

BIBLICAL SEXUAL ETHICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: A Necessary Course of Instruction *John M. Holmes*¹

INTRODUCTION

The Sexual Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s accelerated a shift in Western attitudes and public policy concerning gender identity, gender expression, and sexual freedom. Three main ideas dominated its public discourse: contraception's ability to separate sex from childbearing, easy divorce separating sex and childbearing from marriage, and the call to eliminate all distinctions between men and women except those differences an individual embraces.² National discourse on sex continues to impact American society's moral and social fabric today, influencing attitudes towards sexual freedom and views on the biological family.³ The U.S. Census in 2020 showed that

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² Jennifer R. Morse, *The Sexual State: How Elite Ideologies Are Destroying Lives and Why the Church Was Right All Along*, (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2018), chap. 2. For agreement on the sexual revolution and western attitudes, see Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 22–34.

³ Bailey, Beth. "Prescribing the Pill: Politics, Culture, and the Sexual Revolution in America's Heartland." *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 4 (July 1, 1997): 827–56. Bailey attempts to document the "multiple sites of power, languages of negotiation, and critical structural changes" in which the birth control debate occurred. As one example of shifts in social acceptance, see Jason Rantz, "School board director to host 9-year-olds for classes on sexual pleasure, gender ID at sex shop," 770 KTTH Radio, July 4, 2022, <https://mynorthwest.com/3539919/rantz-school-board-director-sex-classes-shop-jenn-mason/>. Politically elected Washington state school board director, Jenn Mason, teaches classes directed at 9-to-12 year olds on sexual anatomy for pleasure and safer practices for all kinds of sexual activities. Mason says "there's no such thing as 'real' sex" because it is self-defined.

the number of children living with only their mothers has doubled in the past fifty years and that nearly one-third of U.S. children do not live with two parents, while almost half of all U.S. adults aged 55 to 64 no longer remained married.⁴ Professor of Christian ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Daniel Heimbach, argues that sexual morality is the most crucial moral-spiritual issue facing our time. A cultural shift towards pagan morality, Heimbach says, will eventually lead to complete social collapse.⁵ Christian philosopher and author Francis Schaeffer likewise lamented the legality of abortion, the entertainment industry's promotion of sexual perversion, and the attacks on marriage and family life under the banners of sexual freedom and personal happiness.⁶ Schaeffer urged the church to urgently talk about these issues, fearful of the day when "all morality becomes relative, the law becomes arbitrary, and society moves towards disintegration."⁷ Feminist calls to "bring an end to God" and "castrate Christianity by abolishing [its pillars of] supermale arrogance: the myths of sin and salvation" indicate that opponents of biblical sexuality do not intend to remain silent.⁸ Although the secular world emphasizes sexual fulfillment and identity as "the essence of human happiness" that is justified by science, individual freedoms, and the need to eliminate sexual distinctions to achieve equality, the church is called to teach a different sexual ethic. An examination of Paul's exhortations in 1 Corinthians 3–6 to grow in Christ and guard against impurity by avoiding

⁴ "Families and Households," U.S. Census Bureau, July 1, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/time-series/demo/families-and-households/ch-1.pdf>; See also, "Number of Kids Living Only With Their Mothers Has Doubled in 50 Years," U.S. Census Bureau, July 1, 2022, [https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50years.html#:~:text=The%20majority%20of%20America's%2072.9,with%20mother%20only%20\(21%25\)](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50years.html#:~:text=The%20majority%20of%20America's%2072.9,with%20mother%20only%20(21%25)).

⁵ Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 39. Heimbach says that sexual morality is the pivot point on which America's cultural foundations will erode, leading to teen pregnancy, crime, drugs, murder, poverty, family breakdown, homosexuality, gender role confusion, weakened law, attacks on family life, threats to the sanctity of life and more.

⁶ Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, (Westchester, IL.: Crossway, 1984), 20, 22–23, 101–103, 106–112, 188, 191.

⁷ Carl F. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Westchester, IL.: Crossway, 1988), 15, 19. Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, (Westchester, IL.: Crossway, 1984), 22–23. Francis Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 1970), 15–6, 81.

⁸ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1973), 71–2. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaphysics of Radical Feminism* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1978), xi. Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1979), 90.

spiritual immaturity and the folly of human wisdom demonstrates that churches should instruct biblical sexual ethics by teaching God's design for gender, marriage, sex, and procreation to help Christians respond to the social narratives of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual freedom.⁹

BRIEF BIBLICAL POSITIONS ON FOUR GODLESS NARRATIVES

Divorced from God, no shared absolute standard exists for the atheist to come to an agreement, much less do morally “the right thing.”¹⁰ For such a person, nature holds all authority, although it is “self-originating” and “without purpose.”¹¹ Without God, man-centered desires and individual freedom reign with the scepter of relativism.¹² Either naturalistic altruism or personal happiness motivates the natural man's behavior.¹³

Conversely, God's moral character, as evidenced within Scripture, serves as the universal standard of morality for orthodox Christianity. Unlike the atheist, God's special revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ is a reality for

⁹ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*, (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2020), 222, 261. Trueman observed that “Freud's emphasis on sexual fulfillment as the essence of human happiness also leads to a reconfiguration of human destiny.”

¹⁰ Kerry Walters, *Atheism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 33–36. One rebuttal is that godless objective morality is possible but it is ‘needs based,’ and not absolute. This does not objectively persuade in an absolute sense why we *ought* to show love by providing a starving man food. Walters argues, “In keeping with the naturalistic worldview endorsed by atheists, all that's needed to establish an objective morality is an analysis of the sorts of creatures we are, the kinds of needs we have, and the best ways to meet those needs [...] because what makes a given act morally good or evil is in part determined by context. Once divorced from religion, values can still be objective. But they cease to be absolute.”

¹¹ Christopher Hitchens, *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 476. About American Atheists, “What is Atheism?” *American Atheists*, July 2, 2022, <https://www.atheists.org/activism/resources/about-atheism/>. Their only shared belief is that each person has “a lack of belief in gods.”

¹² Yuriy Nikshych, *So You're an Atheist: Now What?* (New York: Algora, 2015), 54. “There are no tenets in atheism, [...] it is now up to us as individuals to create our own morality, we can [do whatever] we so choose.”

¹³ W.D. Hamilton, “The genetical evolution of social behavior,” *J Theor Biol*, 1964 7(1):17–52. RL Trivers, “The evolution of reciprocal altruism,” *Q Rev Biol*. 1971 46(1):35–57. R. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), chap. 1.

a Christian. Only Jesus flawlessly exhibited a righteous life (Hebrews 2:17–8; 4:15). The nature of man is evil.¹⁴ Therefore, biblically-based sexual ethics views human sin and depravity as the root cause of immorality—not man’s circumstances or ignorance of moral conduct.¹⁵ Among the many different ethical and moral issues debated between Christians and Atheists, four social and sexual narratives dominate public debate today. A brief biblical position follows for each topic.

First, concerning gender identity and expression, two sexes—expressing masculinity and femininity—were intentionally created and purposed by God in Scripture. Professor of Christian ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Alan Branch, says that the “gift of gender is not an accident of evolution or a mere social construction.”¹⁶ The Bible explains in Genesis 1:26–31 that mankind is made both male and female and in the image of God. Linguistically, the Hebrew word *ādām* (אָדָם) can refer to only a man, or it may refer to male and female as “mankind.”¹⁷ *Anarthrous* in verse twenty-six, אָדָם appears in verse twenty-seven as הָאָדָם (with the article), prompting Senior Professor of Old Testament at Trinity College, Gordon Wenham, to suggest how it foreshadows the blessing of fertility to be announced in verse twenty-eight.¹⁸ Also notable is how the first two clauses of verse 1:27 emphasize the divine image in man using a chiasm, while the third clause explicitly specifies that women bear the divine image.¹⁹

Distinguished professor of Old Testament at Southern Baptist Theological

¹⁴ See, Genesis 6:5, 8:21, Ecclesiastes 9:3, Proverbs 28:26, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19, Romans 3:12, Ephesians 4:17–19.

¹⁵ David Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, B&H Studies in Biblical Ethics Series, ed. Daniel Heimbach, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), 2–7, 25. Atheists sometimes favor forms of consequentialism.

¹⁶ Alan Branch, *Affirming Gods Image: Addressing the Transgender Question with Science and Scripture*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 41.

¹⁷ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 14.

¹⁸ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*. Edited by Verlyn D. Verbrugge. Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 67. “Anarthrous” means no article exists, which impacts how a noun, adjective, adverbial participle, or predicate adjective functions within Koine Greek.

¹⁹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary*, (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc., 1987), 32.

Seminary, Kenneth Mathews, says scholars contending for a bisexual man cannot substantiate their claim in light of God's act to create the female in Genesis 2:22 and His earlier commands to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" in chapter one, verse twenty-eight.²⁰ Some scholars argue that Adam and Eve's defiance by eating the fruit contrary to God's direction somehow altered the image of God in man (i.e., Adam's corrupted image).²¹ Mathews claims that despite mankind's mutiny and punishment, from Genesis 5 forward, mankind continues in God's procreative image through sex between man and woman (cf. Genesis 5:3). After the flood, human life and childbearing remain preserved. Humans uniquely procreate and bear God's image within His divine order as male and female.²²

Second, concerning marriage, God designed and instituted marriage in Genesis 2:24. The Hebrew word for "cling, cleave to" (קָבַד) is covenantal language.²³ The New Testament affirms this picture in Matthew 19:3–5 and Ephesians 5:31.²⁴ One man leaves his parents in a lifelong commitment to one woman and consummates it within a "one flesh" heterosexual union via intercourse. The State has no authority to dissolve the union on its terms (Matthew 19:6–9). Sexual relations strengthen marital covenants and also enable the potential for new life.²⁵ Thus any other form of marriage

²⁰ Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26, Vol. 1A, The New American Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 173.

²¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 569.

²² Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26, Vol. 1A*. Mathews notes how the "psalmist recognizes the superiority of human life and its 'glory and honor' in creation. Human life's [glory] rests not in man's ontological features but in his commission as lord over the terrestrial world (Ps 8:5–8 [6–9])." This glory (*kābôd*), says Mathews, is distinguished in the Old Testament as the attribute of the Lord God. "It is bestowed on humans, indicating man's appointment [to dominion] as the Lord's ruling sonship [albeit diminished by sin]."

²³ Gary R. Gromacki, "Why Be Concerned about Same-Sex Marriage?" *Journal of Ministry and Theology Volume* 9, no. 2 (2005): 76–77. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 209. K. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26, The New American Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 223.

²⁴ Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 7, Romans 7:1–4, Ephesians 5:22–33, Colossians 3:18–19, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:6; 2:4–5, 1 Peter 3:1–7. The marriage union always occurs between a husband and wife in the New Testament.

²⁵ Biblical marriage portrays a Gospel picture: in a make-it-and-never-break-it covenant, husband and bride partake in an exclusive conjugal union that creates the possibility for new life. Consider, J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (Dallas, TX: Spence, 2003),

(homosexual) is not valid, and any conjugal act outside this bond is deemed sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9, 18–20, 7:1–40, Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 5:27, 32).

Although some argue that marriage is a social construct and that monogamous homosexual relationships constitute a valid union, orthodox Christianity has historically adhered to Scriptural authority when contesting this notion.²⁶ Efforts to redefine marriage either elevate human self-interests above Scripture, deny God, or embrace a severe misunderstanding. The Bible's design for families remains the best way to raise healthy and non-delinquent children.²⁷

Third, concerning procreation and abortion, all life is God-created and valued. Contrary to the widespread public narrative that abortion is a fixed “human right,” children represent a heritage and blessing of the LORD and not a burden (1 Samuel 2:6, Psalm 127:3). Genesis 1–2 does not say “be fruitful and multiple only when I find a six-figure salary,” or “stop at two.” Birth control enables women to overcome the former constraints of natural conception and childbearing. However, the command of Jesus is to continually seek “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” first and not selfish gain (contra feminist opinion that abortion enables sexual freedom and economic equality between genders).²⁸ Further, the sixth commandment prohibits murder, and abortion usurps a prerogative belonging only to God—death (Exodus 20:13). Some argue that Scripture excuses abortion before a child is fully developed. They wrongly ignore that God's Word says He creates and sustains life beginning at conception (Genesis 3:16, Psalm 139:13–6, Ruth 4:13).

86–7. Contra conjugal sex (making one flesh out of two), “when a man puts the part of himself which represents life into the cavity of another man which represents decay and expulsion, at the most basic of all possible levels he is saying, ‘Life be swallowed in death.’ We cannot overwrite such meanings with different ones just because we want to.”

²⁶ Albert Mohler, “God and the Gay Christian: A Response to Matthew Vines,” *Southern Seminary Magazine* 82 (Summer 2014), 14. Despite so-called revisionist Christian arguments, homosexuality has never been embraced historically.

²⁷ Jane Anderson, “The impact of family structure on the health of children: Effects of divorce,” *The Linacre Quarterly* vol. 81, 4 (2014): 378–87. “Nearly three decades of research [...] demonstrates that children living with their married, biological parents consistently have better physical, emotional, and academic well-being. [Except marital violence], children [of biological families] fair better.”

²⁸ ζητεῖτε, Matthew 6:33, present, active, imperative verb (command to “[keep on] seeking” is ongoing action).

They also discount the importance of being formed by God and in His image (Genesis 1:26–7, 9:6). Scripture values human life (Matthew 10:30, Genesis 9:6, Luke 12:7) and recognizes an unborn child as a person (Exodus 21:22–3, Luke 1:39–45).²⁹

Fourth, concerning sexual freedom, biblical sexual morality rejects all forms of sexual activity outside the confines of marriage. Therefore, the church laments that in 2019, 40% of U.S. high school students engaged in sexual activity before marriage.³⁰ Biblically, all premarital relations must remain nonsexual.³¹ How and why people participate in intimate relations, express their gender, or identify themselves can all fall prey to social narratives further magnified by self-idolatry—the elevation of one’s desires and happiness above God and His Word. Modern society’s worship of self and demand for sexual freedoms constitutes evil and idolatrous sins resonant of those historically committed by Israel and condemned by God. The Bible decries divorce and condemns adultery, fornicating, homosexual activity, prostitution, polygamy, and polyamorous relationships, as well as forms of non-conforming gender identities and expressions. The New Testament’s usage of the Greek word πορνεία (*porneia*) for sexual immorality is inclusive of all of the above behaviors within its semantic range as well as various other kinds of “unsanctioned” sexual behaviors.³² In sum, social narratives can never justify sexual immorality. Neither can the Bible wink at sexual freedom resultant from any scientific or

²⁹ John Holmes, “The Sexual Ethics of Planned Parenthood” (Research Paper, DR30020 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, January 23, 2022), 1–21. Brian Bolton, “God Is Pro-Abortion: The Bible Says So. (Cover Story),” *American Atheist* 54, no. 3 (2016 3rd Quarter 2016): 6–9. Bolton believes “the bible does not support today’s fundamentalist Christian assault on women’s reproductive rights.” He commits the above errors and misreads Exodus 21:22–3, stating incorrectly that “while the Bible requires the death penalty for 60 specified criminal violations, abortion is not among them” and that the “[God] of the Holy Bible does not care about the lives of pregnant mothers-to-be and their unborn children.”

³⁰ Mark Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3. Each day, about 7,000 U.S. teenagers experience sexual intercourse for the first time [and most do by age of 20]. See also, National Center for Disease Control, “High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) Data,” July 3, 2022, <https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/>. In 2019, 38.4% of U.S. high schoolers had sexual intercourse.

³¹ Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 19:4–5, 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5, 1 Corinthians 7:2, Colossians 3:5, Acts 15:20, Genesis 2:24.

³² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.

biological framework—even if endorsed by the State.³³ The doctrine of *stare decisis*, or where the State has sanctioned legal precedent, does not supersede biblical authority.³⁴ For example, even though the U.S. Supreme Court’s legal reasoning recorded historical evidence of the structural variety in marriage spanning millennia as one of its reasons for justifying same-sex marriage, the Bible still makes it clear that both Jesus and the apostle Paul affirmed the Old Testament’s positions on same-sex associations. The biblical claim remains that the *μαλακός* (“effeminate”) and *ἀρσενοκοίτης* (“homosexuals”) will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.³⁵

EXHORTATIONS FROM THE PASTORAL HEART OF PAUL PERTINENT TO THE INSTRUCTION OF SEXUAL ETHICS

Paul’s letters to the Corinthians represent the most detailed correspondence between an apostle and a local church in the New Testament, providing great insights into both Paul’s theology and gospel application to the situations of life occurring in Corinth.³⁶ In chapters 3–6, Paul instructs believers in Corinth on how to live a life that brings honor and glory to God. In doing so, he exhorts the church to make two tasks a foremost priority. First, believers must grow in Christ, which means they must grow in spiritual maturity. Second, believers must guard against impurity, adhering to sexual ethics that glorify God. The Corinthian church remained mesmerized by the world’s

³³ “All of Scripture is inspired by God and authoritative for [their] life” as stated in 1 Timothy 3:16–17. Feelings associated with sex or sexual orientation do not overrule the Bible as authoritative truth in these matters.

³⁴ Alan Goldman, “The Force of Precedent in Legal, Moral, and Empirical Reasoning,” *Synthese* 71, no. 3 (1987): 323–46. John Holmes, “Same-sex Marriage: Proponent Views and a Biblical Response,” (Research Paper, DR30020 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, January 23, 2022), 1–21.

³⁵ John Holmes, “The Sexual Ethics of Planned Parenthood,” 1–21. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2000), 135, 613. “1 Cor. 6:9 (‘male prostitutes’ NRSV is too narrow a rendering; ‘sexual pervert’ REB is too broad)” On *ἀρσενοκοίτης*, “Paul’s strictures against same-sex activity cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of alleged temple prostitution or limited to contract w. boys for homoerotic service.” *Μαλακός* refers to males whom other males sodomize (a passive partner), and *ἀρσενοκοίτης* is the “one who assumes the dominant role in same-sex activity.”

³⁶ Mark, Taylor. *1 Corinthians*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Vol. 28. The New American Commentary. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 19.

wisdom, but Paul remains determined to orient Corinth back to their identity as Christians, new creations set apart from the world in Christ, to live as God's holy people.³⁷ People may question the legitimacy of using Scripture's sexual ethics given the cultural distance of the Bible from today. However, arguments from silence (e.g., the Bible does not explicitly discuss the morality of passionate kissing) lack merit because when the entirety of Scripture is considered—which Paul attests is authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16–17)—we find that a clear biblical sexual ethic exists concerning gender, marriage, sex, and procreation.³⁸ As such, exhortations from the pastoral heart of Paul to grow in Christ and guard against impurity reveal the importance of teaching God's design for gender, marriage, sex, and procreation so that members may respond (both in word and deed) to the social narratives of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual freedom.³⁹

GROW IN CHRIST

One way Paul exhorts believers to grow in Christ is to not fall prey to the problem of spiritual immaturity in 1 Corinthians 3:1–3. His burden toward Corinth resulted from the fact that some believers in Corinth behaved like children, and Paul had to “coddle” them as infants instead of relating to them

³⁷ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 21.

³⁸ Gerald Hiestand, “A Biblical-Theological Approach to Premarital Sexual Ethics: Or, What Saint Paul Would Say about ‘Making Out,’” *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* 1, no. 1 (June 2014): 13–34.

³⁹ Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler. *Sexual Ethics: A Theological Introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012. Albeit a book of unorthodox and liberal arguments designed to shift Catholic beliefs, Salzman recognizes a “disconnect between many of the Church's absolute sexual norms and [social/cultural] theological and intellectual developments” that have created an impetus for ongoing instruction in sexual ethics. Jones, Stanton L. “How to Teach Sex: Seven Realities That Christians in Every Congregation Need to Know.” *Christianity Today* 55, no. 1 (January 2011): 34–39. Stanton says, “We must educate and shape our young people, indeed all of our people in a deeper and truer understanding of sex. Evangelical Christians need to learn to celebrate and embrace their sexuality and to live out their sexuality in holiness, and thus to have no occasion for abortion.” Mary S. Ford, “By Whose Authority? Sexual Ethics, Postmodernism, and Orthodox Christianity,” *Christian Bioethics: Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 26, no. 3 (December 2020): 298–324. Ford takes the threat of theological error seriously, saying that Christians “[instruct] the ‘Good News’ revealed by Christ, and confirmed in His Church, [to our] sexually confused surrounding society and culture.

as spiritually mature adults.⁴⁰ While the context in this passage is jealousy and strife as it reflects a spiritually immature state of mind, Paul's more significant point is that their actions proved them to act like fools. By using the term "solid food," Paul implies that they should have progressed toward learning the more advanced teachings of the gospel among the mature (1 Corinthians 2:6). He is not contrasting two diets but instead "the true food of the Gospel (whether milk or meat), and the synthetic substitutes which the Corinthians have [wrongly] preferred."⁴¹

Many Christian laypersons today continue to digest Scripture with their bottle in hand without advancing toward a more mature understanding of the gospel. Trading doctrine for application or adopting relativistic interpretations (e.g., "what does this mean to you?" versus "what does the text say?") negatively impacts spiritual growth and the ability to live a godly life.⁴² Modern Christians live in a time with unprecedented technology and the most significant number of understandable Bible translations yet available to mankind. Given this fact, distinguished professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, Craig Blomberg, says that 21st-century Christians should prove themselves one of the most biblically knowledgeable societies in church history. He cautions that when church knowledge of sound doctrine becomes anemic, congregations become less able to spot, assess, and reject false teaching or less willing to address immoral behaviors.⁴³ Former professor of evangelism and preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kenneth Chafin, says that "too often [the church has played the role of the frightened] and not that of the people who gather weekly to worship the God of all true wisdom."⁴⁴ Yet, in these verses, Paul patiently models exhorting the most immature in Corinth to grow in their communion with God, to understand His will, and to make

⁴⁰ Timothy Brookins, and Bruce W. Longenecker, *1 Corinthians 10-16: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, *Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 65.

⁴¹ M. Hooker, "Hard Sayings: 1 Cor. 3:2," *Theology* 69 (1966): 21. See also J. Francis, "As Babes in Christ—Some Proposals Regarding 1 Cor. 3:1-3," *JSNT* 7 (1980): 41-60. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 125. Fee says "Corinthians do not need a change in diet but a change in perspective." Milk implies elementary knowledge; meat implies advanced knowledge of the Gospel.

⁴² James Wicker, "Using Hebrew and Greek Correctly," (Lecture, Biblical Hermeneutics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, January 18, 2018).

⁴³ Blomberg, Craig, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 70.

⁴⁴ Kenneth L. Chafin, *1, 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 47.

sense of the truths of Scripture for applying them in daily living.⁴⁵

While individual Christians bear responsibility for their spiritual growth, the local gathered body of believers must still instruct Christian doctrine. Not only does a gathering of fellow Holy-Spirit-filled Christians help detect and guard against theological error, but they also can encourage, help, pray for, or even admonish one another in the situations of daily life (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Norman Stanton wrote, “Lordship [salvation] of Jesus Christ is the singular, great confession of the Christian faith [and] Jesus [guides and builds an accountable] covenant community (Acts 1:24-25).”⁴⁶ As the Corinthian’s father in Christ Jesus through the gospel, Paul urges believers in 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 to imitate him by learning his ways in Christ Jesus—that Paul “teaches everywhere in every church.” Paul understood the non-negotiable imperative for Christ-followers given by Jesus: “make disciples.”⁴⁷ In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus elaborated by saying “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching [them] to observe [everything that I have commanded you].” Also, the participle “teaching” appears in the Greek present tense, active voice, indicating an ongoing and continuous action applicable today (i.e., keep on teaching and do not stop).⁴⁸

A second way that Paul exhorts believers to grow in Christ is to build on the foundation of Christ as God’s co-worker (1 Corinthians 3:9–16). Church members, and therefore the entire church, should reflect the holy character of God.⁴⁹ Practically speaking, maturity requires studying God’s Word—the whole word—without neglecting selective parts so Christians may discern the truth for holy living. Paul explained to the church at Ephesus that Christ had gifted the church with teachers to “equip the saints for the work of ministry and building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–12). So, given Paul’s guidance to the Church at Corinth to imitate him in Christ, the implication is that church leaders will not leave spiritually immature believers in a corner unto themselves. Imitating Paul, the spiritually mature in the church should

⁴⁵ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 69.

⁴⁶ Norman Stanton, *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church*, 33, 36.

⁴⁷ μαθητεύσατε (“make disciples”), Matt. 28:19, an aorist, active, imperative (command) verb form μαθητεύω.

⁴⁸ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 241.

⁴⁹ John Hammett, “Church Membership, Church Discipline, and the Nature of the Church,” In *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John Hammett, and Benjamin Merkle, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), chap.1.

help disciple the less spiritually mature to learn the ways of Jesus—“ways” that Paul says he teaches everywhere in every church and that he sent Timothy to remind them about (1 Corinthians 4:16–7).

Taylor observes that while the discussion in 1 Corinthians 3:9–11 references leaders involved in the building of the church, the entire church is in view later in chapters 8–14.⁵⁰ Thus, leaders should take responsibility for leading the church as a whole by instructing them in sound doctrine. Human failure to obey godly instruction is not a pragmatic excuse for not teaching a particular topic. It is God who leads and sets the standard. In verse nine, the word *θεοῦ* (“of God”) appears emphatically positioned repeatedly in a series of three repeated occurrences (“*θεοῦ* [...] *θεοῦ* [...] *θεοῦ*”). As God’s fellow workers, God’s field, and God’s building, the bottom line is that God owns it all, builds it all, sets the standards, and executes it all using human agency within His church. Chapter three, verses 16–7, explain that while God’s spirit empowers Christians to serve, there remains an expectation that the church faithfully builds on the foundation set by Paul while remaining holy and pure. Blomberg notes that these verses indicate that the church is not “just any building” but the body of Corinthian believers. The Christian fellowship embodies the Spirit of God, and they must walk in the Spirit, remaining holy and exercising individual spiritual gifts—such as teaching and preaching—for the edification of the entire body.

A third way that Paul exhorts believers to grow in Christ is to imitate Paul and Timothy’s faithfulness in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:14–7, 20–1). Paul admonishes the Corinthian church to imitate him with pastoral concern as their father in Christ. Taylor suggests that given Paul’s life with Christ and his role as the church’s founder in Corinth, he had unique authority to say, “Become imitators of me” in admonishment. The word *γίνεσθε* (“be or become”) appears in the present middle imperative as a command that is a continuous and habitual action. Paul commands, “Become imitators of me [and do not stop!]” The verb *νουθετῶ* (“to admonish/warn”) appears in the present active participle, expressing Paul’s purpose of continuously counseling and instructing them to cease or avoid their improper course of conduct

⁵⁰ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 105. Taylor says, “The thematic link between 3:10–17 and chaps. 8–14 is in the “building” language. See also, David Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003) who notes that “to build upon” refers “to preaching and instruction (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; cf. Ephesians 2:19–22).”

like little children.⁵¹ Instruction is not a one-time event. Paul writes not to embarrass or shame but to issue an ongoing warning they must heed.

Also, Timothy is dearly loved and counted as a faithful child. Paul desires his children in Corinth to model Timothy's faithfulness, as Paul states in verse seventeen that Timothy will work to remind them of Paul's ways. Robertson and Plummer contend that "Timothy was sent to remind children who were equally beloved, but not equally faithful, of their duties towards [Paul, their spiritual father]."⁵² Hard to miss is Timothy's physical presence among God's people for instructing the church on his ways in the pattern of Christ in verse seventeen.⁵³ Instructional letter-writing cannot replace in-person servant-leaders stewarding and teaching the church in God's mysteries (1 Corinthians 4:1). Blomberg suggests that Paul's calls for imitation have references to the ancient world where sons learned a trade from their fathers by seeing it modeled. Daily life itself, lived alongside one another nearby, became the apprenticeship's classroom.⁵⁴

It is unmistakable how seriously Paul considered the need for the church in Corinth to grow in Christ by becoming spiritually mature imitators of him as God's co-worker. Seemingly influenced by Corinth's serious moral failures (detailed in later chapters), Paul indicates He will either come to them in love or with a rod of discipline in chapter four, verse twenty-one. The three ways Paul urges Christians to grow in Christ apply to the instruction of sexual morality. In all churches everywhere, Paul aims to see God glorified in body and spirit through holy and faithful living. For this to occur, churches must rid themselves of sexual immorality and self-idolatry, aided by habitual, ongoing, systematic instruction of biblical sexual ethics.

GUARD AGAINST IMPURITY

One way Paul exhorts believers to guard against impurity is to avoid the folly of human wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:18–23). This requires first that a

⁵¹ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 679.

⁵² Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., ICC, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 90.

⁵³ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 126.

⁵⁴ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 91.

person understands why human wisdom is sometimes wrong and how it may lead to impurity (sin). If the church does not speak or train about such issues, the world will not hesitate to tell its side. Consider three famous psychologists and at least one anthropologist who influenced sexual and social narratives over the past hundred years. First, Abraham Maslow embraced the notion that “universal human values” could be identified in human biology and that “by following the God within [ourselves], we can discover a universal set of values.”⁵⁵ Second, Maslow’s friend and cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, thought that young people were the key to changing the social order. Cultural relativism fueled her vision of sexual utopia, leading her to argue that “teenage sexuality could be wholesome and beautiful if only parents and ‘society’ would stop interfering [and allow them to self-actualize].”⁵⁶ Third, Tim Leary, a proponent of psychedelic drugs, on the other hand, hoped to “destroy organized religion.” He projected that through LSD usage, psychologists could become “arbiters of social values [and serve as replacements for ministers, policymakers, teachers, and others with cultural influence].”⁵⁷ While *Playboy* magazine lauded Leary’s promises of orgasms and psychedelic gay conversion therapy, Leary’s counterculture thinking on personality and social relationships had a lasting impact.⁵⁸ One can argue that two pills fueled the 1960s and 70s sexual revolution—birth control and LSD—and more than anyone else in his era, Leary inspired millions to experiment with LSD.⁵⁹ Fourth, Carl Rogers argued that feelings determined truth. “Neither the Bible nor the prophets [...] neither the revelations of God nor man [...] can take precedence over my own direct experience.”⁶⁰ After the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary consulted with and subsequently adopted Roger’s ideas on free love and the open expression of sexuality, the organization fell into chaos when more than three hundred ladies resigned from the

⁵⁵ John Babler and Nicolas Ellen, *Counseling by the Book*, Revised and Expanded ed., (Fort Worth, TX: CTW, 2014), 50.

⁵⁶ Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth of Western Civilization*, (New York: William and Morrow, 1929), 11. Joyce Milton, *The Road to Malpsychia: Humanistic Psychology and Our Discontents*, (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2002), 10, 29.

⁵⁷ Milton, 82, 96.

⁵⁸ The September 1966 *Playboy* interview with Leary is reprinted in Timothy Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy*, (Berkeley, CA: Ronin, 1998). “In a carefully prepared, loving LSD session, a woman will inevitably have several hundred orgasms.”

⁵⁹ Don Lattin, *Timothy Leary’s legacy, and the rebirth of psychedelic research*, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 28 (1), Spring 2017: 65-74.

⁶⁰ Milton, 135, 144.

organization and turned to either “new religions” or adopted various forms of inward “self-expression” as a basis for universal truth.⁶¹ Such ideas infiltrated and influenced all aspects of society, from Government policy, religious beliefs, children’s TV shows, education, social work, and business practices worldwide.⁶² Social programs such as character training, child morality experiments, and “self-esteem training” that promised cures for society find their origins in one or more of the humanistic ideas of these psychologists. At one point, a former president of the American Psychological Association remarked, “Corporations, educators, students, and above all, taxpayers need to begin to ask hard questions about why they allow psychologists to dictate their values through experiments in thought reform.”⁶³

A second way Paul exhorts believers to guard against impurity is to practice formative instruction and corrective discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1–13). Sexual immorality must never find tolerance within the body of believers. Paul pronounces judgment on sexual immorality within the church. He gives his rationale to the church in Corinth, but just as problematically as the reported sin, Corinth failed to monitor and address sin in the congregation properly.

⁶¹ William R. Coulson, “Full Hearts and Empty Heads: The Price of Certain Recent Programs in Humanistic Psychology,” a conference on *Tasks of Personalistic Psychology*, held at Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio, 20 October 1994. Roger’s use of “encounter groups” promoted an idea that personal authenticity required “self-expression” according to one’s inner desires without the yoke of religious dogma. See also, Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahad, eds., *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* (Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press, 1985), 13, 328.

⁶² Milton, 54–59, 66, 75, 82, 90, 96, 112, 137, 145, 151, 196–234, 242–63. From America to Japan, the humanistic beliefs of these men influenced education, applied branches of psychology, management, and religion (inclusive of protestant, Catholic, Jewish faiths). Either atheistic or pantheistic, these men adopted antinomian views and sought to replace all sacred doctrine with man’s wisdom. New Age mysticism resulted from saturation of these concepts into society. Rogers, found himself courted by the U.S. Department of Education’s liaison to *Sesame Street* and held considerable sway among American Psychologists. As their theories became widely adopted, activists with humanistic agendas brought different types of social agendas to schools, the workplace, and businesses. For example, “diversity training” (co-opted for supporting LGBTQ equality) is virtually ubiquitous among U.S. companies today. The effect became a brainwashing of humanistic ideas across society, supporting the rise of new religions, feminism, sexual freedom, the elimination of gender identity and expression, as well as an affinity for socialism. Efforts to re-write history textbooks and other forms of revisionism all find influence under the humanistic ideas that self-actualizing, personal feelings, and happiness derive from one’s inner true self. Leary notably stated on p. 96 that “once traditional religion caught on, it would be too late.”

⁶³ Milton, 204. James Nolan, *The Therapeutic State*, (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 2–4.

How the church reacted to this affair proved as terrible as the affair itself.⁶⁴ Christians should strive for holiness as God is holy. Jesus expects purity in His church (Matthew 5:48). Although Jesus shed His blood to pay sin's penalty, Christians cannot ignore sin (Hebrews 10:19). Clinging to sin above obedience to God represented humanity's most significant transgression.⁶⁵ Christ's atoning death for sin demands faith from a pure heart (1 Timothy 5). The body of Christ is accountable when sin occurs in the 'camp' (Numbers 5:3). The church's authority is over its membership, as Paul explains. Thus, membership must consist of regenerate believers, equipped for holy living, guarding against sin's leavened dough-like spread (1 Corinthians 5:6).⁶⁶ Both Jesus and Paul set an expectation that churches will add, disciple (equip the saints), and at times remove people from the body of Christ through the use of formative church instruction and corrective discipline.⁶⁷ Paul spoke of his intentions, saying, "I wrote to you in a letter not to [...]," "I teach everywhere in every church," and commanding "remove the evil person from among you" (1 Corinthians 4:14, 17; 5:9, 11).⁶⁸ Even though churches do not always well understand and practice church discipline, and many completely ignore Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 altogether, the expectations for holy living within Christ's church have not changed.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 104–5.

⁶⁵ Jerry Pelfrey, "Pastors, Computers and XXX," In *Practical Aspects of Pastoral Theology*, ed. Christopher Cone, (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2009), 364–365.

⁶⁶ See Ralph N. Cone Jr., "A Biblical Model for Church Growth," In *Practical Aspects of Pastoral Theology*, ed. Christopher Cone, (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2009), chap. 8. Also, Luke 24:44, "Everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." The authoritative claims found in the salvific message of Scripture require a human response of obedience.

⁶⁷ Bobby Jamieson, *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline: 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides*, Edited by Mark Dever, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 17. "Preaching, teaching, prayer, reading, and memorizing the Bible, corporate worship, accountability relationships, and godly oversight by pastors and elders are all forms of discipline. Theologians often call this kind of discipline 'formative discipline' because it forms our character to be more like Christ. In a narrower sense, discipline is when we point out fellow church members' sin and encourage them to repent and pursue holiness by God's grace. [We] often call this kind of discipline 'corrective discipline.' It means correcting fellow church members when they begin to veer from the path of following Christ."

⁶⁸ ἐξάρατε from ἐξαίρω ("to remove") appears in 1 Cor. 4:13 as an aorist, active, imperative, second person, plural verb. Paul addresses not just one but many with a command. The church body must remove the evil person.

⁶⁹ Gregory Wills, "A Historical Analysis of Church Discipline," In *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, eds. John Hammett, and Benjamin L Merkle, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), chap. 6. Wills wrote that by "the 1940s most

A third way Paul exhorts believers to guard against impurity is by reminding them that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God and that Christians must glorify God in body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:9–20). It is worth noting that Paul admonishes all forms of immorality, not only sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:10–11). So, it is correct to say that churches must not ignore nonsexual sins as somehow less dangerous than sexual sins. However, Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:15–18 that sexual immorality is uniquely against the body, thus damaging a believer’s oneness with Christ (sealed by the Holy Spirit who dwells in the body as its temple). Believers (including their bodies) were bought at a price by Jesus’ blood and thus have no right to do anything that does not glorify Him (1 Corinthians 6:20).⁷⁰ As Heimbach demonstrates, the consequences of sexual sin ripple across all dimensions of society and family life, leading to dysfunctional families, crime, divorce, suicide, murder, poverty, gender role confusion, economic weakness, homosexuality, teen pregnancy, abortion, pornography, euthanasia, undisciplined children, cohabitation, disrespect for life, disrespect for authority and even risk of complete social collapse.⁷¹ Trueman adds a sobering observation that since the modern world has now firmly rejected all things sacred and allowed personal identity to become associated with the “authentic sexual self” (i.e., individual happiness), the predominately accepted social narratives now affirm what is essentially the universal human right to “self-creation”—dumping the constraints of biology for an “authentic human freedom” or an “expressive individualism” that makes man god and creator of his own identity.⁷² No longer do dignity, value, or absolute truth hold because society no longer anchors them in the sacred order. Instead, self-idolatry (clothed in consumerism) has rationalized the validity of “competing tastes” for everything according to one’s desires, from entertainment to sexual

[Baptist] associations stopped bothering to record exclusions.” This trend continued until “1979, [when] they reasserted their commitment to the full inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures.” The practice of church discipline in Baptist churches increasingly waned from the 1870s throughout most of the 20th century.

⁷⁰ ἐοξάσατε from ἐοξάζω (“to glorify”) appears in 1 Cor. 6:20 as an aorist, active, imperative (command), second person, plural verb. Paul makes it clear that glorifying God through obedience to his instruction is not optional. Similarly, φεύγετε (“to flee”) from sexual immorality in verse 18 appears as a present, active, imperative, second person, plural verb. It implies that such “fleeing” is ongoing (i.e. flee, and always ‘keep on’ fleeing).

⁷¹ Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 39.

⁷² Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 163–183.

identity, expression, freedom, and family structures.⁷³

Relative to contemporary living, Paul's corrective instruction to the Christian church for glorifying God in body and spirit amid a perverse and wicked world remains timeless. Paul possibly uses a popular Corinthian slogan in verses twelve and thirteen to rebuke hedonism and self-rule while explaining the proper use and purpose of the human body (in which Christ's Spirit dwells).⁷⁴ The message is as clear for today's world as it was to Corinth: sex is not a mere bodily function like eating food.⁷⁵ Sexual immorality has serious consequences. Believers must live congruent to their sacred union with Christ, knowing that His authority extends to body and spirit. Pastorally, Paul exhorts the church to glorify God in light of three unchanging truths: a believer's union with Christ's body (6:15), the oneness they share (6:16), and the spiritual union believers have with Christ's Spirit (6:17).⁷⁶ "You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

THREE CATEGORIES OF OPPOSITION TO BIBLICAL SEXUAL MORALITY AND THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Christians do not need to look far before discovering widespread social resistance to the teachings of biblical sexual morality. Critics make at least three claims to refute the Christian position: 1) biological factors explain sexual behavior, 2) human rights must include all sexual rights, and 3) hegemonic power structures result in inequality for women. While not mutually exclusive, three descriptive labels can characterize these categories of opposition: the scientist, the activist, and the feminist.

The scientist assumes that either evolution or biological and social factors explain sexual behavior. For example, Ashlyn Swift-Gallan et al. argue that

⁷³ Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 12–31, 35–163, 201–265, 379–407.

⁷⁴ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 155.

⁷⁵ Cleon Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 360. The Greek verb ἁμαρτάνει ("to sin") in 1 Corinthians 6:18 appears in the gnomic present, indicating that it is always principally true that the sexually immoral person is guilty of sin.

⁷⁶ Using the created order found in Genesis 2:24, Paul argues that joining to a prostitute constitutes "one body."

genetic mechanisms “appear to at least partially influence” male same-sex sexual orientation. So, it is true that research claims to have discovered limited evidence for independent factors of neurobiology.⁷⁷ It is not illogical to ponder whether human biology or other societal factors play a role in human sexuality (identity, orientation, and expression). Lehman et al. say, “Current understanding of these factors is far from complete, and the results are not always consistent.” However, the fact remains that science has not yet to date discovered a “homosexual” or “transgender” gene (nor epigenetic or genetic traits), despite suggestions that nature and nurture may provide an environmental influence.⁷⁸ Still, whether social factors influence those who make homosexuality their ‘preferred’ lifestyle choice remains unknown.⁷⁹ Unresolved research questions still exist. What is love in marriage? Why behave nicely to your spouse?⁸⁰ Atheist Richard Dawkins believed that

⁷⁷ Ashlyn Swift-Gallant, Lindsay Coome, Madison Aitken, D. Ashley Monks, Doug P. VanderLaan, “Evidence for Distinct Biodevelopmental Influences on Male Sexual Orientation,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (Jun 2019) 12787-12792. “Answers to Your Questions: For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality,” American Psychological Association, January 27, 2022, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/orientation>. pdf. I. Savic and P. Lindstrom, “PET and MRI Show Differences in Cerebral Asymmetry and Functional Connectivity between Homo- and Heterosexual Subjects,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105, no. 27 (January 1, 2008). Research has begun to suggest independent factors of neurobiology. This study claims to show “sex atypical cerebral asymmetry and functional connections in homosexual subjects” that cannot be “primarily ascribed to learned effects, and they suggest a linkage to neurobiological entities.” Dean Hamer, Stella Hu, Victoria Magnuson, Nan Hu, and Angela Pattatucci, “A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation,” *Science* 261, no. 5119 (July 16, 1993): 321-27. Claims the existence of a specific allele located on the X chromosome that predicted gay versus straight sexual orientation in men.

⁷⁸ Alan Branch, *Affirming God's Image: Addressing the Transgender Question with Science and Scripture*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 64-7. Branch argues that Christians cannot “affirm gender transition or transgender behavior, especially when highly debated notions of a “transgender brain” are central to some of the arguments.” Branch cites scientific research as evidence that science has not yet discovered a transgender or gay gene. See also, Michael Lehman, Victor Navarro, Deborah Suchecki, and C. E. Roselli, “Neurobiology of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation,” *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* 30, 7 (July 1, 2018). Laura Erickson-Schroth, “Update on the Biology of Transgender Identity,” *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health* 17 (2013): 154. Erickson-Schroth concludes, “To date, no studies have conclusively linked genes to transgender identity.”

⁷⁹ Emmanuele Jannini, Ray Blanchard, Andrea Camperio-Ciani, and John Bancroft, “Male Homosexuality: Nature or Culture?” *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 7, no. 10 (October 1, 2010): 3245-53. Brian Gladue, “The Biopsychology of Sexual Orientation,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 3, no. 5 (Oct. 1994): 150-54.

⁸⁰ David Barash, *Homo Mysterious: Evolutionary Puzzles of Human Nature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 90.

the character trait of “niceness” originated from altruism in evolutionary biology.⁸¹ Generally, science remains content with examining any and all explanations for sexual behavior as long as it can avoid the supernatural.⁸² For example, some advocate an evolutionary spread of bisexuality because young boys traded sexual favors to heterosexual men and greatly profited from such behaviors in ancient Greece (i.e., a “learned” survival of the fittest). This logic is endlessly flawed, given that one could generate similar arguments for pedophilia and other behaviors. In short, scientists have several naturalistic theories to justify a positive sexual ethic divorced from God.⁸³

The activist believes that human rights must include sexual rights. Whether it is sexual identity and expression, abortion, gender transition, or unrestrained sexual activity at all ages, Planned Parenthood’s political action arm advocates for expressing any and all forms of sexual freedom.⁸⁴ Entitled “Young People’s Guide to Sexual Rights,” Planned Parenthood contends that all youth must have the “freedom to pursue sexual lives without fear of unwanted pregnancies.”⁸⁵ Parents, their literature says, must recognize that “sexuality and pleasure are important for all young people, irrespective of reproductive desires.” In other words, to properly “[recognize] young people’s sexuality,” parents must support unconstrained sex (as long as it is “safe”) while empowering their children to enjoy sexual pleasure.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Michael Ruse, *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, (New York: Oxford Press, 2014), 31, 155, 199–200. Ruse cites Dawkins, others.

⁸² David Barash, *Homo Mysterious: Evolutionary Puzzles of Human Nature*, 90: “How can natural selection have favored any genes whose phenotypic outcome [...] results in its own diminished success? [...] The paradox exists for those who are bisexual, since it is mathematically provable that even a tiny difference in reproductive outcome can drive substantial evolutionary change. [...] Gay men have children at about 20% the rate of heterosexual men.” Yet, the authors still vigorously argue that its prevalence in nature likely prefers a biological (not spiritual or psychological) answer.

⁸³ David Barash, *Homo Mysterious: Evolutionary Puzzles of Human Nature*, chap. 4. Barash exhaustively examines a plethora of naturalistic reasons homosexuality remains selected to some degree in evolutionary biology. Cited reasons include, evolution, pathology, natural exuberance, homosexual genetics, altruism in nature, heterosis, social payoffs, sexually antagonistic selection, reproductive skew, birth order, neoteny, and other proximate traits.

⁸⁴ John Holmes, “The Sexual Ethics of Planned Parenthood,” 1–21.

⁸⁵ “Youth Declaration of Sexual Rights,” International Planned Parenthood Federation, January 13, 2022, https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/ippf_exclaim_lores.pdf.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Margaret Sanger, Planned Parenthood's founder, perceived that poor families were "burdened with children" while well-off families had few children.⁸⁷ In *What Every Boy and Girl Should Know*, she passionately hoped to persuade her readers on the merits of her logic for controlling pregnancy, saying, "Young people [ought to] create their own standards to suit their own generation [without advice or moralizing] [...], the aim of life [...] is to free all inhibitions [...] to direct one's controls [by use of] logic and reason—not fear and morality."⁸⁸ "The most merciful thing a large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it."⁸⁹ Today, the official position of Planned Parenthood is that the "Hyde Amendment is a dangerous and unfair policy that lets politicians interfere in people's personal health care decisions."⁹⁰

Planned Parenthood's online platforms campaign for the normalization of every practiced type of sexual activity (vaginal, oral, and anal), married or not (young or old), and drive an agenda of unconditional support for any type of gender identity, orientation, and expression.⁹¹ Marketed as a community health provider (offering services such as abortion, contraceptives, and hormone therapy for gender transitioning), clinics actively adhere to a policy of enabling the sexual freedoms of young people.⁹² Depicting themselves as a

⁸⁷ Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, *Blessed Are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1991), 131. Also, Margaret Sanger, *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger, Volume 4: Round the World for Birth Control, 1920–1966*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 2016), xix–xxvi.

⁸⁸ Margaret Sanger, *What Every Boy and Girl Should Know*, (1927; reprint, Fairview Park, Elmsford, NY: Maxwell Reprint Co., 1969) 140, 7, 13–4.

⁸⁹ Margaret Sanger, *Women and the New Race* (New York: Brentano's, 1920), 63.

⁹⁰ "Federal and State Bans and Restrictions on Abortion," Planned Parenthood, January 12, 2022, <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/abortion/federal-and-state-bans-and-restrictions-abortion/hyde-amendment>. See also, "Texas Abortion Laws," Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, January 13, 2022, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-gulf-coast/sb8>. At Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, we believe that all individuals must be free to control their own bodies [...] It is unthinkable that anti-abortion extremists could be allowed to stand in the way of people accessing essential health care." See also, S.142, *Hyde Amendment Codification Act*, 113th Congress (2013–2014), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/142>. The Hyde Amendment prohibits the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortion except when the life of the woman is endangered by carrying the pregnancy to term.

⁹¹ Planned Parenthood's primary online presence includes three websites, PlannedParenthood.com, PlannedParenthoodActionFund.com, and the website of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (ippf.org). Additionally, there are 59 affiliate/State websites and hundreds of "partner" sites linked to for sex-related resources.

⁹² "Empowerment Kits," Planned Parenthood, January 13, 2022, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-greater-texas/patient-resources/empowerment-kits>. Where permitted

leader in the fight for human rights, a historically noble cause, individuals or organizations who stand opposed to their agenda, such as conservative and religious critics, will receive an understandably harsh branding as “extreme” spreaders of patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, and racism.⁹³

Contemporary feminists believe that hegemonic power structures result in inequality for women. Simone De Beauvoir, the author of *The Second Sex* and progenitor of the second-wave of global feminism, believed, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”⁹⁴ De Beauvoir’s ideas became the basis for the contemporary notion that gender is a social construct, not a biological trait.⁹⁵ In an interview with the *Saturday Review*, she stated, “No woman should be authorized to stay home and raise her children. Society should be different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one.”⁹⁶ Mary Daly, who advocated neo-paganism in *Beyond God the Father*, stated, “If God is male, then male is God.”⁹⁷ Daly is a well-known American theologian, philosopher, and ethicist who pioneered radical feminist theology.⁹⁸ Feminist Shulamith Firestone noted that, unlike the earlier feminist movement, the later movements should not just seek to eliminate male privilege but that of sex distinction itself and

by legal statute, this is accomplished through the reduction of parental consent. Texas young persons can even request medical “empowerment” kits that comprise emergency contraception (the “morning-after” pill), a pregnancy test, and condoms. “Pleasure Protection Kits,” Planned Parenthood, January 13, 2022, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-great-plains/pleasure-protection-kits>. Planned Parenthood Great Plains delivers to children 15-years and older, three classes of free “pleasure kits”— the “non-latex,” “the classic,” and the “oral only” with flavor—so its users may continue to “have [uninhibited sexual] fun” in private without risk.

⁹³ John Holmes, “The Sexual Ethics of Planned Parenthood,” 1–21. A strategy of political rhetoric has been an effective street-fight tactic among abortion activists. For more, see Joshua Wilson, *The Street Politics of Abortion: Speech, Violence, and America’s Culture Wars*. The Cultural Lives of Law. (Stanford, CA: Stanford Law Books, 2013).

⁹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 1st American ed., (Knopf, 1953), 267.

⁹⁵ Alan Branch, “A Brief History of Modern Feminism” (Lecture, DR30020 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO., January 23, 2022).

⁹⁶ Betty Fiedan, “Sex, Society, and the Female Dilemma: An Interview with Simone de Beauvoir,” (*Saturday Review*, June 14, 1975), 18.

⁹⁷ Mary, Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 19, 129.

⁹⁸ Margalit Fox, “Mary Daly, a Leader in Feminist Theology, Dies at 81,” *The New York Times*. Archived from the original on October 9, 2021.

the “tyranny of the biological family.”⁹⁹ These women were leading feminists, whose ideas sought to eliminate patriarchy and outdated sexual ethics by eliminating gender differences. As such, they believed that human gender should have no more importance than other human traits.

Biblically speaking, in response to the scientist, it does not matter if researchers confirm a gene responsible for influencing sexual orientation, identity, or expression, because it will not negate human responsibility before God for holy living—made possible by the Holy Spirit. All of creation is under bondage and corruption from sin’s curse (Romans 8:22). God remains the standard-bearer, representing absolute truth. His word is unchanging truth (John. 17:17, 2 Corinthians 6:7). It gives us truthful guidance on living in a broken and fallen world. Thus, science derives from God, whose created order has a purpose and intentional design (albeit in bondage under sin). Gender, sex, and marriage have a divinely sanctioned purpose.

In response to the activist, yes, human rights and freedom matter because all life has value, meaning, and purpose. The Bible says all humans were fearfully and wonderfully made, with a body, and that God knows children in their mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13–6, Galatians 1:15, Luke 1:15, Isaiah 49:1, Job 31:15). Humans were made on purpose for a purpose and granted agency in the created order (Genesis 1:26–8, 2:7–23, Acts 1:6–11, 1 Corinthians 12:12–26). Further, God loves all people. He sent His only Son to die such that none would perish due to sin (John 3:16, Romans 5:8). Therefore, all life is precious. Embryos do not represent a mindless clump of cells. In the image of God, He made mankind. Thus, abortion violates the sixth commandment prohibiting murder (Exodus 20:13). Intentional or not, any serious injury to a pregnant woman receives the penalty of *lex talionis*.¹⁰⁰ “If her children come out” and serious injury occurs, a penalty occurs in like kind (Exodus 21:23).

⁹⁹ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, (1970; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 11. “And just as the end goal of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class *privilege* but of the economic class *distinction* itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male *privilege* but of *sex distinction* itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally.”

¹⁰⁰ Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, Vol. 2, The New American Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 492–7. “Tooth for Tooth,” “Eye for Eye,” “Life for Life.” Penalty must match the offense.

Serious injury is contrasted with premature delivery in verse twenty-two.¹⁰¹ Abortion is evil and always prohibited—as God reigns sovereign over life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39).

In response to the feminist, God has placed the husband in loving authority over his wife (Genesis 3:16, Ephesians 5:24). The created order includes men and women (gender and sex), each with functional roles and a purposeful design. It is impossible to correct men's rule over women by making women rule over men. Neither is it possible to erase gender without denying the reality of biology. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter one, verses eighteen and nineteen, "[they] suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Indeed, the culture has changed, but our "God-given physiological differences have not."¹⁰² By accepting whom God created us as, we can resist the world's efforts to become something else that He did not intend.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Robert Congdon, "Exodus 21:22–25 and the Abortion Debate," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989), 134. Daniel Gurtner, *Exodus: A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus*, (Boston: Brill, 2013), 391–92. John Holmes, "The Sexual Ethics of Planned Parenthood," 8–10. "Verse 22 calls the unborn a 'child' (לֵילִיד) explicitly, although written in a plural form (children). The text does not say 'formless or embryo' (לֵילִיד) as found in Psalm 139:16. Nor is the text written with an emphasis towards a stillborn 'fetus' that falls out (לֵילִיד) as in Job 3:16. Neither is the word for one 'bereaved' or a natural 'miscarriage' (שִׁלִּיב) used as in Exodus 23:26. The emphasis concerning the penalty against harmful human behavior is placed entirely on a human child not yet delivered—a child, made, and formed in the image of God per Psalm 139. Exodus 21:23 in the LXX affirms the intent that the child seriously harmed is fully formed. The verb ἐξαικονισμένον appears as a perfect active participle ("[if it] has fully formed"). The perfect tense implies completed action before the harm (ἄδικον) occurs, but the word does not necessarily imply the child is full term and ready for delivery. In the case of death, contra verse 22, the rules for murder apply. They appear consistent with Genesis 1:26–7 when humans were formed in God's image and again in Genesis 9:6 when (because of God's image) those who shed man's blood would receive the same in return (lex talionis). Thus, the use of the active tense implies an ongoing life (a living being) made in God's image. Those who attempt to use Scripture as a means to justify abortion at some mid-way point before a child is "fully formed" discount the totality of Scripture with reference to God's agency in giving life at conception (Ruth 4:13, Psalms 139:13–6, Genesis 3:16), the value God places on life (Luke 12:7, Matthew 10:30), the evidence for the personhood of the unborn child (Exodus 21:22–3, Luke 1:39–45), God's direct prohibition on murder (Exodus 20:13), and the significance of being formed by God in His image (Genesis 1:26–7, 9:6)."

¹⁰² John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2021), 293.

¹⁰³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 369.

CONCLUSION

Scripture claims divine authority to rule over the human family and sexual ethics because all Scripture is “God-breathed.” The assumptions of the scientist, activist, and feminist falsely position them to rule in authority over the Bible. God calls Christians to walk in the light “for the fruit of the light is goodness, righteousness, and truth” (Ephesians 5:9). They must not participate in “the fruitless works of darkness but instead expose them” (Ephesians 5:8–13). By systematically teaching biblical sexual morality, Christians not only grow in Christ and guard against impurity, but they become more equipped to respond to an increasingly hostile and vocal world that does not worship God but instead, themselves.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, churches must instruct biblical sexual ethics by teaching God’s design for gender, marriage, sex, and procreation to help Christians respond to the prevailing social narratives of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual freedom.

¹⁰⁴ 2 Timothy 4:3 reminds us that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; [...] they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.” Elevating personal happiness and expressive individualism, the scientist, activist, and feminist appeal to themselves (pleasure, authentic living, self freedom), then to biology (as convenient), and lastly, false ideas of human equality not based in God’s created order.