

<b>Series:</b> New Mercies	<b>Reference:</b> Ephesians 5:3-12 & Various Passages	<b>Title:</b> Good Sex(uality)	<b>Date:</b> 01.16.2022
<b>Website Writeup:</b> This is a PG-13 sermon. We're going to talk about everyone's favorite subject today, sex. We'll be candid, because we need to speak clearly on this subject in church. I've done my best to word this in a mature & palatable manner.			

## COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

(Title Slide) Canada has passed Bill C-4 limiting free speech on what it considers to propagate “myths & stereotypes about sexual orientation, gender identity & gender expression, including [what it calls] the myth that heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity & gender expression that conforms to the sex assigned to a person at birth are to be preferred over other sexual orientations, gender identities & gender expressions.” The bill “directly comes against parents & counsellors who would seek to offer biblical counsel with respect to sexual immorality & gender.” Christians speaking out of a Biblical sexual ethic face up to a 5 year prison term. Canadian & US pastors have chosen to preach openly on the subject today in solidarity, myself included.<sup>1</sup>

This sermon is PG-13, although I've worded it maturely (Credit). The sexual appetite is like a 90lbs jockey trying to control a 1200lbs racehorse. How do we control ourselves bombarded daily with imagery & ideas which stoke desire. Are there boundaries? Is there right & wrong?

Some of you will take my words as judgment today, negating mercy & grace, and feel despair. Listen carefully to the grace conveyed & take stock of how you live. Repent maturely, if need be. Don't overreact & over compensate needlessly throwing away something which might have potential. We're not here to heap guilt.

Skeptics who don't buy into the Christian sexual ethic may walk away not feeling they have to think or live differently. Be openminded, it's healthy to feel the weight of an issue. Listen to God's Word, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak & respond with maturity.

*Ephesians 5:3-12 says...But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup>Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup>For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ & of God.*

*<sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not be partners with them. <sup>8</sup>For*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://churchleaders.com/news/413678-john-macarthur-calls-pastors-to-take-a-stand-on-biblical-sexual-morality.html>

*you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness & truth) <sup>10</sup>and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.*

Such strong words may feel too much to bear in a sexually charged world. **And we need to understand the context in which God speaks. Imagine, we're all players in a story starting with Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden. A beautiful place, living in perfect harmony with God & each other - naked. Husband & wife to unite physically in the act of love making. Fidelity & faithfulness at the heart of their relationship with each other & God. The perfect marriage. Now imagine, what if Satan never turned up & the fall never happened? What would life be like now? What happened?**

**God wasn't just upset over some fruit.** The real problem is they were duped into thinking they could decide for themselves how they should live. They knew the difference between good & evil, just had to go to God for it. So we must ask...who's Satan? Scholars tell us he was a beautiful Archangel who tried to usurp the throne of God & was casted down. He couldn't beat God, but at least he could try to destroy Gods special garden & these vulnerable creatures living in it. Maybe in his initial attempt to usurp the throne, he sensed God had a weak side - a tenderness & loving gentility. How God's willing to give of Himself at risk of being hurt. Maybe he misread vulnerability as weakness & now all he wants to do is to make a mess of Gods creation. He desires to divert the worship of Gods creation to himself.

**We know God desires worship, but His worship is never coerced; it's an act of free will to worship God. But, Satan's worship is coerced, not caring coerced worship isn't true worship, or that you even know you worship him. He only cares that you're not worshipping God. So, Satan convinced Adam & Eve maybe God was holding out on them, they could be better than God & decide for themselves how they should live, that they didn't need to be dependent on God for their knowledge of good & evil.**

**He manipulated them - decide for yourself how you should live, who you'll marry, what you'll be & do. Satan craved Gods Glory & will take worship by default, even though it's not real worship coming from freewill in healthy relationship. Satan's deception opened all out war on Gods wonderful plan. When they were no longer faithful to God, why stay faithful to one another? Why bother imaging a God you're not going to follow? It wasn't their mouths they covered, it was their nakedness. This fall struck at the core of their sexuality & by default they placed themselves under Satan's dominion & power.**

**From Adam & Eve it went downhill, they hid their differences, exchanged harmony for hostility, coming under the dominion of a being which sought to destroy them. God allowed them to stray - it's what they wanted, God won't force worship. Then we go to Cain & Abel, the first murder, from there to Noah & the starting over by God because it says, *"Every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."* God was saddened & decided to start over with one faithful family making a covenant, asking**

them to live on the earth & spread His love from the inside out. Then God chooses one man, Abraham as His reference point to build His special people. But, He also chose to move these people to a special place called Canaan.

I just summarized a good deal of the Old Testament with a large history of the Israelites devotion waxing & waning over history, following God out of Egypt into the desert, onto Mount Sinai, making a golden calf, through the judges & so on. Scripture outlines it all. And we're players in this story, spiritually connected to Scripture & all its characters. We read the Bible as a part of a continuing story.

So God chose to place His people in Canaan. Before doing so He made a covenant with them & said He'd cause them to be fruitful. Their ability to procreate, their sexuality, was a part of His plan & to come under His lordship. He said kings & nations would come from Abraham, Canaan will be yours & so forth, sounds promising (*Gen 17*). However, God chose to command them to do something strange - to circumcise all the males. Why would God ask this & why's it a symbol of commitment? What's He saying in such a graphic & painful way?

Well, Canaan was a dark religious place involved in idol worship. They didn't yet know Israel's God. Maybe you were taught in Sunday school about idol worship, people had temples & little statues of wood or stone. They might place these idols in their home, on a mantle, in a corner & bow to them. Seems harmless. Why was God so upset, other than it wasn't Him they were worshipping. We're all enlightened people, we know little pieces of stone or wood have no real effect or power to harm. From Sunday school we viewed them as bowing to an idol, then going on about life seeing no power in it.

What you weren't taught was the actual extent & form the worship took. They were worshipping a number of gods. Baal the supreme deity of many gods for one, was the male deity of land or fertility. His title meant landowner. Then Ashtoreth (also known as Venus in Rome, Aphrodite in Greece, Ishtar in Babylonia & other names) the Goddess of fertility & war imaged by Asherah poles, phallic symbols decorating the high places. They believed if these deities saw them in lascivious acts they'd be aroused bringing forth rain making land fruitful. Within this religious structure was a temple priesthood of good looking young folks. As your act of worship, you'd go to the temple & perform acts such as orgies, incest, homosexual & adulterous acts as a spiritual form of worship. Which created a paternity problem, babies with no way of knowing the father. So, there was a third god, Molech, the god of fire who demanded child sacrifice - the solution to the unwanted byproduct of the worship of the other two deities - the abortion solution for ancient people & one reason for Gods extreme disgust & anger.

God chose His people, made a covenant including circumcision, chose Canaan, a dark place of sexual idol worship & put Israel in the middle of it. There's a lot of history there. Abraham pulls up his tent stakes, goes on to the land of Canaan, Joseph is sold into slavery in Egypt, gains power, calls on his family, they grow like crazy, a new Pharaoh comes along, enslaves them, they're called out of Egypt under Moses & finally Joshua leads them to the Promised Land.

God immersed the Israelites in this sexual immorality, darkness & sin. And the Israelite was supposed to live as a witness, as 'children of light', hence the issue of circumcision. God was saying 4 things when He asked the Israelites to do this strange thing. 1) **Your sexuality & your worship of me are inextricably linked - the male genital is a vulnerable spot & a symbol of great power & procreation - I want it to belong to me.** 2) The power of your life has to be marked by vulnerability to Me in this area. 3) **You need a daily graphic reminder of that belonging & vulnerability.** 4) I want you to be a visual reminder to others of your connectedness to Me.

Interestingly, God chose a sexually immoral place & asked the Israelites to mark themselves in such a sexual way. If they went to a public bath, or involved themselves in worship of other deities everyone would know they were marked! When He instituted circumcision He was inviting the Israelites to be a part of the redemptive story, to be light, an image of God's covenant relationship with them to others. Through Circumcision God was asking Abraham to submit himself body & soul, the whole man, taking ownership of Abraham's sexuality & virility. God was going to build this nation through Abraham. His people had to be marked & to reflect fidelity & faithfulness. God was starting over His original plan. **Look at Duet. 30:6 - "The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts & the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart & with all your soul & lives."** There's a direct correlation between human sexuality & spirituality, the terminology's the same. Abrahams sexuality was linked to his spiritual life with God & God's ultimate purposes of bringing life to this world. God wanted to be in control of his whole being, including his ability to procreate. Abrahams offspring were God's people (Isaac & the three barren matriarchs; Sarah, Rebekah & Rachel). Sexuality within a covenant relationship was in direct contrast to the Pagan beliefs & practice of their sexuality. (See also Col. 2:9-12 & ROM 2:28-29)

Now they're a marked people physically & spiritually. After 40 years they come to the point of going into the Promised Land led by Joshua. There were the Canaanites & God asks them to go in & *live as children of light*. But although they served the Lord under Joshua, later they did evil in the eyes of the Lord & served the Baals & the Ashtoreths. They conquered the Canaanites physically, but were conquered spiritually by Canaanite worship. They prostituted themselves to other gods, wouldn't listen to the judges, waxed & waned, returning to ways even worse than their forefathers. God says, "I'll no longer drive out the nations due to this" & uses these enemies to purify His people. We find in Numbers 25, the Israelites didn't even wait to enter the land before they started to serve other gods & 24,000 were killed for their disobedience at that time (Paul mentions this in 1 Cor. 10:8-22).

The lesson is: *Sexual impurity is not spiritually neutral. One commentator writes: "This worship (of Canaanite deities), appealing to every sensual passion, joined with the attractions of wealth, fashion & luxury, naturally was a great temptation to a simple,*

*restrained agricultural people, whose worship & laws demanded the greatest of purity of heart & life.”<sup>2</sup>*

Judges 2:10-19 explains the first generation in Canaan...*After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. <sup>11</sup>Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD & served the Baals. <sup>12</sup>They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed & worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger <sup>13</sup>because they forsook him & served Baal & the Ashtoreths. <sup>14</sup>In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. <sup>15</sup>Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.*

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. <sup>17</sup>Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods & worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. <sup>18</sup>Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge & saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed & afflicted them. <sup>19</sup>But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods & serving & worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices & stubborn ways.

Judges 17:6 says...*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.* They hammered through this history of Judges & Kings, doing well sometimes & worse later (like yo-yo dieting). A sad story. In Judges 6:25-30 the Israelites wanted to kill a fellow Israelite because he tore down an altar to Baal. They built more & more altars involving themselves in sexual worship of other deities, burned incense in the place of Yahweh's altar, so on. In Jeremiah 11:13 it says, *“You have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah; and the altars you have set up to burn incense to that shameful god Baal are as many as the streets of Jerusalem.”* They built temples for Baal worship, swore on his name, set up idols & pagan symbols on threshing floors, in their wine vats & behind their doors & doorposts (Isaiah 57:9/Hos. 9:1). Every time they looked at one of these idols they'd feel sexually aroused recalling the last act of worship in which they participated. They brought Asherah poles into, housed temple prostitutes & practiced these things in God's Temple becoming polytheistic & polygamous - which always go together. Leviticus 18 describes these practices & in verse 21 it outlaws the sacrifice of children. God had commanded Adam & Eve to be fruitful & cover the earth. He was intending to continue His plan through Abraham & Satan was still seeking to destroy God's creation by diverting worship & taking the power of procreation of Abrahams

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<sup>2</sup> Peloubet's Bible Dictionary, Zondervan (1972) p.272.

descendants to himself. Abrahams' offspring were being killed off by Satan & life bearing is a part of our sexuality.

What a story! A story about an ancient people, not us. None of you have an idol on your keychain, for sure. **We're enlightened, we know our sexuality has nothing to do with our spirituality; God is here, sex is there. No mixing, no problem. There are no spiritual powers influencing our thoughts & actions, tempting us in immoral ways. We're smarter than that; we choose how we should live! We don't have Asherah poles & we don't even know anyone who worships such things! What's all this have to do with us? Remember two things: Sex is an act of worship, therefore sexual immorality isn't spiritually neutral.** It's an act of worship either to something other than God, or to God Himself in the confines of the heterosexual marriage covenant. We give glory to Satan by default through coerced worship with every illicit orgasm, encounter, immoral fantasy, porn image, etcetera.

The Enemy pays special attention to this vulnerability. He knows sexuality is supposed to be directed in worship to God - sex as a spiritual act of worship, mirroring His love relationship with us in fidelity & faithfulness in the confines of the heterosexual marriage covenant. We're weak & vulnerable, failing just like the Israelites. None of us perfect. When we understand the context of from where God speaks, we understand those passages in the NT which warn strongly against sexual impurity. When we use our sexuality outside of what God created it to be, we offer something good & holy to Satan who doesn't have our good in mind. By default we further Satan's goals, not God's glory.

**Artist Andre Serrano created an image called *The Piss Christ* seeking to offend Christians for judgment he felt as a homosexual. A crucifix in a beaker, filled with cows' blood & his own urine. Senator Al Damato tore up a copy on the senate floor. Newt Gingrich said, "*This is prototypical of the cancer that is eating up our society.*" Attempts to destroy it caused the National Gallery of Australia to close. But what man intends for evil, God uses for good - Andre unwittingly created something which illustrates the Gospel of Christ all too well.**

Remember, we're all players in this continuing story. Ephesians 5:8, to live as children of light is a charge to us. God chose us, like the Israelites, to be immersed in a dark culture to live as light. There's no greater calling than to be a part of the redemptive story in history living as children of light among the dying & the lost. This is our immersion experience as Canaan was Israel's. Like them, we're humbled, realizing we aren't only the crucifix immersed in a dying world to be light, we're also that beaker containing the blood & urine of our lives. God chose to immerse Himself in us changing us from the inside out, redeeming us by the power of His sacrifice. Now, He wants to use us in the lives of others. We're all witnesses of Jesus immersed in the blood & urine of America to be salt & light.

We're able to remain committed & true to God by submitting our sexuality to Him. As 90lbs jockeys we may not be able to handle a 1200lbs horse, but God can. God's Word & Spirit are the bit & bridle in the mouth of our sexuality directing it in healthy ways. Sex

isn't dirty, wrong, or outside of God's intent, but it is a reflection of what our relationship is to Him & others need to see that. Proper sex within the heterosexual marriage covenant & in the patient waiting of the single person, is glorifying to God & a missionary witness to the world. Maybe you never considered your sexuality as witness. In Indonesia the faithfulness & fidelity of my marriage was profoundly useful to God in my witness to Muslims, just as my single teammate was in their submission in this area. At times it seems everyone's involved in some sort of wrong relationship, pornography, or just in an abusive situation. And like a great jockey we have a good shot at being Triple Crown winners, we just can't allow ourselves to be manipulated by a dark errant cultural narrative.

Listen to Hosea 2:14-23

**14**"Therefore I am now going to allure her;

I will lead her into the desert  
and speak tenderly to her.

**15**There I will give her back her vineyards,  
and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.  
There she will sing as in the days of her youth,  
as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

**16**"In that day," declares the LORD,  
"you will call me 'my husband';  
you will no longer call me 'my master. '

**17**I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips;  
no longer will their names be invoked.

**18**In that day I will make a covenant for them  
with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air  
and the creatures that move along the ground.  
Bow and sword and battle  
I will abolish from the land,  
so that all may lie down in safety.

**19**I will betroth you to me forever;  
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,  
in love and compassion.

**20**I will betroth you in faithfulness,  
and you will acknowledge the LORD.

**21**"In that day I will respond,"  
declares the LORD—  
"I will respond to the skies,  
and they will respond to the earth;

**22**and the earth will respond to the grain,  
the new wine and oil,  
and they will respond to Jezreel.

**23**I will plant her for myself in the land;  
I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'  
I will say to those called 'Not my people, ' 'You are my people';  
and they will say, 'You are my God.' "

God wants reconciliation. He's head over heels in love with you, wants you all to Himself & for you to desire the same. He may need to lead you into the desert for a while to woo you back to Himself. Listen to the grace & mercy in that passage to a people gone astray! His anger comes down hardest on those who've pridefully given themselves over, but grace is extended in everyday struggles. God's not here to destroy, but to bring life. If we listen to Song of Songs 7 & the allegorical wording describing God & his love relationship with His Bride, the Church, it's romantic & sexually charged language! There's nothing wrong with sex, God's not a killjoy or prude! It was created by God for His purposes, that drive's there for a reason. It just needs to be within a marriage relationship between a man & woman marked by fidelity & faithfulness in order to fulfill God's plan & mirror His love for us as a people.

So, how should we respond to God? Let's listen to chapter 1:2-4 of Song of Songs.

2Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—  
for your love is more delightful than wine.

3Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;  
your name is like perfume poured out.  
No wonder the maidens love you!

4Take me away with you—let us hurry!  
Let the king bring me into his chambers.

In conclusion remember, our sexuality was created as a witness to the faithfulness & fidelity of God to His people. Sexual immorality is not spiritually neutral. Your sexuality is not bad & dirty - God isn't uptight. That relationship has to be within the confines of a heterosexual marriage covenant. When you offer your body in erotic pleasure in any form outside of that you offer it by default to Satan's glory. God loves you & wants you to be wholly fulfilled & reconciled to Him. If you repent, He will welcome you with open arms under the New Covenant (do you need to?). Don't over compensate. In these harsh passages concerning sexuality of the NT, God is speaking to those that have become wholly syncretic in their worship of other deities - but take this seriously. The Holy Spirit inhabits your being & gives you power to live rightly if you'll submit your whole being to Him. Remember 1 Corinthians 10:13... *"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."* Remember God wants worship in our whole lives not just in song. The sexuality portrayed by our culture & society is unreal. Everyone argues about it, gets fat & ages. Men, young beautiful women will not always want you. Women, men will not fulfill all your emotional & physical needs. You are that crucifix & the beaker, how will you live out your life as a child of light among a lost & dying world?