

What God Says About Sex – A Christian Perspective on Human Sexuality

Sue Bohlin provides us a succinct Christian perspective on human sexuality. She points out that God created sex and has a purpose for it defined within the context of marriage. When we lose sight of God's perspective, sex can degrade into a pastime for pleasure that will ultimately hurt us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The Pickle Principle

It's not surprising that in a time of growing biblical illiteracy, so few people have any idea what God thinks and says about the extremely important subject of sex. The world holds the Christian view of sex in contempt, considering it prudish, naïve and repressive. But the Bible elevates sexuality as God's gift to us that is both sacred and mysterious. The world's perspective degrades it to just something that feels good—another form of recreation or socialization.



Counselor [Waylon Ward](#) offers an insightful way to understand the problem, which he calls “the Pickle Principle.” In order to make pickles, we put cucumbers in a brine solution of vinegar, spices, and water. After a cucumber soaks in the brine long enough, it is changed into a pickle. Most of us are like pickles. We sit in the brine of a sex-saturated culture, absorbing its values and beliefs, and it changes the way we think. Even most Christians are pickled today, believing and acting exactly like everyone else who has been sitting in the brine of a culture hostile to God and His Word.

The world's sex-saturated brine includes the belief that sex is the ultimate pleasure. The message of much TV, movies, and music is that there is no greater pleasure available, and that it is the right of every individual, even teenagers, to have this pleasure.[{1}](#) Another aspect of this pickling process is the belief that no one has the right to deprive anyone else of this greatest of all human pleasures, that no one has the right to tell anyone else what is right or wrong about the expression of his or her sexuality.[{2}](#)

If the purpose and goal of sex is primarily pleasure, then other people are just objects to be used for sensual gratification. Since people are infinitely valuable because God made us in His image, that is a slap in the face whether we realize it or not. The Christian perspective is that the purpose of sex is relational, with pleasure as the by-product. The Bible teaches that sex welds two souls together.[{3}](#) It is so powerful that it is only safe within a committed, covenant marriage relationship. It's like the difference between the wild energy of lightning compared to the harnessed power of electricity. God knew what He was doing when He limited sex to within marriage!

God wants to get His "pickled people" out of the world's brine and into an intimate relationship with Him. He wants to change our thinking and beliefs to be in alignment with His.

Sex is God's Invention! The Purpose of Sex

Sex is God's idea. He made it not only efficient for making babies, but pleasurable and deeply satisfying. He designed men's and women's body parts to complement each other. He created hormones to make everything work right and make us want to be sexual. Unlike animals, whose mating behavior is purely instinctive for the purpose of reproducing, human sexuality has several wonderful purposes. God means for all of

them to be contained within marriage.

In a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between husband and wife, we can express and enjoy God's two major purposes to sex: fruitfulness and intimacy. His first command to Adam and Eve was to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28); one very foundational purpose of sex is to create new living beings. Fruitfulness is not limited to having children, though. A mutually loving and serving sexual relationship between husband and wife can produce emotional and personal fruitfulness as well. Both people are nurtured to grow, develop, and soar, becoming more of what God means them to be.

The other big purpose for sex, emotional and physical intimacy, is only possible within marriage. In his little gem of a book called [What God Says About Sex](#),^{4} Eric Elder says that intimacy really means "into-me-see." It is only safe to reveal the fullness of who we are, "warts and all," to someone who loves us and has committed to be faithful and supportive "till death do us part." The fullest experience and freedom of sex is found within the marriage bed, which God says to keep holy or set apart.^{5} God says that we are to use self-control to keep all expressions of sexuality limited to marriage.^{6}

Sex also builds oneness, a mystical union of two lives and souls into one life together. The one-flesh union of sex is a picture of the way two souls are joined together into a shared life. In fact, we could say that sex is like solder that is used to fuse two pieces of metal together. Once they are joined, it is a strong bond that helps keep marriages and families intact, which is God's intention for our lives. Another purpose of sex is the pleasure that comes from being safe in another's love. The entire book of Song of Solomon is gorgeous poetry that glorifies married sexual relations.

God also says that an important purpose of sex is to serve as an earthbound illustration of the mystical but real unity of Christ and the church, where two very different, very *other*

beings are joined together as one. This spiritual component to sex is what helps us see more clearly why any and all sex outside of marriage falls far short of God's intention for it to be holy and sacred—and protected.

So . . . What Does God Actually Say?

A lot of people believe the Bible says, "Sex is fun and it feels good, so don't do it." Nothing could be farther from the truth! Sex was God's great idea in the first place! But God's view of sex as a sacred and private gift to married couples, as well as a gift each spouse gives to the other, is at great odds with the world's perspective of sex as simply a pleasure no one should deny him- or herself.

The overarching statement God makes is that sex is to be completely contained within marriage.^{7} As I said above, sex is so powerful that it's like the difference between the wild, uncontrollable power of lightning compared to the safety of harnessed electricity in our buildings. God wants us to harness the power of sex within marriage. This means that all other expressions of sexuality are off-limits, not because God is a cosmic killjoy, but because He loves us and knows what's best for us, namely, not playing with lightning! So God says not to engage in sex with anyone before marriage, with anyone else once we are married, with anyone of the same sex; or with prostitutes, or with family members, or with animals.

God says that sexual purity is a treasure to be guarded and valued. It is a reflection of God's own character, which is what makes it so valuable. In our culture, many people have been deceived into thinking that their virginity is worthless, something to get rid of. But God says it is special,^{8} a gift that we can only bestow on one person, one time. God calls us to purity after marriage as well by remaining faithful to our spouse. Purity before and during marriage prevents "ghosts" in the marriage bed; comparisons are nowhere as deadly as in the intensely intimate realm of sex. We glorify

God in our sexuality by using self-control to stay pure if single, and by loving our spouse sexually if married.

The good news is that purity can be restored if we confess our sin and put our trust in Jesus to forgive us and give us a new, holy quality of life. The Bible promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[{9}](#) God stands ready to forgive and cleanse us, and restore our purity the moment we ask.

God says that sex is to be reserved for adults only. Three times in the Song of Solomon, a beautiful book extolling the glory of married sex, it says, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires," which means "until the time is right."[{10}](#) As I minister to sexually broken people,[{11}](#) most of them bear the still-painful scars of childhood sexual abuse from people who never should have opened a door to sexual experience. Their entire view of sex has been warped and skewed. God never meant for children to be introduced to sex. It's for adults. *Married* adults.

God wants us to actively fight sexual temptation. The battle is harder than it's ever been because of our sex-saturated culture. He says to flee immorality.[{12}](#) In fact, God says to offer not even a *hint* of sexual immorality.[{13}](#) That means that it is a violation of His intentions to engage in phone sex with strangers, or virtual sex in chat rooms and porn sites. The fact that you're not physically touching another person's body doesn't mean it's not sin, because Jesus said that sexual sin happens in the mind first.[{14}](#)

Eric Elder suggests asking a powerful question to help clarify the battle against sexual temptation: will this lead to greater intimacy and fruitfulness with the husband or wife God has created for me?[{15}](#) This filter is helpful for both married people and singles. If an action doesn't build intimacy or fruitfulness, it probably destroys them. Another

question to ask is, Can I glorify God in what my flesh wants to do? Can I invite Jesus into what I'm about to do? If the answer is no, God invites us to meet the struggle with *His* supernatural energy instead of our own puny human strength.[{16}](#)

Outside of the safety of marriage, sex is wounding and hurtful, but God created it for our pleasure and delight. In the Song of Solomon, God enthusiastically invites the newlyweds to enjoy His good gift of sex, where He says, "Eat, friends, and drink, o lovers!"[{17}](#) In fact, God wants married couples to bless each other by enjoying sex often and regularly.[{18}](#)

Are you surprised by what God says about sex?

Why Sexual Sin Hurts So Much

Pastors and counselors will tell you that there is a greater intensity of shame and pain in the people they counsel when the issues involve sexual sin.[{19}](#) Paul says that all other sins are outside our bodies,[{20}](#) but sexual sin touches you deep in your heart and soul.

As mentioned above, it may be helpful to think of sex like solder. God created it to make a strong, powerful bond that creates healthy, stable families into which children are welcomed. But when people fuse their souls through sexual sin without the safety and commitment of marriage, it causes tremendous pain when the relationship rips apart. (Have you ever seen a broken weld? It's pretty ugly.) When sex is disconnected from love and commitment, it also disconnects the body from the soul. This inflicts deep wounds of shame and guilt on a heart that has been used for gratification instead of love.

Waylon Ward says that sex sins expose and exploit our deepest emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities. He writes, "In the

counseling office, individuals rarely if ever weep scalding tears about any other sense of loss like they do for a sexual relationship when it ends. There are soul ties that bind two partners together in unseen ways and there is a sense that part of you has been stolen. There is a hole in your soul where the connection was ripped from you.”[\[21\]](#)

The pickling brine of our culture’s increased sensuality says, “If it feels good, do it. You’re entitled.” But while this belief about sex may *feel* good, it is most definitely not good for us. Note the runaway epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, and the resulting increase in infertility. Note the number of broken hearts and broken families. Note the alarming amount of sexual abuse. Note the soaring rates of depression, especially in teens, much of which is related to sexual activity outside of marriage.

God invented sex for His glory and our benefit. His basic rule—keep sex inside marriage—isn’t meant to be a killjoy, but to protect our hearts and bodies and relationships and families. He knows what He’s doing, and we do well to follow.

Notes

1. Waylon Ward, *Sex Matters: Men Winning the Battle* (McKinney, Texas: Allison O’Neil Publishing Company, 2004), 7.
2. Ibid., 8.
3. Genesis 2:24;1 Corinthians 6:15-16.
4. Eric Elder, *What God Says About Sex* (Inspiringbooks.com, an imprint of Eric Elder, 2006). Contact theranch.org/2006/07/03/bookstore-what-god-says-about-sex/ for more information.
5. Hebrews 13:4.
6. 1 Corinthians 6:18.

7. There are 44 prohibitions of *porneia* (sexual expression outside of marriage, usually translated “sexual immorality”), just within the New Testament alone. This is where God draws the line between sex within marriage and sex outside of marriage, which determines what is sin and what is not.

8. Song of Solomon 4:12.

9. 1 John 1:9.

10. Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4.

11. I have the privilege of serving with Living Hope Ministries (www.livehope.org), a support group for those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions, and the families of those who struggle. (Or who don't struggle because they are just fully immersed in a gay identity.) I mainly minister to women, for whom a history of sexual abuse has long been a common denominator.

12. 1 Corinthians 6:18.

13. Ephesians 5:3.

14. Matthew 5:28.

15. Elder, *What God Says About Sex*, 37.

16. Colossians 1:29, Ephesians 6:10.

17. Song of Solomon 5:1.

18. 1 Corinthians 7:5.

19. Ward, *Sex Matters*, 16.

20. 1 Corinthians 6:18.

21. Ward, *Sex Matters*, 17.

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Pornography – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at pornography from a biblical worldview perspective. He clearly chronicles the physical, emotional and spiritual harm created by pornography and lays out the scriptural warnings to protect us from its degrading effects.

Pornography has been tearing apart the very fabric of modern society, but the problem has been made much worse with pornography's proliferation through the Internet. Studies show that 40 million adults regularly visit Internet pornography sites.[{1}](#) To put that in perspective, that is ten times the amount of people who regularly watch baseball.

When I first started writing about pornography in the 1980s, it was already a multi-billion dollar-a-year business mostly promoted through so-called "adult bookstores" and pornographic magazines. With the development of videos, DVDs, and the Internet, pornography has become ubiquitous.



The wages of sin are enormous when pornography is involved. Revenue from Internet porn exceeds by nearly a 2 to 1 ratio, the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC.[{2}](#) And sales of pornographic material on the Internet surpass the cumulative sales of all other products sold online.[{3}](#)

The current estimate is there are over 4 million pornographic websites representing almost 400 million pages of pornographic material.[{4}](#)

Pornography is not just something a few men view in the late hours in the privacy of their homes. At least 70 percent of

porn is downloaded during work hours (9 am to 5 pm). A percentage of those who do so admit to accessing pornography at work.

And pornography also affects those in church. According to *Leadership Journal*, 40 percent of pastors admit to visiting a pornographic website.[{5}](#) And at one Promise Keepers Convention, 53 percent of men admitted to visiting a porn site the week before.[{6}](#)

The impact pornography is having on young people is alarming. It used to be that when you would ask someone when they first saw pornography they would tell you a story about seeing a porn magazine at a friend's house when they were in middle school or high school. Now a child in grade school has already seen images that were only available in an adult bookstore a few years ago. At one time these images were inaccessible to youth; now they are merely a mouse click away. The average age of first exposure to Internet pornography is 11 years old. And the largest consumer of Internet pornography is the 12-17 age group.[{7}](#)

How should we define pornography? What is the effect on individuals and society? And what is a biblical perspective on this? I deal with each of these questions in detail in my book, *Christians Ethics in Plain Language*.[{8}](#) In the next section, we address some of these questions.

Definition and Types of Pornography

How should we define pornography? Pornography has been defined as material that "is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal." Hardcore pornography "is sexually explicit in the extreme, and devoid of any other apparent content or purpose."[{9}](#)

Another important term is obscenity. In the 1973 Supreme Court case of *Miller v. California*, the justices set forth a three-

part test to define obscenity: [{10}](#)

(a) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest.

(b) The work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and

(c) The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

What are the types of pornography? The first type of pornography is adult magazines, which are primarily directed toward adult male readers. The magazines with the widest distribution (*Playboy* and *Penthouse*) do not violate the *Miller* standards of obscenity and thus can be legally distributed.

The second type of pornography is video. Videocassettes or DVDs are rented or sold in most adult bookstores and the Internet. They have become a growth industry for pornography.

The third type of pornography is motion pictures. Ratings standards are being relaxed, and many pornographic movies are being shown and distributed carrying R and NC-17 ratings. Many of these so-called "hard R" rated films would have been considered obscene just a few decades ago.

A fourth type of pornography is television. As in motion pictures, standards for commercial television have been continuously lowered. But cable television poses an even greater threat. The Federal Communications Commission does not regulate cable in the same way it does public access stations. Thus, many pornographic movies are shown on cable television.

A fifth type of pornography is audio porn, which includes "Dial-a-porn" telephone calls, the second fastest growth market of pornography. Although most of the messages are

within the *Miller* definition of obscenity, these businesses continue to thrive and are often used by children.

A sixth type of pornography is “cyberporn,” or Internet pornography. Virtually anyone can download and view hard-core pictures, movies, online chat, and even live sex acts through the Internet.

Addiction to Pornography

Victor Cline, a psychologist, documented how men become addicted to pornographic materials, then begin to desire more explicit or deviant material, and finally act out what they have seen.[{11}](#) He maintained “that memories of experiences that occurred at times of emotional arousal (which could include sexual arousal) are imprinted on the brain by epinephrine, an adrenal gland hormone, and are difficult to erase. This may partly explain pornography’s addicting effect.”[{12}](#)

Other research showed that biochemical and neurological responses in individuals who are aroused release the adrenal hormone epinephrine in the brain, which is why one can remember pornographic images seen years before. In response to pleasure, nerve endings release chemicals that reinforce the body’s own desire to repeat the process.[{13}](#) Kimberly Young, an authority on Internet addiction, found that 90 percent of those who became addicted to cyberporn became addicted to the two-way communication functions: chat rooms, newsgroups, and e-mail.[{14}](#)

Psychologists identified a five-step pattern in pornographic addiction. The first step is *exposure*. Addicts have been exposed to pornography in many ways, ranging from sexual abuse as children to looking at widely available pornographic magazines.

The second step is *addiction*. People who continually expose

themselves to pornography “keep coming back for more and more” in order to get new sexual highs. James L. McCough of the University of California at Irvine said that “experiences at times of emotional or sexual arousal get locked in the brain by the chemical epinephrine and become virtually impossible to erase.”[\[15\]](#)

A third step is *escalation*. Previous sexual highs become more difficult to attain; therefore users of pornography begin to look for more exotic forms of sexual behavior to bring them stimulation.

A fourth step is *desensitization*. What was initially shocking becomes routine. Shocking and disgusting sexual behavior is no longer avoided but is sought out for more intense stimulation. Concern about pain and degradation get lost in the pursuit of the next sexual experience.

A fifth step is *acting out fantasies*. People do what they have seen and find pleasurable. Not every pornography addict will become a serial murderer or a rapist. But many do look for ways to act out their sexual fantasies

In my book *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I discuss in further detail the issue of pornographic addiction as well as describe the social and psychological effects of pornography.

Social Effects

Defining the social effects of pornography has been difficult because of some of the prevailing theories of its impact. One theory was that pornography actually performs a positive function in society by acting like a “safety valve” for potential sexual offenders.

The most famous proponent of this theory was Berl Kutchinsky, a criminologist at the University of Copenhagen. His famous study on pornography found that when the Danish government

lifted restrictions on pornography, the number of sex crimes decreased.[{16}](#) Therefore, he concluded that the availability of pornography siphons off dangerous sexual impulses. But when the data for his “safety-valve” theory was further evaluated, many of his research flaws began to show.

For example, Kutchinsky failed to distinguish between different kinds of sex crimes (such as rape and indecent exposure) and instead merely lumped them together, effectively masking an increase in rape statistics. He also failed to consider that increased tolerance for certain crimes (public nudity and sex with a minor) may have contributed to a drop in the reported crimes.

Proving cause and effect in pornography is virtually impossible because, ethically, researchers cannot do certain kinds of research. As Dolf Zillman said, “Men cannot be placed at risk of developing sexually violent inclinations by extensive exposure to violent or nonviolent pornography, and women cannot be placed at risk of becoming victims of such inclinations.”[{17}](#)

Nevertheless, a number of compelling statistics suggest that pornography does have profound social consequences. For example, of the 1,400 child sexual molestation cases in Louisville, Kentucky, between July 1980 and February 1984, adult pornography was connected with each incident and child pornography with the majority of them.[{18}](#)

Extensive interviews with sex offenders (rapists, incest offenders, and child molesters) have uncovered a sizable percentage of offenders who use pornography to arouse themselves before and during their assaults.[{19}](#) Police officers have seen the impact pornography has had on serial murders. In fact, pornography consumption is one of the most common profile characteristics of serial murders and rapists.[{20}](#)

Professor Cass Sunstein, writing in the *Duke Law Journal*, said that some sexual violence against women “would not have occurred but for the massive circulation of pornography.” Citing cross-cultural data, he concluded, “The liberalization of pornography laws in the United States, Britain, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries has been accompanied by a rise in reported rape rates. In countries where pornography laws have not been liberalized, there has been a less steep rise in reported rapes. And in countries where restrictions have been adopted, reported rapes have decreased.”[\[21\]](#)

Biblical Perspective

God created men and women in His image (Gen. 1:27) as sexual beings. But because of sin in the world (Rom. 3:23), sex has been misused and abused (Rom. 1:24-25).

Pornography attacks the dignity of men and women created in the image of God. Pornography also distorts God’s gift of sex which should be shared only within the bounds of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-3). When the Bible refers to human sexual organs, it often employs euphemisms and indirect language. Although there are some exceptions (a woman’s breasts and womb are sometimes mentioned), generally Scripture maintains a basic modesty towards a man’s or woman’s sexual organs.

Moreover, Scripture specifically condemns the practices that result from pornography such as sexual exposure (Gen. 9:21-23), adultery (Lev. 18:20), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22 and 20:13), incest (Lev. 18:6-18), and prostitution (Deut. 23:17-18).

A biblical perspective of human sexuality must recognize that sexual intercourse is exclusively reserved for marriage for the following purposes. First, it establishes the one-flesh union (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:4-6). Second, it provides for sexual intimacy within the marriage bond. The use of the word

“know” indicates a profound meaning of sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1). Third, sexual intercourse is for the mutual pleasure of husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19). Fourth, sexual intercourse is for procreation (Gen. 1:28).

The Bible also warns against the misuse of sex. Premarital and extramarital sex is condemned (1 Cor. 6:13-18; 1 Thess. 4:3). Even thoughts of sexual immorality (often fed by pornographic material) are condemned (Matt. 5:27-28).

Moreover, Christians must realize that pornography can have significant harmful effects on the user. These include: a comparison mentality, a performance-based sexuality, a feeling that only forbidden things are sexually satisfying, increased guilt, decreased self concept, and obsessive thinking.

Christians, therefore, must do two things. First, they must work to keep themselves pure by fleeing immorality (1 Cor. 6:18) and thinking on those things which are pure (Phil. 4:8). As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). Christians must make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Pornography will fuel the sexual desire in abnormal ways and can eventually lead to even more debase perversion. We, therefore, must “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Second, Christians must work to remove the sexual perversion of pornography from society.

Notes

1. Mark Penn, *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* (NY: Twelve, 2007), 276.
2. Ibid., 277.
3. George Barna, *Boiling Point: Monitoring Cultural Shifts in the 21st Century* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 223.
4. Truth in Porn, www.truthinporn.org.
5. The Leadership survey on Pastors and Internet Pornography, 1 January 2001, <http://ctllibrary.com/9582>.
6. *Today's Christian Woman*, September/October 2003.

7. Truth in Porn.
8. Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), chapter 11.
9. Michael McManus, ed., *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill, 1986), 8.
10. *Miller v. California*, 413 US 15, 47 (1973).
11. Victor Cline, *Where Do You Draw the Line?* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1974).
12. Victor B. Cline, *Pornography's Effects on Adults and Children* (New York: Morality in Media, 1990), 11.
13. J. L. McGaugh, "Preserving the Presence of the Past," *American Psychologist*, February 1983, 161.
14. Kimberley Young, Paper presented to 1997 convention of the American Psychological Association. A full treatment can be found in Kimberley Young, *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction-and a Winning Strategy for Recovery* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1998).
15. Quoted in Kenneth Kantzer, "The Power of Porn," *Christianity Today*, 7 February 1989, 18.
16. Berl Kutchinsky, "The Effect of Easy Availability of Pornography on the Incidence of Sex Crimes: The Danish Experience," *Journal of Social Issues* 29 (1973): 163-81.
17. Dolf Zillman, "Pornography Research and Public Policy," in *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*, ed. Dolf Zillman and Jennings Bryant (New York: Academic, 1989), 387-88.
18. Testimony by John B. Rabun, deputy director of the National Center for Missing and Exploited children, before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 12 September 1984.
19. W. Marshall, "Pornography and Sex Offenders," in *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*.
20. *The Men Who Murdered*, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, August 1985.
21. Cass R. Sunstein, "Pornography and the First Amendment," *Duke Law Journal*, September 1986, 595.

Those are sexy worldview glasses you've got there.

Feb. 3, 2011

E's email is a response to the post "[Glee-tastic!](#)"

Ms. McKenzie

Don't think Glee's overt sexuality has no effect on you. It is shaping you episode by episode. You are not immune.

Hi E,

Thanks for writing. I appreciate where you're coming from. Of course you're right. Whatever I watch shapes me. The question is, am I simply resigned to being shaped passively? Or do I have the option to take a more active role? I want you to know that I do not underestimate the power of our culture to shape us. That's why I work at a worldview ministry. Worldview goes a long way. The healthy view of sex I have intentionally pursued through study and prayer and practice and fellowship makes the nonsense often shown on screen unattractive, uninteresting, and particularly sophomoric. (Speaking of a holistic biblical worldview on sex, let me recommend Lauren Winner's excellent book, [Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity](#)). Now, that being said, that does not mean that I am immune. I have to be careful (again: prayer, study, fellowship/community, repentance).

I also understand that not everyone has the same level of

freedom to interact with various aspects of our unbelieving society. Everyone is different. There are certain things which are particularly spiritually unsafe for me—I know it in my guts and bones; I just can’t go there. But I also know that doesn’t mean it’s as dangerous for others as it is for me, and I don’t begrudge others their freedom. Especially since it’s so important to engage. Personal conviction derives from the way God has uniquely **created** us as individuals and how our singular personality and wiring is affected by the **Fall** – our particular tendencies, weaknesses, addictions, our circumstances, our personal history. The Apostle Paul calls us “ministers of reconciliation,” those who bring back together what has been separated, which Romans tells us is people and all of creation, the combination of the two inevitably including what people create. The Church has, since its inception, chosen to reconcile, or **redeem** culture, generally, in five different ways (for more on this, see our article, [“Christians and Culture”](#)). And that’s good. Diversity is good. Through it we better image God in all his vastness. Creation. Fall. Redemption. That is the framework we have for understanding the world; and because the Bible is true, it’s also the most accurate understanding of the world. However, take out any part—creation, fall, redemption—and our vision is blurred.



Anyone who believes he or she is safe from all the various temptations available in film is a fool. My colleague Todd wisely notes and advises, “Exercising rampant Christian freedom does not necessarily mean one is a strong Christian [referring to 1 Cor 8]. It could indicate that one is too weak

to control one's passions and is hiding behind the argument that they are a stronger brother." If we choose to watch TV or movies at all, we must approach them through a "framework of moderation," to use Todd's phrase, that addresses *our particular weaknesses*, for we are all of us the weaker brother somewhere. "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments" (Ps 119:66).

There is a difference between conviction and legalism. One of those differences is the legalistic compulsion to impose one's personal convictions on others. It is possible to abstain from certain types of movies and shows, or even all movies and television, in a genuinely free way. I greatly admire my friends who abstain; who don't even have a TV. Together we add to the richness of each others' lives by bringing perspective to one another about who God is and how we relate to him. Together we present to the world a more complete picture. It is the diversity of the Body that most beautifully represents Christ to the world. It is vital to our Christian calling to live as much as we can in the tension between the pulls of legalism and libertinism. The ebb and flow of this kind of living is part of what it means to live the full, rich, abundant life of Christ.

With affection in our Lord Jesus,
Renea

This blog post originally appeared at
reneamac.com/2011/02/03/those-are-sexy-worldview-glasses-youve-got-there/

“You Condemn All Other

Religions!"

I agree with there is one true God but in all the pages I have read on this site, I find that you are condemning all the other religions. But in my studies I have seen all religions have the same basis of love, peace, and understanding, and the belief that how you act on earth determines how you will spend eternity. But it's cocky religious people that spend their weeks living the way they want but then condemning others for living the way they see unfit and breaking the laws they're supposed to live by. Correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't the Catholic Church Bible say "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone," and seeing how it also says sex is a sin then doesn't that mean we all have sinned by being born and should not judge? But the religious people of the world constantly judge and they are hypocrites for cramming one religion down other people's throats.

Dear _____,

It is true that various world religions all address concepts like love, peace, and understanding. But that doesn't mean they have the same basic concepts. The various world religions are extremely different in their core beliefs. It's also true that we take the unpopular position that biblical Christianity is the only way to know God in this life, and the only way to live with Him in heaven after death. But the reason we take that position is because Jesus Himself made the claim, outrageous if it's not true, that He is God, that He came from heaven, and that He is the only way to God the Father: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me." That claim is absolutely CRAZY unless He really is God, and He really is the only way to be reconciled to God. Since He said He would be put to death and would come back to life, and then He did, He backed up His claim.

So we believe Him.

It's not just the Catholic Church's Bible that says "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (all versions say that), but it's important to understand the context of Jesus' statement. It doesn't mean we are not to judge at all, it means we are not to point fingers at someone else's sin when we are guilty of the same thing. I'm afraid you have a misunderstanding about the Bible's statements about sex. God doesn't say sex is a sin. He invented sex and gave it to us as His gift, to be contained within the only safe place for it: marriage. Sex outside of marriage is sin; sex within marriage is His good gift to be enjoyed. Being conceived during sex (which has always been God's good plan) is not what makes us sinners; we are all sinners because we inherited a "bentness" for sin from our first father, Adam. This has nothing to do with sex.

I appreciate that you're bothered by religious people attempting to cram their beliefs down the throats of anyone else. Based on what I know of God's heart from reading all of His words, I think He's bothered by it too. He offers a quality of abundant life on earth, and the promise of life in heaven with Him, but He also says it is our choice to accept His offer or not. Nowhere in the Bible is there any hint that cramming religion is acceptable. That's because God wants to be in a love relationship with us, and force or manipulation are opposites of love.

See _____, all of us have a sin problem. We are sinners, and God is a holy God. Our sin keeps us from having a relationship with Him, and God can't allow any sin into heaven when we die. The different world religions have different solutions to the sin problem. Some of them deny that it exists, then they have a real problem explaining events like 9/11. Others suggest that enough good works can outweigh our sins, but they offer no proof that this is true—or even hint at how many is "enough." That's a terrible thing to be wrong about! We believe that because Jesus provided proof that He is God, we

can trust what He said about being reconciled to God the Father through Himself as the only way.

I hope this helps. . . and I am sending this with a prayer that you will carefully consider the same question Jesus asked when He was on earth: "Who do you say that I am?"

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

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"What Does the Bible Say About Masturbation?"

Dr. Bohlin:

I have just read [your article on "Sexual Purity"](#) & found it to be an excellent resource. You have really hit this subject on the head.

Can you please address the following question?

I am a Christian male, age 36. My girlfriend, maybe soon to be fiance is also a Christian. We do not cohabit, nor do we have sexual relations, albeit we are not virgins.

The secular world would have us believe that masturbation is a healthy practice. Research has shown that men think about sex more often than women. Obviously men and women are wired differently.

I catch myself entertaining sexual thoughts and I feel a tremendous amount of guilt. What does the Bible say about

masturbation & entertaining sexual thoughts? I know that we can commit fornication in our hearts by our lustful thoughts & desires.

You raise a difficult and even controversial topic. Christians have disagreed on the issue of masturbation. Some allow it and some do not. Here is my take. The Bible is clear that any sexual activity outside of marriage is sin. The biblical term "fornication" (sexual immorality) simply refers to any sexual activity outside of marriage. Jesus also clearly indicated, as you mentioned, that we can commit adultery in our hearts without any physical activity involved. Part of our sanctification process is to be transformed from being self-centered to being other-centered. With this background, consider these realities. Masturbation is sexual activity outside of marriage. Most if not all masturbation is accompanied by sexual thoughts to accentuate the experience. Masturbation is essentially self-centered, seeking to fulfill one's own needs by oneself. There is no specific Biblical admonition to refrain from masturbation. However, based on the review above, it is difficult to find any justification for it either.

This is not to say, of course, that avoidance of masturbation in young men is easy. We praise God for His finished work on the cross that allows for forgiveness of past, present, and future sin, even besetting sins.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is Masturbation OK When My Wife and I Are Apart?”

This is an embarrassing question but here goes.....

I am a soldier in the US Army and a born again Christian. Many times the army sends us away from home for long periods and we are separated from our families. I have read your responses to others concerning masturbation but my dilemma is this. I have done this but I do not use porn and I am thinking of my wife when I do it. My wife and I have a very healthy sexual relationship and when together we enjoy each other just as the Bible allows!!! Do you stand firm on your direction for those of us who are married and do this?? I have prayed and have not felt the same conviction as I have on other issues I have taken to the Lord. I know this doesn't mean that okays it but that is usually the way he answers my issues.

Thanks for writing and your encouragement. You bring up a very important issue, masturbation within marriage.

Since you have read my other responses let me remind you of something I said within one of those responses.

“Masturbation is essentially self-centered, seeking to fulfill one's own needs by oneself. ”

I'm afraid this still holds in your case. I fully recognize that the long separations are difficult. But by relieving your sexual tension on your own (even though you use your wife in your mental image) you are robbing your wife of her proper role and responsibility in your sexual relationship. For example, it is well recognized that the longer the time interval between sexual experiences, the greater the enjoyment and the more powerful the experience when finally consummated. By masturbating during separation you ultimately dampen the reunion for both you and your wife. Ask yourself, biblically,

who should be the sole recipient of your sexual energies? I think you would answer that it should be your wife alone.

Masturbation also creates conflicting signals for your mind and body. A high frequency of masturbation creates a pattern in your mind and body on how it is best satisfied. And this will be apart from your wife. You may also fantasize situations with your wife that she may be unable to fulfill in person. This can also create a situation where your actual experiences together may not be able to measure up to what you have created in your mind. This can easily erect a barrier in your mind for when you are together.

Also this is still a sexual experience outside of marriage as God intended, which is fornication.

I challenge you to refrain from masturbation during your next separation with a willing attitude of submission and purity and see if it doesn't make a significant and "very positive" difference in the intensity of your reunion.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"You Are Degrading Teenagers in Your 'Safe Sex' Article"

I just quickly glanced over your article about STDs and pregnancy ([Safe Sex and the Facts](#)). I was extremely set back by the hypocritical phrasing, "immature teenagers." You may want to take a long, deep thought about how people could judge you at this time in your life. Just because teenagers may lack

experience, “immaturity” would not be the word to use especially used in your degrading sense.

I think if you had read the article more carefully, you would have seen that I give teenagers a lot of credit where I know credit is due, as in this paragraph:

“Current condom-based sex-education programs basically teach teenagers that they cannot control their sexual desires, and that they must use condoms to protect themselves. It is not a big leap from teenagers being unable to control their sexual desires to being unable to control their hate, greed, anger, and prejudice. This is not the right message for our teenagers! Teenagers are willing to discipline themselves for things they want and desire and are convinced are beneficial. Girls get up early for drill team practice. Boys train in the off-season with weights to get stronger for athletic competition. Our teens can also be disciplined in their sexual lives if they have the right information to make logical choices. Saving sex for marriage is the common sense solution. In fact, it is the only solution. We don’t hesitate to tell our kids not to use drugs, and most don’t. We tell our kids it’s unhealthy to smoke, and most do not. We tell our kids not to use marijuana, and most do not.”

This paragraph puts my comment in context:

“Condoms are inherently untrustworthy. The FDA allows one in 250 to be defective. Condoms are often stored and shipped at unsafe temperatures which weakens the integrity of the latex rubber causing breaks and ruptures. Condoms will break 8% of the time and slip off 7% of the time. There are just so many pitfalls in condom use that you just can’t expect immature teenagers to use them properly. And even if they do, they are still at risk.”

The comment you found disgusting is not meant in a derogatory

way, it is simply a realistic observation. My wife and I have raised two sons, now ages 22 and 24. They are certainly more mature than when they were 13 and 15. Even they would acknowledge that. Teenagers are immature in many ways and that is natural. They haven't had many life experiences, especially sexually, to allow them to act as mature adults and make wise decisions. That was my point. From the statistics cited about teen sexual behavior, the immaturity shows. I also certainly understand that some teenagers are more mature than others. Not everyone fits a generalization. That is understood.

I'm sorry you interpreted the phrase as being degrading. That was not my intention and I see no reason to change it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

India's Missing Girls and the Right to Choose

Rusty Wright and Meg Korpi reveal that female infanticide and feticide in India's patriarchal culture stir passions for equality and fairness but raise troubling questions. Does favoring a woman's right to choose logically imply that one supports her right to terminate a fetus simply because it is female?

Last summer, a farmer in southern India discovered a tiny human hand poking from the ground. A two-day-old baby girl had been buried alive. The reason? Much of Indian culture favors males over females, sometimes brutally so. The girl's

grandfather confessed to attempting murder because his family already had too many females; keeping this one would be too costly.

This wasn't an isolated incident on the subcontinent according to award-winning filmmaker Ashok Prasad. Prasad spoke recently at Stanford University at the U.S. premiere of his BBC documentary "India's Missing Girls." Anti-female bias affects Indians rich and poor. Males can perpetuate the family name, bring wealth, and care for elderly parents. A female's family typically must pay a huge dowry when she weds, often depleting family resources. A popular Hindi aphorism: "Having a girl is to plant a seed in someone else's garden."[\[1\]](#)

Female Infanticide and Feticide

Against odds, this baby survived, but social and financial pressures bring alarming rates of female infanticide and feticide (termination of a fetus). UN figures estimate 750,000 Indian girls are aborted every year.[\[2\]](#) Demographic studies reveal dramatically growing gender disparity since the 1980's[\[3\]](#); in some regions only 80 baby girls survive for every 100 boys.[\[4\]](#) Many men cannot find wives.

Financial repercussions are typically cited as the reason for discarding daughters, but the decision is often an economic choice rather than necessity. Greater gender disparity occurs in wealthier states.[\[5\]](#) These families can better afford the sex determination tests and sex-selective abortions that, according to a report published by the UN Population Fund, are the main contributors to the decreasing proportion of female children.[\[6\]](#)

Adding to the offensiveness of sex-selective abortion: the fetus must be well-formed (15-18 weeks) before the sex can be detected using ultrasound-the common sex-determination technology. "India's Missing Girls" includes brief, grisly footage of terminated female fetuses being lifted from a well

belonging to a clinic that performed sex-selective abortions. After the discovery, outraged women's groups protested in the streets; several such clinics were closed down.

The heartening side of the documentary is Sandhya Reddy, who runs a children's home, cares for abandoned kids, and tries to persuade mothers to keep their daughters or girl fetuses. This angel of mercy brings love, care and opportunity to society's young rejects.

"India's Missing Girl's" poignantly depicts where devaluing women can lead. The Stanford screening's sponsors included feminist and women's organizations, but feminists and nonfeminists, liberals and conservatives alike will be moved. An [abbreviated 29-minute version](#) on [YouTube](#) is worth watching, even if only the first 10-minute segment.[\[7\]](#)

Troubling Questions

To Western sensibilities, killing babies and terminating fetuses solely because of gender is abhorrent. Yet no Hitler masterminds this mass extermination of females. It results from hundreds of thousands of personal decisions.

As the U.S. recognizes 35 years of *Roe v. Wade*, feticide's increasing contribution to India's missing girls raises a disturbing dilemma: Doesn't favoring a woman's right to free reproductive choice logically require supporting her right to terminate a fetus simply because it is female?

Important worldview questions emerge. Opposing female feticide seems to ascribe some sort of value to the female fetus. Is this value inherent because the fetus is female? If so, wouldn't equality require that we ascribe similar value to the male fetus because it is male?

Or is the fetus's value utilitarian, e.g., to ensure female influence in society or sufficient brides? Or is it merely economic-negative for Indian females, positive for males?

An enduring view of the fetus's value appears in Psalm 139. King David's worldview recognizes awe-inspiring biological intricacy fashioned by the Divine: You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!{8}

Inherently valuable? Socially useful? Economically consequential? Wonderfully complex? The troubling quandary still haunts: Can opposing female feticide be reconciled with supporting reproductive choice? The question demands a logically consistent answer from every thinking person.

Notes

1. Raekha Prasad and Randeep Ramesh, "India's missing girls," Guardian Unlimited, February 28, 2007, guardian.co.uk/india/story/0,,2022983,00.html; accessed January 18, 2008
2. Ashok Prasad, "Harsh reality of India's unwanted girls," BBC News, 22 October 2007, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/7050657.stm; accessed January 18, 2008.
3. Christophe Z. Guilmoto, "Characteristics of sex-ratio imbalance in India, and future scenarios," Report presented at the 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive Health and Rights, Hyderabad, India, October 29-31, 2007. Published by the United Nations Population Fund www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/studies/india.pdf; downloaded January 25, 2008.
4. Prasad and Ramesh, loc. cit.
5. Using India's 2001 census data for each state (www.censusindia.gov.in), we found strong negative correlations (-0.5 to -0.7) between various indicators of wealth and female-to-male sex ratios for children under 6.
6. Guilmoto, loc. cit.
7. www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf32d735VgE; accessed January 18, 2008.
8. [Psalm 139:13-14 NLT](#).

“Can Cheaters Remarry Without Living in Adultery?”

I want to know is oral sex adultery? My friend's husband cheated on her. She divorced him, but before she divorced him, she had sex with another man. She is now divorced and wants to marry the man she later cheated with. Is this ok? Or since they both cheated, can they remarry without living in a continual state of adultery?

First question: Yes, oral sex is adultery. Oral sex is sex. Having sex with a person when youre married to someone else is adultery. So oral sex is adultery. (Here's a question that moves this question from the hypothetical to the real world: Ask anyone who's married how they would feel about their spouse having oral sex with a third party, and if it constitutes cheating. Most people [those without seared consciences, at least!] would quickly assure you they wouldn't want their spouse even *kissing* another person, much less getting far more intimate than that!)

Second question: Its not so much the living in a continual state of adultery, but the permanent stain of having been adulterers that can never go away. Both people would be marrying people who have demonstrated that they are cheaters. Second marriages have an extremely high failure rate, but it's even higher for those that begin in adultery.

What a sad question. It makes my heart hurt. But Im glad you

asked.

Sue Bohlin

“Body Building”: Edifying Thoughts about Our Bodies

Why Should I Care About This?

Our culture is obsessed with the human body. Have you turned on the television or stood in the supermarket checkout line recently? Images and information about the human body bombard our senses from almost every direction. And what we believe about the body can make a huge difference for our daily life, and for the life beyond! That’s why we need to think carefully about a Christian view of the body. For when our ideas about the body go wrong, a lot of related Christian beliefs can also be affected.



For example, in the early centuries of the Christian church there were some religious groups called Gnostics. Their name derived from the Greek term *gnosis* which means “knowledge,” because they thought that salvation came through secret knowledge. In their view, reality consisted of two primary components: matter (which was evil) and spirit (which was good).^{1} Since matter was evil, the human body was likewise viewed as “intrinsically degenerate.”^{2}

The Gnostics’ negative beliefs about the human body influenced

their thinking in other areas as well. Their ideas about the incarnation, the afterlife, and human sexuality, were all affected. Consider the incarnation. Christians believe that God the Son became a real human being with a real human body. But this view was repulsive to some of the Gnostics. While some believed that the divine Christ temporarily assumed a human body, they did not think this state was permanent. And others denied that Jesus had a physical body at all. They believed that Jesus only *appeared* to be human.^{3} In reality, he was a completely spiritual being. This was especially true after his resurrection, which Gnostics generally held to be a purely spiritual (and not physical) event.^{4}

The Gnostic view of the afterlife was similar. After death, Gnostics believed, they would be reunited with God in the spiritual realm. Unlike Christians, they had no desire for the resurrection of the body. The body was a prison from which they would gratefully escape at death.

Consider finally their views about human sexuality. Although some Gnostics may have lived a sexually immoral lifestyle, the majority seem to have rather been ascetics.^{5} They treated the body harshly and rejected sexual activity and procreation as earthly, physical, and unspiritual. Such activities kept one in bondage to this evil material world.

Unfortunately, these Gnostic beliefs about the body influenced Christianity to some degree. But if we look at what the Bible teaches, what we find is much more interesting and exciting.

The Goodness of the Human Body

What do you believe about your body? Is it something good—or evil?

In striking contrast to the Gnostics, who believed both the material world and human body were intrinsically evil, the biblical writers present a positive conception of both.

The first verse of Genesis declares, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). A few verses later we learn that God created human beings in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). And at the end of chapter one we're told that everything God made "was very good" (Gen. 1:31). So unlike the Gnostics, who believed the material world was the work of an evil, inferior deity, the biblical writers viewed the physical universe and human body as part of the good creative work of the one true God.

Moreover, in the biblical view humanity occupies a very special place in the created order. Having been made in God's image, men and women are viewed as the crown of creation. But what does it mean to say that we are made in God's image? As one might expect, this is a question that has been given extensive consideration throughout the history of the church.

On the one hand, we probably shouldn't think of the divine image primarily in *physical* terms, for God is a *spiritual* being. Still, it's probably also a mistake to think that our bodies aren't *in any sense* made in God's image. Genesis 1:27 says that God created man in His image. Reflecting on this statement, some scholars have noted that it's "not some part of a human or some faculty of a human, but a human in his or her wholeness [that] is the image of God. The biblical concept is not that the image is *in* man and woman, but that man and woman *are* the image of God."[\[6\]](#) Since God created man in His image as an embodied personal being, it seems quite natural to suppose that the material (as well as immaterial) aspects of our being are *both* included in what it means to be made in God's image.

In Genesis 2 we have a more detailed account of the creation of man and woman. In verse 7 we read that "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." This verse indicates that there are both material and immaterial components of man's being—and each *in some sense* bears God's

image. This is why in the Christian view human beings have inherent worth and dignity. It's also why in contrast to the Gnostics we believe in the goodness of the human body.

The Importance of the Incarnation

Did you know that your beliefs about the human body can affect your view of Jesus and why He came? As we've seen, the biblical writers saw the human body as God's good creation (Gen. 1-2). Naturally enough, such radically different views of the body influenced how Gnostics and Christians understood the doctrine of the incarnation as well.

The term "incarnation" means "'to enter into or become flesh.' It refers to the Christian doctrine that the pre-existent Son of God became man in Jesus." [\[7\]](#) Our first hint that something like this would happen comes shortly after man's fall into sin. In Genesis 3:15 God tells the serpent, the agent of temptation in the story, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." The verse promises a coming Champion or Deliverer, who would be born of a woman, and who would deliver the decisive death-blow to Satan. Later we learn that this Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, redeems humanity from the tragic consequences of sin and death by giving His own life as a substitute in our place (1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). The death of God's Son for the sins of the world was possible because of the incarnation. By becoming a real man, with a real body, He experienced a real death on the cross.

One of the clearest statements of the incarnation is found in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (1:1, 14). This Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, told His followers that He had come "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). While Gnostics generally

regarded the death of Jesus as irrelevant for salvation, Christians see it as absolutely essential.

In Revelation 5:9 a song is sung in praise of Christ, who through His death “purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” In the early church, some theologians said that what Christ did not assume, neither did He redeem. They meant that if Christ did not really have a human body, then neither did He redeem our bodies. This is why the incarnation is so important. By becoming fully human and dying for our sins, Christ secured the complete redemption of all who put their trust in Him.

Human Sexuality

Those unfamiliar with the Bible might be surprised to learn how much it has to say about sex. And what it says is neither prudish nor out of date. On the contrary, its counsel is both supremely wise and eminently practical. [\[8\]](#)

In fact, unlike the ancient Gnostics, the Bible has a very positive view of human sexuality. An entire book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, is largely devoted to extolling the beauty and wonder of sexual love within the God-ordained covenant of marriage. Sex was God’s idea and is rooted in His original creation of man and woman as sexual beings (Gen. 1:27). While one of God’s purposes in creating us this way was for procreation (Gen. 1:28), it certainly wasn’t His only purpose. God also intended sex to be a pleasurable and meaningful expression of intimacy and love between husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19).

According to Jesus, the biblical ideal of marriage is a lifelong, exclusive commitment of one man to one woman (Mk. 10:2-9). Citing the Genesis creation account He says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Mk.

10:7-8; cf. Gen. 2:24). As one writer has observed, “Here we have a blueprint for human sexual love: through the sexual act the man and woman have a wonderful new kind of intimacy. This is called being ‘one flesh,’ and it is designed to be exclusive and faithful.”[\[9\]](#)

Unfortunately, man’s fall into sin brought about the misuse and abuse of God’s good gift. And as one might expect, the Bible doesn’t shy away from addressing such things. Essentially, the biblical view is that sex is to be fully enjoyed as a wonderful gift from God, but *only* within the sacred bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. Every other kind of sexual activity is lumped into the category of “sexual immorality.” And this we are told to flee, for as Paul told the Corinthians, “he who sins sexually sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).

But Paul then went even further. He called the believer’s body “a temple of the Holy Spirit.” He said that Christians have been “bought at a price” and should “honor God” with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This reveals something of the value which God places upon the human body. And He encourages us to do the same.

Bodily Death and Resurrection

Did you know that your view of the human body affects your view of eternity?

Throughout history humanity has entertained a variety of ideas about what happens after death. Some think that physical death is the end of our personal, conscious existence. While we might “live on” in people’s memories, we don’t live on in any other sense. Others believe that while the body dies, the human soul or spirit continues to exist—perhaps on a higher spiritual plane, perhaps in a spiritual heaven or hell, or perhaps somewhere else. According to this view, our bodily

existence is only temporary. Once we die our bodies are discarded, but our souls go on living forever.

In the early years of the church, many Gnostics believed that people would experience different fates at death. Some would just cease to exist. For them, death was the end. Others could enjoy some sort of afterlife through faith and good works. From a Gnostic perspective, these people were the Christians. Only a few, however, namely, the Gnostics themselves, could expect a truly fantastic afterlife in which they would be reunited with God in the divine realm.[{10}](#) In other words, the Gnostics anticipated being liberated from this evil material world, including their bodies, and being reunited with God in a completely spiritual existence. Interestingly, although there are differences, many Christians seem to expect an afterlife that's very similar to that envisioned by the Gnostics.

But what the Bible teaches is really quite different. Although it comforts Christians with the reminder that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), this is not the believer's final state. Instead, we're told to eagerly await the resurrection of our bodies, which will be modeled after Jesus' resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 42-49). As Christians, we don't look forward to a purely *spiritual* (in the sense of *non-physical*) afterlife. Instead, we await a *bodily* existence in a new heaven and new earth which is completely free from the presence and power of sin (2 Pet. 3:10-13)! Just as Christ was raised *physically* from the dead, so one day He will likewise raise all men from the dead. Some will enjoy His presence forever; others will be shut out from His presence forever (Matt. 25:46; Jn. 5:28-29). Which experience shall be ours depends entirely upon our relationship to Christ (Jn. 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:8-10). So why not put your trust in Him and enjoy forever the new heavens and new earth in a new, resurrected body? You're invited, you know (Rev. 22:17).

Notes

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: Christian Scriptures and the Battles Over Authentication*, Course Guidebook, Pt. 1 (Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company, 2002), 20.
2. Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9.
3. J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: What The Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2006), 200.
4. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 29.
5. Ibid., 21.
6. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, eds. Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), s.v. "Image of God."
7. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (1st ed.), ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), s.v. "Incarnation" by Frank J. Matera.
8. A number of ideas in this section were informed by the article "Sex, Sexuality," in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.
9. Amy Orr-Ewing, *Is the Bible Intolerant?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 113.
10. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 21.