

A Way That Seems Right (Human Sexuality)

(contains PG-13 themes)

Genesis 3:1-6 on July 27, 2025

Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

Please read Genesis 3:1-6 before going further in this transcript.

Human Sexuality can be defined this way: The physical, emotional, mental, relational, and ethical aspects of human sexual desire, attraction, behavior, health, and identity.¹

Today's sermon title is "A Way That Seems Right."

> But who gets to decide what's right, what's true and best in regard to each of these aspects of Human Sexuality?

> Who decides what's morally right and wrong, or... if morality really even matters all that much in the first place?

> Who can declare, with real authority, what's sexually ok and not ok?

Well, if you're a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, then I hope you'll agree that the God who created us humans, is the One who gets to decide on all of these things. He alone has the real authority to set the course for human beings, because He alone is our Designer and Creator.

Genesis 1:1 begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He created the sun and the moon and the stars. He created the land and the sea. He created all of the vegetation and all of our beautiful trees. He created all of the fish and birds, all of the livestock and wild animals. Then, after the first 5 days of creation, Genesis 1:25 declares, "...And God saw that it was good." (It was ALL, good.)

Genesis 1:26-28 then goes on to describe the 6th day, "26 Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"

27 So God created mankind in his own image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

28 God BLESSED them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it....'"

God created humankind, male and female, in His own image, the "Imago Dei."² Not only is this our origin story, this is also what gives every single

¹ Based on an AI overview on Google.

² Google's AI Overview explains: "'Imago Dei' is a Latin term meaning 'image of God.' In theological contexts, it refers to the belief that humans, both male and female, were created in the likeness of God. This concept, rooted in the Book of Genesis, signifies that humanity is uniquely distinct from other creatures and possesses a special relationship with the divine. It's not a physical resemblance, but rather a representation of God's attributes, such as reason, morality, and the capacity for relationship."

human being on the planet, worth and dignity. And, it also gives us our contextual anchor and compass for understanding Human Sexuality. Later on Genesis 1:31 concludes, “31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good....” (Everything that God made was very good, including Human Sexuality.³)

Friend, Human Sexuality is God’s good gift to His creation, and with this in mind, Human Sexuality should actually be defined this way: God’s good gift to His creation, in all of the physical, emotional, mental, relational, and ethical aspects of human sexual desire, attraction, behavior, health, and identity.⁴

Our entire discussion about Human Sexuality must be based in and around and through our Creator’s design, and under His authority. This authority includes the authority of His written Word. Article 2 of our church’s Statement of Faith describes the Bible this way: “... the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged....” Our discussion, and our decisions, our conversation, and our conclusions, must be guided by His Holy Word.

This being established, we can now move on to Genesis 2:8-9, “8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” All of these trees were good, each one was part of God’s good creation, designed just the way He wanted them to be.

Genesis 2:15-17 goes on, “15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” Again, this tree was a good tree; nonetheless, God didn’t allow them access to it, but He did allow them to eat freely from every single other tree in this entire garden paradise. As their Creator, this was well within His purview, well within His rights. God alone determines the boundaries; He alone has the authority to determine what’s best for His creation, and what is not.

In light of our discussion on Human Sexuality, it’s worth noting that Genesis 2 ends this way: “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” This is the summary statement right before humankind falls into

³ I can’t help but think of David Crowder’s song, “Everything Glorious.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81dK2Vu1IUUs&list=RD81dK2Vu1IUUs&start_radio=1

⁴ Based in part on an AI overview on Google.

sin through disobedience. They were both naked, but they felt no shame; they were innocent of evil thoughts regarding their bodies. In today's day and age, how many of us can say this?⁵ Body shame, and sexual guilt, are all too common in our world today. Both men and women alike, wrestle with their sexuality, and a growing number are reporting struggles with their gender identity. But it wasn't always this way, and, it doesn't have to remain this way, if we will only turn to our Creator for the healing and guidance that we so desperately need, and regain what we so tragically lost. God's good design for Human Sexuality has been broken by sin, but through the cross of Jesus Christ, not only can we find forgiveness for our sin, but wholeness and holiness through God's indwelling Spirit. So there is great hope for our broken sexuality.

Our Scripture reading this morning was from Genesis 3. Humankind decided to exercise their free will, and through an act of deception by their enemy, the devil, and through an act of culpable disobedience by Adam and Eve, sin entered our world. Genesis 3:1-3 says, "1 Now the serpent [*that is, the devil*]⁶ was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from *any* tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and *you must not touch it*, or you will die.'"

Now, you may have noticed that both Satan's question, and Eve's answer, change God's words. It's clear that God's directive had been relayed to them, but each of them then made their own adaptations.⁷ When Satan prods her, "Did God really say?", he suggests that God wasn't allowing them to eat from any of the trees at all, not just the one single tree. Eve's answer in verses 2-3 clarifies that God did allow them to eat from the trees in the garden, just not the one in the middle. She then seems to add her own bit of color commentary, "we must not even *touch* it!"⁸ (Now, this may

⁵ Read Genesis 3:7-8. After eating from the forbidden tree, their eyes were opened, and they realized that they were naked. The first thing that they experienced was shame, feeling the need to cover themselves with clothing. Then they hear God approaching and they feel fear, so they hide. Shame, and fear, when they could have been experiencing assurance and safety.

⁶ See Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, and compare/contrast Genesis 3:14-15 with Romans 16:20.

⁷ Genesis 2:16 says that God commanded the MAN which tree to avoid, and then a few verses later God makes a helper suitable for him, the WOMAN, Eve. So Eve likely either heard the command as it was conveyed to her by Adam, or God told her Himself at another time. The Bible doesn't tell us how Satan learned about this directive.

⁸ By referring to it as "the tree that is in the middle of the garden," Eve "omits the name of the tree, which contains the rationale for not eating from it. ...[this in turn serves to trivialize] the offense in contrast to the punishment (DEATH [just] for touching fruit!)." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 30 footnote on Genesis 3:3.

have actually been a really good idea, not to touch this tree, but adding to God's Word is never a good idea.)^{9 10}

Satan then calls God into question in Genesis 3:4-5, "4 You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."¹¹ Satan's bold claim, that they would *not* certainly die, was an outright deception.¹² Not only does he deny sin's punishment, but he makes disobedience to their Creator sound attractive and profitable. He planted a seed of doubt and rebellion: God can't be trusted, and He needn't be obeyed.

Genesis 3:6 then records humankind's tragic fall into sin, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."^{13 14} The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *seemed* good for food, it *seemed* pleasing to the eye, and it also *seemed* desirable for gaining wisdom.¹⁵

⁹ Consider Deuteronomy 4:2 as well as Revelation 22:18-19 which, interestingly, references the tree of life.

¹⁰ "The woman correctly qualifies the serpent's charge, but she diminishes God's grace by not emphasizing that they are "free" to eat from "any" tree (2:16)." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 30 footnote on Genesis 3:2.

¹¹ Now, let's be clear here: Adam and Eve were ALREADY like God. We learned about this back in Genesis 1:26-27 > God made humankind in His image; He made them in His own LIKENESS. It would be hard to overstate how amazing this is: to be made in the "Imago Dei," in the very likeness of God Himself. So Adam and Eve were already blessed beyond compare. To be clear though, just because we were created in God's likeness, that doesn't mean that we're gods. Also, we simply don't really know just how much knowledge of good and evil Adam and Eve may or may not have had before they ate from this particular tree.

¹² In John 8:44, Jesus describes the devil as ".... a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

¹³ Satan suggests that God is just trying to keep you from knowing what you need to know; He's trying to control you. God's just afraid that you'll become like him, so he's keeping you from this good tree. Satan lures them with the desire to be "like God" in a way that God did not intend. See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 30 footnote on Genesis 3:5.

¹⁴ "The rapid-fire series of verbs suggests that everything happens quickly, so that the couple do not consider the consequences. By failing to rule over the serpent, the human couple betray God and permit evil to enter the garden." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 30 footnote on Genesis 3:6.

¹⁵ Note the repetition of 2 out of 3 of these attributes back in Genesis 2:9.

There was a way that seemed right to Adam and Eve, and it most certainly ended in their death.^{16 17 18} Despite the clear and simple boundary that God had set for them, somehow or another Adam and Eve convinced themselves that it seemed right to do it anyhow:

- > It was good for food, and they were hungry!
- > It sure loooooooked good!
- > It was desirable for gaining wisdom, and what could possibly be wrong with that!? (God doesn't want us to be FOOLISH does He!?)

Well, not only is this how we humans tend to rationalize and justify our sin and rebellion, but this is often the lens through which we make many of our life decisions, including our sexuality: we want to do things our own way – the way that seems right, that feels right, to us! We want to use our own wisdom and our own knowledge for making decisions, rather than trusting God. We want our freedom, our independence, our right to do what we want to do!¹⁹ If it feeds the lust of our flesh, if it pleases the lust of our eyes, and if it seems desirable for gaining what we want, then we embrace it whole hog.²⁰

¹⁶ See Proverbs 14:12. Later on, in Genesis 3:19, God renders His judgment for Adam's disobedience, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Genesis 5:5 says, "Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died." Hebrews 9:27 later says, "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." Romans 5:12 later says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way DEATH came to all people, because all sinned."

¹⁷ You see, on behalf of the whole human race, Adam representatively lost access to the tree of life when he was kicked out of the garden. See Genesis 3:22-24 and Revelation 2:7. Article 3 of our Statement of Faith explains in this way: "...In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed."

¹⁸ And were it not for the love and grace of God, which prompted Him to send His Son to die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sin, we'd all be left with nothing but his shared sentence of death. This is why Romans 5 contrasts our death through Adam with our life through faith in Christ. Romans 5:17 adds a word of hope, "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!" Friends, despite Adam and Eve's mistrust and rebellion, God made a way for us to be rescued, reconciled, and renewed. And that renewal extends even to our sexuality.

¹⁹ "In eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve sought a creaturely source of discernment in order to be morally independent of God." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2011, p. 13 footnote on Genesis 2:9.

²⁰ These three particular aspects of temptation are alluded to in Jesus' temptation in Luke 4:3,5,9 as well as 1 John 2:16, "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world."

With all of this in mind, let's consider...

Some Modern-Day Ways That May Seem Right:

1. "As long as it involves consenting adults."

Last month I came across an article with this title: "My best friend cooks me dinner... then lets me sleep with her husband."²¹ Now, my standard response to these kinds of articles is to skip right past them, which is what I did. But I did make a note of it because I wondered if it might make a good sermon illustration one day. Statements like these used to be considered socially unacceptable and inappropriate. But in our current day and age, they've become clickbait, and they've become more and more common, which begins to normalize this kind of behavior.

Hebrews 13:4 teaches us that... "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."²² So the issue isn't just so simple as whether 2 adults can consent to have sex with one another, or 3 adults in this case, but whether God consents. Yes, consent is important, but it's not enough without God's consent. If we consider ourselves a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, there should be no question about whether what's being conveyed by this article is right or wrong. And even if we're not a follower of Jesus, a good number of us can still see that something is definitely off here. Although this way may seem right to some, most of us can see just how hurtful and wrong this is, in terms of God's good gift of marriage. The modern-day practice of "friends with benefits" is offensive to a holy God.

Another modern-day way that seems right is...

2. "Who are we to judge others?"

Boy if there was ever a catch-all phrase in today's society, this is it; just "live and let live" and never say a word about someone else's behavior. Who are we to judge what people do in the privacy of their own bedrooms! There's a troubling example of this in 1 Corinthians 5, when the church in Corinth is failing to deal with a case of sexual impropriety. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 Paul writes, "1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?"

So the context here is *believers* holding their fellow believers to a standard of holiness. In other words, Paul is saying that we do need to judge others

²¹ I think this showed up on an Apple News feed to which I don't currently subscribe.

²² Exodus 20:17 says that we should not covet our neighbor's wife, which can be equally applied to not coveting our neighbor's husband, which is the case in this article. Check out Malachi 2:10-16, "...do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth."

in the church. If this is actually what's going on between two members in your own church, then confront it. In verse 3, Paul says, "...I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this." And, in verse 5, he clarifies that it's actually for this person's own good, "hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord." (*This is likely a reference to being excommunicated to bring him to his senses.*)

Friends, we're not doing each other any favors by looking the other way and ignoring one another's sins. Proverbs 27:17 says that iron sharpens iron; accountability and positive peer pressure are helpful tools in all of our lives. They are particularly helpful in our role as fellow believers, who are striving to help one another grow and mature in the faith; this is a key part of the discipleship process.^{23 24}

A 3rd example of a way that seems to be right, is this:

3. "We're doing it this way in order to save money."

1 Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." I can immediately think of two modern-day scenarios that illustrate this all too well. The first one is couples who decide to live together before they get married in order to save money. Yes, it makes sense that this would save money: rather than paying two rents or two mortgages, why not just pay one? But you see, living together, and being sexually active outside of marriage, is a rebellion against God's good and loving design.

His design is for men and women to save sex for marriage. And then, once they've made a life-long covenant before God and human witnesses, they consummate their marriage in a physical union as one man and one woman. This is why, thousands of years later, Ephesians 5:31 refers all the way back to God's original creation design from Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."²⁵ Becoming one flesh, is the ultimate celebration of our Human Sexuality. This is not only God's design for bringing new lives into this world, but also for placing them in the ideal situation, of being born into a family with both a mom and dad, who've committed to one another (and to their children) to stick together "until death do them part." In light of God's beautiful design for the family,

²³ Galatians 6:1-2 agrees, "1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

²⁴ Consider 1 Peter 4:17, "For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

²⁵ See 1 Corinthians 6:16, as well as Jesus' reference to this very same truth in Matthew 19:5.

suggesting that “we’re living together to save money,” falls far short of God’s wonderful design for Human Sexuality.²⁶

Now, I wish that this kind of thinking, in terms of saving money, was limited to young couples, but it’s not. More and more older couples are deciding to be sexually active with one another outside of a marriage commitment, in order to save money. I can’t tell you just how deeply it grieved my heart, the day my own grandmother, God rest her soul, explained this rationale to me. Ephesians 5:3 says, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” After my Grandpa Johnson died, my grandma decided that it would be more financially advantageous not to get legally married her new boyfriend. You see, she didn’t want to lose grandpa’s retirement benefits. So, in a move that contradicted everything she’d ever taught me about faith and following Jesus, she just moved in with the guy. In the words of her generation, they decided to “live in sin” in order to save a few bucks.²⁷

Friends, if we want to have any kind of a credible Christian witness to the world around us, it needs to begin with sincere devotion to God. If we’re going to call ourselves deeply devoted followers of Jesus, then our beliefs and practices around Human Sexuality need to match up. In the words of Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” One way that salt loses its saltiness, is by getting mixed in with other contaminants, like dirt and rocks, etc. Eventually, what began as something pure and potent and useful, “is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

²⁶ But Pastor Jerry, we’re going to get married someday anyhow, why does it matter what order we do things in? Well, it matters because God says so. And it also matters because many well-intended young couples often end up NOT getting married after all; but they’ve already intimately intertwined themselves by consummating their relationship with sex.

²⁷ 2 Chronicles 15:16 comes to mind, when King Asa had to depose his own grandmother due to her idol worship.