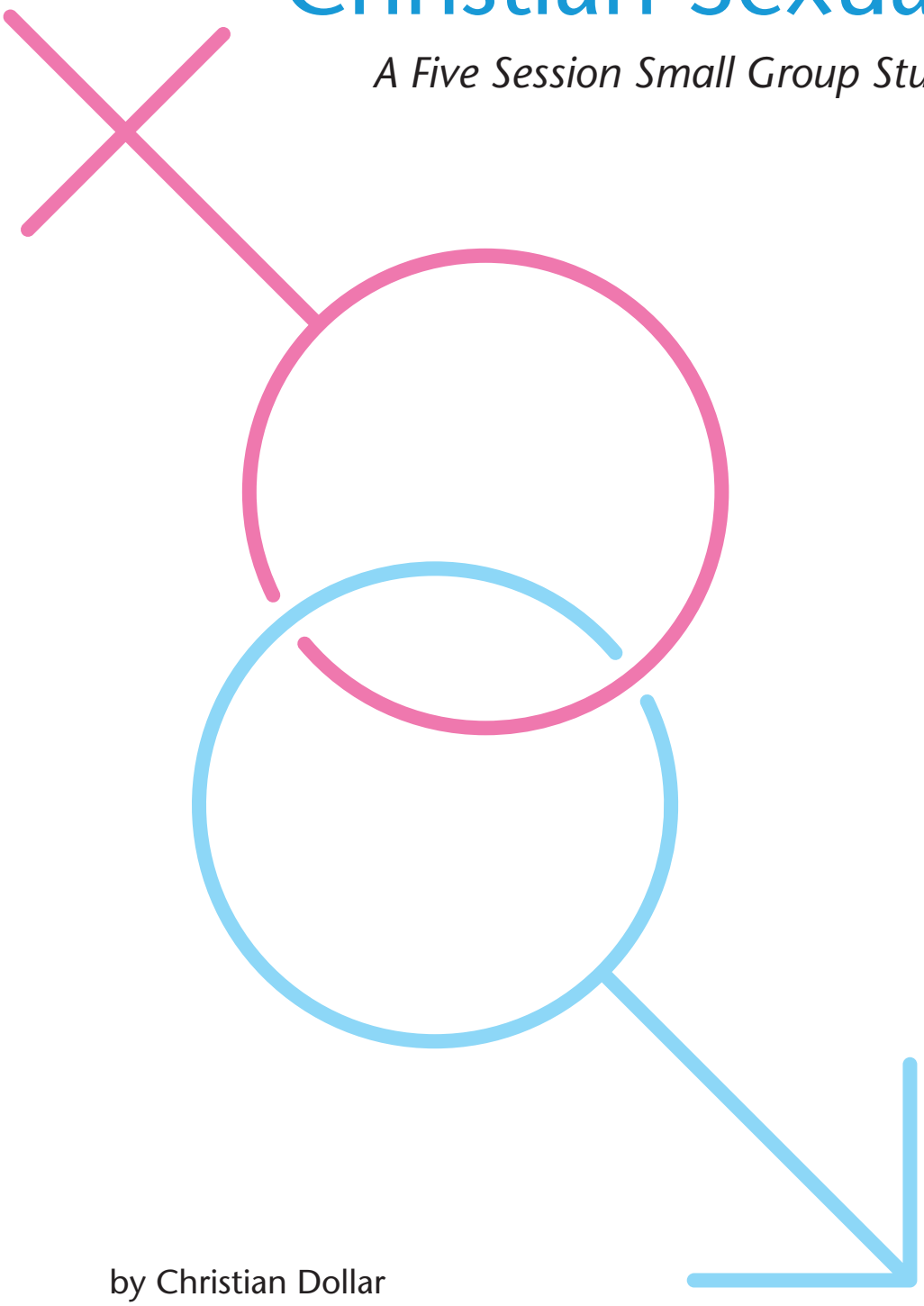
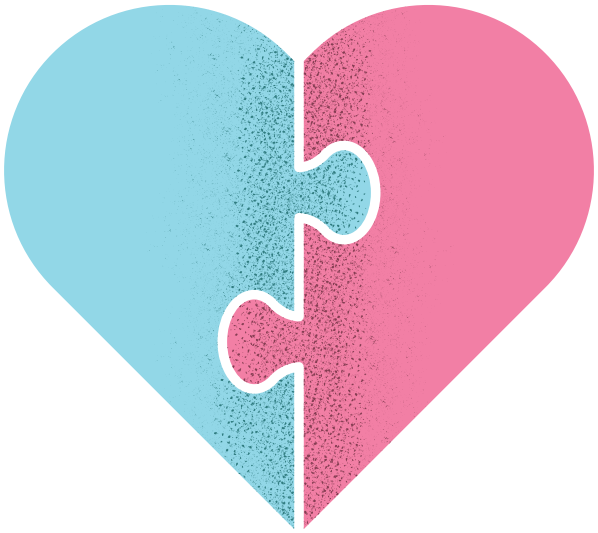
Christian Sexuality

A Five Session Small Group Study



by Christian Dollar



Introduction

Christian sexual ethics have always set the Church apart from the world. This difference goes deeper than the Church's rejection of sexual slavery and homosexuality as practiced in the Roman Empire. Jesus' teaching on sexuality was shocking to His Jewish audience as well. Jesus' radical commitment to the integrity of marriage left His disciples questioning the feasibility of the institution, all the more since the teaching challenged the pattern of divorce described in the Old Testament (Matthew 19:1-10). Behind Jesus' vision of human sexuality stood God's original design for marriage, rooted in the creation of sexed bodies designed for relationships.

The radical nature of Christian sexual ethics has endured because its creational foundation remains. God's good design still informs Christian sexuality despite the corruption of sexuality by sin. As our American culture continues its drive for libertine sexuality, the Church in the west has been forced to defend its sexual ethics in ways it has not needed to do for centuries. Much of this defense has taken an antagonistic posture. This means that the Church has defined its sexual ethics over and against promiscuity, homosexuality, divorce, and other perversions of human sexuality. Now, there is extensive biblical warrant for an antagonistic posture. Much of Paul's instructions on sexual ethics consist of injunctions against pagan sexual practice (1 Corinthians 6:12-19; Colossians 3:5-11; Ephesians 5:1-20; Galatians 5:16-21), and the Church has appropriately defined her sexual ethics against modern day unchristian sexual practices.

Need for an Alternative

Unfortunately, something is lost when the Church primarily addresses sexuality from an antagonistic posture. Christian sexuality loses its independence. For many Christians, sexuality is defined primarily by *what it is not* rather than by *what it is*. This negative sexuality leaves the Christian grasping for substance—for a goal. What should a Christian do with her or his sexuality? When the Church does not provide a vision of godly sexuality except in the most generic of senses, where is the Christian to look? The average Christian of today is just as numb to our sexually charged world as our non-Christian neighbors. No, in our sexually saturated context, it is impossible for Christians to revert into Victorian prudes. A "negative sexuality" cannot suffice. The Christian needs a holistic Christian sexuality, not an "un-pagan sexuality" that only fights against what the world gets wrong.

Overview

The following Bible study is designed to be a small step toward a holistic treatment of Christian sexuality. For the theologians and pastors who spend years studying the things of God, the underlying theological connections between marriage, procreation, and life issues are obvious. This is not necessarily the case for the typical congregant. This Bible study aims to tie together the usually disparate themes of Christian sexuality into a cohesive structure not defined by sinful practices. The goal of the study is to provide at the lay level a theoretical yet practical basis for understanding sexuality. This focus on the "positive" side of sexuality will inevitably frustrate those seeking guidance for the particular sexual challenges of today, but there are many wonderful resources already available to that end. This study seeks to do something different.

Summary

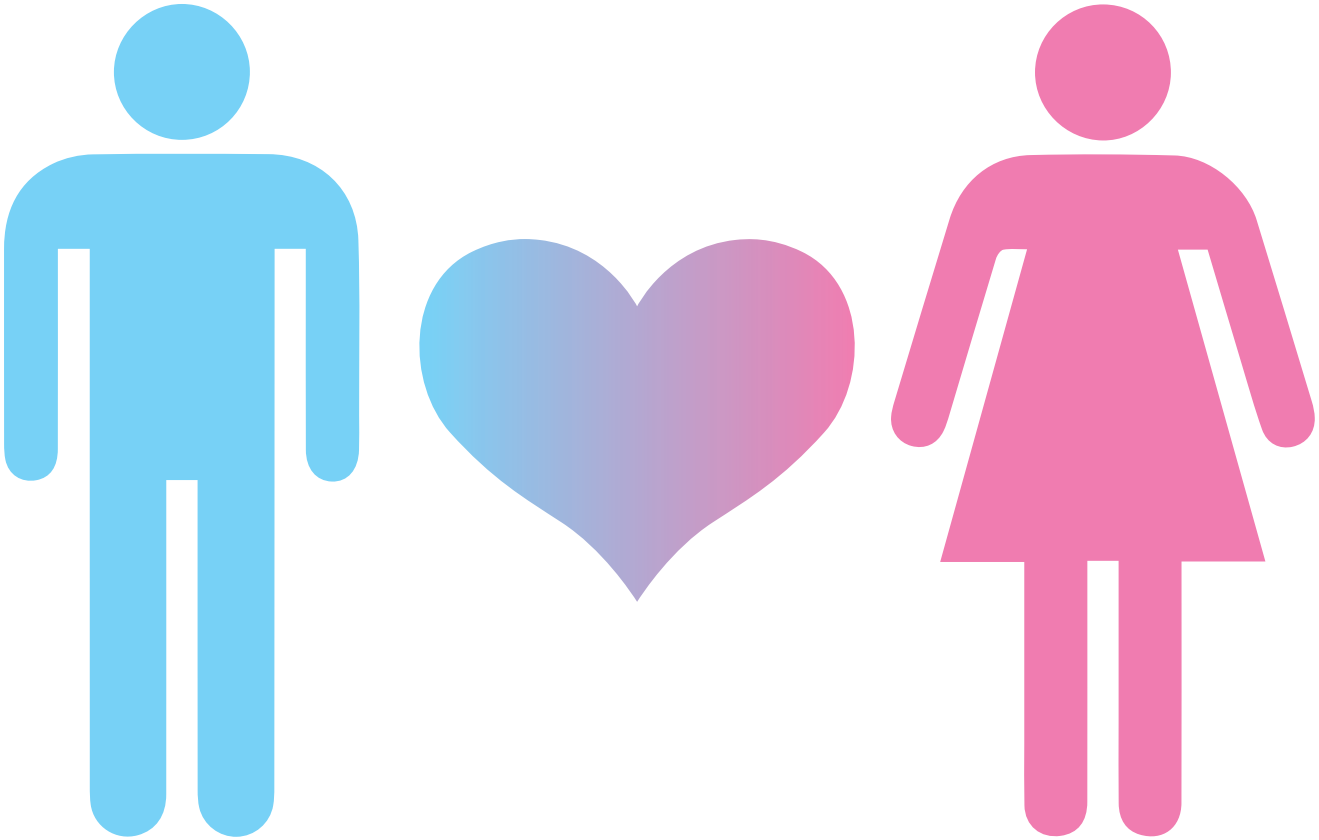
1. **The Body**
2. **The Sexes**
3. **Companionship**
4. **Erotic Expression**
5. **Procreation**

- ***Section one*** establishes human beings as embodied creatures whose bodies must be understood as theologically significant. This lesson sets the groundwork for those that follow by counteracting the prevailing American understanding that the body is something used and possessed instead of something gifted as our very being. Above all, it seeks to establish in the mind of the student the goodness of the body.
- ***Section two*** introduces the integrity of the sexes. Here the equality and distinction of the sexes are affirmed and explored. The irreducibility of our embodied nature as either male or female is compared with societal expectations of the sexes and the role of stereotypes. This is likely to be the lesson in which students, especially those sensitive to sexism, will be most "on guard," and so a tactful, open-ended approach is used. Because the goal of this lesson is the establishment of the integrity of the sexes, more difficult passages such as Ephesians 5 are addressed in the following marriage-specific lessons.
- ***Section three*** signals a shift from the sexuality of the individual to sexuality in community. The marriage relationship will dominate the following three lessons. Section three will focus on the relational aspect of marriage through the lens of companionship. In it the interdependence and mutuality of husband and wife are highlighted as part of the original intention of God. Additionally, singleness is addressed, and students are invited to reflect on the space afforded (or not afforded) within the Church to the unmarried.
- ***Section four*** introduces the students to the goodness of what is typically understood by sexuality: erotic expression. This topic is rarely addressed within Church groups and may make students uncomfortable. Therefore, a lighthearted though respectful tone is taken throughout this lesson. Keeping in line with the study's focus on the positive aspects of sexuality, sinful sexual practices are not addressed in detail. Instead, most of the lesson is spent exploring the goodness, pleasure, and healing functions of Christian sexuality.
- ***Section five*** brings the study to a close with its topic of procreation. This section is not a lesson on parenting. Instead, the focus of this lesson is on the relationship between marriage and procreation. Procreation is held up as a good thing that is the natural overflow of Christian sexuality. The majority of the lesson is spent comparing contemporary thoughts and feelings about procreation to biblical examples.

Lesson Structure

This study is designed to be used in a small group setting with a heavy emphasis on discussion questions. Because it is likely that many small group leaders will not be theologically trained, a short introduction to each Bible passage is provided, along with discussion questions. Additionally, because this is designed to be used in the informal setting of a small-group, discussion-based study, each subsection functions as an independent node. Aside from the introduction and closing thought, the subsections can be rearranged to better fit whatever direction the discussion takes. Finally, in each lesson there are two "floating" subsections that do not have a standard place across lessons. These floating subsections address tangential issues that may or may not be relevant to a particular class. The outline includes suggested points at which to address them should the leader choose to do so.

- **Introduction**: A short introductory paragraph used to help orient students to the topic. Each introduction includes a question or set of questions to be answered by the study.
- **Main Verse**: This is a single verse taken from the Genesis creation account and is used as the entry point into the principle of Christian sexuality under consideration. There is not a lengthy exposition attached to this verse; rather, it serves as a landmark from which the helping verses can be located. All other subsections revolve around this verse. In addition, there is a short explanatory paragraph for this verse which brings out one relevant facet of Christian sexuality.
- **Helping Verses**: Along with the main verse, each lesson includes three "helping verses." These helping verses range from a single verse to an entire chapter, and each introduces a distinct aspect of Christian sexuality not yet addressed by either the main verse or other helping verses. Instead of explanations of the helping verses, there are discussion questions attached. Some discussion questions are open-ended, while others invite students to complete short "activities," such as counting the occurrences of a particular word in a passage.
- **Well, I Heard …!**: The "Well, I Heard!" section is a floating subsection designed to address common beliefs in the Church about the lesson's topic. This section is structured as a statement put to the small-group leader by one of the students. Often this statement will be related to a misunderstood or misconstrued Bible verse, although it may also stem from a folk belief likely present in a congregation. The benefit of this subsection is that it gives voice to viewpoints students may hold but be hesitant to make known. In this way scruples may be addressed in the open without the embarrassment of "believing the wrong thing." Often there will be discussion questions suggested for further exploration at the end of the explanation.
- **What About …?**: The "What About?" section is the second floating subsection. Whereas the "Well, I Heard!" section addresses theologically based questions, the "What About?" section addresses difficult societal issues. In this section, popular beliefs and attitudes originating from outside of the Church are addressed. Each question is structured to ask about *a person rather than a topic*. This structure helps to remove potentially contentious political issues from the abstract and bring them into the interpersonal realm. The response to each "What About?" section outlines both a theological structure for understanding the question and a Christian response to the issue.
- **Closing Thought**: The closing thought is the final take-away from the lesson that answers the questions posed by introduction.



Created as a Body

Introduction: Why do we have a body? Odds are most of us have not given that question much thought. A body is just what you are born with. Is there some deep meaning behind us having 10 fingers instead of 12? Does it matter if we are tall or short? Having a body is just part of being a person! Yet God could have made us without physical bodies like He did the angels. Imagine what life would be like if you did not have to eat, sleep, or ever get mud on your shoes. That does not sound too bad, does it? But if God did not make us as physical bodies, we would not be able to hug our pets, taste a homecooked meal, or get cozy in bed. Who would want to miss out on those things? So why did God make us *as bodies*? The short answer is, "Because it is good!"

Main Verse: **"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day"** (Genesis 1:31).

Here God looks over everything He had created in the six previous days and sees just how good everything is. But none of it is "very good" until God makes humans to take care of it. God created the world as a finely tuned machine, a machine that needs human bodies in the world to take care of the world!

(Suggested: "Well, I Heard …!")

Helping Verses:

Psalm 139:13-18 *(…knit me together in my mother's womb …)*

How should God's intimate concern for our bodies inform how we think about our own? What about those parts of our bodies that we don't normally think about?

(Suggested: "What About …?")

Luke 1:26-32 *(You will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call Him Jesus …)*

The perfect God became a physical man, lived a sinless life in the body, and was raised with a glorious body. God effected our salvation through the body of Jesus. (Incarnate literally means "into-flesh.") What unique role does each of our bodies play in our service to our neighbor?

1 Corinthians 15:35-49 *(But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised …")*

As Christians, we are not looking forward to an eternity as a disembodied spirit floating in the clouds. We are expecting an eternity in the physical body on a new earth. How does this picture of a "physical salvation" compare with how life after death is usually depicted?

Closing Thought: God did not make us *with* bodies; He made us *as* bodies, and He will remake us as *new bodies*. This is very good!

Well, I Heard …!

Well, I heard that it is better to be in heaven and live as a *spirit* than it is to live life in the *body* here on earth.

In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul says, **"Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."** It certainly sounds like Paul would agree that living as a spirit would be better than living as a body, and who could blame him? He had just recounted all the bodily suffering he had experienced up to this point: afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down (2 Corinthians 4:7-9). But just one verse later Paul explains why all of this happened: **"… so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our *bodies*."** Paul is willing to both suffer bodily hardships and even die (be away from the body) so that he can be with the Lord! As Christians we are looking forward to the day when the Lord returns, raises the dead, and gives us new bodies so that we can live here on earth with the Lord! This is exactly what Paul told the Corinthians when he said, **"… knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence"** (2 Corinthians 4:14).

What About …?

What about birth defects?

Scripture is clear, God created all of creation "very good," but Scripture also tells us that we live in a fallen world. When sin entered in, it corrupted the good things God had made. Our bodies are subject to death and brokenness because of sin, but that does not mean that the brokenness of our body is outside of God's power or plan. When the disciples saw a man who had been born blind, they asked Jesus whose fault it was that the man was born blind. Jesus corrected them by saying, **"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him"** (John 9:1-3). Even the brokenness of our bodies is used by God to display His grace.

Celebrating Our Differences: The Sexes

Introduction: God made human beings as bodies, but not all bodies are the same. Some are tall. Some are short. Some are skinny. Some are not. For as many differences as there are from one body to the next, all seem minor when compared to one special kind of difference: male and female. So, what does it mean that some*body* is female, and some other body is male? Is there a real difference between the two? Do the differences matter? *Should the differences matter*? As we continue to look at what it means to be in the body, we have to look at what it means to be female and male.

Main Verse: **"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"** (Genesis 1:27).

Too often discussions about male and female begin with the differences between the two, and too often these differences are simply stereotypes. When Scripture first speaks about male and female, it begins with the "Image of God." Fundamentally, being male or female is not rooted in who does the dishes, but in being a representative of God to the world. The specifics of how one represents God will change depending on person (you or me), role (mother or police officer), and yes, even sex (male or female).

Helping Verses:

Genesis 2:5-7, 20-22 *(… then the Lord God formed the man of the dust … took one of his ribs)*

In Genesis 1:27 we see how God created both man and woman in the image of God. Here we see the special, intimate, and distinct ways God creates the man and woman. What ways do we in the Church tend to highlight either the differences or similarities between the sexes and so lose sight of the other?

Galatians 3:26-28 *(…for you are all one in Christ Jesus)*

Paul is here saying that neither nationality, freedom, nor sex keeps someone from being a child of God. In that respect, Paul is saying much the same thing as Genesis 1:27. How do stereotypes creep into the way we treat and think about the sexes?

(Suggested: "Well, I Heard …!")

Proverbs 31:10-31 *(Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come …)*

A Proverbs 31 woman has become a common theme in the Church. Notice the combination of characteristics and actions contained in a single person. List the actions and descriptions of the excellent wife. Then divide your list into a "feminine" group and a "masculine" group. Where did you put verse 30?

(Suggested: "What About …?")

Closing Thought: God made us male and female, not better or worse. God made the sexes for distinction, not division.

Well, I Heard …!

Well, I heard that the Bible tells women they have to wear veils.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul not only tells women to wear veils when they pray, but also to have long hair! Additionally, men have to keep their hair short and not wear a hat when they pray! Is there something holy about women's hats and evil about men's hats? Hardly. Instead, Paul explains in v. 3 that these instructions are rooted in the proper ordering of things. **"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."** What does this mean? Well, it doesn't mean that women are less than men; after all, Christ is not less than God. It simply means that our behavior should reflect the way God made us. In the culture of Paul's day, head coverings were a way to indicate to everyone that the wearer was a woman. It was a simple way to agree with the fact that God made her the way He did.[1] What are some ways we can affirm our own creation as male and female in our cultural context?

What About …?

What about people who are transgender?

Transgenderism is a hot topic today, but it is hardly a single movement. There are those who say gender should not matter at all, while others say gender is the most important thing. Add on top of that the political fights, and we end up with a very confusing situation. One group of people whom the Church cannot lose sight of in the confusion are those struggling with painful questions about their gender identity. Pain, confusion, and distress in all their forms have roots in the brokenness of creation caused by sin, and God has tasked the Church to bring the healing of the Gospel to a hurting world. The Church's role to those struggling with questions of gender identity is one of care, accompanied by affirming who God has made them to be and their place within the family of God,[2] **"…so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God"** (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Marriage: Complementary Companionship

Introduction: This lesson signals a turn for our series. Until this point, we have been focusing on what it means to be an individual in a body. The second part of our series will look at what it means to have a relationship while in the body. For Christians, the bodily relationship par-excellence is marriage. In the joining together of wife and husband, a unique and sacred relationship is formed, but what should this relationship look like?

Main Verse: "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'" (Genesis 2:18).

Did you catch it? This is the only time in the creation account when God says something is "not good." Man is in paradise, and creation is in perfect harmony. What could possibly not be good about that? One simple fact: He is alone. God created human beings for a relationship with Himself and with others, and relationships require someone different. God does not make a clone of Adam, but a new creature who is different yet familiar. Woman is for man a helper "fit for him." Both are designed by God to be compatible. With the entrance of sin, that compatibility is obscured, but God's original design still shines through.

Helping Verses:

Ephesians 5:22-32 *(Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord …)*

> Here Paul gives us the perfect paradigm of marriage: Christ and the Church. Christ's relationship to the Church is not one of disembodied emotion, but one of embodied action. Identify the action words Paul uses to instruct husbands and wives and write down three embodied actions that would fit under that category.

(Suggested: "Well, I Heard …!")

Genesis 2:22-23; 3:11-12 *(…Bone of my bone … She gave me fruit of the tree …)*

> It is sad to see how quickly sin transforms the joys of marriage into accusations and blame. Based on Ephesians 5:22-32, how should Adam have reacted to God's question?

(Suggested: "What About …?")

Matthew 19:7-12 *(… made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven …)*

> Jesus here speaks of those who **"make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."** Likewise, Paul says that those who can remain unmarried have received a **"gift from God"** (1 Corinthians 7:7). Often the Church spends much of its time with couples and family ministries and forgets the special gifts of its single members. In what ways can the Church better recognize and celebrate its single members?

Closing Thought: God made human beings for relationships, and the greatest human relationship is marriage. In it, husband and wife are able to reflect the love of Christ to each other and to the world.

Well, I Heard …!

Well, I heard that Paul said it was better for Christians not to get married!

If you want good, godly marriage advice, you can do no better than 1 Corinthians 7, so why does Paul end his advice on marriage by saying that it is better to not marry at all (v. 38)? He explains that he wants them to be **"free from anxieties"** (v. 23). Relationships are a lot of hard work, and marriage especially so! Paul traveled extensively, and he inevitably saw the stress placed on marriages that being a Christian in a hostile world caused. His advice? **"I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment … I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is"** (vs. 25-26). Read through 1 Corinthians 7:25-40. What is Paul's concern for married people? What is his concern for unmarried people? What is Paul's ultimate goal for both married and unmarried people?

What About …?

What about people who are divorced?

Divorce is a painful reality in our world, and one that is far too common. Just like our bodies and our sexes, God designed marriage in a specific way. Marriage is to be the lifelong union of a man and woman. In this respect, divorce is less like the dissolution of a legal contract and more like an amputation. Remember the words of Adam (Genesis 2:22-23) and Paul (Ephesians 5:25-30). Jesus informs us that God is intimately involved in marriage: **"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate"** (Mark 10:1-10). God is the force that brings a marriage together! Notice how different this is from modern conceptions of marriages based on "chemistry" and "compatibility." What would a marriage that has God as its foundation look like? What specific actions would husbands and wives do in such a relationship?

Marriage: Love in the Body

Introduction: The lifelong companionship of marriage gets a lot of attention in the Church. The physical expression of that companionship—sex—is often swept under the rug. Many times, when it is addressed in the Church, it is followed by a series of "Thou shalt not …" statements. It is not that those "Thou shalt not" statements are wrong, but they are only one half of the story. Sex, like our bodies and our gender, is a gift of God. If it is a gift, how are we to appropriately enjoy it?

Main Verse: **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"** (Genesis 2:24).

Sex was part of God's plan right from the beginning. It is hardwired into the goodness of our bodies and is the ultimate expression of oneness with another. However, just like every other part of our lives, sex and our desires have been warped and twisted because of sin. Whereas much of the world throughout history dives headfirst into whatever direction passion might direct them, Christians have consistently sought to live their sexual lives in accord with God's original good design.

(Suggested: "Well, I Heard …!")

Helping Verses:

Song of Solomon 7:1-13 *(How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights …)*

Did you ever expect to read a love song in the Bible that talks about thighs, bellies, breasts, and … noses? The Song of Solomon certainly does not sound like something you would hear on the radio today, but it is unmistakably a love song! Read through vs. 1-9 and try to discover the most used word ("your" – 18x). What does that tell you about the focus of the husband and wife (v. 10)?

1 Corinthians 7:2-8 *(… each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband …)*

Sexuality is not just something corrupted by sin. Paul says that Godly sexuality is actually a tool to overcome sinful sexuality![3] What does this view add to the Church's conversation about sexuality?

(Suggested: "What About …?")

Proverbs 5:15-23 *(Drink water from your own cistern …)*

With the entrance of sin, our bodies and sexuality have two sides: the original good design of God and our current corrupted reality. We have to live with the tension between the two. How does the father's timeless advice to his son apply to our modern context?

Closing Thought: Our sexuality is a blessing from God, but one that is broken and easily led astray. God designed sexuality for marriage, and in it our sexuality can find healing.

Well, I Heard …!

> Well, I heard that sex is not something that you are supposed to talk about in Church except to warn people what not to do!

If that's the case, someone should have told God! It is true that sex has often been treated in the Church as something taboo—something polite company does not talk about—but the Bible is full of stories about sex, both good and bad. In fact, an entire book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, deals extensively with the godly desire between wife and husband. It is true many of the Bible passages about "good" sex do not talk *only* about sex (they also talk about having children and the marriage relationship), but that is because sex was *never supposed to happen in isolation*. Although we are addressing companionship, sex, and procreation in different lessons, for the Christian they always go together. You cannot separate sex from companionship any more than you can separate sex from the body! What are the dangers of not talking about the positive aspects of sex in the Church? What are the potential benefits of a holistic framework of Christian sexuality?

What About …?

> What about people who are homosexual?

Scripture is clear that sexual expression is reserved for marriage. Looking back at God's original, uncorrupted design, Jesus Himself tells us that marriage is between a male and a female (Matthew 19:4-6). It is helpful to think of homosexuality in terms of any other sexual activity outside of marriage such as adultery, pornography, and pre-marital sex. The temptations of these broken expressions of sexuality are real for everyone, including Christians. It is up to the Church to come alongside and support those who are struggling to live sexually pure lives, whatever their particular struggle is.[4] It is always important to approach our brothers and sisters with humility, remembering both Paul's rebuke and comfort in 1 Corinthians 6:11, **"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."**

Marriage: Procreation

Introduction: Our bodies and sexes point us to our relational nature manifested most powerfully in the companionship and love of marriage, but what does the marriage relationship itself point us toward? The relationship between man and wife is oriented toward procreation. This does not mean that a marriage without children is any less of a marriage; after all, a male body is no less of a male body if he remains unmarried! What this means is that God built marriage not only for the joy of the couple, but also for the expansion of that joy into the lives of children and the continuation of humanity.

Main Verse: **"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'"** (Genesis 1:28).

The first thing God ever said to humanity was both a blessing and a command: **"Be fruitful and multiply!"** God had created everything good, and here He invites us to continue and expand that goodness. Through pro*creation* we participate with God in His continuing *creation*.[5]

Helping Verses:

Malachi 2:13-16 *(And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring …)*

This verse touches on many of the topics in our series, but here in the last book of the Old Testament, God reiterates the same purpose for marriage He established in Genesis. How does God's motivation for establishing marriage compare with modern reasons for getting married?

(Suggested: "What About …?")

Psalm 127 *(Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord …)*

The Bible was written in an agricultural context where children were a financial advantage since they could help work on the farm and defend the land. In our context, children are often viewed as a financial liability. How might we celebrate children in our own context like the Psalmist did for his?

Genesis 4:1 *(I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord …)*

Why talk about the birth of Cain? Sure, this is the first recorded birth in the Bible, but is not Cain a bad guy for killing his brother? That's the point! Even in the most difficult situation (having just been kicked out of the Garden of Eden) and for every person (both "good guys" and "bad guys"), the birth of a child is a blessing from God. What are the modern yardsticks used to measure the coming of a new child (planned/unplanned, financial costs, preparation of parents)? What does Eve's focus tell us of how she views the coming of her new child?

(Suggested: "Well, I Heard …!")

Closing Thought: Children are the expansion of the companionship and love of marriage beyond the couple.

Well, I Heard …!

Well, I heard that Christians are not allowed to use contraception!

Contraception is one of the most debated topics in the Church. This is likely because Christians throughout history have recognize that marriage is designed for children, *but not only for children*. Although marriages are normally expected to be fruitful, there are circumstances in which love for one's spouse may warrant the use of contraceptives, such as health and other special concerns. Without a biblical prohibition of the practice, we cannot reject contraceptives entirely. We must, however, be discerning in their use. For example, abortifacient contraceptives (those that destroy or otherwise impair a fertilized egg from reaching maturity) are a clear breaking of the Fifth Commandment and should be rejected. We must also be cognizant of the reasons why contraceptives are being used. As with every other good gift of God, sin can twist even the marriage relationship toward inward-facing selfishness. Is the decision to use contraception based on a desire to focus on the upbringing of existing children, or does it stem from an unwillingness to give up the freedom of a childless marriage? The decision to use contraception in a Christian marriage should not be made lightly, even if its use has become ubiquitous in society. A pastor can be a helpful guide when making these decisions.[6]

What About …?

What about those who are infertile?

Certainly nothing is outside of God's control, even situations of infertility. In fact, in 1 Samuel 1:6, the Bible explicitly states that **"the Lord had closed Hannah's womb."** Although that story ends in the joy of a child, that is not always the case for us. Often our prayers seem to go unanswered, even when we, like Hannah, **"have been pouring out [our] soul before the Lord."** In these situations, we can look to the comfort God always attaches to His answers of "no": **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"** (2 Corinthians 12:9). As the family of God, we should be a conduit of grace to those struggling with infertility, making sure that they are never alone in their struggle. With so much talk about youth ministries in the Church, it can feel like there is no place for the childless couple. What can be done in your context to be more inclusive of those without children?

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NOTES

NOTES

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