

GOD'S DESIGN AND PURPOSE FOR SEXUALITY

I. Design

Genesis 1:27; 31a, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them...And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."



Before the Fall of mankind into sin, God created our world in just the way it was supposed to be. Two genders, both reflecting the image of God, were created to be distinct and unique, yet equal in value. He also designed them to connect and relate within a covenant relationship that reflects the close-knit relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Trinity. And so, when God created sexuality He proclaimed it, along with everything else He created, was “very good.”

Our physical differences are the most obvious distinctions between males and females. This variation is part of God’s design and so it is natural to find one another attractive. God knew that sexuality was a powerful, intense drive, and called it *good* as well. As with other aspects of creation, we need to accept and celebrate that God made us distinctly male or female and that He made us sexual beings. You do things every day that correspond with your gender. Many people have attempted to describe the differences between men and women. While there are many ways to do so, one thing is certain: there is a difference. The differences cannot be simply defined by identifying who is more skilled, capable, or competent as both genders reflect aspects of the image of God. These differences are God-ordained and connected to the roles to which He has called us.

Ultimately, God desires that we function as one body (*Romans 12:4-5*) and to appreciate that He has placed us and others in the genders, roles, and functions in the church according to His good purposes (*1 Corinthians 12:18*). Having different roles does not mean that either gender is superior or inferior to the other, for *Galatians 3:28* speaks of our equality in God’s eyes: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*” As single or married individuals, we have a role to play in fully living out biblical femininity or masculinity.

II. Understanding what it means to be a sexual being

To start, we must define sexuality in its broadest sense by recognizing that all humans are sexual beings, whether single or married. It is quite common for people to only consider sexuality in terms of either the sexual relationship of a married couple or in terms of sexual sin (pornography, etc.). However, this view is overly constricted and actually misses a much broader picture that God has created. Below is a partial listing of ways sexuality, broadly defined, is lived out by all people in four dimensions of life: biological/physical, psychological/emotional, social/relational, and spiritual. These four dimensions make up a person's total Health, and together they are called the **Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model of Health**.

A. Biological/Physical

- Human beings are created male and female and with the associated internal and external physical characteristics. God uniquely designed male and female bodies to be sexually compatible and created sexuality to be physically pleasurable.
- Hormonal shifts and influences that affect sexual development and interest are ongoing throughout life.
- Our sexuality and gender are part of us all the way down to our chromosomes.
- Our physical bodies are the temple of God, where our undying soul and the Holy Spirit reside while we are alive.
- Human beings thrive when they have adequate healthy physical touch.
- We experience sexual desires, feelings, and sensations.

B. Psychological/Emotional

- God designed us to notice beauty, gender differences, and experience attraction.
- We desire to be desirable in the eyes of others.
- Our sexual identity is one part of our overall personal identity.
- We all have a gender identity that falls on a spectrum of masculinity and femininity.
- Expressions of affection are meaningful to us.
- Interacting with and learning from people of both genders is intellectually stimulating and helps us learn from various perspectives and individual natures.

C. Social/Relational

- Companionship, emotional connection, and attachment are deep human needs.
- Isolation, rejection, and abandonment are some of the most painful human experiences we can feel.

D. Spiritual

- God is glorified when His creation operates in the manner and for the purposes in which it was created.
- We learn obedience to God and reliance on the Holy Spirit's power to help us control the "appetites" of our body. We rely heavily on God to produce the spiritual fruit of temperance in our lives.

- Our experience of temptation to act in a manner outside of God’s plan for our sexuality reminds us that we live in a fallen, sinful world, that Satan is real, and that someday all temptation and sin will be removed as God’s plan of redemption eventually sets all things right.
- God uses the sexual union between husband and wife to provide an analogy of the closeness and intensity of Christ’s love for the church.

For our children and growing up young people, we understand you want to learn about sexuality. This is natural, and a good place to start is in asking your parents any questions that may arise in your minds. Perhaps they have already been teaching you about sexuality, and may have some good books or other resources to use in doing this.

Discussions about sexuality should be private between you and a trusted adult, and it should not be your aim to learn about sexuality from those of your own age group. Young people are not always aware of how private and sacred these topics are in God’s sight, so sometimes what results are crude and distorted illustrations of God’s perfect plan for His creation, and not at all what He had in mind when we were “*fearfully and wonderfully made.*” (Ps. 139:14)

III. Responsibility: Living with boundaries

As God has designed us as sexual beings, we must be good stewards of this aspect of our lives. We each have a responsibility to maintain our sexual integrity. Feelings and desires He created within us are not a justification for stepping outside of the moral boundaries He has given. Verses such as those below indicate that God expects us all to live in obedience and keep our bodies and desires under control:

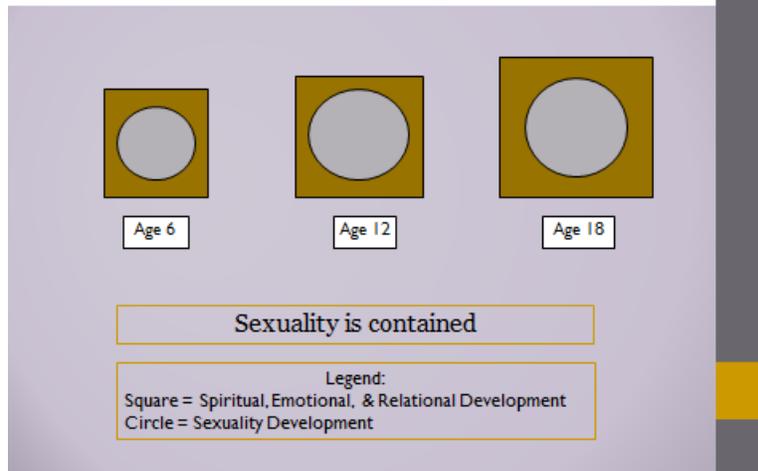
Hebrews 13:4, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:”

2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

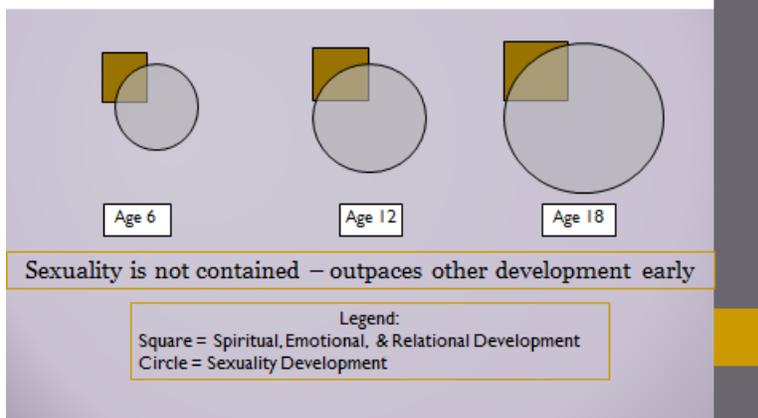
God intends that our interest in our own sexual development never “outpace” the development of our Spiritual, Emotional, and Relational development. As such, our sexual development, part of the Physical being, is always contained within the boundaries of the other parts of our growth.

God's Design for Healthy Sexual Development



If a child's controlled, normal sexual development is altered and "speeded up" by sexual experiences in childhood, one result can be the development of sexual addiction, as shown below:

Sexual Development altered by sexual experiences in childhood (sexual abuse, exposure to pornography, etc.) leads to sexual addiction



However, effectively dealing with our sexuality is much bigger than just holding to a set of behaviors. Rather, sexuality is a God-ordained aspect of humanity that we are seeking to steward well. In addressing healthy sexuality, our primary source of strength and guidance comes from knowing Christ. As our heart is continually transformed by our relationship with Him, our thinking, our behavior, and our relationships with others will be significantly impacted. We must understand that true change happens from the inside out. *Matthew 23:26* reminds us, "Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

Single or married, some of the greatest dangers are believing that you are either “above” temptation and invulnerable to it or that you are helpless and there is no use trying to fight it. As one writer states, “We can choose either to feed our arousal or to discipline it.” Pursuing sanctification and holiness is a full-time responsibility for all believers. Because we cannot obtain righteousness on our own accord, God gives us grace to overcome and He desires that we use it when facing temptation. *1 Corinthians 10:13* speaks of a form of this grace that can come as a way of escape: “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*”

Finding godly, effective ways of dealing with sexual temptation is crucial rather than waiting for the temptation to go away. Some people unwisely avoid managing sexual temptation effectively because they assume it will just get better over time or if they are able to marry. Sexual temptation does not go away once you are married. Learning to manage sexual temptation now will help you to remain faithful in the future whether you marry or remain single. In practical terms, we need to be on guard against temptation. If we overestimate the strength of our will, set weak boundaries, or rationalize our thoughts and behaviors, we will likely fall prey to the temptation. The balance is found when we accept our sexual nature and allow God, through His Holy Spirit, to direct our behavior. The Scripture notes that sexual sins violate something deep within us and carry consequences.

1 Corinthians 6:18-19, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

Proverbs 6:24-28, “Keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?”

However, this does not mean that sexual sins are unforgiveable or that all sexual feelings are sin. Christ’s shed blood provides cleansing and forgiveness.

1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God knows that dealing with sexual desires and temptations is difficult and desires to help us in the battle. To be sure, Satan likely threw every type of temptation imaginable at Christ as Satan brought the glory of the kingdoms of the world in front of Him [Christ]. Christ responded to Satan by rebuking him with Scripture and so should we.

Luke 4:5-8; 13, “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. . . . And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”

Hebrews 4:15-16, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

IV. Desire for intimate emotional connection

Sexual desires, feelings, tension, and temptation are all made up of a complex mixture of longings. These longings include the desire to be known and accepted physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Ultimately, God wants us to seek Him to fulfill our deepest needs, for He is the only One who can fulfill those longings. *Isaiah 54:5a* states, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name." Unfortunately, our adversary, Satan, wants to hijack these longings and steer us into sin.

Our sexual desire reminds us that we were created for relationship, to be intimately known and to know intimately. A marriage relationship can give a glimpse of this level of intimacy, but still it is incomplete. These desires will ultimately be met when we reach Heaven and experience the presence of Christ in His fullness (*1 Corinthians 13:12*).

Contentment, joy, emotional connection, purpose and meaning, close relationships, and wholeness are all available to single people, and are necessary in order to experience *the abundant life* as a single person. The abundance we are referring to here comes from intimate communion with God and what springs out of life lived in His design. One of God's purposes in creating human sexuality was to help us understand intimacy and to point to His covenant relationship with His people.ⁱⁱ Paul refers to this as a "great mystery" in *Ephesians 5:32*. One of the reasons our sexual drive was given is to draw us closer to God in addition to drawing us closer to other individuals. So, without a spouse, we draw nearer to God when these feelings become intense. One author noted, "Your sexual ache was purposefully designed by God to motivate you (body, soul, and spirit) toward an intimate connection with God, an intimate connection with other members of the body of Christ, and eventually an intimate connection with a future spouse. Even if you never marry, the sexual ache is the divinely created vehicle God uses to give you a longing for intimate connection with himself and with others."ⁱⁱⁱ

Whether single or married, we have the opportunity to know and relate with God. Consider your relationship with God. How connected to Him do you feel? If you think an intimate relationship with the Lord is not possible, consider the traits you love in people or would look for in a mate: gentleness, honesty, tenderness, trustworthiness, warmth, and understanding, to name only a few. God is *infinite* in all of these characteristics. The Bible has many references to support this. The intimate communion that can be experienced by a single individual focused on the Lord is noted in *1 Corinthians 7: 32b-34*, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit."

God created us so we could have a vibrant relationship with Him. If it is His will that you marry someday, there is nothing that will better prepare you for marriage than a deep relationship with Him. If marriage is not His plan for you, then He has other plans, "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (*Jeremiah 29:11*), and there is nothing that will better prepare you for that plan than a deep relationship with Him.^{iv}

