

# Why We Treat Sex as Something Sacred?

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Date: 23 November 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] It was great to sing some of those themes of light and hope and a God who deals with guilt and shame in contemplating dealing with this topic of have you ever wondered why we view sex as sacred.

The world has so many different views of and we as Christians living in that world rub up against these other views all the time.

Almost at least through what we're reading in the headlines on a daily basis and maybe even more frequently in what we're talking about with others at work on a weekly basis.

So it's a huge topic. I want to help us to think on just three points. Quite big brushstroke points because I think the tendency for us as Christians is to get bogged down in some little bit of detail of the topic of human sexuality and how it fits into a Christian view of the world.

And we think this and somebody else thinks that and we get bogged down in discussing the fine detail of why each view is right or wrong.

[ 1 : 36 ] That's sometimes where the conversations go and end up and there's no agreement. And even at best there can be listening but disagreement.

But I want us to almost take a step back and view the topic at a slightly bigger scale. Before I do that I want us to read just a few verses from scripture.

In humanity men and women are constantly looking for fulfillment of some description through the sexual relationships that they have or don't have.

And because of the fulfillment that people are wanting to find there's therefore accompanying that enormous amounts of pain, longing, hurt, disappointment and joy.

So people are so invested. They want a view. Humanity wants a view of human sexuality that will work.

[ 2 : 53 ] That will be good and right for people. And then when we turn to scripture which we're about to do. And if we imagine reading these very verses to non-Christian people.

Think about what they would think as they listened. Okay. People are wanting an approach to human sexuality that will work.

That will be good for people. That will be healthy and right. We as Christians say, well we have a view of human sexuality. Let me read something from the Bible and see what you think of it.

So turn to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 22. And imagine yourself with four or five non-Christians reading these verses to them.

Okay. Wives, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5. Well let's start at 21.

[ 4 : 01 ] Verse 21. Chapter 5 verse 21. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives. Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless in this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church. For we are members of his body.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery. But I'm talking about Christ and the church.

[ 5 : 27 ] However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. What are your non-Christian friends or colleagues thinking, if they're still in the room?

They're probably thinking, wow, that is in various different ways unacceptable to me. They might well be thinking that.

Or they might be thinking, that's really old-fashioned. Or they might be thinking, maybe at best, well, that's kind of nice if it works for you, but it wouldn't work for most people.

A range of views will come into that conversation, if there is to be a conversation, if you read these verses. And therein lies the interesting problem.

Humanity wants a view of sexuality that will work and be good for everyone. And the creator God gives us a blueprint for human sexuality that is good and works and would be good for everyone, for people who want it.

[ 6 : 48 ] And therein lies the difficulty. So have you ever wondered why we view sex as sacred? Two things. As we try and get into that conundrum.

That reading these verses helps us to feel. First. In answer to the question, why do you view sex as sacred?

Point number one. I do view sex as sacred. But I also think everything is sacred. Not just sex. Everything is sacred. Sacred is a funny word. It's a slightly religious word. It's not particularly a word we would use often. It's perhaps more common in the Old Testament when people had a religious life based around the temple.

By being the people of Israel, they had sacred things and a sacred place. We are New Testament Christians, so we tend not to use the word sacred so much.

[ 7 : 56 ] But if we get our brains going along these lines, as New Testament Christians, I think what we believe is that everything is sacred.

The world is sacred. The world is God's. History is God's history. Human beings belong to God. And he created everything and is sovereign over everything.

That was another phrase in the song that we just sung that I thought was really helpful. God is over everything. And so everything is sacred. Everything is his.

Even, if it helps you to get the point, the devil is God's devil. He is over everything. And that helps us to think, well, yes, sex is sacred.

And God has things to say about it. But it is not unique. Everything is sacred. Now, within that, we automatically begin to understand that whilst everything is sacred and belongs to God and his sovereign rule of the whole universe, it is true that things have a different order of importance or a different prominence of place in God's world.

[ 9 : 23 ] Yes, everything is God's. But we do automatically share in common with all human beings, Christians or not, a kind of basic understanding that comes from observation of the world, that not everything sits on the same plane of importance in the world.

And if you were to spend a day going around the city of Edinburgh and it was your goal to kill as many dogs as possible, you know, it wouldn't be too long before somebody was reporting you and this would be seen under the rule of law in our country, at least, as a criminal offence.

And we would kind of get that. And I guess most of us would not have a problem with that being a criminal offence.

But if the government of the day decided to make it a criminal offence to kill a bluebottom, we would kind of think, oh, that's not right. There's nothing to do with our Christianity.

It's just to do with our human observation of the world and our part within the world. So similarly, if somebody is a sexual predator and bringing violence and injury for other people in a sexual manner, we would view that and do view that under the rule of law as a really serious and wicked or evil or whatever words we want to use thing to be doing.

[ 11 : 11 ] And it would be a hundred times worse than the guy who shot a few dogs in our heads. We hope. So we have this kind of understanding that things are of different importance.

But our Christian view is that it is all sacred. And we human beings have been placed in God's world as his vice regents.

To run the world. To represent him in the world. And to put in place things like these laws which say what people do to a bluebottle is less important than what they do to a dog.

And that's less important than what people do with their sexual preferences. So from the beginning, the Bible tells us, and right through the history of even a fallen sinful world, everything is sacred. But some things are more important than others and have bigger, weightier meaning and significance than other things. And sex, we would recognize probably in common with most human beings, is at one end of the spectrum.

[12:37] I'll do that, point one. Point two. Although everything is sacred, sex in a particular way is woven in to the meaning of God's relationship with men and women.

Sex between a man and a woman and a husband and a wife. And sex within that context as God designed it to be. Is in what Paul describes as a profound way woven in to the meaning of the gospel.

And the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife. And the bringing about of children within that relationship.

And the nurturing of children in the world. And the accompanying, bringing the stability that a right godly view of sex brings to society as a whole.

That is all sacred in a particular way. The Bible starts with Adam and Eve.

[13:57] And one sexual relationship between a man and a woman created for each other. Paul refers back to that. The one flesh idea. And the Bible ends with the relationship of Jesus Christ with his church.

Being finally and fully consummated in a new creation. And right through the Bible's unfolding story of redemption from beginning to end.

The place of husband and wife. The place of marriage. The place of sex. The place of family life. Amongst God's people.

Has an incredibly important significance. It is the closest thing that exists in the world.

To give us the understanding of the true intimacy that exists between Christ and his people. The Bible has so, so many ways of describing the relationship with Christ and his people.

[15:10] It uses all sorts of metaphors and language to describe that relationship. God is our creator and we are creatures.

God is our king and we are his subjects. God is our father and we are his children. God is our redeemer and we are slaves who have been set free at a great price.

God is our king and we are his children.

Bang in the middle of humanity to most deeply help us understand that is the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife.

Its place within marriage. Its place within family life. Its beauty and permanence until death shall us part.

[16:34] There's that slight kind of, in the words of a wedding service, there's just that slight cold edge that we feel when the guy solemnizing the marriage says, until we shall be separated by death.

But it's permanent until that happens. A man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

What does that mean? Well, obviously it's to do with the bond, the union, sexual intimacy, but clearly there's still two people. But there is a bond that is profoundly deep in the marriage relationship between a husband and wife.

And this is given to humanity by the creator God and underlined in the gospel as being the thing which, in a unique way, helps us to see Christ's love for the people of God.

God's love for the people redeemed by Jesus. Union, knowing, intimacy.

[17:59] The Holy Spirit himself comes to not just live with us, but in us. Uniting us to Jesus.

And Paul rightly says, the collision, the interwovenness of these two things, marriage, the sexual union of husband and wife, and the spiritual union of Christ and his people is a profound mystery.

The depths of which we can't really plumb and I don't think we're meant to unravel it, to understand it in logical, legal terms.

But we accept it as a profoundly true relational reality. One day, the Bible tells us, marriage will be no more.

And when I hear of husbands losing their wives and grieving, they often speak, don't they?

[19:04] Understandably so. My mother-in-law died two years ago and they'd been married for 61 years. And I still see two years on with grief that my father-in-law carries. Because the one flesh is

gone.

61 years of being together has ended. But I do think that in the new creation, it's not that marriage won't exist so that relationship is downgraded to be something less than it's ever been.

I think it's marriage no longer exists because every relationship is upgraded to be all that they could ever be in union with Jesus Christ.

This profound mystery that we get a glimpse of through the reality of a sexual relationship's place in the world, if not yet in your own life, this profound mystery helps us to understand the eternal reality of union with Jesus Christ.

So, on one hand, everything is sacred. On the other hand, sex is a unique gift of God given for a very specifically profound reason.

[ 20 : 27 ] Here's the third thing. Have you ever wondered why we view sex as sacred? Now, that question will jar with us in a world that is as fallen and confused and broken as our world is.

We've thought about how the Bible teaches us to think of sex and to view marriage relationship. But we do so in a world that is absolutely riven with pain and shame and guilt and brokenness and injury and despair and hurt.

And I think the third thing I want to say is that the gospel holds out the only ultimate hope to people who have been hurt or are guilty because of sexual sin or sexual brokenness or sex existing outwith God's given norms.

The gospel holds out the only ultimate hope for all the pain that exists in people's lives around this area.

And of course, a lot of it is hidden, personal, deeply painful wounds. It's not for nothing that people wouldn't feel able just to speak to anyone and everyone about their experience of guilt or pain in this area.

[ 22 : 11 ] But it is for everyone that the gospel says there can be hope even with this. Even in this area, there can be healing and hope and eternity where all the wounds can be fulfilled in a relationship with the Lord Jesus as it is meant to be.

So, sometimes when you, as a Christian, want to put your cross upon to view that sex is sacred, well, it is. But that can often be heard as you are now condemned because you don't share that view or that has not been your experience.

Whereas what the gospel wants to say is sex is unique, a gift of God with a unique amount of importance placed upon it.

And the gospel wants to draw you in a world where God tenderly and in real ways brings life and light and eternal hope to a place where you've maybe experienced pain and guilt beyond words. That's a wonderful thing. So, there you are. You need things to think about. Everything is sacred, not just sex. Sex has unique significance as described in the whole of the Bible and woven into the fabric of the meaning of the gospel.

[ 23 : 48 ] And the gospel is the only ultimate hope in a world which is often damaged and broken by people's view of sexuality and their experience of it.

Okay. Okay. Shall I pray? No, let me pray and then Craig's going to help us to have some talk. Heavenly Father, we recognize even as we talk tonight that we know people have been wounded enormously.

We've all made mistakes and feel guilt and shame, Lord. We know our need of grace. We know, Heavenly Father, and treasure and cherish the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, united to us as Savior and Redeemer.

The one who is able and willing to mend what is broken and clean what is dirty. So, Lord, help us to think carefully, to speak wisely, and to hold out genuinely the hope and love of Jesus Christ and the gospel that you've given us to many others in this broken, needy area.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.