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WHAT'S the  
BIG DEAL  
— about —  
SEX?



# 1



I can remember being a teenager, babysitting at my sister's house. On her nightstand, she had a book about sex. I was intrigued; I was curious. I would never have admitted that to anyone back then, but in the privacy of her house I looked through the book. Asking questions outright about sex was just awkward and embarrassing. It seemed easier to find the answers in a book. Librarians will tell you that books on sexuality are not often checked out, but are secretly paged through. The Internet means you can get information without even having to find a book. The topic of sex makes us curious, interested, filled with shame, and sometimes even disgusted.

One look at the marketing techniques of Madison Avenue will tell you that sex is a powerful force. It is used to sell alcohol, cars, and everything else. Television shows and movies are filled with sexual scenes and innuendos. Approximately 15 percent of searches on the Internet are related to porn. Thirty percent of those looking for porn are women.<sup>1</sup>

Because we rarely admit the power of our sexuality, it works in subversive ways, impacting our choices and often becoming a formidable source of temptation and frustration.

*What you think about sex matters*

Human sexuality is an essential aspect of who we are as children of God. God purposefully created us as sexual beings and intentionally designed our sexuality to be a powerful force. Because Christians often don't talk or teach about sex, women are confused about what to do with their sexuality. The world's resources like random blogs, erotic novels, and women's magazines seem to have more sexual advice than Christian resources. So women are left with the assumption that God just doesn't have that much to say about sex—other than “don't do it until you're married.”

I've met hundreds of Christian women who are struggling with sexual issues. In the silence of the church, they are left to sort through harrowing experiences like childhood sexual abuse, exposure to porn, raging temptation, homosexual thoughts, and betrayal in marriage.

Many women feel like sexuality has hijacked their happiness, and it certainly seems to be a barrier to honoring God. We desperately need God's perspective on sexuality. Fortunately, the Bible has a lot to say on the topic. Some of it might surprise you. We all have thoughts and beliefs about sex that are not based on truth. Maybe the lies you believe about sex came from poor

teaching (or deafening silence) in religious settings. Wherever the misinformation came from, it impacts the choices we make. Here is a common example:

Kassandra experienced sexual abuse from a boy in the neighborhood. She didn't tell anyone because she was scared and ashamed to admit it to her Christian parents. As a twelve-year-old girl, she drew many conclusions about herself and about sexuality. Without ever voicing these thoughts, she believed lies like "Sex is dirty. I'm damaged goods. The only way I can ever get a boy's attention is through giving him sex. I will never be pure again." As a teenager, Kassandra moved from boy to boy, and had a secret unplanned pregnancy that ended in abortion. Kassandra is now a forty-year-old wife and mother. Even though she looks like a wonderful Christian woman on the outside, these unspoken messages, violations, and secret sins still dominate her thinking and impact her marriage. She loves the Lord and reads the Bible, but she doesn't quite know how to be free from the shame of her past.

I've met many "Kassandras" over the years. Their faces flash before me even now as I write. They don't know how to be free from the bondage of the past. If you truly want to see the gift of sexuality as it was created to be experienced, you must be willing to expose the lies you've believed as measured by the truth of God's Word.

*You can't separate your sexuality from your spirituality*

Here is perhaps the most profound truth I have learned from studying what God says about sex: Whether you are single or married, having great sex or no sex, your sexuality is inseparable from your spirituality. In fact, every sexual choice is also a spiritual choice. Sex isn't just about sex.

Take a moment to digest that. Most Christian women have built a thick wall between their sexuality and spirituality. Their sexual fantasies, sexual shame, and temptations are far removed from their desire to please and know the Lord. I believe that the walls we build between the sexual and spiritual are only imaginary. Confusion and hidden pain related to sex is intricately intertwined with our present relationship with God.

John Piper wrote, "The ultimate reason (not the only reason) why we are sexual is to make God more deeply knowable."<sup>2</sup>

What do you think of the above quote? Kind of a paradigm shift, isn't it? God created sex for a lot of reasons—for procreation, for pleasure, for intimate knowing between a husband and wife. However, one of the most important reasons He created sex is to communicate about Himself.

God understands that we are limited creatures—that we have difficulty grasping spiritual truths. All throughout Scripture, God paints physical pictures to explain spiritual truths. For example, in John 15, He used the physical picture of a grapevine to explain what looks like to abide in Christ. God even tells us to *do* physical things (like take communion) in order to *remem-*

ber spiritual truths (like Jesus' sacrifice for our sins).

God created sex and the covenant of marriage to be a brilliant metaphor of how deeply He knows us and longs for us to know Him. It's not just John Piper who says this. Consider this fact. The Hebrew word for sexual intimacy between a husband and wife in the Old Testament is the word *yada*, which literally means, "to know deeply or intimately." The word *yada* appears in the Old Testament over 940 times. No, there isn't that much sex in the Old Testament. The word *yada* is most often used to describe intimacy with God—His with us, and ours with Him. Here are a few examples:

You have searched me, Lord, and you *yada* me.

(Psalm 139:1)

In all your ways *yada* him and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:6)

Moses said to the Lord . . . "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may *yada* you and continue to find favor with you." (Exodus 33:12–13)

Sexual intimacy is a powerful picture of the gospel—of the degree of intimacy and ecstasy we are capable of having with God. The Christian marriage is designed to showcase this masterpiece. The promise of marriage (till death do us part) is an echo of God's covenant love, "I will never leave you or forsake you." The romantic longings of a single woman mirror the longings of a bride who is waiting for the ultimate salvation—the



coming of Jesus Christ. To the extent that our understanding and experience of sexuality is damaged and twisted, our view of God is compromised.

Your sexuality isn't just about what you choose to do with your body. It's about living out a holy metaphor within the messiness of a fallen and broken world.

Here's the takeaway: What you think about sex really matters. Having God's perspective on the topic, whether you are single or married, is a vital piece of your growth as a daughter of God.

### *A call to sexual discipleship*

My guess is that you probably haven't seen those two words together. What is sexual discipleship? Our approach to sexuality is often compartmentalized. A loving parent has the "sex talk" with her son or daughter in adolescence. Maybe once a year the pastor mentions the importance of sexual purity. But our understanding of sex is rarely integrated with the rest of who we are as Christ-followers.

The result of this is that Christians often commit their lives to Christ but reserve their sexuality for themselves. There are men and women who have left everything and moved to the mission field, yet continue to exercise their sexuality according to their own desire. A godly wife insists, "It's my body—my right. I don't owe my husband anything in the bedroom." Others study at Bible college to prepare for full-time ministry while sleeping around or looking at porn.

One reason for this disconnect is that we don't have a practical theology of sex. Most of us don't have a clue how much worldly teaching has infiltrated our thinking about sex. Throughout a lifetime in the Western world, we will be bombarded with millions of messages and examples exalting sexual immorality. Although the Bible has a lot to say about sex, we rarely hear this message.

Hudson Taylor wrote, "If God is not Lord *of* all, He is not Lord *at* all."<sup>3</sup> Let me ask you a personal question. Is God Lord of your sexuality? If someone were to look solely at your sexuality, would there be evidence that Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord?

A follower of Christ intentionally sets his or her mind on what the Spirit desires, not what the flesh demands. Sexual discipleship means that you are willing to yield this very personal and vulnerable area of your life completely to the Lord, trusting that His ways are good.

Throughout this book, we will be tackling some very practical questions about sex. My hope is that the Lord will reveal how we can surrender even this most intimate area of our lives to Him. As God brings His truth and healing into your heart, may you grow closer to Him in *all* areas of your life. Thanks for joining me on this journey!