

Research Paper

# Theology of Sexuality

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**Abstract**

God is the creator of all things from sex, intimacy, gender and even culture. In our brokenness, our society has a newfound good news that has shaped our culture today. The cultural good news is all inclusive and liberating. However, a biblical foundation and rediscovery of the theological principles of sex and sexuality will give voice to reshape our current culture. God created male and female in His image and created sexual intimacy for marriage. Theology begins with Jesus and shapes how the Church can participate in His restoration project. The church can no longer continue in this path and not address the desires of lost people.

## Introduction

God created the pleasurable climax of an orgasm. There have been different approaches in understanding sex and sexuality. The consequences of an inadequate theology of sex and sexuality has impacted our culture and world. Our world today has taken hold of the good news of liberation and flourishing without acknowledging the true good news of Jesus Christ. The breadcrumbs from the past theological implications help us to reshape our theology to address our world today.

**Thesis** – While parts of church history and culture have opened the doors for a new expression of sexuality, a redemption of the theology of sexuality will bring good news to people today because Jesus has restored the brokenness, the current cultural expressions of sexuality are only temporary, and God's original design is for His creation to sexually flourish.

Theology begins with the good news of Jesus Christ, who was and is the coming King. He is the fulfillment of the Israelite expectation and prophecies.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ became fully man and gave himself up to death on the Cross.<sup>2</sup> He overcame the rulers, authorities and even death. In the death and resurrection, He takes our place and is victorious. Death has lost its sting.<sup>3</sup> Jesus ascended to heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God.<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ as King has implications for His Kingdom. He offers salvation from the bondage of death and destruction. Salvation births a life of flourishing and in three realities: “a) a sense of belonging (to love and be loved), b) a sense of purpose (calling), c) an experiential transcendence and joy (worship).”<sup>5</sup> All variations of the good news should be seen in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Cultural Good News

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 52:7 and Isaiah 9:6.

<sup>2</sup> Phil 2:6-11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:20.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, Chuck. What is the gospel? Doc #2.

God has revealed himself to all people throughout every generation and culture. In the search for order and purpose, culture has been created by sinful human beings. Human beings have strayed from their Creator and have found their own versions of salvation. This usually includes the idea of flourishing within their context. Some of the examples of the cultural good news can be seen in the city, television shows, and media. For this project, I immersed myself into the cultural liturgies to have a deeper understanding of the good news.

### *City of Nyack*

Our culture today expresses that beauty is attainable and affordable. If you are not satisfied with your look or have issues, there are options for you. As you drive into Nyack, the first business on Main Street is Lazure Lavie. Their motto is “beauty is a way of life.”<sup>6</sup> Beauty is advertised next to the images of a muscular male and a fine-toned female body. Their website adds a program called Emsculpt that advertises, “are you unhappy with stubborn fat?... our main goal is to help our guests achieve their aesthetic desires.”<sup>7</sup> Attractive physical appearance somehow brings more satisfaction in life. Throughout the city, I saw beauty parlors, salons, nutritional restaurants, and a few gyms.<sup>8</sup> This feeds into the cultural voice that all are welcome to begin the journey of looking like the advertised models. The goal to become like the models in the ads are possible and they will bring a more satisfied life.

### *Television*

Another voice within our culture is the notion that the men rule and reign over the world. In a popular HBO TV series, *Ballers*, it begins with a rap song depicting that he’s on top of the world and parts of the lyrics read, “I got a couple cars I never get to use, Don't like my women

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<sup>6</sup> Walkthrough Visit of Lazure Lavie on 4/2/20.

<sup>7</sup> “Sculpt 'Em With EmSculpt Nyack NY.” Lazur La Vie. [https://lazurlavie.com/Sculpt 'Em With EmSculpt](https://lazurlavie.com/Sculpt%20'Em%20With%20EmSculpt).

<sup>8</sup> Businesses include – Crossfit Momentum, Nyack Bootcamp, Nyack Fitness, Beauty for Ashes, Gaby’s Unisex Salon, Sage Herbal.

single, I like my chicks in twos, And these days all the girls is down to roll.”<sup>9</sup> The rap song sets the stage for a sex scene to begin the initial TV series.<sup>10</sup> The common theme throughout is that women are at the disposal of men. Although we can see the culture slowly shift away from the male dominance perception, this has not fully happened yet. The men are seen as gladiator-like figures with the women being submissive objects in their lives. Unfaithfulness in marriage or a relationship usually lead to consequences, but men can overcome any obstacle. They have a plethora of choices. Gender roles are defined as the men are masculine/strong and women are feminine/weak. Today’s cultural identity is built around these basic characteristics.

One other message that speaks to our culture is the inclusion of all people. I watched a popular TV show, *Modern Family*, which follows the life of the Pritchett family. The family makeup includes: Jay and his second wife (a younger attractive female), their son together and a stepson, his two adult children and their families (his son is married to another man and his daughter has a traditional family).<sup>11</sup> The show addresses the adaptations to the changing social norm. The traditional nuclear family is no longer the dominant model for family in our generation. Divorce happens as the relationships begin moving apart and is in the background of the show. The writers used a very attractive actress (Sofia Vergara) marrying an older man to appeal to their viewers. In one of the episodes, the second wife teaches their son how to get a girl to like him. This is traditionally something men do together, but the message is clear about the changing roles in society. The wife is very much in charge and seems to be the head of the relationship. She has more control and leverage in their family dynamic. The primary message of the show explains that the family dynamics have changed and all are welcomed in the family.

### *Media*

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne, Lil. Right Above It.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Dwayne. *Ballers*. HBO. TV series

<sup>11</sup> *Modern Family*. ABC.

The voice of our current culture adds that power and control is in our hands. In one of the ads on yahoo.com, it read, “plenty of fish out there (40+) – no charge to browse pics.” Our internet search engines capture our data and fetch ads deemed relevant to us. Social marketing makes it simple for anyone to indulge in their sexual desires. The Yahoo! webpage also shows the top to trending topics of the day. Five of the ten trending searches were models. As people browse, men are attracted to the beauty of the model and women are turned on by their stories. Everything is right in front of us and for our disposal. In addition, a tab under the world news read, “Mexico prostitutes end up homeless as virus keeps client’s home, shuts hotels.”<sup>12</sup> During this worldwide pandemic, there is less value in sexual endeavors. Before the crisis, prostitutes would be highly valued and seen as quick sexual experiences. Now, they are left to fend for themselves. This crisis has reshaped the value system of our culture. Another tab explained how premium pornography sites would be free at no additional cost. People are not getting their physical needs met and now have access to this in isolation. The porn industry has not forgotten the people who are isolated.<sup>13</sup> The good news within our culture of attainable beauty, male hierarchy, power to control, inclusion, and freedom speaks clearly through the medium of our city life, television and media.

### *Cultural Analysis*

An explanation of the sexual revolution begins with a historical tracing of previous generations. The cultural good news of liberation and freedom of sexual compulsions flowed out of modernity. Modernity gave social structures and parameters for the society. This engrained disciplinary power for a person’s activities that had consequences.<sup>14</sup> Sexuality developed

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<sup>12</sup> Esposito, Anthony. “Mexico’s Prostitutes End up Homeless as Coronavirus Keeps Clients at Home, Shuts Hotels.” Yahoo! News. Yahoo!, April 9, 2020. <https://news.yahoo.com/mexicos-prostitutes-end-homeless-coronavirus-134421543.html>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.techspot.com/news/84541-pornhub-wants-people-stay-home-offers-free-premium.html>

<sup>14</sup> Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy* (p. 18). Wiley. Kindle Edition.

originally as a secret that could be guarded against during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The church created space for confessions that represented the secret life. Giddens adds that “modern civilization is repressive, yes, but the release of sexual expression from its constraints could produce emancipation of a far-reaching sort.”<sup>15</sup> This quickly progressed to a change in perception of marriage. Marriage was no longer based on ties, but on romantic love. Freedom reigned in the selection of a spouse and then to the control of a family size during wartime. John Tyson added that the idea of courtship no longer began by looking at agape, philo, and then eros.

Relationships are viewed in the opposite order beginning with eros.<sup>16</sup> Finally, sexuality became autonomous as the reproduction of children became possible without sexual activity. Now, women had sexual autonomy and the sexual revolution began in the 1960s. Sexuality through a same-sex expression became liberating. In addition, Giddens noted that “increased geographical mobility, the mass media and a host of other factors have undercut elements of tradition in social life.”<sup>17</sup> Mobility opened the door for widespread acceptance of the propaganda message of different sexual expressions.

### **Biblical Theology of Sexuality**

Reshaping the theology of sexuality through Scripture will give voice to a generation in need of something more. I want to highlight a couple areas that add to a theology of sexuality.

#### *Equality in the Image of God*

A biblical theology of sexuality affirms that equality is grounded in God’s creation of man and woman in His image. God said in Genesis 1:26, “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

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<sup>15</sup> Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy* (p. 158). Wiley. Kindle Edition.

<sup>16</sup> Tyson, John. *God and Sexuality Podcast*. <https://bridgetown.church/teaching/god-sexuality/sexual-formation>.

<sup>17</sup> Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy* (p. 29). Wiley. Kindle Edition.

the earth.” The term “man” is in reference to Adam, but is meant to imply mankind. The word is also tied to the plurality of “and let them,” which includes both Adam and Eve. They both had the role of dominion and rule over God’s creation. Genesis 1:27 continues that “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Again, the Hebrew word for “man” (ha adam), or mankind, includes both man and woman. Together, this points to the individuality and complementarity of both sexes.<sup>18</sup> They are two distinct people designed to complement each other. God’s divine characteristics were given to mankind, which separates us from animals. Women were created with these characteristics just as much as men. God blessed the both of them and saw that everything he created was good.

### *Intimacy/Nakedness*

Sexual intimacy was created as part of God’s original design of marriage. Some have suggested that the consciousness of sex came after the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. However, Genesis 2:24 reads, “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall *become one flesh*.” The indication of “therefore” links back to the marriage union for all future marriages. Davidson adds, “the ‘one-flesh’ relationship centers in the intimacy of sexual union, sexual intercourse. The physical act of coitus is the primary means of establishing the ‘innermost mystery’ of oneness...to constitute the sign of the marriage covenant.”<sup>19</sup> Sexual intimacy was deemed good and designed before the fall in Genesis 3. Debra Hirsch adds, “Orgasms offer us fleeting experiences of transcendence, a way of losing ourselves, a mechanism to find and experience the “other” ... a place or state where we will finally experience ultimate and eternal freedom.”<sup>20</sup> Becoming one flesh through sexual intimacy points to a creator who saw that it was not good for man to be alone. After the fall, Adam was afraid of

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<sup>18</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 36)

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 46)

<sup>20</sup> Debra Hirsch. *Redeeming Sex* (Kindle Locations 233-236). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

God. Adam's realization of his nakedness refers to "a sense of 'being unmasked, a consciousness of guilt, a nakedness of soul.'"<sup>21</sup> God clothed Adam and Eve before they are expelled from the garden. They no longer have access to the sanctuary of the garden, but their shame is covered.<sup>22</sup> A woman's body is crafted beautifully for her husband and vice versa. In a covenant marriage, they are no longer ashamed of their nakedness, but embrace their sexuality based on His design. God created sex to reflect Him.

### *True Hierarchy*

The debate of headship has been more divisive lately within our church culture and society. As we have begun to see more and more women lead, there have been more Christians pushing them down. The true headship belongs to Jesus Christ. Paul says to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," before he speaks about the relationship within the household.<sup>23</sup> As mentioned earlier, the role of the both male and female is to rule over His creation. This task or purpose was given to the both of them. Paul's message to the Ephesians was not of subordination. The passage was in regards to the husband and wife relationship and not the men and women relationship.<sup>24</sup> This does not point to the authority or ranking over the other person, but the focus is within the household. In addition, the New Testament speaks clearly of the priesthood of all believers "with no mention of any restrictions upon gender."<sup>25</sup> The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts as the Spirit chooses.<sup>26</sup> Paul's message is also clear regarding the biblical equality that there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. A redeemed theology of the hierarchy would recognize "a divinely approved hierarchical

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<sup>21</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 57)

<sup>22</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 58)

<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 5:21 NIV

<sup>24</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 642)

<sup>25</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 648)

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:11.

relationship of husband and wife in the home and an egalitarian relationship of men and women in the church.”<sup>27</sup> Women are permitted to lead within the church without restrictions.

### *Holiness*

Under the Kingship of Jesus Christ, we are made into a new creation. Our bodies are a temple for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds us to flee from sin and sexual immorality.<sup>28</sup> The good news of Jesus covers our sin and moves us to a life of holiness. Hollinger adds, “all of life is to be set apart for God’s glory and that includes our sexual lives.”<sup>29</sup> This is not just for us to refrain from sexual sin, but to find depth and meaning in our sexual experiences. Freedom of our sexuality can be experienced fully within God’s framework. “Our physical intimacy is itself an expression of our sanctification, our set-apartness to Christ and his kingdom.” Holiness is a process of transformation of becoming whole.

### **Local Theology Synthesis**

#### *Historical*

The voice within the early Christianity regarding sexuality shows the progressive struggle to adequately address a theology of sex. Early on, the gnostics had a dualistic view of life between the spiritual and physical. All physical things were evil and should be rejected.<sup>30</sup> Marriage and sex were not from God, but from Satan. This led to a period of asceticism with St. Jerome. He believed in the superiority of celibacy over sex and marriage.<sup>31</sup> This flowed into the period of Augustine. He escaped the view of ascetism, but could not shake the concern for the Human will. Augustine believed our will power was too strong. Sex and marriage were good, but our sinful nature was stronger. The medieval pushed this even further with the Pope

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<sup>27</sup> Davidson, Richard. *Flame of Yahweh* (p. 650).

<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.

<sup>29</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *The meaning of Sex*. Baker Publishing. (Pg 88)

<sup>30</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *The meaning of Sex*. Baker Publishing. (Pg 45)

<sup>31</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *The meaning of Sex*. Baker Publishing. (Pg 46)

declaring that “sensual pleasure as the chief culprit in sex.”<sup>32</sup> Christians were seen as either a committed Christian in a monastery or an average Christian living in the world. Finally, during the Protestant Reformation and the period of the puritans, “sex and marriage received their full dignity and positive stature.”<sup>33</sup> The image was redeemed; however, the legacy of asceticism still plagues our culture today. It was an unhealthy view of sex.

### **Contextual message**

Christians have handled a theology of sex inadequately throughout history and have pushed people away. Many are not welcomed into His family with this newfound sexual liberation. A contextualized message may be an opening in addressing our culture today. First, God created male and females in His image and said that it was good. No enhancements need to be made to belong in His family. We are all made perfect in His image. Second, we were created to be equal partners in His restoration project. Our sexual identity cannot be changed, but gender roles are not black and white anymore. Culture does not define our roles, but His creative blessings and giftings will. Third, all of His creation was meant to worship Him. Sexual intimacy is a transcendent experience given by our creator to be enjoyed. Sex was designed to flourish within His framework. We desire to be Holy as He is Holy.

### **Conclusion**

God is the creator of all things and has left His fingerprints within our culture. Our culture has created false promises of the good news. The gospel of Jesus Christ welcomes all into the family, gives a sense of purpose, and unending joy. A redemption of the theology of sexuality will answer the longings of the people in our generation. The church has to be an incarnational presence in the community, demonstrate the healing power from past hurts, and

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<sup>32</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *The meaning of Sex*. Baker Publishing. (Pg 48)

<sup>33</sup> Hollinger, Dennis. *The meaning of Sex*. Baker Publishing. (Pg 49)

proclaim the corrective view of sex designed by of our Creator. (see appendix for an implementation within our context)

## Appendix 1 –

### Implementation in Ministry Context

The main thrust of the implementation is to be incarnational in community, demonstrate the power of Jesus and proclaim the good news.

#### Incarnational Presence –

Jesus came into culture and welcomed the women and outcasts. As a church, we can begin to participate in movements that move towards equality. We are taking a stand to say we are partnering with Kingdom principles. As my wife and I join the church plant in New Rochelle, we can begin to engage into the community to stand for women and the marginalized. Our leadership team must have a heart for equality within ministry.

#### Demonstration

For a long time, I operated under the Billy Graham principle that I cannot have any relationships with a female. Within the church, I only had a relationship with men. We have an opportunity to redeem this image and bring healing when we acknowledge that all relationships are not genital sexuality as Deb Hirsch puts it. We can begin to demonstrate healthy social sexuality within our leadership team and community. We acknowledge that sin can happen, but we live in our freedom. There is only one relationship that is genital and this is for my wife and this requires openness and understanding.

#### Proclamation

Social media seems to be the best way to reach our younger generation. A redefined view of gender and sex can speak to a generation that is confused. Gender roles have been typically defined as blue and pink. Blue for men and pink for women. Men wear suits to church and women wear dresses. Our language within the church defines men as strong and women are weak. We can begin social media videos proclaiming that a woman can be strong and men can wear pink. The masculinity and femininity does not define them. They are wonderful and beautifully made in His image.



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