

# ***Theology Conversation #1: The Good News About Sex***

## **Part 1: Why Is This Topic So Important To Study Today?**

1. A swift and radical \_\_\_\_\_ of what has historically been believed about human sexuality is taking place as we speak.
2. While these changes have seemingly come overnight, we need to learn what has \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Thinking biblically and deeply about this subject will enable us to \_\_\_\_\_ of our faith more powerfully.
4. We need to understand the great \_\_\_\_\_ that culture's prescription for sexuality is causing.
5. Advocates for these views of sexuality are \_\_\_\_\_ to advance their worldview.
6. This same infection is in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. To catch a fresh vision for how to minister to the sexual brokenness in \_\_\_\_\_.

*Let's talk.*

Do you have any comments about what we have just shared? What are some questions or thoughts you have about this subject that you hope we cover during this 6-week journey?

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## Part 2: What Does The Bible Have To Say About Sex?

1. Why would an intelligent person commit themselves to trusting a book that's thousands of years old as to what they think about morals and values in the modern world?

2. From first chapter to last, and every place in between, the Bible speaks about sexuality.

Scriptures:

3. God's "gold standard" for our sexual behavior is found in the Bible's first chapters: Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24.

4. Why do we know that this is God's "gold standard" for human sexuality? What do we learn from Jesus' words in Matthew 19:1-5?

5. Every sexual boundary the Bible teaches traces its lineage back to Genesis 1 and 2. Yet as we read our Bibles, especially the Old Testament, it's important to distinguish between what is descriptive from what is prescriptive. Why?

6. As we move into the New Testament, does Jesus relax God's moral boundaries when he comes? What about the apostles and the early church?

*Let's talk.*

## Part 3: The Collapse Of The Christian Worldview

1. Nancy Pearcey has at least two main objectives in writing, “Love Thy Body”:

- First, she wants to give us a way of understanding what in the world is going on \_\_\_\_\_.
- Then she invites us to rediscover the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of our Christian worldview.

**(Many of the following questions are taken from the Study Guide provided in the back of “Love Thy Body”)**

2. What view of Christian morality was expressed by the Supreme Court in its 2013 Windsor decision? What view of religious liberty was expressed by the US Commission on Civil Rights in 2016? Have you heard the same attitudes expressed anywhere else? Give an example or two from your own experience. How would you respond?

3. Where did this thinking come from? How did we get to this place?

*Culture used to buy-in to the Christian worldview. Here’s how Pearcey describes that worldview:*

“Christianity holds that body and soul together form an integrated unity—that the human being is an embodied soul... This is called a teleological view of nature, from the Greek word *telos*, which means *purpose or goal*. It is evident that living things are structured for a purpose...

If nature is teleological, and the human body is part of nature, then it is likewise teleological. It has a built-in purpose, part of which is expressed as the moral law...Morality is the guidebook to fulfilling God’s original purpose for humanity, the instruction manual for becoming the kind of person God intends us to be, the road map for reaching the human *telos*.

The implication is that the physical structure of our bodies reveals clues to our personal identity. The way our bodies function provides rational grounds for our moral decisions. A

Christian ethic respects the teleology of nature and the body. In the biblical worldview, sexuality is integrated into the total person...

A biblical worldview leads to a positive view of the body. It says that the biological correspondence between male and female is part of the original creation. Sexual differentiation is part of what God pronounced “very good” —morally good—which means it provides a reference point for morality. There is a purpose in the physical structures of our bodies that we are called to respect. A teleological morality creates harmony between biological identity and gender identity. The body/person is an integrated psychosexual unity. Matter does matter.”

*Put some of these ideas in your own words:*

*Where did the shift from this mindset occur. Pearcey’s explanation:*

“How did this change? In the modern world it began with Darwin. Even though humans *seemed* to be teleological, they were just the product of random forces. The next step in the logic is crucial: If nature does not reveal *God’s* will, then it is a morally neutral realm where humans may impose *their* will.”

*This led to a dramatic fragmentation of human nature in the minds of many, which Pearcey goes to great lengths to visualize.*

*It actually began in a period known as the Enlightenment where the following happened:*

*The concept of truth has been divided*

**THEOLOGY, MORALITY**

Private, Subjective, Relativistic

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**SCIENCE**

Public, Objective, Valid for Everyone

In time, this led to the following division:

*The fact/value split*

**VALUES**

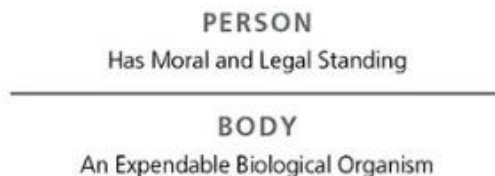
Private, Subjective, Relativistic

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**FACTS**

Public, Objective, Valid for Everyone

Which eventually led to what Pearcy calls the “Personhood Theory”, represented by this diagram:



Again, Pearcy:

“The key to understanding all the controversial issues of our day is that the concept of the human being has been fragmented into an upper and lower story. Secular thought today assumes a body/person split, with the body defined in the “fact” realm by empirical science (lower story) and the person defined in the “values” realm as the basis for rights (upper story). This dualism has created a fractured, fragmented view of the human being, in which the body is treated as separate from the authentic self.”

*But what strange twist has happened with this split today, which we see in the arguments given in favor of abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and transgenderism?*

*Here’s a question from the study guide:*

Explain briefly how the body/person dualism is at the heart of the most common arguments in each of these issues:

- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Sexual hedonism
- Homosexuality
- Transsexualism or transgenderism

“What has happened here to the concept of the human being? It has been torn in two. If a baby is human life from conception but not a person until some later time, then clearly these are two different things. This is a radically fragmented, fractured, dualistic view of the human being. Thus we have a new category: human non-person...”

Furthermore, in the two-story worldview, if the body is separate from the person, as we saw in abortion and euthanasia, then what you do with your body sexually need not have any connection to who you are as a whole person. Sex can be purely physical, separate from love.”

## Part 4: How Christianity Transformed The Way We Think Of the Body

1. (From the Study Guide) Explain how the Bible supports a high view of the body. Contrast the biblical view with the Gnostic view.

*From the book:*

### WALKING CLAY

“At the time of the early church, this biblical view was radically counter-cultural. Ancient pagan culture was permeated by world-denying philosophies such as Manichaeism, Platonism, and Gnosticism, all of which disparaged the material world as the realm of death, decay and destruction—the source of evil. Gnosticism essentially conflated the two doctrines of creation and fall: It treated creation as a kind of fall of the soul from the higher spiritual realm into the corrupt material realm.

A popular pun at the time was that the body (Greek: soma) is a tomb (Greek: sema). Gnosticism taught that the world was so evil, it must be the creation of an evil god.

God formed Adam “from the dust of the ground” (2:7). The name for humanity, Adam, is even a pun in the original Hebrew, meaning “from the earth” (adamah = earth). It was this walking, animated clay that God pronounced “very good” (1:31). It was this embodied, earthly, sexual creature that God described as reflecting his own divine image.”

### BETHLEHEM BOMBSHELL

“What really set Christianity apart in the ancient world, however, was the incarnation—the claim that the Most High God had himself entered into the realm of matter, taking on a physical body. In Gnosticism, the highest deity would have nothing to do with the material world. By contrast, the Christian message is that the transcendent God has broken into history as a baby born in Bethlehem.

In the early days of the Church, this was Christianity’s greatest scandal.

When Jesus was executed on a Roman cross, we might say he “escaped” from the material world, just as the Gnostics taught we should aspire to do. But what did he do next? He came back—in a bodily resurrection! ... Because he was taken bodily into heaven, his human nature is permanently connected to his divine nature.”

### DEATH BE NOT PROUD

“Finally, what will happen at the end of time? God is not going to scrap the idea of a material world in time and space as though he made a mistake the first time. The biblical teaching is that God is going to restore, renew, and re-create it, leading to “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1.)

Christians are never admonished to accept death as a natural part of creation. The Gnostics saw death as freedom from the encumbrance of the body. But for the early Christians, says Peter Brown, death “was a rending of the self that left the soul shocked and horrified, like a bereaved spouse or parent, at the prospect of parting from the beloved body.” Scripture portrays death as something alien—an enemy that entered creation with the fall.”

*What stands out to you?*

2. If the worldview of Christianity is the “truth”, and the sexually progressive worldview we see being championed today does not mesh with reality, what outcomes will this lead to?

*“But the truth is that Christianity has a much more respectful view of our psycho-sexual identity. It is not anti-sex, it is pro-body.”*

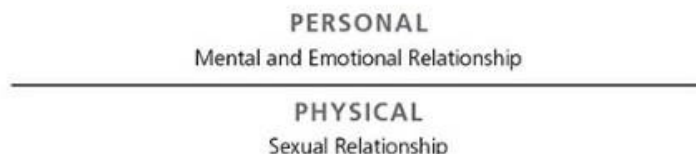


*From the book:*

## WHAT ROLLING STONE SAYS

In Rolling Stone magazine, a student named Naomi said hooking up has made people assume that there are two very distinct elements in a relationship, one emotional and one sexual, and they pretend like there are clean lines between them.

*The hookup culture: "clean lines between them"*



## BE LIKE PORN STARS

Unfortunately adult culture is not helping. Sex education courses typically focus solely on the physical dimension: on body parts, health risks, avoiding pregnancy, and the mechanics of sex. But sex education programs do not teach how to form and maintain a relationship.

Why are students inundated with information about contraception, a healthy diet, sleep hygiene, coping with stress and pressure – but not a word about the havoc that casual sex plays on a young woman's emotions?

Colleges invite pornstars and provide workshops on sadomasochism.

Businesses and corporations are complicit in the sexualizing of ever younger children producing slut-style fashions for little girls... The irony is that when young people experiment sexually, they typically think they are rebelling against adult culture. But in reality they are following a script that adult culture is giving them. The real rebellion in our day is to practice chastity. That requires genuine courage.

## NO NAMES, JUST SEX

Why does secular sexual morality places such a strong emphasis on emotional detachment? Because if the main goal is pleasure, then taking account of the partner as a whole person gets in the way.

Says Melinda Selmys, former lesbian, "If the purpose of sexuality is mere pleasure, sooner or later the other person, with all their personality, and their own separate desires, is going to become burdensome. The ideal, then, becomes, 'no names, just sex'."

But humans can't help functioning as a body-person unit which is just what the biblical world view says we are. Christianity is often accused of being negative because of its teaching on sin and guilt. But in reality, it has a much more positive view of sexual than the secular view.

## PORN VS. INTIMACY

The most extreme example of depersonalized sex is pornography...Porn tears apart what is meant to be integrated, treating the body as an object or instrument for one's own purposes. Tragically, porn is where many young people are getting their sex education today. Even secular researchers are growing alarmed about porn's harmful consequences. It's called a 'public health crisis'.

Today the average boy first encounters porn at 9 years old. By the time he is an adult, he has been consuming porn for more than a decade. How does that affect his relationship with real women? Many are simply unable to experience a sexual response with a real live woman. They are only able to respond to pornography. In fact, they prefer pornography.

## THE SCIENCE OF SEX

The irony is that science is constantly uncovering new evidence of the profound interconnection between body and person. Pick up any recent book on sexuality and you will read about the role played by hormones such as oxytocin and vasopressin...often called the attachment hormone...Consequently, the desire to attach to the other person when we have sex is not only an emotion but also part of our chemistry. As one sex therapist puts it, with sex we create 'an involuntary chemical commitment.'

Even when you intend to just have casual sex, 'biology might trump your intentions' says a Glamour magazine columnist. The same is true for men. Vasopressin stimulates bonding with a woman and with offspring. It's been dubbed the monogamy molecule. (Echoing Paul's words of becoming one with a prostitute.)

### Here are some follow-up exercises to work on:

Dialogue: "Why are Christians so hateful and bigoted?" You are talking with a non-Christian who agrees with the Supreme Court that Christian morality is hateful and hurtful. Explain that the biblical position on abortion, homosexuality, and other issues is actually inspired by a high view of the value of the body.

Dialogue: "Mom, Dad, my girlfriend/boyfriend and I are in love, and I don't see what's wrong with having sex. All of my friends are doing it." Imagine this is your son or daughter. Or imagine it is a friend of yours. Using material from the text, in conversational form, practice how to make a persuasive case for a biblical view of sexuality.

Dialogue: You are talking with a Christian who says we just need to preach the Word, not study worldviews. Using the example of the thinkers who have shaped modern Western ideas about sexuality, explain how worldviews shape people's thinking—how they percolate down through entertainment, education, magazines, and movies. Explain that they are difficult to dislodge because they function as substitute religions.