**Sex with a Good Conscience**

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1. **God’s Creation of Human Bodies for Sexual Union in Marriage**
2. Sexual confusion

* Sticker: ***Your body may be a temple, but mine’s an amusement park.***
* Meeting the challenge of our age
* Common notion of God as a sexual killjoy rather that the Creator of sexuality for our enjoyment
* Quest for guilt-free sexual enjoyment by rejection of God’s law and Christian teaching on sex
* I can do what I like with my body because it belongs to me.
* Loss of Christian moral imagination by younger generation
* Recovery of the beauty of the Christian teaching and practice of sexuality
* Luther in LC 218: “I say these things in order that our young people may be led to acquire a love for the estate of marriage and know that it is a blessed and God-pleasing estate.”
* Christian teaching: owned body
* St Paul in 1 Cor 6:19: ***You are not your own.***
* Given by God its Creator as His gift: body that belongs to Him and my spouse
* Ordered sexual intercourse: protection of God’s gift and its enjoyment by His law
* Our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19)

1. The God’s gift of our sexual bodies as part of his cosmic order

* Teaching of Jesus on divorce in Mark 10:6: ***from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave (will) his father and mother and hold fast (cleave) to his wife, and the two shall (will) become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.***
* Paraphrase of Gen 1:27 and 2:24
* Made by God rather than ourselves, our parents, or the natural world
* Created and sustained by God’s word
* Created in God’s image (Gen 1:27): ***So God created the man*** *(Hebrew ha’adam)* ***in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***
* Statement about primeval parents and all mankind
* Both male and female in God’s image: singly and together
* Creation of whole person body and soul in God’s image
* Visible and spiritual resemblance with invisible God (1:26)
* Procreation and rule
* Righteous and holy like God
* Incarnate Christ as God’s image (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)
* Created as male and female
* Hebrew terms for both sex and gender
* Part of cosmic order with its polarities
* Luther: ***God divided mankind into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she…Therefore each of us must have the kind of body God has created for us. I cannot make myself a woman, nor can you make yourself a man; we do not have that power. But we are exactly as he created us; I am a man and you a woman*** (LW 45.17).

1. The life sustaining habitat for our bodies as taught in Gen 1:1-2:3

* God’s provision of an ordered ecosystem for the human body
* Dynamic order in time and space
* Ordered binary polarities for the maintenance of human life in the body
* Light and darkness
* Sky and earth
* Sea and land
* Plants and trees
* Sun and moon
* Fish and birds
* Animals and mankind
* Male and female
* Ecological order of dependence and rule
* Dependence: light, sky, land and sea, vegetation, fish and birds, animals and humanity
* Rule: sun, moon, and stars over earth and vegetation, humanity over animal life, God over humanity
* God’s appraisal and approval of His created order for human life
* Good creatures: light (1:3), dry land (1:10), vegetation (1:12), constellations (1:18), fish and birds (1:21), animals (1:25)
* Very good whole (1:31)

1. God’s creation of male and female bodies for sexual union in marriage

* Original solitude of Adam: basis for single life before and apart from marriage
* The need for sexual companionship
* Provision of helper: partner, helpmate, coworker in common enterprise
* Provision of opposite: counterpart, complement, match
* Building of Eve from Adam’s ribcage to be next to his heart: body-mate with the same flesh and bones
* Luther in LW 2:134: ***Let us therefore obey the Word of God and recognize our wives as a building of God. Not only is the house built through them by procreation and other services that are necessary in a household; but the husbands themselves are built through them, because wives are, as it were, a nest and a dwelling place where husbands can go to spend their time and dwell with joy.***
* Affinity and admiration
* Recognition of origin and orientation by pun on the link between man = איש and woman = אשה with מאיש = from man and אשה = for man
* God as the marriage celebrant who joins them together: emphasis by Jesus in Matt 19:6
* Order for sexual union in three stages
* Husband’s leaving of his parents to start a new household
* Husband’s cleaving to his wife: permanent commitment
* Both becoming one flesh with sexual intimacy and birth of children: conclusion by Jesus: ***So they are no longer two but one flesh.***

1. Dividing what God has joined together

* Separation of husband and wife by divorce and remarriage
* Supernatural union by God as its Maker
* Lifelong one flesh union under God
* Christ’s decree in Matt 19:6: ***What therefore God has joined together, let no one separate.***
* No dissolution by God and no sanction of divorce by Him
* Remarriage as adultery in God’s eyes
* Result: impurity of body and soul
* Separation of gender from sex
* Modern dissociation of personal gender from biological sexuality
* Gender as social, personal construct: self-identification
* Range of genders: heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, asexual, transsexual, queer, intersexual
* Notion of gender fluidity: matter of choice
* Extreme degree: gender reassignment and queer life
* Result: disorder and confusion

1. Uniting what God has divided

* Union of an unmarried man and woman in fornication
* Pagan and modern approval: harmless satisfaction of physical needs like eating of food (1 Cor 6:13)
* Prohibition by God as an act that results in physical and spiritual impurity (Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3; Heb 13:4)
* Life-damaging pollution both body and soul
* Separation of the body from the soul
* Temporary union of body with an alien body
* Negation of union with body and soul
* Diminished capacity for total self-giving and ordinary sexual enjoyment in marriage
* Bad conscience from God’s disapproval (1 Thess 4:3-8; Heb 13:4)
* Result: discarnate spirituality
* Desecration of holiness: see Paul in 1 Cor 6:12-20
* Union of two people of the same sex in homosexual intercourse
* Pagan and modern approval (Lev 18:1-5, 22, 24-30)
* Bodily idolatry with bodily debasement (Rom 1:22-27)
* Prohibition by God as pollution of body and soul (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10)
* Life-damaging disorder and desecration (Lev 18:5; 20:7-8, 26)
* Bad conscience from God’s disapproval (1 Cor 6:9): quest for social approval

1. The reflection of God’s image sexually by human bodies

* Single bodies: bodily devotion of men and women to God like Jesus as his brothers and sisters (1 Cor 7:32-35)
* Married bodies: one flesh union in marriage to mirror the one flesh union of Christ with the church (Eph 5:25-32)
* Both single and married bodies: bodily participation in Christ’s purity and holiness

1. **Sex with a Good Conscience**
2. Our sexual ambivalence

* Attraction and repulsion
* Excitement and disgust
* Conflict between mind and the body
* Index of the conscience: need to feel right about sex in order to feel right about one’s self
* Common cause for bad conscience that sabotages sexual enjoyment
* Desire for sexual innocence and sexual approval

1. The virtue of sexual chastity

* Sexual impurity from sexual abuse
* Cause: disordered heart with its disordered desires (Mk 7:2-23)
* Pollution of the whole person by sexual lust
* Damage to natural sexual ecology: disorderly, addictive, destructive, life-diminishing, depersonalizing, and desensitizing (Eph 4:19)
* Rejection by NT as a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19) that is improper for God’s holy people (Eph 5:3)
* Connection with sexual idolatry (Rom 1:22-25; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5)
* Disqualification from God’s kingdom (Eph 5:5)
* Prohibition of ‘fornication’ (*porneia*) as a distinctive Christian teaching
* New Christian term in Greek: 28 warnings in NT
* Modern translations: sexual immorality, unchastity
* Original use for the sale of sexual intercourse of any kind prostitute
* Use of prostitutes and slaves condoned by ancient pagans: healthy sexual outlet
* New Christian sense of *porneia*: use of a prostitute or any single person for sexual intercourse → pornographic lust and behavior
* Teaching by Jesus in Mark 7:21 as a matter of the heart with its thoughts and desires and the cause of defilement
* Mark of paganism with its idolatry: see the decree of the apostolic council in Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25
* Need for repentance (2 Cor 12:21)
* Cleansing by Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:25-26; cf. Tit 2:11-14)
* Sexual purification of the soul through baptism (1 Pet 1:22)
* Chastity as sexual purity rather than virginity
* Call for all Christians to “lead a chaste and decent life”
* Chastity as a Christian rather than pagan virtue
* Jesus (1 John 3:3) and Paul (2 Cor 6:6) as examples of chastity
* Call for Timothy to be chaste (1 Tim 5:22) and an example of chastity (1 Tim 4:12) in encouraging younger women (1 Tim 5:2)
* Call for older women to teach younger women to be chaste wives (Tit 2:5)
* Call for meditation on what is chaste (Phil 4:8)
* Link of chastity with emotional self-control (ἐγκρατεία: 1 Cor 7:9; Gal 5:23; Tit 1:8; cf. 1 Clem 30:3; 38:2; Pol 4:2) and sound-mindedness (σωφροσύνη: Tit 2:3-5; IgEph 10:3; cf. 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 1:7; Tit 2:2, 6, 9, 12)
* Chastity as physical and mental, personal and spiritual
* Condition for life-enhancing, fruitful sexual enjoyment
* Aspect of sexual ecology: works best when done with the right person, at the right time, in its right place, and in the right way
* Moral chastity: sexual self-reservation for spouse in marriage and faithfulness to spouse in marriage or celibacy apart from marriage
* Spiritual chastity: clear conscience before God sexually by obedience to his word
* Avoidance of sexual defilement as the desecration of both body and soul (1 Cor 7:1) as well as of holy matrimony (Heb 13:4)
* Reflection of the one flesh union of Christ with the church (Eph 5:25-32) or of his devotion to the Father as a single person (1 Cor 7:32-34)
* Connection with the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 6:12-20)

1. The teaching on sexual sanctification in 1 Thess 4:1, 3-8: ***Finally brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality (fornication); that each of you know how to control his own body (vessel, instrument) in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger of all these things, as we have told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.***

* Instruction on honorable, God-pleasing sexual behavior: sex with a good conscience
* God’s will for us: our sexual sanctification
* Call from sexual impurity to sexual sanctification
* Result of our baptism (Eph 5:25-27) and participation in the divine service (Rom 6:12-23)
* Three aspects
* Avoidance of fornication for single members
* Exercise of sexual self-restraint that honors the spouse for married members rather than indulgence of sexual lust like the Gentiles
* Prohibition of lustful, sexual abuse of fellow members
* Punishment of abuse by Jesus
* Sexual sanctification as the work of the Holy Spirit

1. The sanctification of marriage in 1 Tim 4:1-5: ***Now the Spirit expressly says that in the later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity (hypocrisy) of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.***

* Wrong asceticism from seared, desensitized conscience: pursuit of higher levels of spiritual consciousness
* Abstinence from marriage by people who regard sex and certain foods such a meat as unclean and unspiritual: pursuit of disembodied, demonic spirituality
* Sex and marriage as a good gifts from God in creation
* Sanctification of marriage by the word of God and prayer
* In the Christian rite of marriage
* In the divine service
* In daily devotions
* Transformation of marriage into holy matrimony: holy estate
* Thanksgiving rather than filthy talk (Eph 5:4)

1. The transformation of sexual desire

* Warning by Jesus about sexual lust in Matt 5:27-30: looking as secret doing
* Inward imaginary adultery
* Need for radical surgery by Christ: eyes and hand
* Confession and absolution
* The transformation of the imagination
* Connection between the imagination and sexual desire
* The importance and power of visual intimacy: eyes as sexual organs
* Sexual intercourse as uncovering nakedness (Lev 18:6-19; 20:11, 17-21)
* Visual sexual self-giving by physical self-disclosure
* Corruption by sin: fearful prudery and manipulative exhibitionism
* Exploitation by pornography: depiction of nakedness for sexual arousal
* Problem: unreal and not explicit enough
* Growing recognition of its huge damage: pollution of whole person
* Need for cleansing by private confession and absolution and by the blood of Jesus in HC
* An antidote to the corruption of sexual imagination and desire in the Song of Songs
* Woman as the main actor: conversation between her and her lover
* Use of imagery for sexual interaction that appeals to all five senses
* Picture of her body as her garden: admission by her invitation
* Imaginative depiction of male and female nudity by poetic re-appropriation of imagery from pagan idols
* Focus on the whole body rather than the genitalia
* Husband’s admiration his wife’s body and praise for her beauty
* 4:1-5: eyes → hair → teeth → lips → mouth → cheeks → neck → breasts (cf. 7:7-8; Prov 5:19)
* 7:1-5: feet with sandals → thighs → navel → belly → breasts → neck → eyes → nose → head → locks of hair
* Wife’s admiration and praise for her husband’s body in 5:10-16: head → hair → eyes → cheeks → lips → arms → torso → legs → whole appearance → mouth
* Model for the healthy exercise of outspoken physical, sexual admiration of the body in marriage
* Purification and sanctification of imagination and desire by God’s word
* Luther in WA 34:15.15-19: ***When a husband looks at his wife as if she were the only woman on earth, and when the woman looks at her husband as if he were the only man on earth; yes, if no king or queen, not even the sun itself sparkles more brightly and lights up your eyes more than your husband or wife, then right there you are face to face with God speaking. God…actually gives your spouse to you, saying; “The man shall be yours; the woman shall be yours. I am pleased beyond measure! Creatures heavenly and earthly are jumping for joy.***

1. C. S. Lewis in Mere Christianity, 88: ***The old Christian teachers said that if man had never fallen, sexual pleasure, instead of being less than it is now, would actually have been greater. I know that some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they are wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions that thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy.***