

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON SEX

Adult Entertainment

God created humans as sexual beings, somehow reflective of His own image ([Genesis 1:27](#)), and declared that this reality was “very good” ([Genesis 1:31](#)). One will look in vain, however, in the Bible for a single word for sex. The nearest biblical terms are “male” and “female.” The biblical language for sexuality is rich with variety as it describes God's will and human behavior regarding this aspect of God's creative power: the power to bring new life into being within the family and the pleasure of companions within marriage.

Attitudes Toward Sex

The biblical writers were somewhat ambivalent about sex. Some passages truly value sex and celebrate it joyously ([Genesis 18:12](#); [Genesis 26:8](#); [Song of Solomon 4:1-16](#)); others call for times of abstaining from sexual activity ([Exodus 19:15](#); [1 Samuel 21:4-5](#)); still others raise the life without sex above the normal marital relationship ([1 Corinthians 7:1-9](#), [1 Corinthians 7:37-38](#); [Revelation 14:4](#)). Positively, God blesses sex for both companionship and procreation ([Genesis 1:28](#); [Genesis 2:18-25](#)). Fertility of women was a blessing while barrenness was a curse ([Genesis 29:30-30:24](#); [1 Samuel 1:5-20](#)). Basically, the Bible sees sex as good because God created it.

The interpreter should not ignore negative feelings the Bible expresses toward sex. The sinful nature of man appears to have corrupted God's good gift. Outside the first garden, a negative attitude toward nudity appears ([Genesis 3:7](#), [Genesis 3:21](#); [Luke 8:27](#), [Luke 8:35](#)). “Uncovering one's nakedness” refers to a shameful, incestual, or otherwise forbidden sex act ([Leviticus 18:6-19](#)). Sex can be wasteful of one's strength ([Proverbs 31:3](#)). Euphemisms and circumlocutions are used in referring to the body's private parts ([Deuteronomy 28:57](#), “feet”; [Genesis 24:2](#), “loins” or “thigh”). Similarly, the verb “to know” is sometimes used to refer to having sex relations ([Genesis 4:1](#); [Matthew 1:25](#)). Sin has produced a hesitancy and reservation about sex among the biblical characters and writers as compared with the lack of shame in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:25](#)).

Male/Female Relationships

As sex is both good and bad in the Bible, so also there is a contrast of equality and dominance/submission patterns for male/female relationships in the biblical teachings. This overlordship by males is a result of sin distorting God's original plan for humans. A double standard in relationships may be described throughout the Scriptures; yet before the Fall and after the coming of Christ, man and woman are set forth as equals before God.

In the garden, Adam and Eve were created equal ([Genesis 1:27-28](#); [Genesis 2:18-23](#)). The New Testament teaches that in Christ this Edenic complementariness is restored ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Galatians 3:28](#); [Ephesians 5:21-33](#)). Mates are equal in possessing one another ([1 Corinthians 7:4](#)) and are interdependent ([1 Corinthians 11:11-12](#)). The new creation in Christ makes this possible.

Yet the Fall ruptured God's plan for male/female equality. Sin produced male dominance and female submissiveness ([Genesis 3:16](#)). Many scholars believe that this is descriptive rather than prescriptive for all time. Much of the remainder of Scripture, therefore, describes a double standard of male superiority and female inferiority, a kind of

“chain of command” of the husband ruling his wife and children. Various passages set forth women being subordinated to men ([Numbers 30:3-15](#); [1 Timothy 2:11-15](#)). Different standards of fidelity in marriage are found ([Numbers 5:11-31](#); [Deuteronomy 22:22-29](#)) where unfaithful wives are more severely dealt with than husbands. The New Testament response to this was that of mutual equality and servanthood toward each other with the servanthood of Jesus as the basic criterion ([Ephesians 5:21-33](#)). Some passages deal with specific problems that appear to be limited to the time and culture of the first-century place ([1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#); [1 Timothy 2:11-15](#); [1 Peter 3:1-7](#)), though some Bible students see such passages as establishing social orders for all times.

Sexual Deviations

Several deviations of sexual behavior are condemned in the biblical teachings: homosexuality ([Leviticus 18:22](#); [Romans 1:26-27](#); [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#)); bestiality ([Exodus 22:19](#); [Leviticus 18:23](#)); incest ([Leviticus 18:6-18](#); [1 Corinthians 5:1](#)); rape ([Exodus 22:16-17](#); [Deuteronomy 22:23-29](#)); adultery ([Exodus 20:14](#); [Deuteronomy 22:22](#)); prostitution ([Proverbs 7:1-27](#); [Proverbs 29:3](#)); fornication ([1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#); compare [Matthew 19:9](#)). These are all declared to be outside of the will of God for man and woman who are called to live together in monogamous fidelity within the covenant of marriage. The only other option is the giftedness of celibacy ([Matthew 19:12](#); [1 Corinthians 7:7](#)). Incidentally, the Bible is silent on the subject of masturbation (compare [Leviticus 15:16](#)). It is silent on physical techniques of sexual intercourse, referring only to marital rights or enjoyment ([Exodus 21:10](#)), erotic caresses ([Song of Solomon 2:6](#); [Song of Solomon 7:1-9](#)), fondling ([Genesis 26:8](#)), and pleasure in conceiving ([Genesis 18:12](#)).

Yet these are set forth in the context of the behavior of married couples. Intimate sexual behavior outside of marriage is considered sexual immorality in the biblical perspective.

Theology of Sex

The Bible reveals an ethical God who gives humans the gift of sexuality whereby they image God when they join together to complement each other as “one flesh” ([Genesis 2:24](#)). All non-marital sex is outside the boundaries of the will of this ethical God (see [Amos 2:6-8](#) where Israel was to reject sex at the pagan shrines). God's people are expected to exercise self-control, not by asceticism ([Colossians 2:23](#); [1 Timothy 4:1-5](#)), but by the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming sexual impulses ([Galatians 5:16-25](#)). For the noncelibate, marriage is the only approved outlet for sexual expression ([1 Corinthians 7:9](#); [Titus 2:5-6](#)). This view equates human wholeness with holiness of life ([1 Thessalonians 4:3-5](#)). One's sexuality is a vital part of Christian holiness and not a necessary evil to be rejected. Within the limits of marriage, sex is for procreation of children, the enhancement of the one-flesh relationship, and the pleasure of the married couple whose love can be nourished thereby. Outside of the limits established by God, sex becomes an evil and destructive force in human life, calling for God's redemptive power to deliver humans trapped therein. Marital sexual love is both a gift and a responsibility from God to be consecrated by the Word and prayer.