment for murder is based on the fact that "in the image of God has God made mankind" (Gen 9:6). The image still exists, though in diminished capacity,

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<sup>6</sup>"God by his providence permitted some of the angels, willfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory; and established the rest in holiness and happiness; employing them all, at his pleasure, in the administrations of his power, mercy, and justice." WLC Q. 19. The "Serpent" of Gen 3 is identified elsewhere in Scripture with Satan (cf. 2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9).

<sup>7</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 46–47.

<sup>8</sup> Albert M. Wolters. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), chap. 3, Kindle.

centuries after the Fall. However, that the *imago Dei* in humanity has been drastically altered is seen in the fact that it must now be restored (cf. Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24). Sinclair Ferguson says,

*In our sin we have all fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Paul's language here is loaded with the biblical motif of the divine image. In Scripture, image and glory are interrelated ideas. As the image of God, man was created to reflect, express and participate in the glory of God, in miniature, creaturely form. Restoration to this is effected through the Spirit's work of sanctification, in which he takes those who have distorted God's image in the shame of sin, and transforms them into those who bear that image in glory. This is what it means to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4, RSV).<sup>9</sup>*

In creation God gave an *orientation* to his highest creature, but the fall resulted in *disorientation*, so that now a *reorientation* is required.<sup>10</sup> Thankfully, though we have failed the test of the Garden "probation"<sup>11</sup> God is graciously moving his restoration program forward.

The distortion of sex is one of the many manifestations of "fallenness" in our world.

### III. God's Design for SEXUALITY<sup>12</sup>

#### A. Cultural sex is disoriented.

It's nearly impossible today to go for long without hearing or seeing some reference to sex. We live in a media-saturated culture, and our media is saturated with sex.

You see it in the plots of movies and television shows. In the suggestive commercials for erectile dysfunction. In the images in magazines and those flooding the Internet. In the links to pornographic websites offering fantasies at the click of a mouse. In the mainstream magazines with articles like, "Five Sex Secrets Women Wish Their Husbands Knew."

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<sup>9</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 139–40.

<sup>10</sup> I have used the *orientation, disorientation, reorientation* language for years and cannot identify a source from which I have borrowed it. I have learned since that the liberal Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann uses these terms in his *Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Augsburg, 1984) but in a different context.

<sup>11</sup> *Probation* is Vos's helpful word for Adam and Eve's pre-fall state: "We understand by this . . . the disclosure of the principles of a process of probation by which man was to be raised to a state of religion and goodness, higher, by reason of its unchangeableness, than what he already possessed." (*Biblical Theology*, 27). Others have used similar terminology: "Life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon *condition* [emphasis added] of perfect and personal obedience" (WCF 7.2). McCune says: "Adam had what has been called *undeveloped* or *unconfirmed* creaturely holiness, an untested moral purity and tendency. In other words, Adam had, by creation, a disposition to obedience but not the constancy to persevere." (Rolland McCune, *Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009–2010), 2:32.

<sup>12</sup> *Preparing for Marriage* (p. 209-214). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Sex has become a cultural obsession. But the picture of sexual intimacy that our culture paints is a cheap counterfeit and a perversion of God's original design. Like a surgeon's knife that has been designed for good but can be used for harm if put in the wrong hands, sex has been twisted and torn from its original purposes with devastating consequences.

What percentage of your sex education was received at each of the following "schools"? (Your total should equal 100 percent.)

\_\_\_% Peer school: My friends talked about what we thought, knew or had heard.

\_\_\_% Home school: My parents explained to me what sex is.

\_\_\_% Private school: I read things on my own or asked certain people (not my parents).

\_\_\_% Christian school: Church, Sunday School or youth group.

\_\_\_% School of hard knocks: I learned by experience.

\_\_\_% School of the silver screen: I learned from movies or television.

\_\_\_% School of \_\_\_\_\_

100% Total

B. Biblical sex is reoriented.

*[In marriage] a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)*

Note the term "one flesh." Becoming one flesh involves deep relational intimacy of which sexual intercourse is an integral part. Dr. Louis Evans, Jr., wrote about the term "one flesh":

*The one flesh in marriage is not just a physical phenomenon, but a uniting of the totality of two personalities. In marriage, we are one flesh spiritually by vow, economically by sharing, logistically by adjusting time and agreeing on the disbursement of all life's resources, experientially by trudging through the dark valleys and standing victoriously on the peaks of success, and sexually by the bonding of our bodies.*

Sex is not just a physical act. God created it as a process of intimate communication, of which the act of physical intercourse is a significant part. It is a powerful, emotional, bonding experience designed to strengthen a marriage much as metal rods reinforce concrete.

Premarital sex is so common in our culture today that some people are considered odd if they maintain their purity until marriage. But, God has our best in mind when He commands us to not engage in sex before marriage. He wants us to experience the absolute best, rather than a poor counterfeit.

C. Biblical sex has purpose.

1. Procreation

Sex is intended for the creation of children. God's command to "be fruitful and multiply" has not changed or been revoked.

2. Protection

Sex is intended to protect a husband and wife from temptation. Failure to sexually satisfy each other in marriage can lead to a spouse looking outside the marriage for fulfillment.

3. Pleasure

Sex is intended for the pleasure and enjoyment of the man and woman. Contrary to the interpretations of the medieval church, God is the Author of sexual pleasure.