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## Who Taught You about Sex?

*“I was raised to believe that sex is something you wait for until marriage. But God hasn’t brought marriage, and no one around me seems to think that God cares about me waiting. Does God really want me to have all these desires and nowhere to go with them? Really? How long does He expect me to wait?”*

*“I’m a Christian but I don’t agree with a lot of what the Bible says about sex. Sex is about love, isn’t it? So why would God care if two women love each other sexually?”*

*“Whenever I hear people talk about purity, I tune out. I’ve already been with guys so none of this even relates to me anymore.”*

*“I have yet to meet a guy who doesn’t want to have sex within the first few months of dating. It’s just assumed that dating means sex, even with guys who say they are Christians. It’s a different world than when my parents grew up.”*

I’m guessing that you can relate to what these women are wrestling with. We live in a sexually chaotic world. There are no standards other than *be true to yourself* and *don’t judge anyone else’s sexual choices*. And sex is *everywhere*. There is hardly a sitcom or movie that doesn’t have strong sexual themes. The daily headlines are filled with reports of sexual scandals, the impact of changing laws, and personal sexual freedom.

And then there’s you . . . your life. You have your own private battles. We’ve heard from many women like you who share some of the pressures and challenges you face.

Maybe you carry with you sexual secrets you would never share with anyone and the shame from your past haunts you. Or maybe you don’t know what the big deal is about sex. Does God really care if you sleep around, look at porn, or experiment with another woman sexually? Doesn’t He want you to be happy?

There is probably no topic that creates more confusion or pain than sexuality. The questions above are just the tip of the iceberg. Many women have sexual abuse in their past; others equate their sexuality with guilt and shame. And most Christian sources haven't been very helpful in sorting through the deep questions women are asking.

### REFLECT AND RESPOND

- *What pressures and challenges are you, your roommate, and/or close friends battling right now?*
- *What questions are you having a hard time sorting through on your own?*
- *How would you like your life to be different after going through this study?*

### YOU GOT YOUR OPINIONS FROM SOMEWHERE

Think for a moment about what you learned about sexuality from your parents. How about from church or Christian books? Was there silence or could you honestly ask questions about masturbation, boundaries in dating, and what being a “virgin” really means? We are typically pretty clumsy and reserved in teaching a Christian view of sex. If you grew up in church, maybe all you ever heard was “Don’t do it . . . until you get married.”

While most parents and church leaders seem to be uncomfortable talking about sexuality, the culture has no problem inserting the topic into almost every venue. Because of this disparity, even a woman who loves God may have a difficult time understanding how her sexuality relates to her faith. Sex just seems too personal and crude for God to care much about. While we may orient other parts of life to what God wants, our sexuality seems like a separate category.

God wants all of your life to be in agreement with His design for you. Why? Because He knows what is best for you. Unfortunately, the average woman has been given very little (maybe no) teaching on sexuality from a biblical perspective. Even the most committed

Christian often thinks about sexual issues from a worldly mindset. Through *Sex and the Single Girl* we want to change that. I'd like to show you how your love for God and His love for you can deeply impact the choices you make and the beliefs you hold about sexuality.

My mom didn't talk to us much that I remember but I do recall her telling us that if we ever decided to have sex, it was no big deal. She would buy whatever we needed to be protected—as in birth control, condoms, etc. My dad on the other hand gave me a very messed up idea. He had, or rather has, an extensive *Playboy* collection. He doesn't see anything wrong in it and in fact would argue the value of them. I don't think my mom wanted us to know about the magazines, but since he kept a few in the house we found them. His porn use made me believe that sex is dirty and that a woman's value is only in her sexuality, how she portrays herself, and giving herself to a man. —Jenna

Sex was never mentioned in our house, besides that one awkward conversation I had with my mom when I turned thirteen. I had no one to ask questions to and no safe place to discuss things I was experiencing. Because of this I turned to friends and the Internet. I felt so much shame for even feeling attracted to boys because the only message I ever heard was "Sex is bad." —Mallory

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

- *What percentage of your thinking about sex came from your parents? Religious teaching? Media? Other sources?*

Parents \_\_\_\_%      Religion \_\_\_\_%      Media \_\_\_\_%      Other \_\_\_\_%

- *What are the primary things you've learned about sex from each of these sources?*

Parents:

Religion:

Media:

Other:

- *Do you agree that it's difficult to understand how your sexuality relates to your faith? Why or why not?*
- *Think about the last twenty-four hours. What messages has the culture shared about sexuality? (Think of the shows you watch, music you listen to, etc.) Write down some of the messages you've heard in the past twenty-four hours from these three sources:*

TV:

Music:

Social media:

# Sex Is a Brilliant Metaphor of a Profound Truth

**L**et's begin with the truth that you are a sexual woman. Even if you have never had sex or are currently not sexually active, you are still a sexual person. To take that a step further, you are sexual *by God's design*. He intentionally created you female, with the physical anatomy and biochemical properties of sexuality. This means that you have longings for intimacy, relationship, *and* physical pleasure.

You don't magically become a sexual person when you have sex or when you get married. The expression of your sexuality changes under these circumstances, but you have always been a sexual person.

Sex, sexuality, and intimacy are often used interchangeably in our culture. This makes the whole discussion even more confusing. Your sexuality involves more than just having sex. Your desire for intimacy transcends your desire for sex. Throughout this study, keep the following definitions in mind:

**Sexuality:** A broad concept encompassing all aspects of a person's gender, sexual desire, sexual beliefs, and sexual experiences.

**Intimacy:** A close, familiar, and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person. Intimacy involves the experience of safety, vulnerability, and being deeply known.

**Sex:** Physical activity that is related to and often includes sexual intercourse.

Why the distinction? Because our culture talks endlessly about the act of sex but ignores the bigger picture of sexuality. Christian teachers may give guidelines about “how far is too far,” but typically avoid the deeper questions related to what it means to be single and sexual. As a single woman, you may not be having sex, but your sexuality deeply impacts many aspects of your life.

To understand the importance of your sexuality, you have to grasp that sex is first and foremost a brilliant metaphor of a profound truth (a *metaphor* is a figure of speech which compares two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics). Underneath your sexuality is the drive and desire to be known and loved. God created you as a sexual being so that you might understand what it means to long, to desire, and to crave intimate oneness. Your sexuality was never meant to be an isolated physiological urge that is expressed apart from the rest of who you are as a woman. You have longings to share your heart, soul, and body with another person because God made you a deeply relational and spiritual woman. Your greatest need for intimacy however is to know the God who created you.

Does that seem farfetched? Here is one example of why we can say this with confidence. The first part of the Bible (called the Old Testament) was written in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for sexual intimacy between a husband and wife used in the Old Testament is *yada*. The first time this word, *yada*, is used in the Bible is right here:

Now Adam knew [*yada*] his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain . . . .  
Cain knew [*yada*] his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. . . . And Adam  
knew [*yada*] his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth.  
(Gen. 4:1, 17, 25 ESV, emphasis mine)

*Yada* literally means “to know deeply or intimately.” This Hebrew word, *yada*, is in the Old Testament over 940 times. Most of the time, the word *yada* is not referring to sex but used to describe intimacy with God—His with us and ours with Him. Here are a few examples:

You have searched me, Lord, and you [*yada*] me. (Ps. 139:1, emphasis mine)

In all your ways [*yada*] to Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:6, emphasis mine)

Moses said to the Lord, “If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may [*yada*] you and continue to find favor with you.” (Ex. 33:12–13, emphasis mine)

Take a minute now and go back to each of these verses. Underneath the verse, rewrite the verse but this time with the definition of *yada* in place of the actual word *yada*. (Example: You have searched me and you [intimately know] my heart.)

Why would God inspire the authors of the Bible to use a word related to sexual intimacy to also describe His relationship with His people? Because marriage and sexuality were always intended to teach us about intimacy with God.

Sexuality is a powerful picture of God’s invitation to intimacy. The physical longings related to your sexuality point to a much deeper, more profound longing to be known intimately. We live in a culture that consistently tries to separate sex from all it was intended to express. While sexuality was designed to be a wonderful expression of intimacy, it has become a cheap replacement for it. We live in a culture that discourages long-term relationships, trust, and emotional intimacy. The prevailing message is that physical nakedness can fulfill your desire for true intimacy. The prevailing message is wrong.

### REFLECT AND RESPOND

- *When you think of the word intimacy, what first comes to mind? How does this brief teaching expand your understanding of intimacy?*
  
- *Is the concept that underneath your sexuality there is a drive and desire to be known and loved revolutionary to you? If so, why? If not, why not?*

- *Read Psalm 139, a psalm of intimate knowing. The Hebrew word yada is used five times. Can you find it anywhere? What is your yada relationship with God like? Write a prayer expressing your desire to be known and to know Him.*

## Sexuality: A Sacred Picture

This may sound a little crazy, but sexuality is actually a physical picture of a deep spiritual truth. It's not just some random way God created us to have babies. The unrestrained passion, the vulnerability of being naked, the longing of unmet desire, the pleasure of sexual release, and the agony of betrayal all tell us a story . . . a story about God.

Let's break this down even further by looking at three specific and powerful ways sexuality is a holy metaphor—a sacred picture of God's love for us.

### THE FREEDOM OF BEING KNOWN WITHIN THE SAFETY OF A COVENANT

We live in a world that views sex as a commodity to be traded. You trade your sexuality for companionship, reassurance of a man's love, or a fun night out. Because your sexuality is a commodity, you are constantly under evaluation and review. This means that if you don't please the person you are with, he will leave you. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking has permeated marriage. Couples "fall out of love" when one fails to please the other. You have to constantly perform, keep your figure, and please your man.

This was never how God intended sexuality to be expressed. Instead of a commodity to trade, it is a celebration of a promise. Only within a covenant (a promise that cannot be broken) are you free to be 100 percent who you are. You don't have to fear being naked, vulnerable, or rejected because the other person is never going away.

When sex is experienced within the safety of a true covenant, the pleasure and freedom is out of this world.

This is true of God's love for you. The Bible tells us that God loved us and gave His Son as a sacrifice while we were sinners with nothing to give back. You don't have to perform for God. Nothing you can do can separate you from His love if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior! He will never leave you nor forsake you!

## THE AGONY OF BETRAYAL

Have you had a man promise to be faithful only to be betrayed? Have you witnessed the horrendous fallout of broken wedding vows between your parents? Few things rival the rejection of giving yourself fully to another person only to be discarded.

God knows this, which is why He says that sexuality should be reserved for the lifelong promise of marriage (Heb. 13:4). When God gave Himself to His people (Israel), they constantly chased after other gods. God used very sexual terms to describe their betrayal, calling them “prostitutes” and “adulterers” (Hos. 4:10–14).

The crushing pain of sexual infidelity and broken promises teaches us about God’s jealousy for His people. Do you know that jealousy can be a good thing? The Bible says that God is a jealous God. In the same way, a married man should be “jealous” for his wife, and a wife “jealous” for her husband. My husband belongs to me. I don’t want any other woman to see him naked or arouse him sexually. That is a holy jealousy, resembling God’s heart that His people only worship Him. “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3 ESV).

## THE LONGING OF SEPARATION

As a single woman, your sexuality may be represented by unending longings. You long to be close to someone—to give yourself fully. You daydream about what it will feel like to be face-to-face with a man you love and respect.

This longing also speaks of God’s love. When Jesus was on the earth, He told His disciples that one day they would mourn and fast when He was taken away from them. He actually used the example of a bride waiting for the bridegroom to return. We may not fully understand this because our wedding traditions are different than the Jewish tradition Jesus was referring to. The process of getting married in ancient Jewish culture involved many stages. Right before the actual wedding, the bride knew that the groom would be coming soon but didn’t know the exact hour. She had to wait and be ready for him whenever he surprised her. Jesus referred to this idea of being ready and waiting many times throughout His teaching.

The concept of waiting and longing is also in the Old Testament. The psalmists wrote about their deep yearnings and longings to be in God’s presence. They weren’t content

to be separated from their Creator and God. “My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God” (Ps. 84:2; 42:1).

Your sexuality paints a vivid, living picture of the gospel message. You were made for love, for deep knowing, and for the safety of a promise that can’t be broken.

### REFLECT AND RESPOND

- *What are some ways the world portrays sexuality as separate from the relational and spiritual aspects of yada? How has this impacted your thinking about sexuality?*
- *What do you think about the concept of your sexuality being connected with your relationship to God?*
- *Explain in your own words: how is sexuality a metaphor for intimacy with God? For your longing to know Him?*

# Your Sexuality Cannot Be Separated from Your Spirituality

**H**ere is perhaps the most profound truth I have learned by studying what God says about sex. Whether you are single or married, having great sex or no sex, your sexuality is inseparable from your spirituality.

Over and over again, you hear people suggest that sexual choices don't matter. Most of the people around you have bought into the lie that what you choose to do sexually is as trivial as what you had for breakfast. Sex is never just about sex. Our sexual opinions and choices ultimately reveal something much deeper about us and our relationship to God.

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

- *Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 twice. The first time just read it all the way through. As you read it a second time, reflect on the text by answering the following questions:*
- *What is your body's purpose?*
- *What happens when two people come together?*
- *What one-word command are you given in regard to sexual immorality?*

- *What is unique about sexual sin in relation to every other sin?*
  
- *Ultimately, what does this passage say about the connection between who you are spiritually and who you are sexually?*

Our culture encourages you to explore sexually as a way of finding and expressing *who* you are. God wants you to think about your sexuality in terms of *whose* you are. Do you belong to God? Have you trusted in Him for life and salvation? If so, “you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Research shows that you are more likely to make sexual decisions based on your generation than based on your profession of faith in God. Your opinions about living together before marriage, casual sex, LGBT issues, and pornography are more likely to reflect your age group and where you live than they are to reflect your belief in God.<sup>1</sup>

More important than your generational identity is your identity as God’s daughter and a follower of Jesus Christ. Christians vary in age, race, experience, and geographical location, but our commitment to follow Jesus as Lord unites us.

Peter wrote it like this: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). This is your “spiritual identity.” How you think about and express your sexuality cannot be separated from that spiritual identity.

If you are like many Christian women, you have constructed a thick wall between your sexuality and your relationship with God. Your sexual desires and fantasies, your shame and temptations seem like a total disconnect from your longing to know and please God. Maybe it is your sexual thoughts that make you want to run away from God rather than run to Him. Your sexuality deeply impacts your spirituality and vice versa. Your confusion and hidden pain related to sex are inseparable from your relationship with God, even if you try compartmentalizing them. God cares about all of who you are, even the “sexual” you.

LIST 5 PHRASES THAT DESCRIBE YOUR SPIRITUAL IDENTITY: (1 PETER 2:9; 1 COR. 6:18–20)	LIST 5 WORDS THAT DESCRIBE WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY:
Example: I'm a temple of the Holy Spirit.	Example: My body is my own—I can do what I want with it.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Are your spiritual identity and your sexual beliefs consistent or at odds with each other?	

For a long time, my view of God was so distorted. I never even looked at me being a sexual person and quenched all those desires somehow. And saying that, it wasn't that my thoughts were all pure. Sex/sexuality in my mind was not something to be addressed until after marriage. Yet when I'd hear men talking suggestively or referring to anything about sex or women, it infuriated me as a young lady.

It is in reading this I'm reminded that God loves us so much that He created us as sexual beings. When my view of God is so distorted, then I can't see sexuality as a gift from God. I only look at it as something I'm deprived of until marriage. I get so angry at the enemy for infiltrating lies! God really loves us. Our sexuality is a means of God inviting us to share those longings with Him. –Eve

**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

- *Like Eve, have you ever considered that your sexuality was meant to be an invitation to know the love of a Savior who will never reject you? Write a prayer to God asking Him to help you break down the thick wall between your sexuality and your relationship with Him.*
  
- *Today you read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. If you are going to take this verse to heart, what needs to change?*