

A Christian Vision for Sexuality (Ephesians 5:3-5)

Big Idea: The biblical view of sexuality is not just true. It's also better.

We're almost at the end of our series on sexuality and gender. Joshua is going to wrap up next week with one final sermon. Today we're going to devote most of our time to questions and responses. You can go ahead and ask anything. I may not have a good answer, but we'll see what happens!

But before we're done, one final word.

In his excellent book [*This Is Our Time*](#), Trevin Wax writes:

Christians who shine the light of the gospel on the myths of our world do not simply say, "This is right and this is wrong," but "This is better." The gospel tells a better story. Yes, the gospel exposes the lies we believe and promote in society, but once our eyes adjust to its brightness, we discover how the gospel also answers our deeper longings in ways that surprise us. Evangelism is not just convincing people the gospel is true but also that it is better.

In other words, it's not enough to explain what God says is right and wrong. We must also show how God's vision for life – including sexuality – tells a better story and answers our deepest longings. The biblical view of sexuality is not just true. It's also better.

So what is the better story that the Bible tells us about our sexuality?

The story the world tells us is that sexual self-expression is good.

It's the good for which everything, including wife and children, must be sacrificed. It seemed incomprehensible that a family's stability should come before sexual fulfillment. Do whatever it takes to be happy! Don't let anything get in your way, even your marriage vows! What goes unreported are the consequences: people who try to treat their pain by having sex usually leave more pain behind them for others to deal with... (Trevin Wax)

Two Ways to Treat Sex

So let's look for just a minute at what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Ephesians 5:3-5)

This passage teaches us two ways to treat sex.

The first way is the way of sexual immorality. It's what he mentioned in verses 3 and 4: sexual immorality and impurity – broad terms that refer to every kind of sexual sin, every form of marriage outside of God's ordained context of covenantal marriage. He also mentions filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking.

This is the default way to handle sex. It was in Ephesus back then, and it's also the default way to handle it today.

But Paul says that these shouldn't even be named among us. This approach to sex is to be completely banished from the Christian community. Talk about a high standard, especially in Ephesus! Immorality was everywhere. The city was dominated by the temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, "Diana of the Ephesians." She was regarded as a fertility goddess, and sexual orgies were regularly associated with her worship.

Paul says to go completely reject sexual immorality so that there's not even a trace of it within our lives and within the church. Instead he offers a second way to treat sex. He teaches us a second way to treat sex.

If we treat sex this way, Paul says, we have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

The second way is to treasure sex and give thanks for it. This is the Christian vision for sex. Verse 4 says, "instead let there be thanksgiving..." John Stott explains what Paul means:

...the reason why Christians should dislike and avoid vulgarity is not because we have a warped view of sex, and are either ashamed or afraid of it, but because we have a high and holy view of it as being in its right place God's good gift, which we do not want to see cheapened. All God's gifts, including sex, are subjects for thanksgiving, rather than for joking. To joke about them is bound to degrade them; to thank God for them is the way to preserve their worth as the blessings of a loving Creator.

What's the Christian view of sex? To give thanks to God for it; to see it as one of his generous gifts; to refuse to cheapen it by misusing it.

That's the Christian view of sexuality. Here's what happens when we flee sexual immorality: we begin to treasure sex. We begin to thank God for his generous gift. Our sexuality becomes holy.

Sex is a gift from God. Your sex life can actually be an act of worship to God, a subject of thanksgiving and life. That's the Christian vision of sex: your sexuality as a means of glorifying God and enjoying his good gift.

Canadian pastor Mark Clark writes, "Instead of keeping people away from God, sex should draw us all closer to him. And that, in the end, may be the most radical idea of all."

Fathers, help us to not live in column a: sexual immorality and coarseness, which leads to exclusion from your kingdom. Help us to move into the beauty of column b: sex as a subject of thanksgiving, sex as something that draws us closer to you. Thank you for all your good gifts including sex. Thank you for Jesus who has paid the price for all of our sins. Thank you for the Spirit who is making us new.

We are not our own. We've been bought with a price. So may we glorify you in our bodies. In Jesus' name, Amen.