



Ashley Madison is a Canadian based online dating and social network service, which was launched in 2001. The site is intended for those who are interested in committing adultery and is known for its slogan, "Life is short. Have an affair."

The Bible, Marriage, and Sexuality

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The company made headlines in mid-July of 2015 when it was revealed that a group of hackers published approximately 40 megabytes of sensitive internal data. The hackers eventually released account details of all 37 million users of Ashley Madison. Resignations and suicides resulted from the leaked information, and it was readily evident how much the culture loves to expose people's sins. A little more than a year has passed since the hack, yet sadly, the parent company of Ashley Madison reported that the business is still accessible and is growing.

What can be learned from the Ashley Madison scandal? Christians are not impervious to sin of any kind. Sin is not a respecter of persons, and believers must be vigilant against the lusts of the flesh. Moreover, believers are commissioned to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). Pastors, especially, cannot accomplish this command with “motivational talks” from the pulpit. Far too many evangelical pastors teach virtually nothing with regard to a biblical understanding of human sexuality, which results in much of the Bible remaining untaught and fellowships of believers being woefully in the dark. Recognizing the necessity to affirm the Bible's authority and truthfulness in every dimension that it addresses, the purpose of this article is to provide a word from the Lord on the matter of sexuality, which is fundamental to human identity and ubiquitous within modern culture.

The Creation Account

God provided for the first man in such a manner that distinguished Adam as the highest of the created order. God provided for Adam's physical and spiritual necessities. God created the superlative environment

in which Adam could love and enjoy his Creator. God's concern for Adam's personal wellbeing was the reason that He provided a female companion to be “a helper suitable for him,” that is, to complement him in the most intimate of relationships (Gen 2:7-25).

Subsequent to God creating Eve from one of Adam's ribs, the Lord “brought her to the man” (2:21-25). The most intimate of relationships had been established by God, which is the permanent union of “the man and his wife” in marriage. Often, it is said that the woman was not taken from Adam's head in order to dominate him, nor from his feet to be trampled by him; rather, it was from his rib (under his arm) in order that he would protect her and draw her near to his heart.

The responsibility placed upon Adam was for him to “leave his father and his mother” and to “cleave to his wife” and begin a new family (2:24). Adam “had relations with his wife Eve” in the warm, intimate embrace of married love (4:1). God pronounced Adam and Eve as husband and wife, and they became “one flesh.” Such a sexual embrace is always for a married couple who belong to one another. Sex apart from marriage is thus condemned in the Bible.

God's design for the married woman is for her to be a “helper” for her husband (2:20). The simple description, “helper,” encompasses a wide range of capacities in which the wife complements her husband; she also maintains the distinctive qualities that both husband and wife bring to the marriage relationship.

The description “helper” means that a wife balances, submits, and satisfies what is lacking in her husband. Genesis 2:21-25 gives several primary features of the marriage relationship. Verses 21-22 reveal that the role of the male and female is distinct. Man's role as head of the marriage is by virtue of his being created first; it is distinct from that of the woman as the “help meet.” Man is incomplete with-

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out the woman. The wife balances the husband almost like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fitting together. The marriage relationship is unique. For instance, both the man and his wife are to be “one flesh”; it is within the Genesis account that sex is viewed as a normal and healthy component of the marriage relationship.

Sex is beautiful and holy because God created it. In the arrangement of God, it takes two people—male and female—for a new life to be produced. The male and female come together in the intimacy of marriage, as the Creator planned it, and the result is a precious new life in the home. Within the intimate embrace of marriage, Eve “conceived” from the seed given her by Adam, “and gave birth to Cain” (4:1). The same occurred when “she gave birth to his brother Abel” (4:2). Therefore, sex is good, as God planned it, for married couples who have become “one flesh” (husband and wife). In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve “were both naked and were not ashamed” (2:25). God made the intimate sex life a very desirable and pleasant thing, so that the world He created would be populated with people who would love Him and enjoy Him forever (cf. Col 1:16).

The Consistent Testimony of Scripture

Sex was created by God to be pleasurable within marriage. When “Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing” (Gen 18:11), God told them Sarah would bear a child. “And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’” (18:12). There is a genuine “pleasure” between husband and wife in the intimacy of marriage.

Abimelech, king of the Philistines, thought that Rebekah was the sister of Isaac. “And it came about... that Abimelech...looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah” (26:8). Isaac was likely kissing and perhaps engaging in foreplay with his wife.

God gave man a natural attraction for a woman, and He gave to woman an attraction to man. One would not be understating the biblical account to declare that courtship has a rich history (cf. Song 2:8-17). The tragedy is that sinful men and women disobey God’s design and enter into the sacred intimacy of sexual indulgence without the bonds of marriage. For this reason, God commanded, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). God also commanded, “But do not let immorality or any impurity...even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (Eph 5:3).

According to Scripture, sex is to be reserved for marriage. God designed sexual intercourse as a vital aspect of the marriage relationship. The first command that God gave to Adam and Eve was to have sexual relations (Gen 1:28). Essentially, He repeated the command in Genesis 2:24-25.

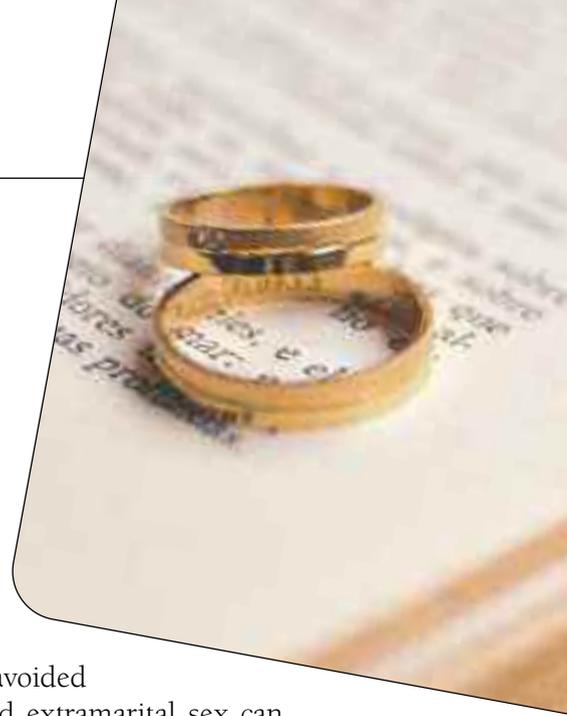
The command of Exodus 20:14 is, “You shall not commit adultery.” The command against extramarital sex is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:18, because God does not want His people to misunderstand the importance of the command. Adultery is the sin of sexual indulgence with someone other than one’s own husband or wife. There is never a circumstance when extramarital sex is acceptable.

God commanded His people not to “covet your neighbor’s wife” (Exod 20:17). Coveting a person that is not one’s spouse is often the result of looking, longing, and lusting. Therefore, God told His people, “Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you” (Prov 4:25). Looking often leads to longing, and the longing often leads to lusting. For this reason, Jesus said, “Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28).

Premarital and Extramarital Sex

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cally leads an unmarried couple into fornication, as a slippery slope from the initial look or touch. Fornication and adultery are among the sins that Jesus said come from the heart (Matt 15:19). The acts are evil and “defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23). Jesus did forgive the “woman caught in adultery,” as He will forgive those who repent of this sin, but His counsel is to practice this sin “no more” (John 8:4, 11).

The biblical view of sex can best be seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, which stresses that anyone who has engaged in sexual immorality will suffer consequences. Certainly, it is prudent and wise not to suffer the consequences of sin, which is why God warns against sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:13, 18-20). Premarital and extramarital sex is a sin that affects one of the most important and sacred bodily organs that God has given.

God desires His people to enjoy sex only in the bonds of marriage to protect the mind. Those who do not engage in premarital or extramarital sex usually have healthier marriage relationships, because there is a mutual trust that has been established from the beginning of the relationship; this provides a resolute foundation for a healthy marriage. Indeed, sex is a gift from God, and thus it is subject to God’s loving commands for its enjoyment. God created sex, and thus when a husband and wife experience it in accordance with the Lord’s design, it is not only the best sexual experience, but also contributes to the best sexual development.

Waiting to have sex until marriage and within the bonds of marriage also protects man and woman from fear. There is a peace of mind when one knows that the threat of sexually transmitted diseases is not possible because of sexual fidelity. Only those

who have avoided premarital and extramarital sex can have this peace.

God desires to protect man and woman from lacking the ability to discern the difference between love and sex. Although the world confuses love and sex, the Bible instructs, “You shall not follow the masses in doing evil” (Exod 23:2). Certainly, a husband and wife in love do enjoy a sexual relationship that is unknown to most young people. Jacob, for example, labored fourteen years for his wife, Rachel, whom he loved greatly (Gen 29:20; cf. 24:58). Ruth was in love with Boaz, and he likewise loved her. The romance was clearly true love (Ruth 2). Premarital and extramarital sex distorts the ability to discern whether genuine love or whether emotions or hormones are directing one’s actions.

Conclusion

God created sex and designed it to be enjoyed solely in the bonds of marriage, for which it is intended. Anything that has a legitimate function can be abused, such as sex outside marriage, and will not function as the Creator intended or will lead to additional consequences. God’s desire is to protect His creation from the sin of sex outside marriage, and the problems that such actions create. God’s best is to provide a member of the opposite sex, within the marriage relationship, as a result of His love for His creation. God gives His commands to obey for the benefit of humanity. Rejection of God’s design for sex is ultimately self-destructive. The biblical view of sex may not be popular in today’s culture, but it is what is best for culture, families, and the nation. (788)