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A SUMMARY

# **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR HUMAN SEXUALITY:**

SURVEY OF CULTURE, SCRIPTURE,  
AND CHURCH HISTORY

by David Closson

The rapidly changing moral landscape of the twenty-first century has overturned centuries of norms concerning the family, marriage, and human sexuality, leaving many people—including Christians—confused. FRC's publication "Biblical Principles for Human Sexuality" helps Christians think about marriage and sexuality from a biblical perspective. What follows is a summary of this resource.

## **TIMELINE OF THE MORAL REVOLUTION**

The sexual revolution of the 1960's emerged partly from our culture's shifting views of right and wrong—a moral revolution. At least four developments in the twentieth century contributed to the moral revolution and can account for our society's increasingly hostile attitude toward Christian beliefs about marriage and human sexuality.

First, the rise of urbanization helped remove a societal check against premarital and extramarital liaisons by lowering the chance of exposure. Second, advances in contraceptive technology allowed for seemingly consequence-free sexual activity by separating sex from potential pregnancy. Third, laws that had restricted certain sexual behaviors and conduct were replaced or overturned. Fourth, Christianity lost a considerable share of its cultural influence. As a result, fewer people today understand or hold Christian convictions, including those related to sexual morality.

## DEFINING SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

What is sexuality? Many people do not have a clear definition of sexuality and take their cues from recent academic studies, marketing campaigns, or cultural norms. Christians, however, ought to follow the Bible.

While the Bible does not provide a succinct definition for sexuality, it does provide a robust framework for one. From this framework, we can define sexuality as the basis of the desire for male and female to be united in a one-flesh union called marriage. Such a union is physical, relational, exclusive, and permanent.

God intended for sexuality to draw people together in marriage, not merely to have sex. Therefore, understanding what the Bible teaches about the nature and purposes of marriage is essential to a biblical understanding of sexuality.

## THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

### *Genesis 1-2*

The account of the first marriage provides us with four principles that frame and inform all subsequent biblical reflection on marriage:

First, marriage is permanent. A man and woman leave their families of origin and are united together in a life-long relationship. Second, marriage is exclusive. Third, marriage is a sacred covenant. Fourth, sexual differentiation is part of God's plan for marriage. God did not create androgynous beings; He created two complementary, biologically and genetically sexed individuals.

## DEPARTURES FROM GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUALITY

Although sexuality is supposed to lead men and women to unite in the permanent, exclusive, one-flesh union of marriage, this truth is often denied, suppressed, and disobeyed. Departures from God's design for sexuality include homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism.

## THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ON HOMOSEXUALITY

### *Romans 1:18-32*

The apostle Paul explains that humanity has rejected God, exchanging the truth about Him and the things He created for a lie. In verse 26, while describing the sinful “exchanges” men and women have made, Paul uses the term *παρὰ φύσιν* (*para physin*), which means “unnatural” or “against nature.” Homosexuality is unnatural because it is a departure from God’s design for sexuality. According to the passage, homosexuality is also a consequence of humanity suppressing God’s truth and refusing to honor Him. Other verses, including 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10, reinforce this teaching.

## JESUS AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Although Jesus did not directly address homosexuality, the available evidence strongly suggests that He would not affirm same-sex relations. Jesus believed in the binding authority of the Old Testament and affirmed the creation pattern for marriage (Mat. 19:4-6 cf. Gen. 1:27, 2:24). Specifically, Jesus’ quotation from Genesis 1:24 indicates He affirmed the Old Testament vision for marriage and sexuality as a union between one male and one female for one lifetime.

## TRANSGENDERISM

Another departure from God’s design for sexuality is transgenderism. This ideology holds that “sex” refers to the physical body (including the reproductive system), while “gender” refers to a person’s inner perception of themselves (i.e., their identification with either maleness or femaleness). In transgender ideology, subjective feelings and personal experience supersede biology and anatomy while sex is reduced to a social construct.

This is inconsistent with a biblical understanding of sexuality. Sexual differentiation of male and female was God’s design, and it was created “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Moreover, Jesus’ incarnation and embodiment after His resurrection imply His physical body and soul are inseparable. In sum, Christians should see their created bodies as part of God’s good creation, including maleness or femaleness.

## CHURCH HISTORY

Christians have reflected on the topics of marriage and human sexuality for 2,000 years. Understanding their arguments can help today’s believers navigate current issues in sexual ethics.

## *Early Church*

Early Christian writers affirmed marriage as the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy. Theologians such as Tertullian and Augustine reflected deeply on marriage and sexuality, and their writings provide valuable insight.

## *Post-Reformation*

After the Reformation, both Protestants and Roman Catholics remained committed to the Bible's teaching on marriage and sexuality. Martin Luther explained, "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage."

## *Modern Church*

Christians remained committed to biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality well into the twentieth century. Only then, at the height of the sexual revolution, did many mainline Protestant denominations such as the Episcopal Church and Presbyterian Church (USA) change their view on homosexuality.

There is a striking correlation between rejecting the Bible as God's authoritative Word and accepting homosexuality. Denominations that continue to believe in the Bible's trustworthiness and reliability remain committed to the church's historic teaching on sexuality.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

Today, a biblical understanding of sexuality is ridiculed as being outdated. It is also viewed as dangerous by many in government, higher education, and the media. Threats against churches and organizations guided by sincere religious convictions are becoming more prevalent. Political and legal pressure against Christians working in areas such as the wedding vendor industry continue to rise.

Biblical beliefs about marriage, gender, and sexuality are called intolerant in an effort to drive Christians from the public square. Ironically, these efforts in the name of tolerance have resulted in increased intolerance from secularists toward Christians who want to live their lives peaceably and in accordance with their deeply held religious beliefs.

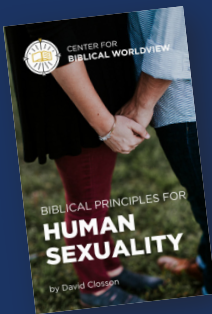
## **GOSPEL HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

Marriage and sexuality are deeply personal topics, and Christians must speak the truth about them with conviction and love. The gospel is good news for all people, including those who struggle with their sexuality and those who experience unwanted same-sex attraction. The Bible's teaching on sexuality is something we all need to hear, but it is not all we need to hear. God's design for sexuality is not

the Bible's central focus. Rather, it is about salvation in Christ, the redemption He has secured for us from this broken world, and the transformation guaranteed to us when we follow Him. The church should proclaim this good news with clarity and hope, affirming God's design for humanity while also proclaiming God's faithfulness to rescue us from our sin.

## CONCLUSION

The gospel has the power to save. This salvation includes a transformation of identity. Both truth and love must frame a biblically faithful response to the moral revolution that has upended the culture's understanding of sexuality. Upholding, teaching, and defending biblical truths in a loving manner is not easy, but it is necessary for the witness of the church, the flourishing of individuals, and the good of society.



For a more in-depth discussion on marriage and human sexuality, visit [FRC.org/humansexuality](https://www.frc.org/humansexuality) to read our full publication, "Biblical Principles for Human Sexuality: Survey of Culture, Scripture, and Church History."



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