



BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW SERIES

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

Several developments in the twentieth century contributed to our society’s increasing hostility 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.

DEFINING SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

What is sexuality? Many people don't 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 gather that sexuality is the basis of the desire for male and female to be united in a one-flesh union called marriage. Such a union is both physical and relational, exclusive, and permanent.

God intended sexual desire to draw people to marriage, not merely to 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.

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. While describing the sinful

“exchanges” men and women have made, Paul uses the term *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 and humanity’s creation as “male and female” (Mat. 19:4-6).

TRANSGENDERISM

Another departure from God’s design for sexuality is transgenderism. This ideology believes “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). This is inconsistent with a biblical understanding of sexuality.

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 once 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

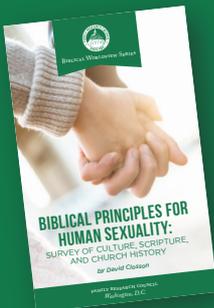
Today, a biblical understanding of sexuality is ridiculed as being outdated. It is also viewed as dangerous by many in government, higher education, and the media. Biblical beliefs about marriage, gender, and sexuality are called intolerant in an effort to drive these beliefs from the public square. Ironically, these efforts in the name of tolerance have resulted in increased intolerance on the part of 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 church should affirm God’s design for humanity while proclaiming God’s faithfulness to rescue us from our sin.

CONCLUSION

The gospel has the power to save. 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 isn’t easy, but it is necessary for the witness of the church and the flourishing of society.



For a more in-depth discussion on marriage and human sexuality, visit FRC.org/humansexuality to read our full publication, “Biblical Principles for Human Sexuality: Survey of Culture, Scripture, and Church History.”



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