TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader /Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Brooks McKelroy

#587 Sing and Be Happy
#611 Heavenly Sunlight

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
#349 Ten Thousand Angels
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#851 I'll Fly Away
Sermon: "That's Not in the Bible!
2 Timothy 3:16-17

#934 Softly and Tenderly
#535 The Glory-land Way

Closing Prayer by: Andre Jones

We will have 3rd Sunday evening singing service tonight at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

October 17, 2021

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Sex and the Bible

For the past several months, we have been considering how to make moral choices on Wednesday evenings. Recently, we began discussing sexual ethics. There are few, if any, areas of culture that have experienced more rapid and dramatic change in recent years; there are few, if any, subjects that we are more uncomfortable addressing. (I suspect the title of this article alone caused a few raised eyebrows!)

But the Bible far from embarrassed in tackling these issues. That should help point us toward how we ought to speak on these difficult matters. More so than any specific prohibitions that we might fixate upon, the fundamental problem is that the world is telling a different story than Scripture. Contemporary morality upholds personal autonomy and individual freedom of expression as core tenets. In the sexual realm, this means almost unfettered liberty, provided the activity is consensual; anyone who would draw any sorts of boundaries is by definition regressive, even villainous, in that they endeavor to oppress others.

That is a powerful narrative that has captured the imaginations of many in our society. While we could quibble with it in a number of ways, the most powerful counter to that, not merely for outsiders but for our own self-understanding, is to tell a better—and more biblical—story. What Scripture says about sex and sexuality is far more than a list of "thou shalt nots." If we read it that way (or tell others about it that way), we are missing the forest for the trees. No, God's will in this area, as in all things, is for our good. While there is a definite need for restraint, the Bible does not teach that sex is dirty or evil; instead, it is a gift, a blessing, when expressed within its proper parameters. Let's note a few guideposts that will help us toward better understanding.

1. Creation. Scripture's teaching on human sexuality begins at the beginning: God created male and female; he instituted marriage; he gave the command to *be fruitful and multiply.* All of that indicates that, in God's design, marriage precedes procreation and is the ideal context for it. The good of marriage is not limited to reproduction, of course; it also includes intimacy between husband and wife, as God saw that it was *not good for the man to be alone* **(Gen 2:18). Genesis 2:24** sums it up well: *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* A man shall leave his father and mother, a public, ceremonial act; he will be united to his wife—they will become a new family unit of their own; and the two will become one flesh, a reference to the sexual consummation of marriage.

Creation sets the precedent for marriage and sexual relationships. It establishes a paradigm that marriage is between one man and one woman, and only within marriage are sexual relations to occur. It is worth noting that this story is given weight as establishing moral norms repeatedly in Scripture.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Virginia Cole, Glenda Wiggins' sister, fell and broke her right elbow last week. She is also recovering from a broken leg.

Gary Nielsen will be meeting with a transplant team on Nov. 2nd.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Gary Nielsen, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Winston Leifester, Caitlin Smith, Jo Ann Modisette, Ka'Leisha Jones, Mike Little, Jackie David

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Oct. 18th at 5:30 p.m.

Primetimers will be going to Tookies Seafood in Kemah, on Tuesday, Oct. 19th at 5:00 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday Oct. 21st at 8:00 a.m.

Homecoming is Sunday Oct. 24th. We will have a meal after morning service. The meal will be catered and we need to provide desserts.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Phillip Strickhausen	
Robert Ward		

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Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;
Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737
Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ

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Most obviously, Jesus appeals to it in his teaching on divorce **(Matt 19).** But Paul talks about it in subjects as diverse as homosexual activity (**Rom 1)** and conduct in the assembly (**1 Cor 14).** In other words, we need to take this narrative seriously. Other parts of the OT reinforce this design.

2. The Law of Moses. The various prohibitions against illicit sexual relations assume Creation as normative. You can read about them in **Lev 18** and **20,** but the Law rules out all forms of incest, homosexuality, adultery, and bestiality. The point is that sexual expression is limited to heterosexual marriage. No one sin is singled out as more egregious than others in this list—they are all problematic in that they violate God's design. While we are not under that Law as Christians, the principle of normative sexual relations is still relevant.

3. Wisdom literature. Where the Law stresses boundaries, the Wisdom literature celebrates the beauty of sexual relations within marriage as God intends. The marital part is key: **Proverbs** warns repeatedly against the easy availability of sexual temptation **(5:1-23; 6:20-29; 7:1-27).** But the high point of this theme is the **Song of Solomon.** Restraint is exercised during courtship, as the Shulamite woman confesses her love but states, *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.* (**3:5).** There is then a wedding procession and ceremony **(3:6-11).** Afterward, Solomon describes his bride in passionate detail **(4:1-7** and it's worth noting that she describes him too **5:10-16)**, and there is a metaphorical description of consummation, with vivid imagery for enjoyment **(4:11-16).** Space precludes printing all of that text, but I encourage you to go read this very neglected book. The point: sex is seen as something good that is blessed by God and to be enjoyed if it is within the parameters he has laid out.

4. New Testament. Jesus himself appeals to Creation, as we already noted above in passing. Beyond that, the NT consistently appeals for believers to avoid sexual immorality. For instance, Paul straightforwardly commands it: *For this is the will of God, your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality* **(1 Thess 4:3).** And sexual immorality appears on many of the vice lists, the specific sins to be avoided (e.g., **1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21**). The term that is translated as *sexual immorality* is the Greek word *porneia*, from which our word pornography is derived. It's a broad term that refers to all illicit sexual relations, just like those listed in the Law—anything outside of the norm of Creation. In other words, sexual expression is restricted to heterosexual marriage.

This just scratches the surface of what Scripture teaches. Ultimately, it is clear that Creation established God's intent for sex to be experienced within monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. Anything outside of that is outside of his will and gets to specific controversial issues that we must navigate today. But more important is what God is FOR—within that relationship, sexual relations are a gift to his people. That good and positive story is where we need to begin. Of course, this will still likely be unpersuasive to many who reject any and all restrictions on individual autonomy. But it will help us to better understand God's will and live within it.

Bryant Perkins