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It’s Complicated: The Boundaries of Sex

**Scripture Reading:**

Encourage… younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. (Timothy 5:1-2)

1. Introduction
   1. First lesson review
      1. God created us as sexual beings[[1]](#footnote-1)
      2. Secular culture has its own individualistic and pleasure-seeking way of thinking about sexuality
      3. Scripture tells us that sex and the gospel are intrinsically linked
         1. Created realities point us to deeper spiritual realities of gospel
      4. From Ephesians 5:24-43, we saw that sexual union is a picture of Christ’s spiritual union with the church, and this is only depicted in male-female marriage relationships
   2. Question: What are appropriate biblical boundaries for males and females, who are unmarried? (i.e. “How far is too far?”)
      1. Because dating is a modern invention, it’s not always clear what biblical sexual boundaries are
   3. Theme/Answer: Until marriage, unmarried Christians should refrain from not only sex but from *sexual activity* as well
2. Three God-Ordained (Male-Female) Relational Categories[[2]](#footnote-2)
   1. Family
      1. For various reasons, in early times, people had sex between blood relatives
         1. Abraham and Sarah (half-sister)
         2. Lot’s daughters
         3. Cain, Abel, Seth
      2. God never encourages it, but later clearly disapproves of it
         1. Leviticus 18 – prohibition of unlawful sexual relations
      3. There should be no sexual relations amongst family members and blood relatives
   2. Marriage
      1. In marriage, God *commands* couples to have sex
         1. *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another… (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)*
      2. Sexual relations between husband and wife are good because it signifies union between Christ and church
   3. Neighbor
      1. Neighbor means people who aren’t a spouse or family-member
         1. Friends, strangers (tinder), schoolmates, colleagues, etc.
      2. *To the unmarried… it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Corinthians 7:8-9)*
      3. Widespread sexual immorality in Corinth; Paul says if you want to have sex that’s fine, but *do so only within marriage*, any other context is prohibited[[3]](#footnote-3)
3. Not Just Sex, but Sexual Relations
   1. Sexual relations are more than just people having sex
   2. Sexual activity is any kind of activity that would incite thoughts and feelings that would or could lead to sex
      1. *You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28)*
   3. To discern this, it’s helpful to put our neighborly relationships against the backdrop of family relationships
      1. You shouldn’t do anything with someone which you wouldn’t do with a sibling or parent
   4. Sexual purity is to treat other people, especially those of the opposite sex, like family-members (1 Tim. 5:1-2)
4. Conclusion
   1. Again, the bible gives us more than a list of dos and don’ts
   2. Only within marriage does sex and sexual activity rightly point us to spiritual union we have with Christ
   3. Anything outside of marriage is sin because it would fundamentally miss the mark to mirror the mystery of our spiritual union with Christ

1. Beth Felker Jones, *Faithful: A Theology of Sex* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 39. Thus, sexual *desire* in and of itself is not bad or evil, that is, insofar as sexual desire, or any other desires for that matter, is oriented towards God and his ordained purposes for creation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gerald Hiestand and Jay Thomas, *Sex, Dating, and Relationships* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 35-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hiestand and Thomas, *Sex, Dating, and Relationships*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)