

WHAT IS
THE MEANING
OF SEX?

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Preface

I was ten years old when my dad first explained to me the birds and the bees. Like most kids my age, I was fairly shocked to receive the news. “That’s where babies come from? That’s where I came from? That means that you and mom . . .” I can only imagine what the look on my face must have been as the realization fell upon me like a bag of cold spaghetti. I am thankful that my dad did not laugh. Instead, we sat and talked while he answered all my questions. And I had a lot. My dad was a public high school science teacher of many years. He made a living explaining such things to naive adolescents. So I guess he was probably more prepared for such a conversation than most parents. Nevertheless, for all the technical precision, what prepared him most for our conversation was his Christianity. From the beginning, I learned from him that sex was a gift from God to be enjoyed exclusively within the covenant of marriage. It was my first lesson in sexual ethics, and it was an abiding one.

My earliest and most enduring lessons about marriage came from both my mother and my father. Perhaps above all else, I learned from them that it is a covenant made before God that is not to be broken. I have been married long enough to know that difficulties and trials sometimes strain marriages in ways one would never expect. Marriage is hard because life is hard. There was a reason that the apostle Paul said that those who marry would have much trouble in this life, “and I am trying to spare you” (1 Cor. 7:28). As I have gotten older, I have come to understand the great gift my parents gave me in their loving one another for a lifetime.

If there were times when they felt like they were hanging on by a very thin thread, I never knew it. Divorce was not a part of their vocabulary. So I grew up in the security of that love, and I am ever grateful to them for what they have given me. They say some things are better caught than taught. I caught the permanence of marriage from my mom and my dad. In many ways, this book is a continuation of that lesson.

This is a book about sex. It is also a book about marriage. But more fundamentally it is a book about the glory of God. For indeed God created the gift of sex to be enjoyed within the covenant of marriage so that he might magnify his covenant love for his people. God intends marriage and the joys of conjugal life to be a living parable about another marriage—Jesus’s union with his church (Eph. 5:32). Marriage is to be an icon of Christ’s self-sacrificial love for his bride and his bride’s humble submission to him. It is to be a living and breathing depiction of the gospel. Thus when we ask the question, “What is the meaning of sex?” we are asking a question about purpose. The short answer is this: sex exists for the glory of God. Consequently, all sexual morality must be measured by its ability to achieve that purpose.

This book is an attempt to show from the Bible what the meaning of sex is and thereby how we ought to order our sexual lives under God. Having said that, it will be useful to set forth some parameters about what this book is and what it is not.

First, this book is a primer. It is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter. The original conception of this book was that it would be a relatively short work introducing a range of topics related to the Bible and sexual ethics. On the one hand, I have included some material that is not included in other books on sexual ethics—e.g., a chapter on gender roles. On the other hand, there are topics that receive passing attention and in some cases no attention at all—e.g., bioethics and reproductive technologies. In what I have covered, I have tried to interact with some of the more important voices in the literature, but even here the treatment is not comprehensive. My hope is that there

is enough interaction with the sources to give the reader a basic idea of how the issues are being discussed *and* enough principles to guide the reader to make sound ethical judgments about the issues covered in this volume.

Second, this book is biblical. It is not philosophical. By that I mean that my primary orientation is the text of Scripture, not contemporary debates about natural law or secular ethical theories. That is not to say that these other inquiries have no value. It is just to say that this is not that kind of book. I mean to cut to the chase and take readers directly to the norm that is not normed by any other norm—the Bible. So my aim has been to make explicit what the Bible teaches about the meaning of sex. From time to time, there are statistics and other anecdotes of contemporary relevance. But these are brought in so as to see more clearly how the Scripture ought to be applied in the modern day. In the main, however, my purpose is to be as biblical as possible. Throughout this book, you will find extended exegetical discussions and interpretations of Scripture. Indeed, chapter 1 is essentially a commentary on 1 Corinthians 6:12–20. The reason for this is that it appears in a section of Scripture that is dense with material on sexual ethics. In this one passage we see how the apostle Paul uses Scripture to admonish and correct a group of philandering whoremongers in the church at Corinth. His method is a model for what I hope to achieve in this book. Paul was into the application of Scripture to sexual ethics, and that is what I want to be into as well.

Third, this book is for sinners. It is not for people who are perfect. Nor is it written by someone who is perfect. After viewing all the holy commands of God as they relate to our sexual lives, the soft heart is apt to carry away an abiding sense of his own failures and shortcomings. I have felt that many times throughout the writing of this book. I can only imagine the myriad experiences that readers will bring to this book and the despair they might feel in view of the Bible's standard of sexual holiness. So let me make an appeal to you from one broken sinner to another. The same God who issued these impossible commands also sent his Son to live

the perfect life that we could not live, to die as our substitute, to pay for our failures, to be raised for our eternal life, and to enable us to walk with him through the power of the Spirit. You cannot earn these gifts by sexual holiness. You can only receive them by faith alone in Christ alone. Through Christ, he gives us everything we need for life and godliness. We are no longer slaves to our passions, but we are new creations enabled to walk in newness of life. Look away from yourself as you read this book and train your eyes on Jesus—the author and finisher of our faith.

I have already mentioned my parents and the formative influence they bring to this work. But there are others as well who must be mentioned. I have often said that John Piper has been my mentor *in absentia*. For the last fifteen years, no one has been more influential over my thinking and theology. This influence was not because I knew him or because we have ever been personal friends. Nor was it because of his books. The influence has been entirely due to his preaching ministry. I first heard John Piper preach in 1995. The sermon was on a cassette tape that someone had loaned me, and it was a message about the supremacy of God in preaching. I didn't like what I heard. After listening, I wrote Piper off as someone who needed to rely more on the sufficiency of Scripture and less on his emotions. I did not have ears to hear. But that changed in 1998.

In 1998 I attended the second annual Passion conference in Austin, Texas. I didn't come with high expectations. I had no idea that a Copernican revolution was in the offing for me spiritually. The message that the Lord used was Piper's exposition of Romans 3:25–26. Piper's exposition of the cross of Jesus Christ in these two verses made my heart soar in worship. I was gripped by the notion that Christ died not just for me but for God. The “basic riddle of the universe” had nothing to do with my rights but with God's rights. It was this exposition of the cross that gave me ears to hear that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

That theocentric perspective shaped my thinking through years of listening to Piper's Bible-saturated messages. I cannot begin to

calculate how many hundreds of messages I have listened to since then. Yet over time, I began to see that God's glory is not something that exists elusively in the untouchable ether. God aims to manifest his glory in the gritty details of life—and that includes our sexual lives, a topic to which Piper repeatedly returned. There were messages on sexual purity, a series on marriage, sermons about homosexuality and so-called gay marriage, strategies for fighting sexual sin, exhortations against abortion, teaching on biblical manhood and womanhood, and on and on. In those years, God was giving shape to a sexual ethic rooted in the ideal of covenant marriage and oriented toward the display of God's glory. I am not exaggerating when I say that the thesis of this book has been shaped over the last fifteen years by a man I hardly know—my mentor *in absentia*.

In more recent years, another significant influence has entered the picture in the person of R. Albert Mohler Jr. I am grateful to have benefitted from his writings over the years, but I am especially grateful for the three years of weekly interaction that I had with him when I served on his cabinet as dean of Boyce College. In those years he helped me perhaps more than anyone else to understand the interface between Christian sexual ethics and the larger debate in our culture about what makes for the common good. I have never known anyone as learned and well read as he is, nor anyone with a keen sense of where the culture is going and how Christians ought to be speaking to it. He is a man of Issachar who understands the times and what the people of God ought to do.

I want to thank Russell Moore and the rest of the administration of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for granting me writing leave to work on this book. It was a fruitful time for this project, but it was especially fruitful for my family. We will always be grateful for that year.

Thanks are also in order to friends who read and provided feedback on early drafts of this work: Mitchell Chase, Miguel Echevarria, Joe Carter, Barry Joslin, Jim Hamilton, Tom Schreiner, Andy Naselli, and my mother, Sandra Burk. All of them had a part in knocking off the rough edges. Any rough edges that remain must

be imputed wholly to my own misapprehension and not to their fine editing skills.

And now I have saved the very best for last—my wife, to whom this book is dedicated. The inscription is a tag line that I have included at the end of all the anniversary poems that I have given her over our twelve years of marriage. The annual repetition of this tag has a purpose. The poems change, we change, our bodies change, the size of our family changes, our homes change, our cities change, our close friends change. But one thing does not change between us. She is still lovelier to me than anyone could ever be. I love her now more than I ever have. She is my best friend and my most trusted counselor. I can hardly imagine life without her. I am grateful to God for giving me more than I could ever have asked for in a wife. My earnest hope and prayer is that the hours spent in study for this book on marriage would bear fruit in me to make me a better husband. It will take a lifetime to realize, and that is what I am eager to give for her.

—Denny Burk
January 11, 2013

Introduction

A few years ago I was invited to speak at a youth conference on the topic of gender confusion. At the time, I could hardly think of a more relevant theme. From television shows like *Modern Family* to Lady Gaga's pop anthem "Born This Way," our popular culture has become a reflection of the underlying confusion about what it means to live in this world as male and female. Kids today are awash in a gender-bending popular culture. So I was eager to address these students and to bring the Bible to bear upon an issue that I consider to be one of the touchstone issues of post-Christian America. So there I was in front of about one hundred junior high and high school students, and I delivered to them a message that had grown out of many hours of study and preparation. But nothing I had read before the session prepared me for the question I faced after the session.

At the conclusion of my talk, a youth minister from a small church in the area approached me for advice on how to deal with a perplexing pastoral situation that he was facing in his congregation. A young girl in his youth group had recently decided that she wanted to become a boy. My usual reaction to a pastoral conundrum like this one would be to advise the young girl of what the Bible teaches about how God created us as male and female, how Christians must embrace what God made us to be, and how God has a design for her life as a female. But there was more to this young girl's story than a spontaneous desire to change genders. There was an additional detail that would turn my usual response on its head.

This particular girl had been born with a rare biological condition that made it difficult at birth to determine whether she was a girl or a boy. The condition is known as intersex, and intersexed persons are born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical pattern for female or male. Until relatively recently, the most common medical treatment for intersex has been for doctors to recommend a gender, to encourage the parents to embrace that gender, to reshape the genitals and reproductive organs accordingly through surgery, and to advise parents not to express any ambiguity to the child about the selected gender. The young woman in question had undergone such surgery as an infant but now as a teenager felt that she was not really a girl after all. She felt that her parents had made the wrong choice about what sex she was, and now she was in the midst of an identity crisis. She wanted to become what she felt she was born to be. She wanted to be a boy.

So the youth minister asks me, “What should I say to them? How do I minister to this student and her family?” I confess that I was at a bit of a loss to answer his question—not because I didn’t know what the Bible teaches, but because I didn’t know what intersex was. As I struggled to apply Scripture to a condition I had never even heard of, it occurred to me that at the heart of this minister’s query was a question about sex—not *sex* narrowly conceived as sexual acts, but sex more broadly conceived as gender and sexuality. At the root of his difficulty was a desire to know how the Bible’s normative teaching about manhood and womanhood speaks to this very difficult situation.

A Collision with Reality

How would you have answered this youth minister’s question? Would you have had the biblical and theological wherewithal to speak truth into this morally confounding situation? Do you know what the Bible teaches about gender? About sex? About human sexuality in general? Do you know if the Bible even addresses these

issues at all? Does the existence of intersex throw into question your belief in the Bible's teaching that God created humans in his image as male and female (Gen. 1:27)?

My first conversation about intersex highlighted for me a larger issue—the need for Christians to understand what the Bible teaches and how it applies to the various ethical challenges we face. It occurred to me during that conversation that the only way to answer the question was not only to understand the problem (the child's intersex condition and all the life complications that stemmed from it) but also to understand what the Bible actually says about human sexuality. Sadly, this latter point is one that we can no longer assume. Not only has biblical literacy declined in our day, but so also has the Bible's cultural influence on sexual mores. Whereas there used to be a broad cultural consensus about gender norms and sexual morality, that is no longer the case in the contemporary West. As Christopher Ash has written, "Western societies are witnessing sexual relationships characterized by . . . lower levels of public commitment than before, which are proving more transient than previously, with fewer children, and in which a succession of public sexual partners is increasingly common."¹ We can no longer assume a consensus even among those who name themselves as Christians. From the progressive wing of evangelicalism to the more liberal mainlines, many "Christian" groups have accommodated themselves to the spirit of the age. The result has been a sustained assault on what the Bible teaches about gender and sexuality. This crisis of faith has undermined the faithfulness of many congregations. These churches and their leaders have given up on biblical sexual ethics and have turned elsewhere for guidance.

This larger cultural pressure has influenced many Bible-believing churches as well. Many pastors and teachers simply do not want to push back in a countercultural sort of way but are content to remain silent about the Bible's teaching about these

¹Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 43.

flashpoints in the larger culture war. Meanwhile, their congregations are floundering in misunderstanding and false teaching about human sexuality. Many Christians have little training in what it means to be created in the image of God as male and female. It has rightly been said that where there is a mist in the pulpit, there is a fog in the pew. In the absence of clear, biblical teaching on gender and sexuality, people tend to get folded in to the Bible-ignoring *zeitgeist*. Unfortunately, that is where too many evangelical Christians have drifted.

What Is the Purpose of Sex?

The purpose of this book is to answer the underlying question put to me by that youth minister: *What is the meaning of sex?* But we cannot answer this question by coming to it in the usual way. Oftentimes when we want to explain something, we look to find out what caused it. But when it comes to ultimate meaning, we do not find answers in *causes* but in *purposes*.² If I want to understand a hammer, it is not enough to know its cause (i.e., where the hammer came from, the factory in which it was manufactured, who designed it, etc.). To understand a hammer, I have to know for what *purpose* it was created. A hammer's created purpose is to drive nails. I can know everything about where a hammer came from, who made it and designed it, the truck that shipped it to the store, etc. Yet if I do not know for what *purpose* it was made, I have entirely missed the point. I do not necessarily need to know anything about the hammer's origin (what caused it) in order to have a full appreciation for its purpose. It is the hammer's *purpose* that determines ultimate meaning, not the *cause*.³ Similarly, I might know everything there is to know about theories of human origins, about human reproduction, and about the biological and

²John Piper, "Why Was This Child Born Blind?," sermon preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church, May 21, 2011, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/why-was-this-child-born-blind>.

³No analogy is perfect, and I do not wish to imply that cause is unimportant. Indeed, it is often the case that the cause or genesis of a thing reveals the purpose of that thing. As we shall see, gender and sexuality are a case in point. The biblical paradigm for sex and gender is set in Genesis 1–2.

genetic factors that determine human sexuality. But if I do not understand the *purpose* for which human sexuality was made, then I do not understand it. Nor am I prepared to give a proper ethical evaluation of its use.

Of course in the Christian worldview, the purpose of human sexuality is inexorably bound up with its origin. God's purpose for sex is revealed in the account of God's initial creation of human beings as male and female (Genesis 1–2). That account and subsequent scriptural reflection on it suggest a very clear purpose for human sexuality. A book on sexual ethics, therefore, will stand or fall on its ability to describe that purpose as it is found in Scripture. Many books on sexual ethics—including Christian ones—founder on just this point. As Andreas Köstenberger has noted, “There is a relative dearth of conscious Christian reflection on the deeper meaning of and purpose for sex.”⁴ To be sure, some Christian books do describe the purpose(s) of sex, but too often they do not go far enough. They do not give an adequate account of the *ultimate* purpose of sex as the Bible describes it. Even though they may suggest some purposes for sex, there is a failure to distinguish ultimate ends from subordinate ends.⁵

What is the difference between ultimate ends and subordinate ends? Why is the distinction important? I might point to an automobile and say, “That car was made for someone to sit in.” Since there are doors on each side of the car and seats inside, no one could deny that one of the purposes of a car is for people to get inside and sit down. But it would be inadequate if we stopped there in describing the purpose of a car. The ultimate purpose of a car is to transport people and objects from one place to another. Sitting down in a car is a subordinate end. Transportation

⁴Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 79.

⁵I am taking this distinction from Jonathan Edwards [1749], *Ethical Writings* (WJE Online, vol. 8), edited by Paul Ramsey, p. 405: “A subordinate end is something that an agent seeks and aims at in what he does; but yet does not seek it, or regard it at all upon its own account, but wholly on the account of a further end, or in order to some other thing which it is considered as a means of. . . . An ultimate end is that which the agent seeks in what he does for its own sake; that he has respect to, as what he loves, values and takes pleasure in on its own account, and not merely as a means of a further end.” The Yale edition of Edwards's work is available at <http://edwards.yale.edu>.

is the ultimate end. Sitting down in the car is one of the means by which transportation ultimately comes about. Unless we account for the ultimate end of the automobile, we have not really understood the purpose of the car. Describing subordinate ends alone is insufficient.

This distinction between ultimate ends and subordinate ends is critical when thinking about sexual ethics. Sexual ethicists make a mistake when they focus attention only on subordinate ends rather than on the ultimate end. They may rightly speak of the purpose(s) of sex while giving short shrift to the ultimate purpose of sex. Dennis Hollinger's excellent book *The Meaning of Sex* focuses on the ethics of physical intimacy, and he argues rightly that understanding the purpose of sex is essential to developing a biblical sexual ethic. He writes,

We must probe the ends or purposes of the gift of physical intimacy. Understanding these ends or purposes enables us to capture God's intentions from creation. But such understanding is also essential to guard against the abuses and unethical practices that tempt us in a fallen, sex-crazed world.⁶

Hollinger then identifies "four main purposes" for sex: consummation of marriage, procreation, love, and pleasure. He then argues that the moral legitimacy of any sexual act must be tested against the ability of that act to achieve those purposes.⁷

Hollinger's argument is good so far as it goes, but should we not take it further? The four purposes that he identifies are not ultimate ends but subordinate ends. One can find support in Scripture for all four of these "purposes," but the framework can seem a little bit arbitrary and difficult to apply if they are not properly connected to the ultimate purpose of sex.⁸ Hollinger does seek

⁶Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 95.

⁷Ibid.

⁸To be fair to Hollinger, it is not as if Hollinger has no concern about "ultimate purposes." Clearly he does (ibid., 89–91). In my view, however, he could strengthen his case if he could connect an ultimate purpose to his fourfold framework.

to ground his four purposes in the larger narrative of Scripture,⁹ but what if the Scripture itself indicates a larger motif that would integrate these four purposes?

The Scripture does in fact give us an all-encompassing motif, and we can hardly make any sense out of the Bible's sexual ethic unless we account for it.¹⁰ James Hamilton has recently produced what I believe to be the best biblical and exegetical account of this all-encompassing motif. In his book *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*, Hamilton argues that the glory of God is the central theme of biblical theology.¹¹ He argues that the metanarrative of Scripture can be summed up in four biblical themes: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.¹² God *created* the world and everything in it to be holy and good as he himself is holy and good. But Adam's *fall* plunged the world and everything in it into judgment and death. God enacts a plan of *redemption* to rescue his people. This plan begins with the promise to crush the head of the Serpent in Genesis 3:15, and it reaches its fulfillment in the cross and resurrection of Christ. God will one day *restore* the world by making a new heaven and a new earth and by resurrecting his people to eternal life. Hamilton argues that "the center of biblical theology is the theme that organizes this metanarrative" and that it is "the theme out of which all others flow."¹³ God manifests his glory through creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. All of these themes and every other subordinate theme that one might identify in Scripture find their unity and purpose in the glory of God.

So what is that purpose of sex? If we clear away all the subordinate purposes, we find that the ultimate purpose of sex is the

⁹Ibid., 95: "The ethics of any sexual act is then tested against the ability to encompass these four ends, or at least to be in the context of these ends. The full yet mysterious meaning of sex is found in these four purposes, set in the context of the larger biblical worldview."

¹⁰Ash, *Marriage*, 105: "Purpose is also a necessary theological undergirding to the interpretation of the Bible as a whole in its teaching about sexual ethics."

¹¹We might define the glory of God as *all of who God is put on display*. Hamilton says it this way: "The glory of God is the weight of the majestic goodness of who God is, and the resulting name, or reputation, that he gains from his revelation of himself as Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer, perfect in justice and mercy, loving-kindness and truth." James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 56.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

glory of God. Sex, gender, marriage, manhood, womanhood—all of it—exist ultimately for the glory of God. The glory of God as the ultimate purpose of sex is not merely a theological deduction. It is the explicit teaching of Scripture. In the next chapter I will show from 1 Corinthians 6 how Paul teaches that the glory of God is the ultimate purpose for sex. Before moving into that discussion, we need to say a word about ethical theories and subordinate purposes.

Ethical Theories and Biblical Ethics

In what I have argued so far, I have made a host of assumptions about the proper way to go about establishing a normative sexual ethic. But we would do well to acknowledge that not all ethical theories share the assumptions that form the basis for this work. Certain basic questions underlie every attempt to establish a framework for ethical conduct: What makes my actions good or bad? What are the standards we should use for determining moral judgments? Where do I get these standards?¹⁴ Christians are not the only ones who have puzzled over these questions for answers. In the history of human thought, these questions have been answered differently by different people in different times and circumstances. In broad terms, there have been four main approaches to answering these questions: teleological ethics, consequentialist ethics, deontological ethics, and character/virtue ethics.

Teleological Ethics

Teleological ethics takes its name from the Greek term *telos*, which means “end” or “goal.” Teleological theories tend to share the principle that human actions should be judged in light of their end or goal.¹⁵ Natural-law theory is a prominent species¹⁶ of teleology

¹⁴ Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 23.

¹⁵ C. A. Brown, “Teleology,” in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 835.

¹⁶ Although there are a variety of teleological theories, they divide broadly into two groups: consequentialist ethics and natural law theory. See Scott Paeth, “Teleological Theories of Ethics,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 766. For the

that is “concerned with the natural goal or end of human action rather than with particular consequences.”¹⁷ This theory relies on the observation that God created the world and everything in it with a purpose. Actions must be evaluated on the basis of their conformity to God’s purpose for his creation. If God’s glory is the ultimate purpose for creation (as I have argued above), then God has ordered creation so that its “natural” use promotes his glory. And God’s ultimate purpose—his glory—is only realized when creatures fulfill the subordinate purposes for which they were made. Oliver O’Donovan describes a teleological approach in this way:

The order of things that God has made is *there*. It is objective, and mankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is concerned with man’s life in accordance with this order. . . . Thus Christian moral judgments in principle address every man.¹⁸

As will be discussed below, teleology has special relevance for sexual ethics as so much of the biblical material appears to be based on the “natural” ends of human sexuality as they were given by God in creation (e.g., Rom. 1:26–27; cf. Gen. 2:24).¹⁹

Consequentialist Ethics

Consequentialist ethics bases moral judgments on the consequences that accrue from human actions.²⁰ This way of determining ethical behavior does not see any action as inherently good or evil. The consequences of an action determine which acts are good and which acts are evil.²¹ Consequentialist theories define

purposes of this book, I will associate teleology with natural law ethics and will keep consequentialist ethics in its own category.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 767.

¹⁸ Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 17.

¹⁹ Ash, *Marriage*, 105: “The order the Creator has placed in creation is—at least in part—teleological order, order that serves a purpose. We seek therefore . . . to elucidate the purpose of the Creator in instituting marriage as a part of the good created order.”

²⁰ Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 24.

²¹ John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 34.

moral good by whatever action produces the greatest amount of nonmoral good. The definition of what that nonmoral good may be differs from theory to theory. In some theories the nonmoral good is pleasure. In others it is power, knowledge, or self-realization.²² There are two primary streams of consequentialist approaches—one that focuses on producing the greatest good for oneself (ethical egoism) and another that emphasizes producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people (utilitarianism). Epicurus, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Ellis have been associated with the former, while Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Peter Singer have been associated with the latter.²³

There are a number of items we could point to that make it difficult to reconcile consequentialist approaches with a biblical worldview. First, consequentialist approaches elevate nonmoral goods above Scripture as the standard for evaluating ethics. Second, human nature limits our ability to calculate in every case what the consequences of an action might be. Third, there is no consensus on how to define the nonmoral good. Without some external arbiter to determine the matter, consequentialist approaches might change from person to person or situation to situation. Fourth, there is no intrinsic value in any action according to the consequentialist approach. In this way, a purely consequentialist approach is simply out of step with the Bible. As Richard Hays has it, “How strikingly indifferent is the New Testament . . . to consequentialist ethical reasoning. The New Testament teaches us to approach ethical issues not by asking ‘What will happen if I do x?’ but rather by asking ‘What is the will of God?’”²⁴

Deontological Ethics

Deontological ethics says that human actions are right or wrong to the extent that they are the fulfillment of duty.²⁵ Duty is often

²² *Ibid.*, 34.

²³ Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 25–29.

²⁴ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 455.

²⁵ M. T. Nelson, “Deontology,” in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 297.

expressed in the form of principles or rules. Deontology takes its name from the Greek word *deon*, which means “that which is binding or obligatory.”²⁶ This approach denies that the morality of an action can be measured in any way by the results of the action. Rather, a deontological approach holds that “there are inherent goods, rights, wrongs, and duties in life, regardless of what the consequences might be.”²⁷ Immanuel Kant has given the classical formulation of the deontological approach by saying,

The moral worth of an action then does not lie in the effect which is expected of it, and consequently in no principle of an action which must borrow its motive from the expected effect. . . . Of what sort can this law possibly be, the conception of which, even without regard for the effect expected from it, must determine the will, in order that the latter may without qualification be called purely and simply good? . . . I am never to act otherwise than so that I could at the same time will my maxim should become a universal law.²⁸

Because deontologists hold that the morality of an action is known through rules or principles, this approach is sometimes called “principle ethics.”²⁹ Deontological theories differ from one another in where they locate the basis for establishing the principles. The principle might be derived from reason, tradition, universal human experience, or divine revelation.³⁰

Character Ethics

Character ethics (a.k.a., virtue ethics) takes its name from the belief that moral actions spring from the character of the person per-

²⁶John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 16. See also H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1996), s.v. δέον: “that which is binding, needful, right.”

²⁷Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 30.

²⁸Immanuel Kant, *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics*, trans. Otto Manthey-Zorn (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938), 16–17. Kant also argued that “duty” must be the basis of an action for it to be considered morally good. To act out of one’s self-interest ruins the morality of the action. In Kant’s words, “If now, when there is no inclination to urge him to it, he nevertheless rouses himself from this deadly indifference and performs the act without any inclination, solely out of duty, then the action for the very first time has genuine moral value” (ibid.).

²⁹Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 29–30.

³⁰Ibid., 30.

forming the action. The focus in character ethics is not to develop a long list of rules or to predict what the consequence of an action will be. Those who follow character ethics are more interested in forming moral character than moral norms. Character ethicists observe that laws and rules do very little to curb immoral behavior. Thus a focus on external standards can be an ineffective way to produce moral living.³¹ Rather, they argue, what is needed is the moral formation of the individual who will be making moral choices. Moral acts can only come from upright character. Stanley Hauerwas says it this way:

In matters of significance even involving the “hardest choices” there was no “decision” to be made. Rather, the decision makes itself if we know who we are and what is required of us. . . . I expect many of our decisions are . . . but confirmation of what we have become without realizing it.³²

Character ethicists draw from the ethical theories of Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. Its newfound popularity among theologians and philosophers, however, traces back to thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas.

While there are some helpful emphases in character ethics, its aversion to rules and principles can set this approach at odds with Christian revelation. In the Bible, moral character and moral norms are not at odds. Indeed they complement each other. The Bible encourages us to have moral character as the basis for all of our moral actions (e.g., 2 Pet. 1:5–9). That is why one of Jesus’s chief critiques of the religious leaders of his day was that they were “whitewashed tombs.” On the outside they looked good, but on the inside there was only death. They performed moral actions, but they acted from hearts that were dead to the kingdom of God.

³¹Robert L. Brawley, ed., *Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2007), vii: “Legislation is hardly alone in reflecting a side of ethics that can only be labeled ‘failure.’ The same is true for some of our other preferred approaches to ethics: role models, principles, and rationality. They all may seduce us into a false optimism that these sources of morality make us adequate for the task.”

³²Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 129–30.

Jesus and the authors of Scripture require inner transformation of the individual. But that transformation is effected in part by the Christian's interface with the principles and rules of Scripture. In character ethics, however, the question of what kind of people we ought to be takes precedence over the question of what we are to do.³³ To the extent that character ethics deemphasizes moral laws and rules, to that extent character ethics is out of step with Scripture.³⁴ As an ethical theory, character ethics often falls short of telling us what we need to know about the morality of a given act.³⁵ A sounder approach is to view character formation as the necessary condition for receiving and applying the ethical content of Scripture—which includes moral norms and rules.³⁶

A Blended Approach

In this book, I am favoring a blended approach that gives a privileged place to teleology within the framework of divine revelation. Scripture is plainly concerned with the formation of moral character as the basis for moral choices (as in character ethics). Scripture is also concerned with rules and divine commands (as in deontology). But Scripture also focuses on the glory of God as the purpose of all things (as in teleology). These three theories do not contradict one another but rather complement one another.

Consider, for instance, the commands that we find scattered throughout the pages of Scripture. From the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1–17 to Jesus's two love commands in Matthew 22:36–40, God's commands are not ends in themselves. To be

³³Nikki Coffey Tousley and Brad J. Kallenberg, "Virtue Ethics," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 814.

³⁴I am arguing that character ethics can be out of step with the rules and principles that derive from Scripture. David W. Haddorff notes that this is a general weakness of character ethics that can and ought to be corrected. David W. Haddorff, "Can Character Ethics Have Moral Rules and Principles? Christian Doctrine and Comprehensive Moral Theory," *Horizons* 23, no. 1 (1996): 50.

³⁵Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 38: "Virtue ethics focus more on the moral character of the *agent* than on the moral nature of the act."

³⁶John R. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008). Frame argues that "ethical knowledge" is the "product of sanctification" (*ibid.*, 350). He writes, "It is wrong to suppose that we must get all the answers to ethical questions before we engage in spiritual warfare, as if the intellect were in every respect prior to life. Rather, there may well be some ethical questions . . . that we will not be able to answer (or even fully appreciate) until we have been in spiritual combat with the forces of darkness" (*ibid.*, 359).

sure, these laws are deontological in that they expose principles for ethical conduct. But it cannot be denied that the laws also serve a larger purpose. For example, in Leviticus 10 God strikes two priests dead for breaking his law. God explains his judgment, saying, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be glorified” (Lev. 10:3 AT). The breaking of the command constituted a failure to “glorify” God before his people. Clearly, the ultimate end of the command was the glory of God. But God made known *how* they were to glorify him by means of divine command.³⁷ So teleology is regulated by deontology. We learn *how* to glorify God by doing what he commands in Scripture.

In some ways, this approach resembles that of John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg’s in *Ethics for a Brave New World*. They argue for a “modified form of divine command theory”—a deontological model that relies on Scripture to determine ethical principles:

Because we take our norms from Scripture and hold that Scripture is God’s revealed Word, the source of our norms is revelation, not reason. However, given our view that norms reflect God’s character and that there are inherently right and wrong acts, we also hold that by reflecting on God’s attributes and the world he made, reason can see the reasonableness of what God has prescribed. For the same reasons, we think reason on its own can reach some perception of what should and should not be done. At this point, we find some kinship with natural law theories.³⁸

Even though the Feinbergs deem their model to be deontological, notice the place they give to reason. Scripture is the absolute norm, but reason can also deduce moral principles based upon God’s ordering of his universe. That is why they have sympathy for “natural law” theories, and that is what makes their own brand of

³⁷In the case of Nadab and Abihu, they had disregarded the prohibition that God gave Moses in Exodus 30:9: “You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar, or burnt offering or meal offering; and you shall not pour out a drink offering on it.”

³⁸Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 37.

deontology very friendly to the kind of teleology that I am arguing for in this book.

We are not pursuing a teleological method that makes reason the judge of Scripture. We are pursuing a teleological method that is defined and guided at every turn by the ethical content of Scripture. Our method also assumes that God's expressed purposes for his creation may help us to "connect the dots" on thorny ethical questions that may not be directly addressed in Scripture. A husband and a wife, for example, may be wondering what sexual activities they may engage in within the context of their marriage. Are there ethical limits? Certainly, the Scripture defines a number of limits: no adultery, no brutality, and no rape (just to name a few). But what about activities that may not be explicitly mentioned in Scripture? One popular book recently attempted to give an ethical evaluation of such activities including sodomy, masturbation, role-playing, birth control, and cosmetic surgery (among other things).³⁹ The authors based their ethical evaluation of each act upon whether the Bible has an explicit prohibition concerning that act.⁴⁰ If there was no explicit prohibition, then the authors deemed the act "lawful" within marriage according to Scripture. What they never asked, however, is the teleological question: *Does this act fulfill God's purposes for the sexual union? Does this act fulfill God's ultimate purpose for marriage and sexuality—the glory of God?* This is where teleology can help us. The Scripture provides us not only with explicit ethical norms (à la "divine command" deontology) but also with the purposes for human sexuality (à la teleology). We must use the commands as well as the purposes in making ethical judgments concerning human sexuality.

John Frame's triperspectivalism is very similar to the approach that I am arguing for here. He argues that "ethical judgment in-

³⁹ Mark Driscoll and Grace Driscoll, *Real Marriage: The Truth about Sex, Friendship, and Life Together* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 177–203.

⁴⁰ In their book *Real Marriage*, the Driscolls construct a taxonomy for evaluating the ethics of marital sex. The first question is: "Is it lawful? With this question we seek to ascertain whether or not something is in violation of the laws of government in the culture or the laws of God in Scripture" (ibid., 178). Because certain sexual activities are not explicitly prohibited by Scripture, they declare sodomy, masturbation, role-playing, and cosmetic surgery to be "lawful."

volves the application of a *norm* to a *situation* by a *person*.⁴¹ Those three factors comprise three perspectives that must inform our approach to ethics. They also roughly coincide with the three different approaches to ethics that we have considered thus far. The situational perspective is the teleological perspective. It focuses on “God’s actions in creation and providence” and compels us to ask what is the best means to accomplish God’s purposes.⁴² The normative perspective is the deontological perspective in which we are chiefly concerned with what the Scripture defines as our duty or obligation.⁴³ The existential perspective is the perspective of character ethics, and it focuses on the question, “How must I change if I am to do God’s will?”⁴⁴ These three perspectives are interrelated, and all three must have a say in the ethical judgments that we make. God’s glory is the purpose, Scripture is the norm, and sanctification is the virtue.

The Purpose(s) of Sex

So what is the purpose of sex? As I have already indicated, the *ultimate* purpose is the glory of God. But we must also understand that there are *subordinate* purposes as well. God’s glory is not achieved simply by contemplation of the divine attributes. God defines *the means by which* our sexuality will glorify him, and he spells out the matter in Scripture and in natural revelation. We must pay careful attention to both if we are to discern the subordinate purposes of our sexuality. I have already mentioned Dennis Hollinger’s important work defining four different purposes for sex, and I intend to adopt his approach in this book as the four subordinate purposes of sex. The four purposes are (1) the consummation of marriage, (2) procreation, (3) expression of love, and (4) pleasure.⁴⁵ These four purposes comprise the means by which we glorify God with our sexuality.

⁴¹ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 33; emphasis original.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁵ Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 95.

Consummation of Marriage

The first purpose of sex is the consummation of marriage. The Scripture defines marriage as the covenanted heterosexual union of one man and one woman. Marriage is initiated by public declaration of an exclusive commitment and is ratified by the one-flesh union of sex. Without sexual union, there can be no marriage. Scripture teaches us that this has been the norm ever since Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. After God formed the woman from the man's side and gave her to the man, the Bible says, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24 AT). So the first marriage began by leaving one family to start a new one and by the initiation of the one-flesh union. Sex completes the initiation of the marriage covenant, and "every sexual act after the initial consummation is an ongoing affirmation of the husband and wife's unique union."⁴⁶ It tends toward the glory of God in that it effects a union that is designed to be an image of Christ's marriage to his bride, the church (Eph. 5:32).⁴⁷

Procreation

The second purpose of sex is procreation. Since the Bible permits sexual activity only within the covenant of marriage, it is no surprise that procreation is a purpose of both the conjugal act and the institution itself.⁴⁸ From the very beginning, God made his intention clear about his creative purposes for sex. At the original creation of the first man and woman, God commanded them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:26, 28). God makes Adam and Eve his vice-regents over the primeval world. They image forth God by "ruling over" every aspect of the world as God had given it to them. Their ability to "subdue" the earth is tied directly to their ability to

⁴⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁷ See subsequent chapter on "Glorifying God with Your Marriage."

⁴⁸ Ash, *Marriage*, 107.

“fill it” with their offspring. Thus the procreation of man becomes a key part in God’s intention to rule and reign over the world through his image bearers. Commenting on Genesis 1:27, Kenneth Matthews writes, “Human procreation is not intended merely as a mechanism for replication or the expression of human passion but is instrumental in experiencing covenant blessing.”⁴⁹ Thus the propagation of the race is supposed to issue forth in the propagation of God’s rule on earth. It is not just Adam and Eve who received this charge. God also gives the same charge to the patriarchs, which shows that the command to procreate plays a unique role in God’s redemptive purposes for the world.⁵⁰ Procreation tends toward the glory of God as it is a means by which the glory of God will cover the earth through his image-bearing vice-regents.

Expression of Love

The third purpose of sex is love—in particular, the ongoing expression of marital love. The apostle Paul compares the “one flesh” union of husband and wife to the relationship of Christ and his church (Eph. 5:31–32). The love between a husband and wife, therefore, is not merely a state of mind but is expressed in part through the conjugal act. Human beings are not souls trapped in a husk. They are whole persons consisting in a unity of body and soul. Spouses cannot enter into a comprehensive union⁵¹ nor can they express their love fully apart from the union of bodies. Just as sex consummates marriage, so also it serves as the ongoing affirmation of the husband and wife’s unique love for one another. Perhaps no biblical book illustrates this truth more vividly than the Song of Solomon. No less than three times, the author uses the word *love* (אהבה) as a figure of speech for sexual union.⁵²

⁴⁹ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1a, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996), 174.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 90. The mandate to procreate appears to the patriarchs in Gen. 8:17; 9:1, 7; 17:6; 22:17; 26:22, 24; 28:3–4; 35:11; 48:4, 16; 47:27; Ex. 1:7, 12.

⁵¹ Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson, “What Is Marriage?,” *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 34 (2010): 253.

⁵² Brian P. Gault argues that the two most likely interpretations of “rousing love” say that the phrase is either a reference to anticipated coitus or coitus in progress. He opts for the latter. In either case, “love” appears as a metonymy for sexual relations. See Brian P. Gault, “An Admoni-

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
 That you will not arouse or awaken my *love*
 Until she pleases. (Song 2:7)

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
 That you will not arouse or awaken my *love*
 Until she pleases. (Song 3:5)

I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 Do not arouse or awaken my *love*
 Until she pleases. (Song 8:4)

Elsewhere the Song of Solomon speaks of the emotional love that exists between the lover and the beloved (Song 2:4; 7:7; 8:6–7). But in these three texts, it is not merely the emotion that is in view but the marital act. The sexual union is so closely associated with the emotion that the author uses the word *love* to refer to the deed itself. In this way, the Song teaches sex as a unique, bodily expression of love. How does the expression of love tend toward the glory of God? The apostle Paul says that this passionate union of spouses serves as a living metaphor of the loving union that Christ has with his church: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32).

Pleasure

The fourth purpose of sex is pleasure. Pleasure serves as a powerful inducement to achieve the other purposes of sex: consummation, procreation, and expression of love. Because sinners often pursue sex for pleasure alone—quite apart from the other ends that God has ordained—some have mistakenly concluded that pleasure itself is a carnal, ungodly concern. But this is not what the Bible

tion against ‘Rousing Love’: The Meaning of the Enigmatic Refrain in Song of Songs,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, no. 2 (2010): 161–84. See also Brian P. Gault, “A ‘Do Not Disturb’ Sign? Reexamining the Adjuration Refrain in Song of Songs,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 1 (2011): 93–104.

teaches. The Scripture is clear that the pleasure of sex is a good gift from God. As Hollinger has argued,

Despite the fact that Christians rightly reject hedonism, the pleasure-seeking principle, as the governing framework of their lives, there is a kind of Christian hedonism. The very fact that the Psalmist [16:11] can speak of eternal pleasures at God's right hand shows that he is a God of pleasure.⁵³

Indeed, biblically speaking, God is not averse to pleasure. It is true that pleasure can become an idol when it is treated as an end within itself (Prov. 21:17; 1 Tim. 5:6). But when the pleasure of sex is enjoyed in keeping with God's comprehensive purposes, pleasure glorifies God. That is why the apostle Paul commands the Corinthians to "glorify God" with the use of the body for sex (1 Cor. 6:20). Sexual pleasure in the service of God is doxological. But where else is this taught in the Bible? Christopher Ash argues that the goodness of sexual pleasure in marriage is the assumption of all the relevant texts. He writes,

Sexual desire and delight is part of the natural backdrop to all the biblical texts. It is taken for granted and alluded to as a natural part of life. It is important to be clear that this is understood and affirmed throughout Scripture, as a brief survey of examples will show.⁵⁴

Consider, for instance, the delight of the bridegroom over his bride in Isaiah 62:5: "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." Consider also the joyful anticipation of marital pleasure in Psalm 45:11: "The King will desire your beauty." Ecclesiastes 9:9 likewise says, "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love" (AT). Proverbs 5:18–19 commands the reader to "rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her

⁵³ Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 111.

⁵⁴ Ash, *Marriage*, 185.

love.” Again, the Song of Solomon gives us some of the most vivid descriptions of the pleasures of marital love:

Awake, O north wind,
And come, wind of the south;
Make my garden breathe out fragrance,
Let its spices be wafted abroad.
May my beloved come into his garden
And eat its choice fruits! (Song 4:16)

The backdrop for all of these statements (and countless others) is the physical delight of the sexual union.⁵⁵ This “taken-for-grantedness” of the delight of the marriage bed has a larger theological purpose in the Bible. As Christopher Ash has observed, “Sexual attraction, desire and delight were as well known and accepted then as now. . . . The whole metaphorical structure of the Lord’s marriage to his people would have been evacuated of meaning were this not so.”⁵⁶

Taken together, these four purposes are subordinate to the ultimate end of glorifying God. The four subordinate ends are not discreet goods but are inseparably related to one another in the covenant of marriage, which itself exists for the glory of God. The morality of any given action, therefore, must be measured by its conformity to these ends.

The Way Forward

The rest of this book will flesh out the thesis that the ultimate purpose of human sexuality is the glory of God and that the ultimate ethic is to glorify God with our sexuality. Chapter 1, “Glorify God with Your Body,” consists of an exposition of 1 Corinthians 6:12–20

⁵⁵Christopher Ash lists most of these texts and others in speaking about sexual pleasure in marriage (*ibid.*, 186).

⁵⁶*Ibid.* See also John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 56: “Sex desire is not wrong and Jesus does not say so. To cast any aspersion on sex desire is to impugn the integrity of the Creator and of his creation. Furthermore, it is not wrong to desire to satisfy sex desire and impulse in the way God has ordained. Indeed, sex desire is one of the considerations which induce men and women to marry. The Scripture fully recognizes the propriety of that motive and commends marriage as the honourable and necessary outlet for sex impulse.”

in which the central command is for believers to glorify God with their bodies. Chapter 2, “Glorify God with Your Hermeneutic,” seeks to discredit a hermeneutical approach that pits Paul against Jesus in the interpretation of Scripture. Chapter 3, “Glorify God with Your Marriage,” defines the covenant of marriage and argues that the covenanted heterosexual union of two persons is the only context in which it is possible to glorify God with sex. Chapter 4, “Glorify God with Your Conjugal Union,” explores the nature and limits of the sexual bond between married couples as well as the issue of divorce. Chapter 5, “Glorify God with Your Family Planning,” examines the moral issues at stake with modern birth control methods while focusing special attention on the Pill. Chapter 6, “Glorify God with Your Gender,” expounds a biblical view of manhood and womanhood in light of a number of contemporary challenges to it. Chapter 7, “Glorify God with Your Sexuality,” takes on the challenge of homosexuality. This chapter highlights the Bible’s consistent teaching on the moral status of same-sex relationships and argues that Christians need to learn how to minister more effectively to homosexuals. Chapter 8, “Glorify God with Your Singleness,” examines the teachings of Jesus and Paul and singles and urges sexual purity for singles. The concluding chapter summarizes some of the broad conclusions of the book and contrasts them with a secular worldview concerning sexuality.

Christian faithfulness in our generation requires that we be prepared to apply the Word of God to the gritty issues of life. It demands that we be prepared to speak with clarity and conviction to ethical challenges like the one faced by the young minister at the beginning of this chapter. This book is an effort to set forth the vision of sexual wholeness that is found in the Bible. And that vision finds its coherence and impetus in the glory of God as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures. He has called us to glorify him with every aspect of our being. This book is aimed to help you understand how to do just that with respect to gender, sex, and marriage.