NO WAY BACK, BUT A WAY FORWARD

In Genesis 1, God created the world and everything in it, and it was “very good.” Just two chapters later, sin entered the world and everything from then on was tainted, including both marriage and sex. When we ignore God’s wisdom and presume to know what is best for us, we walk a very dangerous path that includes the loss of intimacy and trust as well as potential destruction. Although we can’t go back to the way things were before the first bite of the fruit, God graciously provides a way to move forward through His son Jesus Christ.

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The power of human sexuality is immense. Sex sells. Companies use it to lure people into purchases of all kinds, from clothes and cosmetics to cars and vacations. We are bombarded with sex and sexual images in magazines, in movies and on television, in music, on billboards, and, most of all, on the Internet.
To put it simply, we live in a sex-saturated, self-gratifying society.

In the following pages we want to ground our understanding of God’s good gift of sex in the context of the great story of the Bible. By doing so, we can understand both God’s original purpose and the challenges we continually face because sin has distorted all that God designed.

Remember: Sexual morality isn’t just about avoiding something that is sinful and wrong; it is about respecting something precious, for our good and for God’s glory.

*Gary Inrig*
contents

one
Paradise Lost ................................................................. 5

two
Back to the Beginning .................................................... 9

three
Sin Makes Personal Pleasure a Supreme Good ............................................ 15

four
Sexuality Is a Primary Victim of Sin .................................................. 21

five
No Way Back...But a Way Forward ......27

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Walking through the Siq, the narrow gorge that leads to the ancient city of Petra in the country of Jordan, is an experience in itself. About a mile long, and usually no more than twenty feet wide, the Siq is lined with niches where religious objects once stood, as well as the remains of water channels and guard posts from the time almost two thousand years ago when thirty thousand people lived in this city that flourished in the desert.

As we passed through this gorge, suddenly our guide called to us to stop, instructed us to stand in a line one
behind the other, put our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us, then close our eyes and shuffle forward until he told us to open our eyes. When he did, there it was—the sight we had come to see, visible through a narrow opening at the end of the ravine—the famous Treasury Building carved deeply into the rose-red rock of a high-walled canyon. It was our first glimpse of the rose-red city half as old as time.

No matter how well prepared you may have been through movies or pictures, it is a sight that takes your breath away. As you wander through the rest of the site, you cannot help wondering what life was like thousands of years ago for the desert-dwelling Nabateans who lived there. Despite the barrenness of the surroundings, the community flourished until a series of strong earthquakes in AD 6 caused the city to be abandoned.

Over the years I have had the privilege of visiting these and other impressive ruins of the ancient world, such as the Coliseum in Rome, the Parthenon in Athens, Masada in Israel, and Ephesus in modern Turkey. Even in their disarray, these ruins possess a magnificence and are mute witnesses to what once was but is no more. There is glory in what remains, but it is a broken, marred, distorted, and damaged glory.

Broken, marred, distorted, and damaged glory—we deal with that very thing in our own lives. Specifically, as in the subject of this booklet, we wrestle with distorted and impure sexual desires. Where do they come from?

If God created humans in His own image, with marriage as His divine provision, what went wrong? If,
as God-given, sex was good, beautiful, and holy, how has it become the source of so many of our heartbreaks, our guilt and shame, and our problems? How did something good get distorted in so many different ways and become the source of habits that enslave us? Why are marriages and relationships so often frustrating and difficult rather than fulfilling? Why do we fight the same temptations over and over?

Scripture makes it clear that sexual intimacy is a God-given gift, a blessing within its God-intended context (marriage) and for specific purposes: procreation, connection, knowing and loving, and mutual pleasure.

Unless we correctly diagnose the problem, we cannot possibly discover the appropriate cure. If the roots of our sexual struggles are primarily informational, we should look to research or education for our answers. If our problems are rooted in social oppression and power-wielding majorities, we should look toward liberators or revolutionaries who can help us throw off our shackles. But if our problem is, at root, a spiritual one, we need to look beyond these things to God himself.

To find the answer, therefore, we need to go back to the beginning, to the place where everything went wrong. We need the clear-eyed realism of the Bible as it exposes the complexity of human sexuality after the fall. Such realism will keep us from naive and simplistic diagnoses of our problems, as well as superficial and deceptive promises about, or solutions to, our struggles. It will challenge our temptation to idealize and idolize
the sensual and the sexual, in the foolish belief that these can function as our deliverers. A biblical balance will also keep us from a reaction that spurns the physical and the natural. The fall distorted God’s intention for sex just as it distorted everything else. But despite the brokenness of our sexuality, true goodness remains.

The Fall refers to the moment when sin entered the world as a result of Adam and Eve’s first act of disobedience—eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
Few biblical events have such far-reaching consequences as those recorded in Genesis 3. These events have shaped, and continue to shape, the life of every single human being; and it is impossible to understand the Bible, human history, or our own lives apart from the events recorded in Genesis 3.

The temptation of the first couple, Adam and Eve, recorded in this chapter, is a historical fact. But it is not just their story; it is ours as well. Not only are we caught up in the consequences of their choices, but Satan has
also employed the same strategy of temptation in every succeeding generation. So we can profitably read Genesis 3 to gain insight into the tactics of the Tempter and the nature of the seductions that come our way every day. That, however, is not our main purpose in this booklet. Here we are looking at this passage specifically for what we learn about the effects of sin on our sexuality.

Genesis 3 is a theologically dense chapter, with the entrance of sin, the penetration of death into the human experience, the first glimmerings of God’s redemptive promise, and the encounter of humanity with the consequences of their own sin and life in a fallen world. However, it is important to note the complete absence of any suggestion that this first human sin was sexual in nature or involved sexual misconduct. Sexual intercourse is not the original sin, as some have falsely suggested. But it is true that Adam and Eve’s sin caused God’s intent for marriage and our sexuality to be marred and scarred.

At the conclusion of the creation account we are told, “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). The recognition and celebration of human sexuality in the context of the first marriage is positioned as the crowning glory of God’s creation.
Over this unclad twosome God himself pronounced the judgment, “It [is] very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Genesis 1 and 2 are two perspectives of God’s act of creation. Genesis 2 records the specifics of the creation of humanity, and fits within Genesis 1, which records the broader picture of God’s creation of the universe and earth in particular.

This depiction of the original couple, bearers of the divine image, has obvious erotic connotations as they experience pure pleasure in their encounter with one another, body and soul, within the framework of a God-originated marriage. Their uncontaminated sexuality is a magnetic call to deeper intimacy as each delights in the other. They stand before each other in the garden God had prepared for them. There is no shame or fear that their partner will find them to be in some way unworthy or inadequate. The woman stands before her man in her God-given femininity; the man stands before his woman in his God-designed masculinity. The two move together in dignity, harmony, and holy physicality, marvelously completing and complementing one another.

Sadly, that is not the way the story ends, and Genesis 3 traces the tragic path from the way it was to the way it is now.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not
eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”
And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach
out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Genesis 3)
God had a wonderful plan for our sexuality and our marriages. Satan had a very different one.

The biblical text doesn’t answer many of the questions we inevitably ask about the remarkable nature of this talking Serpent and his embodiment of the Evil One. Mystery covers his origin. There can be no doubt, though, that it is Satan’s hiss in the words of the
Serpent as he seduces Eve. And it is helpful to briefly consider Satan’s methods, especially since we encounter these same temptations in our own battle for sexual purity.

His first step is to undercut God’s Word. God had said, “You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Genesis 2:16–17). In Satan’s mouth, that generous and emphatic provision of a gracious God is twisted into the arbitrary and malicious prohibition of a mean-spirited miser: “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden’?” His sarcasm manages simultaneously to attack God’s goodness and wisdom, as well as to turn God’s Word into a subject for debate. The question deserved an emphatic denial from Eve. Instead, she chose to deal carelessly with God’s words, exaggerating His restriction (“don’t touch the fruit”) and minimizing His warning (“lest you die”).

Satan’s second step is to undermine God’s character. “You will not surely die,” he said. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Satan’s challenge is

On a superficial level, Satan’s accusations appear to be true, since Adam and Eve don’t die physically. But Satan’s words are pure deception. The instant they sin, everything changes. Their fellowship with God is broken, their view of themselves and one another is irretrievably changed, the judgment of God comes upon them, and before the day is over they are expelled from the garden. The inevitable experience of physical death, years in the future, is only the culmination of their transfer to the realm of death.
direct: God is untruthful and God is envious. His threats are empty—you will not die! God isn’t good; He is jealous and restrictive. He is not interested in your best interests, only in His own. He is a jealous tyrant, exercising raw power over you to preserve His own prerogatives. His rules are oppressive and repressive, serving only to keep you in chains. These sentiments still echo through our modern world when moral principles are discussed.

Satan’s final step is to challenge God’s authority. The idea of “knowing good and evil” goes beyond intellectual knowledge of moral and ethical standards. The real issue here is Satan’s suggestion (temptation) that Eve will relate to good and evil as God does, defining and deciding “the good.” She will become godlike, the determiner of what is right or wrong, good or evil. The irony is that Eve will indeed know good and evil, but in a way very different from the way God does. She will know evil because she experiences it and good because she lacks it. But she will not be able to redefine it, any more than Satan can, because good and evil reflect the unchanging character of God himself.

The man and woman join together in rebellion against God and, in the process, damage and deface the image of God in them. Eve acts on the basis that her personal
pleasure is the supreme good: She “saw that the tree was
good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and
that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.” For
her, the basis of choice becomes purely personal, so that
God’s Word is reduced to an option, not an authority.

It is important to understand the biblical teaching that the
image of God in humans is marred and defaced, but not lost. So
James warns in the New Testament against cursing “people who are
made in the likeness of God” (James 3:9).

God had never denied that the tree was good for food;
what He said was that it was not to be used for food, for
reasons He chose not to disclose. The issue was whether
Eve would believe God and His restrictions, even when
they might not make sense to her. This is a central issue in
our fallen sexuality—the conviction that we determine and
define what is good for us to do. After all, “It’s my body!”

The essence of sin is believing in ourselves more than in God.

Convinced that she was acting in her best interests,
Eve ate the fruit. Such a simple act, but what catastrophic
consequences! The biblical writer recounts it all with
remarkable brevity, just as he does the compliance of
Adam: “[She] ate, and she also gave some to her husband
who was with her, and he ate.” Had Adam been standing
there all along, silent and passive as the temptation
unraveled? The account doesn’t say. But we do know that
he had heard God’s command about the tree directly
and would be held accountable. Both Adam and Eve were guilty of disobedience and defiance.

The course of sin is remarkably consistent in the first couple’s experience and in ours. We push God and His Word into the background, all the while pulling our own understanding of what will bring us pleasure into the foreground. Sin always convinces us that we are acting in our own best interests, even if it means going against the clear Word of God. For both Adam and Eve, their own desires had become so compelling and the fruit so enticing that it simply didn’t matter what God had said.

There are those in our modern culture who see this kind of boldness as heroic. Read the evaluation of Eve’s act by Rabbi Harold Kushner:

I see Eve as terribly brave as she eats the fruit . . . She is boldly crossing the frontier into the unknown . . . [She is] giving us humanity, with all of its pain and all of its richness . . . [This] was one of the bravest and most liberating events in the history of the human race . . . She can be seen as the heroine of the story, leading her husband into the brave new world of moral demands and moral decisions.¹
God’s evaluation of Eve’s act and Adam’s complicity is, as we shall see, very different. It is not heroic or noble but catastrophic, both for her and all her descendants. As Adam and Eve soon realize, their action has ruptured creation. Nothing will ever again be quite the same. Not a single aspect of our world, our humanity, or our sexuality is left untainted or unaffected by their choice of rebellion over obedience.

Sexuality Is a Primary Victim of Sin

The first taste of sin was pleasant: Eve enjoyed the fruit enough to want to share it with her husband. The aftertaste was increasingly bitter. Adam and Eve discovered that sin affects us personally, with a loss of inner innocence. "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." Suddenly they saw themselves differently. Their nakedness was not new, but no longer was it free of shame. Now there was
an inner distress about who they were, not just about what they had done.

One of the fruits of their sin was a shame-based self-consciousness that instinctively caused them to cover themselves. What Adam and Eve covered with their loincloths was what made them different from one another, their sexual organs. Tom Gledhill points out the significance of this:

The sin of rebellion made them self-conscious as regards their sexual organs. Their nakedness represented their vulnerability towards their Creator’s hostile gaze. But why the genital region as the focal point of their embarrassment? Why not their eyes, which looked on the forbidden fruit with great desire? Or their hearts which decided to flout the commandment? Or their hands which actually touched the forbidden fruit? It seems that one possible answer is that their shame in each other’s presence is focused on that part of their bodies that fundamentally differentiate them. They are threatened by the possibility of exploitation . . . aggression or seduction at the very level where the two were to find their mutual at-one-ness.²

Their problem wasn’t nakedness, of course. It was guilt and shame, which could not be covered by a pathetic belt of fig leaves! Even they recognized this. Clothed in his belt of fig leaves, Adam explained his decision to cower in the bushes: “I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” Even if he had covered his entire body in fig
leaves, he would have felt naked before a holy God!

Clearly sexuality was immediately affected by sin. Adam had been instantly attracted to the woman God had made, and the naked sensuality they experienced in the garden put sexuality within the “very good” of God’s creation. Now, on the other side of their rebellion, one direct effect of sin was seen in their protective concern for their sexual organs. They had become “private parts.”

Think of all the corruption unleashed by the distortion of our sexuality—guilt, shame, pain, abuse, addiction, violence, and on and on the list goes. God’s good gift has now been twisted and distorted. Sin takes good things and not only deforms them but often turns them into weapons of destruction. Neal Plantinga, in his book Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be, doesn’t explicitly mention sexuality, but his words obviously apply: “Sin corrupts powerful human capacities—thought, emotions, speech and act—so they become centers of attack on others or of defection or neglect.”

Paradoxically, while a couple created to desire one another now hide from one another, they will begin to experience lust for one another. What they once experienced without shame will now become both a source of shame and a passion that knows no shame. As
Dennis Hollinger observes in *The Meaning of Sex*, “Thus sex, despite its distortions after the fall, is still sex, and God’s gift to humanity. It becomes distorted in its longings, directions, misdirected ends, and idolatrous impetus.”

Closely connected to the birth of shame is the birth of distrust. *Sin affects us relationally with the loss of intimacy and trust.* The fig leaves are evidence of the distance and separation the man and woman now feel. Covering their physical nakedness is symptomatic: They are no longer open with one another. Someone has observed that the real problem wasn't that they could see one another's private parts; the real problem was that they couldn't look into one another's eyes as they once could. They feel vulnerable before one another.

Sin causes us to hide from one another. It also leads us to hurt one another. When confronted by God with their misdeeds, Adam blames both God and Eve, refusing accountability for his own actions: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Blaming and excusing—the sexuality God gave to be a blessing has become a battleground. Self-justification nearly always involves self-deception, and that is certainly the case here. Sin, like a virus, has corrupted our most precious human relationship.

We don't know how precisely to interpret the statement about “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” While we don't know the exact nature of this experience, the text makes it clear that this was a regular part of the relationship of the Lord God with His first human creatures. They enjoyed the
privilege of a remarkable relationship with God himself. But this time the sound of His approach does not invite; it intimidates. Instinctively they respond by fleeing from God, not moving toward Him: “The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

For the first time, the presence of God brings fear and guilt, not anticipation and delight. Their relationship has been broken. Sin affects us spiritually, breaking our fellowship and causing the loss of spiritual life. Adam and Eve first fear God, then flee Him, and finally fight Him when He confronts them with their actions. They attempt to shift the blame for their actions onto one another, onto the Serpent, and even onto God himself. In response, God speaks solemn words about the permanent consequences of their sin, which includes their banishment and expulsion from the garden (Genesis 3:16–24).

What has happened? The man and the woman have chosen to violate the clear command of God, given for their blessing and their protection. In choosing to despise and disobey God’s spoken words, they have chosen to despise and disobey God himself. As Timothy Ward observes, “From God’s side, when the words of his command are set aside by his creatures in favor of their own desires and their own claims of wisdom, then God himself has been set aside.”

God’s creation order has been disordered. The longing for one-flesh union has been disordered into frustration and conflict on the one hand, and self-centered pleasure seeking on the other. The evidence appears quickly on
the pages of Genesis. The first known fruit of the love of Adam and Eve, Cain, murders his brother Abel in an act of self-righteous envy (Genesis 4). Women such as Sarah and Rachel struggle with infertility rather than fruitfulness. The one-flesh relationship God intends is twisted into polygamy, and the impact of this is seen in the tragic conflicts that divide the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Added to this is the worldwide moral corruption that brought on the flood (Genesis 6), the attempted violent rape and sexual perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34), and the sexual degradation that is found in the mistreatment of Tamar in Genesis 38, one of the most sordid chapters in the Bible.

Our new world outside the garden has taken us a long way from the “very good” of Genesis 1! And there are no exceptions. We will never meet an individual undamaged by the fall.


5 Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 27.
Five

No Way Back . . . But a Way Forward

In the midst of all this there is, however, a bright note. God does not abandon Adam and Eve or eliminate them, even in their sin and failure. His words, “Where are you?” are the words of a seeking God. He doesn't ask this because He is ignorant, needing information; He is omniscient. He is seeking them and their honest repentance. He knows precisely where they are, hiding among the trees clothed in their useless fig-leaf loincloths, and He knows why they are there. In His love and concern, He ignores their feeble excuses and presses them to speak the truth.

At the same time, in grace, He announces a judgment
on the Serpent that contains within it the declaration of Satan’s defeat through the offspring of the very woman who has been instrumental in the collapse into sin. The ongoing drama of redemption will reveal this to be the Lord Jesus, who dealt a fatal blow to Satan through His victory at the cross. God’s Promised One will be a human being who will strike the blow that decisively brings to an end the work of the Evil One (Genesis 3:14–15).

Undoubtedly Adam was deeply troubled by the declaration of the Divine Judge as He pronounced the consequences of sin. No area of life was left unchanged. Nothing would ever again be the way it had been. Adam would fight the ground all his life, and in the end it would win: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

It would not be surprising to hear him blurt out invective accusations against his wife, to call her a name that reflected blame and shame. In fact, Adam did almost exactly the opposite. In God’s awesome words of judgment, Adam heard the gracious promise of God’s final victory over sin and evil. We are told, “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” The Hebrew word translated “Eve” is, in fact, another form of the Hebrew word that means “life.” What a strange name for Adam to choose! After all, their
sin had set in motion the events that had brought about the certainty of death. The only explanation for Adam’s choice of the name Eve is that he had chosen to believe God’s promise, in direct contrast to the distrust and disobedience that had been at the heart of his rebellion.

God then provided a further basis of hope: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” On the surface, this may seem like nothing more than a simple act of God’s kindness, replacing their pathetic fig-leaf skirts with more substantial and durable leather robes. Yet further consideration leads to a stronger conclusion. The fig leaves represented the man and the woman’s instinctive and inadequate attempts to deal with their guilt and shame. They could cover their genitals, but they couldn’t remove their shame. They still felt naked before a holy God. But now God himself provided a covering for them, apparently at the cost of an animal’s life (the most likely source of the “garments of skins”). If this is so, the first suggested death after the fall is the death of a substitute to provide a covering for them. This covering is a gift of God, given not earned, complete not partial. All of this points us to the Lord Jesus, who provided a perfect sacrifice so that we can be covered with His righteousness. As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (NIV).

Despite this glimpse of hope, Adam and Eve are not allowed to remain in the garden. They have forfeited the right to the way life was, fresh from the hand of God.
Sin, their sin, tainted everything. So God, "drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

Paradise is not only lost; it can’t be regained by anything humans can do. The false claims and foolish hopes that we can reproduce paradise all mock us. Yet the end of Eden is not the end of God’s story—or ours. God provided a way for Adam and Eve to go forward, a journey that would find its climax at the cross of Christ, and its culmination at His return to establish a new heaven and a new earth.

When the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, took human flesh in the incarnation, it was God’s strongest affirmation of His purpose for our bodies. Christ did not come as a kind of gender-neutral being. He came as a male, taking a sexual identity that impacted all that He was. By His crucifixion as the Lamb of God bearing our sin, He not only crushed the Serpent’s head, He restored humanity’s lost relationship with God. His resurrection was not only evidence of His victory over death; it was also a pledge of His intention to reform His image in us. The holiness He intends is
not merely the absence of sexual sins, but an increasing likeness to His character. And we look forward to the time when He will return in glory and we will receive our resurrection bodies, when He completes His restoration and redemption of all things in Christ.

Joshua Harris puts it well in his book *Sex Is Not the Problem*: "The truth is that Jesus didn’t come to rescue us from our humanity; He entered our humanity to rescue us from our sinfulness. He didn’t come to save us from being sexual creatures; He became one of us to save us from the reign of sin and lust, which ruins our sexuality."

One of the painful experiences of life is the discovery that we cannot go back. Once virginity has been given, it cannot be regained. Once adultery has been committed, once imagination has been defiled through pornography or sexual experimentation, once . . . the list goes on. There is no way back. But the glorious message of the gospel is that there is a way forward—through the gospel. We need to refuse to hide behind fig leaves, attempting to hide our guilt and shame. We need to stand as we are before a holy God, trusting His promise that there is a covering for us—the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, made available through His death on the cross. We cannot go back, but by faith we can go forward, covered by the provision of the Lord Jesus and accompanied by His gracious Spirit.

We are glorious ruins. We are not what we were created to be. The brokenness and corruption that fills human history is eloquent witness to that. Yet God’s image remains. Even though our sexuality bears witness
to the fall, it also bears witness to God’s original creation. And as we go forward in the saving power of Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, it is in the confidence that He is at work in us, and we are “being renewed in knowledge after the image of [our] creator” (COLOSSIANS 3:10).

We do not glorify God merely by avoiding sexual sin, although clearly that is part of what God’s Word calls us to do. But we most fully glorify God when we realize the purpose for which we were created, and employ and enjoy His good gifts as He intended.

The creation account makes three things clear:

Sex is a God-given blessing. It is God’s idea, not ours.

Sex has a God-intended context: marriage.

Sex has a God-designed purpose: intimacy.

When we trust Him by living within these boundaries under His authority in this most personal part of our lives, God receives glory and we display and enjoy the way life ought to be.

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