

Introduction

Sexual intimacy can be a delicate subject. Yet we live in a sex-oriented society and it is pushed upon us from many directions. The Apostle Paul in Romans 1:24a indicated that this pre-occupation with sex is a result of rebellion against God. When man rejected God, “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity ...” The misuse of sex gets worse and worse as man gets further from God.

God gave sexual intimacy to man and woman in marriage. God has placed that boundary around marriage for our good. It is proper and good within marriage, but sinful outside of marriage. Looking from both perspectives helps better understand the boundaries which God established.

I. *Sexual intimacy within marriage is right and proper (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).*

God’s establishment of marriage and His command to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28) implies that God intended sexual intimacy in marriage. Paul furthermore associates the united of a man with his wife (Genesis 2:24) with sexual relations (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:16). As something right and proper within marriage, there are biblical principles for it.

1. ***Fidelity: Marriage is a monogamous relationship of mutual fidelity (7:2).*** Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman in which sexual intimacy helps guard against immorality. This assumes faithfulness.
2. ***Liability: Marriage obligates a person to give sexually to the spouse (7:3).*** The emphasis is not on receiving but giving what rightfully belongs to the partner.
3. ***Authority: Marriage gives authority over one’s body to the spouse (7:4).*** When two become one flesh (Genesis 2:24), each relinquishes sole authority of his or her own body. Furthermore, God has placed a husband and wife with regard to sexual relations on an equal level.
4. ***Priority: Marriage removes even prayer as a reason to forego sexual relations unless the pause is brief and by mutual consent (7:5).*** To withhold sexual intimacy is to steal from the spouse. Yet a couple can agree for a limited time to abstain for the sake of prayer. Prayer is a high priority in the Christian life. But even prayer warrants only a temporary abstention from sexual relations.

Sexual intimacy within marriage is created by God as both right and proper. He requires a married couple to work at it together.

II. *Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is sinful (1 Corinthians 6:12–20; Matthew 5:27–28).*

God has enclosed sexual intimacy within marriage. Both gentile Corinthians and many Jews would have thought differently. The Corinthians were infamous for their sexual immorality, but even Jews often limited adultery to improper relationships with married women. So, God had to correct both Jew and Gentile. Two principles are extremely counter-cultural.

1. *The believer does not have freedom to misuse the body.*

When a person places their trust in Jesus, God not only forgives their sin, He also connects the believer to other believers and to Christ as a member of His Body (1 Corinthians 6:15). Therefore, what you do with your body, you do with Christ. You do not have the freedom to do with your body as you wish, but must submit our bodies to His will.

God by His Spirit lives in the bodies of believer (1 Corinthians 6:19). You may have control over your body, but you take God with you into everything you do. God has purchased the believer with the blood of Jesus. Therefore, the believer is obligated to do the body that which God wants done. He says, flee from all types of sexual sins. It is for your own good and for the glory of God. The young man portrayed in Proverbs 7 should have fled from the adulterous woman. But instead he followed her, “like an ox going to the slaughter” (7:22a). Outside of marriage sexual intimacy will eventually destroy a person.

2. *The believer does not have freedom even to indulge in immoral thoughts.*

Jesus made this clear in the Sermon on the Mount. Sexual immorality begins in the heart and can take place in the heart (Matthew 5:27–28). Pornography and lust are sin for both men and women. Furthermore, what begins in the mind, often leads to action. So don’t start down that path. Flee, even if it means taking drastic measures (Matthew 5:29).

God created sexual intimacy as part of His very good creation for a husband and wife to enjoy. He enclosed it in marriage to protect and enhance it. Outside of marriage it is sinful rebellion against God’s design and purpose, which will eventually lead to a person’s own harm.

God uses the relationship of husband and wife to picture His relationship to His people. God even calls unfaithfulness to Him spiritual adultery. It is an important picture to maintain pure.

Sexual sins have a special seriousness, because they are against one’s own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). Sexual sins distort the picture of the relationship of God to His people and corrupt the picture which we should have of God Himself. Flee from sexual immorality.

But the married may treat sexual intimacy as a gift from God to serve the partner and to enjoy. God has enclosed sexual intimacy in marriage and that is where it belongs.