

Healthy Sexuality

Introduction

Why address healthy sexuality at all, and why do so in a setting like this?

First, the Scriptures deal very frankly with it, both as a good gift from God and as a curse when pursued in violation of God's design.

Second, human sexuality has become the defining issue of our times. The sexual revolution of the 1960's continues to deconstruct our society, reaching beyond the party scene into our families, our entertainment, our schools, our lawmaking bodies, our courts, and our churches.

Third, if we do not teach what God says about this critical area of human identity and behavior, the only voice missing in the marketplace of ideas will be the voice of God. The sexual dogma of the current age is everywhere. And with the pervasive influence of digital media, it is discipling you, your kids, and your grandkids nearly every day to a different gospel.

Why talk about it here? Because this place is where we set forth life by the Book. The neglect if not rejection of God's revealed design for healthy sexuality has produced a host of harms. Like everything else in our

lives, if we would pay attention to what God has to say in His Word, we would see healing of our lives and bring benefit to our community.

So what we cover tonight is important insight from God not only for married couples, but for those who are not married, for families, for our church and our community, our world. It is for our good and our health, and it will hopefully help us navigate the minefield of lies and temptations that dominate our times.

Let's start at the beginning. God's perfect design at creation before the first sin marred our universe, our relationships, and ourselves.

Genesis 1:26-28

26 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."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the

heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

The creation mandate and blessing includes male and female distinctiveness and being fruitful and multiplying (procreation) in order to subdue and exercise dominion over the earth. *So from the beginning our sexuality is tied to our created identity and purpose as those made in God’s image.*

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

21 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. **22** And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** 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.”

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

Need for companionship—not good to be alone. These are the first two human beings. Even if you are not married,

Correspondence to one another—a helper fit, suitable, corresponding
One flesh union expressing the closest human relationship of all—even closer than parent-child!
Unashamed physical vulnerability—both naked; not ashamed.

Healthy sexuality is not only for procreation but also to express one-flesh companionship. Our identity is created male and female. Our identity corresponds to our created physical biological gender. *Healthy sexuality is designed to be enjoyed within the sacred protection and steadfast love relationship of marriage between one man and one woman. All deviations from this design bring trouble and harm not good.*

Our fallenness adversely affects this area of relationship as is does every other part of our lives.

Genesis 3:16

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

Our fall into sin marred the happiness of the husband-wife relationship. Pain connected to child-bearing. Conflict and abuse within the

relationship. And then searching for sexual fulfillment outside of it.

Proverbs 5:15-23

- 15** Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
- 16** Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
- 17** Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for strangers with you.
- 18** Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
- 19** a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her
breasts fill you at all times with delight; be
intoxicated always in her love.
- 20** Why should you be intoxicated, my son,
with a forbidden woman and embrace the
bosom of an adulteress?
- 21** For a man's ways are before the eyes of
the LORD, and he ponders all his paths.
- 22** The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him,
and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.
- 23** He dies for lack of discipline, and because
of his great folly he is led astray.

Proverbs 5 warns about adultery, but it calls us to healthy sexual relationship with one's spouse.

Sexual enjoyment is to continue throughout the life of a marriage, not just during one's youth. Sexual delight in the body of one's spouse is a good thing. Compare Song of Solomon

Sexual delight in a person other than one's spouse squanders God's good gift, evokes God's judgment, and leads to death.

Proverbs 6 and 7 warn about pursuing sex outside of marriage. Our culture in general frowns on adultery even though it is widespread, but accepts sexual activity among the unmarried as natural and healthy. It is not. God calls it foolishness, and it has a heavy price tag.

So how do maintain healthy sexuality in our marriages as fallen, but redeemed people living in a culture that worships many forms of sexuality that deviate from God's good design?

1 Corinthians 7 gives us really clear instruction. It will also address those of the church who are not married right now. We will take that up in a couple weeks. Corinth was more sex-obsessed even than our own culture—as were many of the pagan cultures over history. What's the best way to honor God with our sexuality in such a culture?

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

¹ Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

A broad a statement, evidently being used even within marriages to refrain from sexual relationship for the mistaken purpose of achieving greater spirituality. Paul is going to correct this unbiblical philosophy and practice likely rooted in Greek dualism

² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Not saying that everyone should be married, as the rest of the chapter will demonstrate. Rather, it is saying that if you are married you should have—have sexually—your own spouse. *Sexual intimacy is an important part of a healthy marriage relationship. Neglecting it is not healthy.* If you just want a friendship without sex, don't get married.

³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

Notice how *the Scriptures reverse the common worldly thinking about sex. It's not something you take. That mindset leads to abuse. It's something you willingly give.* It is your spouse's right to receive this from you. It is not just a man thing or a woman thing. A husband is to give himself to his wife sexually. A wife is to give herself to her husband sexually.

⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Again, note the mutual authority regarding the sexual relationship. It's not just that a wife's body belongs to her husband. His body also belongs to her. To withhold yourself is to take what is not yours. It is to buck the authority of your spouse and of God.

As fallen people, it is hard for us to hold that duty can also be a delight. Solomon calls this relationship the Song of Songs—the ultimate song. It's a duet. A delight. A joy. An expression of oneness and safety and cherishing and pleasure. A special gift that belongs only to your spouse. Why would you throw it away?

⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

So far God has defined the nature of the sexual relationship in marriage as God designed. Here He gives us a direct

command: Do not deprive one another. Do not rob one another.

To disobey God's command is by definition sin. And sin always does harm in some way. Your spouse may not complain to you. In such a sensitive area, bringing up frustration often causes hurt and conflict. Far better for you just to live according to God's good design. Adultery, sexual immorality, homosexuality, bestiality, pedophilia, rape, or polygamy all bring harm because they deviate from God's revealed will and design. Depriving your spouse is also a deviation from God's revealed will and design, and as such, brings harm.

There is a three-part exception clause:
except perhaps by agreement
for a limited time,
that you may devote yourselves to prayer
Notice the word "perhaps"—this is not a
necessary exception, but a possible
exception, but it has definite limits

but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Any break from sexual activity needs to be for a short time. Get back together as soon as possible. Satan looks for vulnerable people,

and neglecting your sexual relationship to your spouse makes you both vulnerable.

Ironically, the very reason that some were refraining from sex in their marriage was to fight the sexual immorality of the culture. What they were doing was in fact making them more vulnerable to it. *The best way to fight sexual sin is to pursue healthy sexuality the way God designed it.* That is still the case.

If you realize tonight that your sexual relationship with your spouse is not healthy, you have an advantage if you've both been listening tonight. Perhaps it's time for a good conversation. But how about not just talking about it. Line up your life with God's design by acting upon it. It is good. And you both will benefit from mutual pursuit of God's good will.

If your spouse is not here, perhaps you can do your part to give yourself the way God talks about.

If you're not married, save yourself for your spouse. Or if marriage is not a prospect for whatever reason, keep yourself in the will of God in this area for His glory and your good. Pray for those who are married that they will grow healthy in this area.