

THEOLOGY OF **SEX**



THEOLOGY OF **SEX**



THEOLOGY OF SEX



The mission of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is to honor God by connecting and representing evangelical

Christians. Founded in 1942, the Association represents more than 45,000 local churches from 40 denominations and serves a constituency of millions. For more information about the NAE, visit www.nae.net.



The National Association of Evangelicals established the NAE Generation Forum to explore the potential for evangelical Christians to be involved in collaborative efforts aimed

at reducing the number of abortions in the United States. For more information about the Generation Forum, visit www.naegeneration.com.

Copyright © 2012 National Association of Evangelicals

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NKJV is a trademark of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Turn on the television. Go to a movie. Listen to the lyrics of a popular song. Explicit sexual messages and experiences permeate our culture. Contemporary media portray people engaged in the most intimate forms of sexual behavior simply for physical gratification or recreation. On college campuses or in retirement centers, a couple may debate whether to go bicycling, see a movie, or have intercourse. All three might even be viewed as morally equivalent choices. Is this change freeing and good? For many people, it seems, there is no sense that sexual acts have a deeper meaning than mere fleeting satisfaction.

When it comes to sex, evangelical Christians are often known more for what they oppose than for what they affirm. In addition, evangelicals are often viewed as being out of touch and espousing 19th century standards.

When sex is experienced as God intended, it is one of his greatest gifts to humanity.

However, what evangelicals believe about sex may surprise you! Our sexuality is a core element of our

humanity, with physical, relational and spiritual components. When sex is experienced as God intended, it is one of his greatest gifts to humanity. Because of this, the evangelical Christian church should teach and model a robust, joyful vision of sexuality that is rooted in God's plan for his creation.

Although our sexuality was marred when sin entered the world (see Genesis 3), through Christ we have the opportunity to redeem and celebrate it. We need a view of sexuality that is biblically rooted, faithful to historic orthodox understandings of humanity, and realistic about the challenges of living biblically so that God will be honored.

Join us as we trace the biblical account of humans as sexual beings and identify the tensions between sex as God intended it and sex as people often experience it. For those who wish to live happily and responsibly as single or married persons, these words may serve as a guide toward celebrating the fullness of sex.

SEX IN THE BEGINNING

Human sexuality and sex are good gifts of God, given from the beginning of creation. In the first and second chapters of Genesis we discover that God created humans with sexual capacity, sexual drives, a mandate for procreation and a longing for physical oneness. After God had created humans—male and female in his image—he looked at all he had made and pronounced it “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

This stands in stark contrast to the way many Christians through the centuries have thought about sex and to the way they have experienced it. Asceticism, with its denigration of the body, of sex and even of marriage, has reigned at times as the supreme outlook in Christianity. Some church fathers even argued that sex emerged only after the Fall. This contradicts biblical teaching. First Timothy 4:3-4 clearly rejects false teachers who propagate a message of asceticism: “They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving... Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”

At creation, God designed us for embodiment: to live, find identity and serve God in and through our bodies. What happens in our bodies matters significantly to God, for the Apostle Paul calls every believer to “honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Some early Christians had difficulty with the biblical teaching of the Incarnation, finding it hard to believe that God would ever take on human flesh, not because they thought God was unable to do so but rather because they found it difficult to think of God coming to earth and assuming a body with physical feelings and human drives. Nevertheless, the Church affirmed that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. His own embodiment in human flesh (see John 1) is an affirmation of our embodiment with sexual capacity and drives. Our physical bodies are one of God’s good gifts.

The creation account in Genesis also affirms that sexuality and sexual capacity are essential elements of our relational nature. In the first chapter

of Genesis, we read that we are made in God’s image, male and female; that we are to rule over creation; and that we are to be fruitful and multiply. Bearing God’s image includes reflecting the perfect, divine relationship of love in the Holy Trinity—just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit show both unity and diversity in relating to one another.

“Yes, sex is good!”

The gender differentiation announced in Genesis 1 is developed further in Genesis 2, where the relational and sexual components of our humanity come into view. That the man and woman were naked and felt no shame is an affirmation that sexuality and sex are good gifts from our Creator.

Yes, sex is good! This is the most important statement evangelical Christians can make about physical intimacy. All biblical commands regarding sexual behavior are meant to protect the full meaning, joy and beauty of God’s gift of sex. God established divine frameworks for human life. These frameworks include humans as male and female, sex, and marriage as the context for sexual intimacy and procreation. Indeed, marriage is instituted as a God-intended covenant—place for deep relationship, happiness, and for multipurposed sexual expression. Jesus affirms this creational paradigm in Matthew 19. It is also affirmed in the rest of Scripture, which gives strong credence to the God-given nature of sexuality as male-female, sex as a procreative act and sex as linked to the covenant of marriage.

SEX HAS PURPOSE

The ethics of sexual intimacy are rooted in the purposes of sex, for only in that context do humans experience the meaning of God’s good gift. Morally legitimate sexual acts occur in the context of these very specific purposes, which are known intuitively and experientially through a divinely

given natural law and through common grace in addition to being known through God's Word.

Below are four primary reasons for sexual intimacy:

1. God gives us sex as a one-flesh union that consummates a marriage.

Genesis 2:24 states, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." This provides the essential model for marriage. Leaving father and mother connotes a change of status in the community; being united to one's spouse is a commitment that embodies what the rest of Scripture calls a covenant. "One flesh" refers directly to the physical union that sets the couple's relationship apart from all other relationships.

The physical union that establishes oneness completes the other elements of marriage and is an ongoing affirmation of the husband and wife's set-apartness for each other. When two become one, they are never the same again in their relationship together. This act is the ultimate act of trust, the most explicit abandonment of self. Although some couples may be physically unable to have intercourse, if the declaration, the commitment and the intent to be physically united are present, the marriage is consummated regardless. In contrast, when people have sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse, they have engaged in a life-uniting act without life-uniting intent. Although an actual marriage has not taken place, they have entered into an intimacy that God intended only to consummate a marriage. This act violates not only the partner but also God's intention for sex.

2. God gives us sex for procreation.

We read that after creating humans—male and female—in his image, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:28). God intended that humans come into the world through the most intimate, loving union possible:

the one-flesh relationship of husband and wife. The fruit of the one-flesh union is a reminder that this physical act is not just inward oriented; it is outward oriented with a generative quality. Sex therefore always has social and cultural significance. Not every couple is able to conceive and bear children. However, before the Fall this was part of God's plan for marriage. While some interpreters might infer from Paul that situations may arise in which one may justifiably remain childless by choice (1 Corinthians 7), for a married couple to remain childless for selfish reasons goes against the counsel of Scripture.

Sex is by nature procreative, and children should be recognized as a blessing from the Lord (see Psalm 127). This does not mean that a couple must intend with every sexual act to have children. From the beginning, God established multiple purposes for sex and granted humans a stewardship role over his creation, so there is legitimacy in family planning and the use of ethical means of contraception. However, pregnancy as a possible outcome of sex should be embraced with humility and joy. As we see in Genesis 1 and 2, life is a gift, not a curse. If God permits a pregnancy, planned or unplanned, we should understand that God is forming a new life in his image. Sex is a responsible act only in a relationship in which the couple is willing to care for any children that can come from that union.

3. God gives us sex as a way to express love to our spouse in the covenant relationship of marriage.

Humans naturally desire to express their love physically. The biblical book Song of Solomon may well be read as an explicit celebration of such love. When influenced by asceticism and negative perceptions of sex, the Church tended to interpret this book only as an allegory of Christ's love for the Church. However, a clear reading of this book in relation to the whole of Scripture strongly suggests an affirmation of physical union as an expression of love and joy.

Sex is not the only way husbands and wives say, "I love you," but it is a primary vehicle for mutually expressing love. Sexual intercourse and other

forms of physical intimacy communicate love and enable the couple's love to mature holistically. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the other is enhanced through maturing sexual intimacy. Sex as an expression of love in marriage is so essential to the covenant relationship that Scripture states, "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).

4. God gives us sex for enjoyment and pleasure.

Contrary to the assumptions of some Christians, pleasure is not the invention of the devil. God created us to experience not only eternal pleasures in the next world (see Psalm 16:11) but also physical and emotional pleasures as part of his created order in this world. Indeed, male and female bodies were created with parts specifically purposed to bring sexual delight. This argues that God's intent is that we should experience pleasure...in the right sexual context. The problem comes when men and women either make pleasure the only purpose of sex (Proverbs 7) or divorce pleasure from the other God-ordained purposes.

God gave the good gift of sex for very specific purposes: consummation of marriage, procreation, love and pleasure. A morally legitimate sexual act occurs in the context of these divinely given purposes, which can come together only in the covenant marriage of a man and a woman.

SEX AND THE FALL OF HUMANITY

Our sexuality was and is an essential, created *good*. Created in the image of our loving, Trinitarian God, we are relational and embodied beings, sexual beings, whose very natures bear the fingerprints of our Maker.

But our good sexual natures have been marred by the effects of the Fall. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, thereby breaking fellowship and the bonds of faithfulness with the Creator. Their violation of that

relationship was not, contrary to a common misunderstanding, the result of their having sexual intercourse. The first sin of our first parents was breaking faith with God.

Everything changed then, and for all humanity since. Though the underlying reality of the basic goodness of our sexuality remains, our experienced reality is utterly changed and marred. We must not, however, equate either our recognition of our sexual natures or our experience of sexual longing and attraction as necessarily sinful. Asexuality, or sexlessness, is not a prerequisite of purity. Though our sexuality is now necessarily tinged with sin, this is no more so than in any other area of our lives. To understand this fully requires that we understand the multifaceted nature of sin: sin as a disobedient act, sin as brokenness, sin as rebellion and sin as bondage.

Many evangelicals learn to think of sin first as individual acts of disobedience. But it is helpful also to think of sin as brokenness: Everything has been tinged with ruin as a result of sin. Disease, death, imperfection, twistedness...

Though our sexuality is now necessarily tinged with sin, this is no more so than in any other area of our lives.

in every way, the condition of our world (including us) has been contaminated by sin. Romans 8:22 describes how "the whole creation

has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" as it endures this brokenness. While simplistic biological explanations of everything from promiscuity to sexual orientation have been shown inadequate, evangelicals nevertheless have no theological reason to resist the idea that defective genes, distorted hormone levels, abnormal brain structures and connections and other biological abnormalities in all of us may contribute in some way to an experience of broken sexuality. So, too, do all of the tragic consequences of our experiences of the broken conditions of our world, such as hurtful family interactions, traumatic experiences of abuse and the twisted message about sexuality that we all absorb from a distorted culture. Sin means that we—and our world—are broken.

Moreover, sin means rebellion against our loving God. Every one of us experiences a deep inner urge to push back against God’s loving overtures, a desire to exchange “the truth of God for a lie” and to worship and serve “created things rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). We decided to be little gods unto ourselves, to run our own lives, to remake ourselves in our own images rather than in God’s image, to spoil his good gifts and to repudiate his gracious love.

In contrast to the Christian’s mature embrace of our sex—male or female—as a gift from God, the contemporary flirtation with “sexual fluidity” may represent a rebellious rejection of our biological givens. Such a rejection of the creaturely constraints of our sex represents a clear example of our rebellious desire to make ourselves in our own image. Indeed, we live in a culture that often seems to celebrate immorality.

**“Only Jesus Christ can
and will set us free.”**

Sin is also bondage. We, along with the rest of creation, are in “bondage to decay” (Romans 8:21). We experience sin as a force that keeps us enslaved. The concept of addiction so familiar to us today conveys something similar to the biblical concept of bondage. Addicts have destroyed much of the autonomy and control they were once capable of exercising over their lives by giving over that control to the dictates of a foreign substance or experience without which they can no longer function. Whereas they might once have been said to *use* a substance (as in drug addictions) or *enjoy* an experience (as in sexual addictions), they are now clearly *being used* and *used up* by their addictions.

We are incapable of extricating ourselves from the entanglements of sin; only Jesus Christ can and will set us free (see Romans 8:1-4). It is our

experience of sin as brokenness, rebellion and bondage that helps us make sense of our individual, disobedient acts of sinful behavior. A spouse’s adultery is not an isolated act; it is embedded in the web of sin that can include twisted needs rooted in biological sex, distorted character, relational misunderstandings, self-deception, rebellion against God’s rules about sex...and more.

Of course, those who choose paths that clearly constitute sinful violations of God’s standards can still exhibit elements of the essential goodness of sexuality. For example, singles who cohabit outside of marriage might display admirable fidelity and sacrificial love. To rightly judge their relationship as sinful does not mean that thoughtful Christians have to deny some good characteristics of these individuals, any more than we have to deny the fact that faithful married couples and chaste singles bear marks of human sinfulness and are always in need of God’s grace, purification and redemption.

The ways in which sin degrades and distorts our sexuality are almost limitless. The New Testament often speaks about two particular distortions: lust and sensuality. Lust occurs when we embrace sexual acts in our hearts and imaginations that would violate God’s commands if we acted on them with our bodies. Sensuality is a narrowing of attention and focus to the purely physical dimensions of our sexuality and, thus, degrading it. But the ways that humans misuse and distort sexuality are almost limitless, as when sex is linked with violence and the misuse of power in sexual abuse or rape; when we reduce and depersonalize others by thinking of them or experiencing them as mere body parts or commodities through pornography; and when we participate in a culture of sexual voyeurism or join in an orgy of sexual experimentation that ultimately empties sex of its true relational meaning.

These and many other sexual distortions often make both too much and too little of our sexuality. They pretend sex and sexuality can become the center of our personal identities, or idols around which we can orient our lives. They also trivialize the intensely loving, personal and precious communion

that is grounded in the sharing of our sexuality with another. These distortions fail to recognize the necessarily life-uniting, one-flesh-creating nature of sexual intercourse, that most intimate of human actions.

SEX IN TODAY'S WORLD

Sex and Marriage

Marriage is a part of God's plan for humanity. As first described in the early chapters of Genesis and affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19, marriage is a God-ordained, covenant relationship between a man and a woman through which the human race is propagated and by which, stewardship of the earth is maintained. As noted earlier, this covenant includes a publicly recognizable reordering of relationships (a man shall leave his father and mother), a personal commitment to another (joined to his wife) and a physically intimate expression of the covenant (the two become one flesh). In the pre-Fall world, this resulted in Adam and Eve's nakedness before each other without shame. The marriage partners were seen without disguise; they were vulnerable and open and loved for who they were and as they were.

This covenant relationship is intended to be lifelong and sexually exclusive (see Matthew 19; Hebrews 13). It is also iconic, intended to picture the relationship between God and his people (see Ephesians 5). It is to be marked by faithfulness, sacrificial love and joy. It is one of God's instruments for moving us toward Christlikeness. To make a marriage work, the character qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of Christians are needed, tested and displayed.

Certainly, marriage is much more than sex, but sex finds its true expression in marriage:

Marriage is the relationship in which the richest, fullest expression of sex is possible. The benefits of a shared history, a deeper trust, an improved understanding of oneself and one's spouse, an ability to forgive, and unselfishness all enhance sexual expression.

Sex in marriage is more than a pursuit of physical pleasure.

It can be a means of extreme closeness emotionally and spiritually, not just physically. In some ways sex is "wasted on the young" because the pursuit of pleasure can overshadow the pursuit of holistic intimacy of the type found in long-term marriages. Proverbs 5:18-19 suggests the deep satisfaction that God intends in a loving marriage.

Sex in marriage is character-forming. If sex is to grow in value through marriage, the partners must be able to delay gratification, be committed to the sexual satisfaction of their spouses, and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. Without the characteristics enumerated in Galatians 5:22, it is unlikely that sex in marriage will meet the remarkably countercultural standard that Paul suggested in 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, in which the wife is to meet the sexual needs of her husband and the husband is to meet the sexual needs of his wife.

Marriage and sexuality are inextricably linked in God's original plan. If sex in marriage is carried out according to God's design, with redemptive focus, it can lead us toward Christlikeness, deeper relationships and greater joy.

"Singles are created for relationship and appropriately long for intimacy."

Sex and Singles

Sex rightly belongs in the context of a covenant marriage between a man and a woman. But if all humans are sexual beings, what role does sexuality play in the lives of unmarried Christians? This is a critical subject, because

single adults make up a significant portion of church congregations. Whether unmarried for a season or for life, most singles wonder about appropriate expressions of their sexuality and where to look for fulfillment that is seemingly restricted to married people.

Unmarried individuals often live in a culture that assumes they are missing something, that love is fully realized only in “making love,” and that to be celibate is to be sexually unfulfilled and incomplete. For

For Christians, the perfect example of someone who was fulfilled and whole without being married or experiencing sex is Jesus.

Christians, the perfect example of someone who was fulfilled and whole without being married or experiencing sex is Jesus. Evangelicals believe that we “are complete

in him” (Colossians 2:10, NKJV), yet singles are sometimes treated as second-class citizens in the Christian community. Scripture provides the necessary framework for a solid theology of single living, and the Church has a unique opportunity to serve singles by providing a biblical basis in support of single living and single sexuality.

A biblical understanding of single sexuality recognizes singles as sexual beings who are created for relationship and who appropriately long for intimacy. If a key dimension of sexuality is that of drawing us toward others so we experience the life-giving affirmation of being loved and known, then we are sexual whether or not we are having sex. We have significant longings and desires that can be met relationally where there is no sex involved.

Cultural shifts have altered norms about physical involvement outside of marriage, raising significant questions for single Christians.

Negotiating appropriate sexual expression is clearly a challenge for singles.

Is it immoral for an unmarried man and woman to hold each other in a long embrace? to kiss? to cuddle on a couch while watching a romantic movie? Do these mandates differ if one is sixteen years old or sixty years old? Is something that is not moral on a first date okay if one is engaged? Negotiating appropriate sexual expression is clearly a challenge for singles.

Cultural differences often influence appropriate parameters around non-erotic touch between friends. For example, the North American church continues to be a place where non-erotic touch is affirmed. Women and men in churches offer hugs and kisses in greetings and farewells. But what are the guidelines for touch outside of the church? In some countries, non-erotic touch extends to men who are friends with each other, and to women who are friends with each other. They might hold hands and walk arm in arm down the street or rest side-by-side, their bodies touching as an expression of comfort and friendship. Allowing singles to express sexuality as it relates to touch may require that we examine assumptions and distortions about touch that are specific to our North American culture.

Nevertheless, while touch outside of marriage can be positive and life-affirming, it can also lead to unwanted sexual experiences and expressions of sexuality intended only for marriage. Faith communities that encourage individuals to walk in transparency and accountability with others in their relational choices and challenges can help singles express their sexuality in a chaste way.

Sex and Purity

The biblical mandate is clear: We are to pursue sexual purity, upholding fidelity in marriage and upholding chastity outside of marriage (see Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6). Extramarital sex is always irresponsible. Such liaisons are outside the good reasons for which God established sex. Infidelity to the marriage covenant is very damaging to a current or future spouse and children, as well as to oneself. As Christians, we need to be aware of potential temptations and be transparent with a person or group

that will hold us accountable to the hard work and commitment that both marriage promises and chaste singleness require.

Whether single or married, individuals will experience sexual desires that can lead to sinful thoughts or behaviors. Indeed, temptation doesn't go away after one says, "I do," nor does marriage guarantee that all sexual thoughts or behaviors will be aimed at one's spouse. Habits cultivated outside of marriage—both positive and negative—are carried into marriage. This is all the more reason to keep ourselves far from pornographic images, demeaning language, sexual fantasies, lust or mental dehumanization of others based on their gender or sexual orientation. If we have stumbled, we need to seek healing and restoration in our Redeemer as we set out again on the path to purity.

“Pursuing purity can be viewed as a spiritual discipline resulting in a more meaningful Christian life.”

Pursuing purity can be viewed as a spiritual discipline resulting in a more meaningful Christian life—one that challenges believers to examine vulnerabilities and strengths. Christians, married or single, can view sexual temptations as an affirmation of their identity as sexual beings and as a reminder of their dependence on God. Sexual temptation, even when it is a source of perpetual frustration, can serve as an opportunity for spiritual and relational growth.

A noteworthy challenge for Christians striving to honor God in their sexuality today is how to make sense of homosexual behavior. Consensus

among Christians about the immorality of homosexual behavior has been shaken through difficult debates in many churches related to monogamous homosexual relationships, the approval of gay marriages, and complex and painful questions surrounding what it means to offer acceptance, love and justice to professed homosexual individuals. Indeed, competing models to the marital covenant are found in current and ancient cultures, including polygamy, same-sex unions, serial monogamy and “open marriages.” These constructs lack essential ingredients that fully express God's plan. While a government might choose to grant certain types of “legal couples” selected rights based on a civil status, these alternate models must be seen for what they are: a flawed imitation of God's intention. So, although some homosexual individuals may exhibit some positive characteristics, homosexual activity does not fall in line with the fundamental purposes for sex. In fact, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and other passages throughout the Bible specifically identify homosexual behavior as sinful.

Sexually active heterosexual cohabiting relationships also present a problem for well-meaning Christians. As in society at large, cohabiting is on the rise for unmarried couples within our churches. While in the past, couples cohabited out of convenience or to rebel against the convention of marriage, many of today's cohabiters see their lifestyle choice as part of a normal path toward marriage. Increasingly, cohabiting couples come from Christian homes and profess Christianity. Church leaders have challenging choices: They can embrace a couple and disregard their choice to cohabit; embrace a couple while encouraging them to move toward marriage; or refuse fellowship to a couple as long as they continue to cohabit. While the church's role in overseeing and defining marriage has shifted over the centuries, a guiding principle has been to move people toward Jesus and toward biblically grounded lifestyle choices that honor God and simultaneously serve the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

The biblical emphasis on moral purity is not a devious plan to eliminate enjoyment from a Christian's life; rather, it is God's infinitely wise

foundation for our collective and individual well-being and happiness, as well as long-lasting family relationships. In this area of our lives as in all others, God call us to be obedient to his revealed moral rules, in no small part because these moral laws are given for our own good (see John 14:21; Deuteronomy 10:13). Righteousness is life-giving; sin has the opposite effect.

“God gave us a very good gift.”

While many choices regarding sexuality remain personal in our culture, the way forward in all these questions is not an individualistic one. Our strongest faith communities will be those in which individuals can find encouragement, conversation partners, fellowship and accountability. Friendship bonds within faith communities support our covenant bond to God and to one another. Single and married Christians can embrace meaningful relationships that demonstrate the inclusive, open, ever-expanding love of God even as they wrestle with hard questions regarding their sexual longings.

God gave us a *very good* gift when he created us as sexual beings. Although our view of sexuality and our experiences of it are marred by sin and imperfectly expressed, our task is to bring the redemptive light of the gospel to sex. So we advocate and seek a sexuality that is joyful, nonexploitive, respectful and aligned with God’s creative intent.

Sexuality is part of the creation order. It is to be expressed in biblically bounded relationships with *joy*, not shame. According to God’s original plan, it is to lead us to a deeper understanding of ourselves, of others and of God. Whether we are single or married, our sexuality needs to be affirmed and lived. Let’s seize the opportunity to live and teach a biblical, God-honoring view of sexuality as part of our faithful witness!

The next steps are up to you.

- If you are a pastor or lay leader in the Church, teach positively and holistically the scriptural message about sexuality. Don’t shy away from difficult passages or teachings.
- If you are single, seek transparency and accountability in your faith community as you strive to live life in the completeness found in our Lord.
- If you are a parent, take seriously the responsibility of educating your children rather than leave it to others. Begin while they are young, with age-appropriate materials.
- If you are a spouse, embrace a biblical view of sexuality and sexual expression in your marriage. Real life is much more complex than what you see on TV or in movies. To capture a biblical view of sex in marriage takes all the fruit of the Spirit!

DISCUSSION STARTERS

The questions that follow are in no way exhaustive in their scope. They are intended to be a springboard for discussion and exploration by church leaders and members of congregations who wish to dig fo more insight into the significance and sacredness of their sexuality.

For Everyone

“I’m not married. How can I appropriately express my sexuality?”

“I’m not ready for marriage yet, but I’m in love with someone special, and we’re committed to each other. Is there any problem with living together now?”

“I’m married. My spouse and I want to celebrate our bond of love sexually, but we don’t believe the time is right to conceive a child, so we are taking preventive measures. Is that OK?”

“I know pregnancy is a natural result of sex and having a baby should be exciting, but we weren’t planning on this pregnancy. Does the Bible offer any guidance for us?”

“I’m married, but I’m attracted to someone else. We haven’t had sexual contact but are emotionally involved. Is this wrong? What should I do?”

“I strongly suspect that my unmarried son/daughter is sexually active. How can I help him/her?”

“I am addicted to pornography. I know it is wrong, but I just can’t stop. What can I do?”

Especially for Church Leaders

“What is the role of the Church in teaching about sexuality and sex? How can I encourage healthy and biblically based discussion about sex in my congregation?”

“I agree that sex only in marriage is the biblical mandate, but I also know that a number of singles in my community are sexually active. How can I reach out to them?”

“What is my pastoral responsibility to unwed cohabiting couples in my congregation?”

“Should I responsibly and sensitively weigh in to help those under my care to make informed choices about family planning and infertility treatment options? If so, how?”

“I’m concerned by the number of abortions in my community. Is there a way I could link the promotion of a God-honoring understanding of sex with real efforts to decrease the abortion rate?”

“How can I create a safe environment for members of my congregation who are suffering from sexual brokenness to be honest about that area of their lives and to seek help?”

“What support system do I need in order to be sexually accountable and to remain sexually pure? How can I put one in place?”

an initiative of the

nae national association of
Evangelicals

PO Box 23269
Washington, DC 20026
202-789-1011

www.nae.net
www.naegeneration.com