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2020 MAGAZINE

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MISSION STATEMENT

Harvest USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

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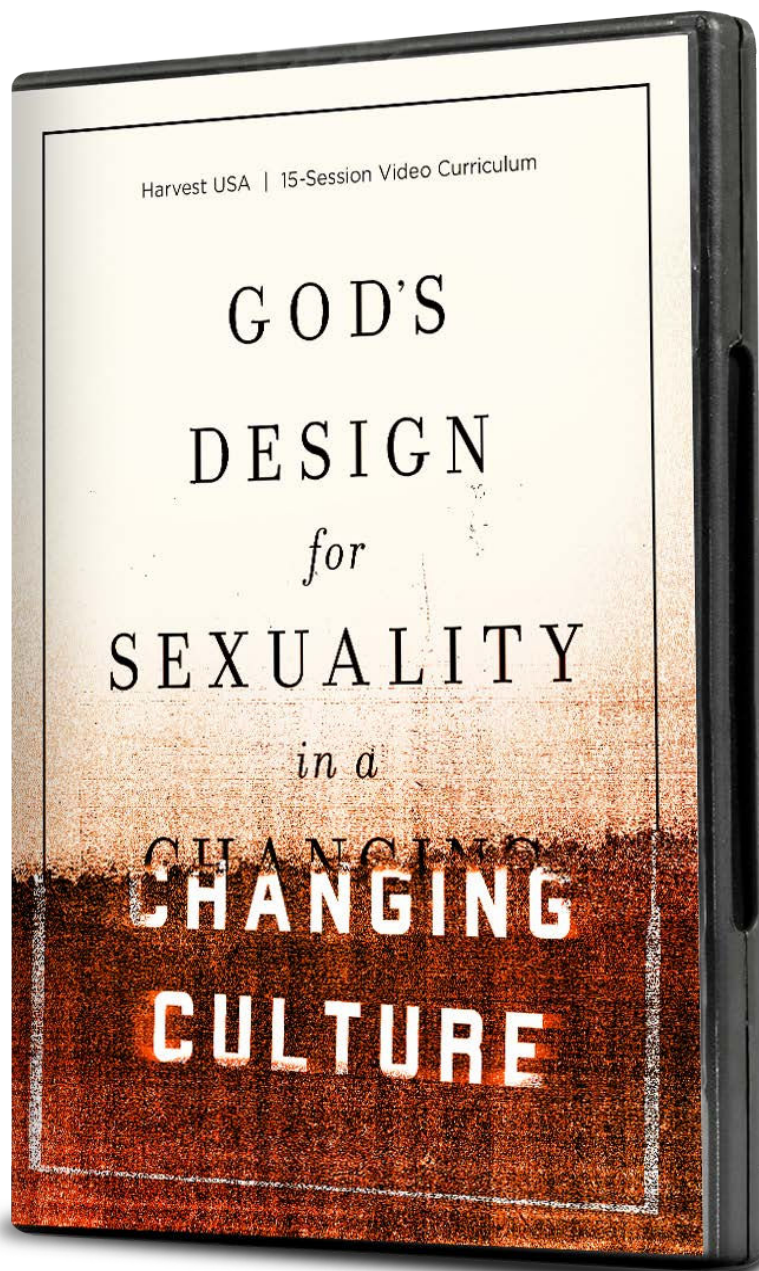
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"God's Design for Sexuality in a Changing Culture is a sturdy resource that will equip churches to be ambassadors of truth, grace, and freedom in a culture that's awash in sexual confusion."

— **ANDREW T. WALKER**

Director of Policy Studies,
The Ethics and Religious Liberty
Commission, author of *God and
the Transgender Debate*



FROM THE FOUNDER

Vocation and Invitation

Thirty-five years ago, I began volunteering at Harvest USA while working to support my family and attending seminary. During my year of volunteering, a steering committee member challenged me to consider whether or not God might be calling me to full-time work with this ministry. I wasn't certain about my life's direction at that time, and I remember him saying to me, "John, what if this is what God wants you to do?"

"What do you mean, 'do'—as in, my vocation?" I asked, wondering aloud how practical that was.

"Well, you'd raise your support—just like missionaries and campus ministry staff," he replied.

So my wife, Penny, and I prayed for months, seeking the Lord's guidance. Up to this point, I'd thought of volunteering as an interim position—something I would do until graduation, after which I would seek a church pulpit somewhere. However, after a season of prayer, both Penny and I became convinced of God's hand in this challenge and that he was calling us to Harvest USA.

I began raising my support, and I promised God that when one half of my support was raised, I would quit my job at the post office that very moment and join Harvest USA as their first staff person. That day arrived on February 9, 1985, two months after I'd begun support raising. The other half was pledged to me over the next month. Through the years, I have also seen God's faithfulness in so many other ways at Harvest USA.

Of course, the faithfulness, clarity, and authority of God's Word has been the mainstay not only in my own life but also in everything we do here. I actually came to faith by reading the Scriptures. In them I found God's healing mercy and grace as a young adult while I dealt with my own sexual and gender confusion. I discovered

a Jesus who was continually inviting the discards, the rejects, and the throwaways of society to himself. They were particular objects of his time, attention, and affection, which was infectious to me! It's the same grace, forgiveness, and power for living offered in the gospel that I found so precious then and still do.

Those who seek out Harvest USA for help, either individually or as a family, often do so when in crisis. The bottom has fallen out: the affair was discovered; the beloved partner left; a child said, "I'm gay." God uses all of the messiness in life to draw people to himself.

In our life-on-life ministry here, we have the privilege of walking alongside the people God brings our way, helping them learn how to apply the Scriptures in their own lives. But we also develop resources for individuals, families, and the Church so they might know how to apply God's Word to the heart issues surrounding sexuality and gender. In this issue of *Harvest USA Magazine*, we have included helpful pieces that illustrate the fruit of knowing how to apply the Scriptures. I hope that it blesses you!

John Freeman

FOUNDER



JOHN FREEMAN is the Founder of Harvest USA. His calling is to see those who struggle with pornography, homosexuality, and other sexual addictions experience changed lives through Jesus Christ.



FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Scriptural Constants for a Shifting Culture

Pornography. It's the other pandemic few of us are willing to talk about. And when COVID-19 swept in, Satan, the ultimate spinmeister, saw to it that churches were closed and traditional ministry opportunities, which all of us had taken for granted, evaporated. Then it was "Welcome to Lockdown," the new normal in which loneliness, depression, and anxiety too often became gateways to sexual sin.

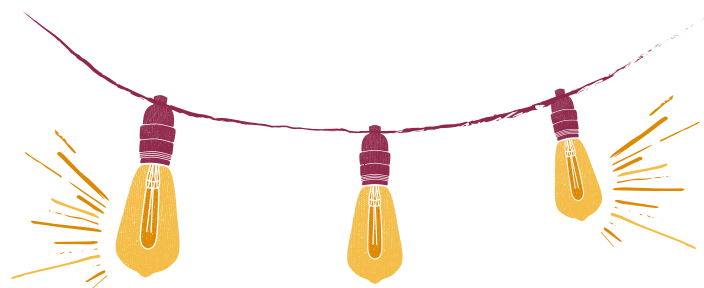
Even those of us at Harvest USA could not have anticipated the ensuing explosion of sexual temptation. Or predicted the demands this would place on our already hard-working staff. Or—this is a good thing!—the opportunities for ministry and vulnerability that lockdown would present. For example, we received an unprecedented amount of inquiries from a growing number of ministry recipients and their families who found themselves reeling from isolation and stress.

Uncertainty seems to have spared no one. Here at Harvest USA, we closed our offices this past March as a safety precaution, despite wondering how God would provide for the ministry. How many events would we need to cancel? Would we have to furlough staff? A sermon I had heard preached by Dr. Joseph Stowell more than twenty-five years ago came to the forefront of my mind, in which he observed that light always shines brightest in darkness. Even then, I never expected that, riding on the coattails of COVID-19, a national turbulence unseen before in my lifetime would come—or the opportunity this would present to us here at Harvest USA.

Throughout COVID-19, our light has shone brighter than ever as America's search for hope, peace, and redemption appears to have widened in the turmoil. Ironically, Harvest USA has been able to re-purpose the same digital technology sometimes associated with declining cultural values by maintaining and even increasing our connections between ministry recipients and staff as we've transitioned from in-person meetings to online video appointments. None of us could have predicted the burgeoning wait list for our men's, women's, parents', and discipleship ministries and support groups. And God has been faithful! He's enabled us to meet the growing demand for biblical clarity on sexual issues.

In fact, even before we found ourselves responding to COVID-19, our staff had already sensed that the timing was right for a magazine issue featuring scriptural constants applied to a shifting culture. As I write this letter from quarantine, this very comforting truth endures: The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8). To God be the glory!

SANDRA DREIBELBIS serves as Chairman of Harvest USA's Board of Directors. She started her career in the oil industry and economic development. Later, she and her husband began American Design & Service, Ltd., supplying HVAC and specialized equipment design for the global manufacturing market.



Codependent No More

Encouragement for Keeping Christ Central in Our Relationships

BY ELLEN DYKAS

Finding a greeting card for someone you love can be tough! Have you noticed how the messages in cards are often exaggerated, lofty, and unattainable?

“You make life complete and worth living for!”

“Mom and Dad, you are my unfailing rock and support. Without you, I would have failed to accomplish anything of worth.”

“You’re the friend I’ve always longed for, the other half of my heart living in another person.”

Movies, music, and greeting cards frequently touch upon deep longings for unfailing love and commitment. As image bearers of God, our desire for intimate relationships is in our spiritual DNA—yet God alone can offer unfailing, always-present love for us. We can taste love like this in human relationships, but it was never the Creator’s intent that we would replace him in our lives. Spouses, parents, children, friends, siblings, and mentors are supposed to point us to God’s love, not hijack our heart’s devotion to him.

CODEPENDENCY: WORLDLY WISDOM VS. SCRIPTURAL TRUTH

In the 1980s, self-help books popularized the term “codependent” to describe dysfunctional relationships in which an individual excessively relies upon others for worth, approval, and self-identity. Professional organizations made diagnoses for personality and relationship-based disorders. One example was dependent personality disorder, described as an “excessive and pervasive need to be taken care of; submissive, clinging, needy behavior due to fear of abandonment.”¹ Tragically, the American Psychiatric Association offers little hope because “personality disorders are resistant to treatment!”²

The word “codependent” isn’t in the Bible, and yet Scripture addresses unholy relationship patterns. What the world calls codependency, God’s Word calls “idolatry,” the worship of anything or anyone other than him. When we displace God with human relationships, relational idolatry happens.

God’s explicit command is that we have no other gods, including people, before him in our lives (Exodus 20:2–3). He warns that when “your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices



Our closest relationships can present the fiercest temptations to turn from the Giver to his gifts.

you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’... you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him” (Deuteronomy 13:6–8, ESV). The sin is subtle, but the idolatry that causes codependency happens when relationships entice us away from the Lord, and we selfishly demand that someone give us, or receive from us, love, attention, and affirmation.

Our closest relationships can present the fiercest temptation to turn from the Giver to his gifts. Codependent relationships are idolatrous because they usurp Jesus’s rightful place. Instead of yielding to the Lord who loves us, we yield our sense of well-being to a person. Even though these connections at first feel emotionally intoxicating or comforting, a painful harvest of discontentment, anxiety, and insecurity eventually develops. Why is this? People can’t fill, heal, or satisfy our hearts!

DELIGHTING IN, RATHER THAN RUNNING AFTER, PEOPLE

Codependency, or relational idolatry, is something I know well. Several relationships in my life became all-consuming, painfully broken situations, even though I was convinced that I was honoring God with sacrificial love, and even though fear and jealousy abounded in my heart. Eventually, God used Psalm 16, particularly verses

¹ [https://www.theravive.com/therapedia/dependent-personality-disorder-dsm--5-301.6-\(f60.7\)](https://www.theravive.com/therapedia/dependent-personality-disorder-dsm--5-301.6-(f60.7)), accessed by author May 29, 2020.

² Ibid.



Jesus loved, served, and enjoyed people without “entrusting” himself to them in the same way that he entrusted himself to his Father.

1-4, to help me step away from these broken patterns of relating to people.

“Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.’ As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.”

David rightly looks to God as his refuge, the One apart from whom there is “no good!” This echoes Jesus teaching his disciples that the truest intimacy and security could only be found in relationship with him: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). When we abide in Jesus alone, he will bear good fruit in our relationships. The sober warning of Psalm 16 has served as a codependency stop sign for me. I’ve learned the hard way what happens when I try to make a home in people rather than in him.

Having proclaimed God as his true refuge and Lord, David expresses a godly heart posture towards people: a holy delight in and affection for them. He cautions that when we desperately run after anyone or anything

to feel good about ourselves, devastating consequences will result: sorrow, pain, and grief, which are the sure consequences of displacing God in our lives.

JESUS’S EXAMPLE

When you “watch” Jesus relate to people in the Gospels, he is never aloof or selfishly distant. His relationships weren’t fueled by flattery, people-pleasing, or demands that people make him feel good about himself. How did he do it? John 2:24-25 explains how Jesus lived out Psalm 16:1-4: “But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”

Jesus loved, served, and enjoyed people without “entrusting” himself to them in the same way that he entrusted himself to his Father. He compassionately and selflessly loved people and obeyed the command to love God alone with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. For all of the Bible’s commands regarding marriage, friendship, parenting, and neighbors, God never said to place our trust in people with our whole being—yet we are to love as he has loved us (John 15:12). That kind of love and trust is rightly focused on our Savior, who refused to allow people to capture his heart’s focus and “sideline” God.

GOD-DEPENDENCY DISPLACES CODEPENDENCY

If you struggle with idolatry in your relationships and recognize the symptoms of codependency in your life, take heart! In truth, worldly wisdom cannot offer effective treatment options for a spiritual matter, but the gospel can through Jesus, the most relationally healthy person you'll ever meet. He offers all that we need to grow into healthy and holy people.

Jesus offers you himself! Don't miss this: Our Savior has come to make a home in us through an eternal union based on his grace. This is the most intimate, satisfying, and healthy relationship anyone could ever enjoy!

Jesus also forgives us when we sin in our relationships, and he heals our broken hearts. Many people were never taught what healthy relationships look like, much less how to cultivate family relationships and friendships fueled by the rightly ordered love for which Paul prayed in Philippians 1:9–11. Pray that God would guide you to love that abounds with knowledge and discernment.

Finally—though so much more could be said—Jesus came to transform your heart so that you would be captivated by his love and freed to move towards people with God-honoring motives rather than selfish demands. With Jesus in his rightful place as our loving Lord, other people will increasingly take their proper place as gifts to be enjoyed, not as altars for our hearts, makers of meaning, or ultimately meeting our needs.

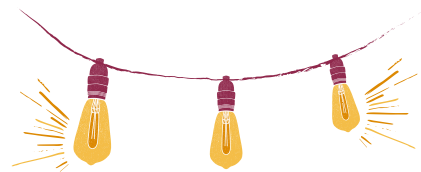
Growing in relational holiness is a topic that Harvest USA is passionate about! Please check out our website for more articles and videos in which we address it.



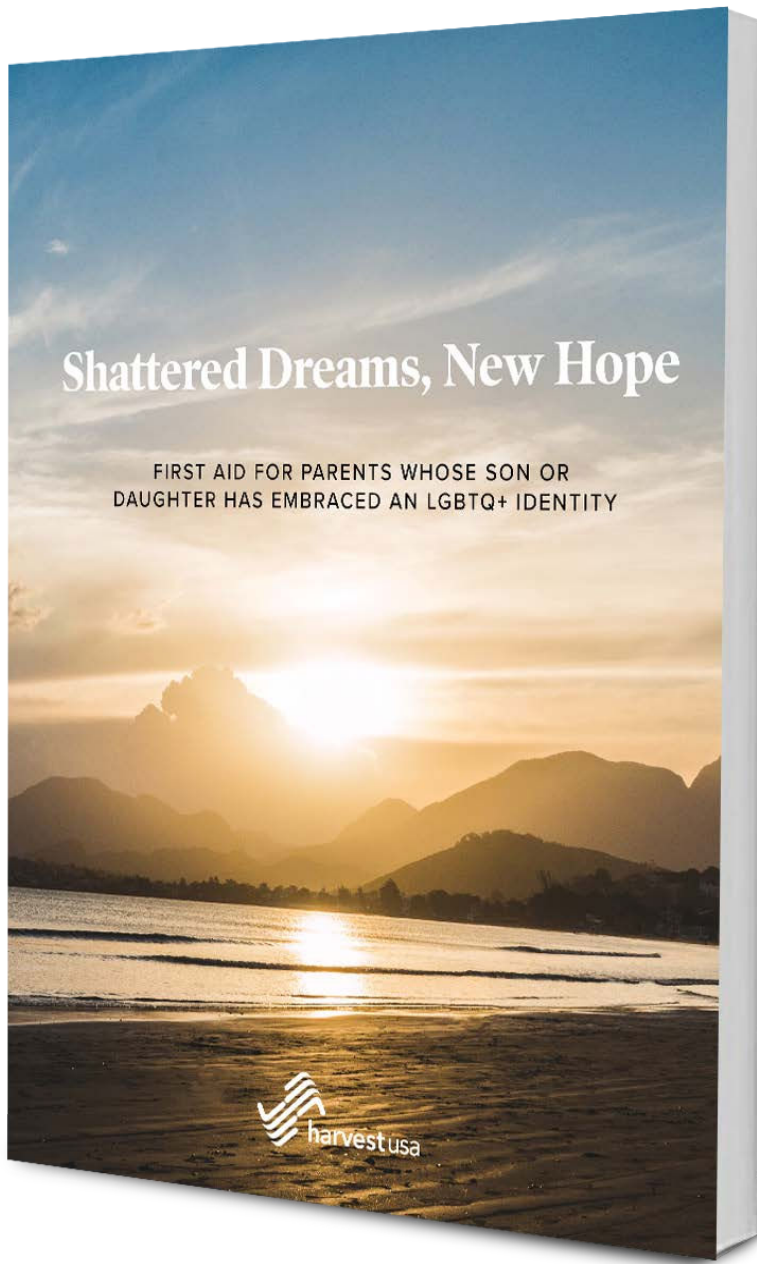
Jesus came to transform your heart so that you would be captivated by his love and freed to move towards people with God-honoring motives rather than selfish demands.



ELLEN DYKAS is the Women's Ministry Coordinator at Harvest USA. She delights in teaching God's Word and coming alongside women in their spiritual journey.



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— **CHRISTOPHER YUAN**
International Speaker and Author
of *Out of a Far Country*



Overcoming Shame Through Scripture

A PERSONAL JOURNEY



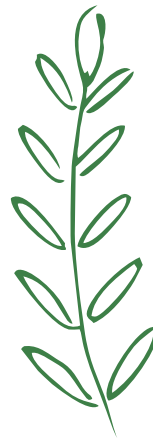
BY ANONYMOUS

I want to start by telling you that when I was asked to write this, I was excited! Let me also tell you, though, that the past couple of months have been full of challenges, some related to my sexual brokenness and some to simply a general unrest and discontentment. Walking towards God and not away from him is taking effort and deliberate choices, and the past few days have been especially difficult. However, just yesterday, God brought to mind something from Harvest USA's Journeyers in Grace (JIG), a women's support group in which I recently took part. The gist of it was, "I do not want to let Satan make me ineffective." Today, when I opened my Bible, I saw these words written on a scrap of paper acting as a bookmark: "I refuse to...I choose to..." It was something we had talked about in our JIG group.

So, I refuse to let Satan squash my desire to glorify God with my sexual struggles. It's not happening. Not today, Satan. Instead, I choose to believe that God is good and faithful. His truth far outweighs the thoughts and emotions trying to take over my attitude. I will persevere with my eyes focused on Jesus and eternity, not on myself or on this life of light and momentary afflictions (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Now, on to that testimony.

I have been a Christian since I was young, but it wasn't until high school that I started to understand the real gospel and how that applied to life. Not long after that, I figured out that I am attracted to women. It's been about 15 years since I started this journey, and a lot has happened over these years.

The part I'd like to share with you has to do with shame. Satan's greatest weapon against me has been shame. Shame is a lie that says we're worthless because of things we've done or things that have been done to us. Those lies must be measured against God's truth because God tells us something very different. He tells us we are worth his Son's life.



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To give you a picture of where I went with shame, I basically walked out on my life four years ago. I distanced myself from almost everyone who loved me. I refused to associate myself with God. I rarely went to church. I stopped serving at church and in the community. It wasn't anger at God that led me to do those things; it was shame. I didn't think I was worthy of even calling myself a Christian, let alone broadcasting to the public that I claimed to be one. I was in a very deep pit of darkness with no desire to keep on living because I saw no way out and no future with purpose. Shame had eaten me alive. I had no hope.

It's helpful to know that I am very hard on myself. I had never realized how nasty I was to myself until I lived through these past three years. My shame is rooted in a strong desire to be right—not in the sense of me being right and you being wrong, but more like me doing what is right and honorable with pure motives and always pursuing perfection in my thoughts and actions. (To be clear, these are the expectations I have for myself, not what I expect from others.)

For someone who wants so desperately to be right and pure, just knowing that my own sexual desires are twisted and broken produces a lot of shame. Choosing to actively pursue relationships with women, while knowing these choices were in direct rebellion against God, made the shame even greater. My struggle with this attraction lasted a number of years before my greatest shame, which came from taking that last step with women that I didn't think I would ever take. When I finally let those relationships progress to a sexual level, I did it with a huge bang. God's not kidding when he says that, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). My load of

shame became unbearable as I understood the ripple effects of my decision on my life and everyone around me.

I'm not sure if I just refused to let go of my shame or if I wasn't aware I could, should, or needed to do it. Whichever it was, I know I felt utterly lost and powerless. God used a dear friend to make me aware of my need by gently, but plainly, telling me I was hurting Jesus by not letting go of my shame. Essentially, by holding onto it, I was saying that his suffering and death weren't enough. I had a hard time swallowing that one. I tried to rationalize keeping my shame by saying he was already taking the punishment for my sins; I didn't want him to have to feel the weight of my shame, too. Warped thinking, right? Where is the gospel in that? The thing is, he voluntarily died knowing that he would also be carrying that shame for me. That day, I asked forgiveness for holding onto my shame and started giving it over to him. He willingly took it; he keeps his promises.

God didn't leave. He waited and then pursued me hard because he loves me. Once I chose to respond to my dear friend's rebuke, God started preparing my heart to step back into serving him. Granted, some months had passed, but during that time I completed the

counseling homework I had previously abandoned. I was seeking God.

Then, one day, I ended up in John 21. As I read the exchange between Peter and Jesus after Jesus's resurrection, I cried. I'm tearing up now as I write this. I tear up nearly every time I read that passage now. Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times before Jesus's crucifixion after stating he would never do that exact thing. Peter's pride showed, and then he fell hard—just like me! He denied even knowing Christ who loved him and who was willing to sacrifice his life to be Peter's Savior. Imagine the shame!

What did Jesus do? He gently reminded Peter that his actions did not negate his love for Jesus. Peter couldn't bring himself to say that he loved Jesus after his denial. He knew he had chosen to preserve himself instead of sacrificially loving Jesus in his time of need. Again, imagine the shame! The tenderness Jesus shows Peter hits deep in my heart. Jesus recognized the struggle in Peter and made a point to assure him that he still loved him.

Then Jesus tells Peter to tend his sheep and follow him! I don't know about you, but I know levels of shame that have left me lifeless and sure that I no longer had anything to give in this life, let alone give to God. I



I will persevere with my eyes focused on Jesus and eternity, not on myself or on this life of light and momentary afflictions.



felt I was so broken that I would never be able to do anything worthy again. I thought I had nothing to stand on because I had failed myself and had lived in complete rebellion: denying God, giving up hope that I could ever change, believing that God did not love me because he had left me with this struggle that I couldn't beat.

If you can imagine the shame, then you can also imagine the feeling of knowing that God isn't done with me. I don't even know how to explain that feeling, but he has work for me to do. Sure, he says that throughout the Bible, but reading about Jesus telling Peter he was worthy of being used for the kingdom's sake is something I can latch onto. Then I think of all that Peter did after Jesus left, and I can see that the work to which God called him was not second rate. Does that give you hope for what God has in store for you? It does for me!

I need to hear the gospel frequently. I need it preached to me. I need to preach it to myself. That is the only thing that keeps me above water and out of the woods. Even so, it gets a little dicey sometimes. God has provided people in my life to help me keep my eyes on him because, as much as this single, independent woman would like to do it on her own, it's just not possible.

The first person God provided in my journey was a fellow struggler who had the courage to share her story publicly at a conference we both attended. She has been on this road with me longer than anyone else, and we have experienced the full gamut together. I have a great core group of people in my church community who have been walking with me for quite a few years.

I need to hear the gospel frequently. I need it preached to me. I need to preach it to myself.

They have been with me to celebrate the victories, point me to Jesus, pray me out of the pits, and just do life together. They are the people I can't hide from, and that's a good thing.

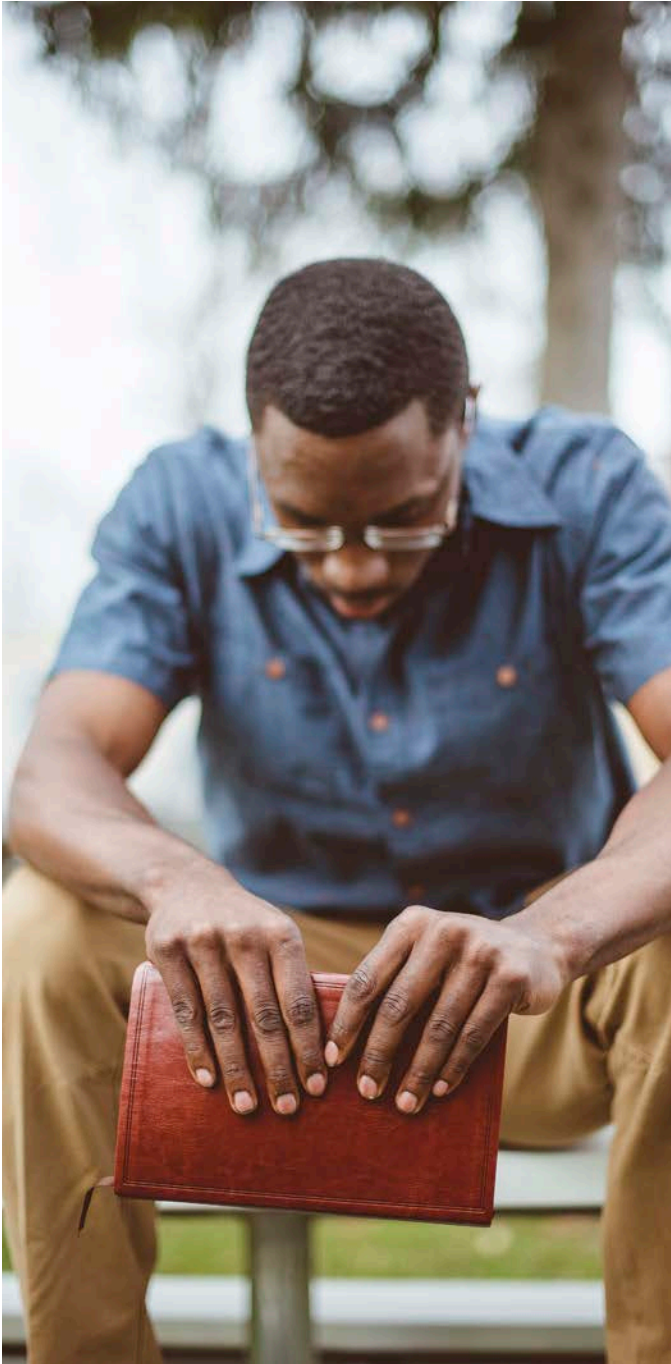
I've been connected to Harvest USA for almost nine years now, and I've seen God use the Women's Ministry in my life. They have helped open my eyes to Jesus's compassion by helping me dig into and work through some of the deeper intricacies of this struggle in my heart. Most importantly, I have found a community of others pursuing Jesus in their sexual brokenness. I didn't know I needed that community as badly as I did, but God did. He always provides.

I have been praying that anyone who reads this will walk away with a renewed sense of hope. Because there is hope. I say that with such certainty. I wish you could hear my voice and see my face to grasp how confident I am in God's faithfulness. I've seen him show up over and over again in my life. He'll do the same for you—I promise!

In this article, we do not disclose our ministry recipient's real name because she has requested to remain anonymous.

Listening to God

IN ROMANS 1 AND 2



BY JIM WEIDENAAR

James 1:19 exhorts us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak” (NIV). When we are in a conflict with people or ideas, our desire to speak what we believe is the right answer can easily eclipse any willingness to listen to the other side. But the wisdom of James’s words goes beyond mere human interaction. There is always a third person present in any controversy, one to whom we should be quick to listen. That person is God himself—especially when the controversy concerns the Bible.

The Bible is not just a text to be examined or a puzzle to be solved; it is the very speech of God to us. While it is necessary that we get the right answers from Scripture, it is even more important that we let the Bible address us on its own terms to communicate God’s own agenda. The Bible is not our research tool; it is the voice of our Creator, Master, and Savior.

To better illustrate this, let’s consider how many of us have used Romans 1 in the controversy over homosexuality. I believe the church has traditionally found in this passage a right answer to an opposing view. But let’s now submit that answer to the wisdom that comes from listening to what God is saying to us, even those who may not struggle with homosexuality.

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Addressed to those “who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” (1:6–7, ESV), this is a letter to Christians about the gospel. But we can tell from the recurring references to “Jew and Greek” throughout the letter that this church was comprised of both kinds of people. The Jewish element had all the cultural, religious, and theological “advantage” of centuries of God’s revelation; they had a lot of right answers, and they knew it. The Greeks, on the other hand, were new to the things of God and perhaps a bit rough around the edges. Paul wanted both the Jews and the Greeks in the church to be unified in the gospel, by faith, as the power of God to salvation (1:16).



If these are the outworkings of a God-denying worldview, and their existence is a sign of God's judgment, then how do I account for these things in my life?

To begin his argument, Paul first widens his scope. He starts in 1:18 by talking about “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” This is broader than either the “Jew,” who is the guardian of centuries of right answers, or the “Greek,” who is just discovering them. Paul uses “Greek” as a generic word for humankind. This is our culture, the world culture, the diverse mass of humanity descended from Adam. He temporarily directs the gaze of both these know-it-all and new-to-it-all Christians to the state of humanity as a whole.

What does Paul have to say about this broadest category of people and culture? He says that the judgment of God upon them is visible; he uses the word “revealed” in verse 18. God's ruling is shown, on display, not hidden. How is this so? His explanation of how God's judgment is visible has three points. First, God's existence and humanity's accountability to him is obvious to everyone who can perceive anything (1:19–20). Second, everyone—the great mass of humanity and culture—has decided to deny God's existence and make created things ultimate (1:21–23). Third, God lets them develop and live out the worldview that flows logically and inevitably from their fundamentally flawed starting point (1:24).

This is where Paul brings in homosexuality. Why? The reason lies in the answer to this question: “What sort of conclusions flow logically and inevitably from a worldview in which all of nature is disassociated from God?” The answer is, ironically, all sorts of “unnatural” conclusions. Inevitably, when humans make nature merely “Mother Nature” and not any kind of creation,

they redefine and manipulate nature according to their desires, resulting in conclusions that are patently unnatural. Remember, he is speaking about, but not to, the broader world here. In that broader world, these unnatural conclusions are held forth as truth; in fact, they seem natural. That's the point: Their views make sense in a world with no divine reference.

But to those who have been called out of atheistic or agnostic darkness into light, the unnaturalness is clear. And to those to whom it is clear, Paul's point is this: Isn't all this exactly what one would expect in a world opposed to God? God lets denial of his existence play out to its obvious consequences. At this point, all of Paul's Christian audience should find it easy to agree.

Oh, but wait. Paul continues with his list of the consequences of a God-less worldview. As his list continues, we begin to hear some things that are a little less obviously “unnatural.” We still hear “amens” now and then, but they are a bit more subdued and less confident. There are still some easy ones: “evil,” “murder,” “haters of God,” “heartless,” “ruthless.” But mixed in are “covetousness,” “strife,” “deceit,” “gossips,” “boasters,” “disobedient to parents.” Yikes. We had thought he was talking about other people, but this is us! The thought that ought to be whispering in the minds of Paul's Christian audience—in our minds—is, “Uh... if these are the outworkings of a God-denying worldview, and their existence is a sign of God's judgment, then how do I account for these things in my life in spite of my claim to know God?” That is exactly what Paul intends

you to think. It should be troubling. It should be jarring.

The punchline is the first verse of chapter 2. (Remember that Paul was not the one to insert a chapter break there!). “Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges.” No excuse. Wow. In 1:20, Paul had said of the God-denying world, “They are without excuse.” Now he says the same to us, to all who imagine ourselves to be in a position to judge that world. At least when people of the world do these things, it is a logical consequence of their worldview. If we do them—and we do—it proves something that should stop us in our tracks and terrify us. It proves that what is wrong with us is so bad that we continue to rebel against God while claiming to acknowledge him. We should ask ourselves which is worse: To live in godless ways consistent with an atheistic worldview, or to live in godless ways in betrayal of a professed acknowledgement of God?

What is the application? How should this affect us? It should bring a deep humility that precludes judgmentalism. But I fear that it is all too easy for us to short-circuit what God is saying to us in this section of Scripture, to stop listening to it before the punchline that lies on the other side of the chapter break, to stop at 1:26–27 and “rest our case.” Let’s not be content with the right answer from Romans 1:26–27 on homosexuality and miss the bigger point that God is speaking directly to us. If reading the first portion of the letter to the Romans leaves us feeling anything but uncomfortable, humbled, and convicted—in short, in desperate need of mercy—we are not hearing it correctly, and we are not listening to God. And if we do not hear this correctly, we are ill-prepared to understand the gospel. Let us in humility submit ourselves to what God is saying to us.



If reading the first portion of the letter to the Romans leaves us feeling anything but uncomfortable, humbled, and convicted—in short, in desperate need of mercy—we are not hearing it correctly, and we are not listening to God.



JIM WEIDENAAR is the Director for the Greater Pittsburgh Region (GPR). He has a burden to help those who are struggling with sexual sin come to understand and experience progress in gospel repentance.



Learn how sexuality points to **God's love for you.**

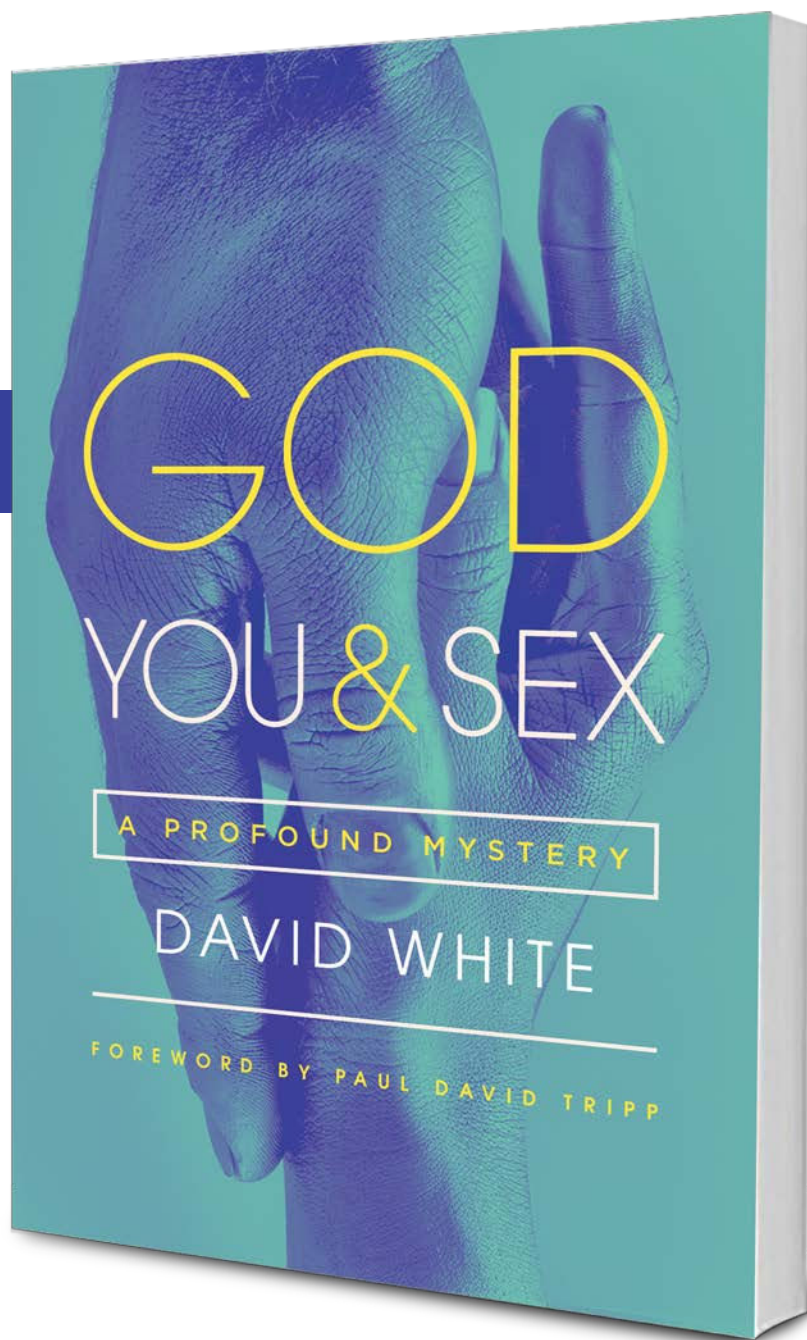
- Establishes a positive theology of sex from Scripture
- Provides helpful guidelines for parents
- Addresses issues facing married couples and singles

"Perhaps the most powerful part of this book is its discussion of how sex reveals God to us and is meant to connect us to the kind of relationship to him that grace makes possible."



— **PAUL DAVID TRIPP**

Pastor, Conference Speaker,
and Best-selling Author





HARVEST USA'S **IMPACT**

On a Pastor

BY RAYMOND JOHNSON



As a pastor, I am keenly aware of the urgent challenges of shepherding individuals who are ensnared by sexual sin. On the one hand, they are processing life in a culture defined by events like the celebrated transition of Bruce Jenner into “Caitlyn.” On the other hand, they are struggling deeply with shame, failure, and confusion regarding their own sexual sin and temptations. So many people are trapped in a downward spiral of hopelessness and despair, and, tragically, local churches are often ill-equipped or underprepared to serve and minister to these people.

Churches stand in need of trusted partners who will support them in their work of mending lives with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Harvest USA is that partner: Christ-centered, Church-focused, and committed to the authority and power of Holy Scripture.

I have found that Harvest USA consistently provides biblical foundations for the most challenging of counseling issues facing me as a pastor: homosexuality, transgenderism, pornography, sexual addiction, gender dysphoria. Whether I am in the pulpit or counseling in my study, their books, seminars, webinars, emails, and intentional encouragement have helped me learn how to move beyond mere surface matters to the chronic sin patterns endemic to all human hearts.

Harvest USA’s thoughtfulness in these issues opened a door for our church to invite former Men’s Ministry Coordinator David White to teach on “Can You Change If You’re Gay?,” current Men’s Ministry Coordinator Mark Sanders on “Pornography,” and Women’s Ministry Coordinator Ellen Dykas on “Women, Sexuality, and the Church.” Harvest USA’s faithfulness has allowed our church elders to confidently recommend their discipleship ministry to sexual strugglers in our congregation, as well as our local community. Their concern for the Church is the reason I wanted to serve as a board member.

Harvest USA’s tools are useful because, lurking just beneath the surface of our hearts, there is an often-unconscious desire for the sexually illicit and explicit. Many of us—perhaps many of you—carry the shame and sorrow of memories and actions in which we failed to protect our purity. And that is why Harvest USA’s resources are so essential. They have helped me learn to identify the warning signs of uncontrolled desire, what God’s Word says to those oppressed by misplaced affections, and our ecclesial involvement in helping struggling people recalibrate their recalcitrant hearts.

Though I recommend all of their resources without reservation, I find myself regularly returning to one



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quote in particular when discouraged, tempted, or counseling others. When challenging sexual strugglers who base their confidence in their own self-righteous attempts to stay pure, rather than on Christ, Harvest USA’s Founder, John Freeman, writes,

“Most of us have that slink-back mentality toward God and not an attitude of faith and repentance. Strugglers, especially those who have not come into the light with God or other people, don’t usually rush into God’s presence. We wait...and wait...and wait, until the opportune time. We wait until we “feel” better, until we think we have the right words, until we’ve worked up our courage, until we convince ourselves that this time was the last time we’d fail like that, until we’ve put enough distance between us and our last acting-out event, whatever form it may have taken. We wait until we’ve appropriately punished ourselves in a variety of ways. But, the truth

When we're full of unbelief and think that God is not enough, he calls us to himself.



is that there's usually no repentance in any of that. It's primarily a form of penance and reparation. And, that means that there's little of the gospel in it.”¹

How challenging to realize that, even as Christians, we gravitate toward a cycle of penance and self-atonement. But Harvest USA has helped me see that this will never work. When we're full of unbelief and think that God is not enough, he calls us to himself. So, in 1 John 1:7, God offers us a formula of sorts when the Scriptures say,

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (ESV).

Honest confession leads to fellowship and freedom from sin. John helps us see that the “gospel is all about seeing what happens when you quit hiding [sin] and start to discover the love of the Savior for you—in the mess!”²

But what about those who, though wrestling with sin, seem incapable of reorienting their misplaced affections “to control [their] own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles” (1 Thessalonians 4:4–5)? What about men and women who are white-knuckling it and trying to endure the battle until heaven? For those struggling with pornography or sexual addiction, another excerpt, from former Harvest USA Men's Ministry Coordinator David White, offers this:

“We are men [and women] who have been slaves to our appetites. When we're honest, we acknowledge that we're characterized by weakness and folly. We've been utterly confounded by our inability to stop doing things we don't want to keep doing. Yet when we begin to improve, we often grow proud. We actually begin to pat ourselves on the back because we no longer masturbate daily (or multiple times a day), that we haven't picked up a prostitute recently, that we've been staying away from the rest areas.”³

Too often, men and women live “failure-filled, shame-filled, and guilt-ridden lives. Reticent to admit [their] sexual temptations and struggles, [they] hope [it] will somehow just all go away.”⁴ But David helps us see that

recurring patterns of sexual sin are intimately wed to pride—because we hate to see how bad we truly are; because we want to be better than we are; because we take pride in our modest gains against sin and, therefore, put ourselves in grave danger. The first step for defeating pride is to find someone you trust from your church and share with him or her what is going on because, “though we might think that real help comes through dramatic and new insights, most help tends to come in more ordinary ways. It comes through our personal engagement with each other, our attention to Christ, and prayer.”⁵

Dear reader, because of Harvest USA, I am now better able to intentionally structure our ministries in ways that facilitate an open and safe place for people to share their experiences and sorrows while simultaneously ministering the gospel to them. Harvest USA labors to craft initiatives that both honor God and meet the needs of the Church—specifically, local churches. They consciously ask questions like, “What are the discipleship and sexual and gender ministry needs of pastors and church leaders? How can Harvest USA help equip churches for discipleship instead of merely providing content?”

In an era of platform building and brand expansion, it is rare for a ministry to be so concerned about local churches.



RAYMOND JOHNSON serves as the Senior Pastor of Christ Church West Chester in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He holds an MDiv, ThM, and PhD in New Testament from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of *I See Dead People: The Function of the Resurrection of the Saints in Matthew 27:51–54*, along with several articles. He serves on the Board of Directors for Harvest USA. Raymond and his wife, Meghan, have five children.

¹ John Freeman, *Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God About Sex* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014), 91.

² Ibid., xvii.

³ David White, *Sexual Sanity for Men: Re-Creating Your Mind in a Crazy Culture* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 236.

⁴ Freeman, *Hide Or Seek*, 8.

⁵ Edward T. Welch, *Caring for One Another: 8 Ways to Cultivate Meaningful Relationships* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 43.

MEET THE STAFF

Shalee Lehning



NAME

Shalee Lehning

HOMETOWN

Sublette, Kansas

POSITION

Women's Ministry Staff

DESCRIPTION OF WORK AT HARVEST USA

I serve in our Direct Ministry by offering targeted discipleship and small group facilitation. My focus is working with individuals who seek help for their sexual struggles, as well as those who have been impacted by the sexual struggles of others. In addition, I'm involved in the equipping component of Harvest USA, which includes participating in teaching and equipping events and producing resources for Harvest USA.

HOW DID YOU GET TO HARVEST USA?

In 2015, while living in Laramie, Wyoming, I was first introduced to *Sexual Sanity for Women*, a discipleship resource by Harvest USA. Not only did God use that resource in a powerful way in my own life, but ultimately I was able to use that same resource to facilitate biblical support groups for other women in my home church. Several years later, I discovered the internship program at Harvest USA, which compelled me to move across the country in 2018 in hopes of becoming better equipped to minister in these areas. At the completion of my yearlong internship, the opportunity arose for me to join the Women's Ministry staff full-time in July of 2019.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCRIPTURE?

2 Corinthians 10:9–10, which says, “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

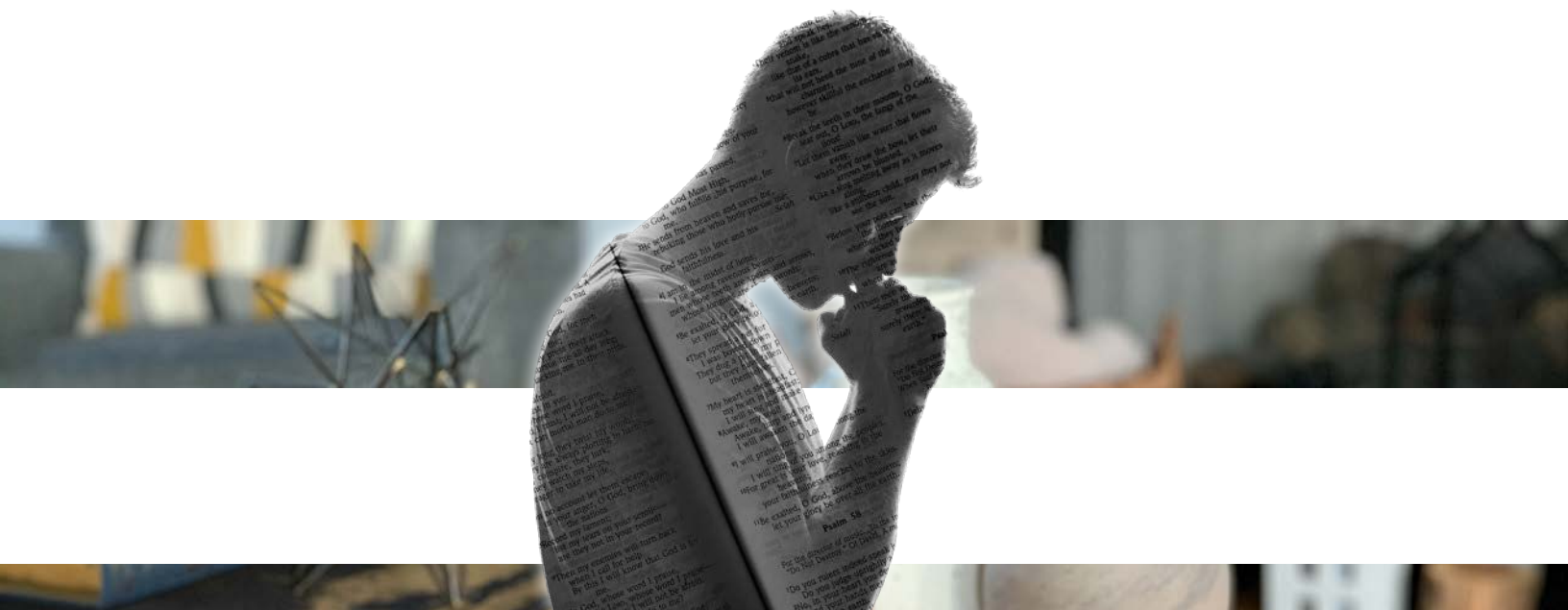
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT LIVING IN PHILADELPHIA?

The Wissahickon Valley Park Trail System. I love being active outside! This trail system goes for miles, connecting the city to the suburbs. I enjoy riding my bike on this trail into the city as it provides a unique vantage point to experience Philly.

CAN YOU TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT ABOUT YOURSELF?

I love sports! I grew up playing a variety of sports, but my love for basketball eventually won out as my favorite. I was blessed by an opportunity to play college basketball at Kansas State University. Eventually, my childhood dream of playing in the WNBA came true when I was drafted in 2009 by the Atlanta Dream. It was a privilege to travel all over the country and play the sport that I loved.





What Does Scripture Say About Homosexuality?

BY NICHOLAS BLACK



The speed with which change now occurs is faster than ever. And nothing is changing more rapidly than sexuality and relationships. Homosexuality and its increasing acceptance, in and out of the Church, is challenging the way Christians understand sex and relationships. This is more than just an intellectual debate; it is tearing apart evangelical churches, denominations, families, and friendships. It is a battle with wide-ranging societal and faith implications.

Many Christians and denominations are reinterpreting the Church's historical, orthodox stance on Scripture passages. Some denominations accept gay and lesbian relationships as fully sanctioned by God. Society is increasingly pressuring and silencing any voices that do not affirm gay relationships.

Churches holding to the orthodox position seem reticent to speak on these issues. While the gospel is about more than sexual ethics, the silence of local evangelical Churches adds to the confusion about how much Christians should submit their sexuality within God's design.

For those who desire to follow Jesus, it matters whether one obeys his will in this area. So what is the truth of this important matter?

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCUSSION

Foundationally, Scripture tells us who we are and how to live before God. Opposing sides on this issue believe this but differ widely in how they interpret the Bible. Let me suggest four ways to approach this discussion.

1. **Don't use the Bible merely to win an argument.** This is not a debate about some abstract principle; this is about people. Sexuality touches on the core of who we are and how we relate to others. Men and women in our own churches struggle with same-sex attractions alone. Many of them question whether God truly loves them—especially when they hear heterosexual Christians discussing these passages. Sensitivity and compassion ought to shape our tones.



Do you acknowledge that everyone, including yourself, needs to obey God's Word, and that everyone, on some level, struggles with sexuality?

2. **Everyone experiences broken sexuality at some level.** When we discuss whether or not God condones homosexuality, those who are heterosexual must include themselves in this discussion.

In fact, the Bible contains more verses about broken heterosexuality than about homosexuality. The Fall impacted our attractions, desires, and behaviors. When you use Scripture to examine this subject, do you acknowledge that everyone, including yourself, needs to obey God's Word, and that everyone, on some level, struggles with sexuality? Confess ways you, too, have lived outside God's boundaries. Entering into these discussions requires ongoing repentance and humility.

3. **Acknowledge that the Bible is not the easiest book to understand.** Nevertheless, the Church has always submitted to the Bible as the essential text guiding our faith and life. No Christian can, with integrity, affirm any action or behavior without reference to Scripture as a "trans-cultural" Word, divinely inspired and able to speak to every generation. So study the Bible; read scholars whose books and commentaries take differing views. Isn't listening and asking questions how you love someone you want to understand?
4. **Love and respect those who don't agree with your viewpoint.** We are called to "not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone...correcting his opponents with gentleness" (2 Timothy 2:24–25). People have seen the damage done by abusive rhetoric and have become much more vigilant about how we communicate. But, in our sensitized culture, disagreeing with someone's beliefs, thoughts, or actions is frequently labeled as hate speech or wrongfully shaming someone.

Opposing worldviews clash on this subject. The Christian worldview is that man is in a desperate condition, needing rescue and restoration by Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection on our behalf.

There may be no way to avoid conflicting emotions, but real love for another person engenders mutual respect, even when disagreements remain.

The secular worldview believes we are all essentially good; we only need personal freedom to fully authenticate the self. Because these two worldviews are incompatible at their core, conflict is inevitable.

Remember that many personal issues are at stake. When engaging with those who identify as gay or lesbian, understand that the historic, orthodox view makes a claim on them. Don't just engage the subject; get to know and love the person to whom you are talking. There may be no way to avoid conflicting emotions, but real love for another person engenders mutual respect, even when disagreements remain.

COMMONLY DISPUTED PASSAGES

Once you have laid the groundwork of love and respect and hopefully agreed upon the primacy of the Scriptures, you can have a more productive conversation about what the Bible actually says. Six passages directly address homosexuality, and several others mention it. Three are in the Old Testament (OT): Genesis 19:1–9 and Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

GENESIS 19:1–9

Two angels enter the city of Sodom urging Lot to flee because of God's impending judgment against the city, which God declared to be wicked and irredeemable. As the visiting angels seek shelter in Lot's house for the night, the men of the city demand that Lot turn over his visitors to them for their sexual pleasures.

Conservative Christians sometimes caricature the gay community as out-of-control people consumed by sex. Since they see this as the reason for Sodom's destruction, they view gay people as also awaiting judgment and destruction. In reality, no one group of people has a corner on lust and sexual obsession. Heterosexuals are equally capable of sexual promiscuity. Gay men and women are equally interested in committed relationships, companionship, love, and family.

The pro-gay interpretation of Genesis 19 brings a different, one-dimensional slant to the biblical text: violence and rape. Proponents reference Ezekiel 16:49, which states that Sodom's sin was economic injustice. Therefore, homosexuality was not the reason for Sodom's destruction, because it was not describing

committed, consensual, same-sex relationships.

Both sides bring some distortion to the argument. Those on the orthodox side must see gay men and women as made in the image of God who share deep, personal values. Pro-gay advocates must not erase or ignore the data inherent in the story. Highlighted in Jude 7 and 2 Peter 2:4–10, homosexual sex was part of the intended violence, evidenced by Lot's appalling willingness to exchange his daughters for the two men. This sordid story isn't the best example for articulating the orthodox view of homosexuality, but it does show how each side uses elements that support its limited viewpoint.

LEVITICUS 18:22 AND 20:13

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (18:22).

"If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them" (20:13).

Pro-gay revisionists cite these two laws as either outdated or limited to homosexual practices within pagan rites. As such, neither speaks to today's homosexual relationships: committed same-sex marriages.

One way to dismiss these laws is by relegating them to the past. People often say that traditionalists pick and choose which OT laws they think are still relevant—like prohibitions against homosexuality—while ignoring laws against clothing with mixed fabric or stoning people who work on the Sabbath. These arguments



contend that the inconsistency exposes what's really at work here: prejudice against gays and lesbians. Some point to texts like Hebrews 8:13, which says that the coming of Christ made the old covenant obsolete, that these laws were only for that time, and that Jesus abolished the law; his love now liberates us to embrace those who were marginalized and oppressed.

There are a number of responses to these alternative arguments.

1. **Understanding the different parts of OT law is critical.** Jesus's coming did make the OT civil and ceremonial laws obsolete—that is, laws that governed Israel's theocracy and their worship at the tabernacle. Why just these two aspects of the law and not the moral law? Elaborate rules regarding animal sacrifices and “clean” and “unclean” were fully met by Jesus's sacrifice. Jesus makes us “clean,” acceptable to a holy and just God. The OT sacrificial and ceremonial rules pointed ahead to Jesus. Now that Jesus has come, they no longer apply to us.

So orthodox proponents do not arbitrarily “pick and choose” which OT laws to obey. In understanding how the Bible is read through the lens of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, theologians have long understood that some laws were fulfilled and simply no longer apply today. The New Testament (NT) explicitly mentions the annulment of ceremonial laws and worship practices like cleanliness, diet, and holy days. But the NT noticeably lacks even one single mention or reference to removing the prohibition against homosexuality. Why is that?

2. **The OT moral law continues into the NT because it reflects God's holiness.** The moral laws still remain. Numerous passages in the New Testament that address sexual behavior and the importance of conforming our sexuality to God's design echo the OT's call to holiness.

Numerous passages in the New Testament that address sexual behavior and the importance of conforming our sexuality to God's design echo the OT's call to holiness.

Porn Stats: At a Glance

Wise as serpents and innocent as doves:
A realistic look at what Christians are up against



HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE PORN



90%

of teens and

96%

of young adults are either **encouraging, accepting, or neutral** when they talk about porn with friends.



55%

of adults 25 and older believe porn is **wrong**.



13–24

year old teens and young adults believe **not recycling is worse** than viewing pornography.

“Pornography Statistics.” *Covenant Eyes*, Covenant Eyes, 2020, https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/#stats_title. June 12, 2020.

Porn Stats: At a Glance

Wise as serpents and innocent as doves:
A realistic look at what Christians are up against



PORN IN THE CHURCH



1 in 5

youth pastors and

1 in 7

senior pastors use porn on a regular basis and are currently struggling.
That's over 50,000 U.S. church leaders.



64%

of Christian men and

15%

of Christian women say they watch porn **at least once a month.**



Only

7%

of pastors report their church has a **ministry program for those struggling with porn.**

"Pornography Statistics." *Covenant Eyes*, Covenant Eyes, 2020, https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/#stats_title. June 12, 2020.

The law exposes the real nature of our sinful hearts and drives us to God to find life in honest confession and repentance.

For this reason, all the other sexuality laws in Leviticus are still applicable today. Let's say Jesus abolished the prohibition against same-sex relationships because he abolished all the law. For consistency's sake, he also abolished the laws against incest in the same chapter in Leviticus. But why then did Paul get so upset at the man who was sexually involved with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5)? Why was Paul upset at the church for tolerating such behavior? It was because he was applying Leviticus 18:8, which remained relevant for the emerging church. Leviticus 18 and 20 not only prohibit beard-trimming and mixed-weave fabrics, but also theft and deceit, slander, hatred, and revenge (19:11, 16–18). Yet no one argues that such morals are now obsolete because of the work of Christ. Rather, the New Covenant reiterates and reinforces both the principles and the particulars.

3. **Jesus actually strengthened the moral law of the OT, especially when it came to sexual behavior.** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reinforced and deepened the OT law against adultery by including lust of the heart, a secretive behavior, as equally a sexual violation against God's design. He tightened divorce law in light of Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus did not reduce God's standards. The law exposes the real nature of our sinful hearts and drives us to God to find life in honest confession and repentance.
4. **Jesus aligned our sexuality with what the OT positively describes.** Jesus declared his love for and dependency upon the Scriptures. Over and over, in response to controversies with religious leaders, he declared, "It is written." In one encounter with the Pharisees (over the question of divorce), Jesus described the ideal of marriage by appealing to God's creation of humanity into male and female (see Matthew 19:3–6, where Jesus refers to Genesis 2:24). By appealing to God's creational order—before the Fall—Jesus affirms God's boundaries for sexual expression as permissible only between a husband and wife. Jesus agreed with this understanding of marriage and sexuality.

The Bible tells us what is wrong with humankind and how God is fixing the whole world through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.



By saying that the biblical writers didn't know about the kind of homosexual relationships we know of today, opponents face a serious question when it comes to Jesus. Was Jesus so limited by his time and culture that even he was wrong on this matter? If so, then Jesus's understanding of the OT and how it applies to his followers is deficient, since he relied on its text without hesitation or qualification. Jesus's "silence" on homosexuality does not fit an interpretation that he would affirm mutual, loving, covenantal, same-sex relationships; rather, it says far more about his complete agreement with the OT Scriptures and its boundaries for sexual expression.

5. **The Bible, though not a science book, accurately describes what is wrong with us.** Culture says the biblical writers didn't understand the nature of homosexuality, while we now have knowledge of social sciences that they didn't. While the Bible is not a science book, it is an authority on the human condition. It tells us what is wrong with humankind and how God is fixing the whole world through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

When we subordinate what Scripture says about humankind's condition to current opinions, we risk discarding portions of Scripture we don't like. If we

do this, we must then ask ourselves why we believe anything God has said about how we should live. The Scriptures warn us that our hearts all too easily fall prey to self-deception; they will delude us into affirming whatever we think is right for us.

6. **Interpreting these two passages requires a wider view of the Bible.** There are so many laws for God's people to obey because everyone has an innate, sinful inclination to live life apart from God. Without clear instruction, everyone would do whatever they thought was "right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). The Bible describes the result as discord, more suffering, death, and misery. Sin is a stance of the human heart that fundamentally disbelieves God and refuses to obey and trust him. To live rightly, we cannot look to our own hearts, for we are masters at self-deception. We need clear direction regarding sexuality to preserve what is good from what can corrupt. The law was a "tutor" that showed us how to live, but it was only when Jesus came that we would be given a new power to obey (the Holy Spirit).

CONCLUSION

Many people conclude that the Bible is unclear about sexuality or too dated. But looking at these passages in light of the whole Bible, and grounding that view in

His love is personal,
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become people who
look and act like him.

Genesis 1–2, really removes any uncertainty. This issue is far more emotional than rational; inclusivity and a fear of appearing unloving drive many to dismiss what Scripture says or to vigorously reinterpret them.

Stepping back from the discussion on sexuality to look at the wider biblical message shows us that the Bible isn't solely centered on God's love for us. The central message of the Bible is God's love, and God's love is accepting, but his love intrudes into and transforms our lives, disrupting the life-paths we have personally chosen. His love is not the world's "unconditional love." His love is personal, intense, and relentlessly desirous that we become people who look and act like him. Look at 1 John 5:2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." If we love others as we ought, then we will also obey God out of love for him.

God is for us! Deep blessings come from being in a personal relationship with him. For everyone, that means turning from things we think we need and turning in faith toward him, growing in obedience to him in all things.

In Mark 10:28–30, Jesus told Peter that we will receive "a hundredfold" of blessings in this life, and that we cannot comprehend the richness and depth of life when we give ourselves completely to follow him and his Word. Jesus's words remain strikingly relevant today.

This article is adapted from Nicholas Black's minibook, Homosexuality and the Bible: Outdated Advice or Words of Life?, published by New Growth Press. The minibook can be purchased at harvestusa.org.



NICHOLAS BLACK is the Director of Shepherding at New Life Presbyterian Church of Glenside, PA. Formerly, he served as the Educational and Resources Director at Harvest USA.

Current American Behaviors and Beliefs About the Bible

5%

"BIBLE CENTERED"

Interact with the Bible frequently. It is transforming their relationships and shaping choices.

19%

"BIBLE ENGAGED"

Interact with the Bible frequently. It is transforming their relationship with God and others.

19%

"BIBLE FRIENDLY"

Interact with the Bible consistently. It may be a source of spiritual insight and wisdom.

9%

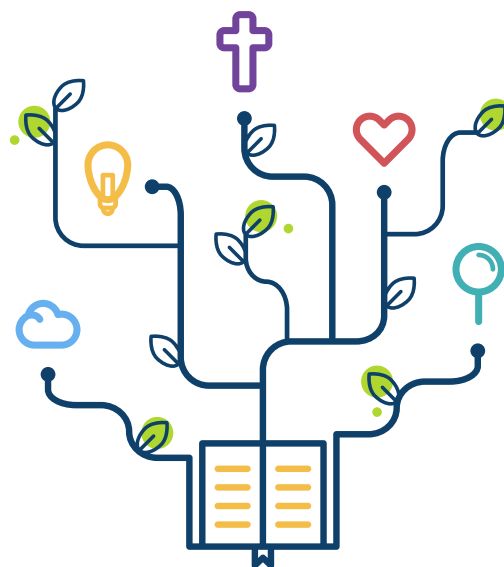
"BIBLE NEUTRAL"

Interact with the Bible sporadically. It has little spiritual influence, but that influence may be growing.

48%

"BIBLE DISENGAGED"

Interact with the Bible infrequently, if at all. It has minimal impact on their lives.



"State of the Bible 2019: Trends in Engagement." *Barna*, Barna Group, April 18, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2019/>. June 12, 2020.

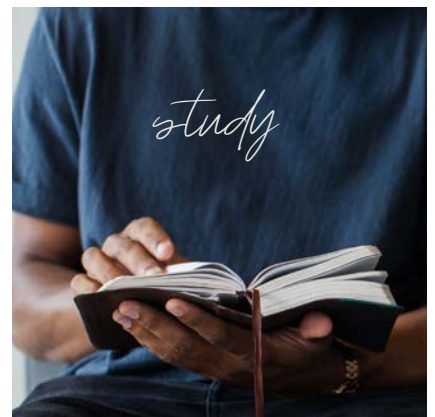
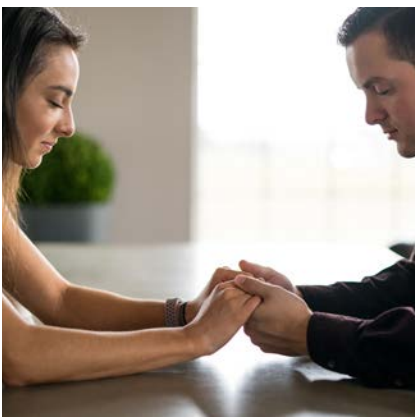
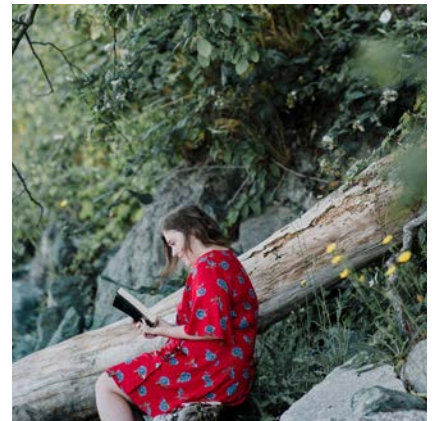
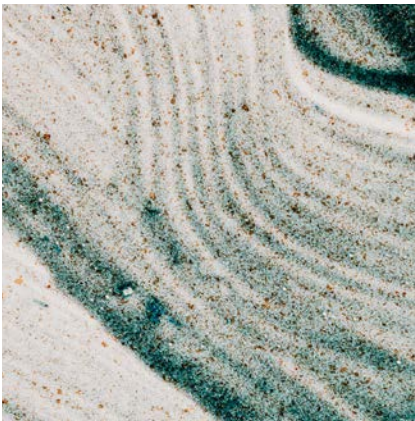


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