

Sermon & Bible Study Helps

SEXUAL PURITY: HELPING YOUR TEENS STAY SEXUALLY PURE

Emphasis Passage: Genesis 1:27

Parallel Translations

King James: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

New King James: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

New International Version: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

New American Standard: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

New Revised Standard: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

New Living Translation: So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.

Hebrew Text

אִתּוֹ	בָּרָא	אֱלֹהִים	בְּצַלְמֵוֹ	בְּצַלְמוֹ	אֶת־הָאָדָם	אֱלֹהִים	וַיִּבְרָא
him	he created	of God	in the image	in his image	mankind	God	created
					אֹתָם	בָּרָא	וַיִּבְרָא
					them	he created	and female
							male

KEY WORDS (WITH STRONG'S REFERENCE NUMBERS)

בָּרָא (bara') – Qal, perfect, 3rd, masculine, singular

(1254) בָּרָא (barah) – to create

בְּצַלְמֵוֹ (be'zelem) – noun, masculine, singular, with prefixed preposition

(6754) צֶלֶם (zelem) – image, likeness, semblance

CONTEXT

The Book of Genesis teaches that God is the source of all creation. It reveals a purposeful, logical progression of acts that lead ultimately to the creation of human beings (Gen. 1:27). Part of this purposeful activity was the creation of the sexes. From the beginning, a complete humanity required both male and female (Gen. 2:18). Much of the rest of human history, and its record in the Bible, revolves around the relationship between men and women.

SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY NOTES

Introduction

Sexuality isn't about superiority. Genesis 1:27 teaches clearly that men and women share equally in the two fundamental aspects of being human. They are both called mankind, and both of them are made in the image of God.

Sexuality isn't about procreation. Genesis 2:28 makes clear that God intended for humans to procreate and to oversee His creation, but it doesn't explain why He chose to create humans as two sexes to accomplish this. While both sexes are required for procreation, the perpetuation of our species cannot be the principal reason for our sexuality. After all, God could have made humans asexual, able to reproduce without sexual union.

Sexuality isn't even really about sex. While the Song of Songs teaches that sexual intimacy in the bonds of the marriage commitment is good and desirable, it is evident from the complexity of the relationship between the man and woman in the Song that the physical part of their relationship is only a part of a much deeper relationship.

A good starting point for understanding sexuality is found in Genesis 2:18. After God created Adam, He considered the needs of this first man and knew that it was "not good for the man to be alone." So God created "a helper suitable for him." This word "helper" does not mean someone who cooks and cleans for him. K. Mathews (*Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, p. 214) states that the word refers to the "integral part" the woman plays in human survival and success: "What the man lacks, the woman accomplishes."

When one reads Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:18 in light of the other, it is clear that God intended men and women to comprise a partnership of equals who would work together to fulfill His purpose for humanity. Considered from this perspective, three reasons for making humans sexual beings are immediately evident.

I. God made humans sexual beings so they could enjoy intimate relationships.

The description of the first marriage in Genesis 2:22-24 elucidates this purpose. The man and the woman join together in a bond that affects the very fiber of their beings. Adam says of the woman God made, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Their union created a bond in which the two became "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

By creating humans as sexual beings, God enabled man and woman to express physically what has taken place spiritually in their union. But this physical union cannot be considered as something separate from the spiritual union. It is the spiritual union that the physical union represents. To engage in the physical union without the prior spiritual union misses the point of sexuality.

The necessity for this prior spiritual union is emphasized in the Song of Songs. The man and woman in the Song engage in a long series of relational activities, entwining on an emotional and spiritual level before they ever engage in sexual intimacy. Their sexual intimacy following their wedding is the result and physical expression of a strong and healthy relationship of mutual love and sharing.

The relational aspect of sexuality has been lost to many in our culture and replaced by self-indulgence. For sexuality to be what God intended, we must return to the importance of relational sex rather than recreational sex.

II. God made humans sexual beings so they could express His character

Anyone who has spent time observing boys and girls has noticed that they are different in many ways. The differences are not merely physical. Accompanying the physical differences is a host of other differences that enable men and women to perform their specific God-ordained functions.

Probably the most notable difference in the sexes is the tendency among males to gravitate to tasks and for females to gravitate to relationships. While sin has no doubt interfered with God's intention for these different interests, it is certain that these differences are God-given. The curse in the Garden reveals that God was aware of these different interests from the outset. When He pronounced some of the effects of Adam and Eve's sin, he told Eve that she would have pain in childbearing (Gen. 3:16), and He told Adam that he would toil in the fields with great difficulty (Gen. 3:17-19). God related to the effects of sin on Eve from a family perspective and on Adam from a provider/protector perspective.

While these differences provide both sexes with different key ways that they can contribute to their relationship, it should not be overlooked that these are two primary characteristics of God. God desires relationships, and He is also a provider/protector. The fact that He sent His Son to die for humanity's sins reveals the extent to which God desires relationships with humans. The fact that He sends the rain on the just and the unjust reveals the extent to which He fulfills His obligation to provide for and protect humanity.

When one considers that so much of who God is can be described within the context of these two characteristics, it is probably not an accident that they find different emphasis in men and women. Because men are designed primarily as provider/protectors and women as relational beings, these two very important characteristics of God—God as a relational being and God as a provider/protector—enjoy equal expression simultaneously, by being lived out through the sexes. Consequently, more of who God is and what God is like can be revealed through humanity.

It is this representative aspect of sexuality that God probably intended when He made humanity in His "image." The word "image" does not refer to actual physical representation. It probably refers to functional representation. G. Wenham (*Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary*, pp. 31-32) comments, "The divine image makes man God's vice-regent on earth." In other words, humanity represents God on earth. This representative function extends beyond humanity's responsibilities to care for creation and includes similarities in characteristics.

III. God made humans sexual beings so they could experience true love.

While affection should be present in a proper love relationship, it is only part of biblical love. Jesus described the highest form of love as a self-sacrificing love when He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Of course the New Testament

uses the word *agape* when it talks about this kind of love.

Agape love is noted for its sacrificial nature. Because of His *agape* love for humanity, Jesus sacrificed Himself for humanity's sin so that all who trust in His sacrifice on their behalf can be forgiven and escape the judgment of God. This same *agape* love is enjoined on humans in their relationships with each other. Jesus said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Human sexuality emphasizes the need for this kind of love because neither sex is capable of doing everything that life in this world requires. Life is too demanding. By design, the sexes possess different strengths and abilities. The only way that people can reach the full expression of what God desires for humans to do is by cooperating with each other. This cooperation finds its greatest expression in the marriage relationship. In order for the man and woman to enjoy the many wonders of their marriage each must think of the other as more important and give all that they have to meeting the needs of the other. And in this giving of themselves to each other, this couple experiences true, biblical love.

Conclusion

In today's self-indulgent culture, where physical pleasure has become the ultimate experience, the biblical perspective on human sexuality should cause people to refocus and see sexuality as God intended it. While the physical act of sex is obviously part of God's design for us as sexual beings, a proper focus on all that it means to be sexual beings will enhance the physical expression and give it much deeper meaning.

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

- Teach a Sunday School class for teenagers about sexual purity.
- Ask your pastor to preach a message about sexual purity.
- Contact your elected officials and tell them you want abstinence-only sex education presented in your public schools.
- Run for public office or recruit candidates for public office who support abstinence-only sex education programs.
- Talk with your children about God's gift of sexuality and its deeper meaning.
- Help your children to develop a healthy understanding of sexuality by talking to them about the important roles of men and women and how they complement each other.
- Ask God to protect the minds of your children from the deceptive messages of popular culture about sexuality.

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE

Bible Passages that Give Guidance about Human Sexuality

Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; Proverbs 31:10-31; The Song of Songs; John 8:1-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 7:1-9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:1-5, 22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Titus 2:3-8; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 2 Peter 1:5-9

SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The sermon notes on this sheet, the information on the accompanying fact sheet, and the other enclosed materials serve as resources as you prepare to teach and then lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own answers.

Create Learning Readiness: Share some statistics about current problems associated with human sexuality mentioned in the accompanying fact sheet.

Say: Our society has certainly become obsessed with sex.

Ask: How have you noticed this lately?

Let the members identify instances where they have observed our society's obsession with sex. Make sure the discussion stays clean and is not offensive or disrespectful to anyone in the group.

Say: Sometimes, you have to wonder why God invented this thing called sex when you look at how humans have distorted it.

Ask: Why do you think God created the sexes?

Let the members share their explanations. Again, keep the discussion from becoming offensive.

Say: There certainly are a lot of explanations for why God invented the sexes. Some of these are correct, but they don't really get at the root reasons. (Refer to the Introduction of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide to explain why some of the reasons that people give do not tell the whole story.) The starting point for understanding why God created the sexes can be found in Genesis 2:18. (Call on a member to read Genesis 2:18.)

Say: Some people think this passage means that God created women to be men's servants. However, that is not what this passage teaches. (Share with the members from the Introduction of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide what Genesis 2:18 teaches about the relationship between the sexes.) What Genesis 2:18 teaches is that the man was incomplete without the woman and that the woman was incomplete without the man. This means that there is something about sexuality that is essential to God's design for humanity. There is much more to sexuality than sex. We're going to discover some of this deeper meaning in this study. Let's start by thinking about marriage.

Ask: What makes a marriage great?

Let the members talk about the things that make a marriage great. Ask them if they see any common element in the things they are mentioning. It should be easy to demonstrate that relationship is at the heart of most of what the members have said.

Say: A marriage is great if the husband and wife have a great relationship with each other. Everything else in the marriage flows from that.

Ask: Can two men or two women experience the same level of relationship that a man and a woman can experience?

Let the members talk about this.

Say: Apparently, God does not think so, because when he had the opportunity to bring Adam the person who could complete him, He brought a woman, not another man. This must be one of the reasons God created the sexes. Sexuality is about more than sex. It is about how two individuals can become one whole. (Share with the members the explanation of this from the first point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide.) So one reason God made humans sexual beings is so we could enjoy intimate relationships. Let's look at another.

Ask: If you put a boy and a girl in a room filled with toys, what will each of them probably start playing with?

The members will probably say the girl will play with dolls and the boy will play with soldiers.

Say: Children don't have to be taught to do this. It comes naturally, because boys and girls are driven by different things. People who study the differences between men and women say that the differences can be found in the fact that women are primarily oriented toward relationships and men are primarily oriented toward performing tasks associated with providing and protecting.

Ask: Why do you think God made men and women different like this?

Let the members talk about this for a while.

Say: It is interesting that so much of what we know about God can be described from these two characteristics. (Share the explanation from the second point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide to help the members see how these characteristics describe much of God's own character.) So another reason God made humans sexual beings is so we could express His character. There are certainly other reasons why God made humans sexual beings, but let's think about one more.

Ask: What's the key to maintaining a healthy, happy marriage for many years?

Let the members talk about this for a while. If they don't come to this conclusion themselves, point out that much of what they talked about related to self-sacrifice. For a marriage to be healthy and happy both the husband and wife must sacrifice for the needs of the other.

Say: The Bible has a special word for this kind of love.

Ask: What is that word?

Agape.

Ask: What do we usually think about when we think about that word?

God's act of love in giving His Son to die for us.

Say: So in a marriage relationship, where neither person is perfect, the same kind of love is necessary. God made two sexes, with different interests and different needs, which are incomplete without each other, and planned for them to live together for life in a happy, healthy marriage. The only way they can do that is to sacrifice themselves for each other. In other words, human beings get to experience the purest form of love as two very different people learn to live together as one. So a third reason God made humans sexual beings is so we could experience true love.

Ask: How has this study of sexuality changed your understanding of sex?

Say: Very good. Now in the coming week, let's try to think differently about why God created men and women and see if that changes the way we think about and treat other people.