

SEX OUT OF BOUNDS

Adultery- Condemned over 30 times in the Bible, adultery may rank as the most heinous of sexual sins. An adulterer “destroys his own soul,” (Proverbs 6:32), but also crushes the spirit of his spouse. Jesus identified the root of adultery as lust carried out in the mind (Matthew 5:28). Lust is never satisfied. It strives for more and more satisfaction, ultimately acting out on fantasy. James 1:15 says: “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Research-based estimates of infidelity in marriage indicate that the chance of a marriage suffering infidelity is about 25 percent in the US.ⁱ Those with more partners before marriage—both married and unmarried—are more likely to cheat.ⁱⁱ Only about a third of marriages survive infidelity.ⁱⁱⁱ In God’s eyes, divorce and remarriage for the sake of romantic fulfillment constitutes adultery (Matthew 19:9), raising the bar even higher. A person who divorces without grounds deals “treacherously with the wife of his youth,” (Malachi 2:15). All of this points to the sacredness of the marriage vow and the possibility of faithfulness to it, for God would never condemn us for something we couldn’t prevent.

Fornication- The current mindset thinks of sex outside of marriage only sinful if infidelity is involved. The Bible goes beyond this, classing unmarried sex with things “unclean” (Ephesians 5:3). “Fornication” is a much uglier word than “affair,” but gives a more accurate portrayal of the ugliness of the act. For all its well-documented consequences, premarital sex is the norm in Western society. Almost all Americans have sex before marrying.^{iv} We can easily connect the dots between premarital sex and the difficulty we have staying married, because our first sexual experiences outside of marriage tend to “format” us for enjoying sex within the context of a transient relationship. In God’s plan, our sexuality is awakened in a committed-for-life relationship, sanctioned by God and celebrated by man, thus creating an appetite for sex within a covenantal bond.

Homosexuality- Let me be clear: God loves people with same sex attraction, as well as those who identify themselves as the other gender or wish to dress like the other gender. People with same-sex attraction (and other variations) who wish to conform to God’s original design face a great difficulty. They must deny their emotional and physical inclinations and in

many cases live a celibate life. I don't envy them for the difficulty of this decision. But nature and revelation indicate that the divine design for human sexuality involves male and female. The Bible speaks of homosexual sex as "against nature," meaning contrary to God's design in the natural world (See Romans 1:26-27). Same sex lifestyles entail physical, mental, and social consequences that point individuals back to God's plan. For instance, research shows more psychiatric disorders in the same-sex population; specifically relationship turnover rate, and the related depression and suicidality. Some blame this entirely on social rejection, but we find these rates even in societies that accept homosexual lifestyle and marriage.^v

Polygamy- Aside from the serial polygamy of pleasure-seeking divorce and remarriage, and certain religious cults, Western society sees little of this institution. But in parts of the developing world, as well as the Old Testament of the Bible, it is the norm. Even the great patriarchs Abraham, Jacob, David and others practiced it. While God allowed it, He also allowed the natural consequences to come in the form of jealousies, competition, and sometimes murder. One study out of British Columbia makes a case for thriving societies doing away with polygamy because of the social problems it causes. For instance, the older, more powerful men tend to "stockpile" wives, depriving younger males of wives. The young, frustrated males then become a crime liability to that society.^{vi}

Autoeroticism- Almost all males and many females (95% and 71%, respectively) masturbate at some time in their lifetimes.^{vii} The wisdom of the world regards this as a legitimate and safe way to release sexual tension. Scientists even claim it has some health benefits, although the data is mixed. The Bible doesn't say much about it. However, masturbation is one of those practices that solves one problem only to create another. One of those problems is the solitary nature of it. In healthy, God-designed sex, a person must engage in certain relational prerequisites—finding a life partner, building good will in the relationship, gaining the trust of the other, being attractive and attracted to another, to name a few. The reward of sexual pleasure comes after the person observes these disciplines. With masturbation, none of these are necessary, making it an instant-gratification scenario. Highly-gratifying, easily-accessed activities tend to quickly become addictive (Think: sugar). Frequent ejaculation in males causes more semen production; the buildup of semen then increases sexual tension, creating a cycle of need for more and more release. With orgasm, the brain chemical release

designed to bond us to another, bonds us to ourselves, possibly setting us up for a certain detached self-love. In my observation, many even of those who defend this practice feel a sense of shame over it. Although I can't prove occasional masturbation to be a sin or unhealthy, it can certainly be avoided with benefit. Orgasms during sleep (for both males and females) seem to be God's provision for the release of sexual tensions in those without a partner. Why not leave our sexuality on the altar?

Pornography- Because of the ease of delivery with smart phones and computers, pornography and masturbation tend to go hand in hand these days. The bane of internet pornography has called for volumes of books and seminars to counteract it. With each image viewed, the porn consumer contributes to human trafficking, street prostitution, and a host of other evils. Invariably these wicked enterprises exploit women and children. How opposed to the spirit of the gospel, which lifts up the weak (Isaiah 35:3; Acts 20:35). Even the "porn" that springs from a vivid imagination in lustful fantasy leads down a dark road of compromise. A sorrowful porn-addicted client told me he couldn't function with real women anymore. "Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you," (Proverbs 5:16-17).

Prostitution- The Bible condemns the world's oldest business for good reason. To sell one's God-given sexual faculties is to make merchandise out of a sacred gift. Before we condemn an individual prostitute, however, we should be careful to consider whether he or she has been trafficked. Studies reveal that the majority of prostitutes want to leave the sex trade.^{viii} Kidnapping, trafficking, or mere survival forces many into the business. Because of the horrors of this industry, the Bible often uses prostitution to allegorize corruption. Prostitution degrades the image of God in both men and women, and both the provider and, especially, the consumer.

Loveless married sex- A marriage license does not baptize carnal sex any more than a driver's license sanctions running red lights. Married couples who engage in a frequency of sex that saps energy and overuses delicate sexual organs, trample upon nature and nature's God. Although it can go either way, husbands are the ones who most often want sex for sex's sake. Wives feel degraded and devalued even within the holy institution of marriage. Then, as sex drive wanes with age, couples drift apart, not having cultivated the finer affections for one

another. In God's plan for human sexuality, passion always exists in the context of self-giving love.

Deviant sex- Let this term suffice for the scores of mutations into which human sexuality can morph when outside of God's design: Pedophilia, bestiality, necrophilia, sado-masochism, rape, voyeurism, fetishism and the rest of the parade. Often these appetites develop in the context of sexual addiction. When we break one sexual boundary, it becomes easier to break another; like a drug addict, we need stronger and stronger doses to satisfy a perverted appetite. Serial rapists and murderers from Ted Bundy and Jeffery Dahmer connect their sexual obsessions to pornography.^{ix} Once the spirit of the enemy takes possession, the depths to which humans can plunge has no bottom.

These words may seem like strong medicine, but the licentious spirit of the age calls for them. High walls of righteousness must be built to prevent the powerful tide of sensuality that has all but overtaken us. God calls His children back to His original design, that sex might be restored to its rightful place in creation, as a powerful bonding tool for husband and wife, and a metaphor of heaven's self-giving love for the human race.

ⁱ Grohol, J. "How Common is Cheating and Infidelity Really?" See <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/03/22/how-common-is-cheating-infidelity-really/>

ⁱⁱ Walsh, S. "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Infidelity but Were Afraid to Ask." July 2013. Hooking Up Smart. See <http://www.hookingupsmart.com/2013/07/24/relationshipstrategies/the-definitive-survey-of-infidelity-in-marriage-and-relationships/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Porter, W. "Surviving Infidelity." The Denver Post. Oct. 2009. See http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_13546193

^{iv} Warner, J. Premarital Sex the Norm in America. Dec. 2006. See <http://www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/news/20061220/premarital-sex-the-norm-in-america>

^v Sandfort, TG, et al, "Same-sex sexual behavior and psychiatric disorders: findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMESIS)".

Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2001 Jan;58(1):85-91.

^{vi} Henrich, J. et al. "The Puzzle of Monogamous Marriage." Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B 2012 367, doi: 10.1098/rstb.2011.0290, published 23 January 2012

^{vii} Gerressu M, Mercer CH, Graham CA, Wellings K, Johnson AM (April 2008). "Prevalence of masturbation and associated factors in a British national probability survey". Arch Sex Behav 37 (2): 266-78.

^{viii} For instance, Melissa Farley and Howard Barkan, "Prostitution, Violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder," Women and Health 27, no. 3 (1998): 37-49.

^{ix} Warner, R. "What Serial Killers and Murderers Think about Pornography." July, 2013. See <http://www.netnanny.com/blog/what-serial-killers-and-murderers-think-about-pornography/>