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DEVELOPING BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP
TRAINING FOR ANCHORED CHRISTIAN
COUNSELING OF FERNANDINA
BEACH, FLORIDA

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DEVELOPING BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP
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To my wife, Allison, and our children, Seth, Kallie, Luke, Brooke, and Camille.

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PREFACE

Many people have come alongside me in life and ministry to make this project possible. No one has been a greater source of constant love, support, and encouragement than my wife, Allison. Always the constant cheerleader and partner, she has walked beside me through every milestone in marriage, ministry, and this doctoral journey. She has laughed with me, cried with me, and grown with me every step of the way. I could not have made it here without you. I am also incredibly thankful to be the father of Seth, Kallie, Luke, Brooke, and Camille. I have no greater joy than to know that my children are walking in the truth. My wife and children are the greatest joys of my life. I pray that they will continue to chase hard after Jesus.

There are many other people to who helped me along the way. First, I am thankful for my late father, Mike Johns, and mother, Judy Johns, who lived with little and sacrificed much to always support me. I wish my dad could be here to celebrate with me. Second, I am thankful for my wife's parents, David and Diane Taylor, who have loved and supported me as one of their own. Third, I am thankful for the parents, students, people, and staff of Park Spring Bible Church in Arlington, TX and First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, FL, my two former churches. They loved, supported, and served me well in my journey as a youth pastor. Thank you all for your faithfulness as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Shane Johns

Fernandina Beach, Florida

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fourteenth century, the Black Death claimed more than half of the population of Europe.¹ Fifty percent is a staggering statistic when it is referencing the number of deaths that could have been greatly reduced by proper sanitation. Today, the church is facing a different kind of plague, one that is affecting the heart of her people. Sexual sin, with its addiction and trauma, infects swiftly and thoroughly. While sexual sin may not result in physical death, it effectively destroys individuals, families, and churches.

As with any pandemic, the young are often more susceptible to infection. Yet the church seems to be as naive about sexual sin among students as the fourteenth century Europeans were about the cause of the plague. The same is true of the student population of the local churches of northeast Florida. My experience in a previous ministry context as a student pastor in this area allowed me to observe this firsthand. During my time as Student Pastor of a local church, I sought permission from my pastoral leadership to conduct a study examining the depth and frequency that our high school students struggled with sexual sin. More than 300 students were polled using an anonymous online survey.² The survey revealed that the students of that ministry struggled with sexual sin to a degree that matches national averages.³ Fifty-five percent of 9th-12th

¹ P. L. Walker, "A Pest in the Land: New World Epidemics in a Global Perspective - Alchon, Suzanne Austin," *JOURNAL- ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE* 12, no. 1 (2006): 219–20.

² This study was fully commissioned, supervised, and completed by church leadership of the local church and with parental permission. All statistics derived from the survey was previous to and separate from any instrumentation contained in this project.

³ Thirty-two percent of teenagers surveyed admitted to intentionally accessing nude or pornographic content online. Of these, forty-three percent do so on a weekly basis. Only twelve percent of

graders reported at least some kind of struggle with sexual sin ranging from sexual activity to sexual addiction.⁴

The goal and heart of this project is to develop a program of biblical sexuality discipleship that equips parents and students to pursue sexual purity that is sustained into adulthood.

Context

Student ministries across northeast Florida rely on adult volunteers to help disciple the student population within local churches. These adult leaders, along with the parents of students, are crucial in overcoming the epidemic of sexual sin within the adolescent population of the local church. The adult volunteers and parents of these ministries are the focus of this ministry project.

Conventional wisdom in ministry acknowledges that it is not a matter of whether or not sexual sin exists among the members of a ministry, instead the questions become how many are struggling and whether or not they have been identified. Perhaps, more telling is whether or not a culture of grace is present enough for struggling students to seek help. If they were to seek help, would there be anyone to help them?

For centuries, the Greco-Roman characteristic of compartmentalized living has enabled a stark distinction between the public and private areas of life. This is especially true in today's student culture. Social media, digital technology, and an over-sexualized society have become a wasteland for students who have fallen into sexual sin. Sexual sin is rampant among students, yet many student pastors and parents seem to be content to remain ignorant of the issues as long as such issues remain in the shadows of

parents knew their teens were accessing pornography. "The Digital Divide: How The Online Behavior of Teens Is Getting Past Parents | PDF | Adolescence | Social Networking Service," accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/document/98269655/The-Digital-Divide-How-the-Online-Behavior-of-Teens-is-Getting-Past-Parents>.

⁴ Statistics are derived directly from the survey that was specifically developed for and administered to the high school students of the local church using Survey Monkey.

privacy. These shadows are the hiding places for sexual addiction, frequent sexual encounters, same-sex attraction, sexual assaults, and transgenderism. The adolescent population within the local church is no different than any other group that struggles greatly with sexual sin. These difficulties are a result of both individual sin struggles and sin ignored or perpetrated by others.

During my time as Student Pastor in my previous ministry context, we made a concerted effort to develop a culture of grace that sought to encourage struggling students to come out of the shadows of their sin and pain. We accomplished this through sermon series, volunteer training, parent training, special discipleship programs, honest dialogue, and biblical counseling. We were not prepared for the pervasiveness of the issues that came to light as a result of this new culture of grace. As students began to feel safe and no longer feared ostracization for revealing their darkest secrets, they brought their pain to adult leaders in overwhelming numbers.⁵ We were astounded at the number of students who made their burdens known.

The high number of students who reported sexual sin and sexual assaults led to a desire to get a better understanding of what we were facing. I developed the online survey to help identify the nature and frequency of their struggles. The survey and link were provided to parents for preview. These students were considered to be a large portion of the core of our student ministry rather than nominal attendees. We discovered that our students' struggles closely resembled the national averages. The following are some of those key statistics:

1. Fifty-nine percent of our students admitted to viewing pornography. Of that percentage, forty-nine percent were female.
2. Forty percent indicated that they view pornography on a weekly basis with nearly fifty percent of them being female.

⁵ It is important to provide the context that church mentioned here was a historical mega church in the SBC and had a high school ministry student population of more than three hundred 9th-12th grade students.

3. Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated that their primary access to pornography was a mobile device.
4. Forty-six percent of students indicated receiving a sexually explicit text. Twenty percent admitted to sending one themselves.
5. Nine percent of students admitted to engaging in online dialogue with a stranger.
6. Forty-five percent of students indicated that they have not engaged in sexual behavior.
7. Of the fifty-five percent who did indicate engaging in sexual behavior, Forty-five percent admitted to masturbation, thirty-two percent admitted to sexually touching another person, fourteen percent engaged in oral sex, and six percent had intercourse.
8. Fifty percent of respondents who admitted to engaging in sexual behavior, did so before the age of thirteen. Nine percent indicated that they were eleven years of age at first sexual contact.⁶

Since the time of this survey, I have transitioned out of student ministry and launched Anchored Christian Counseling (ACC). ACC is aimed at providing families with the counseling resources needed to successfully navigate life's struggles in accordance with the Word of God. While the ministry context has changed from the local church to the community at large, the need for biblical sexuality discipleship remains unchanged.

Rationale

Talking about sex and sexuality remains taboo for believers. It is difficult for parents to discuss such sensitive matters with their children. Discussion about sexuality has largely been viewed as the sole responsibility of parents, and the church has been happy to leave it with them. However, parents simply are not talking to their students about sexuality. If they do manage to try, it is often merely a conversation about the mechanics of sex or a simple message about abstinence until marriage. Our survey indicated the following about sexuality discussions in the home.

1. Seventy-five percent of students indicated that they had at least some discussion of

⁶ Statistics are derived directly from the survey that was specifically developed for and administered to the high school students of the local church using Survey Monkey.

sexuality with their parents. Of those, thirty-four percent were simply warned not to have sex, twenty percent only discussed the anatomy of sex, ten percent discussed the safe practice of sex, and two percent were just given educational material. Only thirty-two percent indicated having healthy discussions about sex.

2. Regarding the primary source of information about sexuality, twenty-nine percent came from parents, thirty-four percent came from friends, thirteen percent from media, ten percent from school, five percent from the internet, and four percent from pornography.⁷

Sex and sexuality have become so taboo, that many parents have difficulty articulating the biblical purpose of sex in marriage. Yet students are expected to navigate the turbulent waters of a hyper-sexualized society, armed only with surface-level talks about the “birds and the bees.” The average age of pubertal onset means that many children often begin to develop sexually before they enter middle school.⁸ The early onset of puberty is compounded by poorly monitored access to the internet, social media, and numerous avenues of graphic and explicit entertainment. Our children are being exposed to sexually explicit content long before parents begin the process of teaching them about their sexuality. Many parents often delay “having the talk” so long that many students are well on their way to developing issues with sexual sin. We must continue teaching our students about sexual abstinence until marriage, but it cannot begin or end there. We must teach them about God’s original design for marriage and how that purpose is traced throughout time and eventually fulfilled at the marriage supper of the Lamb where Christ will be united with His Bride, the church.

While it is understandable that the church has left this critical responsibility in the care of parents, it has happened without any follow-up or accountability, resulting in the rapid deterioration of purity among students. The apostle Paul makes it clear in

⁷ Statistics are derived directly from the survey that was specifically developed for and administered to the high school students of the local church using Survey Monkey.

⁸ In a study on the mixed effects of timing and intensity of pubertal growth, Cole, Pan, and Butler, found that the majority of boys and girls studied are at peak velocity in pubertal development at thirteen years of age. This indicates that the average age of pubertal onset is eleven and twelve for girls and boys respectively. T. J. Cole, H. Pan, and G. E. Butler, “A Mixed Effects Model to Estimate Timing and Intensity of Pubertal Growth from Height and Secondary Sexual Characteristics,” *Annals of Human Biology* 41, no. 1 (January 2014): 76–83, <https://doi.org/10.3109/03014460.2013.856472>.

Ephesians 4:11-12 that the church is responsible for equipping the saints. Therefore, the church must come alongside parents in this important area of discipleship. Biblical sexuality discipleship is a weakness within the family ministries of the Church that requires immediate attention.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship for the parents and adult volunteers of the local churches of northeast Florida through the counseling ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling.

Goals

Where parents fail in discipling their children in biblical sexuality, the world will indoctrinate in the silence. The silence in the home is leaving an echo chamber for the world to fill with lies. The church must partner with parents by equipping them to disciple their children in biblical sexuality.

1. The first goal was to assess the level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among a select group of parents and individuals associated with the ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling.
2. The second goal was to develop a five-session curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship.
3. The third goal was to increase the understanding of parents to effectively disciple students in biblical sexuality.

Research Methodology

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among at least five adults associated with Anchored Christian Counseling.⁹ This assessment consisted of an online survey that will capture a self-assessment of their level of knowledge using a

⁹ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

Likert scale.¹⁰ This goal was considered to be successfully met when at least five participants complete the survey.

The second goal was to develop a five-session curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.¹¹ The expert panel was comprised of one certified biblical counselor, one parent, and one student pastor. This course took place using pre-recorded video sessions to be completed at the convenience of the participants. Each session lasted approximately forty-five minutes in length. Participants were encouraged to complete modules.

The third goal was to equip participants to help their children to effectively discuss developing sexuality and deal with the temptations and behaviors of sexual sin. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey assessment that will measure the participant's increased understanding of biblical sexuality. This goal was successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Adolescence. Adolescence refers to the transitional stage of human sexual development that begins at puberty and ends in adult maturation.¹²

Adolescents. Adolescents refer to those individuals who fall within the developmental range of pubertal onset to adult maturation.¹³

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

¹¹ See appendix 2.

¹² Lorah D. Dorn et al., "Defining the Boundaries of Early Adolescence: A User's Guide to Assessing Pubertal Status and Pubertal Timing in Research with Adolescents," *Applied Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (January 2006): 33.

¹³ Dorn et al., "Defining the Boundaries of Early Adolescence," 34.

Students. Students refer to those individuals who are middle and high school age.

One limitation applies to this project. The effectiveness of the training was limited by the completion of the self-paced pre-recorded video sessions. If the participants did not complete all sessions, it was difficult to measure how beneficial the training has been. To mitigate this limitation, participants were reminded regularly and given a clearly communicated deadline date.

Conclusion

Sexual sin is rampant and pervasive in secular society. The same is true for the church. The church can no longer afford to leave sexuality discipleship of its student population solely in the hands of families with no assistance or accountability. Biblical Sexuality Discipleship is paramount to preparing parents and students to successfully navigate the hyper-sexualized waters of society. The following chapters will demonstrate how the church must partner with parents in disciplining their students to a biblical understanding of sexuality.

CHAPTER 2
A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR BIBLICAL
SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

The rise of age-graded programming in the local church has enabled parents to feel supported in their biblical mandate to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Over time, however, parents have abdicated more and more responsibility to the church. Yet, the church has often viewed the teaching of biblical sexuality and discipleship, as a whole, as the responsibility of the parents and not lay volunteers or staff within the church. Parents feel under-equipped, and the church has mostly left sexuality discipleship to parents. This has created a large gap in how parents and the church are discipling children and adolescents in biblical sexuality. Yet the Bible is clear in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, that “all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”¹ The Word of God had much to say about family discipleship and sexuality. This chapter will demonstrate a theological foundation for why biblical sexuality discipleship should be one of the tenets that the local church strives to equip its parents in teaching their children.

The spiritual consummation of Christ and His church at the marriage supper of the Lamb is the culmination of the gospel. Through the Holy Spirit, John the apostle penned the opening words of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1). These words help us understand how Revelation’s marriage supper of the Lamb was

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

always in the beginning (Rev 19:7-6). The union of Christ and his church is the foundation of the physical and spiritual union of Adam and Eve, thus becoming foundational for human sexuality.² It is against this backdrop that we understand the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 5:31-32 as central to marital union and sexuality. This provides the foundation for a clear theology of biblical sexuality discipleship.

Marriage Union of Christ and the Church as the Foundation of Sexuality: Ephesians 5:31-32

The saga of humankind's redemption begins with the union of man and woman. This beginning is more than a simple pairing of complementary companions; it is a foreshadowing of the culmination of a union with Christ and the church. The marriage supper of the Lamb is the crowning end to Christ's redemption of His bride (Rev 19:7-9). Sexuality must be understood from the foundational truth of the eternal union with Christ rather than the earthly bonds of human matrimony. This view also provides a more complete understanding of sexuality without excluding or diminishing celibacy in singleness from this divine purpose.

Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus centers marriage within the larger context of God's redemptive plan.³ Andreas Köstenberger points out that Paul lead with this in chapter one with the culminating purpose for humanity to be unified with all things under Christ.⁴ While Paul's letter is not exclusively talking about married couples, he addresses human marriage throughout the letter and connects it to the overarching theme of unity with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb.⁵ Paul uses the Genesis 2:24 reference to

² This is not to diminish singleness. The biblical understanding of marriage between humans is temporal and does not carry over to heaven. Therefore, singleness is to be considered just as sacred as marriage because we will revert back to singleness as we await our marriage with the Bridegroom.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2010), chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 1, Kindle.

⁴ Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 1, Kindle.

⁵ See footnote 2 above.

the one-flesh union in chapter 5 to anchor earthly marriage to the deeper culmination of union with Christ. God created Adam and Eve for both physical and spiritual union.¹³ The genesis of human marriage has reflected the image of the marriage supper of the Lamb from the beginning. Marriage then becomes the only avenue for man and woman to experience sexual relations biblically, making Paul's clarification of the one-flesh union in Ephesians five one of the foundation passages in building a framework for biblical sexuality. The language of Ephesians 5:31-32 provides an argument for why the physical union of marriage and the sexuality it encompasses is foundational to a robust sexuality discipleship.

Biblical marriage between the first man and woman as established in Genesis gives us both the blueprint and instructions for marriage, family, discipleship, and sexuality. It is in this plan that the original design for how God intended to reconcile humankind unto himself unfolds. The Apostle Paul alludes to this in Ephesians 5:26-27 in his description of reconciliation. Paul used the imagery of Jesus cleansing his Bride, the Church, by the washing of the water with the word. The expressed purpose of this is so that Jesus may present to himself a bride without spot, blemish, or wrinkle. The first marriage points to this glorious end. In such is the mystery of physical union. One can also see a glimpse of the purpose of sexual pleasure in such a union because it is a foretaste of the glory to come in the future union with Christ.

Paul's Usage of "Become One Flesh" (Eph 5:31-32)

The Apostle Paul provides a depiction of the husband-wife relationship by drawing its comparison to the relationship between Christ and the Church. However, there is more to this than mere comparison. The book of Ephesians contains more than 20 different references that relate to the Christ-Church union.⁶ Daryl Burling argues that the

⁶ Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* (Wheaton, IL:

Christ-Church union is the foundation for understanding human marriage, not vice-versa.⁷ Paul drew from the words of Moses in Genesis 2:24, in which God decrees that Adam and Eve are to become one flesh. It is important to note that this declaration was made before the fall of Adam and Eve, thereby having eternal implications. Andreas Köstenberger argues that earthly marriage should be viewed as an illustration of the union between Christ and the Church.⁸ Early Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter, describes the Christ-Church union as a “resemblance” of human marriage.⁹ This eternal union of Christ and the Church is paramount in understanding all earthly expressions of biblical human sexuality.

The Greek word for “hold fast” (προσκολληθήσεται) used by Paul is nearly identical language to the Hebrew word for “hold fast” found in Genesis 2:24. These words translate as sticking together so closely as to become one.¹⁰ This concept is better illustrated in the process of welding metal. Welding involves melting and joining two separate pieces of metal by an electrical arc, thus creating a fusion of materials into a new permanent bond.

It is clear from the passage that Paul wants his readers to understand the marriage relationship through the lens of the Christ-Church relationship. He draws specific comparison between the two in nearly every verse of 5:22-32. He further solidifies this comparison by using the more explicit language of “in the same manner” (οὕτως) in verse 28. Martyn Lloyd-Jones argues that “the relationship between husband

Crossway, 2014), 126-30.

⁷ Darryl John Burling “The Place of Union with Christ in the Theology and Practice of Marriage” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 193.

⁸ Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 15, Kindle.

⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 3:450.

¹⁰ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995), Logos Bible Software.

and wife is the same both in essence and nature as the relationship between Christ and the Church.”¹¹ Lloyd-Jones essentially prioritizes understanding the hierarchy of the Christ-Church union as central to understanding the husband-wife union.¹²

According to F. F. Bruce, the Apostle Paul shifts his perspective in verse 32 by referring back to Genesis 2:24.¹³ Paul continues the emphasis by calling the human union a “profound mystery.” Here, “profound” (μέγα) is where the English word “mega” originates. Paul uses this language to emphasize the mystery (μυστήριον) of the earthly union to the much larger (μέγα) connection – one that is beyond any earthly understanding of human marriage. Francis Foulkes used the term “primitive ordinance” in describing the husband-wife union referenced in Genesis.¹⁴ Paul then clarifies the mystery of this first order ordinance by explicitly stating “. . . I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (v. 32). Sam Allberry writes,

And, of course, at the very climax of Scripture we have the marriage supper of the Lamb and his people, followed by a vision of heaven and earth finally united as the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth like “a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). Heaven and earth at last become united, and marriage is the language that best describes it.¹⁵

The marital union established in the beginning is a first-order ordinance because it reflects the ultimate consummation of Christ and the Church. Paul’s language in this passage is a juxtaposition of the great mysteries of the earthly one-flesh union and the eternal Christ-Church union.

In light of Ephesians 5:31-32 and marriage being the only biblical expression

¹¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975). 138.

¹² Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work*, 138.

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New international commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 383-84, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 10. Tyndale House New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989). 167.

¹⁵ Sam Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 110.

of sex, the earthy union of husband and wife must be viewed as representative of the Christ-Church union. However, human sexuality does not exist within the vacuum of biblical marriage. Human sexuality is much more than remaining abstinent until married. Yet the church has tended to have a myopic view of the physical expression of sex within the sole context of marriage. Many individuals spend the better part of their first two to three decades of life as a single. Therefore, if the emphasis of Ephesians 5:31-32 is the Christ-Church union rather than the husband-wife union, then biblical sexuality discipleship must include helping single individuals understand how the expression of their sexuality is intertwined in the spiritual union of Jesus and the church. Additionally, the priority of the foundational truth of union with Christ also allows both human marital union and celibacy in singleness to co-exist with equal status because of their ultimate end in union with Christ.

Practical Implications of Ephesians 5:31-32 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

Biblical sexuality is inextricably rooted in the doctrine of the believer's culminating union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is the theological framework for understanding the earthly marriage between man and woman, as well as sexuality in singleness. The two are inextricable because of the new creation of one out of two from the spiritual union of one flesh.¹⁶ Therefore, sexuality must be understood within the context of our ultimate spiritual union with Christ and not just earthly marital union. Otherwise, sexuality can only be viewed in the context of earthly marriage, leaving broad gaps for deviation from biblical sexuality, especially as the unmarried navigate an over-sexualized society. The silent gap in sexuality discipleship within the

¹⁶ In regard to sexual union and singleness, celibacy in singleness is a sacrificial delay in the earthly pleasures of marital sex. This is because pleasure in marital sex should be viewed as a foretaste of the Glory to be experienced when the church is united to Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is important to understand that sexual union and pleasure associated with the marital sexual union is secondary to the primacy of union with Christ and church. Since the Christ-church union is primary, singleness is not diminished because its ultimate culmination is one in the same with human marital union.

Church has contributed to the continued deterioration of fidelity to Christian marriage and biblical sexuality. Consequently, as the traditional understanding of biblical marriage continues to diminish, the gross deterioration of expressions of individual sexuality also continues to be widely accepted by Christian society.

Prolific variations of gender identity and sexual orientation are evidence of the deterioration of biblical sexuality, especially as children and adolescents increasingly abandon traditional sexual norms. This is due, at least in part, to parents delaying or completely failing to talk to their children about sex and sexuality. Parents often put off these conversations until junior high, high school, and even into the college years. Unfortunately, when such conversations do occur, they are nothing more than a simple brief of the mechanics of sex and how a baby is conceived.

It is imperative that Bible-believing churches be proactive in countering this trend by intentionally developing teaching models that equip parents to disciple their children in a robust biblical sexuality. This will not be effective unless the local church becomes intentional in teaching their adult members about the biblical model for union with Christ as the foundation and greater purpose for earthly marriage. This is the only suitable foundation upon which to build a model for biblical sexuality discipleship that has any hope of countering the deterioration of marriage and sexuality within the Church.

The Shema as the Foundation of Discipleship: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Our union with Christ is the final and ultimate fulfillment of the Gospel. One can trace the roots of this climax back to the beginning with the spiritual and physical union of Adam and Eve. As discussed earlier, this union must be viewed against the backdrop of the union of Christ and his Church. This first-order ordinance becomes the bedrock upon which God commands Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). As the original family unit of Adam and Eve grows into the nation of Israel, the need for the law also grows. In Deuteronomy God gives Moses the Shema, which

becomes another first-order ordinance in discipleship, thus making the family the primary vehicle for the promulgation of the gospel through the teaching of the Torah.

Hear שמע

Moses writes “Hear, O Israel” as a powerful opening salvo to what would become the mantra of the fledgling nation. In time, this mantra would eventually be recited as a daily prayer.¹⁷ This passage is historically known as the Shema, which is simply the Hebrew word for “hear.”¹⁸ Deanna Thompson states that this declaration of faith was so central to Hebrew life that it was memorized and recited twice daily.¹⁹

The origins of the Shema stem from the ten commandments (Deut 5:7-10).²⁰ J. A. Thompson suggests that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” is a positive rendering of what is stated in the negative in the decalogue.²¹ In verse 5, Moses shifts to the imperatives of love with the command to love the Lord with all of the heart, soul, and might. This is more than a mere legalistic directive; it was to stem from a relationship based on love.²² “Love the Lord our God” is better translated as “and you shall love the Lord your God” to match the imperative in the opening command of “hear.”²³

Love אהב

The exhortation to love the Lord in verse five is more than a simple command. Rather, it is qualified with three requisites that further bolster the depth and commitment

¹⁷ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5. Tyndale House Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 133–34

¹⁸ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 133–34.

¹⁹ Deanna A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy, Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 76.

²⁰ John A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5. Tyndale House Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 137.

²¹ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

²² Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

²³ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

of such love. First, there is the command to love the Lord with all of one's heart. The biblical concept of the heart is commonly understood as the seat of emotions. Woods further attributes the will, mind, and affections to the understanding of the heart.²⁴ Second is the command to love the Lord with all of one's soul. Although heart and soul are often used interchangeably throughout the Bible, early Jewish exegesis indicates a distinction from the heart that is more harmonious with a dichotomous view of man.²⁵ The soul is the principle of life itself that should encompass a love for the Lord.²⁶ The third is the command to love the Lord with all of one's strength. Here, strength is more than mere physical ability; it is akin to resolve and strong commitment. Patrick Miller also attributes other qualities such as substance, wealth, and property given in service to the Lord.²⁷

The requisites in the love imperatives of the Shema are repeated in numerous passages throughout scripture. This is most notable in the Gospel of Matthew when the Pharisees attempted to test Jesus by asking him to name the greatest commandment (Matt 22:34-37). Jesus not only bolsters the Shema as the greatest commandment but also establishes it as a first-order commandment for the New Testament era.

Heart לֵב

After establishing the impetus of the teaching of the Shema, Moses shifts to how it's lived out. He declares that the words that he commands shall be 'upon' the hearts of the Hebrews (v. 6). Continuing with the theme of the heart as the seat of the innermost essence of man, Moses uses the Hebrew word 'al (לְ) for 'upon,' which potentially signals a deeper emphasis on its importance. Woods suggests that this unique

²⁴ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

²⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 102.

²⁶ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

²⁷ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 102.

emphasis, although difficult to interpret, may have indicated that Moses was impressing that the Shema was to be written deeper upon their hearts and not just on the stone of the decalogue.²⁸

Moses laid the foundation of the Shema with the imperative of “hear” followed by the fullness of the command. He continues the shift to the praxis by spelling out a specific rubric for how the children of Israel will live out this first-order command.

Disciple, Distinguish, Declare

The words of the Shema were to be of such importance in the life of the ancient Hebrews that they were to be internalized and written on the heart, soul, and mind. This primacy begins with a focus on the inner person to be lived out personally and privately. Moses shifts his praxis further by focusing on the following imperative from private life to public life. Miller asserts that this shift balances the importance of keeping the letter of the law with the spirit of the law.²⁹ This shift also indicates a move from the internal to the external by commanding that these imperatives be taught to the children of the family with diligence and dedication.

Disciple. The command to diligently teach these imperatives to children is more robust than the mere dissemination of biblical truths. Rather, the translation of the phrase “shall teach diligently” is derived from the Hebrew word *shaman* (שָׁמַן), which refers to the diligent and repetitive action involved in honing a blade to a sharp edge.³⁰ Moses then clearly defines the scope and sequence of how and where these truths are to be discussed by providing two areas of focus in daily life along with the duration. First, they are to be talked of as life happens inside the dwelling of the home. Second, they are

²⁸ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

²⁹ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 104.

³⁰ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 1041.

to be discussed as they walk about carrying out their daily responsibilities. He then prescribes that this discipleship should take place from the waking light of dawn to the culmination of the day in sleep. This scope and sequence provide a foundational understanding that the discipleship of children should encompass all aspects of daily life.

Distinguish. As parents master the discipline of discipling their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they are also commanded to distinguish themselves in public living as well. Moses instructs the children of Israel to bind these truths as a sign on their hands and a frontlet on their heads (v. 8). Hebrew tradition eventually developed the actual use of phylacteries, which involved the practice of physically binding pieces of parchment containing scripture on the heads and arms.³¹ Many scholars contend that it is difficult to determine if these words should be considered literally or figurately. It is apparent that the intent of the instruction expands the scope of the Shema into the public realm of daily living.³² This distinction signals to the children of Israel that the principles represented by the Shema must be intentionally taught and exercised both privately and publicly.

Declare. The Shema is rounded out with the final admonition to write the commands on the doorposts of both houses and gates (v. 9). At first glance, this seems to be a reiteration of the command in the previous verse to bind these truths on hand and head. However, David Brown suggests that Moses may have intended this to be a counter to the Egyptian custom of having the lintels, imposts, and gates inscribed with superstitious messages.³³ Woods argues that the witness of the Shema in writing aligns

³¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1994), 244.

³² Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

³³ Andrew Fausset et al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible: The New Testament: From Galatians to Revelation* (Fort Collins, CO: CreateSpace, 2017), 125.

with the larger purpose of Deuteronomy in moving from an oral transmission to a written one, as to make the words of the Torah clear.³⁴ Regardless, it appears that the intention was that the Hebrews were to display the Shema as a declaration of faith in Yahweh.

Two major considerations of the Shema are its audience and application. While these truths are intended to be taught throughout one's life, the clear targets are parents and children. The teaching that happens in the parent-child relationship was the primary vehicle of discipleship for ancient Hebrews. The Shema encompasses the whole of God's written word in both Testaments, yet these clear imperatives have lost their importance in the modern church era. Parents must regain the mantle in their most sacred of duties in discipling their children. The Shema must be so encompassing that its discipleship is applied to all areas of a child's life so that they will not be easily threatened by the godless influences of the world.

The Practical Implications of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

The Shema is a definitive declaration of the primacy of parental discipleship. Its broad scope provides a range of focus that encompasses the whole counsel of Scripture. There is nothing within the breadth of Scripture that parents should be unwilling to teach to their children in preparation for navigating the difficulties of life. This is especially the case in a hyper-sexualized society full of deviation and debauchery. Likewise, the Shema also provides a clear sequence as a framework for the target and praxis to be applied to all areas of discipleship, especially biblical sexuality.

While the Shema originates from the ancient Hebrew Torah, it was thrust into modern-day relevance when Jesus declared its impetus as the greatest commandment. The Synoptic Gospels contain the account of the Pharisees' attempt to test Jesus by

³⁴ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

asking him which was the greatest commandment (Matt 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28; Mark 12:28-31). Jesus's declaration in the gospels draws emphasis and a renewed impetus for the Shema's continuance into the New Testament age.

The Shema is clearly set within the context of the family as the primary vehicle for discipleship. In the Old Testament, the family unit was the primary means for all manner of discipleship in life and law. The family was the backbone and strength of society and provided the best and only means for growth in life and faith. Unfortunately, the family has suffered grave deterioration in the modern day. Even within the context of the local church, the family has weakened to the point that the local church has become the assumed vehicle for discipleship. This reality, whether by necessity or by design, creates a dangerous gap when parents abdicate their responsibility of discipling their children to the church. The taboo nature of sexuality within the church and home further exacerbates this problem by widening the gap where sexuality discipleship should exist. Even though the modern church is trying to fill the gap with general discipleship, it is leaving the more delicate issue of biblical sexuality in the care of parents, who, in turn, are ignoring it altogether. This silent void in biblical sexuality discipleship is being filled by society's overt doctrine of hyper-sexuality. Therefore, the church must be intentionally strategic in coming alongside parents in equipping them to deal with such a gravely important area of discipleship. The church must help its families take back the mantle of the Shema as a first-order command in fully discipling their children.

**Sexual Sin Necessitates Biblical Sexuality Discipleship:
1 Corinthians 6:16-20**

Sexual sin is rampant in both secular society and within the church. Sexual addictions, abuse, assault, deviations in orientation, and deconstruction of biological gender are just a few of the glaring issues that the church is facing. These issues are no longer limited to adult populations within the church. Children and adolescents have long since been exposed to every increasing deviation that continually surfaces within secular

society on a daily basis. The increased prevalence of these deviations is so voluminous that they are occurring more frequently in the various discipleship ministries and divisions of the church, including both children and student ministries.

Cultural Background

The apostle Paul was no stranger to aberrant sexual behavior. A closer look at his letter to the young Corinthian church reveals very similar issues that the modern church is facing nearly two millennia later. The ancient city of Corinth was originally a Greek city existing several hundred years before it was destroyed by Rome in 146 BC.³⁵ It remained a Roman colony for about a century before it was reestablished by Julius Ceasar in 44 BC.³⁶ The new city grew to power and prominence because of the mercantile and trade industries, making the city a seat of power for government and business.³⁷ Corinth's geographical location made it a prime port city and became a cultural melting pot. Its Greco-Roman origins, coupled with its new base of commerce, attracted a broad mix of pagan cultures. This foundation of power and diversity created a culture of godlessness that many scholars suggest was very similar to the modern day.³⁸ According to Ciampa, Corinth was prosperous, cosmopolitan, and religiously pluralistic.³⁹

The book of 1 Corinthians paints a picture of a young church struggling to navigate the difficulties of a city replete with pagan diversity. The sexual debauchery often associated with pagan worship intensified the Corinthian church's difficulties with

³⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), chap. 11, para. 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁷ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, chap. 11, para. 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁸ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, chap. 11, para. 6, Logos Bible Software.

³⁹ Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 2, Logos Bible Software.

sexual immorality.⁴⁰ Paul directly addresses the issues of sexual immorality within the church in chapter five. He used direct and heavy language, lamenting that even the pagans did not tolerate the type of sexual behavior that the Corinthian Christians were guilty of committing. Paul rounds out the chapter by casting judgment on the man caught sleeping with his father's wife and instructs the church to discipline him and cast him out of fellowship. After taking a brief hiatus in chapter 6 to deal with lawsuits among believers, he turns back to provide additional clarity and instruction on the issue of sexual immorality in the believer.

The Body and Incompatibility with Sexual Immorality (1 Cor 6:13)

The Apostle Paul turns his focus to dealing with sexual immorality in verse thirteen by addressing the prominent views of typical Greek philosophies regarding the body and sex. He begins with the analogy between food, sex, and the body. According to Keener, “food for the stomach and the stomach for food” was a typical Greek way of arguing that the body was for sex and sex was for the body.⁴¹ According to David Lowery, the Corinthians used the “stomach for food” slogan in justifying their immorality by reasoning that food was both pleasurable and necessary. Likewise, when their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied.⁴² The “body for sex” mindset is further demonstrated in the Greek denial of a bodily resurrection, which Paul addresses later in chapter 15. This idea is rooted in the Greek understanding that one was done with the body at death making it permissible to use the body for that which it was

⁴⁰ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴¹ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴² David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 516.

designed—sex.⁴³ Paul continues the body, food, and sex metaphor in his letter to the Philippians when he writes “their god is their belly” (Phil 3:19). Here “belly” is also a metaphor that means fleshy indulgence.⁴⁴ Denial of bodily resurrection also precludes a holistic view of union with Christ in eternity. Such a broken view of sexuality detached from bodily resurrection or future union with Christ creates an “anything goes” mindset toward sex and sexuality. Paul was dealing with more than the occasional occurrence of sexual sin. He was addressing a pervasive distortion of biblical sexuality that had permeated the young and fragile church. This acceptance of sexual deviancy is mirrored in the church today.

Paul counters this broken thinking with a clear declaration that the body is not meant for sexual immorality. It is important to note that while Paul narrows his focus to the example of sexual intercourse later in verse fifteen, the Greek word for sexual immorality references a much broader scope of sexual sin. *Porneia* (πορνεία) is understood to mean any type of sexual immorality and is not limited to intercourse.⁴⁵ Paul uses *porneia* or one of its derivatives eleven times in his letters to the Corinthians and 7 other times in his other epistles. Paul uses a total of three forms of sexual immorality, except for *koite* (κοίτη), in Romans 13, which specifically references sexual immorality in the bed chamber.⁴⁶ *Porneia*, which means licentiousness or fornication, is used five times. *Porneuo* (πορνεύω), which means to prostitute or to commit fornication, is used twice.⁴⁷ And *pornos* (πόρνος), which means whoremonger or male prostitute, is

⁴³ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁴ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁵ Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*.

⁴⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997). 3130.

⁴⁷ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*. 4521.

used four times.⁴⁸ Earlier in the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul specifically references adulterers and men who practice homosexuality, in addition to the broader term pornos (1 Cor 6:9). Paul's broader use of sexual immorality that includes all sexual sin rather than the narrower view of intercourse only is further bolstered in Matthew 5:27-28 where Jesus equates lust in the heart with the act of adultery. Between Paul's use of sexual immorality and Jesus linking lust and adultery as equal, the scope of porneia should be understood to include both sexual behavior and lustful thoughts.

The Body and One Flesh Union (1 Cor 6:15-17)

After providing his readers clarity on what the body is and is not meant for, Paul moves to link the committing of sexual immorality with our mortal bodies, which are in fact members of Christ. He asked the rhetorical question, "do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" Ciampa notes that Paul deploys his style of using forceful rhetorical questions followed by an outburst of denial.⁴⁹ The Greek word used here is melos (μέλος), which means a limb as a member of the human body.⁵⁰ Paul further drives the point of his argument by using a second forceful rhetorical question followed by a strong denial. This time he asks, "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" He answers with an emphatic "never!"⁵¹

Paul once again references the Genesis 2:24 passage of one-flesh union.⁵² The reference to this passage in his letter to the Ephesians focused on the connection between earthly marriage and the coming marriage of Christ with the Church. Here, Paul uses the

⁴⁸ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*. 4521.

⁴⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 257.

⁵⁰ Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*.

⁵¹ The Greek phrase μή used here is the same one Paul uses in Romans 6:1 when he asks if we should sin more so that grace may abound? The King James translation renders this word as "God forbid!"

⁵² Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

connection to emphasize the egregious nature of using the body, a member of Christ, to join flesh with a prostitute. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that Paul is using the example of sex with a prostitute to reference a specific example of broader sexual immorality, rather than limiting *porneia* to mean intercourse only.⁵³ The Jews of that time would have understood that intercourse either sealed the covenant of marriage or broke it, in the case of extramarital sex.⁵⁴

In verse seventeen, Paul adds emphasis by clearly declaring that those who are joined to the Lord become one in spirit with him. It should be noted that he uses one-spirit phraseology rather than one-flesh. According to Keener, Paul cannot say one-flesh here because of the Old Testament doctrine that God does not have flesh.⁵⁵ This is also in keeping with the mystery of the Christ-Church union that Paul discussed in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. The one-flesh union should be understood as limited to the corporeal bodies of man and woman. This understanding avoids any dissonance created by the error of mistaking the marriage supper of the Lamb as a one-flesh union from intercourse.

The Body and Sexual Sin (1 Cor 6:18)

Paul then transitions to establish how sexual sin is distinguished in severity and consequence from other sins. Rosner states that verses eighteen through twenty should be viewed as a strong admonition worthy to be treated as a discreet unit.⁵⁶ Paul instructs his readers by using the negative injunction “flee from sexuality immorality.” The verb “to

⁵³ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 262.

⁵⁴ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 5, Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁵ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 6, Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 261.

flee” carries a sense of urgency, akin to fleeing enemies or danger.⁵⁷ The verb used to describe Joseph’s flight from Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39:12 is similar to Paul’s usage.⁵⁸ He continues his argument with the peculiar statement, “every other sin a person commits outside the body, but the sexually immoral sins against his own body.” It would go against common sense and logic to suggest that Paul is claiming that the body is not used to commit sins akin to gluttony or drunkenness. Clearly, the body is used in many manifestations of sin, not just sexual immorality. Rather, Paul seems to keep his focus on the aspect of sexual sin and its connection to the union of Christ, especially in the context of the body as the dwelling place of God. Rosner argues that Paul’s distinction here is clear in that “sexual immorality should be fled because it is worse in some way than other sins.”⁵⁹ Leon Morris also supports this understanding by offering further clarity that sexual immorality is unique in that the sexual appetite arises from within while other sin comes from outside the body.⁶⁰ Morris also contends that sexual sin, and this sin only, is a violation of the body, a member of Christ, and unifies it with sexual immorality, thus violating a person’s oneness with Christ.⁶¹ Again, Jesus’s clear teaching that lustful thoughts of adultery and the act of adultery are one in the same supports the understanding that sexually immoral sins encompass both thought and deed and are not limited to intercourse. Yet, these sources provide only a partial explanation for the unique difference the effects that sexual sin causes.

⁵⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 262.

⁵⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 263.

⁵⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 263.

⁶⁰ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 7. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 101.

⁶¹ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

The Body and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Paul takes his admonition further with yet another forceful rhetorical question. He asks his reader, “. . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” This is in contrast to both the Jewish and Pagan understanding that *Yahweh* or pagan deities were believed to dwell in physical temples rather than human bodies. Paul makes it clear that the body of each individual believer is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Morris explains that *naos* (ναός), the word used for temple, means sacred shrine, the sanctuary, and the place where deity dwells.⁶² This clarification raises the magnitude of the offense of sexual immorality. If sexual sin is viewed with such disgust as it is in Jewish and Christian circles, how much worse is it to consider that Paul’s link here is similar to fornication within the Temple of God? Additionally, it is widely known that sexual sin is considered to be such a vice that it leaves the chronic offender in a state of addiction. In his book, *Wired for Intimacy*, William Struthers explains that sexual addiction occurs when continued exposure to sexually explicit material or behavior causes the neural pathways to become wider as they are repeatedly accessed.⁶³ He goes on to discuss how the neurotransmitters of dopamine and norepinephrine, which are released during sexual activity, stem from the same mechanism in the brain associated with drug addiction.⁶⁴ While Paul makes no reference to the addictive pathway created during repeated exposure to sexual immorality, it stands to reason that it further complicates the explicit impact that sexual sin has upon the body. A logical examination of the flow of Paul’s argument reveals an alarming reality of the impact of sexual sin and why he discusses it so much in his epistles. Paul’s implicit argument that sins against the body have a deeper impact is also

⁶² Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

⁶³ William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 85.

⁶⁴ Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 85.

bolstered by the fact that believers are bought with a price, making their bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all sins are ultimately offenses against God, but sexual sins are different in that they are offenses upon God because he dwells within the believer. The sowing of the sins of sexual immorality reap a deeper entrenchment and entrapment that often leads to sexual addiction.

Chapter 6 concludes with Paul's final admonition before he turns his focus to sexuality within the context of marriage. Paul declares that believers are not their own because they have been bought and paid for by the blood of Christ. This instruction keeps with his theme of using sex with a prostitute as the example for sexual immorality. The Greek word for prostitute is *porhē* (πόρνη) and is one of the derivatives of *porneia* (πορνεία). *Porhē* translates as female slave or prostitute. Both of these iterations involve a price that must be paid for the ensuing sexual immorality with a prostitute. Keener suggests that this is intentional and perhaps a wordplay to emphasize that God redeemed believers from slavery, therefore believers must glorify God with their bodies.⁶⁵ Morris indicates that the Greek *dē* used to translate "therefore" is sometimes added to an imperative to give a greater sense of urgency without delay.⁶⁶

The Practical Implications of 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

The Apostle Paul takes special care to deal with the issue of sexual immorality within the church as well as in the life of the individual believer. The unique cultural context of pagan society in first century Corinth shows stark similarities to the prevalent views of sexuality in culture today. The proliferation of gender identities, sexual orientations, and aberrant sexual behavior is not only widely accepted by secular society

⁶⁵ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 8, Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁶ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 102.

but celebrated with deafening applause. This grim reality is not limited to the outliers of society. It has long since infiltrated the local church. Pastors and parents are faced with these various forms of sexual expression at an increasing rate. Long gone are the days of simply standing against such expressions on the pedestal of condemnation. The Church is no longer backed by similar voices in society. Pastors and parents must realize that the void left by their silence in teaching a robust sexuality discipleship to their members and children is a major contributing factor to young and old abandoning the church to sow the seeds of sexual desire. They must move beyond elementary and awkward conversations that merely graze the surface of the purpose and mechanics of procreation. It is imperative that pastors and parents thoroughly address the dangers of sexual sin in a way that is appropriate for stages in development from young children to mature adults. The pitfalls of aberrant expressions of sexuality that the world continues to advocate are widening to the point that our children are falling in at an increasingly young age.

Conclusion

Marriage and union with Christ, sexual purity, and the Shema form three pillars for the necessity of biblical sexuality discipleship. The Shema is the pillar that bears the weight of the impetus to thoroughly disciple the next generation in families and churches today. No rational believer in Jesus would disagree with the dire importance to thoroughly disciple the young generation within the church and home. Yet, a cursory look reveals significant holes in the discipleship of these younger generations.

Conversations about individual sexuality are delayed until many students reach junior high or high school age. However, by this time many students have already been affected by early exposure to explicit deviant forms of sexuality, often long before adolescence. The Shema paints a clear picture of the scope of discipleship as well as the sequence of how it should be taught in the home. Two points stand to reason here. First, when considering today's hyper-sexualized culture, children must be disciplined in all areas of

God's word, especially biblical sexuality. Parents must not preserve their children's innocence in knowledge to the detriment of their purity as they reach maturity. Likewise, churches must not assume that parents are equipped to be thorough in this critical area of discipleship. Second, the rampant decline in society's view of sexuality necessitates that the discussion and discipleship on sex and sexuality must come out of the shadows. Equipping both the church and parents to effectively deal with their child's developing sexuality in a biblical way is critically important to surviving the war on sexuality.

Union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb is the pillar to countering the deficit in biblical sexuality discipleship within the family and church. Satan has waged war on the gospel by attacking the family and has done so since the garden of Eden. The biblical purpose of sex, sexual pleasure, sexuality, marriage, and singleness have become detached from their greater purpose in the future union with Christ and the joy it will bring.

Finally, the Apostle Paul's focus on sexual immorality in the Epistles forms the third pillar demonstrates that sexuality discipleship must be addressed intentionally, directly, and thoroughly. It is clear from his letters to the young churches that they were struggling to navigate the difficulties of sexual expression in an increasingly pagan world. More than two thousand years later, the church is facing the same crisis in sexuality. The church must champion her ultimate end in union with Christ by carrying the light of God's word into the shadows of biblical sexuality.

CHAPTER 3
THE DEFICITS OF BIBLICAL SEXUALITY
DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHURCH
AND HOME

Introduction

Satan first began attacking the family when he planted dissent in the hearts of Adam and Eve. Their rebellion caused a shift in the perceptions of sexuality and nakedness. For the first time, nakedness was associated with shame, causing a ripple effect to cascade through time, distorting God’s plan for marriage and sexual union. Since the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden, history has been replete with examples of such distortion.

The first sexual revolution of the 1960s is a primary example of such distortions. The rise of the “Free Love” movement, pornography, and casual sex resulted in a cultural shift.¹ This distortion of sexuality during the sexual revolution was one of the major contributing factors to the deterioration of the family, causing a rapidly increasing divorce rate.² The nuclear family began to weaken in both secular and Christian circles. With the rapid rise of divorce, strained or absent relations between parents and children became the norm, and the institution of marriage began down a path of swift decline.³

¹ “Free Love and Women’s History in the 19th Century (and Later),” *ThoughtCo*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.thoughtco.com/free-love-and-womens-history-3530392>.

² Jeffrey Escoffier writes that Justice Brennan’s arguments in *Roth v. United States of America*, in 1957, played a significant role in the battle over freedom of sexual expression in pornography. Escoffier, further states that while Brennan declared that obscenity in sexual expression has no redeeming value, he created an opening for freedom of sexual expression by stating that sex and obscenity were not synonymous. “*The Sexual Revolution, 1960-1980*,” n.d., 7, accessed June 15, 2022, http://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/sexual_revolution_S.pdf, paragraph 19.

³ According to data from the National Vital Statistics System, the divorce rate began to rapidly increase at the end of the 1960’s and rose steadily through the 1970s. Israel, Patterson, and Hetzel, *Vital and Health Statistics*; Series 21, No. 24 (12/73). https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr21/sr21_024.pdf.

Unfortunately, this resulted in a successful attack on the family, one of the foundational bedrocks of God's design in creation. It is important to recognize that while the entire family system has been severely impacted, the children have suffered the most. Because of this, children should not be considered merely collateral damage by this attack. Rather, they should be viewed as the primary targets. Enticing children with the sexual trappings of this world eventually break the cycle of family discipleship. Thus, further weakening the family unit and contributing to the ongoing issues in a post-Christian society.

Despite the proliferation of sensuality and the encouragement of free sexual expression in society, the church and Christian homes continue to struggle in protecting biblical sexuality. The taboo nature of sexuality within these Christian communities has enabled a generation of parents who are unintentionally perpetuating an absence of biblical sexuality discipleship. Children are often left to learn about sexuality for themselves amid the deafening noise of a secular society that beckons them to embrace and explore all aspects of their sexuality and sexual impulses. As secular society continues to steamroll the agenda of every person's right to free sexual expression, Christian families and the Church must be proactive in grounding their children in a biblical sexuality theology. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of why Christian parents and the Church must reclaim biblical sexuality through proactive discipleship.

The Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

Through the decades the Church's reputation for preaching admonitions from the soapbox of condemnation has done major harm to her ability to minister to those who commit the sins that she often rails against. Historically, this is evident in the counter-cultural approach that many in Christian circles have taken. Things like fiery sermons, pithy social media posts, podcasts, and public boycotts are examples of how the church

has often counteracted the world's view of sexuality. Juli Slattery, author of *Rethinking Sexuality: God's design and Why it Matters*, writes, "Christians have a long history of avoiding and mishandling topics of sexuality. For generations, we simply didn't talk about things such as sexual addiction, sexual abuse, sexual dysfunction, or even sexual pleasure in marriage."⁴

While it is still imperative that the Church stand as a light in the darkness by calling out sin, the preaching of judgment and condemnation should never be louder than the preaching of God's redeeming grace.⁵

In the past, there have been initiatives and ministries like *Passport to Purity*,⁶ *True Love Waits*,⁷ and its rebrand, *The True Love Project*,⁸ that emphasized teaching students about the importance of being able to give the gift of purity to one's spouse on the wedding night.⁹ These abstinence-based programs have now shifted to allow for an understanding of sexual purity that does not stop with simply remaining a virgin but also includes staying pure from sexual images, thoughts, and any kind of sexual acts. While it is critically necessary to teach abstinence, it is simply not adequate to teach the unmarried merely to abstain from sexual activity without the theological foundation of why this safeguard is important. Slattery warns that focusing on "compelling teenagers to stay virgins and exposing the many ways sexuality leads to sin" tends to couch sexuality as a

⁴ Juli Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality: God's Design and Why It Matters* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2018), 7.

⁵ Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 154.

⁶ Dennis Rainey and Barbara Rainey. "Passport2purity" (Little Rock, AK: Family Life, 2012).

⁷ "History Of True Love Waits | Lifeway." Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/product-family/true-love-waits/history>.

⁸ Clayton King. *True Love Project: 40 Days of Purity for Guys* (Nashville: B & H, 2014).

⁹ Lifeway Students. *True Love Waits Takes a Look at Courting, Dating, & Hanging Out* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2000).

“problem to be solved, rather than a territory to be reclaimed.”¹⁰ In many cases, sex education in Christian homes is limited to the broad biological mechanics of sex and how babies are made. In some cases, with older adolescents, parents may expand “the talk” to include the purpose of purity and the dangers of sexual sin. Parents mean well but are often not equipped to expand beyond these limitations. When parental conversations are limited in this way, larger theological principles are often omitted, such as the greater biblical purpose of marriage, sex in marriage, celibacy in singleness, and how they all tie into the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). Students must be taught the full biblical foundation for sex and sexuality. These conversations need to begin in age-appropriate ways long before children move into adolescence.

Epidemiology of the Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

According to experts on the subject, sex and sexuality are strictly guarded in many Christian homes.¹¹ Discussion surrounding these issues has become so taboo that many Christian married couples can barely discuss sex in the privacy of their own bedroom.¹² Likewise, parents struggle even more with these hard conversations about sexuality. Sociologist Mark Regnerus states that parents are so unable to bring themselves to have an ongoing conversation about sexuality that they adopt a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.¹³ Similarly, there are generations of parents within the church who are not talking to their children about biblical sexuality at all, leaving a silent void in one of the most critical issues facing Christians today. This silence is allowing the world an

¹⁰ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 9.

¹¹ Mark D. Regnerus, “Talking About Sex: Religion and Patterns of Parent–Child Communication about Sex and Contraception,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (December 2, 2016), 79–105.

¹² “Why Are Some Christians So Fearful of Sex When They Get Married?,” *Crosswalk.Com*, accessed July 15, 2022, <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/why-are-some-christians-so-fearful-of-sex-when-they-get-married.html>.

¹³ Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think About Marrying* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

unchecked opportunity to define sexuality.¹⁴

The lack of sexuality discipleship in the church and home has resulted in a glaring crisis that needs to be addressed. Jennifer Garrison's survey of current research found that the broad topic of marriage is well-represented, but these studies do not address the teaching of marriage and sexuality to children by Christian parents.¹⁵ This crisis is resulting in alarming amounts of students leaving the church altogether when they reach their teenage years. Barna Research found that among 18 to 29-year-olds who were polled regarding their reason for leaving the church, simplistic and judgmental views on sexuality was one of the top reasons.¹⁶

One of the reasons that this has become an issue is the perceived "sexual innocence" that parents have of their children. Lanae St. John, of Alliance for Girls, says that abstinence-only methods as a means of protecting the innocence of children are ineffective.¹⁷ St. John bolsters her stance by stating that failure to prepare a child for the onslaught of sexual content could be considered neglect or endangerment:

An unfiltered exposure to everything else that's sexualized in the environment without a reasonable explanation, or any context is troublesome. Or, if a parent does attempt to filter things, there's a whole lot of sexual content kids can see when the parents aren't around to filter. And then that lack of preparing the child adequately for what they might be exposed to could be considered neglect or child endangerment.¹⁸

This is also echoed in how church ministries tend to leave sexuality discipleship

¹⁴ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 15.

¹⁵ Jennifer Rose Garrison, "Marriage, Sexuality, and Christian Parental Instruction: A Descriptive Analysis of Perspectives and Practices." (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 10.

¹⁶ Barna Group, "Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church." Accessed June 13, 2022. <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church/>.

¹⁷ Alliance For Girls, "Innocence and Sensibility: A Child's Innocence vs. A Parent's Comfort," accessed June 29, 2022. <https://www.alliance4girls.org/voices/innocence-and-sensibility-a-childs-innocence-vs-a-parents-comfort/>.

¹⁸ Alliance For Girls, "Innocence and Sensibility: A Child's Innocence vs. A Parent's Comfort," accessed June 29, 2022. <https://www.alliance4girls.org/voices/innocence-and-sensibility-a-childs-innocence-vs-a-parents-comfort/>.

primarily to the parents. Current statistics show that parents are not having adequate or any dialogue with their children about sexuality.¹⁹ This further suggests that the church is not providing parents with adequate support in equipping them to be successful in discipling their children in sexuality. It is understandable that pastoral leadership in the local church would seek to guard a parent's right to disciple their children regarding their sexuality as they see fit. However, the lack of follow-up care by parents has proven to leave a void that secular society continues to fill. Parents and the church should be vigilant in protecting their children from unnecessary and premature exposure to sensuality. However, clinging to their "innocence" in an attempt to make it last as long as possible is leaving children and teenagers exposed and ill-prepared to withstand the onslaught of sexuality outside the home.

Deviant distortions of sexuality are so pervasive in our culture that one can scarcely go a few minutes without having his or her senses assaulted with sensuality and sexual innuendo. Studies indicate that there is significant correlation between early and frequent exposure to sexually explicit material in early adolescence and risky sexual attitudes and behavior in emerging adulthood.²⁰ This pervasiveness has resulted in the knee-jerk reaction of Christian parents to attempt to sterilize their children's environment from all things sexual.²¹ This attempt at a sterile environment has created a "false-inoculation" that, in reality, only offers parents a weak line of defense and ultimately leaves teenagers even more exposed. Technology and social media are now an

¹⁹ Regnerus, "Talking About Sex," 80-81.

²⁰ Lin, Wen-Hsu, Chia-Hua Liu, and Chin-Chun Yi, "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media in Early Adolescence Is Related to Risky Sexual Behavior in Emerging Adulthood." *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 4 (April 10, 2020): e0230242, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230242>.

²¹ At the time of writing this, June 22, 2022, Disney released the newest adaptation of the animated series of the *Toy Story* franchise, called *Lightyear*. Parents soon became outraged after learning about the lesbian kiss between two characters. Social media platforms were filled with concerned parents calling for further boycotts of Disney. A Google search on "Christians boycott Disney after Lightyear movie" resulted in more than a dozen articles citing Christian group calling for the boycott. "Christians Boycott Disney after Lightyear Movie - Google Search," accessed August 12, 2022.

inextricable part of the fabric of society. Digital devices and social media applications are changing so rapidly that parents are significantly outmaneuvered in managing all of the avenues of sexual content. Students must be prepared for the bombardment of sensuality from these avenues while they are in the protection of their Christian homes, not when they leave for college. It is easy for parents to “lock the door and go to bed” by setting the perimeter defense of limiting access to the internet or other avenues for sensuality. However, having no plan for continued patrol or education makes children easy targets when they leave this perimeter defense of the home. Parents often put off adequate discussions of sexuality until they have older teenagers. Unfortunately, when the discussions finally happen, they often only focus on abstinence or basic procreation. Parents are not adequately discipling children about their biblical sexuality and how it is interwoven into God’s design for creation and eternity.

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, sexual development begins in a child’s very first years.²² Infants and toddlers begin forming emotional attachments from how they are held, touched, kissed, and hugged.²³ This unique type of physical intimacy and emotional attachment can be the early foundation of later mature sexuality.²⁴ Either by ignorance or by oversight, some parents struggle with accepting that their children come out of the womb with a developing sexuality. Ron DeHass, the president, and co-founder of *Covenant Eyes*, writes that, “Parents who are fearful of talking to their kids about sex leave a void of silence the world will be glad to fill. The problem is many parents are too afraid to talk to their kids about sex because they don’t want to say ‘too much too soon.’ Unfortunately, ‘too much too soon’ often turns into ‘too little too late.’”²⁵

²² Johns Hopkins Medicine, “Understanding Early Sexual Development,” accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Health-Library/HealthDocNew/Understanding-Early-Sexual-Development>.

²³ Johns Hopkins Medicine, “Understanding Early Sexual Development.”

²⁴ Johns Hopkins Medicine, “Understanding Early Sexual Development.”

²⁵ “Talking to Your Kids About Sex: A Parent-Child Bible Study,” *Covenant Eyes*, last

Juli Slattery laments in her realization that in the absence of discussion “we have been sexually disciplined by the world.”²⁶ She goes on to clarify that we have been taught to see sexuality from the world’s narrative.²⁷ The message of secular sexuality is so deafening that the whisper of biblical sexuality in the church and home is drowned out.

Regardless of the level of insulation and isolation that a parent tries to maintain, no parent can completely shield their children from the war of sexuality that the world is waging. The Bible calls parents to train and disciple their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not to merely preserve their innocence until they leave the home (Deut 11:19; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4). If parents are not actively discipling their children in biblical sexuality, then the world will gladly speak in the silence.

Contextualizing the Crisis

Parents must understand that children are not simply the casualties of Satan’s attack on sexuality. They are the targets. Satan’s ultimate end game is to destroy the glory of God in man by attacking the family, marriage, and sexuality. Christopher West, the author of *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, writes:

If the body and sex are meant to proclaim our union with God, and if there’s an enemy who wants to separate us from God, what do you think he’s going to attack? If we want to know what’s most sacred in this world, all we need do is look for what is most violently profaned. The enemy is no dummy. He knows that the body and sex are meant to proclaim the divine mystery. And from his perspective, this proclamation must be stifled.²⁸

Teenagers in today’s culture struggle with sexual behaviors and sexual addiction at staggering rates.

1. Seventy-one percent of teens have attempted to hide what they do online from their

modified April 14, 2014, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.covenanteyes.com/2014/04/14/talking-about-sex-bible-study/>.

²⁶ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 20.

²⁷ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 20.

²⁸ Christopher West, *Theology of The Body for Beginners* (West Chester, PA: Ascension, 2004), 12.

parents (this includes clearing browser history, minimizing a browser when in view, deleting inappropriate videos, lying about behavior, using a phone instead of a computer, blocking parents with social media privacy settings, using private browsing, disabling parental controls, or having e-mail or social media accounts unknown to parents).²⁹

2. Forty-four percent of teens surveyed admitted they have looked at something online of which their parents would not approve. Of these, Eighty-one percent said this has happened at home, and forty-eight percent said it has happened at home when their parents were home.³⁰
3. The majority of young people's first-time watching pornography was accidental, with over sixty percent of children 11-13 who had seen pornography saying their viewing of pornography is unintentional. The largest group of viewers of internet porn is children ages 12-17.³¹

Children and students are succumbing to societal and cultural pressures of sexual expression by acting upon their sexual impulses, resulting in life-altering and devastating consequences. The failure to develop a theology of sexuality in our children has resulted in the continued repression of healthy dialogue. More importantly, it has resulted in parents failing to proactively discuss sexuality with their children.

Instead of healthy and biblically robust dialogue, it seems that parents are employing three common methods of dealing with their children's burgeoning sexuality, abstinence by elimination, reactionary, and detached purity.³²

Abstinence by Elimination Method

Abstinence by elimination is the attempt to create a sterile environment by

²⁹ Jamie Le, "The Digital Divide: How the Online Behavior of Teens Is Getting Past Parents," McAfee.com. Accessed June 16, 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/document/98269655/The-Digital-Divide-How-the-Online-Behavior-of-Teens-is-Getting-Past-Parents>.

³⁰ Cox Communications, "Tween Internet safety survey," June 2012. Accessed June 20, 2022, <http://ww2.cox.com/wcm/en/aboutus/datasheet/takecharge/tween-internet-safety-survey.pdf>.

³¹ BBFC, "Children See Pornography as Young as Seven, New Report Finds," Accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-us/news/children-see-pornography-as-young-as-seven-new-report-finds>.

³² I developed these methods of how parents deal with their children's burgeoning sexuality from my observations from my ministry experience. These observations are primarily anecdotal evidence. However, they were developed from my experience from working with more than a thousand families over a period of 26 years. These tendencies became apparent after many discussions, counseling, and teaching series with parents and students. To the best of my knowledge, these ideas are original and were not developed from any specific source.

eliminating all outlets and avenues for their children to be exposed to sexual content. This attempt at a sterile environment creates a false sense of security by making exposure to sexual content seem impossible. In 2019, Revealing Reality, a research firm based in the United Kingdom, surveyed over two thousand parents. They found that seventy-five percent of parents reported, that if their children were asked, they would report that they have not seen pornography. However, of those children, more than half said that they had, in fact, seen pornography.³³ Any wise and attuned parent should certainly strive to guard against opportunities for easy access to explicit content. However, this method is often employed until the student leaves the home for college, resulting in the student having no practical skills or discipline to resist the temptations of sexual expression that bombard them in college life. This is assuming they have not already succumbed to those pressures. Additionally, even if parents could be successful in creating and maintaining a sterile environment, it is impossible to totally control or prevent any exposure to sexual content outside the home. Daniel Cid of CleanBrowsing.org, reports that among children who were first exposed to pornography before the age of thirteen, fifty percent of them viewed the content by accident on someone else's device and mostly their parent's device.³⁴

Reactionary Method

The reactionary approach mostly ignores the clear and present danger of the sexual temptation of children. The parent then reacts when they accidentally discover that a child has been experimenting with or exploring their own bodies, explicit material, or engaging in other sexual activity. Many well-meaning parents cling too confidently to the

³³ Revealing Reality, "Young People, Pornography & Age-Verification," Accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk/2021/07/15/young-people-pornography-age-verification/>.

³⁴ Clean Browsing, "9 Clear Warning Signs That Your Kids Are Exposed to Internet Porn," November 17, 2018. <https://cleanbrowsing.org/2018/11/9-clear-warning-signs-that-your-kids-are-exposed-to-internet-porn/>.

innocence of their children, simply ignoring the danger before any education or discipleship takes place. Parents often react poorly, inciting shame in children and adolescents by failing to provide a clear biblical context for the importance of purity. This is compounded further when there is a lack of understanding and compassion that leaves children or teenagers feeling dirty or broken. Parents then relegate the issue to silence, leaving struggling adolescents to suffer in shame because they cannot control their burgeoning and developing sexual impulses. James Dobson has written that the shame experienced by teenagers who struggle with their sexual impulses can lead to a sense of divine condemnation that can drive them away from the faith.³⁵ This is often a gateway for children and adolescents to seek outlets to explore sexual images and behavior that lead to full-blown sexual addictions, including masturbation, pornography, and sex.

Detached Purity Method

Detached purity is an emphasis on purity through abstinence without a thorough biblical theology of sex and marriage. As mentioned earlier, *True Love Waits* and *Passport to Purity* once became very popular among both parents and student ministries. While many of these studies have been beneficial in emphasizing the importance of sexual purity to teenagers, the emphasis is often limited to a completed study or weekend purity event without follow-up discipleship. In her dissertation on marriage, sexuality, and Christian parental instruction, Jennifer Garrison studied many of

³⁵ The following is an excerpt Dobson's view on shame brought on by sexual exploration: "Boys and girls who labor under divine condemnation can gradually become convinced that even God couldn't love them. They promise a thousand times with great sincerity never again to commit this despicable act. Then a week or two passes, or perhaps several months. Eventually, the hormonal pressure accumulates until nearly every waking moment reverberates with sexual desire. Finally, in a moment (and I do mean a moment) of weakness, it happens again. What then, dear friend? Tell me what a young person says to God after he or she has just broken the one thousand first solemn promise to Him? I am convinced that some teenagers have thrown over their faith because of their inability to please God at this point of masturbation." *Overcoming Lust*. "Dr. Dobson's Initial Letter Regarding Masturbation," Accessed June 22, 2022, <http://www.overcoming-lust.com/httpwww-overcoming-lust-comdr-james-dobsons-open-letter-masturbation/>.

the popular para-church resources on sexual purity for teenagers and found that they “are in-depth and prescriptive but do not provide parents with instructional help for teaching their children.”³⁶ Parents often develop a false sense of security with this approach, allowing it to stand alone without employing ongoing discipleship in the areas of relationships and biblical sexuality. By this, it is easy to major too heavily on simply “waiting” until marriage rather than the biblical purpose of sexuality, marriage, and the physical and spiritual union of man and wife

Addressing the Crisis

The issue of a lack of biblical sexuality discipleship cannot be adequately addressed by simply providing children and students with more information about their developing bodies, biblical purity, and abstinence. Instead, a foundational theology that facilitates a deeper and more thorough understanding of biblical sexuality is extremely important in reclaiming this territory. Therefore, a curriculum to address these issues needs to be addressed in the following biblical theological themes.

Biblical Theology of Sex

The sexual union of a husband and wife is an image of the spiritual union of the Church with the Creator. Even after the fall of Adam and Eve, restoring man’s broken union with the Creator has always been an impetus of God’s plan for redemption. Similarly, Juli Slattery argues that “God created you as a sexual person in order to unlock the mystery of an invisible God.”³⁷ Just as the union of Christ and the Church is inextricably tied to the reconciliation of creation, so too is the physical union of a man and wife. Christopher Ash, in his book *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God*, argues that

³⁶ Garrison, “Marriage, Sexuality, and Christian Parental Instruction.” 10.

³⁷ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 12.

marriage itself is a part of the created order and not merely a result.³⁸ Andreas Köstenberger goes further and says that the foundation for marriage is itself rooted in God's act of creating male and female.³⁹ The future union of Creator and Church is intimately woven into the fabric of creation from Genesis to Revelation. As Ray Ortlund writes, marriage "is the wraparound concept for the entire Bible."⁴⁰ In his sermon entitled "Love and Lust," Timothy Keller ties the covenant of marriage to the covenant of redemption.⁴¹ He alludes that every time marital sex is enacted it becomes a "covenant renewal ceremony" and reminds us of God's covenant of reconciliation through redemption.⁴² Sex, sexuality, and the physical and spiritual union of a man and woman in marriage are some of the most sacred expressions of mankind's purpose in God. John Piper suggests that "one of the ultimate reasons that we are sexual is to make God more deeply knowable."⁴³ It is time that both the Church and Christian parents bring sex and sexuality out of the shadows and into the light that it deserves. Parents can no longer afford to use the strategy of waiting until the teenage years and then only have inadequate discussions on abstaining from sex. They must be proactive by teaching children about God-given sexuality as soon as they begin to emerge from the latency of childhood, if not sooner.

Foundation of marriage. The epidemic of an over-sexualized culture and how it affects children today is symptomatic of a much larger issue. Human sexuality has

³⁸ Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2005), chap. 4, Kindle.

³⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, and David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), chap. 2. Kindle.

⁴⁰ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 16.

⁴¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Love and Lust," *Gospel in Life*, accessed August 13, 2022, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/love-and-lust-6151/>.

⁴² Keller, "Love and Lust."

⁴³ John Piper, and Justin Taylor. *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 26.

never existed in a vacuum. Rather, it is interwoven into the larger Gospel narrative of the redemption of humankind that culminates in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). The biblical purpose of marriage and the biblical expression of sexual union are both foundational and paramount in combatting the popular culture of sex that influences adolescents today.

Historically, evangelical Christians have maintained that God created marriage, and that it is to be between a man and a woman.⁴⁴ However, a recent Barna poll across the five generational groups demonstrates this viewpoint is weakening. The view that marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman was affirmed by less than half of those groups.⁴⁵ Among the younger groups of Generation Z and Millennials,⁴⁶ grasping the larger purpose of sex in marriage and celibacy in singleness is lacking. Only an average of twenty percent of those polled among these generations agreed that sex before marriage is morally wrong.⁴⁷ The lack of understanding and the inability to articulate the purpose of sex beyond procreation and recreation continues to deteriorate among adolescents and young adults in the church.

In order to lay the foundational truth of biblical sexuality, it is helpful to go back to the book of Genesis. Daniel Heimbach points out that Paul clearly links sex in marriage to union in Christ by quoting the “they shall become one flesh” verse of Genesis 2:24 in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:31-32).⁴⁸ From the very beginning, Scripture tells us that God recognized that it was not good for man to be alone. This simple

⁴⁴ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far),” *Barna Group*, accessed July 22, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/gen-z-morality/>.

⁴⁵ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far).”

⁴⁶ Pew Research Center defines Millennials as those born between 1981-1997, Generation Z as those born between 1997-2012. Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins,” *Pew Research Center*, n.d., accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

⁴⁷ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far).”

⁴⁸ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 149.

declaration in Genesis 2:18 serves as one of the foundational cornerstones in God’s design for man. God’s assessment of “it is not good for man to be alone” and the subsequent creation of Eve demonstrates that he created Adam with the intent to be joined with Eve (Gen 2:18). Christopher Ash states it succinctly that “man is a social creature, made for relationship” and Eve is “God’s primary provision” for such need.⁴⁹ John Piper suggests that this whole saga of Adam and Eve’s creation was “all moving toward marriage” in the one-flesh union.⁵⁰ God’s pronouncement here is the first time that His creation was declared anything other than good.⁵¹ No suitable companion was found among all the created beasts of the field or birds of the air.⁵² Thus, God created a special creature in the most unique way.⁵³ Genesis 2:7 and 2:19 tell us that God made man and every other creature from the dust of the earth and breathed life into them. However, when he created this new and special creature, designed to be a life-long companion to Adam, he did something far more peculiar and spectacular. He caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and supernaturally opened his flesh, removing a rib. He took that rib and fashioned Eve, the perfect and equal complement to Adam. She was not taken from the dust of the ground, nor was she spoken into existence. She was made from the substance of man, in the likeness of her Creator. Adam then called her “woman” because she was taken out of him (Gen 2:23).

Genesis 2:23 captures Adam, the first bridegroom, as he stands before the first bride and looks at the splendor of the glorious gift that the Creator crafted specifically for him. It would be careless to let this moment in creation captured in scripture pass by

⁴⁹ Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 6, sec. 4, para. 1, Kindle.

⁵⁰ John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL Crossway Books, 2009), 21.

⁵¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 175.

⁵² Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 21.

⁵³ Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 22.

without the contemplation that it deserves. Adam settles his eyes upon the most beautiful and splendid of all of God’s creation—a beautiful and radiant Eve standing before him without blemish, completely bare, and there was no shame among them.

The tableau depicted in the second chapter of Genesis lays the foundational cornerstone of the earthly institution of marriage of husband and wife. Jim Newheiser describes this passage as the spring from which all passages on marriage flow.⁵⁴ This cornerstone, however, has not been laid in the mere vacuum of our earthly existence. Rather, it is the spring of what will eventually flow into the eternal union of Christ and his Bride. As Sam Allberry puts it, “the mystery behind human marriage is—as we now see it’s always been—Christ’s relationship to the church.”⁵⁵ Revelation 19 depicts this final act of consummation as the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9).

Purpose of sex. Marriage is the gift of companionship that God gave Adam in Eve (Gen 2:18). Sex is the physical and spiritual union of two separate individuals (Gen 2:24). It is the glorious gift and expression of the future consummation of Christ, the last Bridegroom, with his Church, the last bride. While procreation is an underlying purpose of sex, it is secondary to the ultimate purpose and what it pictures. Christopher Ash deduces that since the relationship of Adam and Eve was established before the command to be fruitful and multiply, “the primary function of sex is not procreation but the unity of fulfilling relationship.”⁵⁶ The sexual union of a man and woman represents the unity of the Godhead, the joy of the Godhead, and the completeness of the Godhead. Unfortunately, even the word sex has been so distorted by secular society that often mature believers can scarcely say it aloud, much less identify its original intention in

⁵⁴ Jim Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2017), 6.

⁵⁵ Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness*, 110.

⁵⁶ Christopher Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 7, sect. 3. para. 2, Kindle.

creation. John Piper describes marriage as foundationally God's doing and ultimately about God's glory.⁵⁷ When sex honors God and is expressed within its biblical prescription of heterosexual marriage, it is the glory of God in man and the expression of the future union of Christ. The physical joy and ecstasy that comes from this holy, physical, and spiritual union of a man and woman are but a glimpse, a foreshadowing, of the joy and pleasure that is to come when the Church is joined with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). Even so, sex in marriage and marriage itself is not the focus of biblical marriage. Sam Allberry warns that we should not make human marriage and sex more than God intended, he states, "It is not to be idolized. Marriage is not ultimate, but it points to the thing that is. Marriage itself is not meant to fulfill us but to point to that which does. The real marriage is the one we find in Christ. Our marriages on earth are just the visual aid of this."⁵⁸

As the warmth of the morning sun upon one's face is but a small reminder of its magnitude and power, likewise, the earthy pleasure of the sexual union of a husband and wife is a momentary glimpse of the glory and blessing that awaits as the Bride of Christ becomes one with the Son.

Sex and the fall of man. The relationship of Adam and Eve, by way of their sexual union, was a part of God's original design before the sin of humankind. The gift of Adam and Eve to each other was for companionship and union. It also served a secondary purpose to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen 1:28). Ash further clarifies that it is unclear that God intended the "sexual relationship to be the remedy for the human heart's longing for loneliness."⁵⁹ Instead, the understanding that Adam and Eve were created for relationship with each other, and not primarily for sexual union is in better keeping with

⁵⁷ John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 21.

⁵⁸ Sam Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness*, 112.

⁵⁹ Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 7, sect. 8. para. 2, Kindle.

our future union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). Additionally, this also allows relationship in singleness to remain on an equal plain with marriage because the ultimate culmination is union with Christ.

The fundamental purposes for sex and marriage have remained unchanged since its inception in the garden. However, the sin of Adam and its devastating effects led to the corruption of the human mind and body, therefore distorting the earthly manifestation of the future union of Christ and the Church (Gen 3:14-18). These distortions still plague the Church today and are worsening. In his book *True Sexual Morality*, Daniel Heimbach discusses humanistic shifts in the Church's thinking about sexuality.⁶⁰ He describes these shifts as going from a theocentric to an anthropocentric ethos.⁶¹ For example, Heimbach writes, "There is a shift from theologies of sex, to sexual theologies. In other words, there is a shift from addressing sex in terms of Christian faith and doctrine, to addressing Christian faith and doctrine in terms of sex."⁶² These anthropocentric mindsets are pervasive and continue to influence younger generations to embrace the world's ideology of sexuality.

Jesus's death on the cross sets the Christian free from the bondage of the sin nature that bound all of mankind since the fall. However, the flesh is the remnant of that corrupt sin nature and must be dealt with until Jesus reconciles mankind to Himself (Col 1:20). Sin, death, and sin nature no longer reign in our mortal bodies, but their effects are still manifested through a weak and undisciplined flesh (Matt 26:41; Gal 5:16-26). Even though the biblical purpose of sex and what it pictures remain unchanged by the fall of man, the body and its lustful desires of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the propensity to worship self have made it difficult for many in today's culture to see sexuality as the gift

⁶⁰ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 42-43.

⁶¹ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 43.

⁶² Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 42.

it is from God to mankind (1 John 2:16). Therefore, reclaiming the biblical ethos of sexuality in the church and home is imperative. Reclaiming this vital territory must begin in the home by shepherding children through their developing sexuality with intentional and developmentally appropriate biblical sexuality discipleship.

Conclusion

There was a time when network programming was reticent to depict husband-and-wife characters sharing the same bed. The show *I Love Lucy* would only depict the married couple, Ricky and Lucy, sleeping in the same room but in separate twin beds. It is hard to believe that there was a time in entertainment history when it was considered inappropriate to show such a benign tableau. It was not until 1947 that the first television show depicted the husband-and-wife characters sleeping in the same bed.⁶³ According to Metv.com, it would take another 20 years until this became a common occurrence in shows such as *The Brady Bunch*.⁶⁴

Today, it is difficult to see a commercial, billboard, or even children's cartoon that is not pushing some message of sexual freedom or innuendo. Yet, the church and many Christian homes seem to be stuck in 1947, when sexuality in any context was scarcely discussed. Sexual sin is rampant and pervasive in secular society. Studies continue to indicate that the same is true for the Church.⁶⁵ According to Barna Research, there is virtually no difference in pornography use among Christian and non-Christian men.⁶⁶

⁶³ MeTv, "A Brief History of TV Couples Sleeping in the Same Bed." accessed July 14, 2022. <https://metv.com/lists/a-brief-history-of-tv-couples-sleeping-in-the-same-bed>.

⁶⁴ MeTv, "A Brief History of TV Couples Sleeping in the Same Bed."

⁶⁵ Barna Group, "Porn in the Digital Age: New Research Reveals 10 Trends." accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.barna.com/research/porn-in-the-digital-age-new-research-reveals-10-trends/>.

⁶⁶ It's important to note here that the Barna Group is using a broad definition of "Christian" to mean those individuals who simply identify as being Christian. The Gospel Coalition analyzed the study and discovered that pornography use among those Christians who identify as "born-again" or "those who have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior" favor better and are one of the last

In addition to the already existing issue of sexual activity and exposure to sensuality among adolescents, the transgender issue continues to add additional pressures with which both the Church and families must now contend. Social advocacy in the secular world is increasingly propagandizing that gender and sex are fluid and not determined by genetics, and especially not intelligent design. The Church can no longer afford to leave sexuality discipleship of its children solely in the hands of families with no assistance or accountability. There is hope that the tides of sexuality ignorance among younger generations can be turned. Tim Stafford in *Christianity Today* has said, “If there is hope in our situation, it is not in clucking tongues. It must come through a counterculture We must become a people who are consciously, undefensively different The Church was a sexual counterculture in the Roman Empire, and it could be again.”⁶⁷ That hope will only be possible through Christ by intentionally applying the whole message of the gospel to sex, marriage, sexuality, and future union with Christ in how we disciple children in a theology of biblical sexuality. The Shema of the Old Testament declares a clear mandate that discipleship is the responsibility of the family (Deut 6:4-5). Likewise, in the New Testament, Acts and the Epistles echo that declaration in the purpose of the Church (Acts 2:42; Eph 4:14; Rom 12:10; 15:14). In Ephesians 4:11-14, the Apostle Paul lays out the gifts that Christ left with the Church at his ascension. He declares that these gifts are to be used to equip the saints for ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. In verse 14, Paul culminates this section with an emphasis on why such gifts and equipping of the body of Christ are necessary. He writes, “. . . so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”

bastions of Christian men resisting pornography. Carter, Joe. “Fact Checker: Do Christian Men Watch More Pornography?” *The Gospel Coalition*. Accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-do-christian-men-watch-more-pornography/>.

⁶⁷ Tim Stafford, “The next Sexual Revolution,” *Christianity Today*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1992/march-9/next-sexual-revolution.html>.

In view of Ephesians 4:14, the clear mandate of discipleship in the Old and New Testaments combine to form the impetus of why biblical sexuality discipleship is paramount to preparing parents and students to successfully navigate the hyper-sexualized waters of society. Otherwise, our children will be tossed around and carried about by every new wind of hedonism that Satan and the world blows.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING THE BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship for the parents and adult volunteers of the local churches of northeast Florida through the counseling ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling (ACC). The first three chapters of this ministry project established the sociological argument, biblical foundation, and rationale for why intentional biblical sexuality discipleship is critical to reclaiming this vital territory. This project was guided by three goals. The first goal was to assess the level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among a select group of parents and individuals associated with the ministry of ACC. The second goal was to develop a 5-session curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship. The third goal was to increase the understanding of parents to effectively disciple their children and adolescents in biblical sexuality. The purpose of this chapter is to review the intended goals that were necessary to accomplish the training and the steps taken to accomplish the project.

Origins of the Ministry Project

This project was born out of a critical struggle with sexual brokenness that students in my youth ministry were experiencing over the course of two decades. In 2015, I began developing surveys, teaching series for students, and adult volunteer training to help with the growing and already intense struggle that these students were experiencing with sexual sin, pornography addictions, same-sex attraction, gender confusion, and sexual assault. It was obvious that both parents and students desperately needed deeper discipleship that went beyond mere biblical sex education and abstinence. In 2018, I began the formal development of this project and curriculum in the doctoral program at

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary so that other ministries and families could benefit from such training in biblical sexuality discipleship.

Structuring the Ministry Project

After receiving approval for the implementation of the project from my advisor and the ethics committee, I began to initiate the medium and method for delivering this training to participants. I chose to train participants with pre-recorded videos that would be uploaded to an online platform to be viewed within a period of three weeks. My rationale was greatly influenced by my transition from student ministry to private Christian counseling practice. The original population of students and parents were no longer available for this project. Originally, the plan was to host in-person sessions at the church where I served as high school pastor. The change in ministry context, necessitated a change in medium and delivery method. Pre-recorded video sessions allowed me to reach a broader audience and expanded beyond the average church attendee. Rather than a primary audience of high school student and parents, the project now involved parents of children, soon to be parents, single individuals, and various professionals.

Method and Platform for Training

The agreement to participate, pre-test, and post-test forms were digitized and converted to online forms through my therapy practice software. This method and software followed compliance with the state of Florida's laws on client confidentiality. Participants were selected from a pool of individuals associated with Anchored Christian Counseling of Fernandina Beach, Florida. These participants were sent an email with instructions for the assessments and a weblink to the online client portal of ACC via the practice managing software, Simple Practice. The participants were required to complete and digitally sign the participation agreement before receiving access to the pre-survey assessment. Once the participants completed the pre-survey assessment, they were emailed a link with instructions to access the online training videos on the streaming

media platform, YouTube.

Data Collection

The first goal of this project was to assess the level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among a select group of parents and individuals associated with the ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling. To accomplish this goal, I developed a survey that asked nineteen questions regarding their understanding of biblical marriage, sex, sexuality, and issues related to sexual development of children and adolescents.¹ Additionally, the survey included questions that assessed the individual's knowledge and understanding of safety and best practices in managing access to social media and online content. The questions were designed to assess the three main domains of beliefs, knowledge, and ability to teach others regarding several areas of biblical sexuality and human sexual development. First, I sought to assess beliefs about the need and level of teaching for BSD in the church and home for individuals ranging from seven years of age to adults. Second, I sought to assess the level of knowledge regarding the theology of sexuality, human sexual development, and best practices for internet safety for children and adolescents. Third, I sought to assess their self-rated ability to teach these areas to children and adolescents. I used a range of options on a Likert scale to determine the participants' self-assessment of domains mentioned previously. I received fourteen out of seventeen surveys. The pre-survey assessment results showed that the participants gave themselves an average Likert scale rating of 4.4.² This self-assessment demonstrated that the participants thought they had an average understanding across the three domains evaluated.

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 3.

Curriculum Development

The second goal of this project was to develop a five-session curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship to be taught to parents and other adult individuals.³ The full curriculum is available in the appendix.⁴ This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, sequence, and applicability of the curriculum.⁵ The expert panel was comprised of one certified biblical counselor, one former girls ministry director, and one student pastor. Two of the three experts were parents of children and adolescents. This panel consisted of a student pastor of 18 years who serves in a mega-church context; the founder and president of *Bring Your Brokenness*, who is also a certified biblical counselor with the *Association of Certified Biblical Counselors*; and the former girl's ministry director of *First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida*, and current director of admissions at *Bring Your Brokenness*, Yulee, Florida.

After the expert panel completed their evaluation, I began the revision of the curriculum in June 2022 and finished writing and filming in August 2022.

Session 1: “The Crisis of Biblical Sexuality.” The objective of this lesson was to demonstrate the importance of why Christian parents and the church must reclaim biblical sexuality through proactive discipleship. The first goal of this lesson is to help participants develop a deeper understanding of the crisis of biblical sexuality. The second goal of this lesson is to create a parental urgency to intentionally disciple their children to a healthy understanding of biblical sexuality. The third goal of this project is to increase awareness of common problems regarding current practices contributing to the crisis of biblical sexuality.

³ See appendix 4.

⁴ See appendix 4.

⁵ See appendix 2.

Session 2: “Addressing the Crisis of Biblical Sexuality.” The objective of this lesson was to help participants understand the biblical argumentation for how to address the crisis of biblical sexuality. The first goal of this session is to increase their theological understanding of sexuality, marriage, singleness, and sex within the greater context of the marriage supper of the Lamb. The second goal of this session is to increase the participants’ understanding of how a lack of biblical sexuality discipleship in the home and church is creating pathways for children and adolescents to be indoctrinated by secular society. Additionally, this session focuses on the sociological impact that secular society has had on how the church and Christian homes have traditionally dealt with biblical sexuality discipleship.

Session 3: “Theological Foundation for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship.” The objective of this session was to help participants develop a deeper understanding of the theological foundations for why a biblical sexuality theology is critical to reclaiming this vital territory in the home and Church. The first goal of this session is to increase the theological understanding of biblical sexuality. The second goal of this session is to expand the participants understanding of sexuality beyond procreation and recreation.

Session 4: “Sexuality Development.” The objective of this session was to help participants develop an understanding of relevant aspects of human growth and development in child and adolescent sexuality development. The first goal of this session is to help parents develop a working knowledge of sexuality development in children and adolescents. The second goal of this session is to help participants understand how developmental stages of sexuality development should coincide with biblical sexuality discipleship.

Session 5: “Best Practices and Safeguards.” The objective of this session was to help participants develop an understanding of best practices and safeguards in

protecting children and adolescents from premature exposure to sexually explicit material. The first goal of this session is to help participants develop a working knowledge of internet safety, digital device management, and content filtering of common mediums of exposure. The second goal of this project is to help participants create practical safeguards in daily life to protect children from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material.

Curriculum Implementation

On August 19, 2022, I began formatting the lesson material by collating and organizing the content from chapters two and three of the project. I edited the content to make the language more appropriate for an audience of lay people. Additionally, I created PowerPoint slides for relevant statistics, quotes, and Scripture to be used in the filming, editing, and post-production of the video sessions. After creating the various slides, I edited a new version of the lesson material so that it could be used for my own visual reference during the filming process. After the video script was complete, I began filming the sessions inside my office. I then edited the raw video files using a common video editing software. Upon completion of final edits in post-production, the video was converted to a format that could be uploaded to my YouTube channel, Anchored Christian Counseling. After uploading the videos to the YouTube channel, I created internet links that were then sent out to the pre-selected participants who had completed the pre-survey assessment. The video links were sent to participants between the dates of August 20, 2022, and August 28, 2022. After receiving notifications that the participants had completed all five videos, they were sent a new link for the post-survey assessment. I received the last post-survey assessment on August 31, 2022.

Post-Survey Assessment Results

The third goal was to increase parents' understanding of how to effectively disciple students in biblical sexuality. This goal was measured by administering the post-

survey assessment after all of the video sessions had been completed. After receiving the final post-survey assessment, I ran the statistical analysis of the pre- and post-surveys. Numeric values were assigned to the ratings of the Likert scale. The values 1 to 6 were assigned in ascending order from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), in the same way as the pre-survey assessment. These scales were reversed for questions that were stated in the negative to account for the descending scale for those questions. The mean score of the post-survey assessment was 5.25 points.⁶ This score indicated that there appeared to be an improvement as a result of the training curriculum. Additional analysis of the data will be provided in chapter 5.

Conclusion

Each of the project goals met or exceeded expectations. First, the pre-survey assessment revealed the current beliefs, understanding, and self-assessed ability to teach regarding the three domains of biblical sexuality. Second, the curriculum that was developed met or exceed expectations by a panel of professional experts in ministry. Finally, a t-test for dependent variables revealed a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-survey results, indicating that the curriculum successfully made a difference by increasing the understanding and ability to teach biblical sexuality to their children and adolescents. The final chapter will include a detailed analysis of this project's results.

⁶ See appendix 3.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter is an evaluation of the ministry project, evaluating its purpose and goals. This evaluation will also include an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter includes my opinion of how the project might have been improved during development and implementation. In conclusion, I will offer my personal reflections on the journey of completing this project.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship for the parents and adult volunteers of the local churches of northeast Florida through the counseling ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling. I desired to create awareness and develop training for parents, individuals, and churches to help deal with the deficit of biblical sexuality theology among these groups. The elements of this goal are supported by the biblical mandate for parents to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). The Shema of the Old Testament, along with the Apostle Paul's writing on marriage, sex, and sexual sin in the Epistles served as the foundation of the biblical argument for the purpose of this ministry project (Deut 6:4-9; 1 Cor 6:16-20; Eph 5:31-32). Additionally, current trends in the struggle of sexuality and sexual sin among adolescents in the church and home further demonstrate the need for such a project.

Nearly twenty-five years of ministry experience in the local church as a student pastor and as a Christian counseling therapist has shown me the dire need for developing a plan to address the issue of a lack of biblical sexuality discipleship in the church and

home. The deterioration of biblical marriage, proliferation of sensuality in society, and taboo nature of sex in the church have combined to form a void in the church and home. This void is leaving a vacuum of silence that the secular world is filling with its human-centered agenda of free sexual expression and licentiousness. The statistics regarding sexual behavior and issues with sexuality among children and adolescents offered in chapters one and three provide hard evidence of the stark reality that both the church and parents are facing today. These statistics show that there is virtually no difference between Christian and secular populations of children and adolescents in their struggles with sexual sin. Furthermore, the project offered evidence that these very issues are why many adolescents end up leaving the church altogether in their college years. Therefore, I believe that this project successfully demonstrated its relevance and necessity in both the home and church. However, the purpose of this project only scratched the surface of the issues that adolescents and their parents are facing today. Much more work, attention, and discipleship development are needed.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The goals of the project were as follows: (1) assess the level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among a select group of parents and individuals associated with the ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling; (2) develop a five-session curriculum of training in biblical sexuality discipleship; (3) increase the understanding of parents to effectively disciple their children and adolescents in biblical sexuality.

Goal 1

The first goal is to assess the level of knowledge of biblical sexuality theology among a select group of parents and individuals associated with the ministry of Anchored Christian Counseling. This goal was accomplished by using the pre-survey assessment to assess the level of understanding of biblical marriage, sex, sexuality, and issues related to

sexuality development of children and adolescents.¹ These questions were designed to explore the three main domains of beliefs, knowledge, and ability to teach others regarding several areas of biblical sexuality and human sexuality development. As mentioned earlier, my previous ministry experience revealed that there was already a deficit in parents' knowledge and competency to teach BSD to their children. Regardless, I needed more than anecdotal evidence. Thus, there was a need to formally assess the participants of the study. The pre-survey assessment revealed a mean score per question of 4.42 on the Likert scale. This score indicated that parents thought they had an average level of understanding across all nineteen questions. Further analysis revealed that there was a greater deficit in the two areas of the practical application that included talking to children about sexual behavior and the knowledge of safeguards and best practices to help children navigate their sexual development. The mean score for these survey questions was 3.85 and 3.14 respectively.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop a five-session curriculum of biblical sexuality discipleship. This goal was accomplished by drawing upon my previous work on biblical sexuality discipleship as a student pastor. After years of pre-project work, I was able to update and re-write this curriculum to align with current social trends and requirements for this project.² My research found that there were several resources on biblical sexuality as it relates to marriage and sex. There were also numerous resources to help parents have age-appropriate discussions about sexuality development. Finally, there were many scholarly sources on the Christ-Church union connection between human marriage and the marriage supper of the Lamb. However, despite the resources for these individual areas of focus, there appeared to be a lack of resources that connected the

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 4.

biblical sexuality discipleship of adolescents with the essential Christ-Church union. The primary focus of existing resources on BSD for an adolescent was purity and abstinence. Such resources lacked a deeper connection with the ultimate purpose of marriage, sex, and sexuality as connected to the Churches ultimate culmination of union with Christ. Part of the rationale of this project was addressing the lack of thorough theology of sexuality. There has been a lopsided focus on both abstaining from sex until marriage and the general mechanism of procreation. The lack of incorporating marriage and sex as described in Genesis into the larger narrative of the Gospel's culmination with marriage and union of Christ with the Church in Revelation has resulted in a weak foundation for guarding purity. Bridging this gap was one of the major goals of this curriculum.

A panel of three experts reviewed the curriculum using a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, sequence, and applicability of the curriculum.³ After a review of the curriculum, the expert panel gave an average score of 97 percent across the above criteria. The expert, who served as my girls' ministry director and worked closely with me in developing the BSD curriculum in 2015, indicated that she felt like her own understanding had improved further after reviewing the material as an expert, as well as watching the sessions.

The second expert, who is currently a high school and college pastor in a large ministry context suggested that the methodology was too clinical in some areas and would need more connecting points for students. I appreciated his observation about the need for more connecting points for students because he was my ministry partner as the middle school pastor where I initially implemented BSD in 2015. My focus in 2015, however, was a curriculum for both parents to teach in the home and for student pastors to teach in their student ministries. This project focused instead on churches teaching parents and parents teaching their own children. The clinical focus was aimed at

³ See appendix 2.

providing parents with enough information to adequately equip them to disciple their children according to how they saw fit. He still provides an excellent point for future development of this curriculum if it is to be expanded to be taught by student pastors.

The third expert provided helpful comments regarding individuals who have experienced sexual trauma. She stated that she understood that dealing with the issues of survivors of sexual trauma was outside the scope of the project. She simply wished to highlight that since there are so many individuals in our churches who have experienced sexual trauma that it may be difficult for them to grasp the connection between human sex and marriage and the Christ-Church union. Her comments provided a perspective that I believe is worth expanding upon in the future development of the curriculum.

The expert panel provided positive feedback and high evaluations. Additionally, they provided helpful suggestions to improve the curriculum in future development. Since those suggestions, shared above, primarily fell outside the scope of the audience and purpose, I decide to move forward with implementation. The curriculum achieved its purpose, and I hope to continue to further develop and strengthen its content in future versions.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase the understanding of parents to effectively disciple children and adolescents in biblical sexuality. This goal was accomplished by implementing the training curriculum on BSD and administering the post-survey assessment to measure the potential improvement that the curriculum had on the participants. The post-survey assessment revealed an average improvement of 15.80 percent in the participants' level of understanding.⁴ To test this, I ran a statistical analysis for a *t*-test of dependent samples. The participant's post-survey assessment was paired

⁴ See appendix 3.

with their pre-survey assessment in order to measure improvement for each individual. The content aspect of this goal was measured by re-administering the post-survey assessment after the participants had completed the curriculum sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey assessment results. The mean score of total points increased by 15.9 points from the pre-survey to the post-survey assessment (out of 114 possible points). These results demonstrated that there was an increase in the participants' level of understanding across all domains after the training. The *t*-test analysis indicates that this increase in the post-survey assessment mean score was statistically significant ($t_{(13)} = -9.156, p < .0001$, see table 1). Further analysis of the results indicated that the areas of understanding that increased the most were the theology of the Christ-Church union, creating safeguards in the home, and how to talk to children about sexuality issues. It is important to note here that the participants were primarily mature Christians, who have been heavily involved in the discipleship ministries of their local churches. Some of the participants were volunteers in my student ministry in 2015 where I initially began addressing and implementing a BSD curriculum. This variable indicates that the representative sample skews the pre-assessment survey results toward a level of understanding that could be better than the average parent. This lends further evidence that the project was effective since the participants may be considered more knowledgeable than the average individual in the area of biblical sexuality.

Table 1. T-test: Paired two sample for means

	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test Total</i>
Mean	84.07142857	99.71428571
Variance	40.22527473	60.83516484
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	0.608448446	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t stat	-9.156234361	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000002477	
t Critical one-tail	1.770933396	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.95345E-07	
t Critical two-tail	2.160368656	

In an effort to remain objective in implementing this project, I only cautiously hoped that it would be helpful. I was encouraged to learn about the personal impact that the curriculum had on the participants. The post-survey assessment contained a comments section for the participants to provide their input on the curriculum after it was completed. They reported that the focus on the Christ-Church union as the foundation of marriage, sex, and sexuality helped broaden their understanding beyond their previous narrow view of the purpose of marriage and sex as only for procreation and pleasure. They most commonly reported that one of the more helpful benefits of the curriculum was the help they received in the practical aspects of safeguards, best practices, and how to talk to their children about sex, sexuality, and sexual sin. Additionally, comments from the post-survey assessment indicated that some participants desired more information on how to specifically introduce the levels of a theology of marriage, sex, and sexuality to children in various stages of their development. The following is an example of such:

I found this to be very helpful and practical. I like that it removed the stigma of talking about sexuality with children, and I like the information of what is normal at different stages of development. I also found the idea of the gradual release of responsibility in consuming media to be very helpful. I didn't have anything like that growing up. The one question I have is about communicating the theology of sexuality to children. At what age is it appropriate to connect sexuality and gender

to theology? Or, how do we connect the theology of sexuality with what children are currently experiencing in their sexuality as they grow and develop?

Project Strengths

Perhaps the greatest strength of this project was that it specifically addressed a major need in families and the local church. While there are many resources on those individual themes, my research showed that they are not adequately synthesized. I am not presuming that this project has adequately filled the gap in this deficit, however, it is a positive move in addressing the issue. Feedback from the participants has demonstrated this to be true as they have remarked about how much they benefited from the added dimension of the Christ-Church union with how they teach their children about biblical sexuality.

A second strength of the project was the curriculum. The research revealed a wealth of resources on various passages used as the foundational theological argument for the project. The individual themes of marriage, sex, sexuality, sex education, and sexual sin were also well represented in scholarly and contemporary literature. This curriculum specifically incorporated the theological foundation of marriage, sex, and sexuality with the sociological and developmental needs of BSD for adolescents. Additionally, the curriculum incorporated the larger biblical theme of the culmination of humankind's redemption in union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Deut 6:4-9; 1 Cor 6:16-20; Eph 5:31-32; Rev 19).

A third strength of the project was the method of delivery. The initial design of this project involved hosting an in-person training over a period of five weeks. The rationale was that in-person training was the normal vehicle for discipleship training in the Church. The global Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 along with its subsequent lockdowns radically changed the trajectory of the planning of this project resulting in the venue change. Additionally, during that same time, my transition out of student ministry and the decision to open a Christian counseling practice necessitated a change in the

method of delivery. Moving to pre-recorded video sessions allowed for a greater audience to be reached. It also allowed for participants to watch at their own pace, creating a more conducive opportunity for learning.

Project Weaknesses

I believe that one of the major weaknesses of this project is its deficit in adequately addressing how celibacy in singleness fits into the theology of biblical sexuality discipleship. I was keenly aware of this during the writing portion but felt that the limited scope of BSD for children and adolescents necessitated that celibacy in singleness needed its own separate focus and was outside the scope of this project. The rationale was that most adolescents in middle and high school are not dealing with the same stigma associated with adult singleness because they simply aren't ready to think about long-term singleness in adulthood. Yet the target audience is in a state of singleness, even if it is temporary for most of them. Regardless, celibacy in singleness is under-represented and needs to be adequately addressed in future iterations of this curriculum.

The second weakness of this project is a lack of balance in the practical aspects of how parents navigate the issues surrounding biblical sexuality. The rapidly changing landscape of social media made that balance difficult. I do not regret the attention given to the theological and sociological foundation of the project, but I think that more attention could have been given to providing parents with practical help. In reality, parents could benefit from a dedicated focus on practical help, safeguards, and best practices.

The third weakness of this project is that the online video training sessions did not allow for immediate feedback and interaction with the participants. The method of delivery is also listed as one of the strengths as well. However, it also had its drawbacks. The online sessions limited the learning dynamic and comradery that may have been

possible if the sessions were in person. I anticipated this issue and hosted a Zoom Meeting for all participants to share feedback and ask questions, but I believe it would have been more effective after each session rather than after all sessions were completed.

What I Would Do Differently

This project was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life, yet the perspective of hindsight reveals several things that I would do differently if I could start over. First, I would have cultivated relationships with local student ministers and lead pastors to expand the reach of the project. Before my change in ministry context, my target audience was several hundred parents and students at the megachurch where I served as High School Student Pastor. The audience with my new Christian counseling practice created limitations with client confidentiality and ethics rules. Nonetheless, I would have liked to see more parents and students involved in this project. It would have been beneficial to consider developing a marketing campaign via local and social media outlets

Second, I would have liked to utilize both in-person and online video sessions. I think it would have been greatly beneficial for the participants to have the opportunity to ask questions and hear the questions of others. I think it also would have been a better learning environment for the participants to be in a live setting. Providing options for both platforms could have also further expanded the potential reach of the project.

Third, I would have added two additional sessions to give more attention to practical application and celibacy in singleness. First, many parents struggle to keep up with rapidly changing society and technology. This, along with the survey data, confirmed that this as a weak area for parents that needs more development. Second, even though most teenagers aren't thinking about singleness in adulthood, they are still single, at least for a time. A greater focus on celibacy in singleness would have allowed for a greater connection to the Christ-Church union. Especially since they are either waiting

for marital union or union with Christ. Additionally, this focus could have served to help develop a deeper understanding of the greater purpose to remain sexually pure for union with Christ, rather than making marriage the main reason for waiting to have sex.

Theological Reflections

High fidelity to Scripture, accurate hermeneutics, and grounded theology are critically important to biblical sexuality discipleship, as well as all other areas of theology. It was a rewarding endeavor to develop the theological argument for this project. I was especially thankful for my personal growth as I realized how the Gospel message of redemption intersects with sexuality, marriage, sex, and our union with the Creator. I often found myself visualizing the incredibly artful picture that the Holy Spirit inspired in Moses, John the Beloved, and the Apostle Paul as they depicted creation, union with Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb. It's often easy to be myopic in our intellectualism and academic study of God's word. Yet there is so much beauty and art in His word, and I am thankful for the deeper look into it. Connecting all of these beautiful motifs of God's design for marriage, singleness, and union with Christ has been beneficial to me personally.

Second, I was reminded of the grace of Jesus and how he freely gives us justification. This project has helped me expand my own offering of grace to those who struggle. Sexual sin is heavy and hard for many, especially for those young souls trapped in sexual sin without support from home or church. One of the most important aspects of a theology of biblical sexuality is how we must develop a culture of grace if we expect our young people to seek help. I am humbly reminded to stay off of my own soapbox of judgment.

Third, I learned that biblical sexuality is not an out-lying area that needs deductive development. Rather, it is clearly taught from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus himself often dealt directly with the sexual sins of those who sought him. The Apostle

Paul dedicated so much of his epistles to directly addressing sexual sin in the church. This has bolstered my view that we, the Church, must be intentional in bringing biblical sexuality out of the shadows of shame and into the light of His grace.

Personal Reflections

I began the journey of this project in January of 2018. Five years later, after a heartbreaking transition in ministry, a global pandemic, and a year of interrupted studies, I reflect on what God has done. So much life and struggle happened during these five years that I scarcely know what to make of it all. I am humbled and incredibly unworthy to have started this journey, much less to have completed it. I fully recognize it is only through the grace of God that he had brought me here.

I am so thankful for my former students from over twenty-two years of ministry as a student pastor. They were so brave to take the risk and let me into their personal struggles with sexual sin. Serving them has been the ministry passion of my life and I would not have been able to do this without them. Likewise, the people and parents of my two churches, Park Springs Bible Church of Arlington, Texas, and First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida have been instrumental in encouraging me and enabling me to embark on this journey. Their influence on me has greatly impacted my work on this project, both as a student pastor and as a Christian therapist. I cherish the memories of serving them.

Conclusion

The rapid degradation of sensuality in today's culture is difficult to comprehend. It has been seven years since I first surveyed more than 300 high school students in my student ministry. The results of that survey became the genesis of this project. The struggle with sexual sin among those core students was truly staggering. Yet this was before the transgender civil rights movement overtook the media. It was before the now common expectation to declare one's personal pronouns at introductions. It was

before gender became a personal choice rather than determined by chromosomes. Even now, as I survey the current landscape of our ultra-sexualized secular culture, the issues of seven years ago seem trivial. Then, the primary access point for pornography was adult websites. The sensual content in commonly used social media applications was still somewhat hidden. Today, sensuality is no longer hidden behind private social media platforms, nor does it require specific searches to access explicit material. Instead, it is peddled by overt and pornographic advertisements from content creators who promote private accounts with paid memberships to access their self-produced pornography. We must not concede this territory to the world without a fight.

By God's grace, I have learned much and accomplished much through the completion of this project. However, there is still so much work to be done in this critically important area of biblical sexuality discipleship. The statistics on how young people are struggling with sexual sin are shocking and heartbreaking. We simply cannot afford to stay silent about such issues. Our churches and families need better and deserve better. I pray that this project serves as a light that illuminates the great need for our churches and families to reclaim the mantle of all-encompassing discipleship, especially in the critical area of biblical sexuality. May this project be the beginning of continued work in biblical sexuality until Jesus returns.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project on Biblical Sexuality Discipleship. It would be helpful for you to understand a few things before you get started:

Please answer these questions according to how you honestly feel without projecting what you think I am looking for. I am interested in what you actually understand, believe, and think – not what think you should understand, believe, and think.

The video training sessions can be accessed via a link that will be sent once you complete the informed consent (separate email) and questionnaire below. You may view the videos at your own pace, but you will need to complete them by August 31st in order to be included in the study.

Once you complete the 5 video sessions, please let us know so that you can be sent a new link for the post-test. The post-test will have the same questions as below and will help us see how your answers have changed as a result of the curriculum. The post-test will include an additional opportunity for you to provide any feedback. I invite you to be honest in what you found was helpful, what was not, and what could be added to make it more effective.

Name: _____

Date: _____

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat AS=Agree Somewhat
A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

1. I understand the Bible's teaching on sexuality well enough to explain it to others.
2. I can identify biblical passages regarding sexuality.
3. Biblical sexuality discipleship is needed for adults.
4. Biblical sexuality discipleship is needed for children between the ages of 7-11.
5. Biblical sexuality discipleship is needed for adolescents 12-14.
6. Biblical sexuality discipleship is needed for adolescents 15 and older.

7. I understand and can explain human sexuality development to children.
8. I understand and can explain human sexuality development to adolescents.
9. I understand and can explain the biblical purpose of physical union (sex) in marriage.
10. I understand and can explain the biblical purpose for sex other than procreation or pleasure.
11. I understand and can explain how the physical union (sex) in marriage is connected to the spiritual union of Christ to the Church in the marriage supper of the Lamb.
12. I understand and can explain how the Bible distinguishes sexual sin from other sin.
13. I believe that teaching adolescents to save sex for marriage is the most important thing when talking to them about sexuality.
14. I understand technology, social media, and internet access enough to create safeguards against unwanted exposure to explicit material.
15. I believe that elimination of exposure to sensuality in the home is the best way to protect a child's innocence.
16. I understand how to talk to my children/adolescents should it be discovered that they have been exposed to sexually explicit material or engaged in sexual behavior.
17. I understand how to talk to my children/adolescents about touching/masturbation.
18. I understand and can explain to my adolescent why sexual activity should be abstained from other than that premarital intercourse is sin.
19. I believe that an adolescent caught looking at pornography should be punished.

APPENDIX 2

BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation rubric was sent to an expert panel of one mental health professional, one student pastor of a local church, and parents associated with Anchored Christian Counseling. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it is biblical, thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC					
1 = Unsatisfactory 2 =Inadequate 3 = Adequate 4 =Exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. It was interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope/Sequence					
The scope/content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The sequence of the curriculum is logical in the training of the participants.					
Methodology					
The curriculum utilizes an acceptable methodology for training participants.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches, such as lectures, case studies, and informative reading.					
Practicality					
The curriculum prepares participants to be well equipped to disciple others in biblical sexuality at the end of the process.					

APPENDIX 3
PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Participant	Pre-test	Post-test
1	77	95
2	92	110
3	93	113
4	87	103
5	90	102
6	80	101
7	85	87
8	89	96
9	81	103
10	86	100
11	86	96
12	72	93
13	75	88
14	84	109
Mean Total Score	83.78	97
Mean Score per Question	4.42	5.24

APPENDIX 4
BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP
CURRICULUM

The following curriculum was developed based on research conducted in this project. It was taught over a period of five sessions, lasting approximately forty-five minutes via pre-recorded video.

Biblical Sexuality Discipleship for Parents
Session 1 – Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

- OBJECTIVES:** To demonstrate the importance of why Christian parents and the Church must reclaim biblical sexuality through proactive discipleship.
- To create a parental urgency to intentionally disciple their children to a healthy understanding of biblical sexuality.
- GOALS:**
1. To help participants develop a deeper understanding of the crisis of biblical sexuality.
 2. To increase awareness of common problems regarding current practices contributing to the crisis of biblical sexuality.
 3. To equip participants to train others in biblical sexuality.
- CAUSE:** Children, adolescents, and adults are succumbing to societal and cultural pressures of sexual expression by acting upon their sexual impulses, resulting in life altering and devastating consequences.
-

PREFACE

1 Peter 5:8 - ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

I'd like to begin this session with testimony of one of my former students who came to me seeking help with her addiction to pornography in 10th grade. When she was older and in college, I asked her to tell her story of how she fell into the addiction.

My struggle began at an early age, but never would I have thought that it would grow into what it became in high school. My parents told me what sex was when I was about six years old. They didn't go into graphic detail, but they gave me an idea of what sex was and why God created it.

When I was in my late years of elementary school I would sometimes come home after school and log onto Disney Channel.com and play some games. However, me not knowing how to spell very well I accidentally misspelled channel and instead typed "channal."

My parents like most smart, protective, Christian parents would do; set a pass code on all electronic devices in our household blocking inappropriate channels and websites from their children's view. However, me being the curious child I was took a guess one day at what the pass code might be and low and behold I was right. I started to browse all the channels and shows that I was not normally allowed to watch, and then it happened... I stumbled upon On Demand. I noticed the tab that said movies and saw all the different types of movies. Then I saw the tab labeled

ADULT.

I wouldn't think about it but constantly throughout the years something would trigger those memories and those images would pop back into my mind, haunting me. Around freshman year, I stumbled upon a website that allowed me to watch free movies that had just come into theaters. It seemed harmless. The occasional pornography ad would come up when the website was opened, and I would exit out of the ad and continue on with what I was doing. Then one day I did not ignore the ad. Instead, I visited the website and gave into the temptation of truly watching porn for the first time.

“The Devil is very patient. He develops habits in you today that will destroy you later in life.” – Jimmy Scroggins

INTRODUCTION

Satan first began attacking the family when he planted dissent in the hearts of Adam and Eve.

Their rebellion caused a shift in the perceptions of sexuality and nakedness. For the first time, nakedness was associated with shame, causing a ripple effect to cascade through time, distorting God's plan for marriage and sexual union.

Since the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden, history has been replete with examples of such distortion.

The first sexual revolution of the 1960s is a primary example of such distortions. The rise of the “Free Love” movement, pornography, and casual sex resulted in a cultural shift.¹

This distortion of sexuality during the sexual revolution was one of the major contributing factors to the deterioration of the family, causing a rapidly increasing divorce rate.²

The nuclear family began to weaken in both secular and Christian circles. With the rapid rise of divorce, strained or absent relations between parents and children became the norm, and the institution of marriage began down a path of swift decline.³

¹ “Free Love and Women's History in the 19th Century (and Later),” *ThoughtCo*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.thoughtco.com/free-love-and-womens-history-3530392>.

² Jeffrey Escoffier writes that Justice Brennan's arguments in *Roth v. United States of America*, in 1957, played a significant role in the battle over freedom of sexual expression in pornography. Escoffier, further states that while Brennan declared that obscenity in sexual expression has no redeeming value, he created an opening for freedom of sexual expression by stating that sex and obscenity were not synonymous. “*The Sexual Revolution, 1960-1980*,” n.d., 7, accessed June 15, 2022, http://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/sexual_revolution_S.pdf, paragraph 19.

³ According to data from the National Vital Statistics System, the divorce rate began to rapidly increase at the end of the 1960's and rose steadily through the 1970s. Israel, Patterson, and Hetzel, “Vital and Health Statistics; Series 21, No. 24 (12/73).” https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_21/sr21_024.pdf.

Unfortunately, this resulted in a successful attack on the family, one of the foundational bedrocks of God's design in creation. It is important to recognize that while the entire family system has been severely impacted, the children have suffered the most.

Because of this, children should not be considered merely collateral damage by this attack. Rather, they should be viewed as the primary targets.

Enticing children with the sexual trappings of this world eventually break the cycle of family discipleship.

Thus, further weakening the family unit and contributing to the ongoing issues in a post-Christian society.

Despite the proliferation of sensuality and the encouragement of free sexual expression in society, the church and Christian homes continue to struggle in protecting biblical sexuality.

The taboo nature of sexuality within these Christian communities has enabled a generation of parents who are unintentionally perpetuating an absence of biblical sexuality discipleship.

Children are often left to learn about sexuality for themselves amid the deafening noise of a secular society that beckons them to embrace and explore all aspects of their sexuality and sexual impulses.

As secular society continues to steamroll the agenda of every person's right to free sexual expression, Christian families and the Church must be proactive in grounding their children in a biblical sexuality theology.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of why Christian parents and the Church must reclaim biblical sexuality through proactive discipleship.

The Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

Through the decades the Church's reputation for preaching admonitions from the soapbox of condemnation has done major harm to her ability to minister to those who commit the sins that she often rails against.

Historically, this is evident in the counter-cultural approach that many in Christian circles have taken.

Things like fiery sermons, pithy social media posts, podcasts, and public boycotts are examples of how the church has often counteracted the world's view of sexuality.

Juli Slattery, author of *Rethinking Sexuality: God's design and Why it Matters*, writes,

“Christians have a long history of avoiding and mishandling topics of sexuality.

For generations, we simply didn’t talk about things such as sexual addiction, sexual abuse, sexual dysfunction, or even sexual pleasure in marriage.”⁴

While it is still imperative that the Church stand as a light in the darkness by calling out sin, the preaching of judgment and condemnation should never be louder than the preaching of God’s redeeming grace.⁵

In the past, there have been initiatives and ministries like *Passport to Purity*,⁶ *True Love Waits*,⁷ and its rebrand, *The True Love Project*,⁸ that emphasized teaching students about the importance of being able to give the gift of purity to one’s spouse on the wedding night.⁹

These abstinence-based programs have now shifted to allow for an understanding of sexual purity that does not stop with simply remaining a virgin but also includes staying pure from sexual images, thoughts, and any kind of sexual acts.

While it is critically necessary to teach abstinence, it is simply not adequate to teach the unmarried merely to abstain from sexual activity without the theological foundation of why this safeguard is important.

Slattery warns that focusing on “compelling teenagers to stay virgins and exposing the many ways sexuality leads to sin” tends to couch sexuality as a “problem to be solved, rather than a territory to be reclaimed.”¹⁰

In many cases, sex education in Christian homes is limited to the broad biological mechanics of sex and how babies are made.

In some cases, with older adolescents, parents may expand “the talk” to include the purpose of purity and the dangers of sexual sin. Parents mean well but are often not

⁴ Juli Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality: God’s Design and Why It Matters* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2018), 7.

⁵ Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 154.

⁶ Dennis Rainey and Barbara Rainey. “Passport2purity” (Little Rock, AK: Family Life, 2012).

⁷ “History Of True Love Waits | Lifeway.” Accessed June 28, 2022. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/product-family/true-love-waits/history>.

⁸ Clayton King. *True Love Project: 40 Days of Purity for Guys*. (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1614/2015413211-b.html>.

⁹ Lifeway Students. *True Love Waits Takes a Look at Courting, Dating, & Hanging Out*. (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2000).

¹⁰ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 9.

equipped to expand beyond these limitations.

When parental conversations are limited in this way, larger theological principles are often omitted, such as the greater biblical purpose of marriage, sex in marriage, celibacy in singleness, and how they all tie into the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19).

Students must be taught the full biblical foundation for sex and sexuality. These conversations need to begin in age-appropriate ways long before children move into adolescence.

Epidemiology of the Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

According to experts on the subject, sex and sexuality are strictly guarded in many Christian homes.¹¹

Discussion surrounding these issues has become so taboo that many Christian married couples can barely discuss sex in the privacy of their own bedroom.¹²

Likewise, parents struggle even more with these hard conversations about sexuality.

Sociologist Mark Regnerus states that parents are so unable to bring themselves to have an ongoing conversation about sexuality that they adopt a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.¹³

Similarly, there are generations of parents within the church who are not talking to their children about biblical sexuality at all, leaving a silent void in one of the most critical issues facing Christians today.

This silence is allowing the world an unchecked opportunity to define sexuality.¹⁴

The lack of sexuality discipleship in the church and home has resulted in a glaring crisis that needs to be addressed.

Jennifer Garrison’s survey of current research found that the broad topic of marriage is well-represented, but these studies do not address the teaching of marriage and sexuality

¹¹ Mark D. Regnerus, “Talking About Sex: Religion and Patterns of Parent–Child Communication about Sex and Contraception,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (December 2, 2016), 79–105.

¹² “Why Are Some Christians So Fearful of Sex When They Get Married?,” *Crosswalk.Com*, accessed July 15, 2022, <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/why-are-some-christians-so-fearful-of-sex-when-they-get-married.html>.

¹³ Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think About Marrying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

¹⁴ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 15.

to children by Christian parents.¹⁵

This crisis is resulting in alarming amounts of students leaving the church altogether when they reach their teenage years.

Barna Research found that among 18 to 29-year-olds who were polled regarding their reason for leaving the church, simplistic and judgmental views on sexuality was one of the top reasons.¹⁶

One of the reasons that this has become an issue is the perceived “sexual innocence” that parents have of their children.

Lanae St. John, of Alliance for Girls, says that abstinence-only methods as a means of protecting the innocence of children are ineffective.¹⁷

St. John bolsters her stance by stating that failure to prepare a child for the onslaught of sexual content could be considered neglect or endangerment:

An unfiltered exposure to everything else that’s sexualized in the environment without a reasonable explanation, or any context is troublesome. Or, if a parent does attempt to filter things, there’s a whole lot of sexual content kids can see when the parents aren’t around to filter. And then that lack of preparing the child adequately for what they might be exposed to could be considered neglect or child endangerment.¹⁸

This is also echoed in how church ministries tend to leave sexuality discipleship primarily to the parents. Current statistics show that parents are not having adequate or any dialogue with their children about sexuality.¹⁹

This further suggests that the church is not providing parents with adequate support in equipping them to be successful in discipling their children in sexuality.

¹⁵ Jennifer Rose Garrison. “Marriage, Sexuality, and Christian Parental Instruction: A Descriptive Analysis of Perspectives and Practices.” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016) 10.

¹⁶ Barna Group. “Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church.” accessed June 13, 2022. <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church/>.

¹⁷ Alliance For Girls. “Innocence and Sensibility: A Child’s Innocence vs. A Parent’s Comfort,” accessed June 29, 2022. <https://www.alliance4girls.org/voices/innocence-and-sensibility-a-childs-innocence-vs-a-parents-comfort/>.

¹⁸ Alliance For Girls. “Innocence and Sensibility: A Child’s Innocence vs. A Parent’s Comfort,” accessed June 29, 2022. <https://www.alliance4girls.org/voices/innocence-and-sensibility-a-childs-innocence-vs-a-parents-comfort/>.

¹⁹ Regnerus, “Talking About Sex,” 80-81.

It's understandable that pastoral leadership in the local church would seek to guard a parent's right to disciple their children regarding their sexuality as they see fit.

However, the lack of follow-up care by parents has proven to leave a void that secular society continues to fill.

Parents and the church should be vigilant in protecting their children from unnecessary and premature exposure to sensuality.

However, clinging to their "innocence" in an attempt to make it last as long as possible is leaving children and teenagers exposed and ill-prepared to withstand the onslaught of sexuality outside the home.

Deviant distortions of sexuality are so pervasive in our culture that one can scarcely go a few minutes without having his or her senses assaulted with sensuality and sexual innuendo.

Studies indicate that there is significant correlation between early and frequent exposure to sexually explicit material in early adolescence and risky sexual attitudes and behavior in emerging adulthood.²⁰

This pervasiveness has resulted in the knee-jerk reaction of Christian parents to attempt to sterilize their children's environment from all things sexual.²¹

This attempt at a sterile environment has created a "false-inoculation" that, in reality, only offers parents a weak line of defense and ultimately leaves teenagers even more exposed.

Technology and social media are now an inextricable part of the fabric of society.

Digital devices and social media applications are changing so rapidly that parents are significantly outmaneuvered in managing all of the avenues of sexual content.

Students must be prepared for the bombardment of sensuality from these avenues while they are in the protection of their Christian homes, not when they leave for college.

It is easy for parents to "lock the door and go to bed" by setting the perimeter defense of

²⁰ Lin, Wen-Hsu, Chia-Hua Liu, and Chin-Chun Yi. "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media in Early Adolescence Is Related to Risky Sexual Behavior in Emerging Adulthood." *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 4 (April 10, 2020): e0230242, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230242>.

²¹ At the time of writing this, June 22, 2022, Disney released the newest adaptation of the animated series of the *Toy Story* franchise, called *Lightyear*. Parents soon became outraged after learning about the lesbian kiss between two characters. Social media platforms were filled with concerned parents calling for further boycotts of Disney. A Google search on "Christians boycott Disney after Lightyear movie" resulted in more than a dozen articles citing Christian group calling for the boycott. "Christians Boycott Disney after Lightyear Movie - Google Search," accessed August 12, 2022.

limiting access to the internet or other avenues for sensuality.

However, having no plan for continued patrol or education makes children easy targets when they leave this perimeter defense of the home.

Parents often put off adequate discussions of sexuality until they have older teenagers.

Unfortunately, when the discussions finally happen, they often only focus on abstinence or basic procreation.

Parents are not adequately discipling children about their biblical sexuality and how it is interwoven into God's design for creation and eternity.

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, sexual development begins in a child's very first years.²²

Infants and toddlers begin forming emotional attachments from how they are held, touched, kissed, and hugged.²³

This unique type of physical intimacy and emotional attachment can be the early foundation of later mature sexuality.²⁴

Either by ignorance or by oversight, some parents struggle with accepting that their children come out of the womb with a developing sexuality.

Ron DeHass, the president, and co-founder of *Covenant Eyes*, writes that:

Parents who are fearful of talking to their kids about sex leave a void of silence the world will be glad to fill. The problem is many parents are too afraid to talk to their kids about sex because they don't want to say "too much too soon." Unfortunately, "too much too soon" often turns into "too little too late."²⁵

Juli Slattery laments in her realization that in the absence of discussion "we have been sexually disciplined by the world."²⁶ She goes on to clarify that we have been taught to see

²² Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Understanding Early Sexual Development," accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/PatientsFamilies/HealthLibrary/HealthDocNew/Understanding-Early-Sexual-Development>.

²³ Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Understanding Early Sexual Development."

²⁴ Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Understanding Early Sexual Development."

²⁵ "Talking to Your Kids About Sex: A Parent-Child Bible Study," *Covenant Eyes*, last modified April 14, 2014, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.covenanteyes.com/2014/04/14/talking-about-sex-bible-study/>.

²⁶ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 20.

sexuality from the world's narrative.²⁷

The message of secular sexuality is so deafening that the whisper of biblical sexuality in the church and home is drowned out.

Regardless of the level of insulation and isolation that a parent tries to maintain, no parent can completely shield their children from the war of sexuality that the world is waging.

The Bible calls parents to train and disciple their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not to merely preserve their innocence until they leave the home (Deut 11:19; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4).

If parents are not actively discipling their children in biblical sexuality, then the world will gladly speak in the silence.

Contextualizing the Crisis

Parents must understand that children are not simply the casualties of Satan's attack on sexuality. They are the targets.

Satan's ultimate end game is to destroy the glory of God in man by attacking the family, marriage, and sexuality.

Christopher West, the author of *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, writes:

If the body and sex are meant to proclaim our union with God, and if there's an enemy who wants to separate us from God, what do you think he's going to attack? If we want to know what's most sacred in this world, all we need do is look for what is most violently profaned. The enemy is no dummy. He knows that the body and sex are meant to proclaim the divine mystery. And from his perspective, this proclamation must be stifled.²⁸

Teenagers in today's culture struggle with sexual behaviors and sexual addiction at staggering rates.

1. Seventy-one percent of teens have attempted to hide what they do online from their parents (this includes clearing browser history, minimizing a browser when in view, deleting inappropriate videos, lying about behavior, using a phone instead of a computer, blocking parents with social media privacy settings, using private browsing, disabling parental controls, or having e-mail or social media accounts

²⁷ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 20.

²⁸ Christopher West, *Theology of The Body for Beginners* (West Chester, PA: Ascension, 2004). 12.

unknown to parents).²⁹

2. Forty-four percent of teens surveyed admitted they have looked at something online of which their parents would not approve. Of these, Eighty-one percent said this has happened at home, and forty-eight percent said it has happened at home when their parents were home.³⁰

3. The majority of young people's first-time watching pornography was accidental, with over sixty percent of children 11-13 who had seen pornography saying their viewing of pornography is unintentional. The largest group of viewers of internet porn is children ages 12-17.³¹

Children and students are succumbing to societal and cultural pressures of sexual expression by acting upon their sexual impulses, resulting in life-altering and devastating consequences.

The failure to develop a theology of sexuality in our children has resulted in the continued repression of healthy dialogue.

More importantly, it has resulted in parents failing to proactively discuss sexuality with their children.

Instead of healthy and biblically robust dialogue, it seems that parents are employing three common methods of dealing with their children's burgeoning sexuality, abstinence by elimination, reactionary, and detached purity.³²

Common Methods of Sexuality Education in the Home

Abstinence by Elimination Method

Abstinence by elimination is the attempt to create a sterile environment by eliminating all

²⁹ Jamie Le, "The Digital Divide: How the Online Behavior of Teens is Getting Past Parents," McAfee.com. June 2012, accessed June 16, 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/document/98269655/The-Digital-Divide-How-the-Online-Behavior-of-Teens-is-Getting-Past-Parents>.

³⁰ Cox Communications, "Tween Internet safety survey," June 2012. accessed June 20, 2022, <http://ww2.cox.com/wcm/en/aboutus/datasheet/takecharge/tween-internet-safety-survey.pdf>

³¹ BBFC, "Children See Pornography as Young as Seven, New Report Finds," accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-us/news/children-see-pornography-as-young-as-seven-new-report-finds>.

³² I developed these methods of how parents deal with their children's burgeoning sexuality from my observations from my ministry experience. These observations are primarily anecdotal evidence. However, they were developed from my experience from working with more than a thousand families over a period of 26 years. These tendencies became apparent after many discussions, counseling, and teaching series with parents and students. To the best of my knowledge, these ideas are original and were not developed from any specific source.

outlets and avenues for their children to be exposed to sexual content.

This attempt at a sterile environment creates a false sense of security by making exposure to sexual content seem impossible.

In 2019, Revealing Reality, a research firm based in the United Kingdom, surveyed over two thousand parents.

They found that seventy-five percent of parents reported, that if their children were asked, they would report that they have not seen pornography.

However, of those children, more than half said that they had, in fact, seen pornography.³³

Any wise and attuned parent should certainly strive to guard against opportunities for easy access to explicit content.

However, this method is often employed until the student leaves the home for college, resulting in the student having no practical skills or discipline to resist the temptations of sexual expression that bombard them in college life.

This is assuming they have not already succumbed to those pressures.

Additionally, even if parents could be successful in creating and maintaining a sterile environment, it is impossible to totally control or prevent any exposure to sexual content outside the home.

Daniel Cid of CleanBrowsing.org, reports that among children who were first exposed to pornography before the age of thirteen, fifty percent of them viewed the content by accident on someone else's device and mostly their parent's device.³⁴

Reactionary Method

The reactionary approach mostly ignores the clear and present danger of the sexual temptation of children.

The parent then reacts when they accidentally discover that a child has been experimenting with or exploring their own bodies, explicit material, or engaging in other sexual activity.

³³ Revealing Reality. "Young People, Pornography & Age-Verification," accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk/2021/07/15/young-people-pornography-age-verification/>.

³⁴ Clean Browsing. "9 Clear Warning Signs That Your Kids Are Exposed to Internet Porn," November 17, 2018. <https://cleanbrowsing.org/2018/11/9-clear-warning-signs-that-your-kids-are-exposed-to-internet-porn/>.

Many well-meaning parents cling too confidently to the innocence of their children, simply ignoring the danger before any education or discipleship takes place.

Parents often react poorly, inciting shame in children and adolescents by failing to provide a clear biblical context for the importance of purity.

This is compounded further when there is a lack of understanding and compassion that leaves children or teenagers feeling dirty or broken.

Parents then relegate the issue to silence, leaving struggling adolescents to suffer in shame because they cannot control their burgeoning and developing sexual impulses.

Dr. James Dobson has written that the shame experienced by teenagers who struggle with their sexual impulses can lead to a sense of divine condemnation that can drive them away from the faith.³⁵

Boys and girls who labor under divine condemnation can gradually become convinced that even God couldn't love them. They promise a thousand times with great sincerity never again to commit this despicable act. Then a week or two passes, or perhaps several months. Eventually, the hormonal pressure accumulates until nearly every waking moment reverberates with sexual desire. Finally, in a moment (and I do mean a moment) of weakness, it happens again. What then, dear friend? Tell me what a young person says to God after he or she has just broken the one thousand first solemn promise to Him? I am convinced that some teenagers have thrown over their faith because of their inability to please God at this point of masturbation.³⁶

³⁵ The following is an excerpt Dobson's view on shame brought on by sexual exploration: "Boys and girls who labor under divine condemnation can gradually become convinced that even God couldn't love them. They promise a thousand times with great sincerity never again to commit this despicable act. Then a week or two passes, or perhaps several months. Eventually, the hormonal pressure accumulates until nearly every waking moment reverberates with sexual desire. Finally, in a moment (and I do mean a moment) of weakness, it happens again. What then, dear friend? Tell me what a young person says to God after he or she has just broken the one thousand first solemn promise to Him? I am convinced that some teenagers have thrown over their faith because of their inability to please God at this point of masturbation." *Overcoming Lust*. "Dr. Dobson's Initial Letter Regarding Masturbation," Accessed June 22, 2022, <http://www.overcoming-lust.com/httpwww-overcoming-lust-comdr-james-dobsons-open-letter-masturbation/>

³⁶ The following is an excerpt Dobson's view on shame brought on by sexual exploration: "Boys and girls who labor under divine condemnation can gradually become convinced that even God couldn't love them. They promise a thousand times with great sincerity never again to commit this despicable act. Then a week or two passes, or perhaps several months. Eventually, the hormonal pressure accumulates until nearly every waking moment reverberates with sexual desire. Finally, in a moment (and I do mean a moment) of weakness, it happens again. What then, dear friend? Tell me what a young person says to God after he or she has just broken the one thousand first solemn promise to Him? I am convinced that some teenagers have thrown over their faith because of their inability to please God at this point of masturbation." *Overcoming Lust*. "Dr. Dobson's Initial Letter Regarding Masturbation," Accessed June 22, 2022, <http://www.overcoming-lust.com/httpwww-overcoming-lust-comdr-james-dobsons-open-letter-masturbation/>

This is often a gateway for children and adolescents to seek outlets to explore sexual images and behavior that lead to full-blown sexual addictions, including masturbation, pornography, and sex.

Detached Purity Method

Detached purity is an emphasis on purity through abstinence without a thorough biblical theology of sex and marriage.

As mentioned earlier, *True Love Waits* and *Passport to Purity* once became very popular among both parents and student ministries.

While many of these studies have been beneficial in emphasizing the importance of sexual purity to teenagers, the emphasis is often limited to a completed study or weekend purity event without follow-up discipleship.

In her dissertation on marriage, sexuality, and Christian parental instruction, Jennifer Garrison studied many of the popular para-church resources on sexual purity for teenagers and found that they “are in-depth and prescriptive but do not provide parents with instructional help for teaching their children.”³⁷

Parents often develop a false sense of security with this approach, allowing it to stand alone without employing ongoing discipleship in the areas of relationships and biblical sexuality.

By this, it is easy to major too heavily on simply “waiting” until marriage rather than the biblical purpose of sexuality, marriage, and the physical and spiritual union of man and wife

Conclusion

The issue of a lack of biblical sexuality discipleship cannot be adequately addressed by simply providing children and students with more information about their developing bodies, biblical purity, and abstinence.

Instead, a foundational theology that facilitates a deeper and more thorough understanding of biblical sexuality is extremely important in reclaiming this territory.

In the next session, we will turn our attention to addressing this crisis through a deeper foundation understanding of biblical theological themes.

³⁷ Garrison, “Marriage, Sexuality, and Christian Parental Instruction,” 10.

Biblical Sexuality Discipleship for Parents
Session 2 – Addressing the Crisis of Biblical Sexuality

OBJECTIVES: To develop a deeper understanding of the theological foundations for why a biblical sexuality theology is critical to reclaiming this vital territory in the home and Church.

GOALS:

1. To help participants develop a deeper understanding of how to address the crisis of biblical sexuality.
2. To increase theological understanding of sexuality, marriage, singleness, and sex within the greater context of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

CAUSE: The lack of biblical sexuality disciple in the home and church is creating pathways for children and adolescents to be disciplined by secular society.

Addressing the Crisis

The issue of a lack of biblical sexuality discipleship cannot be adequately addressed by simply providing children and students with more information about their developing bodies, biblical purity, and abstinence.

Instead, a foundational theology that facilitates a deeper and more thorough understanding of biblical sexuality is extremely important in reclaiming this territory.

Therefore, a curriculum to address these issues needs to be addressed in the following biblical theological themes.

Biblical Theology of Sex

The sexual union of a husband and wife is an image of the spiritual union of the Church with the Creator.

Even after the fall of Adam and Eve, restoring man’s broken union with the Creator has always been an impetus of God’s plan for redemption.

Similarly, Juli Slattery argues that “God created you as a sexual person in order to unlock

the mystery of an invisible God.”¹

Just as the union of Christ and the Church is inextricably tied to the reconciliation of creation, so too is the physical union of a man and wife.

Christopher Ash, in his book *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God*, argues that marriage itself is a part of the created order and not merely a result.²

Andreas Köstenberger goes further and says that the foundation for marriage is itself rooted in God’s act of creating male and female.³

The future union of Creator and Church is intimately woven into the fabric of creation from Genesis to Revelation. As Ray Ortlund writes, marriage “is the wraparound concept for the entire Bible.”⁴

In his sermon entitled “*Love and Lust*,” Timothy Keller ties the covenant of marriage to the covenant of redemption.⁵

He alludes that every time marital sex is enacted it becomes a “covenant renewal ceremony” and reminds us of God’s covenant of reconciliation through redemption.⁶

Sex, sexuality, and the physical and spiritual union of a man and woman in marriage are some of the most sacred expressions of mankind’s purpose in God.

John Piper suggests that “one of the ultimate reasons that we are sexual is to make God more deeply knowable.”⁷

It is time that both the Church and Christian parents bring sex and sexuality out of the shadows and into the light that it deserves.

Parents can no longer afford to use the strategy of waiting until the teenage years and then only have inadequate discussions on abstaining from sex.

¹ Slattery, *Rethinking Sexuality*, 12.

² Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2005). Chap. 4, Kindle.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, and David W. Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), chap. 2, Kindle.

⁴ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 16.

⁵ Timothy J. Keller. “Love and Lust,” *Gospel in Life*, accessed August 13, 2022, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/love-and-lust-6151/>.

⁶ Keller. “Love and Lust,”

⁷ John Piper, and Justin Taylor. *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 26.

They must be proactive by teaching children about God-given sexuality as soon as they begin to emerge from the latency of childhood, if not sooner.

Foundation of marriage

The epidemic of an over-sexualized culture and how it affects children today is symptomatic of a much larger issue. Human sexuality has never existed in a vacuum.

Rather, it is interwoven into the larger Gospel narrative of the redemption of humankind that culminates in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). T

he biblical purpose of marriage and the biblical expression of sexual union are both foundational and paramount in combatting the popular culture of sex that influences adolescents today.

Historically, evangelical Christians have maintained that God created marriage, and that it is to be between a man and a woman.⁸

However, a recent Barna poll across the five generational groups demonstrates this viewpoint is weakening.

The view that marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman was affirmed by less than half of those groups.⁹

Among the younger groups of Generation Z and Millennials,¹⁰ grasping the larger purpose of sex in marriage and celibacy in singleness is lacking.

Only an average of twenty percent of those polled among these generations agreed that sex before marriage is morally wrong.¹¹

The lack of understanding and the inability to articulate the purpose of sex beyond procreation and recreation continues to deteriorate among adolescents and young adults in the church.

In order to lay the foundational truth of biblical sexuality, it is helpful to go back to the

⁸ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far),” accessed July 22, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/gen-z-morality/>.

⁹ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far).”

¹⁰ Pew Research Center defines Millennials as those born between 1981-1997, Generation Z as those born between 1997-2012. Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins,” *Pew Research Center*, n.d., accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

¹¹ Barna Group, “Gen Z and Morality: What Teens Believe (So Far).”

book of Genesis.

Daniel Heimbach points out that Paul clearly links sex in marriage to union in Christ by quoting the “they shall become one flesh” verse of Genesis 2:24 in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:31-32).¹²

From the very beginning, Scripture tells us that God recognized that it was not good for man to be alone.

This simple declaration in Genesis 2:18 serves as one of the foundational cornerstones in God’s design for man. God’s assessment of “it is not good for man to be alone” and the subsequent creation of Eve demonstrates that he created Adam with the intent to be joined with Eve (Gen 2:18).

Christopher Ash states it succinctly that “man is a social creature, made for relationship” and Eve is “God’s primary provision” for such need.¹³

John Piper suggests that this whole saga of Adam and Eve’s creation was “all moving toward marriage” in the one-flesh union.¹⁴

God’s pronouncement here is the first time that His creation was declared anything other than good.¹⁵

No suitable companion was found among all the created beasts of the field or birds of the air.¹⁶

Thus, God created a special creature in the most unique way.¹⁷

Genesis 2:7 and 2:19 tell us that God made man and every other creature from the dust of the earth and breathed life into them.

However, when he created this new and special creature, designed to be a life-long companion to Adam, he did something far more peculiar and spectacular.

He caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and supernaturally opened his flesh, removing a

¹² Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 149.

¹³ Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 6, sec. 4, para. 1, Kindle.

¹⁴ John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 21.

¹⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 175.

¹⁶ Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 21.

¹⁷ Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 22.

rib.

He took that rib and fashioned Eve, the perfect and equal complement to Adam. She was not taken from the dust of the ground, nor was she spoken into existence.

She was made from the substance of man, in the likeness of her Creator. Adam then called her “woman” because she was taken out of him (Gen 2:23).

Genesis 2:23 captures Adam, the first bridegroom, as he stands before the first bride and looks at the splendor of the glorious gift that the Creator crafted specifically for him.

It would be careless to let this moment in creation captured in scripture pass by without the contemplation that it deserves.

Adam settles his eyes upon the most beautiful and splendid of all of God’s creation—a beautiful and radiant Eve standing before him without blemish, completely bare, and there was no shame among them.

The tableau depicted in the second chapter of Genesis lays the foundational cornerstone of the earthly institution of marriage of husband and wife.

Jim Newheiser describes this passage as the spring from which all passages on marriage flow.¹⁸ This cornerstone, however, has not been laid in the mere vacuum of our earthly existence.

Rather, it is the spring of what will eventually flow into the eternal union of Christ and his Bride.

As Sam Allberry puts it. “the mystery behind human marriage is—as we now see it’s always been—Christ’s relationship to the church.”¹⁹

Revelation 19 depicts this final act of consummation as the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9).

Purpose of sex

Marriage is the gift of companionship that God gave Adam in Eve (Gen 2:18). Sex is the physical and spiritual union of two separate individuals (Gen 2:24).

It is the glorious gift and expression of the future consummation of Christ, the last Bridegroom, with his Church, the last bride.

¹⁸ Jim Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2017). 6.

¹⁹ Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness*, 110.

While procreation is an underlying purpose of sex, it is secondary to the ultimate purpose and what it pictures.

Christopher Ash deduces that since the relationship of Adam and Eve was established before the command to be fruitful and multiply, “the primary function of sex is not procreation but the unity of fulfilling relationship.”²⁰

The sexual union of a man and woman represents the unity of the Godhead, the joy of the Godhead, and the completeness of the Godhead.

Unfortunately, even the word sex has been so distorted by secular society that often mature believers can scarcely say it aloud, much less identify its original intention in creation.

John Piper describes marriage as foundationally God’s doing and ultimately about God’s glory.²¹

When sex honors God and is expressed within its biblical prescription of heterosexual marriage, it is the glory of God in man and the expression of the future union of Christ.

The physical joy and ecstasy that comes from this holy, physical, and spiritual union of a man and woman are but a glimpse, a foreshadowing, of the joy and pleasure that is to come when the Church is joined with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19).

Even so, sex in marriage and marriage itself is not the focus of biblical marriage.

Sam Allberry warns that we should not make human marriage and sex more than God intended, he states, “It is not to be idolized. Marriage is not ultimate, but it points to the thing that is.

Marriage itself is not meant to fulfill us but to point to that which does. The real marriage is the one we find in Christ. Our marriages on earth are just the visual aid of this.”²²

As the warmth of the morning sun upon one’s face is but a small reminder of its magnitude and power, likewise, the earthy pleasure of the sexual union of a husband and wife is a momentary glimpse of the glory and blessing that awaits as the Bride of Christ becomes one with the Son.

²⁰ Christopher Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 7, sect. 3. para. 2, Kindle.

²¹ John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 21.

²² Sam Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness*, 112.

Sex and the fall of man.

The relationship of Adam and Eve, by way of their sexual union, was a part of God's original design before the sin of humankind.

The gift of Adam and Eve to each other was for companionship and union. It also served a secondary purpose to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen 1:28).

Ash further clarifies that it is unclear that God intended the "sexual relationship to be the remedy for the human heart's longing for loneliness."²³

Instead, the understanding that Adam and Eve were created for relationship with each other, and not primarily for sexual union is in better keeping with our future union with

Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). Additionally, this also allows relationship in singleness to remain on an equal plain with marriage because the ultimate culmination is union with Christ.

The fundamental purposes for sex and marriage have remained unchanged since its inception in the garden.

However, the sin of Adam and its devastating effects led to the corruption of the human mind and body, therefore distorting the earthly manifestation of the future union of Christ and the Church (Gen 3:14-18).

These distortions still plague the Church today and are worsening.

In his book *True Sexual Morality*, Daniel Heimbach discusses humanistic shifts in the Church's thinking about sexuality.²⁴

He describes these shifts as going from a theocentric to an anthropocentric ethos.²⁵

For example, Heimbach writes, "There is a shift from theologies of sex, to sexual theologies.

In other words, there is a shift from addressing sex in terms of Christian faith and doctrine, to addressing Christian faith and doctrine in terms of sex."²⁶

These anthropocentric mindsets are pervasive and continue to influence younger

²³ Ash, *Marriage*, chap. 7, sect. 8. para. 2, Kindle.

²⁴ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 42-43.

²⁵ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 43.

²⁶ Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 42.

generations to embrace the world's ideology of sexuality.

Jesus's death on the cross sets the Christian free from the bondage of the sin nature that bound all of mankind since the fall.

However, the flesh is the remnant of that corrupt sin nature and must be dealt with until Jesus reconciles mankind to Himself (Col 1:20).

Sin, death, and sin nature no longer reign in our mortal bodies, but their effects are still manifested through a weak and undisciplined flesh (Matt 26:41; Gal 5:16-26).

Even though the biblical purpose of sex and what it pictures remain unchanged by the fall of man, the body and its lustful desires of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the propensity to worship self have made it difficult for many in today's culture to see sexuality as the gift it is from God to mankind (1 John 2:16).

Therefore, reclaiming the biblical ethos of sexuality in the church and home is imperative.

Reclaiming this vital territory must begin in the home by shepherding children through their developing sexuality with intentional and developmentally appropriate biblical sexuality discipleship.

Conclusion

There was a time when network programming was reticent to depict husband-and-wife characters sharing the same bed.

The show *I Love Lucy* would only depict the married couple, Ricky and Lucy, sleeping in the same room but in separate twin beds.

It is hard to believe that there was a time in entertainment history when it was considered inappropriate to show such a benign tableau.

It was not until 1947 that the first television show depicted the husband-and-wife characters sleeping in the same bed.²⁷

According to Metv.com, it would take another 20 years until this became a common occurrence in shows such as *The Brady Bunch*.²⁸

Today, it is difficult to see a commercial, billboard, or even children's cartoon that is not

²⁷ "A Brief History of TV Couples Sleeping in the Same Bed." *Me-TV Network*. Accessed July 14, 2022. <https://metv.com/lists/a-brief-history-of-tv-couples-sleeping-in-the-same-bed>.

²⁸ "A Brief History of TV Couples Sleeping in the Same Bed."

pushing some message of sexual freedom or innuendo.

Yet, the church and many Christian homes seem to be stuck in 1947, when sexuality in any context was scarcely discussed.

Sexual sin is rampant and pervasive in secular society. Studies continue to indicate that the same is true for the Church.²⁹

According to Barna Research, there is virtually no difference in pornography use among Christian and non-Christian men.³⁰

In addition to the already existing issue of sexual activity and exposure to sensuality among adolescents, the transgender issue continues to add additional pressures with which both the Church and families must now contend.

Social advocacy in the secular world is increasingly propagandizing that gender and sex are fluid and not determined by genetics, and especially not intelligent design. The

Church can no longer afford to leave sexuality discipleship of its children solely in the hands of families with no assistance or accountability.

There is hope that the tides of sexuality ignorance among younger generations can be turned.

Tim Stafford in *Christianity Today* has said,

If there is hope in our situation, it is not in clucking tongues. It must come through a counterculture. . . . We must become a people who are consciously, undefensively different. . . . The Church was a sexual counterculture in the Roman Empire, and it could be again.³¹

That hope will only be possible through Christ by intentionally applying the whole message of the gospel to sex, marriage, sexuality, and future union with Christ in how we disciple children in a theology of biblical sexuality.

²⁹ Barna Group, “Porn in the Digital Age: New Research Reveals 10 Trends.” accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.barna.com/research/porn-in-the-digital-age-new-research-reveals-10-trends/>.

³⁰ It’s important to note here that the Barna Group is using a broad definition of “Christian” to mean those individuals who simply identify as being Christian. The Gospel Coalition analyzed the study and discovered that pornography use among those Christians who identify as “born-again” or “those who have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior” favor better and are one of the last bastions of Christian men resisting pornography. Carter, Joe. “Fact Checker: Do Christian Men Watch More Pornography?” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-do-christian-men-watch-more-pornography/>.

³¹ Tim Stafford, “The next Sexual Revolution,” *ChristianityToday.Com*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1992/march-9/next-sexual-revolution.html>.

The Shema of the Old Testament declares a clear mandate that discipleship is the responsibility of the family (Deut 6:4-5).

Likewise, in the New Testament, Acts and the Epistles echo that declaration in the purpose of the Church (Acts 2:42; Eph 4:14; Rom 12:10; 15:14).

In Ephesians 4:11-14, the Apostle Paul lays out the gifts that Christ left with the Church at his ascension.

He declares that these gifts are to be used to equip the saints for ministry and the building up of the body of Christ.

In verse 14, Paul culminates this section with an emphasis on why such gifts and equipping of the body of Christ are necessary.

He writes, “. . . so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”³²

In view of Ephesians 4:14, the clear mandate of discipleship in the Old and New Testaments combine to form the impetus of why biblical sexuality discipleship is paramount to preparing parents and students to successfully navigate the hyper-sexualized waters of society.

Otherwise, our children will be tossed around and carried about by every new wind of hedonism that Satan and the world blows.

³² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Eph. 4:14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Biblical Sexuality Discipleship for Parents
Session 3 – Theological Foundation for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

OBJECTIVES: To develop a deeper understanding of the theological foundations for why a biblical sexuality theology is critical to reclaiming this vital territory in the home and Church.

GOALS:

1. To help participants develop a deeper understanding the theological argument for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship
2. To increase theological understanding of sexuality and why it must be taught.

CAUSE: Parents lack a theological foundation for sexuality discipleship, causing them to avoid teach it to their children.

Introduction

The rise of age-graded programming in the local church has enabled parents to feel supported in their biblical mandate to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Over time, however, parents have abdicated more and more responsibility to the church.

Yet, the church has often viewed the teaching of biblical sexuality and discipleship, as a whole, as the responsibility of the parents and not lay volunteers or staff within the church.

Parents feel under-equipped, and the church has mostly left sexuality discipleship to parents.

This has created a large gap in how parents and the church are discipling children and adolescents in biblical sexuality.

Yet the Bible is clear in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, that “all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”¹

The Word of God had much to say about family discipleship and sexuality.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

This chapter will demonstrate a theological foundation for why biblical sexuality discipleship should be one of the tenets that the local church strives to equip its parents in teaching their children.

The spiritual consummation of Christ and His church at the marriage supper of the Lamb is the culmination of the gospel.

Through the Holy Spirit, John the apostle penned the opening words of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1).

These words help us understand how Revelation’s marriage supper of the Lamb was always in the beginning (Rev 19:7-6).

The union of Christ and his church is the foundation of the physical and spiritual union of Adam and Eve, thus becoming foundational for human sexuality.²

It is against this backdrop that we understand the Apostle Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:31-32 as central to marital union and sexuality.

This provides the foundation for a clear theology of biblical sexuality discipleship.

Marriage Union of Christ and the Church as the Foundation of Sexuality: Ephesians 5:31-32

The saga of humankind’s redemption begins with the union of man and woman.

This beginning is more than a simple pairing of complementary companions; it is a foreshadowing of the culmination of a union with Christ and the church.

The marriage supper of the Lamb is the crowning end to Christ’s redemption of His bride (Rev 19:7-9).

Sexuality must be understood from the foundational truth of the eternal union with Christ rather than the earthly bonds of human matrimony.

This view also provides a more complete understanding of sexuality without excluding or diminishing celibacy in singleness from this divine purpose.

Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus centers marriage within the larger context of God’s

² This is not to diminish singleness. The biblical understanding of marriage between humans is temporal and does not carry over to Heaven. Therefore, singleness is to be considered just as sacred as marriage because we will revert back to singleness as we await our marriage with the Bridegroom.

redemptive plan.³

Andreas Köstenberger points out that Paul lead with this in chapter one with the culminating purpose for humanity to be unified with all things under Christ.⁴

While Paul's letter is not exclusively talking about married couples, he addresses human marriage throughout the letter and connects it to the overarching theme of unity with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb.⁵

Paul uses the Genesis 2:24 reference to the one-flesh union in chapter 5 to anchor earthly marriage to the deeper culmination of union with Christ.

God created Adam and Eve for both physical and spiritual union.¹³

The genesis of human marriage has reflected the image of the marriage supper of the Lamb from the beginning.

Marriage then becomes the only avenue for man and woman to experience sexual relations biblically, making Paul's clarification of the one-flesh union in Ephesians five one of the foundation passages in building a framework for biblical sexuality.

The language of Ephesians 5:31-32 provides an argument for why the physical union of marriage and the sexuality it encompasses is foundational to a robust sexuality discipleship.

Biblical marriage between the first man and woman as established in Genesis gives us both the blueprint and instructions for marriage, family, discipleship, and sexuality.

It is in this plan that the original design for how God intended to reconcile humankind unto himself unfolds.

The Apostle Paul alludes to this in Ephesians 5:26-27 in his description of reconciliation. Paul used the imagery of Jesus cleansing his Bride, the Church, by the washing of the water with the word.

The expressed purpose of this is so that Jesus may present to himself a bride without spot, blemish, or wrinkle. The first marriage points to this glorious end. In such is the mystery of physical union.

One can also see a glimpse of the purpose of sexual pleasure in such a union because it is

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 1 Kindle.

⁴ Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 1 Kindle.

⁵ See footnote 2 above.

a foretaste of the glory to come in the future union with Christ.

Paul’s Usage of “Become One Flesh” (Eph 5:31-32)

The Apostle Paul provides a depiction of the husband-wife relationship by drawing its comparison to the relationship between Christ and the Church.

However, there is more to this than mere comparison.

The book of Ephesians contains more than 20 different references that relate to the Christ-Church union.⁶

Daryl Burling argues that the Christ-Church union is the foundation for understanding human marriage, not vice-versa.⁷

Paul drew from the words of Moses in Genesis 2:24, in which God decrees that Adam and Eve are to become one flesh.

It is important to note that this declaration was made before the fall of Adam and Eve, thereby having eternal implications.

Andreas Köstenberger argues that earthly marriage should be viewed as an illustration of the union between Christ and the Church.⁸

Early Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter, describes the Christ-Church union as a “resemblance” of human marriage.⁹

This eternal union of Christ and the Church is paramount in understanding all earthly expressions of biblical human sexuality.

The Greek word for “hold fast” (προσκολληθήσεται) used by Paul is nearly identical language to the Hebrew word for “hold fast” found in Genesis 2:24.

These words translate as sticking together so closely as to become one.¹⁰

⁶ Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 126-30.

⁷ Darryl John Burling “The Place of Union with Christ in the Theology and Practice of Marriage.” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 193.

⁸ Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, chap. 3, sec. 7, para. 15. Kindle.

⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 3:450.

¹⁰ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995),

This concept is better illustrated in the process of welding metal.

Welding involves melting and joining two separate pieces of metal by an electrical arc, thus creating a fusion of materials into a new permanent bond.

It is clear from the passage that Paul wants his readers to understand the marriage relationship through the lens of the Christ-Church relationship.

He draws specific comparison between the two in nearly every verse of 5:22-32.

He further solidifies this comparison by using the more explicit language of “in the same manner” (οὐτως) in verse 28.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones argues that “the relationship between husband and wife is the same both in essence and nature as the relationship between Christ and the Church.”¹¹

Lloyd-Jones essentially prioritizes understanding the hierarchy of the Christ-Church union as central to understanding the husband-wife union.¹²

According to F. F. Bruce, the Apostle Paul shifts his perspective in verse 32 by referring back to Genesis 2:24.¹³

Paul continues the emphasis by calling the human union a “profound mystery.”

Here, “profound” (μέγα) is where the English word “mega” originates.

Paul uses this language to emphasize the mystery (μυστήριον) of the earthly union to the much larger (μέγα) connection – one that is beyond any earthly understanding of human marriage.

Francis Foulkes used the term “primitive order” in describing the husband-wife union referenced in Genesis.¹⁴

Paul then clarifies the mystery of this first order ordinance by explicitly stating “. . . I am

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¹¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975). 138.

¹² Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work*, 138.

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New international commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 383-84, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989). 167.

saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (v. 32). Sam Allberry writes,

And, of course, at the very climax of Scripture we have the marriage supper of the Lamb and his people, followed by a vision of heaven and earth finally united as the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth like “a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). Heaven and earth at last become united, and marriage is the language that best describes it.¹⁵

The marital union established in the beginning is a first-order ordinance because it reflects the ultimate consummation of Christ and the Church.

Paul’s language in this passage is a juxtaposition of the great mysteries of the earthly one-flesh union and the eternal Christ-Church union.

In light of Ephesians 5:31-32 and marriage being the only biblical expression of sex, the earthly union of husband and wife must be viewed as representative of the Christ-Church union.

However, human sexuality does not exist within the vacuum of biblical marriage. Human sexuality is much more than remaining abstinent until married.

Yet the church has tended to have a myopic view of the physical expression of sex within the sole context of marriage.

Many individuals spend the better part of their first two to three decades of life as a single.

Therefore, if the emphasis of Ephesians 5:31-32 is the Christ-Church union rather than the husband-wife union, then biblical sexuality discipleship must include helping single individuals understand how the expression of their sexuality is intertwined in the spiritual union of Jesus and the church.

Additionally, the priority of the foundational truth of union with Christ also allows both human marital union and celibacy in singleness to co-exist with equal status because of their ultimate end in union with Christ.

Practical Implications of Ephesians 5:31-32 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

Biblical sexuality is inextricably rooted in the doctrine of the believer’s culminating union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This is the theological framework for understanding the earthly marriage between man

¹⁵ Sam Allberry, *7 Myths About Singleness*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 110.

and woman, as well as sexuality in singleness.

The two are inextricable because of the new creation of one out of two from the spiritual union of one flesh.¹⁶

Therefore, sexuality must be understood within the context of our ultimate spiritual union with Christ and not just earthy marital union.

Otherwise, sexuality can only be viewed in the context of earthly marriage, leaving broad gaps for deviation from biblical sexuality, especially as the unmarried navigate an over-sexualized society.

The silent gap in sexuality discipleship within the Church has contributed to the continued deterioration of fidelity to Christian marriage and biblical sexuality.

Consequently, as the traditional understanding of biblical marriage continues to diminish, the gross deterioration of expressions of individual sexuality also continues to be widely accepted by Christian society.

Prolific variations of gender identity and sexual orientation are evidence of the deterioration of biblical sexuality, especially as children and adolescents increasingly abandon traditional sexual norms.

This is due, at least in part, to parents delaying or completely failing to talk to their children about sex and sexuality.

Parents often put off these conversations until junior high, high school, and even into the college years.

Unfortunately, when such conversations do occur, they are nothing more than a simple brief of the mechanics of sex and how a baby is conceived.

It is imperative that Bible-believing churches be proactive in countering this trend by intentionally developing teaching models that equip parents to disciple their children in a robust biblical sexuality.

This will not be effective unless the local church becomes intentional in teaching their adult members about the biblical model for union with Christ as the foundation and greater purpose for earthly marriage.

¹⁶ In regard to sexual union and singleness, celibacy in singleness is a sacrificial delay in the earthly pleasures of marital sex. This is because pleasure in marital sex should be viewed as a foretaste of the Glory to be experienced when the church is united to Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is important to understand that sexual union and pleasure associated with the marital sexual union is secondary to the primacy of union with Christ and church. Since the Christ-church union is primary, singleness is not diminished because its ultimate culmination is one in the same with human marital union.

This is the only suitable foundation upon which to build a model for biblical sexuality discipleship that has any hope of countering the deterioration of marriage and sexuality within the Church.

The Shema as the Foundation of Discipleship: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Our union with Christ is the final and ultimate fulfillment of the Gospel.

One can trace the roots of this climax back to the beginning with the spiritual and physical union of Adam and Eve. A

s discussed earlier, this union must be viewed against the backdrop of the union of Christ and his Church.

This first-order ordinance becomes the bedrock upon which God commands Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28).

As the original family unit of Adam and Eve grows into the nation of Israel, the need for the law also grows.

In Deuteronomy God gives Moses the Shema, which becomes another first-order ordinance in discipleship, thus making the family the primary vehicle for the promulgation of the gospel through the teaching of the Torah.

Hear שמע

Moses writes “Hear, O Israel” as a powerful opening salvo to what would become the mantra of the fledgling nation.

In time, this mantra would eventually be recited as a daily prayer.¹⁷ This passage is historically known as the Shema, which is simply the Hebrew word for “hear.”¹⁸

Deanna Thompson states that this declaration of faith was so central to Hebrew life that it was memorized and recited twice daily.¹⁹

The origins of the Shema stem from the ten commandments (Deut 5:7-10).²⁰

¹⁷ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 133–34.

¹⁸ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 133–134.

¹⁹ Deanna A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 76.

²⁰ John A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5. Tyndale New

J. A. Thompson suggests that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” is a positive rendering of what is stated in the negative in the decalogue.²¹

In verse 5, Moses shifts to the imperatives of love with the command to love the Lord with all of the heart, soul, and might.

This is more than a mere legalistic directive; it was to stem from a relationship based on love.²²

“Love the Lord our God” is better translated as “and you shall love the Lord your God” to match the imperative in the opening command of “hear.”²³

Love אהב

The exhortation to love the Lord in verse five is more than a simple command.

Rather, it is qualified with three requisites that further bolster the depth and commitment of such love.

First, there is the command to love the Lord with all of one’s heart.

The biblical concept of the heart is commonly understood as the seat of emotions.

Woods further attributes the will, mind, and affections to the understanding of the heart.²⁴

Second is the command to love the Lord with all of one’s soul.

Although heart and soul are often used interchangeably throughout the Bible, early Jewish exegesis indicates a distinction from the heart that is more harmonious with a dichotomous view of man.²⁵

The soul is the principle of life itself that should encompass a love for the Lord.²⁶

The third is the command to love the Lord with all of one’s strength. Here, strength is

Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 137.

²¹ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

²² Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

²³ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

²⁴ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

²⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 102.

²⁶ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

more than mere physical ability; it is akin to resolve and strong commitment.

Patrick Miller also attributes other qualities such as substance, wealth, and property given in service to the Lord.²⁷

The requisites in the love imperatives of the Shema are repeated in numerous passages throughout scripture.

This is most notable in the Gospel of Matthew when the Pharisees attempted to test Jesus by asking him to name the greatest commandment (Matt 22:34-37).

Jesus not only bolsters the Shema as the greatest commandment but also establishes it as a first-order commandment for the New Testament era.

Heart לִבָּי

After establishing the impetus of the teaching of the Shema, Moses shifts to how it's lived out.

He declares that the words that he commands shall be 'upon' the hearts of the Hebrews (v. 6).

Continuing with the theme of the heart as the seat of the innermost essence of man, Moses uses the Hebrew word 'al (לֹא) for 'upon,' which potentially signals a deeper emphasis on its importance.

Woods suggests that this unique emphasis, although difficult to interpret, may have indicated that Moses was impressing that the Shema was to be written deeper upon their hearts and not just on the stone of the decalogue.²⁸

Moses laid the foundation of the Shema with the imperative of "hear" followed by the fullness of the command.

He continues the shift to the praxis by spelling out a specific rubric for how the children of Israel will live out this first-order command.

Disciple, Distinguish, Declare

The words of the Shema were to be of such importance in the life of the ancient Hebrews that they were to be internalized and written on the heart, soul, and mind.

This primacy begins with a focus on the inner person to be lived out personally and

²⁷ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 102.

²⁸ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

privately.

Moses shifts his praxis further by focusing on the following imperative from private life to public life.

Miller asserts that this shift balances the importance of keeping the letter of the law with the spirit of the law.²⁹

This shift also indicates a move from the internal to the external by commanding that these imperatives be taught to the children of the family with diligence and dedication.

Disciple.

The command to diligently teach these imperatives to children is more robust than the mere dissemination of biblical truths.

Rather, the translation of the phrase “shall teach diligently” is derived from the Hebrew word shaman (שָׁמַן), which refers to the diligent and repetitive action involved in honing a blade to a sharp edge.³⁰

Moses then clearly defines the scope and sequence of how and where these truths are to be discussed by providing two areas of focus in daily life along with the duration.

First, they are to be talked of as life happens inside the dwelling of the home.

Second, they are to be discussed as they walk about carrying out their daily responsibilities.

He then prescribes that this discipleship should take place from the waking light of dawn to the culmination of the day in sleep.

This scope and sequence provide a foundational understanding that the discipleship of children should encompass all aspects of daily life.

Distinguish.

As parents master the discipline of disciplining their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they are also commanded to distinguish themselves in public living as well.

²⁹ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 104.

³⁰ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 1041.

Moses instructs the children of Israel to bind these truths as a sign on their hands and a frontlet on their heads (v. 8).

Hebrew tradition eventually developed the actual use of phylacteries, which involved the practice of physically binding pieces of parchment containing scripture on the heads and arms.³¹

Many scholars contend that it is difficult to determine if these words should be considered literally or figurately.

It is apparent that the intent of the instruction expands the scope of the Shema into the public realm of daily living.³²

This distinction signals to the children of Israel that the principles represented by the Shema must be intentionally taught and exercised both privately and publicly.

Declare.

The Shema is rounded out with the final admonition to write the commands on the doorposts of both houses and gates (v. 9).

At first glance, this seems to be a reiteration of the command in the previous verse to bind these truths on hand and head.

However, David Brown suggests that Moses may have intended this to be a counter to the Egyptian custom of having the lintels, impost, and gates inscribed with superstitious messages.³³

Woods argues that the witness of the Shema in writing aligns with the larger purpose of Deuteronomy in moving from an oral transmission to a written one, as to make the words of the Torah clear.³⁴

Regardless, it appears that the intention was that the Hebrews were to display the Shema as a declaration of faith in Yahweh.

Two major considerations of the Shema are its audience and application. While these truths are intended to be taught throughout one's life, the clear targets are parents and children.

³¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 244.

³² Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

³³ Andrew Fausset et al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible: The New Testament: From Galatians to Revelation* (Fort Collins, CO: CreateSpace, 2017). 125, Logos Bible Software.

³⁴ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

The teaching that happens in the parent-child relationship was the primary vehicle of discipleship for ancient Hebrews.

The Shema encompasses the whole of God's written word in both Testaments, yet these clear imperatives have lost their importance in the modern church era.

Parents must regain the mantle in their most sacred of duties in discipling their children.

The Shema must be so encompassing that its discipleship is applied to all areas of a child's life so that they will not be easily threatened by the godless influences of the world.

The Practical Implications of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

The Shema is a definitive declaration of the primacy of parental discipleship. Its broad scope provides a range of focus that encompasses the whole counsel of Scripture.

There is nothing within the breadth of Scripture that parents should be unwilling to teach to their children in preparation for navigating the difficulties of life.

This is especially the case in a hyper-sexualized society full of deviation and debauchery.

Likewise, the Shema also provides a clear sequence as a framework for the target and praxis to be applied to all areas of discipleship, especially biblical sexuality.

While the Shema originates from the ancient Hebrew Torah, it was thrust into modern-day relevance when Jesus declared its impetus as the greatest commandment.

The Synoptic Gospels contain the account of the Pharisees' attempt to test Jesus by asking him which was the greatest commandment (Matt 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28; Mark 12:28-31).

Jesus's declaration in the gospels draws emphasis and a renewed impetus for the Shema's continuance into the New Testament age.

The Shema is clearly set within the context of the family as the primary vehicle for discipleship. In the Old Testament, the family unit was the primary means for all manner of discipleship in life and law.

The family was the backbone and strength of society and provided the best and only means for growth in life and faith.

Unfortunately, the family has suffered grave deterioration in the modern day.

Even within the context of the local church, the family has weakened to the point that the local church has become the assumed vehicle for discipleship.

This reality, whether by necessity or by design, creates a dangerous gap when parents abdicate their responsibility of discipling their children to the church.

The taboo nature of sexuality within the church and home further exacerbates this problem by widening the gap where sexuality discipleship should exist.

Even though the modern church is trying to fill the gap with general discipleship, it is leaving the more delicate issue of biblical sexuality in the care of parents, who, in turn, are ignoring it altogether.

This silent void in biblical sexuality discipleship is being filled by society's overt doctrine of hyper-sexuality.

Therefore, the church must be intentionally strategic in coming alongside parents in equipping them to deal with such a gravely important area of discipleship.

The church must help its families take back the mantle of the Shema as a first-order command in fully discipling their children.

Sexual Sin Necessitates Biblical Sexuality Discipleship: 1 Corinthians 6:16-20

Sexual sin is rampant in both secular society and within the church.

Sexual addictions, abuse, assault, deviations in orientation, and deconstruction of biological gender are just a few of the glaring issues that the church is facing.

These issues are no longer limited to adult populations within the church.

Children and adolescents have long since been exposed to every increasing deviation that continually surfaces within secular society on a daily basis.

The increased prevalence of these deviations is so voluminous that they are occurring more frequently in the various discipleship ministries and divisions of the church, including both children and student ministries.

Cultural Background

The Apostle Paul was no stranger to aberrant sexual behavior.

A closer look at his letter to the young Corinthian church reveals very similar issues that

the modern church is facing nearly two millennia later.

The ancient city of Corinth was originally a Greek city existing several hundred years before it was destroyed by Rome in 146 B.C.³⁵

It remained a Roman colony for about a century before it was reestablished by Julius Ceasar in 44 BC.³⁶

The new city grew to power and prominence because of the mercantile and trade industries, making the city a seat of power for government and business.³⁷

Corinth's geographical location made it a prime port city and became a cultural melting pot.

Its Greco-Roman origins, coupled with its new base of commerce, attracted a broad mix of pagan cultures.

This foundation of power and diversity created a culture of godlessness that many scholars suggest was very similar to the modern day.³⁸

According to Ciampa, Corinth was prosperous, cosmopolitan, and religiously pluralistic.³⁹

The book of 1 Corinthians paints a picture of a young church struggling to navigate the difficulties of a city replete with pagan diversity.

The sexual debauchery often associated with pagan worship intensified the Corinthian church's difficulties with sexual immorality.⁴⁰

Paul directly addresses the issues of sexual immorality within the church in chapter five.

He used direct and heavy language, lamenting that even the pagans did not tolerate the type of sexual behavior that the Corinthian Christians were guilty of committing.

³⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), chap. 11, para. 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁷ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, chap. 11, para. 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁸ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, chap. 11, para. 6, Logos Bible Software.

³⁹ Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 2, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁰ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

Paul rounds out the chapter by casting judgment on the man caught sleeping with his father's wife and instructs the church to discipline him and cast him out of fellowship.

After taking a brief hiatus in chapter 6 to deal with lawsuits among believers, he turns back to provide additional clarity and instruction on the issue of sexual immorality in the believer.

The Body and Incompatibility with Sexual Immorality (1 Cor 6:13)

The Apostle Paul turns his focus to dealing with sexual immorality in verse thirteen by addressing the prominent views of typical Greek philosophies regarding the body and sex.

He begins with the analogy between food, sex, and the body.

According to Keener, “food for the stomach and the stomach for food” was a typical Greek way of arguing that the body was for sex and sex was for the body.⁴¹ According to

David Lowery, the Corinthians used the “stomach for food” slogan in justifying their immorality by reasoning that food was both pleasurable and necessary.

Likewise, when their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied.⁴²

The “body for sex” mindset is further demonstrated in the Greek denial of a bodily resurrection, which Paul addresses later in chapter 15.

This idea is rooted in the Greek understanding that one was done with the body at death making it permissible to use the body for that which it was designed – sex.⁴³

Paul continues the body, food, and sex metaphor in his letter to the Philippians when he writes “their god is their belly” (Phil 3:19).

Here “belly” is also a metaphor that means fleshy indulgence.⁴⁴

Denial of bodily resurrection also precludes a holistic view of union with Christ in

⁴¹ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴² David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 516.

⁴³ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁴ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

eternity.

Such a broken view of sexuality detached from bodily resurrection or future union with Christ creates an “anything goes” mindset toward sex and sexuality.

Paul was dealing with more than the occasional occurrence of sexual sin.

He was addressing a pervasive distortion of biblical sexuality that had permeated the young and fragile church.

This acceptance of sexual deviancy is mirrored in the church today.

Paul counters this broken thinking with a clear declaration that the body is not meant for sexual immorality.

It is important to note that while Paul narrows his focus to the example of sexual intercourse later in verse fifteen, the Greek word for sexual immorality references a much broader scope of sexual sin.

Porneia (πορνεία) is understood to mean any type of sexual immorality and is not limited to intercourse.⁴⁵

Paul uses porneia or one of its derivatives eleven times in his letters to the Corinthians and 7 other times in his other epistles.

Paul uses a total of three forms of sexual immorality, except for koite (κοίτη), in Rom 13, which specifically references sexual immorality in the bed chamber.⁴⁶

Porneia, which means licentiousness or fornication, is used five times.

Porneuo (πορνεύω), which means to prostitute or to commit fornication, is used twice.⁴⁷

And pornos (πόρνος), which means whoremonger or male prostitute, is used four times.⁴⁸

Earlier in the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul specifically references adulterers and men who practice homosexuality, in addition to the broader term pornos (1 Cor 6:9).

Paul’s broader use of sexual immorality that includes all sexual sin rather than the

⁴⁵ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*.

⁴⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁴⁷ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*.

⁴⁸ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*.

narrower view of intercourse only is further bolstered in Matthew 5:27-28 where Jesus equates lust in the heart with the act of adultery.

Between Paul's use of sexual immorality and Jesus linking lust and adultery as equal, the scope of *porneia* should be understood to include both sexual behavior and lustful thoughts.

The Body and One Flesh Union (1 Cor 6:15-17)

After providing his readers clarity on what the body is and is not meant for, Paul moves to link the committing of sexual immorality with our mortal bodies, which are in fact members of Christ.

He asked the rhetorical question, “do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”

Ciampa notes that Paul deploys his style of using forceful rhetorical questions followed by an outburst of denial.⁴⁹

The Greek word used here is *melos* (μέλος), which means a limb as a member of the human body.⁵⁰

Paul further drives the point of his argument by using a second forceful rhetorical question followed by a strong denial.

This time he asks, “Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?” He answers with an emphatic “never!”⁵¹

Paul once again references the Genesis 2:24 passage of one-flesh union.⁵²

The reference to this passage in his letter to the Ephesians focused on the connection between earthly marriage and the coming marriage of Christ with the Church.

Here, Paul uses the connection to emphasize the egregious nature of using the body, a member of Christ, to join flesh with a prostitute.

⁴⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 257.

⁵⁰ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*.

⁵¹ The Greek phrase *μή* used here is the same one Paul uses in Romans 6:1 when he asks if we should sin more so that grace may abound? The King James translation renders this word as “God forbid!”

⁵² Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that Paul is using the example of sex with a prostitute to reference a specific example of broader sexual immorality, rather than limiting porneia to mean intercourse only.⁵³

The Jews of that time would have understood that intercourse either sealed the covenant of marriage or broke it, in the case of extramarital sex.⁵⁴

In verse seventeen, Paul adds emphasis by clearly declaring that those who are joined to the Lord become one in spirit with him. It should be noted that he uses one-spirit phraseology rather than one-flesh.

According to Keener, Paul cannot say one-flesh here because of the Old Testament doctrine that God does not have flesh.⁵⁵

This is also in keeping with the mystery of the Christ-Church union that Paul discussed in the fifth chapter of Ephesians.

The one-flesh union should be understood as limited to the corporeal bodies of man and woman.

This understanding avoids any dissonance created by the error of mistaking the marriage supper of the Lamb as a one-flesh union from intercourse.

The Body and Sexual Sin (1 Cor 6:18)

Paul then transitions to establish how sexual sin is distinguished in severity and consequence from other sins.

Rosner states that verses eighteen through twenty should be viewed as a strong admonition worthy to be treated as a discreet unit.⁵⁶

Paul instructs his readers by using the negative injunction “flee from sexuality immorality.”

The verb “to flee” carries a sense of urgency, akin to fleeing enemies or danger.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 262.

⁵⁴ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 5, Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁵ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 6, Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 261.

⁵⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 262.

The verb used to describe Joseph's flight from Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:12 is similar to Paul's usage.⁵⁸

He continues his argument with the peculiar statement, "every other sin a person commits outside the body, but the sexually immoral sins against his own body."

It would go against common sense and logic to suggest that Paul is claiming that the body is not used to commit sins akin to gluttony or drunkenness.

Clearly, the body is used in many manifestations of sin, not just sexual immorality.

Rather, Paul seems to keep his focus on the aspect of sexual sin and its connection to the union of Christ, especially in the context of the body as the dwelling place of God.

Rosner argues that Paul's distinction here is clear in that "sexual immorality should be fled because it is worse in some way than other sins."⁵⁹

Leon Morris also supports this understanding by offering further clarity that sexual immorality is unique in that the sexual appetite arises from within while other sin comes from outside the body.⁶⁰

Morris also contends that sexual sin, and this sin only, is a violation of the body, a member of Christ, and unifies it with sexual immorality, thus violating a person's oneness with Christ.⁶¹

Again, Jesus's clear teaching that lustful thoughts of adultery and the act of adultery are one in the same supports the understanding that sexually immoral sins encompass both thought and deed and are not limited to intercourse.

Yet, these sources provide only a partial explanation for the unique difference the effects that sexual sin causes.

The Body and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Paul takes his admonition further with yet another forceful rhetorical question.

He asks his reader, ". . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit

⁵⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 263.

⁵⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 263.

⁶⁰ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 101.

⁶¹ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

within you, whom you have from God?”

This is in contrast to both the Jewish and Pagan understanding that *Yahweh* or pagan deities were believed to dwell in physical temples rather than human bodies.

Paul makes it clear that the body of each individual believer is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Morris explains that *naos* (ναός), the word used for temple, means sacred shrine, the sanctuary, and the place where deity dwells.⁶²

This clarification raises the magnitude of the offense of sexual immorality.

If sexual sin is viewed with such disgust as it is in Jewish and Christian circles, how much worse is it to consider that Paul’s link here is similar to fornication within the Temple of God?

Additionally, it is widely known that sexual sin is considered to be such a vice that it leaves the chronic offender in a state of addiction.

In his book, *Wired for Intimacy*, William Struthers explains that sexual addiction occurs when continued exposure to sexually explicit material or behavior causes the neural pathways to become wider as they are repeatedly accessed.⁶³

He goes on to discuss how the neurotransmitters of dopamine and norepinephrine, which are released during sexual activity, stem from the same mechanism in the brain associated with drug addiction.⁶⁴

While Paul makes no reference to the addictive pathway created during repeated exposure to sexual immorality, it stands to reason that it further complicates the explicit impact that sexual sin has upon the body.

A logical examination of the flow of Paul’s argument reveals an alarming reality of the impact of sexual sin and why he discusses it so much in his epistles.

Paul’s implicit argument that sins against the body have a deeper impact is also bolstered by the fact that believers are bought with a price, making their bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit.

⁶² Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

⁶³ William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009). 85.

⁶⁴ Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 85.

Therefore, all sins are ultimately offenses against God, but sexual sins are different in that they are offenses upon God because he dwells within the believer.

The sowing of the sins of sexual immorality reap a deeper entrenchment and entrapment that often leads to sexual addiction.

Chapter 6 concludes with Paul's final admonition before he turns his focus to sexuality within the context of marriage.

Paul declares that believers are not their own because they have been bought and paid for by the blood of Christ.

This instruction keeps with his theme of using sex with a prostitute as the example for sexual immorality.

The Greek word for prostitute is *porhē* (πόρνη) and is one of the derivatives of *porneia* (πορνεία). *Porhē* translates as female slave or prostitute.

Both of these iterations involve a price that must be paid for the ensuing sexual immorality with a prostitute.

Keener suggests that this is intentional and perhaps a wordplay to emphasize that God redeemed believers from slavery, therefore believers must glorify God with their bodies.⁶⁵

Morris indicates that the Greek *dē* used to translate 'therefore' is sometimes added to an imperative to give a greater sense of urgency without delay.⁶⁶

The Practical Implications of 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 for Biblical Sexuality Discipleship

The Apostle Paul takes special care to deal with the issue of sexual immorality within the church as well as in the life of the individual believer.

The unique cultural context of pagan society in first century Corinth shows stark similarities to the prevalent views of sexuality in culture today.

The proliferation of gender identities, sexual orientations, and aberrant sexual behavior is not only widely accepted by secular society but celebrated with deafening applause.

⁶⁵ Keener, *The IVP Background Bible Commentary*, chap. 11, sec. 16, para. 8, Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁶ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 102.

This grim reality is not limited to the outliers of society.

It has long since infiltrated the local church. Pastors and parents are faced with these various forms of sexual expression at an increasing rate.

Long gone are the days of simply standing against such expressions on the pedestal of condemnation.

The Church is no longer backed by similar voices in society.

Pastors and parents must realize that the void left by their silence in teaching a robust sexuality discipleship to their members and children is a major contributing factor to young and old abandoning the church to sow the seeds of sexual desire.

They must move beyond elementary and awkward conversations that merely graze the surface of the purpose and mechanics of procreation.

It is imperative that pastors and parents thoroughly address the dangers of sexual sin in a way that is appropriate for stages in development from young children to mature adults.

The pitfalls of aberrant expressions of sexuality that the world continues to advocate are widening to the point that our children are falling in at an increasingly young age.

Conclusion

Marriage and union with Christ, sexual purity, and the Shema form three pillars for the necessity of biblical sexuality discipleship.

The Shema is the pillar that bears the weight of the impetus to thoroughly disciple the next generation in families and churches today.

No rational believer in Jesus would disagree with the dire importance to thoroughly disciple the young generation within the church and home.

Yet, a cursory look reveals significant holes in the discipleship of these younger generations.

Conversations about individual sexuality are delayed until many students reach junior high or high school age.

However, by this time many students have already been affected by early exposure to explicit deviant forms of sexuality, often long before adolescence.

The Shema paints a clear picture of the scope of discipleship as well as the sequence of how it should be taught in the home.

Two points stand to reason here. First, when considering today's hyper-sexualized culture, children must be disciplined in all areas of God's word, especially biblical sexuality.

Parents must not preserve their children's innocence in knowledge to the detriment of their purity as they reach maturity.

Likewise, churches must not assume that parents are equipped to be thorough in this critical area of discipleship.

Second, the rampant decline in society's view of sexuality necessitates that the discussion and discipleship on sex and sexuality must come out of the shadows.

Equipping both the church and parents to effectively deal with their child's developing sexuality in a biblical way is critically important to surviving the war on sexuality.

Union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb is the pillar to countering the deficit in biblical sexuality discipleship within the family and church.

Satan has waged war on the gospel by attacking the family and has done so since the Garden of Eden.

The biblical purpose of sex, sexual pleasure, sexuality, marriage, and singleness have become detached from their greater purpose in the future union with Christ and the joy it will bring.

Finally, the Apostle Paul's focus on sexual immorality in the Epistles forms the third pillar demonstrates that sexuality discipleship must be addressed intentionally, directly, and thoroughly.

It is clear from his letters to the young churches that they were struggling to navigate the difficulties of sexual expression in an increasingly pagan world.

More than two thousand years later, the church is facing the same crisis in sexuality.

The church must champion her ultimate end in union with Christ by carrying the light of God's word into the shadows of biblical sexuality.

Biblical Sexuality Discipleship for Parents
Session 4 – Sexuality Development

OBJECTIVES: To develop an understanding of relevant aspects of human growth and development in child and adolescent sexuality development.

GOALS:

1. To help participants develop a working knowledge of sexuality development in children and adolescents.
2. To help participants understand how developmental stages of sexuality development should coincide with biblical sexuality discipleship.

CAUSE: Parents lack an understanding of how child and adolescent sexuality development should impact how and when they incorporate sexuality discipleship in the home.

Welcome back to session 4.

In the first 3 session we focused on building both the theological and sociological argument for the dire need for a biblical sexuality discipleship in the home and church.

Now we turn to some of the more practical aspects of understanding how your child or adolescent moves through the stages of sexuality development.

I think we can all agree that the last thing any of us want to do is minimize sexual sin.

Parents can easily fall into the trap of thinking that if they are talking about sexuality, they are opening the door to sin.

This is simply not the case.

We must normalize the fact that God created our children as sexual beings, and their sexuality will emerge while they are under our roofs whether we like it or not.

This session will help you understand how and when this happens and helps normalize the conversation around their God-given sexuality.

INTRODUCTION

Human growth and development in biology class probably doesn't bring back the fondest of memories for many of you.

Likewise, the spontaneous human body lessons that spring forth from the inquisitive mind of a toddler can make for really awkward moments as well; especially when the inquisitive toddler, with his impeccable timing, loudly proclaims in public what he just learned about genitals.

Have you ever noticed how unashamed young children are about their bodies?

Have you ever thought about the reasons why?

It's partly because they have not become self-aware, and they don't know that such topics are reserved for more private communication.

Have you ever thought about why children develop that shame?

Genesis 2:25 culminates with God's sculpted masterpiece of Eve as she is presented to Adam. And there they stand before one another in their bare-naked glory.

v.25 – and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Satan, the subtle serpent appeals to the gaps in Eve's knowledge and entices her to eat of the fruit that will make her wise like God (Gen. 3:6).

And so, she ate and took the fruit to her husband, and he ate (Gen. 3:6).

Suddenly the innocence was gone, filled with shame as they are now awkwardly aware of their nakedness (Gen. 3:7).

The very first act following the introduction of sin into creation was Adam and Eve covering their bodies and hiding from God (Gen. 3:7,10).

Their shame came from their fear of judgment from the Lord and the subsequent fear of being judged by one another.

Just like Adam and Eve's new awkwardness and shame in the garden, children and adolescents find themselves covered in shame as they discover their sexual bodies.

While it is very natural for children to develop an embarrassment about their bodies, we must take care not to perpetuate the taboo nature of sex and sexuality by avoiding healthy conversations with our children, even as young as toddlers.

We have been repeating this sad saga for thousands of years.

Even now, with a society that appears to have no shame about anything regarding sex, biblical sexuality is relegated to the shadows in both the home and church.

This session will help develop a working knowledge of child and adolescent sexuality

development in order to help parents know how and when to implement sexuality discipleship according to how their children individually develop.

FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

In Psalm 139:13-16, David artfully captures the wonder and beauty of how the unborn are crafted in the womb. David declares that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:13-16 - ¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

We should rejoice in the intricacy and intimacy with which the Lord made us.

Our nakedness should be private and will naturally bring shame when inappropriately exposed outside of marriage.

However, we cannot allow this result of the fall of man to keep us from educating and discipling our children on the wonder of their bodies.

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Sexual Development in Children (Birth to 5)

Sexuality development begins at birth. The way we cuddle, touch, and talk to infants communicates a sense of personhood and identity.¹

As soon as babies gain mastery over their arms, hands, and fingers, the age of exploration begins.

This is often the beginning of when parents find themselves redirecting a curious explorer.

It is then that parents should begin using appropriate anatomical terms for genitals and body functions.

¹ "Understanding Early Sexual Development," Johns Hopkins Medicine, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Health-Library/HealthDocNew/Understanding-Early-Sexual-Development>.

This will prevent future difficulty and confusion later when the conversations become more detailed and formal.

Experts agree that using slang words to lessen the awkwardness tends to create mystery, secrecy, and embarrassment in children.²

Using slang or silly names can also increase the potential for inappropriate behavior, and possible abuse, to remain hidden from parents.

We want to use clear language that does not send conflicting signals that their bodies are secret.

The more you normalize their body and developing sexuality, the less “secret” it becomes.

There is a difference between secrecy and privacy.

Privacy is about proper boundaries. Secrecy is more about hiding when boundaries have been crossed.

Normalizing a child’s developing body also can help them find their voice and agency that will help them know when their personal boundaries and when those boundaries are violated by others.

Some degree of a toddler touching their genitals is common and natural.³

However, when a toddler or child is touching themselves in public, parents should gently redirect and not scold them.

It’s important not to incite shame or a feeling of “dirtiness” when redirecting such behavior.

Bath time is a great opportunity to begin teaching children about their bodies.

Things like the differences between boys and girls, when it’s appropriate to touch and talk about genitals, what’s inappropriate for when it comes to others touching them.

Capitalizing on teachable moments at bath time and bedtime is a great strategy for beginning these conversations.

² Melissa R. Cox and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health. *Questions Kids Ask about Sex: Honest Answers for Every Age*. Revell, 2005.

³ Melissa R. Cox and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health. *Questions Kids Ask about Sex*.

Age-Appropriate Exploration and Curiosity (5 to 7)

“Young people do not wake up on their thirteenth birthday, somehow transformed into a sexual being overnight. Even young children are sexual in some form.”⁴

A parent’s overreaction to a child’s normal sexual exploration can have a devastating impact on the child’s continued sexual development.

Age-appropriate behavior is the term professionals use to refer to how children naturally act out in exploring their own bodies, and sometimes each other’s.

I have heard from many distressed parents after they’ve learned that their child has acted out in this way

They fear that some sinister issue has emerged. While, it needs to be addressed appropriately, parents need not panic.

This does not mean that it is appropriate (or acceptable), it just means that is normal for their stage in development.

When you discover that your child has been playing “doctor” with someone else, it’s extremely important not to overreact or punish.

Age-appropriate curiosity should not be punished.

Instead, parents should use these instances as opportunities to build trust, communication, and openness with their child.

This helps lay a foundation for open and honest communication as they move into adolescence.

It is important to make sure that the child was not forced or coerced by another child, or that the instigating child is not much older than the other.

Also, if it’s discovered that the children were simulating sexual acts or behavior, care should be taken to make sure that the children have not been abused or exposed to sexual material or behaviors.

It’s important to note that some children will simulate these behaviors if they have accidentally discovered their parents having sex.

So, it’s important not to jump to conclusions but rather investigate calmly and

⁴ H. Coleman and G. Charles. (2001). “Adolescent sexuality: A matter of condom sense,” *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, 14 (4), 17-18.

thoroughly.

Pre-Adolescence (8 to 10)

Depending on how you have cultivated communication with your child, this is the time when curiosity becomes more vocal. This often happens between the ages of 5 and 7.

Regardless of whether or not your child has become vocal in their curiosity before the ages of 8 to 10, this is the time when all parents should consider a more intentional approach to sexuality development.

Parents should not wait for questions or issues to arise.

I believe that intentional conversations about their developing bodies and sexuality should begin during this time.

Of course, this largely depends on the emotional, intellectual, and social maturity of your child.

Regardless of where they are in their maturity, parents should adapt discussions to match this stage.

Parents often need help knowing what exactly they should talk about during these ages.

Here are some very good resources to help you navigate these initial conversations.

Questions Kids Ask About Sex, by Melissa Cox is a great resource for working through specific questions. Keep in mind that this is not Christian resource, but I found that the answers provided in this book were very helpful for common questions and issues in age development.⁵

The Talk, by Luke Gilkerson, is a great resource for introducing children in this stage to biblical sexuality.⁶

Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality, By Jim Burns is useful for kids in the later part of this stage.⁷

Puberty and Pubertal Onset

⁵ Melissa R. Cox and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health. *Questions Kids Ask about Sex*.

⁶ Luke Gilkerson. *The Talk: 7 Lessons to Introduce Your Child to Biblical Sexuality*. (Fort Collins, CO: CreateSpace, 2014).

⁷ Jim Burn. *Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality: A Biblical Approach to Prepare Them for Life*. (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2008).

There are many broad generalities made by parents regarding the onset of puberty in their children.

These generalities contribute to parents being unaware of the physiological and psychological changes that the child is experiencing.

An informed understanding of typical age ranges of pubertal onset will help parents be proactive in preventing some of the pitfalls that are common in a burgeoning sexuality in a child.

The onset of puberty in children marks the beginning of adolescence and is characterized by rapid body and hormonal changes.

The beginning of this stage for children occurs when the pituitary gland and hypothalamus signal the brain to produce FSH and LH which triggers the production of estrogen in girls and testosterone on boys.

Boys have a slow and subtle ramp up to the full onset of puberty.

These subtle changes include hair growth and lowering of the voice.

These changes are the precursors to the rapid sexual maturation of boys.

Girls experience a sudden onset of puberty marked by the start of the menstrual cycle. Breast development and hair growth are the precursors that the menstrual cycle will commence in approximately 1 year.

Even when parents try to be proactive in facilitating healthy dialogue, some pre-adolescents and adolescents are just more private.

In these cases, it may be difficult to get an idea of where they are in the puberty process.

This is when you can utilize the professionalism of a good pediatrician and ask them to evaluate where they are on the Tanner Stage of Puberty Development.

It is usually administered by quick looks at the development of under arm hair, pubic hair, and breast development in girls.

Precocious (early onset) Puberty

Most parents naturally tend to think of their children as “childlike” and view them in a prolonged state of innocence, often oblivious to how early puberty can begin.

An informed understanding of precocious puberty will help the parent be aware of when

a child is experiencing pubertal onset earlier than normal.

As mentioned earlier, the subtleness of puberty onset in boys seems to have a less dramatic impact than that of the girls.

Boys can begin puberty as early as 9, however the typical age range is 11-13.

Girls, on the other hand, can begin puberty as early as 8 years old.

With the more obvious physical changes among girls, this can create more difficulties for girls as they stand out more among their peers.

Studies show that the average age of puberty onset is getting younger and younger. The typical age for onset is between 10 and 12.

While there is nothing that a parent can do to naturally delay the onset of puberty, an informed understanding of the precursors can greatly aid in the anticipation of such an impactful and sudden stage of development.

Sexual Development in Adolescents (11-13)

Adolescence

The beginning of adolescence is marked by the onset of puberty, which is the stage within adolescence that involves the child maturing to become capable of sexual reproduction.

Adolescence continues as the teenager matures to an adult in physical growth.

Girls generally stop growing taller within two years of the start of their menstrual cycle.

Boys often continue to grow long after puberty.

NOTE: While the body reaches its max growth potential at the end of puberty, the adult brain does not reach full maturation until the mid-twenties.

If your child has started puberty, and you have not begun any discussions, you are officially late.

This is the time to begin increasing the discussions about what sexual maturity means.

The Purity Code, by Jim Burns is a resource that can help you get started with these conversations.⁸

⁸ Jim Burns. *The Purity Code: God's Plan for Sex and Your Body* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2008).

By this time, they should have a pretty good idea about egg, sperm, ovaries, and testicles – along with physical mechanics of sexual intercourse.

The onset of puberty in girls should be the marker to begin helping them understand what the menstrual cycle is and how it fits into ovulation, conception, and menstruation.

This also is a great time to begin shepherding young boys through the process of female maturation as well. A strong young boy who is well informed can be taught to see this as a beautiful, delicate, and sensitive process.

There are too many horror stories of poor young girls starting their period in class, suffering great ridicule from young boys and girls alike.

In other words, use your discussions on sexual development to inform your child of how the opposite sex is impacted as well.

This is also a great time to make sure they understand the basic biological process of conception.

Specifically, they need know exactly how husband, wife; penis, vagina; egg, sperm; orgasm, ejaculation all work together to form sex and pregnancy.

This is also the time to incorporate a biblical view of sex, pleasure, and marriage.

Don't just make it about the mechanics, tie it all in together.

Awakening of Adolescent Sexuality (14-17)

It's important to understand the nuance between the onset of puberty versus the awakening of sexuality.

Although not always noticeable, the maturing sexuality of an adolescent awakens at puberty and continues to develop and build.

Similar to a rip current that swirls swiftly under a seemingly calm surface, your burgeoning adolescent has an undercurrent of sexuality brewing within them.

Although you may not readily notice these new developments in your teenager, it's important to be mindful of this in helping them cope with the very strong and sometime irresistible urges within them.

Often boys and girls are very sensitive and embarrassed about what is going on in their bodies.

Some of these developments lead to involuntary behaviors that are beyond their control

and result in shame because they are completely unaware of what is going on in their bodies.

An open dialogue is vitally important in helping to mitigate the shameful feeling that often lead to guilt and takes them down the road of willful sinful behavior.

Nocturnal emissions for boys and the female equivalent for girls are a common occurrence that is often relegated to the same shadows as masturbation.

It is important that parents discuss all of these developmental markers at the appropriate age and stage of development.

All of these forces of sexual development can create a tidal wave of hormones and emotions that can wreak havoc on the spiritual development of children.

Josh McDowell – Handbook on Counseling Youth – the section on sexuality is an excellent resource for parents who need a baseline understanding of the developing sexuality of their child.⁹

Girls

We mentioned earlier that puberty begins between the ages of 10 and 13 for most adolescent girls.

However, a shift in their sexuality development happens when they are around 15 years old, sometimes sooner.

The largest population in my counseling practice are girls in the 15-year-old age range.

They come presenting with a host of issues, and many of these issues coincide with the ramp up of hormones in their systems as their bodies move into adult sexual maturity.

There is such a surge in hormones that it feels like their bodies are waging war on them.

Things like anxiety, depression, irregular periods, intense cramps, double periods, and no periods are all really common.

This sudden acceleration of sexuality in their bodies can be overwhelming, and a lack of knowledge of how their bodies work does not help.

The knowledge that a teenage girl has about her own reproductive cycle is often limited

⁹ Josh McDowell, and Bob Hostetler. *Josh McDowell's Handbook on Counseling Youth: A Comprehensive Guide for Equipping Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers, and Parents* (Nashville: Word Publishers, 1996).

to a period that may come once a month.

By this time teenage girls should be well versed in how their periods impact them on a monthly basis.

They should know about their ovulation cycle and how those hormones affect her sense of beauty, attractiveness, and worth.

Before we move on to boys, I'd like to take a moment and talk about masturbation and pornography among girls.

We looked at stats in session 1 that demonstrate that girls struggle with viewing or reading sexually explicit material on equal level with boys.

It's time we help them come out of the shadows of shame and proactively teach them about such issues.

One of the big differences in masturbation and pornography use among girls is that it impacts them differently.

Boys are sexually aroused by what they see and then seek porn to satiate that sexual desire. It is typically rudimentary in boys through arousal from sight and release through sexual behavior.

It all leads to the same addiction, but with boys the process is straightforward.

Girls are quite a bit different in their struggle because of the emotional sophistication that many have.

Most girls aren't aroused by what they see as much as they are by emotional connection.

They fantasize about having that emotional connection with someone and then connect the sex in pornography with what they're longing for through emotional connection.

Because of their emotional sophistication, I think that a teenage girl's struggle with pornography and masturbation takes a hold of them much quicker and deeper.

Girls need to understand these realities and how their body's development will make guarding their purity much harder in regard to pornography and sexual behavior with boys.

They also need to know that their struggle with these issues is normal and doesn't make them gross or dirty.

Boys

This is the time in teenage development when boys will be very tempted to seek out explicit material on the internet. We will talk about internet precautions in the next session.

But for now, we need to understand the pressure and the temptation.

It's rare that a teenage boy does not struggle with pornography and masturbation.

This struggle is relegated to the shadows and associated with much shame.

Yet, teenage boys are bombarded with a host of temptations everywhere they turn.

To be clear, the answer to this problem is not increased modesty among girls and women.

We need to take care not to objectify a young woman's body, casting blame for the temptation of boys and men.

God made Eve both visually and sexually attractive. We should not diminish this by making girls feel shame about their bodies.

The impetus to guard a young man's temptation is by guarding his own eyes and heart, not covering a young woman's body.

And parents need to help them with this when they are young.

Boys will discover masturbation. No amount of precaution will prevent this.

The discovery of pornography can be mitigated, but the goal is not merely abstinence, but to help them develop the skills to navigate this temptation with accountability, safeguards, and healthy dialogue with parents.

As teenage boys reach dating age, they certainly need to be aware of their own sexual drive, but it would also be helpful for them to know how girls function so that they can be well armed in avoiding the real temptation to have sex.

Many godly young teenagers who had every intention to save sex until marriage have been taken by surprise by their own sexual desire and fallen into the trap of a passionate moment.

Brain Physiology and Sexual Addictions

This is the time in adolescent development when young Christians fall into the trap of sexual sin when they frequent pornography.

Unfortunately, the lack of clear communication from parents contributes to the ease at which students fall into the sin of lust, masturbation, and sexual activity.

Hormonal Development

As mentioned earlier, the brain triggers the release of FSH and LH hormones which, in turn, trigger the ovaries and testes to produce estrogen and testosterone.

As the body, sexual organs, and genitals develop, the physiological changes create a surge of rapid hormonal and physical changes.

These changes are involuntary and lead the child to become psychologically aware of changes in thinking, attraction to others, and physical changes.

Even the most spiritually mature student struggles with a preoccupation with lust.

These rapid changes often result in both sexes discovering masturbation.

These occurrences are often inevitable and need to be thoroughly discussed with open communication between parent and child.

This is vitally important because of the close connection between the obsession with lusts and the pathway to sexual addiction.

Basic Biopsychology and Neurodevelopment

Most parents have some knowledge about the vulnerability and susceptibility of brain development during the prenatal period.

Prenatal brain development is one of the most important periods of development because of the rapid growth that occurs during this time.

Likewise, the neural, physical, psychological, and emotional changes that occur during sexual maturation is similar to prenatal development.

Many are at least familiar with how illicit drugs like heroine take the user deep into addiction and dependency with an ever-increasing inability to satiate the craving.

The physiological part of the brain that we call the *pleasure center* is the very same part of the brain that is involved with sexual addiction.

But it's far more sinister because unlike the visible toll that heroin addiction takes on the body, the effects of sexual addiction are hidden from view.

I think it is part of the reason why the Bible distinguishes sexual sin from all other sins.

A helpful resource in understanding the process of sexual addiction is William Struthers's book, *Wired for Intimacy*.¹⁰

Developing a Culture of Grace

One of the greatest hindrances to a Christian seeking help is the judgementalism and legalism of those who should provide a safe place for growth.

We harp on modesty as a form of godliness, not realizing that our soapboxes of condemnation are slamming the door of grace rather than widening it.

Children and teenagers need the door of grace to be so large that a cruise ship could pass through it.

Developing a culture of grace in the home and church is vitally important in reclaiming this territory.

What does a culture of grace look like and how do you create it?

Bring Sexuality out of the Shadows of Shame

We must bring all things sexual into the light of Christ, both in the home and the church.

We simply cannot allow sexuality to be taboo anymore.

Parents can help accomplish this by being proactive to discuss sexuality in the early years. This will foster openness when children become teenagers.

Make regular time to check in with your child or teenager, but do more than just check in.

Be intentional to make an emotional and relational connection.

There are many ways to do this, but the goal should be intentional conversation.

You can take them out for ice cream, take them for a walk at the beach/park/neighborhood, or another activity where there can have privacy to talk about sensitive subjects.

¹⁰ William M. Struthers. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009).

De-stigmatize Sexuality

Sexual sin is serious, especially as Jesus himself equates lust in the heart with the actual act of adultery.

However, Jesus never used shame when he dealt with those caught in sexual immorality.

Likewise, parents shouldn't punish children when it is discovered that they are engaging in behaviors of sexual curiosity. Remaining calm and having controlled conversations about such things will foster communication later in adolescence.

The same is true when parents discover that their adolescent is caught masturbating, viewing porn, or engaging in other sexual activity.

Instead of inciting shame and guilt, just talk about it with the understanding that you need Jesus just as much as they do. And don't be so quick to forget your own struggles.

Also, the typical struggles from your adolescence are nothing compared to what they are facing today when it comes to the onslaught of sexual temptation and exposure.

Parents should avoid using language of punishment when it is first discovered that their teenager is struggling with sexual sin.

If consequences are necessary in the form of increased accountability or decreased access to devices, then frame them as necessary changes to help them rather than punishment.

If repeat offenses are happening because of disobedience or addiction, stronger measures may need to be taken.

We need to normalize the struggle with sexual sin without minimizing it.

Provide Help and Accountability

Both parents and student pastors need to create safe places for adolescents to get help with sexual sin.

It may be hard for a teenager to find accountability with their parents.

However, parents who have a church with a student ministry brave enough to train lay leaders to help students with accountability will find this to be a huge asset.

It may not be viable for some parents to lean on a student ministry in this way but do whatever you can to get your teenager in front of someone who can walk with them through their struggles with sexual sin. Even if you have to pay for it.

CONCLUSION

Puberty can be a scary time in the life of both parents and children.

In reality, it is nothing more than scary shadows in a dimly lit room, and once you shine light upon the shadows, the scary stuff tends to disappear.

The rapid change of puberty and adolescence does not have to be scary.

All parents need to do is be proactive and open the lines of communication.

An open healthy dialogue between parent and child, along with an arsenal of information, is all that is needed to successfully navigate these rough waters.

Biblical Sexuality Discipleship for Parents
Session 5 – Best Practices and Safeguards

- OBJECTIVES:** To develop an understanding of best practices and safeguards in protecting children and adolescents from premature exposure to sexually explicit material.
- GOALS:**
1. To help participants develop a working knowledge of internet safety, digital device management, content filtering of common medium of exposure.
 2. To help participants create practical safeguards in daily life to protect children from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material.
- CAUSE:** Parents lack an understanding of best practices and safeguard create unnecessary opportunities for children and adolescent to be expose to sexually explicit material.

Welcome to session 5 where we take some time to address day-to-day, practical safeguards and best practices in biblical sexuality discipleship.

The purpose of this session is to help parents understand methods of protecting children and adolescents from premature exposure to sexually explicit material.

Before we begin, I'd like to offer a clear admonition.

Your first line of defense is not their eyes, but rather their hearts.

The purpose of this entire curriculum is to develop a robust theology of sexuality discipleship.

So even though we're taking this session to talk about guarding their eyes, it's important to keep in mind that focusing too heavily on this second line of defense by locking down incoming streams of sensuality is but a false inoculation.

A parent's first line of defense is shepherding the hearts of their children with the beauty of God's plan for marriage, sex, and singleness.

Raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord must be intentional and foundational when mounting an effective defense to the culture's attack on their hearts and minds.

Parents simply cannot ignore disciplining children in foundational truths and expect to stand a chance in the battle for their sexual purity.

The Path to Technology Independence

While protecting your child's mind and heart at all costs may seem like the goal when considering media and technology consumption, I'd like to suggest a greater goal.

When disciplining your children in this area, your goal should instead be to bring them to a place where they are independently self-regulating their consumption in a way that is God-honoring.

I've created a chart to explain how this could look. It's called The Path to Technology Independence.

But before we start down this path, don't forget that the over-arching principle behind this method is discipleship.

Specifically, we're talking about intentional, ongoing, age-appropriate discussions about biblical sexuality.

Without discipleship, you're likely to fall into one of the traps discussed in Session 1 – Abstinence by Elimination or Detached Purity.

There are three phases to The Path to Technology Independence.

The first phase is blocking. Blocking is primarily for children ages 0 through elementary school.

The second phase is filtering. Filtering is primarily for middle school aged adolescents.

And the third phase is monitoring. Monitoring is for high school aged adolescents.

The suggested ages are guidelines only. You will need to adjust these ages and levels of control depending on the maturity and level of development for the child or adolescent.

So, let's talk about each.

BLOCKING - During the blocking phase, parents should vigilantly guard all streams of access to harmful media by blocking all unwanted content.

This includes either completely eliminating sources of incoming content, or only allowing devices that have heavy blocking mechanisms enabled.

FILTERING – During the filtering phase, older children and emerging adolescents need

to start learning to self-regulate without total elimination of all potential channels of unwanted content.

This includes gradually decreasing measures of blocking and filtering to coincide with their maturity and trustworthiness.

I know this is scary, but their very best chance of learning this is while they are still in your care.

MONITORING – And then as teenagers move toward adulthood and continue to demonstrate that they can be trusted, parents should gradually transfer control to them, which happens in the monitoring phase.

This allows the teenager to acclimate to the task of guarding their own purity.

If this phase is skipped or delayed and adolescents find themselves with sudden free and total access when they go away to college, there are sure to be dangerous consequences.

It's important that parents use wisdom and caution in using this method because there is not a universal way to do this. Each child is different, and each home is different.

It's also important to note that there needs to be a gradual transition between blocking, filtering, and monitoring.

Parents should take care not to simply unlock access as they reach the next stage in the progression but slowly, over time, make the transition to the next phase while careful discipleship is taking place.

Again, these are simply guidelines to help you implement a system and structure that allows you to think through and manage content access in your home.

To cover all of the potential pitfalls of sexuality, we would need a lot more than 5 sessions.

So, for the sake of this series, let's focus on two of those pitfalls – content management and dating relationships.

Content Management

When thinking about content management, we are going to apply The Path to Technology Independence – blocking, filtering, and monitoring – to each of the following categories.

Safeguards

Devices

First, let's talk about safeguards for devices.

It's important that parents are aware of any device in the home that has a connection to the internet.

If it has a screen and a plug, it should be inspected and monitored.

Phones, watches, tablets, computers, gaming consoles, and TVs should all be behind some kind of blocking, filtering, or monitoring software.

If you are unable to get these behind some kind of digital wall, then put them behind a physical wall and strictly guard the access.

Depending on the level of technology independence you are using, settings should be such that nothing can be changed without your approval.

Dangerous Apps

It's also important to take a look at dangerous applications that parents should have on their radar.

We simply are unable to cover all applications, but we hope to highlight a few.

It's a given that any app with streaming content can be dangerous, so I'd like to point out the most dangerous elements of the application besides its streaming video content.

If it has a messaging feature, parents should be mindful of how both friends and strangers can send explicit material or pressure their child for nude pictures.

I'm also going to direct you to the website purevpn.com. Simply google dangerous applications for kids and you will find a number of resources.

Pure VPN has a recently updated list with a short description of each of the most dangerous apps.

It's really not wise for parents to simply rely on my words here as definitive.

Technology changes too rapidly for you to go more than a year without intentionally surveying the technology and application landscape to monitor for new pitfalls or apps.

Among the most popular and most sinister of phone apps is Snapchat.

I'd like to offer a gentle but clear warning. If you have a teenager but don't know of the

dangers of Snapchat, then you and your teenager are playing with fire.

Snapchat was the largest source of solicitation of nude pictures of girls in my student ministry.

Essentially, the application allows users to share pictures that automatically delete from the app.

Unless the picture is captured with a screenshot, it's automatically deleted.

This allows users to be emboldened to engage in risky and sexually inappropriate behavior because they know that the pictures will be automatically deleted from the system.

Helpful Applications

It's equally good to know that there are helpful applications that can be used during all phases of technology independence

Apple Parental Controls

Apple offers robust parental controls that few parents fully utilize.

From either your device or your child's device, go to Settings and tap Screen Time. From there, you can do the following:

Prevent iTunes & App Store purchases - There's a lot of flexibility here. You can completely disable your child's ability to add or purchase apps, or you can set up a permission-based system.

Allow or restrict built-in apps and features - These are the apps that are included on an Apple device, such as Safari. If you have a younger child, for example, you may want to block Safari access completely.

Prevent Explicit Content and Content Ratings - This includes everything from movies to music to apps.

Prevent Web Content - This gives you the ability to block adult websites.

Restrict Siri Web Search - You can completely block Siri's ability to search the web when asked a question.

Restrict Game Center - There are features here that allow you to control gaming content and privacy.

Set up Downtime - Schedule your child's time away from the screen, during which the entire device or just certain apps can be blocked.

Communication Safety - This feature can detect nude photos before they are sent or viewed.

Content and Privacy Restrictions - This section allows you to block or limit what your child can change from their own device once set up, such as passcode changes and driving focus changes.

All of this information and more is thoroughly discussed on Apple's website at support.apple.com.

Many parents do not realize that Apple's controls are very thorough.

For a young child, an Apple device can be practically locked down for all purposes other than parent communication, which is similar to what you'd get if you went with a child-safe company such as Gabb, Pinwheel, or Troomi, which are equally good choices for young children.

The benefit of Apple is that as your child develops, you are able to move through the block/filter/monitor phases with ease, allowing for gradual transitions between each phase.

Life360 and KidsGuard Pro

There are other apps, such as Life360 and KidsGuard Pro that primarily focus on tracking your child's location with a host of other features like: Speed Tracking, Crash alerts, geofencing, and text and history monitoring.

Bark

Bark is another helpful app. According to Bark's website: Bark monitors texts, email, YouTube, and 30+ apps and social media platforms for signs of issues like cyberbullying, sexual content, online predators, depression, suicidal ideation, threats of violence, and more.

With content monitoring, you can get email and text alerts when Bark detects potential issues so you can talk to your child and make sure everything is OK.

Covenant Eyes

Covenant Eyes is neither a blocking nor a filtering software. Rather, it monitors and is designed to provide accountability to teenagers and adults who have greater accesses to the full internet.

CE requires an accountability partner or parent as the one who receives a browsing report.

It flags any website with potentially inappropriate content.

It works best with apple or android parental controls, which restrict app access and force the users to use the Covenant Eyes web browser for better monitoring.

Covenant Eyes also has a feature of screen monitoring which analyzes the active screen and sends screenshots to the accountability partner.

As mentioned earlier, it is really important that parents not simply set up the monitored applications and walk away, thinking all is safe.

Parents must stay vigilant, because tech savvy kids can easily find ways around your unmanned perimeter defenses.

Media

Movies, music, shows, and games should also be reviewed.

There are plenty of explicit and pornographic content in movies, music, games, and streaming services.

Also, don't fall into the trap of thinking Netflix, Hulu, and the like are not full of such content.

One of the most helpful websites to use as a resource is by Focus on the Family.

Pluggedin.com offers reviews for movies, tv shows, music, games, books, and even YouTube channels.

Literature

Speaking of books, I want to stop and say a word about literature, because I think it's an overlooked danger.

While books don't fall into the category of technology, they should not be disregarded.

Many of the girls that I have worked with in the past have reported that their primary entry point or preferred source for pornographic content is erotic literature.

Parents need to make sure they are not ignoring this potential avenue.

Plugged-In Parenting: How to Raise Media-Savvy Kids with Love, Not War, by Bob Waliszewski is a great resource for parents in developing these systems of safety.¹

Best Practices

Now let's shift our focus to best practices. Our look at best practices focuses more on how you are managing your children and less on managing digital content.

We still need to use the blocking/filtering/monitoring phases when thinking about best practices.

As your children move into adolescence and then into the older teenage years, you should be adjusting the rules and privileges in order to help them acclimate to managing themselves.

Privacy

Let's discuss privacy. Both children and adolescents need physical privacy because it helps them form boundaries for themselves.

However, device privacy is a different matter.

Because you, the parent, are responsible for their sexuality and heart development, device privacy is relative.

Of course, it's easier to monitor and physically inspect the devices of younger children.

But the older they get, the more their own personal privacy means to them.

The guiding principle here is that they live under your roof and are subject to the rules of the house as long as they live with you.

This means that adolescents should fully understand and anticipate that their device will be internally monitored and also handed over for physical inspections.

Parents should not use this as an opportunity to be nosy and invade their messages in a "diary-grab" attempt, nor should they flaunt this right to inspection.

Instead, look as deep as you need to look to ensure that they are safe without crossing the boundaries of their individuality and personhood.

¹ Bob Waliszewski. *Plugged-In Parenting: How to Raise Media-Savvy Kids with Love, Not War* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011).

Device Rules

Another best practice involves clearly communicated device rules.

There should be no unmonitored access.

Computers should be in open areas with screens visible.

No private browsing or erasing history. You may need to set up apple controls to lock down these features, as previously discussed.

No devices in the bathrooms. Period.

In regard to TVs and game consoles in the bedroom, children and younger adolescents should never have these in their rooms.

However, as they move into older adolescence, you may decide that they are responsible enough to handle this privilege.

If this is the direction you go, stay vigilant in filtering and monitoring the content and access.

Phones and tablets should not be charged or kept inside their rooms at night.

Creating a public charging space in a common area is recommended, but parents should be aware that a sneaky child can easily access unsecured devices on charging stations.

It may be best for some parents to have their children turn in devices to them to be kept in the parents' room overnight.

Room Management

Room management is another important best practice.

Older teenagers may have proven that they can keep their phones in their rooms at night as long as monitoring is still happening.

Some teenagers prefer to use their phone's built-in alarm to wake up for work or school.

Teenagers who enjoy facetimeing with friends should keep the door to their room open, especially when talking to the opposite sex.

Dating Relationships

Finally, let's shift our attention to dating relationships.

Navigating teenage relationships can be a challenging part of raising teenagers.

It was one of the most common issues that I dealt with in student ministry.

Dating relationships should be reserved only for older teenagers.

Essentially, parents should be blocking, rather than filtering or monitoring, until their teenager is older and emotionally and spiritually mature enough.

Having boyfriends/girlfriends in elementary school, middle school, and early high school should NOT be allowed.

I know this is a hard stance, especially since most parents think it's cute and even encourage it.

However, 26 years of student ministry have taught me that the vast majority of high school students are simply not ready to handle such emotionally and relationally sophisticated relationships.

I recommend NOT assuming that the tradition of no-dating-until-16 is the best and automatic standard.

14-, 15-, and 16-year-olds have the emotional depth to begin falling in love, and they need help to avoid these traps.

I recommend that teenagers not be allowed to date until they are juniors or even seniors in high school.

To clarify, I'm talking about actual exclusive dating relationships.

Special occasions like proms, formals, and events can be great opportunities for teenagers to learn about interacting with the opposite sex in date-like experiences.

For years I have drilled into students that the way to spell LOVE is T-I-M-E. If you spend enough time with someone, you will eventually fall in love with them.

For teenagers, they can fall in love long before they have a clue about what God's will is for their lives, often getting deep into relationships that God didn't plan for them.

With this in mind, parents need to be aware of what my wife and I now call "super friends."

Teenagers are very adept and capable at developing strong relationships over social media and video message apps.

Even though we established a no-dating until senior year rule in our house, we simply didn't realize that one of our older teenagers had been cultivating a girlfriend-in-waiting relationship during junior year.

My wife and I didn't realize how strong the "super friend" relationship was, even though they both honored and respected our wishes the entire time.

We were a bit clearer with our other kids as they became older teenagers.

By the way, the super friends are now husband and wife, and we couldn't be happier or prouder.

Safeguards and Best Practices

Candid and open conversations must be had with students regarding the pitfalls of any dating relationship.

If your student cannot handle the responsibility of grades, chores, following rules, obeying traffic laws, self-control, and self-discipline, then they probably aren't ready for dating.

Yet none of these are qualifiers either.

Absolute ground rules must be clearly established, communicated, and agreed upon. The consequences of breaking these rules should also be discussed. Some helpful ground rules could include:

Never alone. Not even a second.

Car rides are ok, but cars are for driving, not for sitting.

Public places are ok.

Never behind closed doors.

If no one is home, then someone stays in the car.

Never date an unbeliever.

Never date someone spiritually immature.

No video calls behind closed doors.

In addition, it's helpful to understand the terms missionary dating and discipleship dating. 2 Corinthians 6:14 clearly states that believers SHOULD NOT be unequally yoked

together with unbelievers.

This goes for both personal and business relationships.

It is unequivocally sinful for believers to date non-believers, even if their intention is to lead them to Christ.

Along the same lines, teenagers may wonder is it ok for a mature believer to be in a dating relationship with someone who is not mature in their faith.

The principle in 2 Corinthians 6:14 deals directly with a relationship between a believer and non-believer.

If the precept (or concept) of 2 Corinthians 6:14 is applied to a mature believer dating an immature believer, then we deduct that the weaker Christian could possibly slow the stronger Christian.

While it should not be considered a sin to date an immature believer, it is most certainly unwise in most circumstances.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parents are faced with many challenges in raising children in today's society.

And there are many sources of noise and distraction from groups and entities that want your child's attention and affections.

The greatest calling of a parent is to shepherd and cultivate the hearts and minds of their children for Christ.

This is paramount, and no amount of shielding or vigilance will be an adequate substitute for shepherding and discipling their hearts daily.

As you lay this foundation of shepherding their hearts, the responsibility of guarding their eyes and minds becomes effective and lasting.

I know that all of this may seem overwhelming, but little by little and day by day you can reclaim the ground of biblical sexuality.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING BIBLICAL SEXUALITY DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING FOR ANCHORED CHRISTIAN COUNSELING OF FERNANDINA BEACH, FLORIDA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
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This project seeks to equip parents and leaders in the local church to disciple their children and adolescents in biblical sexuality. Chapter 1 explains the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology of the project. Chapter 2 establishes the biblical-theological foundation for biblical sexuality discipleship through an exegesis of Ephesians 5:31-32, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and 1 Corinthians 6:16-20. Chapter 3 explains that the process of biblical sexuality discipleship is the responsibility of both the parents and the church. Chapter 4 details the history, preparation, and implementation of the five-session training class. Chapter 5 evaluates the purpose and goals of the ministry project. This chapter also reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the project, including suggestions for change along with theological and personal reflections.

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