

1 Cor. 6:12-7:9

The Lord for the Body and the Body for the Lord

Rich Lusk

8/29/10

Ok, so it was another PG-13 sermon. If you get uncomfortable, just remind yourself that I'm holding a lot back...unfortunately, these notes may move towards more of an R rating in some places...

Here are some follow up notes, links, etc.

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Is the biblical sex ethic even realistic for young people in today's world? Bristol Palin got a lot of attention for saying it was not (e.g., : [http://www.opposingviews.com/i/making-abstinence-realistic/follow\\_ups](http://www.opposingviews.com/i/making-abstinence-realistic/follow_ups)). But in the church we have to create a community in which chastity not only seems plausible, but makes perfect sense. We have to make a compelling case for the biblical sex ethic, and then live it out in all its beauty.

Our culture today has no moral fiber. We never rise to the occasion to resist temptation. We live in a culture where no one does hard things; we crumble before every moral challenge we face.

Nowhere is there a greater need for the church to act as a counter-culture than in this area of sexuality. But to make that happen, we're going to have to swim upstream with strength that only God's Spirit can provide. We're going to have to do hard things. We're going to have to show great moral courage.

A new convert in Corinth was probably going to feel pressure to be more ashamed of his newfound commitment to chastity than his past sexual perversions. We are entering the same situation in our culture, where virginity is treated as an embarrassment, or even a disease, for anyone over 14.

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The Bible describes sex as a man "knowing" his wife. This is a beautiful description of sex, much better than many of the other euphemisms we use. One thing the language of "knowing" captures is that sex is always more than physical, more than skin-on-skin, body-on-body; it's person-on-person, a complete metaphysical interpenetration/indwelling of each other. It's a mirror of the perichoresis ("dance") that characterizes the Triune life of God (1 Cor. 11). I would suggest we recover this language; it would be a counter-cultural step, and I would surmise that speaking more biblically about sex might help us think more biblically about it.

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Most of the news we get about sex is either bad (STDs, illegitimacy, scandals) or deceptive (sex with anyone is fine, sex can be detached from the heart). The church simply has to speak to the truth on this issue – including God’s good news!

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1 Cor. 6:12ff gives us what Paul is against. 1 Cor. 7:1-9 gives us what Paul is for. So, this passage as a whole gives us a glimpse into the complete biblical sex ethic.

When Paul qualifies the Corinthian “freedom” slogan in v.12 by saying, “I will not allow myself to be mastered/enslaved by anything,” the obvious implication is “Neither should you.” He wants them to understand the true nature of their liberty, much as he does with the Galatians in Gal. 5. Freedom is not for the self, but for others. We are set free to serve, not to live selfish lives. See Garland, 228f.

Paul shows us the body is for Christ and Christ for the body. The eternal Son of God took on a body so he could redeem and restore our bodies. He gave up his body in order to purchase our bodies.

On bodily redemption and union with Christ, see Hays, 104f. Hays argues union with Christ is analogous to but deeper than any sexual relationship. The Corinthians mistakenly assumed the body was a husk to be cast off in the next life; therefore, some concluded that the body has nothing to do with sin. On sex with a prostitute creating an unholy bond, see Hays, 105f. Hays argues the fornicator defiles his own body (a personal temple of the Holy Spirit), as well defiling the church by linking Christ to the prostitute.

Hays develops an ethic based on the resurrection of the body, 108f. The body matters; as he says, “To misuse the body is to hold the Creator in contempt” and is a betrayal of our eschatological hope. He says, “bodily actions stand under the eschatological judgment of God...we should therefore use our bodies in ways that point towards the wholeness for which we hope in the future. If we could learn to think of our bodies as bodies with a future, we might be more careful about what we do with them now.”

Hays calls for sex education in the church, p. 108f. Such an education must start “by seeking to cultivate a deep awareness of the indwelling presence of God. An authentic reverence for the reality of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our bodies might facilitate the recovery of the Bible’s powerful categories of holiness and purity as meaningful norms for our sexual practices.” He asks, “Could the teaching of such reverence within the church help overcome the growing cultural tendency to accept premarital and extramarital sexual relations as normal and inevitable?” As Hays points out, certainly the challenges to a biblical sex ethic faced in our day are no greater than those faced in Paul’s day. We may have to content with pornography

that is only a few clicks away, but they had to deal with prostitutes who were only a few blocks away.

Hays shows how Paul challenges our commitment to sexual autonomy, personal "rights," etc. on p.109.

Is it possible that some Corinthians church families were divided by the radically different views of sex in chapters 6 and 7? Some commentators surmise that some of the women had decided they should withhold themselves from their husbands, ala 1 Cor. 7:1; the men responded in a libertine fashion, by returning to pagan temple prostitution, ala 6:12ff.

Fornication is a broad category that covers all forms of sexual immorality, including pornography, highly sexual contact between unmarried persons leading up to intercourse, and intercourse between two unmarried persons. Adultery is a specific form of fornication, in that it violates a marriage covenant.

Fee provides a very good summary of the application of 6:12-20 on p. 266 of his commentary. He calls for a recovery of the sanctity of the body. "Sexual immorality is still sin, even though it has been justified under every conceivable rationalization. Those who take Scripture seriously are not prudes or legalists at this point; rather, they recognize that God has purchased us for higher things. Our bodies belong to God through the redemption of the cross; they are destined for resurrection."

Fee also challenges lingering platonic dualisms "that would negate the body in favor of the soul." He goes on: "God made us whole people; and in Christ he has redeemed us wholly. In the Christian view there is no dichotomy between body and spirit that either indulges the body because it is irrelevant or punishes it so as to purify the spirit. The pagan view of the physical finds its way into Christian theology in a number of subtle ways, including the penchant on the part of some to 'save souls' while caring little for people's material needs. The Christian creed, based on NT revelation, is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. That creed does not lead to crass materialism; rather, it affirms a holistic view of redemption that is predicated in part on the doctrine of creation – both physical and spiritual orders are good because God created them – and in part on the doctrine of redemption, including consummation – the whole fallen order, including the body, has been redeemed in Christ and awaits its final redemption."

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If an unmarried couple has sex, must they marry? No, not necessarily. Paul certainly didn't think the men in Corinth should marry the harlots they slept with. The Torah left it up to the girl's father. This is a decision that must be made by applying biblical wisdom. For example, if one of the partners is not a Christian, marriage is out of the question for the Christian. Other factors come in to play as well, so it's a decision that has to be made on a case-by-case basis.

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Why do people pursue sexual sin? There are, of course, a lot of reasons. But Chesterton's quip, "The man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God," gets at the heart of it. In the end, people, from teenagers to middleagers and beyond, have sex because they're looking for love. What they need to be told is:

[1] The deepest form of love you seek isn't going to be found in any sexual relationship, but only in Christ. He is the one you're seeking, even if you don't know it.

[2] The human love that would be most satisfying to you is only going to be found within a marriage covenant; or as it's been put, "making love" does not make love in anyone's life unless there is a marriage covenant in place.

All this to say: Chastity doesn't just help us avoid unwanted diseases and pregnancies; it helps us to find the real love we're looking for. Sex outside of marriage actually leaves us lonelier, emptier, and more isolated in the long run, so we get the opposite of what we were seeking.

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Tim Keller on sex and the church:

<http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/newsletter/RedeemerNewsletter-2004-06.pdf>

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Chuck Colson:

One of the greatest misconceptions ever perpetuated is that Christianity teaches that sex is in itself somehow sinful or dirty. There could be nothing further from the truth.

Sex within moral boundaries is a beautiful act; a man and woman unite as one flesh, a covenant of God. The Scriptures teach that a union of man and woman is comparable to the union of Christ and His Church. It is a sacred union that speaks volumes of the heart of God to be one with His people and for His people to be united to Him and Him alone.

The procreative nature of sex also displays the mystery of the generative, overflowing aspect of God's love. As love naturally overflows between a husband and wife, so too life overflows, perpetuating God's created order in the form of children and family.

Christians consider sex outside of these moral boundaries as sinful not only because it is specifically violating clear commandments of the Scripture, but also because sex outside of marriage does violence to the picture we've been given of Christ and His Church.

Throughout history many religions, which Christians would consider pagan, have included sex as part of actual worship celebrations. To a Christian this

would be blasphemous and a misuse, a desecration of one of God's greatest gifts.

But it also illustrates the fact that humans have inherently understood that there is something transcendent about sexual union.

Colson is right: the transcendence built into the sex act is the reason pagans brought it into their idolatrous liturgies. For Christians, the transcendence of sex is found in its symbolism: sex between a husband and wife symbolizes the church's union with Christ. We do not need to bring sex into the worship service because, after all, we have the communion feast.

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Wendell Berry on why you cannot fully privatize the definition of marriage:

If you depreciate the sanctity and solemnity of marriage, not just as a bond between two people but as a bond between those two people and their forebears, their children, and their neighbors, then you have prepared the way for an epidemic of divorce, child neglect, community ruin, and loneliness. If you destroy the economies of household and community, then you destroy the bonds of mutual usefulness and practical dependence without which the other bonds will not hold.

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J. Budziszewski:

These days carnality is underrated. Our obsession with sex doesn't show that we take embodiment seriously; it shows that we don't. Like Gnostics, we regard our bodies as separate from our true selves. We use them merely to get pleasure, attention, and other things for the self—and nothing taken seriously is merely used. But the Gnostics were wrong. As [Pope] John Paul [II] emphasizes, body is not separate from self; it is the emblem and vesture of self.

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Randy Alcorn on the two sides of sex:

Sex wasn't invented by Hollywood, Madonna, or some pervert in an Internet chat room. Sex was created by an infinitely holy God, wreathed in blinding light and glory, surrounded by radiant, holy angels. The goodness of sex stands or falls with the goodness of its Creator.

...Sex is the means by which children are conceived and marital intimacy is expressed. Both are very important to God. When sexual union takes place in its proper context, in a spirit of giving, the Creator smiles...

Sex is incredibly powerful; it's able to do immense good ... or immense harm...The most magnificent gifts of God, taken outside their God-intended boundaries, become utterly ruinous. So it is with sex. Its potential for great good has a flip side -- potential for great evil.

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Stacy MacDonald:

Ironically, as our senses are dulled, rather than being oversexed, we become undersexed. Not that sexual activity decreases, but the satisfaction of it does. In addition, sexuality must become more and more shocking to invoke a reaction, which introduces perversions of all sorts.

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Some quotes assembled by Robin Phillips  
(<http://robinphillips.blogspot.com/2009/05/why-sexual-liberation-isnt-sexy.html>):

"According to Biblical ethics, the ultimate expression of love is when lovers give all of themselves to each other, as expressed in lifelong commitment and total physical donation. On the other hand, those who have tried to escape the significance of the gender polarity have less of themselves to offer since they are struggling to be less than the man or woman God originally designed them to be. Love, no less than our humanity itself, becomes a casualty of such 'liberation.'

"This being the case, there is a logical consistency at work in those feminists who have been arguing that romantic love, like gender distinctions, is one of the remnants of an unenlightened society. Notwithstanding the excesses and idolatry often accompanying romantic love, it at least operates on the assumption that gender differences are not only real, but there to be enjoyed. For many feminists, on the other hand, it is a different matter. "...romantic ideals," wrote Amy Erickson, 'were simply a means of maintaining male dominance at a time when overt demands of submission were no longer acceptable.'

"Andrea Dworkin was even more severe: 'Romantic love...is the mythic celebration of female negation. For a woman, love is defined as her willingness to submit to her own annihilation. The proof of love is that she is willing to be destroyed by the one whom she loves, for his sake. For the

woman, love is always self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of identity, will, and bodily integrity, in order to fulfill and redeem the masculinity of her lover.'

"For such feminists, the liberation of our sexuality does not stop with merely rejecting romantic love. Rather, the process completes itself in a full scale pessimism about sex itself, a paradoxical culmination of the Enlightenment's emancipation project and itself an apt illustration that we destroy those things which we worship idolatrously. This can be seen in the way Catharine MacKinnon, another influential second-wave feminist, compares sexual intercourse within marriage to rape: 'What in the liberal view looks like love and romance looks a lot like hatred and torture to the feminist. Pleasure and eroticism become violation.' Elsewhere the Harvard Press author said, 'The major distinction between intercourse (normal) and rape (abnormal) is that normal happens so often that one cannot get anyone to see anything wrong with it.'

"Even as early as 1934, Naomi Mitchison complained that the feminist movement was creating a generation of women so fostered on a defiant idea of equality that the mere sensation of the male embrace roused an undercurrent of resentment. Commenting on Mitchison's words, C. S. Lewis observed that 'at some level consent to inequality, nay, delight in inequality, is an erotic necessity.' He then speaks of the tragic-comedy of the modern woman who is 'taught by Freud to consider the act of love the most important thing in life, and then inhibited by feminism from that internal surrender which alone can make it a complete emotional success.'

"At the end of the day, gender egalitarianism turns out to be a cheat.

"But it takes more than merely a rejection of androgyny to enable one to truly enjoy sexual intimacy. One needs to return to the biblical codes of morality overthrown by the Enlightenment. It may seem strange to suggest that the way to truly enjoy a thing is to restrict it, even though our world furnishes numerous examples of this principle. Yet it should not really be surprising that those who are so sexually active that they give no second thought to a one-night-stand, and are consequently treating sex like it is no big deal (often being actively encouraged to do so), should find the activity less pleasurable than those so-called prudes for whom sex is still a Very Big Deal. And according to the Bible, sex should be a Big Deal, and not merely because this makes the experience more fulfilling, though of course it does.

"This is the legacy that the Enlightenment has left us. Because materialism denied that a transcendent God had revealed himself to His creation, it placed man as the sole arbitrator of morality. The result was that man turned sex into a god. It is a biblical principle that whenever a thing is worshiped idolatrously, the original thing is destroyed. In removing the restrictions of sexuality and denying the design God created, the sexual revolution ended up

de-valuing the very thing it sought to elevate. It was observed in *The Times* that advertisers are finding that sex just does not sell products like it once did. The reason, reported Cristina Odone, is that the advertisers have made sex so banal it doesn't entice us any longer. It has been like taking a picture in color and turning it into black and white. No wonder young people are now reported as making comments like, 'I'm so used to it, it makes me sick.' Nor should we be surprised that in Denmark, where pornography is unrestricted, people are often quoted as saying that sex is boring.

"This helps us to understand one more reason why the biblical teaching on sexual morality and modesty is so crucial. Central to the very delight of sexual union is the pleasure of being admitted into a place that is not open to anyone else. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God set apart only for those who have entered the covenant of marriage. What it is set apart from is the ordinary and the commonplace (hence the importance of modesty and chivalry to protect the value of sexuality); what it is set apart for is the covenant of marriage (hence the importance of chastity). Havelock Ellis, though not someone whose writings I would normally want to be associated with, nevertheless stumbled upon the truth when he wrote: *'Without modesty we could not have, nor rightly value at its true worth, that bold and pure candor which is at once the final revelation of love and the seal of its sincerity.'*

"Seen in this way, modesty (not only of dress but of manners, speech and conduct) need not be indicative of an under-sexed temperament, as is often thought; rather, it is an acknowledgement and preservation of one's sexuality as a gift from God. Modesty and chastity are not matters of negation, but of affirmation: affirming the sacredness and beauty of sexuality and committing to preserve the sense in which it is set apart and cherished. This perspective challenges both promiscuity and prudery, as Shalit has observed:

*'Whether she decides to have scores of men or none, promiscuous and prudish women in some sense embrace the same flippant world-view, which one might call the nothing-fazes-me worldview. As types, they represent two sides of the same unerotic coin, which flips over arrogantly and announces to the world when it lands: "Ha! —I cannot be moved." Modesty is prudery's true opposite, because it admits that one can be moved and issues a specific invitation for one man to try. Promiscuity and prudery are both a kind of antagonistic indifference, a running away from the meaning of one place in the world, whereas modesty is fundamentally about knowing, protecting that knowledge, and directing it to something higher, beyond just two. Something more than just man and wife.'*

"We can begin to see how ironic it is that those who pursue modesty are often said to be the ones 'uncomfortable with their bodies' or 'ashamed of their sexuality.' That is comparable to saying that I am uncomfortable with my expensive silver kitchenware because I refuse to use it on a picnic. Just as



my valuable silver is too precious to put to common use, so the treasure of the human body should be too valuable to use in any but the appropriate context.

"C. S. Lewis observed that 'when a thing is enclosed, the mind does not willingly regard it as common.' Thanks to the Enlightenment, sexuality has come to be common. No wonder we don't see the need for it to be enclosed any more.

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Wendy Shalit on the sexiness of modesty:

Stendhal . . . asks himself why the most sensitive women—let us call them the 'high responders'—are always the ones who end up being the most sexually reticent. Stendhal concludes that it's such a shame the high responders are drawn to modesty, because these are the women who are the most fun to have sex with—the very ones who are, in effect, 'made for love.' . . . his quarrel with female modesty, as a man, seems to be: it's not fair that the high responders should be the modest ones, because then the sensualists are hoarding their sensuality. . . . What seems to have escaped him is that it is no accident the sensualists end up hiding behind modesty, because it is modesty which protects their sensuality—for the right man that is. If the sensualists tried to overcome their natural modesty and to become more promiscuous, as Stendhal suggests, then their experiences would have less meaning for them, much of what excites them would be diminished, one man would serve more or less as well as any other—in other words, they would no longer be sensualists.

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On cohabitation (<http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0000498.cfm>):

Here's the problem with the car analogy: the car doesn't have hurt feelings if the driver dumps it back at the used car lot and decides not to buy it. The analogy works great if you picture yourself as the driver. It stinks if you picture yourself as the car.

The contract or consent approach doesn't really help much either. Living together is fine as long as both people agree to it. The agreement amounts to this: "I am willing to let you use me as if I were a commodity, as long as you allow me to treat you as if you were a commodity." But this is a bogus agreement. We can say at the outset that we agree to be the "man of steel", but no one can credibly promise to have no feelings of remorse if the relationship fails.

All of this points to the essential difference between sexual activity and other forms of activity. Giving oneself to a sexual partner is, by its nature, a gift of oneself to another person. We all have a deep longing to be cherished by the person we have sex with. That longing is not fooled by our pretensions to sophistication.

Here is an analogy that works better than the taking the car for a test drive analogy. Suppose I ask you to give me a blank check, signed and ready to cash. All I have to do is fill in the amount. Most people would be unlikely to do this. You would be more likely to do it, if you snuck out and drained the money out of your account before you gave me the check. Or, you could give me the check and just be scared and worried about what I might do.

Think about it: What do you have in your checking account that is more valuable than what you give to a sexual partner? When people live together, and sleep together, without marriage, they put themselves in a position that is similar to the person being asked to give a blank check. They either hold back on their partner by not giving the full self in the sexual act and in their shared lives together. Or, they feel scared a lot of the time, wondering whether their partner will somehow take advantage of their vulnerability.

No one can simulate self-giving. Half a commitment is no commitment. Cohabiting couples are likely to have one foot out the door, throughout the relationship. The members of a cohabiting couple practice holding back on one another. They rehearse not trusting. The social scientists that gather the data do not have an easy way to measure this kind of dynamic inside the relationship.

In my view, this accounts for the disappointing results of cohabitation. I am sorry to say that I learned this from experience. My husband and I lived together before we were married. It took us a long time to unlearn the habits of the heart that we built up during those cohabiting years.

The sexual revolution promised a humane and realistic approach to human sexuality. Ironically, the uncommitted-sex mentality has proven to underestimate both the value and the power of sexual activity.

Lifelong, committed marriages are difficult, no doubt about it. But self-giving loving relationships still have the best chance of making us happy.

See also <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001126.cfm>:

In the last 50 years, more and more people have started living together outside of commitment to marriage. In fact, 60 percent or more of couples

now live together before they get married and many others live together instead of getting married. The rates of living together are even higher for remarriages. Many believe that living together is a good way to "test" the relationship, or give it a trial run. Perhaps because they are either wary of commitment or have particular reasons to be concerned about their relationships, many think they will learn things about their relationship that will help them decide whether to commit to marriage with a particular partner.

The majority of young adults do believe that living together helps people make decisions about marriage as well as provides a way for couples to work through issues before making a lifelong commitment. In fact, over half of younger people believe that living together prior to marriage will lower their odds of marital problems and divorce.<sup>1</sup> Research, however, suggests something quite different.

- People who lived together before marriage have a higher rate of divorce than those who did not live together.
- People who lived together before marriage report that it is more likely they will divorce than people who did not live together.
- People who lived together before marriage have more negative communication in their marriages than those who did not live together.
- People who lived together before marriage have lower levels of marital satisfaction than those who did not live together.
- Infidelity during marriage is more common among people who lived together prior to marriage than those who did not.
- Physical aggression is more common among married individuals who lived together before marriage than those who did not....

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Sexual relations within marriage are a form of spiritual warfare. Paul says that marital sex is a way to keep temptation at bay, and therefore defeat Satan. Something to think about!

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Glenn T. Stanton:

We can dishonor God in our sex lives just as we can dishonor Him in any other area of our lives. We dishonor Him when we serve ourselves. We

dishonor God in our sex lives when we fail to mirror the Trinitarian reality and beauty in our relationships.

God's instructions for our sexual lives serve Him by bringing Him glory when we obey them, and they also benefit us. God's rules are not limiting prohibitions, but rather ennobling, enriching guidelines.

As theologian George Weigel explains, when we view God's directives for our sexuality this way, "the first moral question shifts from 'What am I forbidden to do?' to 'How do I live a life of sexual love that conforms to my dignity as a human person?'"<sup>1</sup>

This explains why Christian prohibitions against certain sexual practices aren't based on reactive moralism in an effort to keep us from having fun. Quite the opposite! They're based on how we can flourish in our God-given humanity and how we best reflect the image of God in us.

As reflections of the nature and qualities of the Trinity, our sex lives should be shaped by the qualities of the Trinity. Three primary principles apply to all of us and, if we keep these in mind, they'll guide us in a life that is pleasing to God and beneficial to our families and ourselves.

### **We May Never Use Another Person as an Object, Sexual or Otherwise**

The members of the Trinity never relate to each other as objects, to be used for their own good. They relate to each other in love, seeking to serve the goodness and glory of the other. Love is a self-donation. It never uses others as things or an end.

When we use others, we diminish their dignity as well as our own. Animals do this. People shouldn't, because it's not what we were created for. It's not what sex was created for. This is why pornography, masturbation, and rape fall outside of God's intentions for us.

*Pornography* dehumanizes sexuality and depersonalizes people by turning the viewer into a taker and the one viewed into an object. The danger is that we start to see others in our lives the same way we see the object in the magazine, movie, or website: as a nobody, a thing that exists for our pleasure. It also dehumanizes the user because we are made for intimacy with the other sex and intimacy can't occur with illusionary images. It should take place with another person—a spouse.

Similarly, sex is much more than mere physical stimulation. God created it to be a very intimate communion between two people.

Therefore masturbation, like pornography, is incomplete because it doesn't involve the communion of two self-giving people, one to another. It's sex for one and isn't God's ideal for us; it's merely taking from one's self and doesn't mirror the nature of the Trinity.

No member of the Trinity turns in on Himself in any manner.<sup>2</sup> Their relational expression is always to the others. Remember, God said it was not good for man (or woman) to be alone, and in sexualized form, that's what masturbation is.

*Rape* isn't about sex, but about control and domination. It's about taking by violence. It's always wrong because it's the complete opposite of what love is.

It's one of the most egregious violations of the Trinitarian ideal and, therefore, of human dignity.

### **The Monstrosity of Premarital and Extramarital Sex**

The human sexual embrace, this most intimate and ultimate of all human giving and vulnerability, ought to take place in a union of total and permanent surrender of two people. That's what marriage is: both the public and personal dedication of a man and woman to forsake all others and give themselves fully—body, mind, and spirit—to another.

Therefore, to give someone

- Our body without exclusively giving him or her
- Our mind or will (total, unconditional, willful commitment) or
- Our spirit (emotions, affections, and adoration)

is to isolate one kind of union, the physical, "from all the other types of unions which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union, C.S. Lewis said.<sup>3</sup> That's why sex outside marriage is a monstrosity.

Extramarital sex dissects us at our deepest level, giving out one part of us without giving all the rest intended to go with it. It's not what we're made for. Where did we ever get the idea that we can separate our bodies from our minds and spirits and that our bodies could do whatever they like without consequence for the rest of our being? This is why the sexual revolution has been such a dehumanizing failure, diminishing our God-given humanity in painful ways.

Theologian Karl Barth expressed this well when he declared, "Coitus without coexistence is demonic."<sup>4</sup> We can't connect ourselves with someone sexually without connecting all the rest of our being.

Wendell Berry laments, "Because of our determination to separate sex from the practice of love in marriage and in family...our public sexual morality is confused, sentimental, bitter, complexly destructive, and hypocritical."<sup>5</sup>

Only the sexual embrace within marriage mirrors the nature of the Trinitarian relationship in creation. In the ideal, it's loving, permanent, exclusive, and self-giving. Premarital and extramarital sex can't mirror this reality. This is why it's not surprising research shows that faithfully married people enjoy the deepest levels of sexual satisfaction.

### **The Challenge of Homosexuality**

Male and female are not cultural constructs but God-created parts of humanity made for each other to show forth the image of God in the world. Remember Genesis 1:27: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Male and female, together, are the fullest picture of the image of God in creation. That's why they need each other. Adam wasn't complete without Eve.

In everyday terms, this means that only the difference and the complementary interplay of male and female uniquely reflect the image and likeness of the persons of the Trinity in creation. As a result, sexual love between a married man and woman is a life-giving act of mutual giving and receiving that mirrors the Trinity like nothing else on earth.

Homosexuality denies this and falsely states that differences in male and female don't really matter. Nothing could be further from the truth. Homosexuality violates the Trinitarian image of complementarity in a profound way.

All sexual sin is wrong because it fails to mirror the Trinitarian image, but homosexuality does more than fail. It's a particularly evil lie of Satan because he knows that it overthrows the very image of the Trinitarian God in creation, revealed in the union of male and female.

This is why this issue has become such a flashpoint. It will become even more contentious because nothing else challenges this image of the Triune God so profoundly and thoroughly as homosexuality. It's not what we were made for.

We love God in our sex lives by living in the fullness of what He intends for us. This has both positive and negative aspects.

Positively, we're to live fully as the sexual beings God has created us to be. He wants that for us because we mystically show forth a primary part of the nature of God.

But He doesn't give us an unqualified green light. There are stoplights and caution lights we need to pay attention to as described previously. These are not given because God is a killjoy, but for just the opposite: He wants our relationships to mirror His image and likeness. He knows this is best for us, for it's how we're created and what will bring us joy.

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Rod Dreher challenges the church

(<http://blog.beliefnet.com/crunchycon/2008/10/evangelical-teens-and-sex-good.html>):

Fascinating stuff from Margaret Talbot in The New Yorker (read on: there's a Benedict Option angle here). Excerpt:

During the campaign, the media has largely respected calls to treat Bristol Palin's pregnancy as a private matter. But the reactions to it have exposed a cultural rift that mirrors America's dominant political divide. Social liberals in the country's "blue states" tend to support sex education and are not particularly troubled by the idea that many teen-agers have sex before marriage, but would regard a teen-age daughter's pregnancy as devastating news. And the social conservatives in "red states" generally advocate abstinence-only education and denounce sex before marriage, but are relatively unruffled if a teen-ager becomes pregnant, as long as she doesn't choose to have an abortion.

A handful of social scientists and family-law scholars have recently begun looking closely at this split. Last year, Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin, published a startling book called "Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers," and he is working on a follow-up that includes a section titled "Red Sex, Blue Sex." His

findings are drawn from a national survey that Regnerus and his colleagues conducted of some thirty-four hundred thirteen-to-seventeen-year-olds, and from a comprehensive government study of adolescent health known as Add Health. Regnerus argues that religion is a good indicator of attitudes toward sex, but a poor one of sexual behavior, and that this gap is especially wide among teen-agers who identify themselves as evangelical. The vast majority of white evangelical adolescents--seventy-four per cent--say that they believe in abstaining from sex before marriage. (Only half of mainline Protestants, and a quarter of Jews, say that they believe in abstinence.) Moreover, among the major religious groups, evangelical virgins are the least likely to anticipate that sex will be pleasurable, and the most likely to believe that having sex will cause their partners to lose respect for them. (Jews most often cite pleasure as a reason to have sex, and say that an unplanned pregnancy would be an embarrassment.) But, according to Add Health data, evangelical teen-agers are more sexually active than Mormons, mainline Protestants, and Jews. On average, white evangelical Protestants make their "sexual début"--to use the festive term of social-science researchers--shortly after turning sixteen. Among major religious groups, only black Protestants begin having sex earlier.

What's happening here? Well it turns out that a lot of people who profess Evangelical Christianity and socially conservative values don't actually live them in a meaningfully countercultural way. Talbot: Religious belief apparently does make a potent difference in behavior for one group of evangelical teen-agers: those who score highest on measures of religiosity--such as how often they go to church, or how often they pray at home. But many Americans who identify themselves as evangelicals, and who hold socially conservative beliefs, aren't deeply observant. Even more important than religious conviction, Regnerus argues, is how "embedded" a teen-ager is in a network of friends, family, and institutions that reinforce his or her goal of delaying sex, and that offer a plausible alternative to America's sexed-up consumer culture. A church, of course, isn't the only way to provide a cohesive sense of community. Close-knit families make a difference. Teen-agers who live with both biological parents are more likely to be virgins than those who do not. And adolescents who say that their families understand them, pay attention to their concerns, and have fun with them are more likely to delay intercourse, regardless of religiosity.

This is where the Benedict Option angle comes in. If you want to raise kids who observe Christian sexual morality, you stand a better chance of success raising them in a social network where traditional sexual morality is reinforced by being a shared moral ideal. And, you can't be the kind of family that talks the church talk but doesn't walk the church walk. This, it seems to me, argues for a form of cultural secession -- some form of the Benedict Option.

I found this part of the article pretty fascinating too:

In "Forbidden Fruit," Regnerus offers an "unscientific postscript," in which he advises social conservatives that if they really want to maintain their commitment to chastity and to marriage, they'll need to do more to help young couples stay married longer. As the Reverend Rick Marks, a Southern Baptist minister, recently pointed out in a Florida newspaper, "Evangelicals are fighting gay marriage, saying it will break down traditional marriage, when divorce has already broken it down." Conservatives may need to start talking as much about saving marriages as they do about, say, saving oneself for marriage.

"Having to wait until age twenty-five or thirty to have sex is unreasonable," Regnerus writes. He argues that religious organizations that advocate chastity should "work more creatively to support younger marriages. This is not the 1950s (for which I am glad), where one could bank on social norms, extended (and larger) families, and clear gender roles to negotiate and sustain early family formation."

Marry young, yes -- but you have to have a support network in place to help you succeed. What is your church doing, if anything, to help singles live chastely but non-neurotically, especially in dealing with the loneliness? What is your church doing, if anything, to support young marrieds?

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Sex and the one flesh union

(<http://politicsofthecrossresurrected.blogspot.com/2010/01/sex-as-glue.html>):

NT scholar John Nolland, Academic Dean of Trinity College, Bristol, uses a striking and effective metaphor for sex by comparing it to glue.

"To put it crudely, saying 'the two will become one flesh' implies that sex is for gluing two people together into a single unit. In other words, sex makes its own vital contribution to the formation of the psychosomatic unity of husband and wife. A man and a woman well glued together is God's pattern for the main kind of fundamental human unit within society.

I say 'God's pattern for the main kind of fundamental human unit within society', because Scripture elsewhere makes it quite clear that there are particular people and people in particular kinds of situations for whom singleness not marriage is their proper state of being. If sex is the glue for marriage, then sex outside of marriage is using the glue in the wrong way....

To make his particular point Paul points to yet another kind of unitive activity. He talks about the uniting that happens when we become Christians. We are united to Christ. 'United to the Lord' is how he puts it in v 17. 'Your bodies are members of Christ' is how he puts it in v 15. Also in v 17 he says that one 'becomes one spirit with [the Lord]'. This



last piece of language 'one spirit' is specifically intended to be a counterpart to the Genesis language of marriage as 'one flesh'. Paul is clearly after a sameness and a difference between the kind of unity involved in sex and that involved in being linked to the Lord. To say that one is physical and one is spiritual would partly catch the difference, and would be well reflected in Paul's juxtaposition of 'flesh' and 'spirit'.

For Paul, however, 'flesh' is not just physical. It is rooted in the materiality of our bodies, but it catches up as well attitudes and values and impulses that we would be more inclined to describe in psychological terms and in terms of the whole person.

This is profound and theologically responsible exegesis. Thinking of sex as glue helps us conceptualize how and why sex outside of marriage is so destructive, when sex within marriage is so healthy and life-affirming. I especially applaud his clarity on the NT meaning of the word "flesh" and the way that he shows how this word does not permit us to interpret sin and sanctification in a way that allows us to focus on the spirit only or on the body alone, but only on them as two aspects of one being. Clearly, a realist metaphysics is implied here in which the being of the person is more than disembodied mind or the sum total of the choices made by the will. One is reminded of John Paul II's theology of the body at this point.

He also (without mentioning them in particular) demolishes the misleading rhetoric of certain left-wing Evangelicals who call themselves "Red Letter Christians" and claim that their preoccupation with socialist politics and lassitude toward sexual morality is justified by appeal to the words of Jesus. Aside from the hubris of implying that the rest of the Church is somehow beneath them because they alone have the priorities of Christ and the theological error of interpreting the words of Jesus as more inspired and more authoritative than the rest of Scripture, they also happen to be wrong on a simple, factual level.

"One kind of index is to compare how often he talked about sexual matters with how often he talked about other matters. I choose for comparison Jesus' teaching on love and Jesus' expression of concern for the poor. Nobody doubts that Jesus cared passionately about these two areas.

So what do we find? Fourteen references to love, thirteen plus a couple of extras for concern for the poor and twenty-six references to matters concerning sex. Maybe sexual issues did matter quite a bit to Jesus!"

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What we watch on tv is going to have an impact on us. It is foolish to expect sin to stay inside the little box of the tv; to turn on the tv is to open Pandora's box, so to speak. There's just no doubt we're affected by what we watch, especially kids:

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/moviemom/2008/11/teenagers-sex-religion-and-med.html>

Kids say they're not influenced by media as much by other facts, like parents and friends. But there is a lot of evidence that media is still very highly influential in the decisions kids make about their sexuality.

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The false views of sex in found in 1 Cor. 6 (libertinism, sexual autonomy) and 1 Cor. 7 (sexual asceticism) are both are rooted in a false view of the body. Paul counters: the body is created good; the body is now fallen so its desires are distorted and disordered; the body will be redeemed in Christ with resurrection as the ultimate goal.

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A very good article on God's design for human sexuality  
(<http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=18-06-022-f>):

The fact is that we aren't designed for hooking up. Our hearts and bodies are designed to work together. Don't we already know that?

In "Friends, Friends with Benefits, and the Benefits of the Local Mall," a *New York Times Magazine* writer who interviewed teenagers who hook up supplies a telling anecdote. The girl Melissa tells him, "I have my friends for my emotional needs, so I don't need that from the guy I'm having sex with." Yet on the day of the interview, "Melissa was in a foul mood. Her 'friend with benefits' had just broken up with her. 'How is that even possible?' she said, sitting, shoulders slumped, in a booth at a diner. "The point of having a friend with benefits is that you won't get broken up with, you won't get hurt."

But let there be no mistake: When I say we aren't designed for this, I'm also speaking of males. A woman may be more likely to cry the next morning; it's not so easy to sleep with a man who won't even call you back. But a man pays a price too. He probably thinks he can instrumentalize his relationships with women in general, yet remain capable of romantic intimacy when the right woman comes along. Sorry, fellow. That's not how it works.

Sex is like applying adhesive tape; promiscuity is like ripping the tape off again. If you rip it off, rip it off, rip it off, eventually the tape can't stick

anymore. This probably contributes to an even wider social problem that might be called the Peter Pan syndrome. Men in their forties with children in their twenties talk like boys in their teens. “I still don’t feel like a grown-up,” they say. They don’t even call themselves men—just “guys.”

Now, in a roundabout sort of way, I’ve just introduced you to the concept of natural law. Although the natural-law tradition is unfamiliar to most people today, it has been the main axis of Western ethical thought for 23 centuries, and in fact it is experiencing a renaissance.

The hinge concept is *design*. I said that we’re not *designed* for hooking up, that we’re *designed* for our bodies and hearts to work together. We human beings really do have a design, and I mean that literally—not just a biological design, but an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual design. The human design is the *meaning* of the ancient expression “human nature.” Some ways of living comport with our design. Others don’t....

Unitive intimacy is more than intense sexual desire leading to pleasurable intercourse. The sexes are designed to complement each other. Short of a divine provision for people called to celibacy, there is something missing in the man, which must be provided by the woman, and something missing in the woman, which must be provided by the man. By themselves, each one is incomplete; to be whole, they must be united.

This incompleteness is an incredible blessing because it both makes it possible for them to give themselves to each other, and gives them a motive to do so. The gift of self makes each self to the other self what no other self can be. The fact that they “forsake all others” is not just a sentimental feature of traditional Western marriage vows; it arises from the very nature of the gift. You cannot partly give yourself, because your Self is indivisible; the only way to give yourself is to give yourself entirely. Because the gift is total, it has to exclude all others, and if it doesn’t do that, then it hasn’t taken place.

We can say even more about this gift, because the union of the spouses’ bodies has a more-than-bodily significance; the body emblemizes the person, and the joining of bodies emblemizes the joining of the persons. It is a symbol that participates in, and duplicates the pattern of, the very thing that it symbolizes; one-flesh unity is the body’s language for one-life unity. (The next two paragraphs are closely indebted to the Oxford philosopher John Finnis.)

In the case of every other biological function, only one body is required to do the job. A person can digest food by himself, using no other stomach but his own; he can see by himself, using no other eyes but his own; he can walk by himself, using no other legs but his own; and so on with each of the other

powers and their corresponding organs. Each of us can perform every vital function by himself, except one. The single exception is procreation.

If we were speaking of respiration, it would be as though the man had the diaphragm, the woman the lungs, and they had to come together to take a single breath. If we were speaking of circulation, it would be as though the man had the right atrium and ventricle, the woman the left atrium and ventricle, and they had to come together to make a single beat.

Now, it isn't like that with the respiratory or circulatory powers, but that is precisely how it is with the procreative powers. The union of complementary opposites is the only possible realization of their procreative potential; unless they come together as "one flesh"—as a single organism, though with two personalities—procreation doesn't occur....

Why do I spend time on these matters? I do so in order to emphasize the tightness with which different strands are woven together by our sexual design.

Mutual and total self-giving, strong feelings of attachment, intense pleasure, and the procreation of new life are linked by human nature in a single complex of purpose. If it is true that they are linked by human nature, then if we try to split them apart, we split ourselves. Failure to grasp this fact is more ruinous to our lives, and more difficult to correct, than any amount of ignorance about genital warts. It ought to be taught, but it isn't.

The problem is that we don't want to believe that these things are really joined; we don't want the package deal that they represent. We want to transcend our own nature, like gods. We want to pick and choose among the elements of our sexual design, enjoying just the pieces that we want and not the others. Some people pick and choose one element, others pick and choose another, but they share the illusion that they can pick and choose.

Sometimes such picking and choosing is called "having it all." Having it all is precisely what it isn't. A more apt description would be *refusing* it all, insisting on having only a part, and in the end, not even having that.

Think of our sexual landscape as a square or quadrant with four corners, *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*. Over in corner *A* are people—mostly men—who buy into the fantasy that they can enjoy greater sexual pleasure by instrumentalizing their partners and refusing the gift of self. By doing so, they fall pell-mell into what has been called the "hedonistic paradox": The best way to ruin pleasure is to make it your goal.

Pleasure comes naturally as a byproduct of pursuing something else, like the

good of another person. When I talk with students, I illustrate the point with a Mick Jagger song they've all heard, although they think the Rolling Stones are a bunch of geezers. The song is "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." Nobody who has ever listened to the song imagined that Jagger suffered from a shortage of sex. The problem was that all that satisfaction wasn't satisfying anymore.

In corner *B* of the quadrant are other people—mostly women—who try to substitute *feelings* of union for union itself. We catch a hint of how common this is in the debasement of the language of intimacy. In today's talk, "I was intimate with him" means "I had sex with him," no more and no less. This euphemism is used more or less interchangeably with another one, "I was physical with him," and that tells you all you need to know.

The parties have engaged in a certain transaction with their bodily parts. There may have been one-flesh unity—in other words, their bodies may have been acting as a single organism for purposes of procreation—but there has not been one-life unity, because that would require mutual and total self-giving. Even so, the bodily transaction *produces feelings* of union, because that is what it is designed to produce.

One confuses these feelings with the things that they represent and are meant to encourage, wondering afterward why everything fell apart. After all, you "felt so close." You "seemed so committed." You "had such a good thing going." Yes, you had everything except the substance of which these feelings are designed to be a sign.

In corner *C* of the quadrant are couples, who imagine that by denying the procreative meaning of sexuality, they can enhance its unitive meaning—that by deliberately avoiding the so-called burden of children, they can enjoy a deeper intimacy. It doesn't work that way. Why should it? The unitive capacities of the spouses don't exist for nothing; they exist for their procreative partnership.

That is their purpose, and that is the matrix in which they develop. Children change us in a way we desperately need to be changed. They wake us up, they wet their diapers, they depend on us utterly. Willy-nilly, they knock us out of our selfish habits and force us to live sacrificially for others; they are the necessary and natural continuation of the shock to our selfishness that is initiated by matrimony itself.

To be sure, the spouses may try to live sacrificially for each other, but by itself, this love turns too easily inward. Let no one think that I am referring to couples who are childless through no fault of their own. For them, too, childlessness is a loss, but the decisive factor is not sterility, but deliberate sterility. In the natural course of things, if we *willfully* refuse the procreative

meaning of union, then union is stunted. We are changed merely from a pair of selfish *me*'s to a single selfish *us*.

In corner *D* of the quadrant are people who think in exactly the opposite way. Instead of supposing that they can affirm the unitive meaning of sexuality without the procreative, they imagine that they can affirm the procreative meaning of sexuality without the unitive. The full shock of this way of life is not with us yet, but our technology allows it, and in most jurisdictions, so does our law.

Meet Amber, who lives alone, shares social occasions with Dave, in whom she has no sexual interest, and sleeps occasionally with Robert, in whom she has no social interest. Amber wants a child, but she doesn't want the complications of a relationship, and besides, she doesn't want to be pregnant. Where there's a will, there's a way. She contracts with Paul as sperm donor, Danielle as egg donor, Brooke as incubator, and Brian as visiting father figure to provide the child with "quality time."

Let us set aside our feelings and attend to what has happened here. Among humans, procreation takes place within the context of a unitive relationship. To destroy the unitive meaning of the procreative act is to turn it into a different kind of act. It's no longer procreation, but production; the child is no longer an expression of his parents' love, but a product. In fact, he has no parents. He was orphaned before his conception. His relation to his caretaker is that of a thing bought and paid for to the one who bought and paid for it....

I've developed just four themes in this article; allow me to review them. The first is that we ought to respect the principles of our sexual design. Just as those ways of living that flout the bodily aspects of our design sicken and kill us, so those ways of living that flout the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of our design ruin us and empty life of meaning.

The second theme is that the human sexual powers have a purpose. As the purpose of the visual powers is to see and the purpose of the ingestive powers is to take in nourishment, so the purpose of the sexual powers is to procreate. This purpose is not in the eye of the beholder; apart from this purpose, we would have no way to explain why we have them. Moreover, if we try to make use of the sexual powers in ways that thwart and violate this purpose, we thwart and violate ourselves.

The third theme is that the human design for procreation requires marital and family life. For guppies, it doesn't; they manage to procreate without them. For us, however, it does. To put this another way, we are made with a view to marriage and family, and fitness for them is one of our design criteria. No one invented them, no one is indifferent to them, and there was

never a time in human history when they did not exist.

Even when disordered, they persist. Spouses and family members who are divided by disaster commonly undertake Herculean efforts to reunite with each other. Marriage and family are not merely apparent goods but real ones, and the rules and habits necessary to their flourishing belong to the natural law.

The final theme is that the spousal bond has its own structure, which both nourishes and is nourished by these institutions. Because it has its own structure, it has its own principles. Among these principles are the following: Happiness cannot be heightened by sexually using the Other; conjugal joy requires a mutual and total gift of Self. Feelings of union are no substitute for union; their purpose is to encourage the reality of which they are merely a foretaste. The procreative and unitive meanings of sexuality are joined by nature; they cannot be severed without distorting or diminishing them both.

These principles are the real reason for the commands and prohibitions contained in traditional sexual morality. Honor your parents. Care for your children. Save sex for marriage. Make marriage fruitful. Be faithful to your spouse.

Let the sexual revolution bury the sexual revolution. Having finished revolving, we arrive back where we started. What your mother—no, what your grandmother—no, what your great-grandmother told you was right all along. These are the natural laws of sex.

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We destroy the things we idolize. Idols are usually good things we turn into ultimate things – but when we do so, these good things are no longer good for us. Those who have made an idol out of sexual pleasure eventually find that pleasure more and more elusive. Nobody doubts fornication is fun, certainly at first. But over time, sex outside of marriage becomes increasingly boring and pleasure harder and harder to come by. The thrills wear out faster and the heart becomes colder.

The same is true of porn use. Over time, the porn user seeks more hard core forms of stimulation, but eventually, even that wears thin. When the river of sexuality has no banks, all the force of its current just dissipates. There is a reason one survey after another shows that highly religious people who saved themselves for marriage have the most satisfying sex lives.

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Lauren Winner on chastity:

What is chastity? One way of putting it is that chastity is doing sex in the body of Christ—doing sex in a way that befits the body of Christ, and that keeps you grounded, and bounded, in the community.

Sex is, in Paul's image, a joining of your body to someone else's. In baptism, you have become Christ's body, and it is Christ's body that must give you permission to join his body to another body. In the Christian grammar, we have no right to sex. The place where the church confers that privilege on you is the wedding; weddings grant us license to have sex with one person. Chastity, in other words, is a fact of gospel life. In the New Testament, sex beyond the boundaries of marriage—the boundaries of communally granted sanction of sex—is simply off limits. To have sex outside those bounds is to commit an offense against the body. Abstinence before marriage, and fidelity within marriage; any other kind of sex is embodied apostasy.

Chastity, then, is a basic rule of the community, but it is not a mere rule. It is also a discipline.

The language of spiritual discipline, an ancient idiom of the church, has come into vogue again. In the 1970s and '80s, two books on spiritual disciplines, now rightly considered modern-day classics, were published: Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* and Dallas Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. Foster and Willard called readers to deepen their Christian lives by incorporating ancient practices of the church. These books struck a tremendous chord, and Christians of all stripes began exploring habits and structures like liturgical prayer, fasting, solitude, simplicity, and tithing. The spiritual disciplines are things we do; they are things we practice. They are ways we orient our whole selves—our bodies and minds and hearts, our communities and rhythms and ways of being in the world—toward God. Thinking of spirituality as something we practice or do strikes some people as odd. Isn't the point of Christianity that Jesus saves you regardless of what you do? No, doing spiritual practices doesn't get you into heaven. Rather, practicing spiritual disciplines helps align your feelings, your will, and your habits with God's will.

*Discipline* is a modern term for what the old church would have called asceticism, which comes from the Latin word *ascesis*, meaning exercise. And, indeed, the spiritual disciplines are, in part, exercises that train us in the Christian life. Thinking about physical exercise, actually, can help us understand spiritual exercise. Serious runners run at least three or four times a week, rain or shine, whether or not they feel like it. Even on the days you don't enjoy your jogs, you know you are maintaining your skills and strengths so you can go for that run on the beach when you want to. Spiritual practices form in us the habits, skills, and strengths of faithful followers of Christ. Committing myself to a discipline of daily prayer, for example, teaches me how to be a person of prayer. Committing myself to tithing, even when it pinches my budget, turns me into a person who understands that all is a gift, that all belongs to God. As Willard explains in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, spiritual practices "mold and shape" us. They are activities "undertaken to



bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his kingdom. ... To grow in grace is to grow in what is given to us of God and by God. The disciplines are then, in the clearest sense, a means to that grace and also to those gifts."

Chastity, too, is a spiritual discipline. Chastity is something you do; it is something you practice. It is not only a state—the state of being chaste—but a disciplined, active undertaking that we do as part of the body. It is not the mere absence of sex but an active conforming of one's body to the arc of the gospel.

The disciplines of Christian sexuality can be seen, too, when we look at sex between married people. Here the discipline of sex is twofold. Fidelity is a discipline: Just as most single people want to have sex, period, so married people (even really happily married people) find themselves wanting to have sex with someone other than their spouse. And restraining those impulses is itself a discipline. (Indeed, it is worth pointing out that practicing chastity before you are married trains you well for chastity after you are married; it stands to reason that those who are promiscuous before marriage may be more likely to cheat on their spouses once married.) But so too is having sex with your husband or wife a discipline. Sometimes we have sex with our spouse because we feel desire, because we want to express the intimacy we feel, because we feel turned on; but sometimes a husband and wife have sex precisely because they don't feel desire or intimacy. We recognize that sex can do good work between a husband and wife, that it can do the work of rekindling that desire and intimacy, that bodies have something to teach us, and that sex is not about spirits communing, but about persons being bodies together.

Pope John Paul II on chastity:

The chaste person is not self-centered, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace. This purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who "called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

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Andy Crouch on how all of us have a sexual orientation bent towards the self:  
[http://www.culture-making.com/articles/before the deluge](http://www.culture-making.com/articles/before_the_deluge)

Crouch writes:

First, what is the meaning of sexuality? Is it, like so much in consumer culture, an opportunity to define my identity by carefully excavating, and duly satisfying, my individual preferences? (The ostensibly heterosexual plot lines of *Sex and the City*, which has several gay writers on its staff, are pristine expressions of this view of sex. It is no coincidence that the series is ending now that its star has had a child.) Or is sexuality, whether expressed in intimacy or reserved in chastity, less a matter of finding myself than offering myself, less about satisfaction than servanthood?

Second, what are human beings? Are we fundamentally good creatures whose desires are implicitly to be trusted? Or are we both victims and perpetrators of rebellion against our own good, persistently deceived and deceiving?

Beneath these questions hides the third and ultimate question of our time, the goodness (not the existence) of God. Is God for us? Is God distant, cruel, or both, leaving us to do the best we can to provide for ourselves? Or does God suffer with us in our passions, longings, and yearnings—even and especially those that come from the most fragile reaches of our hearts?

I have accompanied many friends through these questions. Some of these friends would usually be described as “homosexual.” But the more I have faced these questions, and the more deeply I come to know my friends and myself, the less I believe that “homosexual” is the right word. Humankind is not divided into “heterosexuals” and “homosexuals.” Rather, we are “sexuals,” people created for union with another, in the image of a relational God. And all of us have a sexual orientation that bends toward self, that tends toward self-justification, and that hides from a God we fear is not good enough to satisfy us.

Unfortunately, our churches often maintain a devilish double standard that expects heroic levels of purity from those with homosexual desires, while aggressively enforcing a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy for the rest of us. The hypocrisy—if not homophobia—of such attempts at sexual sin management is only confirmed by the divorce rate among evangelicals, which is slightly higher than that of the general population. We sexuals are not heroes.

Yet we do have a hero. Some of us have been delivered by him out of the worst that sin can do. I have had the privilege of being friends with those who lived for years as gays and lesbians, who were adulterers, who were cross-dressers, who were consumed by pornography or obsessed with their own attractiveness—and who now joyfully live a different life thanks to Christ. Among us, too, are some who have not experienced any such dramatic deliverance, but who continue to submit themselves to their friends and to God even in the midst of emptiness that goes as deep as the soul can see.

On marriage (especially early marriage) as God’s answer to sexual temptation, see:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/august/16.22.html>

<http://www.boundless.org/2005/answers/a0002146.cfm>

A good overview of biblical sexuality:

[http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4218327/k.5CB9/What God Says About Sex.htm](http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4218327/k.5CB9/What_God_Says_About_Sex.htm)

Also this:

[http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4219305/k.436F/Cool Stuff About Love and Sex.htm](http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4219305/k.436F/Cool_Stuff_About_Love_and_Sex.htm)

Excellent books include Lauren Winner's *Real Sex* and Gary Thomas's *Sacred Marriage*. Winner is especially good on the lies told about sex by the world and by the church, as well as the "politics" of sex (that is, the wider social/communal implications of how we practice sex).

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John Nolland:

### **Paul's argument**

It is time now to come back to Paul's idea that sexual sinners sin against their own bodies. The example case he takes up is sex with a prostitute. In such sex we have two consenting adults who both—admittedly for different reasons—want the sex. On the face of it there is no victim. So why should it be considered wrong?

There is a superficial wisdom to a pragmatic approach like this. And at times it may be the best that a society that is as fractured as ours can do. But even at the most pragmatic level this approach is shot through with difficulties. No self-identified victim doesn't mean no victim. No obvious victim doesn't mean no victim. Sociology and Psychology have helped us to see these matters more clearly and from different angles.

With a bit of sensitive investigation we will be able to identify the possibility of quite a range of victims in the case of a man using a prostitute.

All this—and there is more—operates at the merely pragmatic level. But at the end of the day Christian ethics are not pragmatic ethics. Christian ethics are based on the rightness of behaviour, not the consequences of behaviour. They are based on the God's commandments, not on human wisdom.

Nevertheless, we can always expect Christian ethics to stand up to pragmatic scrutiny precisely because they flow out of the goodness of God.

It is not, however, that we can set ourselves up to test the validity of biblical commandments on the basis of pragmatic considerations.

But Paul was not living in our brave new world; and Paul was not adding up the pragmatics. The flow of thought in 1 Cor 6 allows us to identify the main lines of his thinking about this matter. So let's look through Paul's eyes at the situation of the Christian man and the prostitute. Paul's focus is not going to

be on the range of victims we could identify. He settles for a rather narrower focus. Paul focuses specifically on the situation of the Christian man. His main point is going to be that sex with a prostitute messes up the man's relationship with Christ. But how does he get to this?

As he so often does, Paul makes appeal to Genesis. The creation patterns are really important for him. Just as Jesus does, Paul considers that the creation accounts provide fundamental insight into what it is to be human and into God's vision for human well-being. So Paul appeals here to Gen 2:24, 'the two will become one flesh'. He is appealing to a key element of a Biblical understanding of sex.

To put it crudely, saying 'the two will become one flesh' implies that sex is for gluing two people together into a single unit. In other words, sex makes its own vital contribution to the formation of the psychosomatic unity of husband and wife. A man and a woman well glued together is God's pattern for the main kind of fundamental human unit within society.

I say 'God's pattern for the main kind of fundamental human unit within society', because Scripture elsewhere makes it quite clear that there are particular people and people in particular kinds of situations for whom singleness not marriage is their proper state of being.

If sex is the glue for marriage, then sex outside of marriage is using the glue in the wrong way. We might be able to give a sophisticated description of this gluing role in terms of brain chemistry, hormones, emotional consequences and so on. But Paul settles for the Genesis language of 'one flesh', which he sometimes paraphrases as 'one body'.

What happens when one engages in this gluing process with a prostitute?

What happens when one engages in this gluing process with someone of the same sex? What happens when one engages in this gluing process outside the committed exclusivity of marriage? Paul only works it out at all in the case of the prostitute, and even then only enough to make his point. I want to give some attention to Paul's argument here and then come back to reflect further on the misuse of the sexual gluing process.

To make his particular point Paul points to yet another kind of unitive activity. He talks about the uniting that happens when we become Christians. We are united to Christ. 'United to the Lord' is how he puts it in v 17. 'Your bodies are members of Christ' is how he puts it in v 15. Also in v 17 he says that one 'becomes one spirit with [the Lord]'. This last piece of language 'one spirit' is specifically intended to be a counterpart to the Genesis language of marriage as 'one flesh'.

Paul is clearly after a sameness and a difference between the kind of unity involved in sex and that involved in being linked to the Lord. To say that one is physical and one is spiritual would partly catch the difference, and would be well reflected in Paul's juxtaposition of 'flesh' and 'spirit'.

For Paul, however, 'flesh' is not just physical. It is rooted in the materiality of our bodies, but it catches up as well attitudes and values and impulses that we would be more inclined to describe in psychological terms and in terms of the whole person.

The language of 'spirit' certainly rises above our physicality. But it is not a reality totally apart from the physical. Otherwise Paul would not be able to make the specific argument he is making here; his argument depends on the interplay between the two unities he wants to compare. Some kinds of pagan thought would have been quite comfortable with an idea like orgasmic unity with the divine. Biblical thought is not.

Because God is the creator of our flesh, flesh and spirit get on perfectly well together as long as spirit has the priority and our spirits are in tune with the divine Spirit. Human wellbeing consists in flesh being harnessed and channelled, but not at all in flesh being ignored, repressed or denied.

So what is Paul's argument here? He is certainly not saying that sex creates a unity with another person that we should reserve for our unity with the Lord. As far as Paul is concerned the marriage unity of one flesh is a part of the creation order that is to be celebrated.

Sadly I cannot take you through the details of Paul's argument in the time we have. In broad summary, my tracking it through produces something like this. Paul contends that Christ-man-prostitute is an impossible unity, because it is a unity of irreconcilable opposites. One can have the unity with Christ or one can have the pseudo-unity with the prostitute, but one cannot have both. When the appetites of the flesh are not channeled by the priorities of the Spirit they are irreconcilable with Christ. What should be a pure temple for the Holy Spirit is defiled.

### **Misusing the sexual gluing process**

So now we have looked at how Paul's argument works I want to reflect just a little further on the misuse of the sexual gluing process.

Like many of our human characteristics this capacity to be glued to another person works in complex and subtle ways. And its working can be disrupted. In particular its working can be disrupted by its misuse.

Compared to other modes of human intimacy sexual intimacy creates a distinctive kind of openness between a man and a woman. And in connection with all other relationships this distinctive openness operates as a boundary marker. The marriage relationship is only one of many kinds of human relationships, but it is a set-apart relationship because of the distinctive 'gluedness' between husband and wife.

Other kinds of sex create confusion about this most important boundary and do not normally produce robust relationships, even when there is a desire for them to do so.

By God's grace there is a recovery path from every kind of sin and from every kind of disaster.

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From <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A54736-2004Aug10?language=printer>:

Feminist author Naomi Wolf agrees, and says modern sexual conduct offers a window into what's been gained and lost in the nation's values revolution. The sexual revolution, now stripped of much of its feminist political ideology, has left legions of young women free but confused. "I think the tipping point came three or four years ago with the first generation to grow up with the Internet," Wolf says. "They were daughters of feminists. The feminist message of autonomy got filtered through a pornographized culture. The message they heard was just go for it sexually.

"What is gained is they totally reject the double standard and believe they are entitled to sexual exploration and sexual satisfaction," Wolf says. "The downside is we've raised a generation of young women -- and men -- who don't understand sexual ethics like: Don't sleep with a married man; don't sleep with a married woman; don't embarrass people with whom you had a consensual sexual relationship. They don't see sex as sacred or even very important anymore. That's been lost. Sex has been commodified and drained of its deeper meaning."

To conservative commentator Michelle Malkin, who views the sexual revolution as media-driven, immoral and damaging to women, Jessica's eager publicists in the mainstream press are just as repulsive as Jessica herself.

"This vulgar little episode reflects a larger, disturbing media trend toward normalizing and glamorizing sexual promiscuity among young working women," Malkin wrote in an online column titled "The Skanks on Capitol Hill," which was posted on the [townhall.com](http://townhall.com) Web site. "It harms those trying to succeed on their merits in the professional arena. And it also harms our own daughters, who will be forced to fight harder to protect their dignity and credibility in a 'Girls Gone Wild' culture."

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Peter Berkowitz on the sexual revolution

(<http://www.peterberkowitz.com/woodedbyfreedom.htm>):

Whereas in the sixties and seventies, at the dawn of the sexual revolution, radical college students referred to one of their newfound freedoms as the now quaint-sounding "making love" (a euphemism that emancipated sex from marriage but preserved its link to romance), and in the eighties we referred to "having sex" (which severed the biological drive from emotional attachment), today students adopt a mechanical metaphor, speaking of "hooking up," like railroad cars and computer docking stations.

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On the diminishing returns of sexual sin and the effects of porn on how our culture views women as sex objects

(<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/december/5.50.html>):

The heterosexual icon [Hugh Hefner] ... had trouble finding satisfaction through intercourse; instead, he liked the girls to pleasure each other while he masturbated and watched gay porn."

This statement may seem either shocking or trivial. But it points to that which Hefner's detractors have been saying for years: Pornography stifles the development of genuine human relationships. Pornography is a manifestation of arrested development. Pornography reduces spiritual desire to Newtonian mechanics. Pornography, indulged long enough, hollows out sex to the point where even the horniest old goat is unable to physically enjoy the bodies of nubile young females....

Hefner's Playmates—and, in the culture he has done so much to shape, all women—are primarily visual objects, metaphysically truncated to their improbable physical attributes. Among the consequences: all female rock stars are now obliged to be beautiful, contributing to a dearth of quality female vocalists—not because women can't sing, but because pornographic culture won't allow any but the most beautiful women to get on the stage. The same is true for women newscasters and waitresses, but the irony is doubly poignant in the music industry, where the melodious sound of someone's voice may never get to your ears because she lacks the visual appeal required by mass marketing.

See also Chuck Colson:

Those of us who grew up in the 1950s still look back with amazement at the cultural changes that have taken place during the 1960s and 1970s. And one of the leading proponents of those changes was none other than *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner.

According to a recent *Washington Post* article by Elizabeth Fraterrigo, the 84-year-old smut peddler is now seeking to re-gain control of his once-vast Playboy empire. Why? To ensure his "legacy."

Well, Hefner needn't worry about his legacy. As Fraterrigo notes, his legacy is already assured since Hefner "has already succeeded in transforming American culture," making it "more sexualized and sex more commercialized."

But Hefner was selling more than pornographic images. He was selling a complete philosophy of life, a worldview. A despicable, profoundly anti-human worldview. Fraterrigo sums it up: For Hefner, "self-denial was old-fashioned. So were... conservative sexual attitudes. It was okay to pursue pleasure. In fact, it was American. Above all, individuals did not have to follow the strictures of society—they could find fulfillment in a lifestyle of their own choosing."

Hefner, of course, can't take sole credit for the idea that pleasure is the only worthy goal in life. In this post-modern age, that credit should go mostly to Sigmund Freud. As I wrote in my book, *The Good Life*, Freud believed that the

purpose of life was to “become happy and remain so.” And for Freud, happiness resulted from pleasure. Specifically, sexual pleasure, free of all those cumbersome social restraints foisted upon mankind by religion. And it was this worldview, which invaded the universities and parlors of America in the early and mid twentieth century, which fueled the sexual revolution. Hugh Hefner was merely one of hedonism’s leading ground troops.

And what has the pursuit of pleasure won us as a society? Skyrocketing divorce rates, abortion, a plague of sexually transmitted diseases, sexual abuse and trafficking, pornography addiction, broken families, and on and on. And as for Hefner himself, he’s still pursuing pleasure, Viagra bottle in hand, although as his ex-girlfriends report, he is far, far from happy. The good life has eluded him.

And the good life, what the Greeks called *eudaimonia*, a life well lived, will elude everyone who makes self-satisfaction and sexual gratification their top priorities.

That’s because we can’t live with the consequences of such a worldview. And that’s why we Christians must show the world a better, more rational way of living in the world.

We were made for love. And that love focuses not on ourselves, but on God and neighbor—on the other. God gave us those stuffy old sexual mores, the ones Freud obsessed over, precisely to ensure our happiness—our happiness as individuals and as a human society. The joy and assurance of faithful love, one man and one woman, are a great blessing, and—in the end--the source of great pleasure.

Now that’s a worldview that makes sense. And its legacy will be profound and deep happiness for those who embrace it.

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Glenn T. Stanton:

Sex, for good and bad, can be "awe-fully" consequential. As such, it is always provocative and never safe.

When Andy Warhol said, "Sex is the biggest nothing of all time," he was so wrong. Sex is one of the biggest *some things* of all time — and for far deeper reasons and in many more fabulous ways than most people appreciate.

For Christians, sex is a big thing because it's a big thing to God.

Those outside the circle of faith often see followers of Christ as we typically see our parents. They couldn't possibly be sexual, save for the few obligatory engagements needed to bring offspring into the world.

But this is a false understanding. Truth be told, parents and Christians have a very vibrant interest in sexuality (except my parents, I'm sure!).

And Christians have a higher view of human sexuality than most people. G. K. Chesterton hinted at this in an odd way when he said, "When once you have



got hold of a vulgar joke, you may be certain that you have got hold of a subtle and spiritual idea."

And Bruce Marshall is even more startling: "The young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God."

What Chesterton, always the provocateur for truth, is trying to have us understand is that human sexuality comes to us from God, and even when it is sadly perverted in vulgar joke, the teller is unwittingly referring to something that is, at its root, remarkably sacred and godly. (And that's exactly why the perversion of it is so wrong.)

Marshall would have us know that even the search for intimacy in the wrong places, in the wrong ways, is intimately about seeking what God made us for. (And that's exactly why it should be sought in the right places in the right ways.) This search drives all of us in many different and powerful ways. Some are simply more aware of what is really behind it.

What these men are saying is that "at its root as God created it" sex is remarkably sacred and ultimately about seeking that which God made us for. We must understand that God's interest in human sexuality is so much more than merely making sure people *behave* themselves.

God is much more than some supreme Dr. Laura barking out moral directives over a heavenly radio. But it's not confined to only this. His interest is rooted in something much bigger.

God, and those who follow Him, take sex very seriously, and the Christian picture of sexuality is much more serious, vibrant, and well "sexy" than any other view held in the larger culture. As a result, it's far more fulfilling. While it might seem old-fashioned or pass to people outside the faith, the Christian view of sexuality is actually a very radical one. It's radical because it goes against the culture and holds up human sexuality as nothing less than an icon of the inner life of God. That's far from "nothing."

Before we address this, let's understand that place of sexuality in family life.

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Robin Phillips explains the biblical sex ethic to teens:

Whenever I tell my children that intimacy is inappropriate without a clear possibility of marriage, or that casual dating is wrong, or that modesty is important, I always try to emphasise that this is because I take a higher view of love, romance and sexuality than those with looser standards. This is such an important point to emphasise since those who maintain Biblical standards of purity and integrity are frequently accused of being repressive or of having a pessimistic view of sex. But in reality, it is those who are casual with their sexuality who do not have a sufficiently high regard for it.

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So the starting point has to be an affirmative one. If the restrictions are not seen within this positive context, then everything the parent says will just be

perceived as repression, legalism, over-restriction, and so on. This is something that was impressed upon me when I was researching about the [betrothal movement](#) where the starting point is predominantly negative.

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Building on that, the problem with casual dating is that it trivialises relationships and treats our sexuality as unimportant. When two people are simply pursuing a relationship as a means for personal pleasure, it offers a sort of 'emotional foreplay' that provides the pleasure of a relationship without the responsibility of a committed relationship. That is hardly good preparation for marriage. Because we have been created in the image of God, casual relationships cannot fulfil us and will always leave us feeling empty even if they provide a temporary thrill.

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If you look at the pioneers of the sexual liberation movement and the founders of radical sex education, they say in their writings that the most effective tactic for subverting all sexual norms was to first get people to think of their sexuality in a common and casual way. It is scary that many Christians approach relationships in a way that implicitly encourages a casual approach to sexuality, even if they still hold to the external standards of Judeo-Christian morality. As long as they stop short of jumping into bed with someone of the opposite sex (or wherever they happen to draw the line), many Christians see nothing wrong with a casual approach. They think that as long as you don't have sex before marriage then you are keeping to the Biblical sex ethic and you're fine. This is ethics by subtraction, which leaves a moral vacuum that makes the young person a prime target for sexual temptation. It also means that the person can approach members of the opposite sex with all the wrong attitudes and they think it's fine because they haven't actually 'done' anything immoral. But in reality, the do's and don'ts of Biblical morality spring forth from a whole attitude about how we approach members of the opposite sex – it's an orientation of honour, responsibility, care and love in the 1 Corinthians 13 sense. It's a mindset that puts such a high premium on sexuality, love and romance that the thought of squandering these things in a careless and flippant way should fill us with horror.

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Seen in this way, purity, sexual reserve and modesty need not be indicative of an under-sexed temperament, as is often thought; rather, it is an acknowledgement and preservation of one's sexuality as a gift from God. Purity is not a matter of negation, but of affirmation: affirming the sacredness of sexuality and committing to preserve the sense in which it is set apart and cherished.

In the long run, this is the truly erotic option. It's parents like you and me who are opting for the genuinely erotic option for our children. We are saying that sex is a Big Deal and should be treated like a Big Deal. We are saying that the sexual rite is 'holy' in the sense that it is set apart. What it is

set apart from is the ordinary and the common; what it is set apart for is the covenant of marriage. On the other hand, those who are so sexually active that they give no second thought to a one-night-stand, and are consequently treating sex like it is no big deal, ultimately end up finding the activity less pleasurable (and there is a large body of anecdotal evidence to bare this out).

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On sexual morality and culture, see Rich Bledsoe's "Sex and the City" series:  
<http://revbledsoe.wordpress.com/2009/07/13/april-10-2007-sex-the-city-i-ii/>

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"Glorify God with your body" in context means "glorify God with your sexuality." This means chastity – celibacy if you're single, monogamy if you're married. It means no sex if you're single, lots of sex if you're married. But both unmarried and married people live by the same basic rule.

1 Cor. 6:12ff clearly ties together sex and Spirituality, sex and salvation. In v. 16, Paul speaks of being *joined* to a harlot in sex. In v. 17, he speaks of being *joined* to Christ by faith. The analogy could not be more clear.

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We need to recover the Spirituality of the body. The body is sanctified and saved, not just the soul.

6:15 is a one-verse preview of what Paul will unpack in 50+ verses in chapter 15. In other words, the Corinthians sex problems are really rooted in their misunderstanding of the resurrection.

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A Christian woman's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The only man (priest) with permission to access the holy of holies that is her body is her husband. Why? Because her husband was "ordained" as a priest to enter into her sacred precincts through their marriage ceremony.

See Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*, 209ff.

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If sex is so great, why is "f--- you!" the worst possible expletive? It seems that everyone knows there is good sex and bad sex, ennobling sex and degrading sex. In other words, even the most depraved people in our culture know that sex needs boundaries, even if they're confused about what those boundaries should be.

A youth pastor once passed along these words of wisdom to some young men: "Just being able to get an erection does not turn a boy into man; instead, *it's knowing what to do with an erection* that proves you're a man." Indeed.

There is no condom for the heart....except for the covenant of marriage. Wedding vows are the only prophylactic that can protect your soul from the "diseases" of sexual guilt and dysfunction. Those who commit themselves to one sex partner after another eventually lose their ability to really commit to another person, to be vulnerable and open.

Keller has said sex is our God-given "commitment apparatus." But when we misuse it, we find ourselves increasingly unable to enter into deep, trusting relationships.

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It is a sin to say that sex outside of marriage is not a sin. But it is also a sin to treat sexual sin as unforgivable.

In Christ, total cleansing and renewal are available. All sexual sin can be forgiven. Those who have been sexually active outside of marriage can be mended and even re-virginized. Not all earthly consequences can be totally mitigated, but repentance can certainly pave the way for a life of joyous celibacy and a great sex life within marriage. The gospel is powerful enough to mend even the most wretched sexual sinner. That's the thrust of 1 Cor. 6:9-11: such *were* some of you! But not anymore! In Christ, everything has changed. There is no need to give up or despair, no matter what you've done. In Christ, healing and wholeness can be yours.

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From C. S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters:

The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured.

The whole section is worth reading (from letter 17).

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Sexual sin a matter of the heart, first and foremost, as Jesus teaches us in Matt. 5. To not deal with the heart is to not really deal with the root of the issue. To just look at outward behavior is to deal with the problem of sexual sin in a very shallow way.

Dealing with the heart also helps us answer thorny questions that the Bible does not explicitly address, such as masturbation and "how far is too far before we're

married?” Woody Allen said, “Don’t knock masturbation; it’s sex with someone I love.” But that’s precisely the problem: it’s an act of self-love. It’s using an action which should be all about outward, self-giving love and turning it inward. Masturbation generally involves lust, which Jesus forbids. But just as significantly, it leaves one feeling more lonely and isolated than before, which makes it counterproductive in the long run, since that is the exact opposite of the bonding effect “real sex” is designed to provide.

Dating couples often wonder where to draw the line. Lauren Winner’s “rotunda rule” is a good answer, as a practical guideline. But to say a bit more: While there is no specific biblical answer, it seems wise for couples to avoid those actions that would be considered foreplay by a married couple. Close physical contact is supposed to lead somewhere – and if you aren’t going to be able to reach that destination, you best stay off the path. It’d be like getting on an escalator going up, and then trying to turn around and run back down just before it reaches the top. If you wanted to stay on the ground floor, why did you get on the escalator in the first place? The escalator (arousal, foreplay) is meant to lead to “the top,” to sexual intercourse. Semi-sexual activity is designed to lead to full intercourse – God just made us that way! Dating couples who play with fire eventually get burned. I suggest couples try to stay in public places and get a good accountability system in place. Sexual purity is indeed possible even in our day and age, but it takes planning, discipline, and deliberate effort.

What exactly is lust? Just noticing someone is attractive is not lust. But when the look gets turned into a fantasy, lust has taken over. Also, while Jesus connects lust with adultery by calling it adultery of the heart, we should still not confuse thinking about something with actually doing it. Jesus is not flattening out that distinction (which is vitally important), but showing the link and progression. Guard yourself against mental lust because it’s the first step on the path towards sexual self-destruction.