



Sex: Where It All Starts

Sex is one of the biggest somethings of all time in more fabulous ways than most people appreciate.

by Glenn Stanton

The Gate Leading to the House

Regarding the relationship between sex and the family, allow me the indulgence of quoting Chesterton again:

Sex is an instinct that produces an institution; and it is positive and not negative, noble and not base, creative and not destructive, because it produces this institution. That institution is the family; a small state or commonwealth which has hundreds of aspects, when it is once started, that are not sexual at all. It includes worship, justice, festivity, decoration, instruction, comradeship, repose. Sex is the gate of that house; and romantic and imaginative people naturally like looking through a gateway. But the house is very much larger than the gate. There are indeed a certain number of people who like to hang about the gate and never get any further.¹

Sex certainly isn't an end in itself, any more than a gate is an end. It leads us somewhere. Sex ushers us into something grand and glorious, more than we can imagine. Therefore, we need to understand its nature and participate in it as it was meant to be.

C. S. Lewis refers to this when he says, "The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union."²

A Christian view of human sexuality is all about context – making sure we don't separate some part of the thing from all the others that are intended to make it a complete thing. *The Message*, Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the Bible, states it this way:

There is more to sex than mere skin to skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE." ... We must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever -- the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. (1 Corinthians 6:16-18)

Again, we accomplish this not by merely understanding how we should act or not act, but how human sexuality reflects the very inner life of God and how it gives Him glory when we live in it as He created it.

What is God's Interest in Sex?

... Adam as man and Eve as woman are uniquely created to show forth the image of God in creation. They reflect it as individuals and they reflect it as complements to one another. This image is one of love, intimacy, creativity, cooperation, beauty, glory, and much more. In Adam and Eve's God-given design, let's observe how their sexuality is a primary part of their being.

What's the first statement God makes to Adam and Eve after their creation? "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth'" (Genesis 1:28).

Think of this in terms of what He doesn't tell them to do. From the start, God doesn't tell Adam and Eve to engage in

- learning, as intellectual beings,

- prayer, as spiritual beings,
- economics, as industrious and productive beings,
- politics, as orderly and civil beings, or
- writing stories, performing music or dance, or doing art, as creative beings.

Of course, each of these is part of our God-given humanity and part of God's command to "subdue" the earth. Each of these is a part of family life that we should practice and celebrate. But these are not what came first. God blesses man and woman and bids them to be fruitful and multiply—*exercising and reveling in their nature as sexual beings*. This was the first command for humanity, and Adam and Eve were, no doubt, quite happy to obey. God was pleased also.

Likewise, let's look at the event when Adam and Eve, fresh from the mouth of God, first gaze upon each other. Adam didn't look at Eve and declare his appreciation for her intellectual brilliance, her sensible outlook on life, or her spiritual piety. Not by a long shot!

Adam and Eve first glory in something else, something some Christian theologies have unfortunately and incorrectly thought of as quite base and ungodly. They marvel at each other's bodies—their flesh. When Adam sees Eve for the first time, he proclaims with great excitement, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23, NIV).

He can't help but recognize this aspect of her. God had made Eve beautiful and Adam knew instinctively that this partner was just right for him. Adam was a physical and emotional oddity without Eve, but now it all made sense. Both of them understood the naked truth (sorry!) that Adam was made for Eve and Eve was made for Adam. God revealed it in their flesh, as part of His perfect design.

This helps us understand something very important about Christianity. As C. S. Lewis said, "Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body—which believes that matter is good, [where] God Himself once took on a human body."

This gets us back to Chesterton's quip about the vulgar joke. Satan can corrupt sexuality and the flesh and turn it into something ugly. But it is, at its core, something beautiful and godly. Therefore, the flesh is spiritual and we should appreciate and cherish it under the lordship of Christ.

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¹G.K. Chesterton, *G.K.'s Weekly*, 29 January 1928.

²C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 96.
