



WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT: SEX AND MARRIAGE

We must allow scripture to be our authority on marriage, not the culture (2 Tim. 3:16).

While marriage and sex are important topics in scripture, they are not *the* issue.

Biblical Foundations for Marriage¹

Key Texts: Genesis 1-3; Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Genesis 1-3

Three truths from this text:

1. Men and women are both created in the image of God with the task of ruling over the earth (Gen. 1:27-28).
2. Woman was created to be a “suitable helper” for the man (Gen. 2:18).
3. The fall brought distinct consequences upon men and women (Gen. 3).

“In Genesis 1-3 both male-female equality and male headship, properly defined were installed by God at creation and remain permanent, beneficent aspects of human existence. Let me define male-female equality: *Man and woman are equal in the sense that they bear God’s image equally.* Let me also define male headship: *In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.*²

This is different from *male domination*. Male domination is a man asserting his will and authority with no regard for his wife’s well being (spiritual, emotional, or physical).

What does Genesis 1-3 teach us about the marriage relationship?

1. Marriage comes from and was instituted by God (Gen. 2:18-24).
2. Both men and women were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28).
 - a. That image is mainly wrapped up in the idea of authority (cf. Ps. 8:6-8).
3. What does it mean that Eve was to be a “helper” (Heb. ezer) to Adam?
 - a. Men and women are equal (1 Pt. 3:7), but different (Eph. 5:22).

¹ Much of this material is a summary of findings from: Andreas Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations*, (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2004).

² Ray Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 1991), 95.



4. The New Testament describes the *functional* role of a woman as in relation to a man (1 Cor. 11:9).
5. One of the curses of the fall was a power struggle between man and woman in the marriage relationship (Gen. 3:16).
6. Adam bore the primary responsibility for Eve's sin (Gen. 3:9; cf. Rom. 5:12-14).

Objections to this view of marriage from Genesis 1-3

1. Isn't God called a *helper* to his people elsewhere in the Old Testament?
How could we say that God is subordinate to humans?
 - a. It is true that the same word for helper (*ezer*) is used of God in the Old Testament (e.g. Ex. 18:4; Ps. 20:2, etc.)
 - b. However *helper* is a *functional* term. It does not deal with the value or worth of an individual.
 - c. Thus, Jesus can subordinate himself to God (Phil. 3), and not change his nature. However, his role was changed.

Old Testament Violations of Marriage:

A word of caution: An example of an action in scripture is not warrant for that action.

1. Polygamy
 - a. Practically this would have made sense in light of the creation command to be fruitful.
 - b. The first Old Testament example of polygamy is Lamech (Gen. 4:19).
 - c. There were several prominent Old Testament figures that practiced polygamy:
 - i. Abraham (Gen. 16:3), Jacob (Gen. 29:30), David (2 Sam. 3:2-5), Solomon (1 Kings 11:3).
 - d. There are several texts that appear to allow for polygamy (Ex. 21:10, Deut. 21:15-17).
 - i. These texts protected the woman in this situation.
 - ii. God was not allowing polygamy, but making a way for the protection of both parties in cases where it was practiced.
 - e. Practically polygamy *never* went well in scripture.
2. Divorce
 - a. Genesis 2:24 highlights the permanence of marriage.
 - b. In the Old Testament divorce is frequently connected to spiritual apostasy (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8)
 - c. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).
 - d. Concessions for divorce in the Old Testament did not condone the act, but protected the woman (Deut. 24:1-4).
3. Adultery
 - a. Most well known example is David (2 Sam. 11).



- b. Keeping from adultery was one of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14).
- c. Hosea experienced adultery to expose to Israel the wickedness of their rebellion against God.
- d. Joseph is a great example of a man keeping himself from this (Gen. 39:7-12).
- 4. Homosexuality
 - a. It is explicitly spoken against in Lev. 20:13.
 - b. It goes against the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply (cf. Onan in Gen. 38:8-10).

Other important Old Testament texts on this topic:

For women: Prov. 31

On the beauty and sex of marriage: Song of Solomon

The New Testament on Marriage

- 1. God works in the act of bringing a marriage together (Matt. 19:6)
- 2. Marriage is not the ultimate goal of life (Matt. 22:30). It is not permanent.
- 3. Marriage, like all things, is coming underneath the reign of Christ and is being redeemed.

1 Corinthians 7

Paul is writing to a group of Christians beginning to have a low view of sex (1 Cor. 7:1). Asceticism was becoming the ideal for some.

- 1. There is value to remaining unmarried (1 Cor. 7:6; 7:32-35; cf. Matt. 19:12).
 - a. How can you dive in to ministry rather than wait for and focus on a relationship?
- 2. In marriage there is mutual submission in some areas (1 Cor. 7:2-5).
- 3. You shouldn't seek to separate from an unbelieving spouse if they want to remain together (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Ephesians 5

- 1. In one sense all Christians submit to one another in Christ (Eph. 5:20-21). We are to seek the interests and well being of others.
- 2. Wives are to submit to their own husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22).
- 3. This is similar to Christ being head over the church (Eph. 5:23-24)
 - a. How did Christ love and lead the church? This passage is not an excuse for male domination in the relationship.
- 4. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25-28).



- a. Men, you will be held responsible for the spiritual life of your wife.
 - b. This is not self-centered leading. It is an awesome responsibility.
5. Men and women living out this type of marriage is a message to the unbelieving world about Christ's relationship to the church (Eph. 5:31-32).

1 Peter 3

1. A wife living in a Biblically faithful way might save an unbelieving husband (1 Pet. 3:1).
2. Men and women are both heirs of grace, but men are to lead (1 Pet. 3:7)
 - a. Men, don't abuse your authority.
3. How men treat their wives affects their spiritual life (1 Pet. 3:7).

Important points to remember:

1. Men also are to live under authority
 - a. Church (Heb. 13:7)
 - b. Christ (1 Cor. 11:3)
2. We should seek to emulate the Biblical example without legalism (1 Tim. 3; 5:8; Titus 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:14).
 - a. There is a pattern in scripture of the man primarily working out of the home, and the wife primarily ministering within the home.
 - i. This should not be carried out in legalism, and there are situations where it might make sense to reverse this for a season (e.g. disabled husband, furthering education, etc.).
 - b. However, there are instances of women in scripture working hard (cf. Prov. 31; Acts 16).
3. Being a wife and mother is never looked down on in scripture. It is a high calling!
 - a. For further study see: "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.
4. Women are not required to submit to *all* men.

Application Points:

Advice for Men

1. You are hard-wired to struggle with sexual temptation.
2. There is nothing wrong with noticing beauty in a woman, but does it stop there?
3. Being tempted is not a sin. It's how you handle the temptation that matters.
4. Tools in your struggle with temptation:
 - a. Prayer (Matt. 6:13)
 - b. Grow in the word (1 Jn. 2:12)



- c. Develop self-control (Titus 2:6)
 - d. Find some accountability (2 Tim. 2:22)
 - e. God forgives (1 Jn. 1:9)
 - f. Don't overestimate your ability. Understand the enemy's strategy and be proactive.
5. What type of woman are you looking for? Don't settle because you're impatient.
 6. Are you preparing yourself to pastor your family?

Advice for Women

1. Seek to cultivate modesty in your life (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:3-4).
2. Beauty is found in wisdom (Prov. 11:22)
3. Be discerning in your choice of a man. Is he going to be a good leader?

For Couples

There is spiritual warfare at work in marriage. Satan primarily employs three strategies to break up marriages.

1. Sexual Temptation (1 Cor. 7:5)
2. Anger (Eph. 4:26-27)
3. Insensitivity (Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7)

How should you fight as a couple?

1. Know you're at battle. Your spouse is not the enemy in this war.
2. Know your enemy (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:11; 1 Pt. 5:8-9)
3. Use the tools found in Ephesians 6

Practical ways to protect your family

1. Are you practicing family worship?
2. Dad...be present. Are you *with* your family when you're with your family.
3. Make sure your family is spending time together.

Special Issues Related to Sex

1. Abortion
 - a. Scripture has a high regard for human life even life in the womb (Ps. 8; Ex. 21:22-25).
 - b. Children are a gift from God (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127)
2. Birth Control
 - a. Just as there might be a reason to bypass the gift of marriage for the sake of the kingdom, there might be worthwhile reasons for temporarily passing up the gift of children.



- b. Procreation is not the only reason for sex Biblically
 - i. Creates a bond (Gen. 2:18, 24)
 - ii. Pleasure (Song of Solomon)
 - iii. Fidelity (1 Cor. 7:1-9)
- c. What are acceptable forms of birth control?
 - i. Only those forms that are contraceptive in nature should be employed.
 - ii. Acceptable: Rhythm, diaphragm, condom, and spermicides. All of these methods prevent conception.
 - iii. Unacceptable: Abortion, IUD, morning after pill
 - iv. Special attention: Sterilization, the pill (works in different ways)
- 3. Homosexuality
 - a. Foundationally God created marriage to be shared by a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24).
 - b. It does not allow for the equal, but different roles of heterosexual marriage.
 - c. It does not allow for procreation.

Homosexuality in the New Testament

Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10

⁹ *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, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).*

The phrase, “men who practice homosexuality” is actually two Greek words. The NIV’s translation is probably better, “male prostitutes and homosexual offenders.”

Objections to the traditional view on homosexuality in the New Testament

- 1. Paul is only speaking out against *pederasty*.
- 2. Paul is not speaking against celibate homosexual relationships. He is only condemning “sinful” sexual acts.
- 3. Homosexuality in the first century was much different, and we cannot read current forms of homosexuality back in to scripture.

Responses to these objections:

- 1. It is unlikely that what was condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures would now be acceptable in the New Testament (Lev. 18:22; 20:13).
- 2. It appears that Paul created this term in 1 Corinthians to designate “lying with a male.” This would encompass any type of homosexual activity.
- 3. There was a clear Greek word used to speak of *pederasty*.



4. Paul condemned not only a man's love for a boy, but mutual desire (Rom. 1:27).
5. Paul also speaks of Lesbian sex in Romans 1 which did not involve the concept of *pederasty*.

Conclusions from 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

1. The church cannot tolerate sexual immorality in its midst (1 Cor. 5:1-13).
2. Listed as a vice that will bar from God's Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11). However, it is included with many others.
3. There were some in the Corinthian Church that were formerly homosexuals (1 Cor. 6:11).
4. The church must proclaim the truth about homosexuality, but also the love of God and forgiveness offered. Don't dare be someone that acts in a hateful way toward homosexuals.

Questions on Divorce and Remarriage

Key Texts: Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 5:32 (cf. Mk. 10:11-12); 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:12-16

Implications:

1. God intends marriage to be life-long.
2. It is possible that there be Biblically acceptable reasons for divorce (adultery, desertion). However, in these instances divorce is *always* the last option, and all attempts at restoration should be made.
3. For the current views on the topic of divorce and remarriage see: God Marriage, and Family by Andreas Kostenberger.

Christians and Dating

1. Until you are ready to begin thinking about marriage, there is absolutely no reason to start dating.
2. Guys, look for a God-fearing woman (Prov. 18:22)
3. What is the character of the person? (1 Pet. 3:3-4)
4. Don't date an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14).
5. Are you two in the same place?
 - a. Commitment to God
 - b. Theologically
 - c. Views on children
 - d. Roles in the home

Guys, when you are ready to date

1. Are you spiritually ready to begin leading this woman?
2. Are you working toward a career that will allow you to provide and care for her?



3. Dads, will you be involved in the process?
4. Be confident, lay your cards on the table, and move forward.
 - a. Lots of time is wasted by guys being lazy, unconfident, and uncommitted.

Once you're both ready date, get engaged, get married and enjoy it!

What about cohabitation?

1. This seeks the intimacy of marriage without the commitment.
2. Sex without the responsibility (1 Cor. 6:15)
3. As much as you think you'll stick with the person, you are way less likely to.
4. What is this saying to the outside world about God and his church?
5. If you're not ready for the responsibility of marriage, you aren't ready for the pleasure of it.

Advice for Christian Husbands³

Is Song of Solomon a celebration of sex?

1. The work is marked by sensual and erotic language. It's hard to imagine that he was thinking of God as he wrote.
2. Scripture nowhere treats Song of Solomon allegorically.
3. Spiritualizing the book doesn't work (Song 1:2; 7:7).
4. We need instruction on sexuality. It is a gift from God.

Guys, will you allow your wife to be honest about how you're doing as a leader and lover? Gals, will you allow your husband to lead?

Marriage and sex is to be a reflection of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5). Our marriages are not "us centered" they are God centered.

Learning how to study your wife

1. Are you willing to learn who your wife is? You have to touch her heart before you can touch her body in a meaningful way.
2. Ask her, "Do you feel more like a mother or a wife?" Guys have a tendency to accomplish a goal and then move on. You are never done loving your wife!

Ways to study your wife:

³ Much of this material is adapted from: C.J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know*, (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2004).



Do you know how to surprise her and delight her in these areas?

Sex	Clothing (style, size, store)
Jewelry	Health
Exercise	Books and Magazines
Movies	The Arts
Sports	Food
Music	Entertainment
Places to visit	Intellectual Interests
Hobbies	Vacations

Do you know how your wife is doing in each of these areas?

Theological Knowledge	Spiritual Disciplines
Growth in Godliness	Spiritual Gifts
Involvement in the local church	Relationship with Children
Relationship with Parents	Relationship with in-laws
Relationship with friends	Personal retreats
Fears	Hopes
Dreams	Disappointments
Temptations	

You have to go beyond being informed. You must be transformed.

Are you weekly assessing how you're doing in your particular roles

1. Christian
2. Husband
3. Father

What are three attainable goals you can accomplish in each category each week? You have to plan so the urgent doesn't choke out the important.

Seven Ways to Kindle Romance:

1. Date Night
2. Phone Calls
3. Notes and letters
4. Gifts
5. Music
6. Getaways
7. Surprises



Guys, only you know your wife and what she likes. Scripture calls us to love our wives; it doesn't tell us how to do it.

A better sex life begins with communication. Are you willing to put in the time for carefully composed words? (Song 1:15-16)

Speaking to her about her matters in a sexual way. You should be constantly communicating her worth and value to you. This is more than simply saying, "I love you."

The Gift of Marital Intimacy

1. Is kissing still exciting for you? It is found throughout SOS (1:2).
2. Do you touch your wife? Do you know how she likes to be touched?
3. Your ability to enjoy your wife is directly related to the other sexual temptation in your life.
4. Do you watch out for her needs when you are together?
5. Try changing things up (location, how, when, etc.)

Resources for Further Study

Driscoll, Mark. *Pastor Dad: Scriptural Insights on Fatherhood*. Seattle: ReLit. Available at: www.relit.org/pastordad

---. *Porn-Again Christian: A Frank Discussion on Pornography and Masturbation*. Seattle: ReLit. Available at: www.relit.org/porn_again_christian/

Grudem, Wayne and John Piper. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 1991.

Available online at:

http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/OnlineBooks/ByTitle/1599_Recovering_Biblical_Manhood_and_Womanhood/

Harvey, Dave. *When Sinners Say "I Do": Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage*. Wapwallopen: Shepherd Press, 2007.

Kostenberger, Andreas. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations*. Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2004.

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