

STUDY 5 - REPRESSIVE?

“The Bible was ignorant about human sexuality therefore its sexual prohibitions are also ignorant and actually repressive.”

#love #intimacy #sex #marriage #friendship #dating #courtship #hookup

Throughout this consideration of our culture’s ideas about sexuality I have attempted to compare these ideas with the claims about sexuality found in the Bible. This comparison is grounded in the conviction that the Bible is God’s inspired and authoritative Word to humankind. This conviction naturally leads to the acceptance that the Bible is our Creator’s loving wisdom for how we can flourish, be happy, and find maximum fulfilment. Naturally, those who reject the authority of the Bible consider that its sexual prohibitions are archaic (old fashioned) and repressive (harsh, severe, cruel, and unfair). You would be forgiven for assuming that those who reject Bible’s authority are non-Christians and probably atheists, but you might be wrong.



The general public could also be excused for thinking that the Bible must be repressive and out-of-date about sexuality — because there are so many Christian clergy who tell them so!



Are the Bible’s sexual prohibitions repressive? Consider the list of prohibitions listed in Leviticus 18. It prohibits, (i) incest (vss. 10-16); (ii) fornication (vs. 19); (iii) adultery (vs. 20); (iv) child abuse (vs. 21); (v) homosexuality (vs. 22); and, (vi) bestiality (vs. 23). God is not opposed to sex. The opening two chapters of Genesis reveal that God designed sex within marriage between a husband and wife for their flourishing. Jesus upheld these sexual prohibitions which define *sexual immorality* in Matthew 15:19-20.



Therefore, whenever you hear of a Christian bishop or priest who claims that the Bible's sexual laws no longer apply today, be sceptical and examine their reasons. Often times such claims depend upon people simply assuming that since this was a bishop or priest making the claim, *it must be true!* This is known as *the Professor's Ploy*. Another way to describe this error is: "*Trust me, I'm an expert!*"

GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUAL FLOURISHING

God's design for human sexual fulfilment is evident in the Bible's opening chapter where God "blesses" human sexuality and summons the first man and woman to be *fruitful* (from the Hebrew word 'parach' which is also translated as *flourish*, Ps. 92:12-13) which presents God's means for true sexual fulfilment to be the loving, life-long, exclusive commitment of one man to one woman 'till death do they part' (Genesis 1:28). This instruction was originally given by God in the mountain-top Garden in Eden, and then repeated and revalidated by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6.

We are created sexual - that is, by our Creator's design we are made either male or female and with a natural sexual attraction to each other. This attraction is not sinful. But this demands that we understand what 'sinful' means. When God created the world and everything in it He

declared that it was “good” (Genesis 1:25). This is an incredibly important truth: *God made a good world*. When a heavenly being became proud and envious of God’s creative power he rebelled against God and introduced evil into the world. Evil is a distortion of *good*. This once glorious and good being then became the first adversary of God. The Hebrew word for ‘the adversary’ is *ha’satan* - which our English Bibles translate as *satan*. He, and his devilish minions, are your enemy - but not your *worst* enemy. Your worst enemy lies much closer to home: *sin*. Sin and evil are distortions, abuses, and ill-purposed uses of what God had designed for good. Our natural inclination for sexual attraction has now become distorted. What was created as a gift to humankind and given very clear boundaries for its expression has now been infected by sinful (selfish) desires.

Our culture distorts sex, framing it as a need rather than a gift and as an individual right rather than the most intimate expression of an exclusively committed relationship. Sexual expression, sexual preference, sexual orientation, and sexual activity dominate the current quest for human identity. Because our culture teaches us to see sex as a need and a right of self-expression or self-fulfillment, sex quickly becomes selfish rather than self-giving. If the focus is on fulfilling one’s own desires, one’s partner becomes a means to an end. A faithful reading of Scripture invites us to lovingly give ourselves to another rather than use others to meet our own perceived “needs.”

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MARRIAGE IS HOLY AND SERVES A NEW PURPOSE

God has created males and females to be different. When the enemy manipulated a serpent in the Sacred Garden he was particularly targeting his biggest threat and his greatest object of envy: the woman (Gen. 3:1-6). After yielding to his devilish temptation, the man and the woman were effected by the stain of sin in similar but different ways. For the first time in their lives they would be selfish and permanently so. This impacted their sexual appetites (“libido”). The woman became more conscious of its consequences (Gen. 3:16), and the man became more focused on the pleasure he derived from it and far less conscious of its consequences (as will become apparent through the rest of the Biblical accounts - note Judah’s liaison with Tamar Gen. 38; and David’s liaison with Bathsheba 2Sam 11, as examples).

After the fall of humankind into sin, marriage took on a newer purpose - *the curbing of a man’s inconsiderate drive for sex*. Marriage became a means whereby a man was to prize intimacy *more* than his sexual urges.

Sex requires vulnerability. In a scenario where lovers are not committed to each other for life, the risk of rejection is high. Even in committed relationships, hopes can be fragile. In sex we ideally present our unfiltered and unmasked selves to each other. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed (Genesis 2:25), but since the fall, many of us struggle with baring our bodies because we fear we are not enough. Not curvy enough. Not virile enough. Not desirable enough. Not responsive enough.

I suspect this is one reason why the use of pornography is so widespread. With porn, one can find some measure of sexual gratification without risking rejection or worrying about performance. We can avoid strained relational dynamics and stop worrying about whether we want too much, too often. However, porn instigates its own cycle of problems.

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Dr. Imes (2023) goes on to cite a 2016 *Time Magazine* report that “porn rewires the human brain, making it difficult for a person to respond to an embodied sexual partner...Pornography establishes neurological pathways in your brain that make it more difficult to find embodied sexual fulfillment, *even while married*” (83). For a marriage to be what God intended for a man and a woman, it requires re-learning what was lost in Eden - an ability to be considerate of the other in selfless sacrificial love. This is why being born-again by Christ sending the Holy Spirit into a person’s heart is so necessary!

SINGLENES AND CELIBACY

Not everyone is gifted with marriage. Some are, like the apostle Paul was, gifted with singleness. It is worth considering that the most perfect human being who was also the happiest and the most fulfilled human being, lived his life as a celibate (to live as a virgin), unmarried, person. Jesus Christ, unlike sinful men, was not driven by sinful sexual desires (this is referred to as *lusts* and in theological terms *concupiscence* - note Col. 3:5).

Thus, for many people, their life will be lived as a single, unmarried, celibate, person. One the great lies of culture is that it is not possible to be a fully realised human being unless you are sexually active. The life and example of Jesus the Christ destroys this lie. Living as a single in a ‘couples world’ can be a challenge, and it is a challenge made all the easier by being in a local church community where true and wholesome friendships can be formed. Far from being *repressive* the Bible’s teaching on sex and sexuality is designed for us to experience God’s blessings.

Amen.