

What Does the Bible Say About Sexuality?ⁱ

Pastor Tim Nixon

Many of God's people have historically held views about sex and sexuality that are not Biblical. One of the extremes is the view that sex is dirty and evil. Women were embarrassed to be pregnant and hid it for as long as possible. However, since this was a part of God's command – to procreate – then sexual relations were more tolerable. Procreation was the only legitimate use of sex. It was wrong to enjoy and find pleasure in the sexual act. Good girls and boys didn't do that. Husbands and wives slept in separate beds or rooms and it was the height of embarrassment for a husband to see his wife naked. Many daughters adopted this philosophy from their mothers, even though it was never openly taught to them.

This idea of sex only for procreation is still held by many Christians today.

On the other extreme, sex is thought of as being the highest form of human expression and the **goal** of every relationship. The ultimate goal then for humans is sexual relations or fulfilling sexual appetites, either legitimate or deviant.

The Bible has much to say about sex and sexuality, including:

- sexual immorality
- homosexuality and transgender
- sex and intimacy within marriage

[Back to the Beginning](#)

Genesis 1 and 2 show us two purposes for sex. These chapters provide two complementary accounts of creation. The first in Genesis 1, describes creation of the physical world and life within it. The second in Genesis 2 zooms in on the creation of the first man and woman.

In Genesis 1: 26-28, humanity is created in God's image and its task with ruling the earth and its creatures. In this context, the point of the sexual difference between man and woman is reproduction. Increasing in number will enable them to fill the earth and be present everywhere to rule over it.

In Genesis 2:18-24 the differences between the sexes are presented in a different light. Adam is created first, and yet it is "not good" for him to be alone. By himself he is unable to fulfill the purposes for which God created him. The remedy to this is the creation of the first woman. In contrast to the various animals Adam names, the woman perfectly corresponds to him as a helpmate to him. The woman is *like* the man in the right way and *unlike* him in the right way. In other words, she is made of the same "stuff" but she is also a woman rather than a man. She shares his nature and his very life. It is this complementary role that leads to a special unity between them when they eventually come together in the sexual union in Genesis 2:24.

In Genesis 2:24 the purpose of sex here is to express and deepen the unity between them. It has nothing to do with procreation. And in this verse we also see with clarity that Moses is no longer just talking about Adam and Eve. We are not being told about this first human couple on the off chance we are interested in our ancient family lineage. No, their story is true for all mankind and sets up a pattern that we see repeated in every generation. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife.

What was going on with Adam and Eve explains what has gone on ever since. The perfect “fit” between the two of them is the foundation for every human marriage since. The account is not just about their union but every marriage union.

Jesus teaches that “...They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate “(Matthew 19:6). God himself produces this union between them. Physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, two people are becoming knitted together. God has designed it to work that way. One man and one woman who become one flesh.

And it works very well. The binding effect of sex in a relationship is what makes the breakdown of a sexual relationship so profoundly painful. It’s not what we’re designed for. And the more that union is forged and then broken, the more our capacity for deep and abiding unity is diminished. Sexuality is a little like a post-it note. The first time you use it, it sticks well. But when it is reapplied too many times, it loses its capacity to stick to anything. We are simply not designed for multiple sexual relationships. Sex becomes less relational, more functional and less satisfying as a result. Casual sexual encounters are made to look harmless and fun in most sitcoms, but the consequences in real life are far more serious—emptiness, brokenness and devastation. Sex is a lot like our worship – it should never be casual.

Jesus reinforces the truth of Genesis 1 – 2 when he describes all sexual activity outside of marriage as evil: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mark 7:20-23)

When Jesus uses the term sexual immorality, he is speaking about all sexual activity outside of marriage. Jesus describes this behavior as evil and defiling.

In Matthew 19, Jesus reinforces his point, “And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:3-6).

Jesus underscores what we have already seen in Genesis. We are created male and female. Humanity is gendered. We are not just human beings, but men and women. And this has been the case from “the beginning.” It is how God created us. Next, Jesus shows us that this sexual difference is why we have marriage. We are male and female: “For this reason a man will leave...” It is because we are male and female that we have the phenomenon of marriage. Marriage is based on gender. Marriage would not exist without the sexual differences between men and women.

Marriage is a wonderful God-given way for humanity to reflect the unity and diversity that is seen in the Trinity. God’s oneness is not sameness, as though the three persons of the Trinity were identical to one another. It is unity in difference, not uniformity. And the same is true of the union of a man and a woman. There is this same kind of oneness that comes when male and female are united together.

The same is not true of gay sex. Two men or two women cannot become one flesh. They cannot become one in the way that God is one and in the way that a man and a woman are one. They can have a union of sorts, but it is not of the kind that is uniquely possible with a heterosexual marriage.

The Bible's teaching on sex and marriage is the foundation for how Christians are to think about the whole issue of sexuality today. The teaching of Genesis, reinforced and expanded by Jesus in his own ministry, is that sex is a good gift that God has given exclusively for marriage, and that in order for marriage to fulfill the purposes for which God instituted it, marriage must be between one man and one woman.

What About Homosexuality?

While the Bible speaks about homosexuality (in places like Genesis 19, Leviticus 18, Romans 1, and 1 Corinthians 6), it doesn't do so repeatedly and frequently. Yes, homosexual sin is serious. And yes, Paul says that the active and unrepentant homosexual (**AS WITH ALL THE UNRIGHTEOUS**) will not enter God's kingdom.

But the Bible is not fixated on homosexuality. It is not what the Bible is about. Our understanding of what the Bible does say on the subject therefore needs to be read in light of the bigger themes of Scripture. In other words, what the Bible says about homosexuality does not represent everything God wants to say to homosexual people; it is not the whole message of Christianity.

Christians who want to explain the Christian faith to gay friends need to know that what the Bible says about homosexuality is not the only thing they need to explain, and it is probably not the first thing, or even the main thing, they need to focus on.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, Paul gives a partial list of sins that lead to spiritual death, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

Paul's partial list of sins here includes forms of sexual sin, but it also includes nonsexual forms of sin. Homosexual sin is incredibly serious, but it is not alone in being so. It is wicked, but so is greed. God will judge those who indulge in it. But he will also judge thieves.

But we cannot stop here! Verse 11 gives incredible hope to all of those who are habituated into sin, "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." (emphasis added)

What a tremendous promise, not just for those involved in sexual sin, but for those enslaved with alcohol, or drugs, or swindlers, or greedy, or thieves, or the angry, or the liar, well you get the point. Do you see it? Do you see the promise? And such **were** some of you. And such were some of **YOU!**

- Some of the Corinthian believers were sexually immoral. But not anymore!
- Some of the Corinthian believers were thieves. But not anymore!
- Some of the Corinthian believers were drunkards. But not anymore!
- Some of the Corinthian believers were idolaters. But not anymore!

No! They were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What About Transgender and Gender Identity?

What is it?

Today “transgender” is typically used as the umbrella term for the myriad of ways in which individuals can experience and express incongruence between their birth sex and their gender identity.

“Transgender” has been applied to individuals as varied as children struggling with their sense of gender, drag queens, and intersex individuals born with both male and female traits that do not allow easy identification. Cross-gender behavior may also cover a variety of expressions ranging from secretly cross-dressing to undergoing sex reassignment surgery. There is no one-size-fits-all explanation of transgenderism, nor a one-size-fits-all response to the pain experienced by transgender individuals.

Time will not allow a deep discussion into this but realize that everything we have already said from the Scriptures indicates that God created us male or female and it is a biological creation not a mental decision.

How do We at the Chapel Respond to LGBT People?

How do we share the gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ – with those who identify as LGBT?

The simple answer is in the same way as any other individual. The gospel is powerful enough to work in the hearts of any person, and those who identify as LGBT are not a special subset of people who require a special approach to sharing the gospel. And isn't that part of the truth of the 1 Corinthians passage we just read? God doesn't give us special instructions for adulterers, thieves, swindlers, drunkards, etc. Whether we were once atheists, liars, Muslims, or self-righteous church attenders, there's no magical gospel just for “our sin.” At the foot of the cross we are all equally in need of God's amazing grace.

A familiar denomination adopted the following statement:

The question should be reframed in terms of the Great Commission, which is to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Framed this way, the Church's ministry to transgender persons is essentially the same as its ministry to all persons: *evangelism* that leads to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, symbolized by baptism, and *discipleship* that teaches converts to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ in ever-increasing measure.

This is not to deny that transgender persons present unique discipleship challenges. For example, how should children's ministers respond—both to the child and to his or her parents—when a child in the church expresses gender dysphoria? If a transgender person (who has undergone surgery and hormone treatment to acquire the external appearance of a member of the opposite sex) comes to faith in Jesus Christ, what does repentance look like for him or her?

Given the theology of the body articulated in the preceding paragraphs, it should be clear that the Church's ministry to transgender persons should help them experience increasing

integrity between their birth sex and their gender identity. This is a long-term discipleship goal. However, it is not the only discipleship goal, nor even the first issue that needs to be addressed in the lives of transgender persons. The most fundamental issue in the lives of all persons, after all, is whether they are “in Christ,” to use the apostle Paul’s term. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The practical question, then, is how to create an optimal environment for transgender persons to experience new life in Christ.¹

I had this very experience in the workplace many years ago. A homosexual man that I worked with closely, and had great respect for, came to me one day and shut my door. He sat down in the chair across from my desk and simply said, “You are a Pastor, so you think I’m going to hell because I’m gay don’t you?” While I was a little taken aback by the question and accusation, my answer was clear and quick, “No, the Bible teaches that you’re not going to heaven because you do not believe in the work, power and Lordship of Jesus Christ. You were not going to heaven long before you became homosexual.” While that response was as in-your-face as his question, that simple interaction opened up a trust and a dialogue that we shared for many years.

Imagine if I had leaned across the table, looked him in the eye, and with a stern voice replied, “You’re absolutely going to hell because you’re homosexual. The Bible says so and that settles it!?” My guess is that he would never have spoken to me again, and I would have lost any opportunity to share the gospel going forward.

Have Jesus-like compassion and conviction. Christians have sinned in at least two major ways when it comes to reaching those in the gay community. On the one hand, some have laid aside God’s clear teaching that homosexuality is a sin in an attempt to show the love of God. Love that is stripped of truth is not love but deceit. This is a grave sin against both God and man.

Have Jesus-like conviction and speak the truth in love. Share what the Bible teaches about homosexual activity. Share that there is a terrible judgment for those who reject Christ. Share that there is a great cost in following Christ and also a great hope of forgiveness and freedom for those who do. Speak the truth in love.

On the other hand, some have neglected compassion and have harbored a condescending attitude toward people who practice homosexual sin. Love that is stripped of compassion is not love but hypocrisy. This too is a grave sin because it is unlike Christ’s love toward us.

Jesus was unlike the world of sinners who surrounded him, yet he had compassion on them, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36). As we reach out to those in sexual sin, we must strive to do so with a similar heart. What could be more heartbreaking than for a person made in God’s image to be lost in their sin and forever

¹ Transgenderism, Transsexuality, And Gender Identity
(ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL PRESBYTERY OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN SESSION AUGUST 5 & 7, 2017)

separated from the love of God? Ask God to help you to see those in the LGBT community as he does so you can minister with conviction and compassion.²

Because of the expectation LGBT people will have about how Christians will respond to them, we need to make every effort to let them know that we are for them and not against them. This will at least involve taking time to get to know them well and listening carefully to their story. We need to love them more than their LGBT friends do, and we need to love them more than they love their sin.

Only then can we begin to point to the greater love that God has for them. At some point they will want to know what, as Christians, we make of this LGBT stuff. We need to think carefully about how to explain this in a way that will be understood and appreciated, and not just met with defensiveness.

As important as explaining the particular truths of the Bible, is explaining the reasons *behind* why it says them. So we will need to talk about how God cannot bless—and indeed forbids—any activity that he defines as sinful. But we'll also want to show why God has a right to say what we should and shouldn't do with our bodies, and how it is we've come to see the goodness of what he says.

We will need to explain how repentance for the practicing LGBT will involve turning away from their lifestyle, but we'll also want to show how **all of us**, when **we** came to Christ, died to ourselves so that we could live a new life in him.³

REFLECT AND RESPOND

We must learn to engage those whose "sexuality" is outside biblical standards as people – not projects. Don't seek to "fix" people. Period. Point people to Christ. It's never been my job to change someone's sexual attraction. It's God's job. He has great experience in the "life change department." My responsibility is to speak the truth in love and always point the lost to Jesus.

All people (including you) are simultaneously image bearers, yet sinful.

All people are stricken with a terminal illness: sin. Everyone. No exceptions. Our sin demands our repentance and needs forgiveness, and God's love and grace are where we find both.

People are more than their sexuality.

To identify people **by** their sexuality is to reduce people **to** their sexuality.

As you minister to those struggling in this area, remember we are all prone to being deceived by our own desires ("We all once lived in the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body..." Ephesians 2:3)

The shocking truth is that God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5). We won't help those struggling by encouraging them to "live straight." The cure for all of our souls is found in the gospel's promise that God justifies the ungodly by the sheer power of his grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

¹ I am grateful for many resources and authors who have helped me work through this subject over many years. I am most thankful however, for the privilege I have had to sit at the feet of wise, exegetically sound preachers and

² Garrett Kell, *The Gospel for a Gay Friend*

³ Sam Allbery, *Is God Anti Gay?*

teachers. I am sure many of the words typed in this message came directly from their mouths, even though I cannot identify them specifically in footnotes here. Much of this manuscript is an adaptation of the work by Sam Allbery, *Is God Anti Gay?*