

The Design of Sexual Intimacy

What We Believe about God's Design of Sexual Intimacy

Our Cultural Impasse

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Colossians 3:14¹

"Yes!" we all shout, "Yes!" Love and perfect harmony. Yes!

Is there anyone that doesn't want to be loved and to love? And who doesn't want perfect harmony? Not a pseudo harmony where we simply suppress our differences in the name of civility or the fruitless pursuit of uniformity to eliminate our differences altogether. Perfect harmony.

Love and perfect harmony. Sign me up.

There don't seem to be many issues in America today more desperately needing love and perfect harmony than the explosively divisive issue of homosexuality. Tension erupts into vitriol, civility gives way to crusading, all the while love is said to flourish on both sides of the battlefield as both armies decry the war unnecessary. If only the other side would *actually* love, not simply *say* they do, we could all experience perfect harmony.

And thus we've arrived at our cultural impasse on the subject of sexual intimacy. We'll have to agree to disagree I guess. But we can't.

We're all demand justice. Rights must be honored, evils rectified, the worth of ALL God's creatures affirmed. Mutually exclusive claims of both sides cannot both be correct. One side calls homosexuality good and celebrates it while the other side calls homosexuality sin and renounces it.

We believe justice demands that the truth about sexual intimacy be affirmed.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from English Standard Version.

Two authorities.

Is homosexuality good or is it sin? Your answer ultimately depends upon whose authority you trust.

Who is the final arbiter of truth in the matter? Whose voice ultimately instructs and demands your obedience?

The one who trusts in the authority of God submits to whatever God says about sexual intimacy (and everything else for that matter). What God says about sexual intimacy is the truth about sexual intimacy. The one who trusts in God's authority then filters all his thoughts, feelings and experiences through the Word of God.

The one who trusts in his own authority submits only to himself. Whatever one decides about sexual intimacy is true about sexual intimacy (and everything else for that matter). One's own reason, feelings and experience are the most reliable and final tools of discernment.

We believe one's convictions about sexual intimacy flow from one's source of authority.

We believe God is the ultimate authority.

We believe God has communicated His design for sexual intimacy.

We believe God has communicated the sexual actions that are consistent with His design and those that are sin.

God's Design of Sexual Intimacy

What does God say about sexual intimacy? We find our answer beginning to unfold in the very first chapter of Scripture.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27

Equally in the image of God, equally commissioned for dominion, equally endowed with inestimable worth, male and female are different by design. In Genesis 2 God offers further insight into the creation of male and female, disclosing a portion of his rationale prior to creating Eve.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
Genesis 2:15-18

Man *alone* is not fit to enjoy the freedom of God's creation, nor adequate in and of himself to carry out the marvelous commission.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:21-23

Don't miss what God says next,

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:24-25

Oh the beauty of his design! Male and female physically formed to enjoy God and carry out his commission yet each of themselves insufficient, so God hand crafts them to complete each other, becoming one flesh! Diversity becoming unity, physically enacted in the marriage of one man and one woman. What a marvelous design.

We believe the design of sexual intimacy is intrinsically interwoven with the design of marriage.

Put simply...

- *God's design for marriage is the diverse unity of one man united with one woman for as long as they both live.²*
- *God's design for sexual intimacy creates and demonstrates "oneness" between the man and woman in marriage.*
- *God's design for sexual intimacy illustrates the spiritual intimacy between Jesus and His bride, the church.*

Jesus affirms and reiterates the design.

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."
Matthew 19:4-6

Homosexuality

So what does God say about homosexuality? Let's consider the four New Testament passages that most explicitly address the subject.

1) Romans 1:24-27

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Notice that men were "*consumed with passion for one another.*" God is not only condemning a sinful *kind* of homosexuality in which one forces himself upon another, he condemns all homosexual practice by explicitly drawing attention to the mutual desire of both parties. If this *kind* of homosexuality is sin, then all "lesser" forms are as well.

² See *Biblical Marriage* in the Articles and Papers section of thechapel.life

Observe also, “women exchanged *natural* relations for those that are contrary to *nature*.” The context of the whole chapter and its intentional parallels to Genesis 1 make it certain that “nature” is a reference to the created order and NOT one’s own desire or sexual orientation, as though God is saying the *kind* of homosexuality that’s wrong is the kind practiced by those who possess a heterosexual orientation. By implication then, the faulty argument asserts that those whom “naturally” desire homosexuality and practice it are not misusing God’s gift of sexual intimacy.

However, even if one is born with homosexual desire, the presence of this desire does not mean its expression in willful behavior is condoned. As a result of the fall, all are born with desires contrary to God’s will (Jeremiah 17:9, Psalm 51, Romans 8:23, James 4:1-3) of which we must repent and actively resist the temptation to act upon.

James 1:12-15 clearly distinguishes a difference between temptation alone and temptation that leads to active sinning. Consider also this reality. Jesus “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).”

We believe every act of homosexuality is sin.

We believe that sexuality has been corrupted by the fall and therefore every person has sexual desires contrary to God’s design. Homosexual desire is only one example of this corruption. Far more common are the equally corrupt desires for sex outside of marriage.

We believe same-sex attraction in and of itself is only a temptation to sin and distinct from the sinful acting out of that desire.³

2) 1 Timothy 1:8-11

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance

³ For a further explanation of this critical distinction see *Is it Sin to Experience Same-Sex Attraction* by Nick Roen at www.desiringgod.org

with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

3) Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

“Sexual immorality” is the rendering of the Greek word *porneia* (sounds like pour-knee-uh) defined in the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*; “generally, of every kind of extramarital, unlawful or unnatural sexual intercourse...”

The claim that Jesus said nothing about homosexuality appears destructively misleading.

We believe all sexual intimacy outside God’s design for marriage is sin.

4) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

This passage brings into sharp focus the severity of sin and makes clear its incompatibility with God’s eternal kingdom.

We believe all who remain in unrepentant sexual sin will be excluded from the eternal kingdom of God.

There’s Good News

The very next verse, 1 Corinthians 6:11 says,

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Hallelujah! God has chosen to save to himself people from among the unrighteous.⁴ People that he washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus! People completely enslaved in every form of sin, sexual and otherwise. People just like me. People just like you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:9-10

We believe all sins are forgiven for all who repent.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

We believe new life in Christ, not past or present sin, determines one's identity and future.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

You're never too lost to be found.⁵

⁴ See *What is Salvation* in the Articles and Papers section of thechapel.life

⁵ Contact a Chapel pastor 330.376.6400 or the confidential Genesis help line at 330.315.5610