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## **Complicating Sex**

### **Series: Divine Design: Sex According to the Bible**

**The Village Church at Shell Point**

**Evening Service**

**March 16, 2025**

#### I. **Purpose of the series**

- A. One of the most most sexually chaotic periods in history
  - 1. So my sense is that most of us grew up with a very different framework for understanding and evaluating sexuality than the culture of today
    - a. And we struggle as a result
  - 2. Most of us think we know what we believe
    - a. But we are constantly bombarded by different and antagonistic views of what we take for granted
    - b. Often from our own families
- B. So I have two concerns in this series
  - 1. Take the time to review the biblical views of sexuality, especially as it relates to marriage
    - a. (For biblically, sexuality and marriage are inseparable)
    - b. So we can confirm our biblical roots and commitments
    - c. And now be swayed by the changing winds of cultural waves
  - 2. And then also to evaluate the more extreme forms of sexual expression from those biblical standards
    - a. And help us know how to engage with our children and grandchildren as they face the onslaught of the enemy of our souls

#### II. **The Genesis Connection**

- A. Everything we needed to know about sex we learned in Genesis
  - 1. God's design for marriage and sexuality is established in Genesis
  - 2. Nearly every aberration from God's design and their consequences are illustrated in Genesis

#### III. **First Message**

##### A. **Divine Design**

- 1. Male-female dichotomy established
- 2. Male and females made in God's image
- 3. Jesus affirmed the male-female prerequisite for marriage and sexual expression
  - a. Quotes Genesis 1 and 2 approvingly
- 4. Male-female coupling for sexuality has procreative purpose
  - a. Rooted in the dominion mandate – multiply, fill the earth and subdue it

- b. True even if not every male-female couple can have children
    - c. And true even if not every male and female marries and remains single
- B. **Divine Complementarity**
  - 1. Not good that the man should be alone
  - 2. Woman created from man's sela (Heb) or side (aka, rib)
  - 3. Woman as the "better half"!
  - 4. Reaction of the man: "At last!"
    - a. Woman is far and above any possible animal companion
  - 5. **Genesis 2:24** (ESV) —
    - a. 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
  - 6. Man-wife as new familial unit
    - a. The prioritized family unit
    - b. Jesus affirmed
  - 7. **Helper fit for him**
    - a. Balance of woman as helper, but corresponding to him
    - b. Helper, but equal in personhood
    - c. Both image-bearers of God
  - 8. All before the fall

#### IV. **Arranged Marriage**

- A. **Adam and Eve**
  - 1. Matchmaker was God
  - 2. Humans were without sin
  - 3. Yet the humans could, and would, change
    - a. And would still fall into sin
- B. **Isaac and Rebekah**
  - 1. Abraham's servant went to relatives
    - a. God's providence relied on to make the identification (not by chance)
  - 2. Once identified, servant deals with Rebekah's parents
  - 3. Rebekah was given some say in terms of timing
    - a. But she goes with the servant to marry a man she had never laid eyes on
  - 4. Isaac has even less input
    - a. Servant shows up with Rebekah, and that's it
  - 5. Successful marriage!
    - a. Isaac was comforted after his mother's death
    - b. He never sought another wife (cf Abraham and Isaac's sons)
    - c. Didn't try to solve Rebekah's barrenness by use of a concubine
  - 6. Providence of God central to the success of this arranged marriage
- C. **Jacob**
  - 1. Not so successful arranged marriage
  - 2. Falls in love with Rachel

- a. Serves Laban 7 years to gain her hand
- b. Deceived into consummating the marriage with Rachel's older sister
- 3. Serves another 7 years for Rachel
- 4. All kinds of problematic consequences
  - a. What should Jacob had done?
- 5. What if you marry the wrong person
  - a. Used Jay Adam's example of loving one's spouse
  - b. If not as wife, as neighbor
  - c. If not as neighbor, as enemy!
- 6. The example has to do with an unloved spouse
  - a. Was misunderstood as an abusive spouse
  - b. Would never counsel anyone to live with an abusive spouse

V. **Naked and Not Ashamed**

- A. The sex and marriage story, of course, begins to get complicated following the fall
  - 1. At the same time, I'm convinced that marriage was designed by God with a view to the fall
  - 2. God's design was for marriage and dominion with our without the fall
    - a. But God knows the end from the beginning
    - b. And even in creation, I believe that God's design for marriage was His primary solution to the fall

B. **The Helper Suitable for Him**

- 1. **Genesis 2:18** (ESV) —
  - a. 18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
- 2. Complementarity of man and woman
- 3. Incompatibility of animal substitutes
- 4. **Genesis 2:21–23** (ESV) —
  - a. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.
  - b. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.
  - c. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
- 5. The woman is literally a revelation for the man!
- 6. **Genesis 2:24–25** (ESV) —
  - a. 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
  - b. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
- 7. The beginning of romance

- a. And the obscure, foreboding statement about being naked and not ashamed

C. **The Fall**

1. You know the story
  - a. Serpent, crafty
  - b. Convinces Eve that God is not for them
  - c. She sees the fruit as good for food and a delight to the eyes
  - d. Ate some, gave to Adam
2. **Genesis 3:7** (ESV) —
  - a. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
3. **Genesis 3:8–11** (ESV) —
  - a. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
  - b. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”
  - c. 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”
  - d. 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”
4. All of a sudden, nakedness becomes a basis for shame!
5. Then God issues the curse
  - a. To the serpent
  - b. To the woman
  - c. To the man

D. **Grace After the Fall**

1. But in the midst of the curse is a gracious promise
2. **Genesis 3:15** (ESV) —
  - a. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
  - b. Protoeuangalion – first gospel
3. Significant – promise includes the presumption of offspring
  - a. Even though the stated consequence of failing the probation was death!
  - b. That’s grace!
4. **Genesis 3:20–21** (ESV) —
  - a. 20 The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.
  - b. 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.
5. Why didn’t Adam call his wife’s name “the mother of all the dead”?

- a. After all, she led them into sin
- b. But because of the promise, Eve and Adam would bear children
- c. They would begin to fulfill the dominion mandate
- 6. Even more, God made garments of skin and clothed them
  - a. Their own fig-leaf garments were inadequate
  - b. God's garments prefigured the sacrifice of animals and required the death of animals
  - c. A reminder of the consequence of sin
- 7. Point – God provided marriage as the key relationship through which human beings would be able to navigate the effects of the fall
- 8. Ashamed of nakedness
  - a. Physical, but more than physical
  - b. Now, in context of human sinfulness, to be open and completely transparent to any and all human beings, is a source of fear, shame, embarrassment
  - c. But God established marriage as the one relationship where two human beings could be naked and not ashamed
  - d. One man and one woman, who could be honest with each other in a way that is not possible or healthy with other human beings
  - e. One relationship in which trust with each other's weaknesses and sins is accepted
  - f. One relationship in which the grace of God for sinners can be best expressed on a human level
- E. **Marriage and the Fall**
  - 1. Marriage, and its sexual dimension, is the means by which God redeems human beings
  - 2. The one relationship which is capable of getting human beings to flourish and experience the love of God
    - a. As the demise of marriage occurs, so do civilizations
  - 3. At the same time, because of its significance in redemption, and because it is the best way for humans to navigate fallenness in redemptive ways
    - a. It is also one of Satan's favorite playgrounds
  - 4. And that's why you see all kinds of complicating factors in Genesis
    - a. And aberrations of the divine design

## VI. **Romance and Marriage**

- A. Before we get into the weeds with the negative consequences of the fall as it concerns marriage and sexuality, let's begin with a more positive outlook
  - 1. Yet one that is often misunderstood and distorted
    - a. Romance and marriage
- B. **Falling in love**
  - 1. That's the primary way in which humans speak about relations with the opposite sex
    - a. One of the ways the distortions happen
  - 2. And yet, it is a well recognized dimension of God's design

3. The attraction of a man and woman to one another is impossible to deny
  4. And entire book of the Bible reflects the romantic dimension
    - a. Song of Solomon!
  5. **Proverbs 30:18–19** (ESV) —
    - a. 18 Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand:
    - b. 19 the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.
- C. Possibilities which make it complicated
1. You can fall in love with the right person before marriage
  2. You can fall in love with the wrong person before marriage
  3. You can fall in love with the right person after you are married (your spouse)
  4. You can fall in love with the wrong person after you are married (someone other than your spouse)
- D. The Bible speaks of falling love in a variety of ways
1. David’s son **Amnon** fell in love with his half-sister **Tamar** (**2 Samuel 13.1-15**)
    - a. So much in love that he was sick over her
    - b. That led to his forcing himself on her (rape)
    - c. And ultimately, he hated her with a hatred that exceeded his previous love for her
- E. Better example – **Isaac and Rebekah**
1. A number of elements are included in their story which makes romantic love redemptive
  2. Isaac was **seeking** a wife
    - a. Now, his seeking was by proxy – Abraham’s servant was sent
    - b. But Isaac was open and longing for the helpmate
    - c. Sometimes, a spouse appears apparently out of nowhere
    - d. But most of the time, a man and a woman are open to the possibility; asking, “Could this be the one?”
  3. There was a trust in **the providence of God**
    - a. **Genesis 24:27** (ESV) — 27 and [the servant] said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, **the LORD has led me in the way** to the house of my master’s kinsmen.”
    - b. The hand of God (the invisible hand) is a fuel for romance, certainly not a barrier
    - c. But trust also includes the willingness to wait, to be patient, for God’s timing as well as the person
  4. Then there is a sense of **adventure**
    - a. Both the woman and the man need to be adventurous
    - b. Especially the woman – Rebekah
    - c. She left her home and family to marry a man she had never seen!

- d. She was willing to go when the servant was wanting to go, even though her parents wanted her to wait
5. The modern approach is to check out the marriage partner beforehand through cohabitation
- a. “How will I know if I don’t live with him/her and have sex”
  - b. But cohabitation makes successful marriages less likely, not more
  - c. And ultimately, it will kill romance
  - d. The marriage commitment for life is an adventure of a lifetime; there is always much of the unknown to discover about one another
6. Romantic love does not exclude **parental involvement**
- a. Rebekah’s parents approve the relationship
  - b. Often parents know something about their own children than can help avoid pitfalls in relationships and serve in a healthy way to enhance romance
  - c. Even Isaac consummated the marriage with his father’s approval – taking Rebekah into his mother’s tent (**Genesis 24.67**)
  - d. Song of Solomon affirms the same thing – the bride leads the husband to the house of her mother
  - e. **Song of Solomon 8:2** (ESV) — 2 I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother— she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate.
  - f. Here the wife submits to the instruction of her mother
7. **Romance contains mystery**
- a. **Genesis 24:63** (ESV) — 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening....
  - b. Much discussion about the object of Isaac’s meditating
  - c. Perhaps it was all spiritual – meditating on his latest Bible study
  - d. But he knew the servant was on a mission
  - e. And he wondered what the outcome might be!
  - f. **Genesis 24:64–65** (ESV) — 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel 65 and said to the servant, “Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself.
  - g. There would be mystery until the marriage was consummated
8. **Falling in love after marriage**
- a. **Genesis 24:67** (ESV) — 67 Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, **and he loved her**. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.
9. The **new family**
- a. Comforted after his mother’s death – part of the leaving and cleaving (physically and emotionally)
  - b. Not to discourage an extended network of friends, or to cut one selves off from ones parents

- c. Friends can and should serve to encourage and enhance the love relationship
  - d. But there is a priority of the husband and wife relationship
- F. **Dangers of falling in love**
  - 1. Romantic love can become an idol
  - 2. C.S. Lewis warns in the Screwtape Letters – being in love is “the only thing that makes marriage either happy or holy”
  - 3. That’s the advice the senior demon encourages Screwtape to promote in his project
  - 4. Falling in love before marriage should not divert the committed Christian from short-circuiting the God-ordained process for marriage consummation
  - 5. In Isaac and Rebekah’s case, the romance followed, rather than preceded, the marriage
- G. **Romance preceding marriage**
  - 1. But romance can precede marriage
  - 2. Jacob and Rachel
  - 3. **Genesis 29:20** (ESV) — 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.
  - 4. Their romance continued after they were married
  - 5. **Genesis 29:30** (ESV) — 30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.
- H. **Wrong romantic love** before or after marriage
  - 1. Both premarital and extramarital sex are forbidden – both in terms of the Law and in the NT as well
  - 2. Our age tends to prioritize sentimentalism and feelings over facts
  - 3. But the Law of God is for our benefit
  - 4. Perhaps the worst example is Solomon
  - 5. **1 Kings 11:1** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh...
    - b. That having been expressly forbidden
  - 6. **1 Kings 11:4** (ESV) —
    - a. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.
  - 7. Warning – if the world’s wisest man could fall sway to sexual temptation, that ought to make us all leery of flirting with illicit relationships
    - a. That goes for relationships with the opposite sex
    - b. But also with same sex relationships in the moments of confusion, or the inability to find companionship and a mate of the opposite sex
- I. **Fading romance** cannot be allowed to neglect the marital commitments
  - 1. Husbands are to love their wives (**Ephesians 5.25**)
  - 2. Why would such an admonition be necessary? But it is!



3. Loving one's spouse is work!
  4. Father-in-law's advice – "It's a lot of work"
  5. When the romance fades, it's time to get to work and love
- J. **Helping one another**
1. The older generation should help the younger generation
    - a. And the younger should be open to instruction, and receive it circumspectly, comparing it with scripture
  2. **Titus 2:3–5** (ESV) —
    - a. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,
    - b. 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,
    - c. 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
- K. Romantic love cannot be denied
1. It can be valid, has its place
  2. But cannot supplant the biblical guard rails
- VII. **Social Significance of Marriage**
- A. While a man leaves father and mother and clings to his wife, the marriage still has consequences in the social realm
1. A man marries into his wife's family; a woman marries into her husband's family
    - a. And the dynamics of those broader relationships have their fingerprints on the relationships that will unfold through the years
  2. The families affect the dynamics of the couple's relationships
    - a. And the couple impacts the broader extended family relationships
- B. Take **Esau**
1. **Genesis 26:34–35** (ESV) —
    - a. 34 When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite,
    - b. 35 and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.
  2. And that wasn't enough
    - a. Once he figured out the effect of his selection of wives on his parents, he decided to do it again!
  3. **Genesis 28:8–9** (ESV) —
    - a. 8 So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father,
    - b. 9 Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.
  4. That didn't exactly help the relationship with his parents!
  5. Then his growing family had further social consequences

6. **Genesis 36:6–8** (ESV) —
  - a. 6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob.
  - b. 7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock.
  - c. 8 So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)
7. So Esau’s family ends up outside the Promised Land, outside the domain of blessing for God’s people
8. Even worse, Esau joined himself to a people of problematic religious commitment
  - a. So his choices left him not only geographically separated from the Land of Promise
  - b. But also separated from the people of promise
  - c. Separated from God!
9. But God’s grace is capable of overcoming even those bad choices
  - a. God’s sovereign choice of a people would include some of Esau’s descendants
10. **Amos 9:11–12** (ESV) —
  - a. 11 “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old,
  - b. 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.

C. **Joseph**

1. Pharaoh lifted Joseph up and placed him over the land
  - a. And part of that was his marriage
2. **Genesis 41:43–45** (ESV) —
  - a. 43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.
  - b. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”
  - c. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.
3. Interestingly, the Pharaohs chose their wives out of this priest’s family
  - a. Marrying into this family was of great social significance
  - b. As Joseph rode into various places on his chariot, no doubt his reception was enhanced by the fact that he had married into this well-connected family
  - c. Indeed, into the extended family of Pharaoh!

4. Marrying only to achieve social status is dangerous and can plant the seeds of marital (and societal) disaster
  - a. But to pretend that one's marriage has no social consequences is an error

VIII. **The Love Triangle**

- A. Just think of how many fewer novels and movies there would be if there were no love triangles!
  1. That's because novels and movies are driven by drama
    - a. And there's plenty of drama when a third person is inserted into the love relationships
    - b. And most certainly, the drama is bad drama!
    - c. Jealousies, intrigue, distrust, manipulation, even murder!
- B. **Abraham and Sarah**
  1. Problem – Sarah was past the age of bearing children
    - a. She believed she had the responsibility of siring children for Abraham's family (the cultural norm)
    - b. And her responsibility was significant – his family was to generate the seed that no one could count to fulfill the promises of God!
  2. **Genesis 16:2** (ESV) —
    - a. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.
  3. So, Abraham had a son by Sarah's servant Hagar
    - a. So, wouldn't Sarah be happy with the outcome?
  4. But the best machinations of human manipulation cannot overcome the sensitivities and dynamics of the human soul
    - a. Sarah gets angry
    - b. First with Abraham!
    - c. Even though it was her idea!
  5. **Genesis 16:5** (ESV) —
    - a. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!"
  6. Hagar herself contributes to the problem with the way she responds to her own pregnancy
  7. **Genesis 16:4** (ESV) — 4 And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.
  8. Hagar then promotes her own worth as a woman and flaunts her capacity
  9. Problems ensue
    - a. Jealousy, strife, pride, trouble

10. Only God's intervention – with both Sarah and Hagar – would bring redemption out of this horrendous situation
- C. **Jacob, Rachel and Leah**
1. Rachel is barren; Leah is not
    - a. The same kinds of issues between Sarah and Hagar can be seen
  2. Leah has six sons before Rachel has one
  3. Rachel seeks to compensate by providing her servant for Jacob
    - a. Not to be outdone, Leah does the same thing!
  4. Eventually, Rachel bears Jacob a son – Joseph
    - a. Joseph means “May God add” – Rachel indicating her desire for more, signaling her lack of satisfaction
    - b. Her desires are fulfilled – but at great cost
    - c. She has Benjamin – but dies in childbirth
  5. Bottom line – there is great contention and struggle between the two women, and the two families within a family
  6. Upon the second child of Rachel's servant: **Genesis 30:8** (ESV) —
    - a. 8 Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali.
  7. Remember, these are two sisters
    - a. And there is antagonism throughout their lives as a result
  8. Fueling the feuds is the fact that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah
    - a. Which would eventually result in favoritism with the children
    - b. Joseph's dreams and his flaunting them further drives a wedge between the families
  9. Jacob seems oblivious at times to these dynamics
    - a. (Not that surprising, is it?)
    - b. But he becomes attached to Benjamin, the youngest son of Rachel following the death of Rachel
  10. So here, as in our own world, the love triangle wreaks havoc with God's design for marriage and sexual expression
- D. In our own day, our culture's legal system has exacerbated the problem with the ease of divorce
1. A situation that some have called “sequential polygamy”