

# Sexuality & Gender

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PBCC • 2016.01.24

## Definitions:

- **Sex:** biological, physiological characteristics: chromosomes, genitals, etc. Male, female, intersex.
- **Gender:** roles and expectations in society, hence social construct. Masculine, feminine: boy/girl, man/woman.
  - Gender dysphoria (~~gender identity disorder~~): distress caused by conflict between birth sex/gender and self-identified sex/gender.
- **Sexuality:** sexual desires and behavior; sexual orientation.

## Statement:

In Christ, and filled with his Spirit, we are called to holy living in all aspects of our lives. We affirm that the proper arena for sexual intimacy is marriage between one man and one woman.

## What the Bible says about Sexuality

### Creation: God's original intent

Genesis 1-2 presents two complementary accounts of God's creation of the first humans:

#### 1. Gen 1: Male & Female

God created man (*adam*) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male (*zakar*) and female (*negebah*) he created them." (1:27 ESV)

God differentiated the human (generic *adam*) into male and female, physiological terms, i.e. "sex." This is required to fulfill the subsequent command, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth" (1:28).

#### Gen 2: Man & Woman

After forming the man (generic *adam*), God took half of him and built it into a woman (*ishah*).

Then the man (*adam*) said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman (*ishah*), because she was taken out of Man (*ish*)." (2:23)

They are masculine and feminine forms of the same, i.e. "gender." This differentiation is the basis for marriage, wherein a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife (terms later used of covenant fidelity), establishing a new social unit in which is fulfilled the multiplication of 1:28. In this relationship, the man "knew" his wife, she conceived and bore, as God intended (4:1, 17, 25 etc).

Marriage is frequently mentioned in the Bible, always as man+woman (there is polygamy in OT).

God uses the metaphor of marriage to describe his relationship to his people:

- OT: God took Israel as his bride (Ezek 16; Hos 2:14-20, etc.)
- NT: the Church is the bride being prepared for Christ the bridegroom and the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7,9; 21:2).

### Same-Sex Behavior

7 texts: Gen 19:5-7; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Judg 19:22-23; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10.

#### Attempted Gang Rape

Genesis 19: In Sodom, Lot gave hospitality to two angels.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out

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*to us, that we may know them.*” Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, *“I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.”* (19:4-7)

Judges 19: A man of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin offered hospitality to a Levite and his concubine.

As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, *“Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.”* And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, *“No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing.”* (19:22-23)

### Israel’s Holiness Code

God redeemed Israel from harsh servitude, made a covenant with them to be his people, and gave them ethics (Torah). Two general principles:

1. “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2).
2. “You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you” (Lev 18:2).

Lev 18 lists the abominable customs of the Canaanites: sex with close relatives (6-18), with a menstruating woman (19), with a neighbor’s wife (20), child sacrifice to Molech (21), with another man (22), bestiality (male, female, 23).

*“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”* (18:22)

These practices are variously described as an abomination, a perversion, a disgrace, depravity. They had made both the Canaanites and their land unclean, so that the land would vomit them out. Therefore God would later command Israel to total destroy the Canaanites, the fulfilment of the curse pronounced by Noah on Canaan (Gen 9:25).

Lev 20 specifies the penalty for these Canaanite practices: death (10-21) for sex with neighbor’s wife (10), close relative (11-12), another man (13), woman and her mother (14), bestiality (15-16).

*“If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.”* (20:13)

### NT Epistles: The Church Age

Like Israel, Christians are redeemed in order to live life differently. We are not to behave like the pagans.

The NT Epistles include many lists of practices (vice lists) that we are to put away. These include various sexual sins: sexual immorality (*porneia*,  *pornos*), sensuality, adultery, etc. Same-sex behavior is mentioned three times.

**Rom 1:18-32.** God’s wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of humans who did not honor him, but instead worshiped images like humans or animals. God gave them up (3×):

- in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves (24).
- to dishonorable passions: women with women, men with men (26-27).  
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.
- to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done: a lengthy vice list (28).

*Caution:* “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.” (2:1) “All have sinned” (3:23).

**1 Cor 6:9** “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...*”

“men who practice homosexuality” is actually two terms (“nor effeminate, nor homosexuals” NASB):

- *malakos*: soft [clothing] 3×: Matt 11:8bis; pp Luke 7:25; of a person 1×: effeminate, female role in male same-sex.
- *arsenokoitēs*: 2×: *arsēn* male + *koitē* bed. Male-bedding man, i.e. male role in male same-sex. Perhaps coined by Paul from Lev 18:22; 20:13.

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*Caution:* “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” (6:11).

### 1 Tim 1:10

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 (arsenokoitēs)*, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (1:8-11)

The Bible clearly condemns the same-sex behavior of these texts. But Christians too often use these as weapons. Furthermore, sexuality today is quite different.

## Human Relationships

God has made humans relational creatures, able to give and receive love. Human relationships have been impacted by two major trends: sexualization and individualization.

### Sexualization of Love

Greek distinguishes several different types of love (cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*).

1. Affection (*storgē*): the love of parents for children, hopefully reciprocated; i.e., familial love. The sexualization of this relationship is viewed as abhorrent: incest, sexual abuse of a child by a parent.
2. Friendship (*philia*): between two people, usually same-sex, who find they share a common interest. Non-sexual same-sex friendship has been important through most of history. Alas, same-sex friendship has been sexualized; e.g. Jonathan and David. This is a great loss. The church should encourage such friendship.
3. Eros (*eros*): Gk Eros, Roman Cupid was the god of love, desire. Passionate, erotic love between a man and a woman. Traditionally viewed with great circumspection by the church as volatile (e.g. Amnon and Tamar), potentially dangerous, producing flaming infatuation. Today erotic love is embraced and celebrated by heterosexuals (hook-up culture) and homosexuals (homoerotic sex). Only appropriate arena for *eros* is marriage.
4. Charity (*agapē*): self-giving love that acts for the good of the other party. Sex is not necessary: this love can be given within sexual marriage or non-sexual friendship.

### Individualization

Post-Enlightenment Western society has been increasingly individualistic. The pace of this trend is rapidly accelerating. Members of the selfie-generation are encouraged to find themselves, even reinvent themselves:

“For you graduates, the process of discovering yourself, of inventing yourself, of reinventing yourself is about to begin in earnest.” (Tim Cook, commencement address, George Washington Univ., 2015.05.17)

Sexualization and individualization have come together: sexual self-expression is now seen as essential to healthy personhood; denial of sex is seen as harmful. Sex has been exalted, but at the same time trivialized.

But this individualization also affects marriage and the church. Marriage now is promoted as self-fulfillment, which is counter to *agapē* love.

## Identity

### 1. Sexual Identity

Our sexuality is only part of who we are as humans, but modern secular society has prioritized it by adopting a sexual identity framework based upon sexual attraction: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and an expanding alphabet soup: LGBTQ... But the very idea of heterosexual and homosexual is a recent social construct. Previously identity

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was related to sex (male, female) or gender (boy, girl; man, woman), but not sexuality. The very language of heterosexual and homosexual reduces us to our sexual attraction, which is *eros*. Same-sex intercourse has been practiced for millennia, but until recently those who did so never defined themselves as homosexuals, characterized by their sexual attraction to those of the same sex. Sexual desire is not fully understood (nature vs. nurture). What is clear is that defining one's identity by sexual desire is a reduction of personhood.

Unfortunately the Church has subconsciously adopted this sexual identity framework in a heterosexual-homosexual polarity, with unfortunate consequences.

- Reduction of identity to sexuality; alarm of parents that their children might be gay.
- Heterosexuality is the solution to homosexuality. Reparative therapy has caused great harm, doesn't work and is now discredited (Exodus International closed in 2013).
- Downplay heterosexual sins (divorce, adultery) while magnifying homosexual sins.
- Exaltation of sex (within marriage). But sex is not the most important thing in marriage; *agapē* love is.
- Idolatry of the Christian marriage and family. Singles don't fit. Places excessive weight upon marriage.
- Neglect and suspicion of same-sex friendships.

### 2. Biblical Identity

The Bible offers a different identity polarity:

*Sexual identity framework*  
homosexual <-----> heterosexual

*Biblical identity framework*  
in Adam <-----> in Christ  
in the flesh <-----> in the Spirit

- Marriage and sex are not a necessary part of this new identity. Singleness and celibacy are viable options.
- Family: not the nuclear family but the church. Most common term in NT is *adelphoi* "brothers (and sisters)".
- Goal: being transformed by the Spirit to become more like Christ.
- Saved sinners: We were all formerly in Adam, living in the flesh. Now we're in the boat (ancient symbol of church).
- Mission: seek to help others into the boat.

## Countering with Community

Many people are desperately lonely, especially in this social media age. How can the church embrace into community those who are easily left out of our nuclear-marriage-centric church culture? The single, the widowed, those who struggle with same-sex attraction? Yes, we should call all Christ-followers to a high sexual ethic, both married and unmarried. But for those outside the community of marriage we need to wrestle with how to provide community. This includes encouraging genuine non-sexual same-sex friendships. How do we enable "a well-supported and relationally rich celibate life"?

### Books

Of the many books I've read on sexuality these have been the most thought-provoking:

- Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2012).
- Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015). Vicar of St Paul's Symond's St (Anglican), Auckland, NZ.
- Preston Sprinkle, *People to be Loved: Why Homosexuality is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015). Eternity Bible College, Boise.
- Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (IVP, 2011). Prof. of Anthropology, Messiah College, PA.
- Ed Shaw, *Same Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015). Pastor, Emmanuel City Centre (Anglican), Bristol, UK.