

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
Sex and Culture



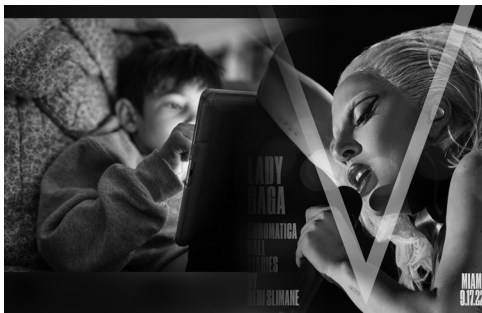
Kerby Anderson



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Sex and Culture



We are a sex-saturated society. Sex is used to sell everything from cars to clothes. It is nearly impossible to avoid the sexual messages in society. That is why Christians must work to view the world through a biblical perspective and teach that perspective to our children and grandchildren.

The reasons for the increase in

sexual temptations and promiscuity are both philosophical and cultural. Our culture has undergone a philosophical shift over the last half century from a Judeo-Christian foundation to a secular one. Two cultural forces have accelerated this philosophical shift. The first is the entertainment media (television, movies, rock music, social media). The second is sex education (sex education classes, school-based clinics). These two forces have transformed the social landscape of America, making promiscuity a virtue and virginity a “problem” to be solved.

Sexual Restraint

One of the most significant books in the 20th century on sex and culture was written by J.S. Unwin, an Oxford sociologist who published a book in the 1930s. In it, he described 80 tribes and six historical civilizations over the course of five millen-

nia. His focus was on whether sexual restraint or sexual liberation was a positive factor in these civilizations.

The pattern was repeated many times. Marriage and family may have varied but usually were based on mutual consent and a lifelong association. But decline came when marriage and commitment faded, and sexual restraint was abandoned. He concluded, "The whole of human history does not contain a single instance of a group becoming civilized unless it has been absolutely monogamous, nor is there any example of a group retaining its culture after it has adopted less rigorous customs."

Whether you are talking about sex or finances, the person who is able to delay gratification will be more successful. Sexual liberation becomes sexual anarchy and eventually social anarchy.

We shouldn't be surprised that

our sex-saturated society is in decline. J.D. Unwin looked at it merely from the practical perspective and even said he had no opinion about the rightness or wrongness of what he studied.

The Apostle Paul looked at the moral implications and warned us in Romans 1:25 about those who “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” There is a price to pay for abandoning biblical principles about human sexuality.

Sexual Revolution

A major change in the way our culture valued sexuality occurred during the 1960s in what has often been called the sexual revolution. The publication of the research by Alfred Kinsey (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*) provided the justification for changing the sexual mores

in society. The promotion of this new sexual standard came from people like Hugh Hefner (Playboy) and Helen Gurley Brown (Cosmopolitan).

Carl Trueman, in his book, *Strange New World*, summarizes this profound change: “we now live in an age where homosexuality no longer carries the social stigma... sex outside of marriage—indeed, outside of any framework of personal commitment—is now commonplace. Our sexual world is simply not that of our Victorian ancestors.”

In *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Carl Trueman argues that the sexual revolution was more than merely the loosening of moral boundaries. He argues that the transformation took place much earlier with the focus on the “self”. Next, the “self” became sexualized. Then sex even became politicized. The change wasn’t just in a rejection of codes of

sexual behavior but was a “repudiation of the very ideas of such codes in their entirety.”

Not so long ago, it was assumed that a boy should grow up to be a man and to become a husband. With the addition of children, it was also assumed that he should be expected to take on the responsibilities of a father. Now, he is expected to search his “inner self” and discover his personal truth about his sexual orientation and his gender identity. In the past, gender identity was determined by his bodily sex, and his sexual orientation was fulfilled by his union with a woman in marriage and the beginning of a family.

The sexual revolution also revised the sexual codes of a culture. Premarital sex was no longer immoral. Living together (cohabitation) became a necessary step before marriage. Sex outside of marriage received less

condemnation. Homosexuality and transgenderism were no longer to be condemned but celebrated and affirmed. Pornography was merely seen as harmless entertainment.

Premarital Sex and Cohabitation

Although figures vary from one study to another, it appears a majority of young people have had sexual intercourse by the time they reach 18 years of age. The reasons for early sexual experimentation are many. First, is biology. Teenagers are maturing faster sexually because of better health and nutrition. Since the turn of the century, for example, the onset of menstruation in girls has dropped three months each decade. Consequently, urges that used to arise in the mid-teens now explode in the early teens.

A sex-saturated society is another reason. Sexual innuendos clutter almost every TV program and movie.

And explicit nudity and sensuality that used to be reserved for R-rated movies has found its way into homes through broadcast and cable television. A third reason is lack of parental supervision. Working parents and reductions in after-school programs have left teenagers with less supervision and a looser after-school life.

Finally, schools have also been a major influence. Teaching sex education in the classroom and providing school-based clinics which can distribute contraceptives also have increased teen sexual activity. Schools and outside groups have attempted to address teen sexuality by providing abstinence seminars and programs.

Sexual activity outside of marriage is dangerous. Doctors warn that if a person has sexual intercourse with another individual, he or she is not only having sexual intercourse

with that individual but with every person with whom that individual might have had intercourse for the last ten years and all the people with whom they had intercourse.

Sexually transmitted diseases are dangerous and increasing. Many are incurable and possibly lethal. Though most are passed through intercourse, some (such as herpes and HPV) can be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact.

Emotional scars also result from premarital sex. One reputable study found that sexually active girls, ages fourteen to seventeen, have rates of depression three times higher than those who have not been sexually active. Sexually active boys were more than twice as likely to be depressed as those who are not sexually active.

A related issue is cohabitation. Young adults are living together and have replaced marriage as the first living together experience. They fol-

low the conventional wisdom that you should “try before you buy.” After all, “You wouldn’t buy a car without a test drive, would you?” The problem with such questions and slogans is they dehumanize the other person and ignore the significant moral, social, and spiritual issues associated with living together.

For example, an abundance of social research documents that couples who live together before they get married are putting their future marriage in danger. For example, researchers have found that cohabiting unions are much less stable than marriages where couples don’t live together first. In fact, cohabiting unions have a fifty percent higher divorce rate than those that did not. We plan to address the issues associated with cohabitation in a future booklet.

Pornography and Sexting

As we have documented in a

previous booklet on pornography, science is now coming to the same conclusion that the church has understood for many years: pornography is harmful.

To put this simply, porn addiction harms the brain and encourages the user to crave more of it as it changes the person. We know this from research on neuroscience and our understanding of neuroplasticity. In our booklet, we document that pornography is physically harmful (1 Corinthians 6:18), emotionally harmful, and socially harmful. Also, Paul gave a list of sins to avoid and often included immorality (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5).

A more recent phenomenon is sexting (a combination of the words sex and texting). This ranges from explicit texts to audio messages to nude photos or videos. Estimates as

high as twenty-five percent of teens say they have sexted.

The dangers from sexting are many. Studies have found a correlation between sexting and risky sexual behaviors (unprotected sex, increased number of sexual partners, lack of contraceptive use). Of course, correlation doesn't prove causation. But the linkage should be concerning.

Also, there are legal risks since some of the laws dealing with obscenity and pornography can be applied to sending sexually explicit photos and videos. That would constitute a misdemeanor for a minor and would be a felony for an adult over eighteen. There is also the danger that such photos and videos would end up in the hands of a pedophile or sexual trafficker wanting to contact the person sending sexual material.

We might recommend the book by Jessica Peck, *Behind Closed Doors*. She devotes an entire chapter on “Sex and Sexting” and “Pornography” along with other chapters on drug abuse, vaping, cyber-bullying, social media, and eating disorders.

Homosexuality and Transgenderism

Homosexuality has moved from the margins of society to the mainstream. In the years following the beginning of the gay rights movement in 1969, homosexuality has been publicly promoted in every arena. Transgenderism is now being aggressively promoted as well.

Previous booklets on *Homosexual Theology* and *Same-Sex Marriage* address the theological as well as the practical aspects of homosexuality. We have also devoted a whole issue of an Outlook magazine to transgenderism and will likely write a future book on the subject. We encourage

you to consult the existing resources and look for future ones to be developed.

Biblical Perspective

God created us male and female and therefore made us as sexual beings. After a creation in which God declares everything good, He then says, “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). That is why God made a “helper fit for him.” God intended sex to be part of the marriage relationship and would be how humans would “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28).

The Bible also teaches that sex is for marriage: “A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This is repeated in the New Testament by Jesus who quoted this verse and added, “They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let

not man separate” (Matthew 19:5– 6).

On the other hand, the Bible also forbids sex outside of marriage. This includes premarital sex (1 Corinthians 7:1-2), homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), and adultery (Exodus 20:14). Hebrews 13:4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” There are other passages that also forbid sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical View on Homosexual Theology*, POV booklet, 2018.

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical View on Same-Sex Marriage*, POV booklet, 2022.

Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005, chapters ten through thirteen.

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Jessica Peck, *Behind Closed Doors*, Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2022.

Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

Carl Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022.



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