

Redeeming Sexuality: Sexuality & Discipleship Conference Track

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Redeeming Sexuality: Sexuality & Discipleship Conference Track Rationale and Outcomes

Carolyn Carney

Rationale

As part of the Discipleship Initiative, resources were created to engage staff and students in the area of Sexuality and Relational Health. Subsequently, it was determined that the movement could be further helped by a sexuality curriculum designed to fit into a fall conference framework. A few regions had designed their own conferences according to their needs. An initial pilot was created and run in 2014, with changes and improvements made each of the next three years, with this final effort as you see it here, completed and tested in 2016.

We knew we could not cover EVERYTHING! So there is a large appendix of material for students to take home and do further reading, as well as two different biblical studies: a GIG guide, and Redeeming Sexuality (upcoming, IVP). But we also knew that with such a loaded subject, students will come in with all sorts of questions and opinions, but many will take a while to be comfortable. We wanted to narrow that gap of comfortability. In order to do so, we needed to start by dealing with the things that cause us shame. So in the first session we take a deep dive into vulnerability, followed by a small group time. We have found this deep dive to be essential to the success of the weekend by opening up students immediately.

The material you will see here is designed to be a part of a multi-track fall conference, including plenaries when all the tracks meet together. If your conference does not need the plenaries, then there are many additions you can make: breakouts on dating, pornography, how to help someone who has been assaulted, prayer ministry, Q & A, etc.

***In the study of Gen. 1-2, for our purposes, it is imperative that the question of why Adam and Eve are sexed is addressed. Compare the creation of man and woman to the rest of the creating and separating of creation in Gen. 1. Some have said this is God "sexing" Creation.*

Desired Outcomes

- 1) Students will gain a biblical framework for a redeemed sexuality perspective. In doing so, they will be able to recognize, differentiate and compassionately address a post-modern tolerance perspective.
- 2) Participants will gain forgiveness for and release from shame in areas concerning their bodies, experiences and desires.
- 3) Some participants will commit to further study of the scriptures by using the Redeeming Sexuality curriculum or the Sexuality GIG guide.
- 4) Those participants who identify as LGBTQ will be affirmed by staff in their inclusion and welcomed into InterVarsity.

- 5) Students will be exposed to the concept of chastity and receive an invitation to commit to chastity as a move toward greater relational health.
- 6) Those who attend will gain tools and confidence in ministry to the LGBTQ community.
- 7) Students will participate in lament on the role the church has played in the marginalization and wounding of the LGBTQ community.

A Word About Small Groups & Small Group Leaders

We have found that small groups work best being gender specific, as long as allowance is made for trans students to lay claim to whichever group they would feel more comfortable in.

Small group leaders should exhibit a fair bit of maturity and should be in alignment with InterVarsity's Theology of Human Sexuality.

Redeeming Sexuality Conference Schedule

This offers a sample schedule for a multi-track weekend conference. Items italicized indicate specific track times in the midst of a weekend conference.

Friday

8:15 pm Welcome! Worship & Introduction

9:15 pm Welcome and Intro to Track

9:25 pm Myth About Sex #1

9:35 pm God, Sex and Us

9:55pm Small Group Process

10:45 pm Registration, Free Time

12:30 am LIGHTS OUT AND QUIET

Saturday

8:30 am Morning Prayer

9:00 am BREAKFAST

10:00 am Bringing Questions to Scripture

10:10 am God's Purposes & Intentions for Sexuality (Gen. 1-2)

11:40 am BREAK

11:55 am Myth About Sex #2

12:00pm Small Group Process

12:45 pm Active Response

LUNCH

Saturday Continued

1:45 pm FREE TIME

4:30 pm *Debrief Active Response*4:40 pm *Faithful, Compassionate Witness in a Sexualized Culture*

6:30 pm DINNER

7:30 pm *Myth About Sex #3*7:40 pm *Chastity*8:10 pm *Living By Faith (Small Group interaction on Romans 12)*

9:00 pm Evening Worship

10:30 pm Campus Groups

11:30 pm RECREATION & FREE TIME

12:30 am LIGHTS OUT AND QUIET

Sunday

8:30 am Morning Prayer

9:00 am Quiet Time

9:30 am *Myth About Sex #4*9:40 am *Go Forth and Be Sexy! Next Steps*

10:30 am BRUNCH

11:30 am Worship & Final Talk

1:30 pm Clean Up/Departure

Friday Night Introduction

"That sex and sexuality are a gift of God is not in question. But every good gift can be misused and abused. The tendency to abuse and misuse the gift of sex is certainly heightened in a highly sexualized society. America is such a place." John Azumah, Ghanian seminary professor at Columbia Theological Seminary.

You are welcome in this track no matter how you identify: whether you are a follower of Jesus, transgender, a pastor's kid, gay, questioning, straight, friendly with Jesus but not sure you want to come any closer, or never been kissed. You are all welcome, no matter where you are on the spectrum. By nature of this being part of InterVarsity's ministry, let me begin by saying that we are unapologetically stating this weekend that you are all made in God's image and loved by him. Because we believe that God is the creator, we believe that as creator and one being personally invested in the outcomes of his creation, God has intentions for our sexuality—intentions—a design, the best plan for the way things are meant to work. We're going to seek Jesus and look at these this weekend.

But we want this to be a safe place. A safe place to come out and to be out. We will spend some time lamenting the sins committed by the church against the LGBTQ community. And we will also talk about how to love the Lord our God with all our heart AND our neighbor. Yes, both are possible. In fact, we are called to both. We will look at how to do that.

LEADER NOTES: Be sure to address

- Double-confidentiality
- Quiet Time and other readings, etc.

Myths About Sex

Objective: To show how common it is to believe what we hear in society. Unmask the myth (show briefly how it is false or skewed) and share personally your own experience with this myth.

4 Short vignettes 5-10 minutes, each to be shared at the beginning of a session.

LEADER NOTES:

1. You may want to find some commercials you like to exemplify different myths. A few ideas are suggested. A few more might be good, but it might be tiresome, and take too much time to try to illustrate every with a video.
2. Watch the tendency to over-explain. Realize that this is just the first building block of a session. We want to just whet their appetite. The job of this talk is to set the stage for what comes next, not to make every point that could be made about sex.

Myth #1, Friday Night

Sex is a human being's greatest need

- In our stories, movies, and songs this seems to be the drive of real, adult life.
- But this myth is not even close to reality; intimacy may be a better way to describe the human need beneath this myth.

Myth #2, Saturday Morning

You will physically burst without sex (Possibility: show [this Fiat commercial](#))

- This myth says that sex is an irrepressible, irresistible biological need. The culture, even some therapists, will say that if you are tense or out of whack, you just "need to get laid."
- Celibacy is a valid call and life choice in scripture. In fact, just about every culture has a place for healthy, even wise, people who choose to live celibate lives.
- And for that matter, every culture has norms that regulate sex, enjoining people to curb and regulate sexual desires.
- The need for sex is not like the need for air. That's just crazy.
- Sexual urges come in the form of desires and you CAN live without fulfilling them.

Myth #3, Saturday Night

It is unacceptable to live with tension or delayed gratification

- The world is very strong about this one and nearly all marketing in the US depends on us believing this.
- We can resist eating a whole bag of chips or bottle of wine or if we can't, we think that self-control is something we ought to work on.

- Our society has constructed whole industries based on helping us control our desires for food, and another whole industry that makes money off telling us that we can't resist our desire for sex. This is not rational.

Myth #4, Sunday Morning

Your ability to be sexually appealing is critical for your life's happiness (show [this Old Spice commercial](#))

- No pressure, right guys? Women, ever felt the pressure?
- This seems ludicrous when it is said out loud, but the power of many of these myths is that they are subconscious, but all the more powerful because they are unexamined.

Additional Myths You Could Choose:

Sex is psychologically neutral

- This myth says that you can have sex without any relational consequences. It's just a thing to do.
- But even secular science says this is not true: Sex releases hormones into the body that aid in attachment. We are built to form bonds with people we have sex with. (Or, you could say that sex was given to us to help us build bonds.)

You must experience sex to be wise about it

- Jesus didn't experience sex or a lot of other things that we consider him to have wisdom about.
- Would you say that you have to have murdered someone to have any true knowledge about whether or not murder is good or evil?
- You might hear it said, "How can you know about your sexual power if you don't experiment with it with multiple people?" Really, you can know your sexual power when you walk into a room, who's looking and who's not? How do people respond around you? We are sexual beings, and you can understand a lot about sexual interactions without ever getting between the sheets with someone.

Sexual compatibility must be discerned before a commitment and is a non-negotiable for proper marital union

- Some people have made the analogy about "test driving" a car, so why not test-drive a potential spouse? Before we even talk about whether or not that is rational, do you want to be test-driven?
- Sexual attraction can be discerned without ever even touching. Sexual compatibility can be learned and developed and grown—and must be for any long term union! If you talk to any mature couple, they will tell you that they learned the compatibility over time, and that love was the context in which they learned to please each other sexually. Being able to please each other sexually was not the basis of their love, but vice versa.

Our desires are the best gauge for our behavior

- We would never say that about our desire to binge, or to skip class, or to tell off our boss, or avoid any uncomfortable situation...
- Our desires tell us important things about ourselves, but if we lived by them, our lives would be pretty chaotic!
- Again, every culture in the world teaches its people that they need to regulate their desires according to their values. We live by our values, not our momentary desires.

It is normal to have a rational conversation with a significant other about whether or not we are ready to have sex.

- Normally the decision is made in a passionate moment.
- Our society would like to think it is rational, reasonable, and grown up about sex. But most people lose their virginity, or initiate sex in a relationship, based on a momentary decision, relational pressure, and too often aided by drugs or alcohol.

Sexual tension ends because we have sex or get married

- This myth says sex is the one thing we all need, the one thing that will make life good. But no, it is just one more human activity, a place where we can love each other or mess each other over.
- Tension CHANGES, but does not disappear.

The writers of the Bible didn't understand or have a context for thinking intelligently about same-sex relationships

- Both in the Old Testament and in the New, the biblical writers knew about same-sex sexual practice around them.
- People are people, then and now. The biblical writers, though their culture was different, saw some of the same things that we see today – and they saw them differently than our society does today. We may choose to disagree with them, but we can't just discount them or assume they were ignorant because they don't live now.

Sex is naughty and therefore we should hide all of our sexuality from God

- This myth often causes Christians not to talk with each other about sex, and so leaves us alone and not knowing what to do with our feelings and our tension.
- As we will see later, sex is God's good gift to us, and he wants to teach us to enjoy it well and in the right way.

Myth #1 Friday Night

Sex is a human being's greatest need

- In our stories, movies, and songs this seems to be the driver of real, adult life.
- But this myth is not even close to reality; intimacy may be a better way to describe the human need beneath this myth.

Redeeming Sexuality: God, Sex and Us

What does it profit a man, woman or country to have any sexual fantasy he or she wants and lose the ability to see a woman or man before them as beautiful apart from the size and ability of them to use their private parts for pleasure? It profits us nothing, but Playboy and other ministers of sexual exploitation are soundly invested in this growing market to the point that they will ensure that men, women and children who want to see other men, women and children choked by penises, penetrated by inanimate objects, gang raped or abused by their “step-parents” – that they will stop taking pictures and printing them to make sure there are more resources for that.

And since we see exploitation as sound business practice to feed our insatiable need for pleasure, we will celebrate them and continue giving time and money to decreasing the value of men, women and children to holes they have and how often someone puts themselves into them.

So no wonder no one asked about the women at Cathouse and why they were on a ranch like cattle. And I can’t sit in my hotel room tonight and get away from the temptation to want a woman other than my wife.

Society says it is okay for me to desire, select and possess any woman or man that I want sexually and then discard them after I’ve climaxed. And that is to be accepted and celebrated as forward-thinking, progressive and true freedom by acclaimed educators, activists and even theologians. No wonder we “blame the victim” because pimps, traffickers and abusers are simply doing what we are supposed to do – consume. Our words and subsequent actions are the fruit of what we truly think and feel. How profoundly sad it is that mass media provides no compassionate words or actions for the women, men and children who suffer under our “need” for more.

Jesus, forgive us and have mercy on me. I can’t unlearn what I know or forget what I’ve seen. I am frustrated, sad and angry and want to drop kick every taxi touting a strip club or peep show and spray paint ads I never asked to see that bombard me daily. I stand in opposition and shout silently at magazines racks that “I never asked for this” but wrestle because I’m being told by everyone that “this is what you want.” Selah.

Slide 1 - Diagram

God created us to flourish, work, create and rule – and sexuality including our desires, experiences and our bodies are VERY GOOD. Now the Hebrew word, Good, is not actually an adjective, but a noun. That this GOOD is not something that describes us but it’s actually something that we are. Man and woman and creation were intended to BE good.

Slide 2 – Three Focuses

God made Sexuality and today we’re going to focus on three facets: Our Bodies. Our Desires. Our Experiences.

Slide 3 – God Made Our Bodies and He Made Them Good

God made our bodies and He made them good.

The gym doesn't make our bodies good.

Organic food doesn't make our bodies good.

A certain shape or body mass index or fat to muscle ration doesn't make our bodies Good.

I spent a lot of time trying to fix my body to everyone else's satisfaction. When I got to Columbia, I didn't gain the freshman 15, I gained the freshman 40. I felt fat and unattractive. I was reminded of a comment my brother made to me when I was 12 years old. I was riding a bike without a shirt on and he said I was "jiggly." I resolved in my mind to play football and never be jiggly again.

But engrained in my psyche when I got to Columbia was – Why would someone want a poor black kid from the south when most folks around here have more money than they know what to do with. The only thing I had going for me was my southern accent, my arms and six-pack and now those were gone. And they hadn't been in 6 years. I felt insecure and inadequate. So what did I do? I wish I could say I sought the Lord and secured my identity in Him – that's not what I did. I went to the gym.

Some of you may be sitting at the same crossroad every day you look in the mirror and struggle to choose between what the world says and what God says about you.

He says he made our bodies. Genesis 1 and 2 explain how he formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed life into Him. Adam did not know he was lacking but God did and He made Eve – Genesis 2:24-25 says that they were naked and felt no shame.

I did similar things with my desires and experiences. I felt deep shame over the women that I had been with physically and hid my desires behind the shadows of pornography and masturbation.

My desire for physical intimacy was God-created, God-given but I sought to fill that need through exploiting others. Whereas God created physical intimacy, as Greg Jao says, to be the epitome of physical, emotional, and spiritual connection in loving service to another person and receiving the same. Physical intimacy is a blessing, but it in no way completes me.

When I brought my body image into the light, my desires into the light, my experiences into the light – what I expected was rejection and instead I experienced freedom.

Slide 4 – Psalm 139 & Ken Shigematsu Quote

"You shaped me, inside then out; you formed me in my mother's womb." Psalm 139:13

"If our bodies were inherently evil, God would not have clothed Himself in one." Ken Shigematsu, God in My Everything.

Slide 5 – Desires Are Good When They Are God-Given

Our desires are not inherently evil. We can think of desires as openness to the fullness of what is rather than what ought to be. -Philip Sheldrake

Argues that 'desire' should be place at the center of the spiritual life: the concrete reality of passion has always been linked to the human search for the divine.

Slide 6 – What Do You Think About Your Desires

The world sees our desires as mainly two things: "Get rid of them" OR "Get whatever you want". The chief tenant of Buddhism or Hedonism or Epicureanism.

God is NOT asking you to rid yourself of all desires. He is inviting you to desire the things of God. We serve a redemptive God who desires to restore what we have to its original intention. Not throw them away to never be seen or used again.

Now, I'll tell you where I am in this. I still think my desires are bad. When I got married I thought it was bad for me to want sex because I spent so much time trying not to lust after women or masturbate to pornography. And what that did was make me believe I'm not worthy of anything at all. I didn't believe that I was worthy of getting paid a living wage. I believed somewhere along the way that my "wanting" anything is bad.

So, now I'm learning to delight in the things of God and I'm starting to want what He wants – and grieve the thing that He grieves.

Slide 7 – God is Bigger Than My Experiences

We say this all the time but never really do the work to see it bear fruit in our lives. I have seen women other than my wife naked. I have been in bed with other women than my wife. I was stalked by a pedophile when I was a teenager. I have 20 years' worth of videos and images in my mind. In this room are things that we have done and that have been done to us. How do we overcome?

Slide 8 – Scripture Romans 8:1, 37-39

Reading these words is easy. Living them out is a whole different ball game.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims that every single person has fallen short of the glory of God. Every single one of us, regardless of the things that have been done to us and the things that we have done are covered by the blood of Jesus. ALL are destined for eternal separation of God where death still has a sting, abuse, violence and have victory. But through Christ Jesus we can have life on this side and the other.

I got the most amazing text this past week. Danielle Douglas was raped, abused, beaten and exploited for money and sex. And now she is in a relationship with Jesus.

There was a story that she told me about being taken to a warehouse where hundreds of men were lined up. She and another woman made \$10K that night. They divided the men into two lines – one for intercourse and one for oral sex. She took the intercourse line. She said something to me once – I don't know how much I'm worth but I know I'm worth more than that.

Slide 9 – Dr. Robert Mulholland, The Deeper Journey Quote

"I hope you are beginning to see that the Christian life in its fullness is far more than being active in Christian community, affirming a certain set of beliefs, or adopting a particular

behavior patter. These are the secondary result of a primary reality of a life engaged in an ever deepening union with God in love."

Slide 10 – Ken Shigematsu, "God in My Everything" quote

"It is possible to engage in a lot of 'spiritual' activity but fail to grow. As Martin Luther noted, we can 'pray' the Lord's prayer hundreds or even thousands of times but not really pray – that is, not meaningfully engaging with the living God."

Closing Remarks

God made our bodies and He made them good.

Desires are GOOD when they are God-given. God is bigger than my experiences – the things that I have done and the things that have happened to me.

Introduce Active Response

Materials: 3 signs/posters/newsprint with a single word: Body, Desires, Experience. Display these in the room.

Talking points: Briefly reiterate from the talk that we experience shame in our lives in these three areas as if relates to our sexuality. It may be that we experience shame in all of them, but perhaps one stand out more than another.

Each staff stands and approaches one of the posters that best describes their main place of shame. Each should succinctly share their shame about that area in their lives. When all have shared with the group, invite students to go stand under one of the posters that best exemplifies their shame. This is done in silence.

After a moment, then move to small groups where debriefing takes place.

Questions for debriefing:

1. What lies do you believe about your body, desires, and/or experiences that is contrary to what the Bible says?
2. Where do you need the overcoming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to conquer your shame and live in the light of His Truth about your body, your desires, and your experiences?

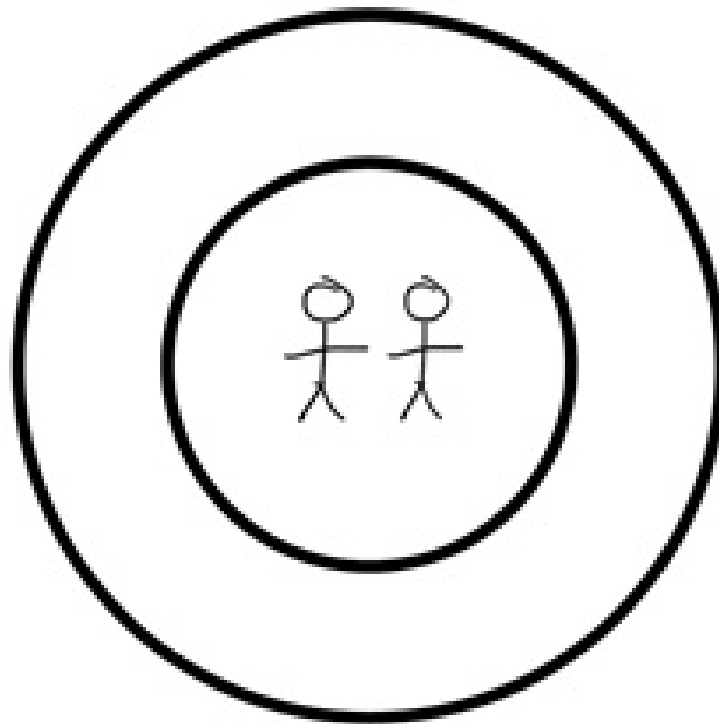
Saturday Morning, Wesley Hill Video

The world that we live in is full of opinions and attitudes about sex. Who is teaching us? Who is guiding you? What is guiding you? Where do you take your questions? As Christians, as followers of Jesus, we are to be people of the Word. We need to do a better job of not just going along with the flow of culture, but by seeking out Jesus and what he says. This is what this track is all about. Listen to one person's search for truth. He is now in his early 30s, but his wrestling took place when he was much closer to your age. Listen to Wesley Hill, a gay Christian.

Watch the Wesley Hill video, [Bringing My Questions to Scripture](#) from Clarifying Biblical Sexuality resources on the InterVarsity Collegiate Ministries website.

God Made Us
and He Made Us Good.

DESIGNED FOR GOOD



CREATION
GENESIS 1:31

God Made Sexuality

- Bodies
- Desires
- Experiences

God made our bodies
and He made them good.

What does God think about your
body?

*Oh yes, You shaped me inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.*

– Psalm 139:13 (The Message)

If our bodies were inherently evil then
God would have never put Himself inside
of one.

- Ken Shigematsu, "God In My Everything"

Desires are good when
they are God-given.

*“We can think of desire as openness to the
fullness of what is, rather than what ought to
be.”*

– Philip Sheldrake

What do you think about your desires?

Stop. Rest. Delight. Contemplate.

– *“Sabbath Rule” at New Life Fellowship*

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

– *Psalms 37:4*

God is BIGGER than my experiences

- the things that I have done
- the things that have been done to me.

There is no shame or condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

– Romans 8:1

But in all of these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth or any other created thing will be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

-Romans 8:37-39

Dr. Robert Mulholland in "The Deeper Journey" says this:

"I hope you are beginning to see that that the Christian life in its fullness is far more than being active in Christian community, affirming a certain set of beliefs, or adopting a particular behavior pattern. These are the secondary result of a primary reality of a life engaged in an ever deepening union with God in love."

Ken Shigematsu in “God in My Everything” says:

“It is possible to engage in a lot of “spiritual” activity but fail to grow. As Martin Luther noted, we can “pray” the Lord’s prayer hundreds or even thousands of times but not really pray – that is, not meaningfully engaging with the living God.”

1. What lies do you believe about your body, desires and/or experiences that is contrary to what the Bible says?
2. Where do you need the overcoming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to conquer your shame and live in the light of His Truth about your body, your desires, and your experiences?

Genesis 1-2 Background and Approach

Author, Date

These chapters have been the subject of much debate on the “origins” questions surrounding science and faith, evolution and creation. In light of this, it is especially important that we remember the essential starting points of sound Inductive Bible Study.

As always, we should approach this passage with: How would the original audience have heard this? What did the original author intend by this statement? Some of our modern questions are not the questions ancient people would have been asking and they would also be foreign to the original author. It will be helpful to set aside questions of science and faith for the present and let the text determine the nature of our questions and observations.

The biblical account of creation is more of a theological statement than a scientific explanation of origins. The Bible is not a science textbook, and we should be careful not to read modern questions of science back into the ancient text. The ancient audience had a picture of the world as spiritual, whereas our Enlightenment worldview is materialistic. They would not be asking questions about the age of the earth or the exact process whereby God made human life. The more essential questions are: “What is the world,” “What does it mean to be human,” and “What kind of God made the world?”

The name Genesis means “beginnings,” taken from the opening words—“in the beginning.” These chapters are truly about the beginning of everything. It will be helpful to trace the nature of these beginnings and the implications for how we see our world. Try to recapture the excitement of what is revealed in these chapters and help people to experience it afresh. You may want to point out the similarities between Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22, showing how pivotal this is in understanding God’s big story and his purposes for a renewed world. It is hard to over-emphasize the importance of Genesis 1-2 in shaping our understanding of God, the world, and his people.

People may have heard that there were other creation stories that emerged from the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). There are many points of similarity with the Genesis account, as we might expect, if in fact that they all derived from a common original story. But the differences are even more striking. The biblical account presents a monotheistic view of the Creator-God, in contrast to the multiple deities of the other creation stories. Also, in Genesis the creation of the first humans to serve as rulers of creation is the climax of creation. In the Babylonian account, humans are created either as food for the gods, or as slaves to do their menial work.

Some would argue that there are two conflicting accounts of creation in Genesis 1-2. But it seems more appropriate to view the story beginning with 2:4 as a more detailed description of the creation of the first humans. In Genesis 1:1-2:3 we have a grand cosmic, poetic, picture of the creation of everything from nothing. In Genesis 2:4-25 the story changes dramatically to a domestic setting—a home, a garden, the first couple. God is revealed in relationship with Adam and Eve. Even the name of God changes from the general name Elohim in Ch. 1 to his covenant name Yahweh (LORD).

The story of creation would have been passed along by oral tradition and clay tablets, from generation to generation, until it was finally written down. It is part of the Pentateuch (five books of the Law, or “five scrolls”). These writings are traditionally attributed to Moses as the Spirit-guided compiler of these stories and tablets that form the larger section, Genesis 1-11 (see Nehemiah 13:1; Mark 12:26).

We recommend studying this passage on its own merits while paying some specific attention to the intention of marriage and relationship between genders.

Genesis 1 & 2 New International Version

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. 6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. 9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seeds according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. 14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. 20 And God said, "Let the water teem with the living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. 24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And that was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw that all he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 The God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. 4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. 5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground. 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 Now the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” 18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Myth #2 Saturday Morning

You will physically burst without sex (Possibility: show [this Fiat commercial](#).)

- This myth says that sex is an irrepressible, irresistible biological need. The culture, even some therapists, will say that if you are tense or out of whack, you just “need to get laid.”
- Celibacy is a valid call and life choice in scripture. In fact, just about every culture has a place for healthy, even wise, people who choose to live celibate lives.
 - And for that matter, every culture has norms that regulate sex, enjoining people to curb and regulate sexual desire.
 - The need for sex is not like the need for air. That’s just crazy.
- Sexual urges come in the form of desires and you CAN live without fulfilling them.

Genesis 1 and 2

Discussion Questions

1. Given that we looked at the goodness of God in the “sexing” and differentiation of creation and the unashamed nakedness of a man and wife, what are the implications for sexual **behavior** that falls outside those intentions (i.e. pornography, same-sex eroticism, masturbation, sexual abuse)?
2. What is the purpose or goodness of men and women having non-sexual (platonic) relationships?
3. Where do you notice loneliness in your life? How do you typically cope with loneliness? What is God inviting you to when you feel lonely?

Active Response

Objective: *Make a case for the curtailment of social media use during the break. Collect cell phones.*

We've been learning this morning about God's intention for human relationships. Part of what draws us to sexual intimacy is well...intimacy. We all have a desire to know and be known. We were made that way! Intimacy is good. But sharing the deep things about myself, my feelings, the things I value is much scarier than being naked in front of someone with the lights off.

When I risk emotional intimacy, I risk rejection. You may not like what you see, you may laugh at me, you may judge me. But if we don't risk, we also don't get the joy of going deep. We miss out on being known and on the amazing gift of knowing someone else.

We want to help you take risks this afternoon. We want to help you engage in relational, verbal and emotional intimacy with others. We want to help you by taking away your cell phones!

From now until we meet this afternoon, we'd like you to choose to not be on social media, to disregard your selfie stick and to engage in real conversation with someone. Specifically, talk to someone about what you are learning thus far in this track.

Are you up for the challenge?

Saturday Afternoon LGBTQ Intro

As we approach this topic, the first thing I want to acknowledge is that we are primarily talking about people and God's gracious words to them, not just ideas and issues. This affects many people that we know very deeply, and God's word is good news for real people.

As we talk about this, I want you to remember that we have a lot of people here, and we are likely in a lot of different places with respect to our experiences and our thoughts and our beliefs. We are not going to assume anything about each other, other than we all want to engage in authentic, compassionate witness, in light of God's love and truth.

Listen to the words of a Gay Celibate Christian:

I promise to tell you my story. The whole story. I'll tell you about a boy in love with Jesus who, at the fateful onset of puberty, realized his sexual attractions were persistently and exclusively for other guys. I'll tell you how I lay on my bed in the middle of the night and whispered to myself the words I've whispered a thousand times since:

"I'm gay."

I'll tell you how I cried and prayed and begged for God to make me straight, or else to make me believe that the Bible left room for monogamous same-sex relationships. I'll tell you how God kept refusing to do either one, how he kept pointing me back to the cross of Christ. How I followed my savior in costly obedience and became a mythical creature, a thing that wasn't supposed to exist.

I'll show you the world through my eyes. The books on Christian masculinity that never seemed to be about me. The churches that treated my singleness like an acne problem that could be cleared up with a few weeks' treatment. The sincere Christians who called it "love" when they talked about people like me with revulsion in their voices.

I'll tell you what it's like to belong nowhere. To know that much of my Christian family will forever consider me unnatural, dangerous, because of something that feels as involuntary as my eye color. And to know that much of the LGBTQ community that shares my experience as a sexual minority will disagree with the way I've chosen to interpret the call of Jesus, believing I've bought into a tragic, archaic ritual of self-hatred.

Self-hatred. I'll tell you about that too. I'll tell you how hard it is some days to look in the mirror and believe that God could have possibly said over me, as he did over all creation, "It is good."

But I promise my story won't be all sadness and loneliness and struggle. I'll tell you good things too, hopeful things, funny things, like the time I accidentally came out to my best friend during his bachelor party. I'll tell you what it felt like the first time

someone looked me in the eyes and said, "You are not a mistake." I'll tell you that joy and sorrow are not opposites, that my life has never been more beautiful than when it was most broken-heated.

These indeed are difficult waters to navigate. Let's watch one more story—of Cameron, who identifies as transgender. This is the story of how Cameron came to faith (<http://collegiateministries.intervarsity.org/biblical-sexuality/part-1-foundations>).

Let's talk some about terminology. Because this is important and we hear a lot of terms being thrown around. And the church has been guilty of judgement.

Clarification of Terms (with slide)

Sexual Attraction ... is what a person experiences internally

Sexual Orientation ... is the attraction a person experiences persistently over time

Sexual Identity ... is formed and chosen as a way a person sees themselves

Sexual Practice ... is what a person does

When we are thoughtful and distinguish these things, it makes some important things clear:

1. I experience attraction or desire, but then I choose my actions.
2. I can name and acknowledge an orientation, but it is not the same thing as naming or choosing an Identity.
3. Someone can challenge my sexual practice, but still respect me, affirming my identity and personhood.

So what does God have to say about each of these things in our lives?

- Sexual Identity – is not foundational, our sexual orientation may be an important fact about our lives, but it is not central. In fact, this can change for some; it is well documented that many lesbians, for instance, are much more fluid in their understanding of their sexual identity. Far deeper and lasting is our identity as people loved by God.
- Same-Sexual Attraction and Sexual Orientation – “not intended, but not condemned.” Sexual attraction to the same sex is not a part of God’s good plan, but no one is condemned for having an attraction or a feeling – we can’t control these. (Yes, the human psyche is complex, and there is some interplay of choice and feeling, but at the most basic level feelings just come to us.)
- Same-Sex Sexual Practice – It is an action we choose to do or not do—as any practice is a choice. Sexual practice, according to Scripture, is intended for marriage—designed for marriage. Because a lifelong covenant of marriage is the only human receptacle able to hold the weight of that kind of intimacy.

Through our study of Scripture, InterVarsity holds the conviction that for followers of Jesus, marriage is between a man and a woman. You may believe differently. But my job is not to convince you of that. This is why we studied Genesis 1 and 2 this morning. Like in Cameron’s story, I just want to point you toward Jesus to have this conversation.

But I will say this: same-sex sexual practice does not damn you for life. The only thing that condemns us is rejecting Jesus.

In the same way, a cisgender Christian woman who has sex with her cisgender Christian boyfriend, does not cease being a Christian, nor is she rejected by Jesus. But this act has created a tear in their relationship with Jesus that needs healing through confession and repentance. If they continue without seeking restoration, a greater tear is made.

Jesus makes far greater demands on our lives than what we do with our genitals. Blasphemy seems to be a far greater sin than sexual immorality.

When Dorothy Day converted to Catholicism she had a common-law husband (meaning they had lived like husband and wife for at least 7 years, though never married in a ceremony). Forster wanted nothing to do with Dorothy's religion or with the institution of marriage. She wrote this in her book, *The Long Loneliness*:

God always gives us a chance to show our preference with Him. With Abraham it was to sacrifice his only son. With me it was to give up my married life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination—you are going against nature when you do them—but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God.

In giving up her common-law marriage, Dorothy was put into a more vulnerable state—and it went against her natural inclination. Yet when she showed her preference for God, she was free to minister to millions and draw strength from a wide community.

Clarification of Terms

Sexual Attraction ... is what a person experiences internally

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Case Studies

1. Peter is a sophomore and serves on the leadership team for his fellowship. It's not an upfront position, but a behind the scenes position of using his administrative gifts to help the Large Group. He has become friends with LaSean who is not yet a Christian, but is close. One night, LaSean gathers up enough courage to come out to Peter that he's gay and has developed some feelings for Keith, who is in their small group. "I've had plenty of casual sex before," explains LaSean, "but I want something more, like a real relationship. What should I do?"

Having learned what you have in this track, if you were Peter, what would you say?

2. Zollie is a Junior, on her chapter's leadership team, serving as the president and is good friends with Peter. They've known each other since high school. Peter just joined the leadership team in a behind the scenes capacity. He comes to her with a question: "You know LaSean, that non-Christian guy in my small group? He's close to saying yes to Jesus. He just came out to me and wants to know if it's ok to start a relationship with someone. What should I tell him?" After a bit of back and forth, Peter decides that he should tell LaSean that he should remain celibate. Zollie carefully says, "But Peter, isn't that hypocritical? I mean, I know you are struggling with pornography?" Peter says, "But that's totally different!"

Is it totally different? What do you think about Peter's plan? What do you think about calling someone else to holiness or faithfulness when we are unwilling to seek the same ourselves?

3. Keith is a freshman Christian. He's involved in a small group in his fellowship and has been developing a friendship with LaSean, who is not yet a Christian. They hang out together, shoot hoops, and talk about things they value. This is the best friendship he's ever had. Someone he doesn't know comes up to him at Large Group and questions his sexuality, citing his friendship with LaSean, saying, "He is obviously gay, you know." Shell-shocked, Keith begins to recall things from his past, incidents he had paid no attention to before, but now are glaring at him, causing him to question his sexual identity. He starts distancing himself from LaSean and from everyone in the fellowship.

You are a friend of Keith's. What questions do you want to ask him in order to listen well to him? What do you want to share with him about what you have learned about identity?

4. As Zollie is walking home from class, she's approached by Alexis a classmate in her Sociology class and outspoken member of the LGBTQ group on campus. "Look Zollie, there's something I've been wanting to talk to you about for a long time. I think you have valuable opinions in class, but I know you're a Christian. I don't see how anyone who is a thinking person can be in such a hateful religion. I mean, why do Christians believe that you can't be queer and believe in Jesus?"

If you were Zollie, how would you reply?

Case Studies Instructions

Time allotted: 45 minutes

1. Before the weekend, make enough copies of the case studies so that multiple groups of 3-4 can have a case. Using a scissor, separate the cases into single slips.
2. Group people near where they are seated.
3. Give verbal instructions: "Get into groups of three or four with those around you. These are possible scenarios you may find on your campus. The aim is to apply what you've been learning to these situations in an effort to begin to think through how to respond faithfully back on campus. The staff will float around to give you help if you get stuck or to give you direction to a helpful response. You'll have 15 minutes."
4. Have like groups present together by the first group describing the situation and then giving their response. Then the second group that worked on that same scenario can add and so on. 25 minutes.
5. After all the groups have gone, take 5 minutes to summarize and/or teach.

Introduction

Because we believe that theology is always to be practiced in the context of community, we want to begin our theology discussions through the doorway of lament. We join with leaders like Nehemiah, David, and Isaiah who stood in the gap on behalf of God's people to express pain, hurt, confusion, anger, betrayal, despair, and injustice.

Prayers of lament can take various forms. Examples include grief over loss, anger at injustice, and despair in the face of evil. In this time we will focus on three movements of prayer.

First, we will identify and grieve the injustice experienced by those who identify Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer. Second, we will confess and repent of sin, both personally and on behalf of those with whom we identify - church, family, etc. Finally, we will pray to God for a way forward. We will alternate liturgy and our own prayers with David's words in Psalm 69.

Listen to the pain of one celibate, same sex attracted Christian leader who reflects on his journey in the church.

"I've felt the fear of being in a room with people making ignorant or vicious anti-gay comments; I've lost an internship because the leaders "didn't approve of my lifestyle" (i.e. simply being attracted to guys); I've had to wrestle with intense self-image problems because I was being told my body was evil or exceptionally messed up; I've had to, for a time, walk across the broken shards of my family's dreams for me; or, less dramatically, I've daily been made aware in a million little ways that I don't quite fit the 'standard' narrative. In short, like almost every person who is a sexual minority I've experienced moments of unjust isolation or harassment in communities that lack room for people who fall outside the disgendered heterosexual norm. Things may be changing rapidly in some places, but in others they definitely are not."

Excerpt from Matt Jones' blog post on Spiritual Friendship

<http://spiritualfriendship.org/2015/03/04/label-makers/#more-4980>

Group Discussion

How would you define some of the pain Matt faces in the church?

Personal Reflection

Invite God to bring to mind friends, family, and students who have been wounded by the Christian community because of their sexual orientation or gender dysphoria.

Write one name per post-it and put in the middle of the table, or on the wall.

Identification

We begin with our friends in mind: Those who have suffered abuse, marginalization, and pain because of their sexual orientation and gender dysphoria. We call out to God with them. The God of love opens our eyes to see the suffering of all our sisters and brothers

AND WE WILL SEE

The God of justice opens our ears to hear those who cry out

AND WE WILL HEAR

We call out to God for ourselves, and with them. The God of love opens our eyes to see the suffering and brokenness of all our sisters and brothers.

AND WE WILL SEE

The God of justice opens our ears to hear those who cry out

AND WE WILL HEAR

With David's words from Psalms 69:1-4, we cry out to you along with our LGBTQ friends:

(read aloud one verse at a time alternating around the group, pausing briefly after each verse)

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

3 I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

4 Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.

We wait now in silence for a few moments, offering this pain to God.

(Maintain silence for a time)

Confession

Now we move into a time of confession on our own behalf as well as on behalf of our culture. Let us pray:

O God, You who created us all in Your image, who knew us all before we were born, affirm in us the value Your love has unquestionably given to us.

Lord, may those who are dehumanized, either by the oppression of others or by acting as oppressors, be granted the permission to live in the dignity of creation in your image. By Your compassion grant us what we need — the courage necessary to love boldly, the vulnerability necessary to trust, the submission necessary to heal, the conviction necessary to repent.

WE BELONG TO YOU.

(Continue responding around the circle, inviting each person to read aloud the confession, with the group responding together, "Forgive us, O Lord.")

CONFESSION: We have often used the pulpit with ignorance or without compassion, causing damage rather than healing. We shepherds have often failed to discern the needs of our sheep.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

CONFESSION: We have treated same sex attracted men and women poorly and have harmed them with words of exclusion and hatred, defining them as "perverts," and "abominations." Many of us have judged same sex attracted people, assuming their feelings are of their own making or assuming they are promiscuous.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

CONFESSION: We have cut LGBTQ people off from our Christian communities, leaving them alienated - while at the same time ignoring or excusing other sins and brokenness in the community.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

CONFESSION: We in the evangelical tradition have also sinned by omission. We have failed to care for people in the LGBTQ community in many ways. During the height of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s Protestant Christians were known as those who condemned rather than those who cared for the sick and dying. Personally, we have often failed to choose the way of humility and kindness toward LGBTQ people, choosing avoidance or alienation instead.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

CONFESSION: Some of us have endorsed those who claim shortcuts to transformation, promising instant orientation-changes they could not deliver, and leaving many LGBTQ people shamed and disappointed.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

CONFESSION: For the marginalization, discrimination, hatred and violence toward LGBTQ persons, in our action and our inaction - by our words and by our silence.

FORGIVE US, O LORD.

(Add time for open confession here, with all responding, Forgive us O Lord.)

Intercession

INTERVARSITY

Now we turn our prayers to the Lord, asking him to intervene by bringing redemption and new creation in the places of pain and brokenness. Lord, we ask you to show your grace and love to our family and friends in who identify as LGBTQ.

(Speak names of people who come to mind)

**MAY WE BECOME VEHICLES OF YOUR GRACE AND LOVE,
O LORD.**

Lord, please heal the wounds of shame and condemnation in the LGBTQ community – especially those caused by your people. And heal us as your people, Lord, from all unrighteous judgment, callous insensitivity, and blind arrogance.

HAVE MERCY AND SHOW HEALING, O LORD.

Lord, please make the light of your gospel shine brightly on campus among LGBTQ students and faculty – that many more would join us in giving our lives fully to you as our savior and Lord. Do that on our campuses, Lord.

(Speak the names of our campuses)

**SHINE YOUR LIGHT BRIGHTLY AND TRANSFORM STUDENTS
AND FACULTY, O LORD.**

Let us continue praying with the word of Psalm 69:13-18.
(around the group, one verse at a time)

We pray to you, Lord, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer us with your sure salvation.

14 Rescue us from the mire, do not let us sink; deliver us from those who hate us, from the deep waters.

15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf us or the depths wallow us up or the pit close its mouth over us.

16 Answer us, Lord, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to us.

17 Do not hide your face from your servants;
answer us quickly, for we are in trouble.

18 Come near and rescue us; deliver us because
of our foes.

(End with a time of silence)

Confronting Heteronormativity

The first step in caring for the LGBTQ community is taking a hard look at your chapter. Would someone who identifies as LGBTQ want to be here? When an InterVarsity chapter wants to grow in ethnic diversity, they usually take a hard look at chapter realities. The same kind of scrutiny can help here. Here are some things to look at:

- Are there any queer chapter members?
- Does the chapter, not just individuals, have a relationship with the LGBTQ community on campus or pride network?
- Is there an assumption that no one who is queer would come to the chapter?
- Does your chapter adequately reflect the diversity on campus?
- When you have conversations or large group talks about sexuality and accountability, are the topics reserved for dating, pornography, and masturbation?
- Is being addicted to porn acceptable, but being gay is no? Is porn use considered normal, but being attracted to the same-sex not?
- Is everyone in your chapter politically opposed to gay marriage?
- Is there understanding that the queer community has been marginalized and oppressed?
- Do you hear slurs or jokes that are not confronted?
- What would happen if someone came out in your community?

Practical Ways to Confront Heteronormativity

1. Refer to *Start Here: Key Moves Toward Growth*.
2. Confront and heal the heterosexual sin in the chapter.
3. Culture shift from “you must be this tall to ride the ride” to “belong before you believe,” and “belong and believe before you behave.”
4. Make space to lament injustices down by the church.
5. Build relationships and friendships with the LGBTQ community. LISTEN. If bias incidents happen, stand in solidarity with the marginalized. (This action does not condone sexual sin; it lifts up the dignity of those made in the image of God.)
6. If someone is experiencing gender dysphoria allow them to choose the small group they feel most comfortable in.
7. Clearly articulate the differences between attraction, orientation, identity and practice.
8. Assume that in your audience there is someone who identifies as LGBTQ and so, choose illustrations and language that will not exclude.

Start Here: Key Moves Towards Growth in LGBTQ Ministry

Check Assumptions	Shy away from projecting a narrative of the individual's past or his/her future. (Eg. Assuming there has been abuse or parent neglect.)
Support Self-Identification	Accept the term the individual chooses to use for self: Gay, Same-Sex Attracted, Queer, etc.
Educate Self	Read books or blogs on issues of Same-Sex Attraction rather than relying on the individual to educate you.
Create Space	Recognize a full range of emotions when an individual is "coming out" which could include shame, self-hatred, anxiety or relief.
Keep Confidences	Recognize the trust extended to you if someone chooses to "come out" but asks you to keep it a secret.
Holistic Discipleship	Trust God's leading in the discipleship relationship. Resist focusing solely on sexuality as THE lordship issue. Allow the study of Scripture and prayer to raise lordship issues.
Pursue Vocation of "Yes"	Investigate how the person's gifts and calling in the kingdom can move towards a "yes", rather than focusing on the "no" concerning sex or same-sex marriage.

Contributors from [Spiritual Friendship](#), a blog founded by Wesley Hill and others, focusing on celibacy, friendship, and the value of the single life.

Myth #3 Saturday Evening

It is unacceptable to live with tension or delayed gratification

- The world is very strong about this one and nearly all marketing in US depends on us believing this.
- We can resist eating a whole bag of chips or bottle of wine or if we can't, we think that self-control is something we out to work on.
- Our society has constructed whole industries based on helping us control our desire for food, and another whole industry that makes money off telling us that we can't resist our desire for sex. This is not rational.

Chastity

Talk Outline with Notes

1. Sex and Culture

- a. Sex is good. It is a gift from God. It was at creation. (world #1)
- b. But in reality, our cultures view and effects of sex is very damaged. (world #2)
Consider the following:
 - Most kids are exposed to porn by age 11 and see over 14,000 sexualized images each year
 - Over ½ of Christian men and nearly 1/3 of Christian women struggle with porn
 - The majority of pastors say that pornography is the most sexually damaging issue in their church
 - The porn industry fuels demand for sex trafficking, which is estimated to affect about 300,000 youths in the U.S.
- c. We live in a culture of the "it's not really sex" thinking referring to watching pornography, masturbation, going to strip clubs, sexting, and so on.
- d. I've cried along with wives who have a deep sense of abandonment because their husbands will prefer to watch porn instead of have sex with them.
- e. Or a dear friend of mine who grew up with her three other sisters who suffered Voyeurism, sexual interest in or practice of spying on people engaged in intimate behaviors, such as undressing, sexual activity, or other actions usually considered to be of a private nature.
- f. So... how do Christians live out their sexuality in a broken world where we all seem a little (or a lot) tainted and maybe even damaged? The answer is CHASTITY!

2. Sexual Practice – Chastity! (When I first heard the word I thought...)

- CELIBACY? Choosing to stay unmarried, restraint from marital sex or any sexual activity.
- CHASTITY BELT? Device rumored to have been used in the Middle Ages, during the time of the Crusades.

Chastity (n), Chaste (vb) – Choosing to practice our sexuality with purity of intention toward ourselves and others

Debra Hirsch, *Redeeming Sexuality*, references Marva Dawn's book *Sexual Character* to widen our view of sexuality.

Sexuality = Social + Genital (erotic) page 66 " ... *every relationship we have (to varying degrees) is socially motivated and only some are genitally motivated.* "

"Social Sexuality constitutes all relationships we have: family, friends, work colleagues and so on... we have a range of needs that are met through a variety of people."

[Story: Married, but I find satisfaction in other relationships as well. Friends (Mayra, Cynthia, Michelle), Family (my brother)]

"Genital sexuality has to do with our genital sexual connection and longing. This can range from a purely physical act (if there is such a thing) to experiencing all the stuff of romance, fluttering of heart, arousal and so forth."

Judith & Jack Balswick, renowned Christian sex therapists, wrote *"The majority of gratifying relationships in our life are actually non-erotic, such as between parent and child, siblings, same-and-opposite sex friendships, extended family members, significant others in our work environments and in our small and large communities. These relationships deeply enrich and give meaning to our lives."* (Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach)

So if CHASTITY is not celibacy or a piece of wardrobe, what is it?

Well let's start with what it's not!

3. Chastity is NOT celibacy. Chastity is NOT repressive. Chastity is NOT impossible. Chastity is NOT Celibacy

Celibacy says no to marriage and any sexual activity outside of marriage. So that means that only single, non-married people are called to be chaste. That would be a shame.

Chastity is a godly virtue to be practiced by men and women, single or married.

Chastity (n), Chaste (vb) – choosing to practice our sexuality with purity of intention towards ourselves and others.

As a married woman, I can be available to be used by God to serve my sisters and brothers without any intention of becoming romantically involved, and be honorable to my husband as well.

My husband can work and serve alongside women at his workplace and church without the intention of becoming romantically involved with them.

Single women and men, can be in friendship with one another, without feeling like they're on the dating game as a potential spouse.

As my colleague Carolyn shared with me, we are able to be hospitable to one another."

We fight to be pure of intentions. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

We choose to not see our friends as objects to gratify us, but as God's image bearers who are loved by God. They are either sisters and brothers in Christ or will be one day.

We choose to not manipulate with flirtation or allow for ambiguous relationships with unclear boundaries.

Chastity is not celibacy (restraining from all sexual activity), but an openness to serve others with honor and purity of intention (motive).

Chastity is NOT Repressive (restraint on a person's freedom, prevents)

It's quite the opposite. It frees us to love and care for those we are in relationship with so they feel safe to be themselves.

Christopher West, Catholic author, writes "Chastity ... is a great yes to the true meaning of sex, to the goodness of being created male and female in the image of God. Chastity is not repressive. It's totally liberating. It frees us from the tendency to use others for selfish gratification and enables us to love others as Christ loves us." www.boundless.org The Undervalue of Virtue of Chastity

As a mom, I don't want to have my sons be inhibited in their sexuality – their body image, their relationships, their future marriages... I don't want them to live in shame of who God made them to be because of the lie of this culture that says "sex is only a physical act" or "your sexuality doesn't matter or affect them" I want them to fully embrace their friendships, be open to hear from God through both women and men and enjoy a satisfying sexual relationship with their wives or a life of singleness if that's what God calls them to.

Chastity is NOT Impossible

"My sex drive is too strong!" "I am not complete unless I have sex." "I can watch porn and not hurt anyone." "I can't control my fantasies."

Is there anything we can do without God? Jesus says in Matthew 5:8 "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

This is more than just anatomy. This is a heart issue. This is a call to live in purity and holiness before our good God.

C.S. Lewis writes in Mere Christianity "We may, indeed, be sure that perfect chastity – like perfect charity will not be attained by merely human efforts. You must ask for God's help."

May we turn to the Lord in the places where we struggle when the "feelings" are so strong and want instant satisfaction or even when we want to hunt for ways to satisfy ourselves in our sexual longings. Psalm 18:28-29 "You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall." #wepa!

I know friends! I dated my husband for six years before we married. There were some tempting days! I tell everyone and I'll tell my kids too that I made it to the altar as a virgin by skin of my teeth. Moe is cute! But God is able to help us scale this wall and live chaste!

4. How Do We Practice Chastity?

Chastity is something we practice: Do something over and over again until we reach mastery/proficiency. It's a repeated exercise.

- Purity of intentions (motives)
- Availability for relationships

- Accountability before God and others (under God's authority)

Purity of Intentions

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

When we are pure in our intentions, we are aware and alert! No ambiguous relationships. No hang-outs without clear boundaries. We are not trying to just "Netflix and Chill." We don't use speech or actions that are misleading.

As followers of Jesus, we choose to lead in starting these conversations towards clarity, remain consistent in caring for others once clarity is discussed (we don't cut people off) and we don't let awkwardness intimidate or isolate us.

Is your chapter a place where women and men can be loved and known without worrying that someone will get the wrong idea?

Is there consistent caring behaviors that display the characteristic of the core of your fellowship no matter how people identify in their sexuality?

Available for Relationship

We are open to serve others without strings attached.

Wanting to be in relationship or even married, sensing your sex drive are all ok, but when we treat everyone as a potential spouse or simple object of affection we are not allowing that person to be free outside of our checklist.

We are also free to give ourselves to others if we have a clear identity in Christ. Psalm 34:5 "Those who look to Him are radiant. Their faces are never covered with shame."

Shame wars against chastity. Shame: a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior. We cannot serve others when we are dressed in shame. We need to pursue spiritual health and vitality in Jesus' name.

Accountability Before God and Others

Jason Gaboury: "The path to freedom is found when we begin to walk in openness and transparency with safe people."

In response to God's love, grace and truth the purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship is to establish and advance at colleges and universities, witnessing communities of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord...

Witness communities are filled with folks who are willing to share with one another how God is at work in their lives. People who are declaring over and over again how God has performed miracles, provided healing, moved from death to life. It is a community that is

willing to listen long and be honest about our struggles with chastity, our challenges with our sexuality, and invite Jesus to be at the center of our lives.

What if we were a community that invited one another to go to Jesus, and even to go to Jesus together, to ask him to purify our intentions?

Can we, who are in this room, be the leaders who would start conversations about chastity, spoke the truth about how hard chastity is and invite Jesus 'to hold our desires, give us our identities and purify our intentions?' " – Jason Gaboury

As I close I want to echo Christopher West's comment: "Chastity...is a great yes to the true meaning of sex."

As you consider your sexual practice, I offer you a simple prayer from Psalm 19:14 "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." I invite you to sit in that prayer for about 30 seconds.

Chastity



MODERN MONKS AND NUNS—MATINS, 2 A.M.



Chastity (n), Chaste (vb) –

Choosing to practice our sexuality with purity of intention towards ourselves and others.

Social + Genital = Sexuality

“...every relationship we have (to varying degrees) is socially motivated and only some are genitally motivated.”

Debra Hirsch, Redeeming Sexuality, p.66

“Social Sexuality constitutes all relationships we have: family, friends, work colleagues and so on... we have a range of needs that are met through a variety of ppl.”

Debra Hirsch, Redeeming Sexuality, p.66

“Genital sexuality has to do with our genital sexual connection and longing. This can range from a purely physical act (if there is such a thing) to experiencing all the stuff of romance, fluttering of heart, arousal and so forth.”

Debra Hirsch, *Redeeming Sexuality*, p.67

“The majority of gratifying relationships in our life are actually non-erotic, such as between parent and child, siblings, same-and-opposite sex friendships, extended family members, significant others in our work environments and in our small and large communities. These relationships deeply enrich and give meaning to our lives.”

Judith & Jack Balswick,
Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach

Chastity

Chastity is NOT celibacy.

Chastity is NOT repressive.

Chastity is NOT impossible.

Celibacy

the state of voluntarily being unmarried, sexually abstinent, or both, usually for religious reasons.

Chastity is NOT celibacy.

Chastity (n), Chaste (vb) –

Choosing to practice our sexuality with purity of intention towards ourselves and others.

Chastity is NOT celibacy.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Chastity is NOT celibacy.

“Chastity ... is a great yes to the true meaning of sex, to the goodness of being created male and female in the image of God. Chastity is not repressive. It’s totally liberating. It frees us from the tendency to use others for selfish gratification and enable us to love others as Christ loves us.”

-Christopher West, boundless.org,
The Undervalue of Virtue of Chastity

Chastity is NOT celibacy.
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“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Jesus, Matthew 5:8

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“We may, indeed, be sure that perfect chastity – like perfect charity will not be attained by merely human efforts. You must ask for God’s help.”

CS Lewis, Mere Christianity

Chastity is NOT celibacy.
Chastity is NOT repressive.
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“You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.”

Psalm 18:28-29

Chastity is NOT celibacy.
Chastity is NOT repressive.
Chastity is NOT impossible.

Practice, Practice, Practice.

*Do something over and over again until
we reach mastery or proficiency.
It's a repeated exercise.*

We practice Chastity.

How do we practice Chastity?

- Purity of intentions (motives)
- Availability for Relationships
- Accountability before God and others

We practice Chastity.

Purity of Intentions

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Available for relationship.

“Those who look to Him are radiant.
Their faces are never covered with
shame.”

Psalms 34:5

Accountability Before God and others

“The path to freedom is found when we begin to walk in openness and transparency with safe people.”

Jason Gaboury

The Purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
is to establish and advance
at colleges and universities
witnessing communities of students and
faculty
who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord:
growing in love for God,
God's Word,
God's people of every ethnicity and culture
and God's purposes in the world.

Chastity

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 19:14

Living By Faith

Romans 12, The Message (MSG)

12 1-2 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Discussion

- 1) What is God asking us to do here? What does this mean for our sexuality, our sexual desires, our body image, our experience?

What is the benefit of doing that?

- 2) How have you felt “dragged down to the culture’s level of immaturity” in the area of sexuality?

What is “the best of you” in this area that God wants to bring out?

Sunday Quiet Time

Romans 8 – The Solution is Life on God's Terms

8 1-2 With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

3-4 God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

5-8 Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

9-11 But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as he surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive in Christ's!

12-14 So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

15-17 This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike, "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

18-21 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

22-25 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

26-28 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

29-30 God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

31-39 So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

The Message (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

1. What does God's redemption mean for you? If you have truly exchanged your filthy rags and are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ and God sees you perfect, how does that transform the way you see yourself now?

2. What is one faithful step you want to take toward God in the area of sexuality? Is there an aspect of your sexuality that is not under Christ's Lordship?

3. Take a moment to praise God. This may mean you write a poem or song like David in Psalm 150. You may draw a picture, dance, or simply sit in silence and say thank you.

Myth #4 Sunday Morning

Your ability to be sexually appealing is critical for your life's happiness (show [this Old Spice commercial](#))

- No pressure, right guys? Women, ever felt the pressure?
- This seems ludicrous when it is said out loud, but the power of many of these myths is that they are subconscious, but all the more powerful because they are unexamined.

Go Forth, and Be Sexy

Next Steps

Introduction

What we've already talked about...

- Bodies, desires, experiences
- Genesis 1 and 2
- Intimacy
- Myths about sex
- LGBTQ ministry
- Chastity
- Romans 8 and Romans 12

As we go from here...

- This is too good to not take back to campus. What is Jesus inviting you to this weekend? What is one step you want to take toward God in the area of sexuality?
- What will be different when you go back to campus?
- Foreshadow response time and call to faith.

If you're wondering, "How do I know what Jesus is inviting me to?" Consider where you have felt the closest to God and farthest from God this weekend. I'll offer some suggestions in a moment.

Broad Invitation

Hang out in Scripture. We've spent a lot of time in scripture during this weekend and its evident we could spend days and weeks learning more about what the Bible has to say about bodies, desires, experiences, etc.

- I recommend the Song of Songs.
- I think many of us have had our ideas about sex, bodies, desires, experiences formed from church or popular culture. Let the Bible be the lens through which you view these. Adopt God's perspective. The Bible says some awesome things about sex.

Hang out in tension. We get messages from "Christianity" that say sex is bad, we should be ashamed, you're a sinner, etc. and we get messages from culture that sex doesn't matter and calls something sacred, "scoring" or "it."

- I often feel, as I'm sure many of you do, that we sit in the tension of "castrate yourself or have sex with everything that moves."
- I often find Jesus in the midst of tension. There is no "bad sex" in God's kingdom. You are an embodiment of good, so the idea that quality or performance would be enmeshed with sex doesn't make any sense. See that what Jesus is inviting you into is actually better than what's been offered previously.

Chastity

- Every thought, interaction, comment, etc., for flourishing and affirming the image of God.
- It will be very difficult to take next steps without chastity.

Scripture

Here are some verses from Psalm 119 to guide the rest of our time.

- Verse 32, "I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding."

Take a step in your discipleship. Give your body, desires, experiences (sexuality and relationships to Jesus). #Lordship

- Verse 45 "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts."

Shape chapter culture: Create safe spaces (fight homophobia, heteronormativity) and build bridges, #FourthWorld

- Verse 64 "The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees."

You've seen God's love in unexpected places, say yes to Jesus, receive an identity as God's child. God and God alone can satisfy your desire for intimacy.
#FirstTimeDecision #FirstLove

Next Steps

A word about accountability

- Most of our accountability is terrible; policing and keeping you in check, or from "slipping up." What does that even mean?
- Accountability should be framed positively and be implemented to point to flourishing.
- We exhaust so much time and energy preventing bad things from happening other than pointing one another toward good things.
- Necessitates posture of humility and willingness to be corrected, and to implement concrete changes, structures, patterns.

Run in the path of the Lord's commands, for God has broadened your understanding.

- Your body is good, fearfully and wonderfully made, precious, and cherished by God. You are worthy of love, affection, because you are YOU.
- Your experiences may suck, but are unfortunately normal. God does not go, "Oh my gosh you did what?!?" Nothing that you have done, not done, or that has been done to you condemns you. Shame wasn't a thing in Genesis 1 and 2.
- Your desires for intimacy are the most human things about you.

Don't run in the path of other commands.

- Confront addictions to porn, masturbation, and sex. Jesus desires you to be set free.

Heart and practicals: Jesus changes desires and perspectives, you need to get off of your laptop.

- Get out of a crappy relationship. Don't settle for less than Jesus.

If Jesus isn't the center of your relationship, something else is. You can tell a tree by its fruit. It's really hard to be an ambassador of peace and reconciliation when you are not on the same page.

- Run from fear and actually start a great relationship with somebody.

Some of you need to start dating something and have been afraid because you know it means being vulnerable, confronting your fears, desires, experiences, hurt, pain, you're messy, not worth it, etc. Jesus redeems so much through significant others. Take a step. Make the first move. Just do it. Quick to listen, quick to forgive, slow to speak, slow to become angry.

- Walk about in freedom, for you have sought out God's precepts.

When your identity is firmly rooted in Jesus, you see your body and good, yourself forgiven for what you've done, experiences as normal and not condemning. When you desire intimacy with no shame, it makes dating a lot more awesome. It allows you to shape the culture of your chapter, small group, etc., with freedom, rather than an agenda.

Shape chapter culture. Create a safe and welcoming space. See the docs from yesterday: Start Here and Confronting Heteronormativity.

Response Time

Those are some next steps: Lordship, Mission, Yes to Jesus, take 3-5 minutes to fill out the commitment card. Share with a neighbor.

Invite people to stand for each of the next steps and commission them as they go back to campus.

Call to Faith: The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees.

- God loves sex. Jonathan says that in Genesis, humans were created to flourish, work, rule, and create. My mom says, "All they did was farm and have sex."
- I recognize that sex wasn't complicated before the fall. It wasn't painful or isolating or based on quality or performance.
- God isn't prudish when it comes to sex.
- Deb Hirsch in her book, *Redeeming Sex*, makes the fantastic observation that God created sex, pleasure, orgasm, all that fun stuff. She asks the question, can you imagine what our evangelism would look like, or how it'd be different if we asked people, would you like to meet the God who invented sex? Who wired you for intimacy? Who created the orgasm? Who is intimate, longing for creation, longing for what has been broken to be restored, who is at work restoring the world and inviting you to be a part of it?
- If you've never committed your life to following Jesus and getting to know God's intimate love, then why not here? Why not now? Jesus loves messy people.
- Psalm 145:16, The Lord reaches out and satisfies the needs of all living things.
- John 4:13-17, Turn from idols, come to Jesus. He is offering this living water today.

Celebrate all the awesome things Jesus will do!

End with Blessing/Benediction

Go Forth, and Be Sexy

Next Steps

Introduction

What have we talked about?

What happens as we go from here?

Is Jesus inviting me to something?

Invitations

Hang out in scripture.

Hang out in tension.

Adopt chastity.

Scripture to Guide Us: Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is all about delighting in following God.

Psalm 119 is all about the freedom found in obedience to God.

Psalm 119 is all about God's faithfulness amidst a long journey

“I run in the path of your
commands, for you
have broadened my
understanding.”

Psalms 119:32

“I will walk about in
freedom, for I have
sought your precepts.”

Psalms 119:45

“The earth is filled with
your love, Lord; teach
me your decrees.”

Psalms 119:64

A Word About “Accountability”

It's not about policing, it's
about flourishing.
Each next step requires
accountability.

“I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.”

Run in the path of God's commands.

#YouAreGood

Stop running in other paths. #BeFree

Psalms 119:32

“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought your precepts.”

Culture shift: Belong before you believe.
Create a safe & welcoming environment
for all students to meet Jesus.
Be on mission

Psalm 119:45

“The earth is filled with your love, Lord;
teach me your decrees.”

Say YES to Jesus. Receive identity as
God's child.

Get to know the God who created
intimacy.

Psalms 119:64

Response Time Commitment Card

Benediction

Redeeming Sexuality Commitment Card

As a result of this weekend, I have come to believe the following about my **body, desires and experiences**:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

With God's help, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and my community, I commit to reflect the above beliefs in the following ways:

1. _____

2. _____

I will seek the help of _____

and _____ to help me in my journey to faithfully live as a disciple of Jesus.

Redeeming Sexuality Commitment Card

As a result of this weekend, I have come to believe the following about my **body, desires and experiences**:

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and _____ to help me in my journey to faithfully live as a disciple of Jesus.



12 Ways People with a Traditional Sexual Ethic can be More Supportive of Celibate LGBT Christians

Sarah and Lindsey (last names not provided)

Since we wrote on [10 Things We Wish Our Church Family Knew](#) and [9 Things We Wish Straight Allies Knew](#), we've been reflecting on the best advice to offer straight Christians who are interested in being more supportive of, specifically, celibate LGBT Christians. Here, we've listed 12 items that we see as most important for people who believe in a traditional sexual ethic to understand. Please comment at the bottom of this post if you can think of other bits of helpful advice. Tomorrow, we will be releasing a similar post aimed at straight Christians who hold to a modern, liberal sexual ethic. Update: you can read that post [here](#).

1. Treat us as you would treat any other member of your church.

We are people, and we are sinners just like every other person in your congregation. Expect that we will have many of the same interests and concerns as other members of your church. Know that we want to be just as involved in the life of the parish as everyone else. Treating us as though we are somehow different can be hurtful, whether your assumption is benign as, "Those people must be here to make a statement," or as egregious as, "Those people are sexual deviants who are here to corrupt my children."

2. Look beyond the culture wars.

Even if you believe there is a "gay agenda," we can assure you that the only agenda most LGBT people are concerned with is being able to live our daily lives in peace. Be mindful of the language you use when expressing disapproval of LGBT-related events, movements, and legislation. [The LGBT members of your church likely have varied opinions on culture war issues like gay marriage](#), and it is incorrect to assume that an LGBT person who attends your church is actively trying to change your denomination's theology of marriage and sexuality. It's likely that if the person has chosen celibacy, he/she accepts your denomination's stance on these issues. But whether this is true or not for a particular celibate LGBT Christian, it's still painful for all of us to be forced hear how "Gay people are destroying the social and moral fabric of America" at coffee hour. [Also, don't try to assign us a special duty to show sexually active LGBT Christians "the error of their ways."](#) We aren't perfect, and we don't sit a place of judgment. Any sexually

active LGBT Christian who is interested in our celibacy is free to approach us to talk about this matter.

3. Show us that you're a safe person.

This can begin with something as simple as flashing us a smile or saying a friendly hello after the service has ended. Tell us that we're welcome at church, and introduce us to other members of the congregation who we may not know so well. Open up to us about aspects of your own life as you feel comfortable. Indicate that you see us as people. It might take a while for us to reach back once you've reached out, but please do not take this as an insult. Many of us could do better at being communicative, but this is a challenge because we've experienced so much hurt in church environments in the past.

4. Get to know us.

Invite us over for homemade pizza night. Have a board game day and ask us to bring Ticket to Ride. Ask about our hobbies and interests. Sarah enjoys sewing and could likely help your child with a project for scouts. Engineer Lindsey might be interested in bonding with your family over a model rocketry project. You might discover that we and your own family are crazy about The Chronicles of Narnia and an evening spent watching a movie together is just the thing all of us need after a stressful week of work and school. Find out what's going on in our lives and ask us how we're doing. Check in on us if you haven't seen us at church in a couple of weeks. All these things let us know that you care about us.

5. Engage us in topics of conversation that don't involve sexual morality.

This may be hard to believe given the prominence of LGBT issues in the news, but most LGBT people probably don't spend any more time thinking about sex than you do. As such, we might be interested in discussing sexual morality, but we might not. Celibate LGBT Christians do not need to be told again and again what the Bible says and what the Church teaches about same-sex sexual activity. [We already know, and often we see denominational teachings on marriage and sexuality](#) as vital elements in understanding our own vocations. We can engage in fruitful conversations with you about a wide range of spiritual and theological topics that do not involve sexuality: prayer, the ecumenical councils, our understandings of Christ, scripture readings, favorite saints, new spiritual disciplines we are trying, etc. Not every conversation you have with us needs to be about our views on chastity.

6. When we indicate that we're comfortable talking about questions of sexual ethics, engage with us.

As we said above, not every discussion needs to focus on sexuality, but that doesn't mean the topic is off limits altogether. We might not always feel comfortable talking about it. Don't push us, but don't be afraid to ask questions. The worst we could say is, "We're not comfortable talking about that right now." We're more likely to be willing if you've shown us that you're a safe person. When we're ready to discuss sexuality issues, we'll be glad to have those conversations with you. Always be respectful of our boundaries and consider the purpose of the questions you're asking. Is your query motivated by curiosity? If so, tell us that and leave us the option of not answering if we become uncomfortable mid-discussion. Does the question come from a desire to understand the lives of celibate LGBT Christians more fully? Those are our favorite types of questions to answer, and we'll do so if it's safe. Are you asking out of a desire to gauge our theological orthodoxy so you can report your findings to a religious leader in hopes that he'll "rein us in" or force us to leave the church? This is not a good reason for asking us questions, and if this is the case, it's likely we'll be able to see through why you've suddenly become interested in us.

7. Respect the language we use when describing ourselves.

Words like "gay" and "transgender" may not mean what you think they mean. When most gay people use the word "gay" as a descriptor, it is in reference to sexual orientation, not level of sexual activity. It's inappropriate to tell a celibate gay Christian, "If you aren't having sex, you aren't gay." It's equally condescending to tell a celibate bisexual Christian, "If you meet someone of the opposite sex and decide to marry him/her, you'll not be bisexual anymore." Likewise, it is not correct to assume that a person identifying as "transgender" is necessarily interested in surgically altering his/her body, and the message, "You're really a girl even though you feel like a boy," can be profoundly alienating to a transgender person. Assigning the term "same-sex attracted" to a person just because you're uncomfortable with your own presumptions about his/her preferred language is harmful and disrespectful of that person's experience. At the same time, if a person would rather you use the term "same-sex attracted," then use it. It's always a good idea to ask a person about his/her preferred language, and it should never be assumed that someone's choice of terms means a denial of his/her identity in Christ.

8. Acknowledge that you can learn from us and we can learn from you.

As celibate LGBT Christians, we are just as much part of the Body of Christ as are all other Christians. Sometimes we do things well, other times we make mistakes. Sometimes we do what God asks of us, other times we fall short. Regardless, we are not your project, and you are not

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ours. We do not come to church for the experience of heterosexual, cisgender people teaching us “the right way” to follow Christ. Nor do we come to church with the attitude that because of our celibacy, we can teach you and everyone else “the right way” to follow Christ. We’re fallible, and we believe that Jesus is the best teacher for all of us. And along our shared journey towards Him, there are ways in which everyone can learn from everyone else.

9. Don’t assume that remaining celibate is our primary spiritual struggle.

Not every heterosexual, cisgender Christian lives in a constant battle to maintain chastity. The same can be said for LGBT Christians. People, no matter their sexual orientations and gender identities, have varying levels of sexual desire. It doesn’t make sense to suggest that because someone is part of the LGBT community, living celibacy is any harder than it is for a heterosexual, cisgender person. Do not assume that a celibate LGBT Christian sees his/her sexual orientation or gender identity as “a cross to bear.” [Many of us are just as comfortable with our choice to pursue celibacy as we are with all other aspects of life.](#) And we deal with the same sins as you do: pride, anger, greed, etc. Often, the potential for engaging in these sins is much greater than the potential for engaging in sexual sin.

10. If we *are* struggling with celibacy, show compassion.

Sometimes, we do struggle with celibacy because [no vocation is easy](#). The demands of serving Christ in the world as celibate singles or celibate couples are great, and no Christian tradition provides us with all the guidance we need for living celibacy outside a monastery. Some celibate LGBT people do see their sexualities and gender identities as crosses. This doesn’t mean that those of us who take joy in celibacy are morally or spiritually stronger than those of us who don’t. Telling a person who is struggling with celibacy to, [“Just bear your cross, do what God asks, and stay on the straight and narrow path,”](#) isn’t helpful. Even we who feel greatly blessed within our celibate vocations sometimes need the space to cry out, “I just can’t do this anymore!” We imagine that on occasion, people who live the vocations of marriage and monasticism feel similarly. When we’re experiencing difficult seasons of life, say, “That sounds challenging. I’m sorry you’re hurting. How can I support you during this time?” We might not know how to respond in the moment, but we will be glad that you’ve asked.

11. Pray for us.

We need prayer just like all other members of the Body of Christ. Prayer strengthens us in our vocations and gives us comfort when things are really hard. Our prayer needs will be similar to other Christians’ prayer needs, but might also be different. Celibacy as a way of life poses a unique set of challenges. However, if we request your prayers, please do not assume that necessarily means, “Sarah and Lindsey want me to pray that they can keep themselves from having sex. They’re struggling with sexual temptations.” There are LGBT Christians who do ask for

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prayer as they work towards living chastely, but it's important to remember that [celibacy is not just about sexual abstinence](#). When we are struggling in our celibate vocation, that could mean we're experiencing difficulty in living radical hospitality, that we aren't able to be as vulnerable as we would like, that our emotional intimacy needs aren't being met, or that we've fallen away from certain spiritual disciplines.

12. Love us, and all LGBT people.

As LGBT Christians, we hear a lot of, "Love the sinner, hate the sin," and, "I love you enough to tell you that being gay is wrong." But it's rare that we see love from conservative, heterosexual, cisgender Christians. If you really love us so much, be willing to show us that by treating us as human beings with dignity and worth. And that includes all LGBT people, not just celibate LGBT Christians. God calls us to love people even if we don't agree with their approaches to sexual morality and other matters. You can show us how much you love us by taking a stand when your coworker makes an inappropriate joke about sexual orientation, advocating for an end to discriminatory employment practices, and speaking out against LGBT-related human rights abuses in countries like Uganda. We'll believe that you love us when you demonstrate it on a regular basis.

Sarah and Lindsey are a celibate, LGBT, Christian couple who blogs about their journey with celibacy at aqueercalling.com.

(No Last Name Provided), Sarah and Lindsey. "[12 Ways People with a Traditional Sexual Ethic can be More Supportive of Celibate LGBT Christians](#)" *A Queer Calling*. A Queer Calling. 8 April 2014. Web. 27 Sept 2016.

Are sexual orientation and identity choices?

Abstract: *How we respond to our sexual desires is an important part of being human. We define ourselves by our sexual attractions and orientation as we incorporate what we know about ourselves, others and our world into our sexual identity. But a bigger understanding of the individuals we are, our true God-given identity, is found in our Creator, the one who made us human beings -- and sexual beings -- in the first place.*

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEXUAL ATTRACTION, ORIENTATION AND IDENTITY? ARE THESE CHOICES OR BASIC TO WHO I AM?

These are good questions. As humans, we are all intricately complex beings, with dreams, abilities, circumstances and preferences. Our sexual natures are often confusing, raising questions about who we are and how we behave as sexual beings. These important questions are not easy to answer, but let's try.

What are the differences between sexual attraction, orientation and identity? These can be very confusing labels that often lead to terms being used interchangeably. Here are some simple definitions:

- Sexual attraction refers to the type of person someone is attracted to.
- Sexual orientation is about how persistent and how intense that attraction is.
- Sexual identity is the label people choose to describe themselves sexually, either privately or publicly, and which is often based on many factors.

Yet defining terms does not answer the heart-felt question of whether our sexual attractions, orientation and identity are choices or simply who we are. Let's dig a little deeper into how these three terms are related and how we might look at them through a bigger spiritual lens.

Sexual attraction is that seemingly spontaneous response that we have to certain people. It's when we desire someone else physically and find that their physical presence elicits a response from us. These desires can come and go. The source of these desires is a complicated mishmash of experiences, training and biology. Some attractions can be same sex and some are opposite sex. We do know that these desires can be cultivated. We can choose to dwell on them or act on them -- which often strengthens the desire and, if done persistently, creates brain patterns that will make us more likely to experience these desires again.

Sexual orientation is the term used when people experience a persistent and strong sexual desire that dominates their sexual lives. They find themselves oriented toward a certain kind of

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attraction. Maybe the attraction is for the same sex, or for the opposite sex, or perhaps bi-sexual for those who experience attraction to both genders. People's choices influence how they will respond to these desires. Again, the origin of those desires is a complex combination of choices, experiences and biology.

Sexual identity is how people choose to label themselves in their own understanding of who they are and in their description of themselves to others. Sexual identity also involves more factors than sexual attractions or even orientation. It involves a person's gender, a sense of how masculine or feminine he or she feels, how a person intends to respond to their attractions, and personal beliefs and values about sexual attraction and behavior. Each of these factors will have a weight for the individual. Some of these things will have more importance in determining sexual identity than others. Human choice is the most powerful and decisive factor in the identity category.

A Bigger View

For the Christian, a person's identity always resides in Jesus Christ first and foremost. Sexual identity is first found in him as Lord. Because God is an intentional Creator, we believe that our gender is important. We highly value the fact that God made us male and female and that our bodies were designed for a certain kind of sex. We also honor the Bible as the chief source of our beliefs and values. Culture does not determine our identities and is not the measure for how we live in this world or respond to our own desires. So the teachings of Scripture end up trumping what our culture believes or even the attractions we have. For some people this may mean a choice of celibacy or a cultivation of certain desires.

Our real hope is to discover that nothing is predetermined for us. We can respond to our desires thoughtfully and freely. As Christians, our identity lies in being a follower of Jesus, and we can respond to our sexual attractions, and even sexual orientation, in a way that allows for deep connection with God and others.

The Long Defeat and the Long Loneliness

Wesley Hill

Abstract: *An honest blog post from a celibate, gay Christian on the cost of following Jesus.*

One of the primary ways I've thought about my own life as a gay, celibate believer and also about my larger project of trying to make the church more of a nurturing haven for other gay/SSA/queer believers is in terms of what J. R. R. Tolkien called "the long defeat." His regal character Galadriel in *The Lord of the Rings*, surveying the long years of her immortality and all the seasons of mingled loss and triumph she's witnessed, says, "Through the ages of the world we have fought the long defeat." And Tolkien himself identifies with her: "I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not expect 'history' to be anything but a 'long defeat' — though it contains (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory."

Alan Jacobs [comments](#):

It seems to me that this philosophy of history, if we may call it that, is the ideal one for anyone who has exceptionally difficult, frustrating, even agonizing, but nevertheless vitally important work to do. For such people, the expectation of victory can be a terrible thing — it can raise hopes in (relatively) good times only to shatter them when the inevitable downturn comes. Conversely, the one who fights the long defeat can be all the more thankful for victories, even small ones, precisely because (as St. Augustine said about ecstatic religious experiences) he or she does not expect them and is prepared to live without them.

This perspective on history and on the individual Christian pilgrimage has meant a lot to me. As someone who hasn't received one iota of the promised "change" in my sexual orientation that some Christians have held out to me, and as someone who also hasn't been able to embrace a more progressive understanding of same-sex marriage, I've often felt like I'm fighting a kind of long defeat: I'm gay but not seeking a same-sex partner, and I'm still gay and so also not seeking an *opposite*-sex spouse, and what that *feels* like is... well, it often feels like the way St. Paul describes his rather stark view of the Christian life in Romans 8: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies."

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I was helped to embrace this viewpoint in my early twenties when I read [*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*](#) by Richard Hays. Facing squarely the much-debated question of whether celibacy is “mandated” for all gay Christians in a way that is qualitatively different than the call to chastity for straight Christians (“Never in church history until the past 50 years has celibacy been mandated for any group [such as LGBT people] regardless of calling,” says Matthew Vines, for instance), Hays writes:

While Paul regarded celibacy as a charisma, he did not therefore suppose that those lacking the charisma were free to indulge their sexual desires outside marriage. Heterosexually oriented persons are also called to abstinence from sex unless they marry (1 Cor 7:8-9). The only difference — admittedly a salient one — in the case of homosexually oriented persons is that they do not have the option of homosexual “marriage” [in traditional churches, we must now add]. So where does that leave them? It leaves them in precisely the same situation as the heterosexual who would like to marry but cannot find an appropriate partner (and there are many such): summoned to a difficult, costly obedience, while “groaning” for the “redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). *Anyone who does not recognize this as a description of authentic Christian existence has never struggled seriously with the imperatives of the gospel, which challenge and frustrate our “natural” impulses in countless ways.* (Italics added)

That passage in Hays’ book has been a lodestar for me over the past few years. And I think it goes a long way toward explaining the way I and many of my fellow celibate gay friends view our discipleship: we’re fighting a long defeat, not necessarily expecting to find a satisfying substitute in this life for the marital happiness we’re choosing to live without and instead pinning our hopes for spousal union on [*the future marriage Supper of the Lamb*](#). We’re groaning and waiting, often without much natural “fulfillment,” and counting on a future weight of glory that will far surpass our present groans. As one gay friend of mine once wrote,

My hopes for making the Church a place where gay people can truly be welcome may be faint glimmerings that I dare not cling to, but that provides no excuse for dropping the project. It simply means that I must continue to fight the fight, while expecting the long defeat. My hope is not in this life, but in the life to come.

I’ve been thinking about all this again recently because I just finished reading [*The Long Loneliness*](#) by Dorothy Day for the first time. Much of what Day — the legendary founder, with Peter Maurin, of the Catholic Worker movement and whose cause for sainthood is now being considered — is concerned to stress in her book, a memoir of her conversion and her activism for social justice, seems to me to dovetail with what Tolkien calls “the long defeat.” For example, she spends a lot of time describing how her conversion to Catholicism forced her to grapple with

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the implications of submitting to the Church's teaching about sex and marriage. (She is very forthright about the Catholic Church's sexual ethics in her book, demonstrating clearly that one can be "conservative" in this arena while at the same time not surrendering one ounce of agitation for social justice — a combination so many of us today find truly baffling.) Day was in a common law marriage to a man named Forster who wanted nothing to do with her newfound faith, and she recognizes that choosing the Church over Forster may well mean that she forfeits — for good — a great deal of earthly happiness. She writes:

God always gives us a chance to show our preference for Him. With Abraham it was to sacrifice his only son. With me it was to give up my married life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination — you are going against nature when you do them — but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God.

When I read that paragraph in the book, I found myself wondering how many of us today really share that vision of the Christian life. Are we — am I — prepared to countenance the fact that the Christian God may indeed be just this kind of God? — the kind of God who might ask me to say no to my most deeply felt "natural" (= in the fallen sense) inclinations for sex and marriage in order to show my preference for Him?

In another passage, Day describes having to "let go" of her natural love for her daughter and place her consciously in God's care.

When I left Tamar that afternoon and went back to Montreal, I never was so unhappy, never felt so great a sense of loneliness. She was growing up, she was growing up to be married. It did not seem possible. I was always having to be parted from her. No matter how many times I gave up mother, father, husband, brother, daughter, for His sake, I had to do it over again.

Notice Day's allusion to Mark chapter 10, in which Jesus observes how so many of His followers have given up exactly those closest ties that Day names: homes and siblings and parents and even children in order to become His disciples. Are we prepared to imagine that Christ might actually call us, still, to that deep level of surrender? That it might be best described as one long, repeated act of placing our greatest loves before Him?

Perhaps many of our debates about "mandatory gay celibacy" in the church involve, at the end of the day, differing understandings of the character of God: is God in Christ the sort of God who would ask His children to embrace a *lifelong* loneliness, a long defeat? I don't want to be misunderstood here: I know many so-called "progressive" or "liberal" Christians whose picture of same-sex marriage is *precisely* about [lifelong self-sacrifice](#), and there are [many stories of gay partners standing by one another in sickness and in health](#) alike to prove it. And yet can some of our disagreement about whether gay sex is morally appropriate for Christians still be traced back to differing beliefs about whether God might just be the kind of God who asks what feels

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well-nigh *impossible*: who asks us to give up the one thing that our “natural” selves most want, which seems for all the world like what we’re most suited for? It’s a question I’d like to explore with my progressive friends, to see what kind of common ground, and also what kind of lack of agreement, we might find...

It’s significant, I think, that Day closes her book — and here I think she probably improves on Tolkien’s vision of the “long defeat” — by stressing that when we surrender to God in this way, when we give up hope of “natural” fulfillment, we find (paradoxically?) that the long loneliness of the Christian life is *not* a life without human love: “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.” No doubt she had read the rest of chapter 10 in the Gospel of Mark:

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

The long defeat, and the long loneliness, are lived in good company, with other guests who are bound for the same Wedding Supper that’s to come.

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Hill, Wesley. “[The Long Defeat and the Long Loneliness](#)” *Spiritual Friendship*. Spiritual Friendship. 24 Aug 2016. Web. 23 Aug 2016.



Redeemed Sexuality Resource List

Books

The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are by Jenell Williams Paris (IVP)

Redeeming Sex by Debra Hirsch (IVP)

Same Sex Attraction and the Church by Ed Shaw (IVP)

Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity by Lauren Winner (Brazos Press)

My Brother's Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don't) Tell Us about Masculinity by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (IVP)

Unhooked: How Young Women Purse Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both by Laura Sessions Stepp (Riverhead)

Sex and the iWorld: Rethinking Relationship Beyond an Age of Individualism by Dale Kuehne (Baker)

Articles

Crouch, Andy. "Sex Without Bodies" *Christianity Today* magazine. June 26, 2013.

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<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/digital-issue/53?page=66>

Williams Paris, Jenell. "The Truth About Sex." *Christianity Today* magazine. November 2001.
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/november12/5.62.html>

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<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2008/08/30/why-i-am-leaving-guyland.html>

Robinson, Marnia. "Understanding and Explaining the Risks of Internet Porn." November 2009.
<http://www.insidetechnology360.com/index.php/understanding-and-explaining-the-risks-of-internet-porn-to-boys-21189/>

Widmer, Cory. "Traditional Sexuality, Radical Community."
<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/traditional-sexuality-radical-community> Oct 3, 2014.

Central Scriptures

covenant: God's good creation and gift (Genesis 1-2; Isaiah 43:1-7)

covenant: God's delight in the beloved (Song of Solomon 7:10-12, 8:10; Hosea; Revelation 21:9-22:7)

covenant: God's bringing together (Isaiah 55-56)

new covenant (Genesis 8:20-22; 12:1-9; 2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 31:31-24; Mark 14:12-31; Revelation 21:1-8)

heart circumcision (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Romans 2:25-29)

God's mercy (Genesis 3:21; Psalm 51; Mark 3:31-35, 7:17-23; John 8:1-10)

call to chastity (Matthew 19-20; 1 Corinthians 6-7)

people's rebellion against God (Genesis 3; Jeremiah 2:28, 3:20)

lust (2 Samuel 11; 13:1-22; Romans 7:14-25)

homosexuality (Genesis 19:1-11; Leviticus 18:22; Judges 19:16-24; 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12; 2 Kings 23:7; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Jude 7)

Videos

Tim Keller "What do Christians have against homosexuality?"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZFCB9sduxQ>

N.T. Wright "Debate about Homosexuality 4" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpQHGPGejKs>

Internet Accountability Resource

CovenantEyes - www.covenanteyes.com

rTribe app (iTunes and Google Play)



An Impatience with Biblical Exegesis

Wesley Hill, August 2014

Abstract: *This guide offers an opportunity to assess your growth as a disciple: in Christ in intimacy with God and others, like Christ in character, and with Christ in his mission.*

I want to try to comment on a—what to call it? a trend? a mood?—I’m seeing in the ongoing Christian conversations and debates about same-sex marriage. I’d like to call it an impatience with biblical exegesis, and here’s what I mean by that:

When I go and speak in various venues about Christian faith and sexuality, I hear comments like the following with more and more regularity: “We know that both sides aren’t going to agree about what the Bible says. And we know that both sides already know which are their favorite verses and how they interpret them, so we’re not going to change each other’s minds. But what we can do is share our stories with one another. We can learn to understand each other’s lives better. We can gain more empathy for each other. So let’s focus on that rather than having yet another ‘debate’ about the Bible.”

I want to add quickly that I’m not immune to this mood either! As Robert Gagnon pointed out yesterday about my recent public conversation with Justin Lee in Grand Rapids, I talked very little about my reading of biblical texts and spent much more time “telling my story.” I share the temptation that many others of my generation face to believe that talking about the Bible won’t lead to any resolution and so we’re better off simply trying to understand one another’s hopes and fears and offer support where we can. Where the Bible is too divisive, sharing our Christian stories can be something that unites us.

But I am more and more unhappy with this mood or trend, and I’m determined to try to talk more about Scripture in future speaking engagements and debates that I participate in. Much of my thinking on this matter has been influenced by a letter that Rod Dreher posted on his blog awhile ago, from an ex-evangelical, pro-same-sex-marriage young person. Here’s an excerpt:

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In all the years I was a member [of a Baptist church], my evangelical church made exactly one argument about SSM [same-sex marriage]. It's the argument I like to call the Argument from Ickiness: Being gay is icky, and the people who are gay are the worst kind of sinner you can be. Period, done, amen, pass the casserole.

When you have membership with no theological or doctrinal depth that you have neglected to equip with the tools to wrestle with hard issues, the moment ickiness no longer rings true with young believers, their faith is destroyed. This is why other young ex-evangelicals I know point as their "turning point" on gay marriage to the moment they first really got to know someone who was gay. If your belief on SSM is based on a learned disgust at the thought of a gay person, the moment a gay person, any gay person, ceases to disgust you, you have nothing left. In short, the anti-SSM side, and really the Christian side of the culture war in general, is responsible for its own collapse. It failed to train up the young people on its own side preferring instead to harness their energy while providing them no doctrinal depth by keeping them in a bubble of emotion dependent on their never engaging with the outside world on anything but warlike terms. Perhaps someday my fellow ex-evangelical Millennials and I will join other churches, but it will be as essentially new Christians with no religious heritage from our childhoods to fall back on.

What this letter shows is that this thoroughly Christianized young Baptist person had no idea what the biblical case against same-sex marriage is. It's not that they had heard it rehearsed ad nauseam and needed to move on to encounter real gay people's personal stories. Rather, it's that they had been given no biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality to begin with. They had been given no sense of the coherent, interlocking architecture of why Scripture says what it says and thus were only equipped with a kind of emotivist argument against same-sex marriage—which, of course, collapsed the moment they met a gay person who wasn't "icky."

Reading this letter helped clarify some things for me. It reminded me that simply walking through the biblical storyline—

- pointing out that male and female are created similar (Genesis 2:23) and yet different (2:7 20) and that both these emphases are made in Genesis;
- pointing out that Jesus' teaching about marriage presupposes that it is for procreation

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and thus depends on sexual difference (male and female) and complementarity (Luke 20:34-36);

- pointing out that Jesus, when teaching about marriage, doesn't just emphasize Genesis 2 and the similarity of the spouses (Mark 10:7 quoting Genesis 2:24) but draws in Genesis 1 in order also to emphasize the difference and complementarity of the spouses (Mark 10:6 quoting Genesis 1:27);
- pointing out that Paul's rejection of same-sex sexual behavior isn't based on the fact that that behavior accompanies idolatry but is instead based on the belief that all of humanity is already idolatrous and that same-sex sexual behavior is the inevitable fruit (Romans 1:18, 24ff.);
- pointing out that the New Testament makes it possible for people to choose celibacy (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:8, 26, 32-35, 38) but still envisions one of the purposes of Christian marriage as procreation (Ephesians 6:1-4 following 5:21-33)

—can seem genuinely new to people, even to well-catechized believers. This is because, as Alastair Roberts has pointed out, many of us have heard conclusions from the Bible throughout our Christian discipleship. But fewer of us have been well instructed in the way of reading that leads to those conclusions:

[A]s many young people leave our churches, claiming that their questions were never taken seriously, it seems clear to me that the incompetence of church leaders when it comes to interacting with opposing viewpoints is a crucial dimension of the problem. Young people are less shielded from opposing viewpoints than their parents, especially given the role played by the Internet in their lives. They are more likely to realize just how incompetent church leaders are in their attempts to deal with critical and dissenting voices (to whom the Internet has granted a voice) and how heavily their credibility has formerly rested upon the absence of the right to talk back to them....

The teachers of the Church [should] provide the members of the Church with a model for their own thinking. The teacher of the Church does not just teach others what to believe, but also how to believe, and the process by which one arrives at a theological position.

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This is one reason why it is crucial that teachers 'show their working' on a regular basis. When teaching from a biblical text, for instance, the teacher isn't just teaching the meaning of that particular text, but how Scripture should be approached and interpreted more generally. An essential part of the teaching that the members of any church need is that of dealing with opposing viewpoints. One way or another, every church provides such teaching. However, the lesson conveyed in all too many churches is that opposing voices are to be dismissed, ignored, or 'answered' with a reactive reassertion of the dogmatic line, rather than a reasoned response.

None of this is to say, of course, that we shouldn't listen to the stories of gay people. I fully intend to go on offering my story to the church for reflection, and I want to go on hearing the stories of friends like Justin Lee with whom I disagree. Nor do I mean that talking about the Bible more will automatically lead to greater agreement. (It took the church hundreds of years to reach agreement about the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, and even then agreement wasn't fully achieved!) But here's what I do mean: I, and perhaps others, need to believe that, in the words of John Robinson, "God has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word." Although it may seem futile, the effort to trace out the meaning of the Bible and talk about Scripture with others isn't a vain exercise.

I love the way John Webster puts it:

[We must seek to foster] modes of public life in the churches which expect that the ministry and message of reconciliation will be borne to the communion of saints through the prophets and apostles [=Scripture!], and which do not let themselves be overcome by the anxiety that that ministry and message may mislead. Breaking the spell of that anxiety is not easy. To do so, we need to cease giving an account of ourselves as somehow located at a point in the history of human affairs where the usual rules of providence do not apply [as if God were now working by some other way than giving the church light through Scripture]; we need to be less compliant to the myth that exegetical authority suppresses rather than liberates; we need to learn that conflict about the teaching of the prophets and apostles is not abnormal or necessarily destructive in the Christian community, but may prove a way in which God keeps the church in the truth. (*italics added*)

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Think about that last line: conflict about the teaching of the apostles may prove a way in which God keeps the church in the truth. Shying away from that exegetical conflict isn't the right way for the church to go forward in our current debates.

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