

Holy Sexuality
Leviticus 18
Leviticus series #14
September 11, 2022

PreSermon Comments

- Holiness Code - set apart and distinct in all aspects of life
- Today, frank discussion of sexuality

Three Common Mistakes

1. Avoidance - this is just too awkward, let's not talk about it
2. Acceptance - what's the big deal?
3. A myopic hyperfocus on prohibitions that leads to a distorted view of sexuality, the rejection of the goodness of this aspect of God's creation, harsh treatment of those who fall short, and crushing internal shame for the sinner.

*Translation: only focus on the negative

**Sadly history of Christian interpretation

Russian Nesting Dolls | Both Xians & non can only focus on what's "not allowed," miss the picture

The Fuller Picture **build from bottom up?*

1. God's love for humanity
2. Rightly ordered creation
3. God's creation of sexuality
4. Fallen thoughts and desires
5. Prohibited sexual activities

Layer 5: Prohibitions

Every single society sets boundaries on sexual behavior | Us: consent, and 18 yrs old

Set Apart Sexuality

Leviticus 18 ¹ The Lord spoke to Moses: ² "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: I am the Lord your God. ³ Do not follow the practices of the land of Egypt, where you used to live, or follow the practices of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. You must not follow their customs. ⁴ You are to practice my ordinances and you are to keep my statutes by following them; I am the Lord your God. ⁵ Keep my statutes and ordinances; a person will live if he does them. I am the Lord.

- Overarching principle of "set apart, distinct, holy, in order to be a blessing"

Sexually Off-Limits (also repeated in Lev. 20, so talk about it here)

1. Close relatives (*majority of this material*) | 18:6-16, 20:11, 17, 19-21
 - a. Father, mother, stepmother, sister, half-sister, granddaughter, stepsister, aunt (blood related or marriage), daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, stepdaughter, step-granddaughter
 - b. Rationale is not genetic abnormality, it's rightly-ordered family/clan relationships
2. Polygamy | 18:17-18, 20:14
 - a. At least a form of it. No mom & daughter, and no rival sisters
 - b. Some see the bible as more accepting of polygamy. I do think there is accommodation, but not when the fuller picture is analyzed
3. During menstruation | 18:19, 20:18
 - a. Lev. 15:24 addressing the "accidental" touching of blood
 - b. Possible link to the principle of letting the ground rest during Jubilee
 - c. Men: give it a break, she might not feel great right anyway
4. Adultery | 18:20, 20:10
5. Child sacrifice | 18:21 *More in a couple of weeks, but tie between sexuality and idolatry*
6. Homosexuality | 18:22, 20:13 *Addresses men only here, perhaps just more common*
7. Bestiality | 18:22, 20:15-16

Objection: But people in the bible did these things.

- Sarah was Abraham's half-sister | Genesis 20:12
- Jacob married rival sisters Rachel and Leah | Genesis 29
- Reuben slept with his father's wife | Genesis 35

Response: True. But stories ≠ prescription. *And reading the bible closely would lead you to conclude that it never turns out good, like maybe there should be a rule against it.*

- What if Leviticus was a commentary on Genesis, saying "let's not do stupid things again"?

Objection: Aren't things different now in New Testament times?

Response: In some matters, yes. In other matters, no.

All Followers of Jesus

Acts 15 ¹⁹Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those among the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but instead we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood.

Objection: That was then, this is now. *In essence, these were culture-bound customs that are outdated.*

Response: Which culture gets to decide?

- Them: incest and polygamy. Us: homosexuality, maybe adultery.
- Jonathan Haidt's "moral taste buds" is helpful. But what if something is poison?

Layer 4: Fallenness

Genesis 3 has affected every aspect of who we are | Total Depravity

- Not as bad as we *could* be, but completely affected in every way

Ephesians 4 ¹⁷ Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

Objection: Why is it wrong if it feels right?

Response: Our thoughts, feelings, and desires have all been affected by the fall.

- Hearts: Jeremiah 17:9 paraphrase, *hey your heart might not be all that trustworthy*
- Mind: *are you sure you're thinking clearly about this?*
- Desires: *every single one of us has desires that run contrary to God's design*
 - Gluttony feels good in the moment, but is deadly for us

C.S. Lewis Suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate on to the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let every one see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food?

Layer 3: God's Sexual Design

(big idea) Human sexuality does not belong to fallenness, but to God's good design

Why God Created Sex

1. Procreation | Genesis 1:28 *Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...*
2. Enjoyment | Prov. 5:18, Song 5:1, 1 Cor. 7:35
 - a. **Proverbs 5** ¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹ a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.
 - b. **Song of Songs 5** 1 ...Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!

It's dynamite, it's fire, it's more potent than any other thing. God gave us the ability to create new human beings through the activity that is more pleasurable than anything else.

Layer 2: Orderly Creation

(big idea) Rightly-ordered sexuality takes place in the context of marriage

- God created a world that is ordered | Genesis 1 light/dark, dry land/sea, sky/sea, animals for each domain, stars that order seasons, and male/female

Levitical Ordering

Leviticus 10 ¹⁰ You must distinguish between the holy and the common, and the clean and the unclean, ¹¹ and teach the Israelites all the statutes that the LORD has given to them through Moses.

Rightly Ordered Design

Genesis 1 ²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

Genesis 2 ²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

Jesus Affirms God's Design

Mark 10 ⁶ But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. ⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother ⁸ and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Layer 1: God's Love for Humanity

- Many metaphors and images for relationship with God

Husband God

Isaiah 54 ⁵ Indeed, your husband is your Maker—his name is the LORD of Armies— and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of the whole earth.

- Sad history of unfaithfulness, i.e. the prophet Hosea

Redeeming Love

Hosea 2 ¹⁴ Therefore, I am going to persuade her, lead her to the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... ¹⁶ In that day— this is the LORD's declaration—you will call me, "My husband," and no longer call me, "My Baal." ¹⁷ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth... ¹⁹ I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. ²⁰ I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD.

Gospel: Jesus loves his church like a husband loves his bride

- Died on the cross because of our sexual brokenness
- Rose again to show that a new life is possible
- Forgiveness for all who come to him

A Culture of Holy Sexuality

1. Set-apart lives | No apologies. We take sexual sin seriously here. **1 Cor 6:18** Flee SI
2. Courageous honesty | Leviticus 18 is quite frank. Too often “church folk” aren’t
3. Tons of grace | Hosea “God will speak tenderly” and Paul “washed by water”
4. Compassionate curiosity | For self and others. “We’re all broken, what’s leading to our disorder?”
5. Care for the wounded | So many have experienced wounding, Christ’s love heals

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 6 ¹²Everything is permissible for me,” but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me,” but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³“Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵Don’t you know that your bodies are a part of Christ’s body? So should I take a part of Christ’s body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶Don’t you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. ¹⁸Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. ¹⁹Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.