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SEXUALITY AS AN APOLOGETIC

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If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once. But, of course, when people say, "Sex is nothing to be ashamed of," they may mean "the state into which the sexual instinct has now got is nothing to be ashamed of."

If they mean that, I think they are wrong. I think it is everything to be ashamed of. There is nothing to be ashamed of in enjoying your food: there would be everything to be ashamed of if half the world made food the main interest of their lives and spent their time looking at pictures of food and dribbling and smacking their lips.¹

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*



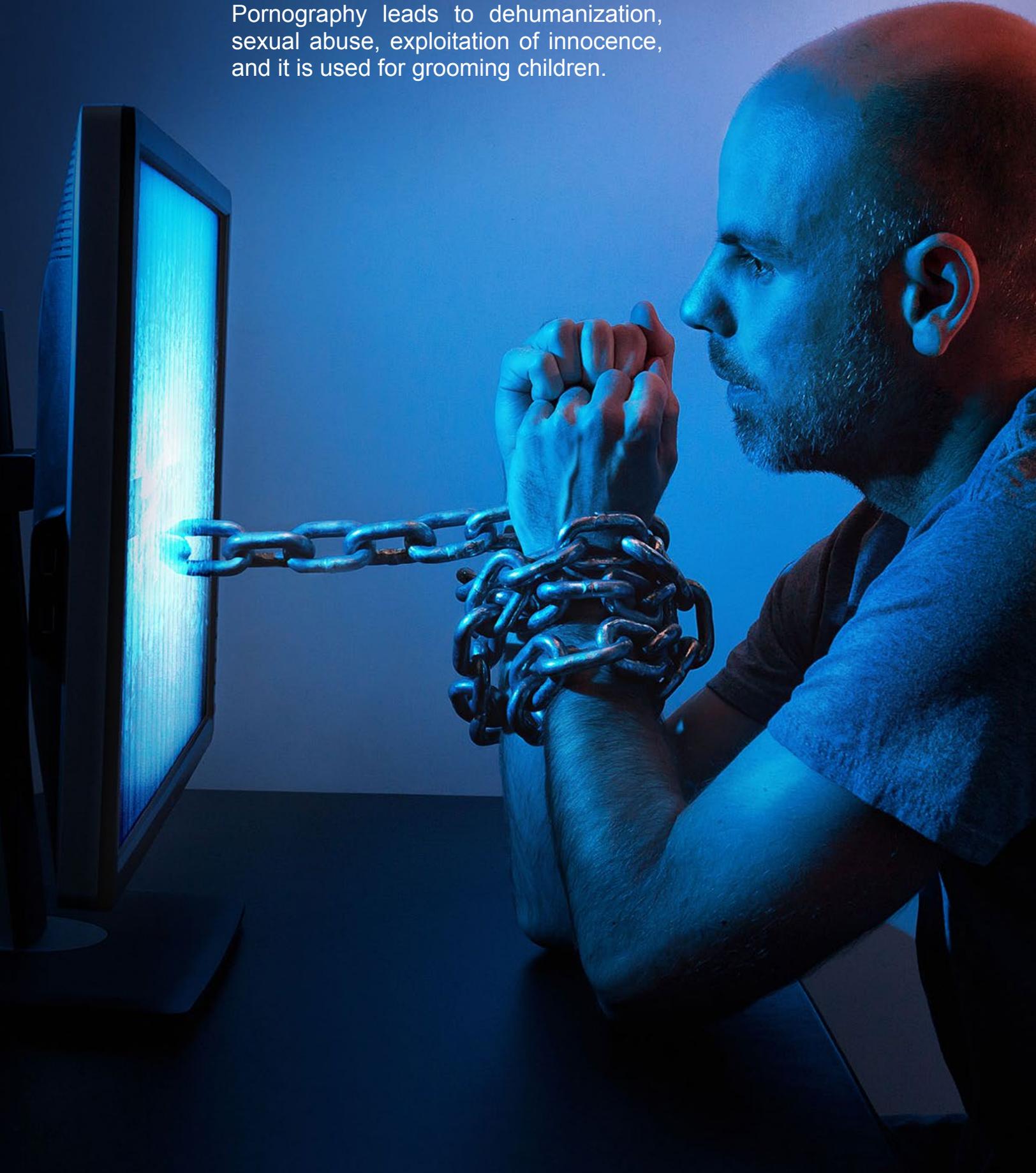
How does your sexuality affect your witness as a Christian? Sexuality is one of the most intimate aspects of our being. But as Christians we rarely discuss it or its importance or its biblical basis. Living and communicating a genuinely biblical view of sexuality is powerful and is, in fact, a most powerful apologetic today. An apologetic is a reason for belief — a defense of your faith in Jesus Christ.

God's Good Design

We live in a world where sexuality is damaged by sin. Its beauty is obscured by brokenness. Christians are, however, empowered to glorify God with our bodies, as Paul clarified in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20,

"I have the right to do anything," you say — but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything" — but I will not be mastered by anything... The body,

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and it is used for grooming children.





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however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?...

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.²

This final command is an imperative: glorify God with your body.

The bottom line is that your sexuality can either (1) win people to Christ, (2) confuse people on truth, or (3) repel people from the gospel. How you live speaks louder than anything you will ever say. Sex is either sacred or destructive. There is no gray area. Communicating these important truths on this very sensitive subject is the focus of this article.

The good news is that Christianity has sex not only figured out but maximized in God's design for marriage, the "profound mystery" (Eph. 5:32) that is the love between a wife and a husband. The bad news is that sin creeps in to destroy that. Sexuality cannot thrive when healthy boundaries break down from sin and corruption with effects from pornography to abortion to divorce to gender identity confusion.

Sexual brokenness in our culture is predatory. One need not look for it; it will find you. Pornography is viewed by some as a basic human right, with 92 million viewers each day. Twelve new videos and two hours of content are uploaded every minute. Children are groomed by video games toward early sexual debut with pornography. Seventy-eight percent of church-going men view pornography.³ Pornography leads to dehumanization, sexual



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abuse, exploitation of innocence, and it is used for grooming children. *Teen Vogue* recently published an op-ed by Tlaleng Mofokeng, MD, founder of Nalane for Reproductive Justice, arguing that sex work should be decriminalized across the globe.⁴ All of this reduces human identity to inclinations and sexual preferences, pronoun expansion, dignity confusion. Biblical sexuality is dismissed as impossible, unbelievable, even by Christians.

There is, nonetheless, nothing new under the sun, as the earliest Christians dealt with things worse: temple prostitution, phallocentric art, a culture where men were emasculated and women, children, and slaves were sexually exploited as a way of life.⁵

But what happened? Jesus Christ came. People trusted in Him. And Christianity worked a cultural revolution. If this happened then, there is hope for now. God can work a cultural revolution today through us. Sexuality is either a powerful destroyer or a powerful apologetic.

Jackie Hill Perry, in her book *Gay Girl, Good God*, writes that she was born into father absence. At age five, she was sexually assaulted. At age seven, she was introduced and quickly addicted to pornography. At age fourteen, she was challenged with lesbianism. At age 17, she became the stud for all her lesbian friends, but, at age nineteen, she met God — and everything changed. There is good news for broken sexuality — the gospel!

God's design for sexuality is unique; every one of us is a bearer of God's image, the *imago Dei*. This divine image offers a perfect design for sexuality, with a gospel that offers forgiveness for sin and grace to live in the way that God has designed. Sexuality begins with His image, as Genesis 1:27 declares, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Sharing these truths about sexuality in a broken culture is apologetics. Sex is a reflection of

Sex is the great life-giving gift that enables couples to bear God's image in a new way through a child, and that child needs stable, married parents.





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God; He invented it! He created it to unite His people; He says in Genesis 2:24–25: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.” That is God’s plan for us — that we feel no shame. A man and a woman united in marriage as one, enjoying every sexual pleasure and joy possible is His perfect design. This is the biblical truth—that sex is designed first for pleasure. Deuteronomy 24:5 requires the husband to take the first year of marriage to learn how to please his wife, and as Dr. Ed Wheat and his wife, Gail Wheat, explain in their book *Intended for Pleasure* (now in its fourth edition), this is a critical area of leadership by the husband. Philip Ryken’s excellent new book *The Love of Loves in the Song of Songs* explains that the biblical Song of Songs aches with sexual desire, where the bride and groom surrender it to the glory of God. Sex is designed first for pleasure, then secondly for reproduction, reflecting His image in a new generation. Christian sexuality elevates and protects women and children because its context is holy matrimony (where a man takes responsibility).

Sex is in context with a strong relationship with God. He must be first in our lives. Just like every other sin, allowing sexuality to rule you is a death sentence. A believer cannot allow his or her body to rule. Rather, a Christian allows God to rule, surrendering to Him and His wonderful will on a moment-by-moment basis.

Marriage is glorious by His design. Ephesians 5:30–32 calls it a profound mystery that points to the gospel. That is sexuality as an apologetic. How one treats his or her spouse is indicative of the two great commandments as set forth in Matthew 22:36–40: first, loving God, then, loving others; the closest other is a spouse.

In this setting, then, parents teach these things to their children. Parents must discuss sexuality with their children as it is a key apologetic for them too! They need to know that God’s design is



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for beauty and sexual pleasure in the context of a husband and wife in relationship with Him, which in turn provides the foundation for a healthy family. This is why a believer dates a Christian and marries a person walking with Christ.

Do we really believe this? C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory* posits,

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.⁶

Are we? Are you? Whatever you find you cannot say no to stands because you don't believe that what God will give you instead is greater. His path for our lives is fullness and joy (Psalm 16).

Making Sexuality an Affirmative Apologetic

When the truth about sexuality is clear, we can live out solutions for making sexuality an affirmative apologetic.

Counter the Wrong Propaganda

First, counter the wrong propaganda. Rather than conceding to commonalities, take a position based on your biblical sexuality. Counter the wrong propaganda by being able to explain God's design for sexual oneness and pleasure, reflected in His image. C.S. Lewis's life-changing book *The Four Loves* is more relevant now than ever. In it, Lewis identifies four types of love that we confuse today: affection (or the Greek word *storge*), friendship or brotherly love (Greek, *phileo*), sexual love (*eros*), and sacrificial love (*agape*, what older Bible translations call charity). Christians

Only the gospel promises forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God, ourselves, and others. By conceding where the Bible is clear, we stand in the way of sinners finding what they need most — Jesus.





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know that marriage is the only rightful place for *eros*, but Lewis also makes it clear that affection, friendship, and especially sacrificial love — the kind Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13 — should define all of our relationships, including and especially marriage. This is why pornography is so devastating. Beneath this cultural epidemic is a terrible misdefinition of *eros*, which not only twists inward the good God-given *eros* that can define marital relationships, but also corrupts all other loves. I say “twist inward” because erotic love is intended by God to turn our attention *outward*, toward a captivation with the other. Think about it: *Eros* is literally life-giving. It is what creates babies and builds families. Thus it can be said that erotic love is personal, but it’s far from private.

By design it draws us out of ourselves, toward another person, toward his or her family, and, Lord willing, toward new little lives who are the result of that love, who then take their place in the larger community. Again, we see His design. Pornography not only corrupts and twists *eros*, but it also corrupts *phileo* and *storge* as well. When relationships between men and women become as hypersexualized as they are in our culture today, men and women cannot be friends or show normal signs of simple affection and caring. Today, even the relationships between men and men and women and women have been hypersexualized, which places a question mark over normal, healthy same-sex friendships that should be based on *phileo* and *storge*. Understanding this counters the wrong propaganda. In his book *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*, Raleigh Sadler takes a new look at the problem of human sex trafficking as he explains that pornography is really the basis for sex trafficking.

There are humans just like us behind the scenes of the porn industry. Any use of pornography contributes to the exploitation of others... the way we spend our money and time can create a demand for human trafficking. As



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hard as this may be to believe, we will never be able to truly point others to freedom until we acknowledge our role in their slavery.⁷

Consuming pornography makes that consumer complicit in human trafficking. Want to fight human trafficking? Stop consuming pornography.

The gospel alone and only transforms life. Sexuality as God designed it is incredible, dynamic, and healthy, without shame, esteeming. Do we believe this? As Christians we must be light in the sexual darkness. Counter the wrong propaganda with the truth about sexuality.

Offer Hope and Healing

Second, offer hope and healing. Only the gospel promises forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God, ourselves, and others. By conceding where the Bible is clear, we stand in the way of sinners finding what they need most — Jesus. A sexually broken culture produces sexually broken Christians. We need forgiveness as much as anyone, and that is the start of your sexuality apologetic. In his book *Is God Anti-Gay?*, Sam Allberry, an Anglican priest who struggles with same-sex attraction, clarifies that because we live in a fallen world it should be expected that some Christians will experience forms of same-sex attraction. Creation has been negatively affected by sin.

The best response to a struggling friend who comes out to you is first to thank him or her for being honest and trusting you. Then be sure he or she knows that they are safe with you. You will not reject them. Then listen to them. Pray for them. Witness with the quality of your life and the clarity of your message, the gospel. These steps give relational credibility. Do not concede in the truth



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to smooth the way, but rather be God's light for them; be their safe place.

Embody Sexual Wholeness

Third, embody sexual wholeness. Even with all our flaws, each one of us can embody sexual wholeness. God's design is the preeminent alternative for our sexuality, but sexual brokenness is exhausting and unsustainable. Start to embody sexual wholeness by surveying your own sexual baggage. Surrender it to God for healing. Do not let it plague you with shame and pain. Sex is the great life-giving gift that enables couples to bear God's image in a new way through a child, and that child needs stable, married parents. This is foundational to sexual wholeness. Your sexuality is an apologetic one way or the other.

Jackie Hill Perry writes,

When salvation has taken place in the life of someone under the hand of God, [he or she is] set free from the penalty of sin and its power. In a body without the Spirit, sin is an unshakable king under whose dominion no man can flee. The entire body, with its members, affections, and mind all willfully submit themselves to sin's rule. But when the Spirit of God takes back the body that He created for Himself, He sets it free from the pathetic master that once held it captive, and releases it into the marvelous light of its Savior. It is then able to not only want God, but it is actually able to obey God. And isn't that what freedom is supposed to be? The ability to not do as I please, but the power to do what is pleasing to Him... God will be there to help.⁸

Scripture speaks with clarity to sexuality, with both truth and grace.



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That is also the way we must approach it. When we oversimplify the issue or submit to it or vilify it or even make it more than it is, we fail to speak with Scripture's authority into it. You were bought with a price; glorify God with your body (1 Cor. 6:19–20). This is your sexuality apologetic. And that testimony is more important today than ever as we need to tell the truth in a culture of sin. Starting with this very deep and personal piece — how you treat your body (from your brain to your eyes to all members of your body) — speaks volumes about the defense of your faith. Sexual purity equals sexual joy and fulfillment. This is apologetics. Your sexuality can be a powerful apologetic, and it really can change the world. ■

NOTES

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952; rpt., San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 98–99.

² Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

³ Josh McDowell, "The Porn Epidemic: *Executive Synopsis*," September 25, 2018, <https://www.josh.org/wp-content/uploads/Porn-Epidemic-Executive-Synopsis-9.25.2018.pdf>.

⁴ Tlaleng Mofokeng, MD, "Why Sex Work Is Real Work," *Teen Vogue*, April 26, 2019.

⁵ Michael J. Kruger, "One of the Main Ways Early Christians Distinguished Themselves from the Surrounding Culture," *Canon Fodder*, September 10, 2014, <https://www.michaeljkruger.com/one-trait-that-set-the-earliest-christians-apart-from-the-surrounding-culture/>.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in *The Weight of Glory* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 25.

⁷ Raleigh Sadler, *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking* (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 146.

⁸ Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God* (Nashville: B&H, 2018), 86.



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What we practice, not (save at rare intervals)
what we preach is usually our great
contribution to the conversion of others.

— *C.S. Lewis*



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1

After considering this article, what are some of the specific actions you could take to make your sexuality an affirmative apologetic?

2

Lynn Marie Kohm argues that “[p]arents must discuss sexuality with their children as it is a key apologetic for them too!” If you are a parent, how might you do this?



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Lynne Marie Kohm, J.D. serves as the John Brown McCarty Professor of Family Law at Regent University School of Law. She is the author of the books *Estate Planning Success for Women* and *The Christian Guide to Wills, Living Trusts and Estate Planning*. Her professional affiliations include and have included the Virginia State Bar Family Law Section Board of Governors, Virginia Bar Association Domestic Relations Council, Christian Legal Society, American Bar Association, Eagle Forum, Alliance Defense Fund, Concerned Women for America, and Bethany Christian Services. She and her husband have two children.

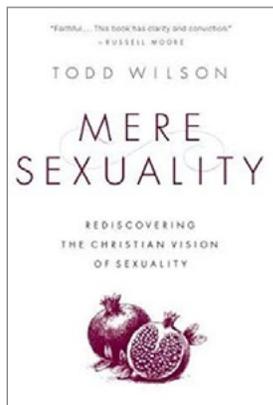


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RECOMMENDED READING



Todd A. Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Zondervan, 2017)

What do Christians believe about human sexuality?

In *Mere Sexuality*, author and pastor Todd Wilson presents the historic Christian consensus about human sexuality, the Great Tradition of the church for centuries as taught in each of its major expressions — Orthodox, Catholic,

and Protestant. Wilson highlights the stunning shift of opinion on issues of sexuality in the evangelical church and why this break with the historic church is problematic for the future of Christianity. Along the way he provides ordinary believers with an introduction to the historic Christian vision of sexuality, yet does so in conversation with some of the twenty-first century's leading challenges to this vision.

In a culture that is deeply confused about human sexuality, Wilson believes it is time for evangelicals to retrieve the historic Christian tradition and biblical teaching on the question of sexuality. *Mere Sexuality* seeks to guide readers back to the beauty and coherence of this vision of sexuality in the face of an aggressive and all-consuming pagan and secular worldview.

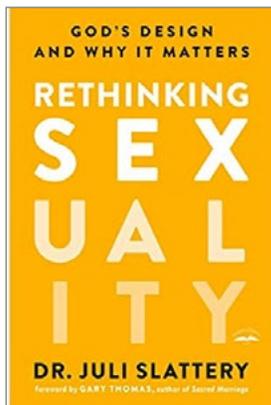


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Juli Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality: God's Design and Why It Matters* (Multnomah, 2018)

This ground-breaking resource challenges and equips Christians to think and act biblically and compassionately in matters of sexuality.

Sexual abuse, sex addiction, gender confusion, brokenness, and shame plague today's world, and people are seeking clarity and hope. By contesting

long-held cultural paradigms, this book equips you to see how sexuality is rooted in the broader context of God's heart and His work for us on earth. It provides a framework from which to understand the big picture of sexual challenges and wholeness, and helps you recognize that every sexual question is ultimately a spiritual one. It shifts the paradigm from combating sexual problems to confidently proclaiming and modeling the road to sacred sexuality.

Instead of arguing with the world about what's right and wrong about sexual choices, this practical resource equips you to share the love and grace of Jesus as you encounter the pain of sexual brokenness — your own or someone else's.