

## Week 2

### Sex and Gender from a Biblical Perspective - God's Biblical Creation as Good

At Hope we often talk about **matter** and **manner** - this is where we're looking for unity, not uniformity of thought during these small group discussions. We should expect a range of thoughts on various topics, because our personality, experience, friends & family, upbringing, etc. all come into play as we shape our thoughts. Let's remember we all need Jesus and his grace is sufficient to cover each of us and our struggles, past or present.

How can we have a conversation that can honor God, the bible and each other?  
Can we challenge ourselves to use this time to learn, listen and grow together?

? Growing up, what messaging did you receive about sex and from whom?

**Leader's Note:** Feel free to be the first person to answer the icebreaker question. The subject of sex can still feel very taboo and prove difficult to converse around. Your vulnerable leadership may help others to open up. For example, I might answer first by saying, "My parents were the primary communicators...but they didn't give me much. I made a comment about two people kissing and my mom said that's all you're supposed to do until marriage. That was it...not much help. And when I did get introduced further it was through pornography. The loudest message was, even when my mom found out, my dad never discussed it with me. It cemented the (wrong) idea that sex is shameful and should be kept hidden."

This week we will look at God's good design for sex.

#### Goodness

##### Genesis 2:20-25

<sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,'  
for she was taken out of man."

<sup>24</sup> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup> Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

### **Genesis 3:6-11**

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

<sup>11</sup> And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

**?** Where do we see the goodness of God in these passages?

*Possible answers: God's creation of animals, God's desire for a suitable helper for Adam, God's creation of woman, no shame being naked together, God's presence*

**?** Some see verses 1:22-24 as the first wedding ceremony—God the Father walking the woman "down the aisle" to the man. If that's the case, what can you comfortably say a marriage relationship entails at this point?

*Possible answers: God's presence, one man and one woman, explore the depths of "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.", name "woman" and the implications she was taken out of man, leave family of origin, explore what it means to be "one flesh", likely including sexual union*

**?** If it's unclear that "one flesh" in verse 24 refers to sexual union, verse 25 makes it abundantly clear that they were naked and yet free from shame (and to borrow from chapter 1...it was good!). If God's design for sex in marriage is for goodness and beauty, what is keeping us from clearly sharing this message? What alternative messages about sex are more often or easier to share?

*Possible answers: Some may be hearing about these realities for the first time in this study!*

*Keeping us from clearly sharing this message: fear, shame, unanswered questions, lack of a safe person to have conversations with about sex, we worship purity more than God*

*Alternative messages: sex is too good to wait, God as a killjoy, we should fear sex, sex is shameful, Christians are known for what we're against (sexual immorality) rather than what we're for (experiencing the greatest good sex offers within the safest relationship--marriage), we can start to worship purity rather than God*

## **My Beautiful, My Beloved**

### **Song of Solomon 4:1-16**

**He**

<sup>1</sup>How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!

Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from the hills of Gilead.

<sup>2</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone.

<sup>3</sup> Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.

<sup>4</sup> Your neck is like the tower of David, built with courses of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.

<sup>5</sup> Your breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies.

<sup>6</sup> Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense.

<sup>7</sup> You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you.

<sup>8</sup> Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon. Descend from the crest of Amana, from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon, from the lions' dens and the mountain haunts of leopards.

<sup>9</sup> You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

<sup>10</sup> How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice!

<sup>11</sup> Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

<sup>12</sup> You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

<sup>13</sup> Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard,

<sup>14</sup> nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices.

<sup>15</sup> You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.

**She**

<sup>16</sup> Awake, north wind, and come, south wind!

Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread everywhere.

Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.

**?** What does it look like for the church, or more specifically this small group, to esteem the goodness of God and his creation of sex within marriage?

*Possible answers: Perhaps accountability doesn't only include confession of sin. Perhaps it also includes ways that you honored (and would want to honor) your spouse, whether that spouse is real or still hoped for in the future. Perhaps married couples can share with singles their expectations for sex prior to getting married and how the expectations have or have not been met. (Many times we have unrealistic expectations due to cultural influences.) Adjusting sex as something to be received for your pleasure versus something you can give/serve the other through. Preach the gospel to shame and fear associated with sexual sin.*

We don't have a law. We have the Spirit. And our main goal is not uniformity. In fact, unlike the world, the church believes it can still have unity even without absolute uniformity. This truth escapes our culture.

**?** How might you respond to someone who upholds a more fear-based or shame-inducing approach to sex education within the church?

*Possible answers: I'd ask them questions. I'd ask if/how they've seen that prove beneficial. I'd ask if they could see any potential harm coming due to this approach. I'd ask them if they were comfortable sharing about their sexual past. It can be the case that those who do not struggle with sexual sin stand in judgment over others who've succumbed to it. So they feel comfortable expressing law/sin/judgment/fear/shame. I'd ask them to consider how this has the potential to create a toxic environment.*

### Real Life Scenario

**Imagine you're a parent (some of you don't have to imagine). Share how you'd like to improve on the messaging of the goodness of God's design for sex with your children. What would you say and how would you say it?**

**Imagine they're 5 years old.**

**Now imagine they're 13 years old.**

**And now imagine them as 18 years old.**

**How would your messaging change while still upholding the goodness of God's creation of sex?**

### For Discussion and Accountability

**?** Explain where your trust level is currently at with the Lord regarding his designs for sex (e.g. God's presence, marriage covenant, one flesh, etc.).

**?** Where have you given God ultimate authority in your life to establish the greatest good of sex (namely, within Christian covenantal marriage)? Where are you struggling with Him in this? How can we encourage you to take one step toward God surrounding this struggle this week?

**Leader's Note: Regardless of where people's trust level is at, this seems to naturally lead into seeking God's help in prayer for our trust in him to increase over/against the empty claim of culture. I think it also provides a great check in throughout the rest of the study, "Which direction is your trust level going – up or down?"**

### Additional Resources

- *The Meaning of Marriage: A Vision for Married and Single People* by Timothy and Kathy Keller