

Divine Romance

By

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“Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh, “and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; “but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

-Genesis 24:1-4

The thing I love most about the narrative sections of the Bible, is that they show us how the most mundane elements of our lives can be seen through an eternal lens. In this chapter, we see a seemingly average story unfold. Abraham, becoming more advanced in years, decides to find a good wife for his son. However, he realizes that the cultures surrounding him are living under moral systems that he can't abide by. Because of this, and the fact that he is too old to go himself, he sends a servant to his hometown in order to find a suitable wife for his son among his own family. His servant, being faithful to this calling, goes to Abraham's native country and prays to God that the first young maiden that approaches him, if she offers him and his animals water, would be the right wife for Isaac. As he was still praying, a young maiden named Rebekah approaches him and offers both him and his camels water.

Taking this as an answer to prayer, he offers her golden jewelry and asks her who her family is. She reveals that she is indeed a relative of Abraham and he returns to her home and offers her, in the presence of her father, a betrothal to Isaac which she and the family accepts. Leaving aside some interesting family drama, which becomes far more relevant when Jacob returns to this house and lives with Rebekah's brother Laban, Rebekah journeys back to Canaan and marries Isaac.

As I said, from the surface this seems like a pretty mundane story. Leaving aside its narrative importance, in that it is important to know how Isaac, the child of promise, married and began his own bloodline, for the ancient world this would be a pretty straightforward betrothal and marriage story. But like all other things in these narrative stories, what we are seeing on the surface has profound cosmic significance. And this is exactly how the ancient Jews read this story. Just like the previous chapter in which we see that the burial of Sarah laid the foundation for Jewish burial rituals which

themselves foreshadowed a higher eternal hope; this story becomes foundational for Jewish wedding rituals, most of which are still practiced to this day, which become the basis for understanding a key component to our relationship with God. And so, in this paper I wanted to take a look at the importance of the rituals that are patterned for us in this chapter and how they point us to Christ, and in the next paper, we will talk about the practical relational counsel that we can derive from Isaac and Rebekah's marriage.

Higher Participation

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

-Colossians 2:16-17

What the New Testament authors reveal to us is that every seemingly mundane element of the Old Testament, whether it is the rigorous descriptions of ritual sacrifice, holidays, the architecture of the temple, or even stories like this that lay the basis for marriage rituals, they all reveal a pattern of heavenly realities that allow for us to participate in God's divine pattern through these patterns. To give one example of this principle, take the construction of the earthly tabernacle in the book of Exodus. When Moses is given the “blueprints” for the Tabernacle on Mount Sinai in incredible detail, God expressly tells him:

“And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

-Exodus 25:40

The obvious question that we can ask is why was it so important that Moses followed a particular pattern of construction? Some argue that in the book of Revelation, the apostle John is given a vision of heaven that mimics the pattern of Exodus, and so Moses was bound to be faithful to the image of heaven that he was shown. This is right in a technical sense but it is wrong in a more general sense. Remember, God is spirit (John 4:24) which means that His dwelling place would necessarily be spiritual as well and not have a physical shape. What this means is that the visions of heaven that were given to John and Moses were not of a *physical* reality that God dwells within, but instead a *spiritual* vision that symbolically outlines the patterns of God's nature and even His plans for His people.

Everything that is prescribed to Moses, from the metals that were to be used, the shape of the tabernacle, the different chambers, and the images sculpted within were all representations of that divine pattern. And by sacrificing on that altar, by moving through

the different chambers of the temple, the people of God were given an opportunity to participate in that divine pattern, and draw nearer to their God, spiritually, through the physical temple that He had provided them.

It is possible, and people have done it to the best of their abilities, to analyze every element of the tabernacle and to see the divine pattern that is contained in these earthly elements. The main issue for the modern reader is that we live in the aftermath of the scientific revolution that sought to reduce all things down to the material. This has had many positive effects, but has unfortunately shut off modern readers from seeing this pattern in the Bible. Now, modern Christians have a tendency to read the Bible in a materialistic sense and seek to only understand the material events and because of this they fail to see the spiritual meaning contained in these archetypal, true, stories.

Our Divine Romance

“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

-Ephesians 5:32-33

This is true within the marital structure as well. The reason why we have wedding rituals is because the ritual is supposed to reveal the divine pattern. When Paul is giving instruction regarding Christian marriage, he isn't just giving marital advice, (though he is doing that as well) he is revealing a pattern contained within marriage that illustrates the divine love that God has for His people. This is not to say that God's love for us is romantic, but that romantic love reveals a particular pattern of God's love that is revealed in our romantic relationships.

Sex and the Younger Generation

This truth should hallow our romances and help us understand why God guards so zealously our romantic relationships. Many today believe that the Bible is a book that brings shame to our romantic inclinations and unfairly restricts our sexual desires. We will talk more about this in the next paper, but there are no shortage of sites and influencers today that encourage overt sexual expression and see it as an act of empowerment for people to speak openly about sex without shame.

To be fair to these people, their narrative is made easier for them by the reactions of Christians themselves. Christians have done a fairly good job at condemning the over-sexualization of our culture, but they have done a fairly bad job at proposing

something different. In other words, instead of showing the Bible's positive view of our sexuality, many Christians have spent all their time condemning the world's view of sexuality, making the charge that Christianity is anti-sex seem more and more accurate to young people. Let's lay aside the consistent movement towards an overly sexualized culture, and instead ask ourselves the simple question, has this strategy worked on helping young people within the church understand the Biblical patterns of marriage?

The answer is no. Increasingly, young couples within the church are having sex before marriage, in fact I can't remember the last couple that I married that actually waited for marriage to have sex. Many young Christians don't even understand the importance of marriage, are confused about why the Bible condemns certain sexual practices, and struggle to have fulfilling sex lives within marriage. All of this is pretty convincing evidence that the church's strategy overall is failing to effectively respond to our shifting culture. Many Christians think that the answer is more restriction from social media or the internet and to blame the porn industry. While I agree with the concern over these things, and, as someone who does have a struggle with pornography, I do advocate for parents and individuals to be more circumspect in how they use the internet.

However, the bigger problem remains, many Christians today don't really understand this higher pattern that is contained in marriage and therefore don't grasp what the goal of marriage should be or why the bible structures it the way that it does. The good news is that it seems like the newer generation is open to this kind of message. Increasingly the newer generations are becoming interested in traditional gender roles and they are wanting to rediscover this cosmic pattern. Our job then is to explain the pattern to them, because even if a modern person rediscovers traditional sexuality and ends up following a Biblical framework for dating and marriage, if they don't understand the divine pattern, they will miss the eternal significance of these actions.

The Bride of Christ

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God..."

-Revelation 21:9-10

Luckily for us, the Biblical authors are not subtle about the divine structure contained within marriage. A marital relationship is supposed to be reflective of Christ's relationship with His people. This is to be distinguished from God's fatherly role to His people, where He is seen as our Creator who unconditionally loves us and sovereignly

guides our lives in accordance with His will and exercises discipline towards us that we might become, more and more, the people that He has made us to be. The reason for the marital symbol is because it accentuates God's passionate and joyous relationship that He has with those He has chosen.

Unlike a parental relationship which, although it is deeply loving and intimate, is one that isn't really chosen. Someone can choose to become a parent and intentionally try to get pregnant with a spouse, but we really don't have any autonomy over what our children will be like. A romantic relationship is different. It is a relationship that begins through a mutual choice to be with a specific person. Because of this, although it contains responsibility within it, what really animates and propels this relationship is that free choice that we are willing ourselves to be faithful to. This in turn makes the marital relationship, in many ways, more characterized by passionate joy and intimacy.

This is what God is trying to reveal to His people in passages like the one above. It isn't that God has a literal romantic affection for us, remember that He is spirit, but that our romantic love participates in the higher pattern of God's love for us. This brings us back to our story about Isaac and Rebekah. Every instance of this story is actually symbolic of, and even predictive of, God's relationship with His people.

Engagement

"Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master." But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go." And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master." So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

-Genesis 24:53-58

One of the more perplexing, yet long lasting, marriage rituals that we have is engagement. It seems a little strange that a couple, who are already set on marrying one another, would go through a seemingly meaningless middle stage in which they aren't really married, yet they are in some ways more than dating. However, this pattern is given to us in these couple verses. Notice first that Abraham's servant gives Rachel and her family jewelry and then offers to bring her to Isaac. Ancient Jews ritualized this in the signing of the "Ketubah".

For Jews, their engagement process is a little bit more strict than the modern western version of this practice. In order to be “engaged” you actually had to sign something called a “Ketubah” or a marriage contract. This meant that when a Jewish couple were engaged, they had to actually sign a contract that legally bound them together, and it would take a type of divorce to break this contract. This contract would usually be worked out between the father of the bride and the father of the groom, (in this story Abraham’s servant is acting on his behalf.) But, the most important thing that the fathers had to work out was the “bridal price”.

In ancient cultures, since land was inherited by men and not by women, when a woman married a man she would have to leave her home and go to her husband’s land. Because of this, the family of the groom gained a woman to help with the land, and also the prospect of new children who would carry on the family name and also help with the upkeep of the land. The bride’s family on the other hand only lost a valuable member of the family. In order to compensate the bride’s family, a “price” was negotiated and paid by the groom’s father. This is why Abraham’s servant offers jewelry to Rebekah’s family.

But, the servant also gives jewelry to Rebekah. This would have been the ancient forerunner to the modern engagement ring. This was given to the bride to be, not as compensation or payment, but instead as a token of affection and as a surety for the eventual marriage. To put it another way, the groom would show his devotion and commitment to his bride to be by giving her a costly piece of jewelry that showed her that he was serious about his proposal and also acted as a symbol to other would-be suitors that she was spoken for.

During the time of engagement, it would be important for the groom to get the house ready for his bride. Since they would be moving into his family’s property, they would need some privacy and a place to start their own family. We see that Abraham has already taken care of this for his son because it says later in the chapter that:

“Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”
-Genesis 24:67

We know from the next chapter that Isaac was a 40 year old man at this point, and he had already begun to cultivate his own land, and it seems that Abraham had given Isaac his and Sarah’s old tent for him to live in.

The final thing I will mention is a bride's hiddenness. Notice that during their engagement process Rebekah and Isaac don't see one another. And when she does see him for the first time, she lifts her veil over her face.

"Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself."

-Genesis 24:64-65

To commemorate this, a bride will veil herself during the wedding ceremony, and will only reveal her face after the vows.

Godly Engagement

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

-Matthew 26:26-29

When we read the story of Christ, we see this same pattern emerge in His relationship with His own people. Rebekah had not seen Isaac yet, but she related to Isaac through Abraham's servant. It is significant that the servant in this chapter is not named. As such, many Christians have seen that he symbolically represents the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Like Rebekah and Isaac, we have not "seen" our groom to be. Instead we relate to Christ through the Holy Spirit who was sent to us.

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

-John 15:26

But, we are promised, that while our current relationship with Christ is at a distance, there is coming a time when we will be face to face with Him, and this will be when we go to heaven and see Him face to face. In order to come into this Godly engagement, there was a "bridal price" that God paid. This is what Jesus is detailing in the above passage and what other Biblical authors echo throughout the New testament.

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18-19

Through this process we are bound to Christ. Through His costly sacrifice we can know that He will be faithful to His promises and we can have assurance that we will be joined to Him one day. Beyond the confidence we can have in the “bridal price”, Christ has even given His people a type of “engagement ring”.

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

-Ephesians 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit, being God Himself, not only allows for us to relate to Christ in the here and now, He also is the most valuable being in the universe and so by indwelling us, acts as a seal, or “guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession...” And what is Jesus doing during our time of “engagement” to Him?

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. “And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

-John 14:1-6

Jesus is faithful to His people and is preparing a place for us that we might dwell with Him one day.

The Wedding

Unfortunately, this story doesn’t go through the actual wedding ceremony, but other passages in the Bible express the other rituals surrounding the wedding rituals.

“Who is this coming out of the wilderness Like pillars of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, With all the merchant’s fragrant powders? Behold, it is Solomon’s couch, With sixty valiant men around it, Of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords,

Being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh Because of fear in the night. Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King Made himself a palanquin: He made its pillars of silver, Its support of gold, Its seat of purple, Its interior paved with love By the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O daughters of Zion, And see King Solomon with the crown With which his mother crowned him On the day of his wedding, The day of the gladness of his heart.”

-Song of Solomon 3:6-11

Here we see a wedding procession for King Solomon’s wedding day. We see that the wedding procession, in the Jewish ceremony, carried a lot more pomp and circumstance than it does in the present day. We celebrate this tradition with the wedding party walking down the aisle preceding the bride, but for the Jews, this procession would actually go to the house of the bride and carry her over to the place of the wedding.

‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.”

-Exodus 19:5-8

From this passage we get the idea of the ceremony itself and the statement of vows. Just as the Jews were led out into the wilderness and covered with a cloud from heaven when God committed Himself to them and they reciprocated, so in the Jewish ceremony, a couple would usually be married outside under an “chuppa” or a type of arch. This arch then became a symbol of the cloud that covered the Israelites in the wilderness, but also acts as a type of tent that commemorates the Israelites wandering in the wilderness.

“I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.”

-Jeremiah 2:2

Symbolically this represents a couple’s pure devotion for one another. That even though they have their families present, they are standing alone on the altar with only one another, and the “chuppa” represents the home, and the life that they are committing to build with one another. They are committing themselves to each other with absolute vows of unconditional devotion and care for one another.

Divine Marriage

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

-Revelation 19:7-9

Although we are in an engagement period to our Lord, we know that this time will come to an end. We will see our God face to face, and in the presence of the angelic hosts, under the covering of heaven itself, we will be united to Him forever.

Intimacy

“Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

-Genesis 24:67

After the ceremony, a couple is usually escorted to a private room where they can share “yichud” or privacy. Traditionally, since the reception would last around a week, this is when the couple would first consummate their marriage, but nowadays a couple usually just shares a meal with one another when they abscond to this room. But this practice communicates something very important. One of the primary facets of uniqueness within a marriage relationship is intimacy. Within a romantic relationship, uniquely, we can engage in the fullest form of intimacy that is possible for us. And this intimacy is expressed in our souls, our emotions, and our bodies.

In a romantic relationship we are not just called to share some of our souls, we are called to share all of it. When it comes to other relationships, no matter how close or intimate, there are many things that I won’t sacrifice for those people. In marriage this isn’t an option. Who we were, and all that we hope to be is sacrificed in a marital relationship. I give up who I was, I surrender all my hopes and all my goals to seek total unity with my spouse. This is a reciprocal choice that we are both called to make, and that we accomplish through negotiation and compromise. But we do this as we seek to be, in the fullest sense, one flesh.

This reality is then expressed in our bodies. A couple that has completely given themselves to one another in spirit, is then free to express that intimacy in their bodies. This is why we refer to sex after marriage as a “consummation.” By attaching a couple’s first act of intimacy to the wedding ceremony itself, the Jews made this point crystal

clear. What is committed to in the spirit is then confirmed through our vows, and then consummated in our bodies. In the act of sex, we are completely naked and vulnerable with another person, and we are then given the ability to literally become one with another person.

Godly Intimacy

“And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

-1 Corinthians 6:14-20

This passage should hopefully clarify and confirm an earlier point that I tried to make. Far from the modern criticism of Christianity, the Bible doesn't have a low or base view of sex, it has the highest and most holy view that we could possibly have. Like in all other aspects of the wedding ceremony, even in this there is a pattern of God's love and affection for His people. We are told in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is not just *with* the Christian, but that He is *in* the Christian. This point can easily go above our understanding, mainly because this intimacy is something that happens within our souls and not our bodies. Since we can't see or fully understand our souls, it is almost impossible for us to understand what it means that the Holy Spirit is within us.

Sex allows a person to act out with the body the spiritual reality of God's oneness, not only with His people, but with Himself.

“Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.”

-John 17:11

Jesus' prayer to His Father before the cross is that we would be one as He is one with His Father. The unity that God has within Himself is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. But through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, this mystery is then spread out to include our eternal intimacy with God and with each other. Just like everything else,

sex is not a perfect representation of this divine reality, but it does participate in this higher pattern.

This is why God is so jealous when it comes to our sexual behavior. Just as the apostle Paul says in the above passage *“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”*

Because sex resonates at such a high frequency, it becomes sacred in a way that genuinely passes our knowledge. It not only represents, but it participates in God’s perfect reality and divine intimacy. This means that we can’t treat our sexuality with casual indifference, but we also should not treat sex as shameful. Instead, we must find the balance between seeing sex as both sacred and beautiful.

The sacredness of sex is where we get the rigid morality that surrounds our sexual behavior. It is a universal truth that the more significant something’s purpose is, the more intentionally we should treat it, and the more devastating the results when we misuse it. To use a simple example, think about nuclear power. Because nuclear power can generate so much energy, it can be harnessed to do a lot of good, but when it is aimed at destruction, it can do a lot of damage. This is why the laws regulating the production of nuclear power are so strict and why objects with high radiation are treated with so much caution. This isn’t because these objects are bad, they can be used to create much good, but because it has such high potential for good, it also has a high potential for bad.

On the flip side you could take something with far weaker potential like an old fashioned windmill on a farm. Since the windmill is designed to harness the energy created by the wind, it can generate some power, but because it can only harness a tiny percentage of the surrounding wind, the energy that it creates is very limited. On the flip side, if it breaks down, or is misused, it also can’t create much destruction either.

Sex works the same way. If the purpose of sex really was as basic as fulfilling our sexual appetite or for recreational pleasure, you wouldn’t expect that abusing sex would be that bad. But we find the opposite to be true. When sex is aimed at destructive ends, like rape or adultery, the harm that comes from these practices can easily exceed any other harm. The mere fact that sex has such destructive potential should hint to us that it also has a higher and more glorious purpose.

This is the contention of the Biblical authors. Since the image of God is equally represented in the male as well as the female (Genesis 1:27) we know that the full image of God can only be brought together in the human body in an act that can reunite what once was unified. Remember that man was once formed as a singular entity and then God divided man into male and female in Genesis 2. And it is only in sex that male and female can be reunified, in an act of intimacy so powerful that it can actually create life in the image of the man and the woman.

This means, that in some sense, sex represents the highest form of worship that human beings are capable of. We can act out in our bodies the reality of the Holy Trinity as well as the blessed eternal hope of the people of God being reunited with our God and Savior. As such, we should expect that the “rules” surrounding our sexuality would be incredibly particular in order to fully realize the potential of sex while avoiding the catastrophic destruction possible in the misuse of our sexuality. Which means that these “rules” are not made to limit our fun or pleasure in our sexuality, but quite the opposite. By giving us this guidance, it gives man the ability to take our temporal sexual behavior and guide it towards eternal, glorious purpose.

This means that when the Bible limits our sexual practice between two partners, (Deuteronomy 17:17, Matthew 19:4-6), this is given to us in order that we might participate in God’s singular commitment to a particular people group. Meaning, God does not have multiple “brides”, He doesn’t share intimacy or salvation with all people, but only His people who have chosen Him to be their Lord and Savior (John 1:12-13). This is also why we are restricted from having sex before marriage (Exodus 22:16-17). Just as the full intimacy between God and His people will not be accomplished until we are united with Him at our “wedding” in heaven, so a couple participates in this image by waiting until they are married to experience the fullness of their intimacy.

When God limits sexuality to be between a man and a woman, (Matthew 19:4-6, Romans 1:26-28, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Leviticus 18:22) this isn’t to shame or unjustly condemn anyone. Instead, just as there is distinction in the persons of the trinity, and distinction in the nature of God and His bride, so the complimentary natures of male and female were designed by God to reflect this distinction, and in being brought together in sexual intimacy, to reflect God’s design and unique intimacy. There are obviously many more principles that guard our sexuality and much more that I could say about each of them, but for the purposes of this paper I think it is sufficient to recognize and understand that it is the nature of God Himself that expresses our correct sexual behavior.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

-John 15:9-11

A point that most Christians tend to forget is the joy that God intends within His commands for His people. Notice that Jesus directly says that He has given us commandments that His joy may remain in us and that our joy may be full. There is actually a good and necessary reason for the pleasure that is contained in our sexuality. Some Christians make the process of righteousness seem so arduous and bland, that it is described as being devoid of pleasure and joy, but we actually see the opposite in Scripture.

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything...”

-Deuteronomy 28:47

In the above passage, God is not upset at His people for a lack of service, but a lack of joy within their service. Oftentimes we can forget the importance of this simple truth, but the intimacy that we have with God is supposed to be the completion of joy for the Christian. We aren’t denying worldly pleasures for some sort of “reward” that we receive in heaven, but instead we deny some worldly pleasures to receive eternal, divine pleasure that is available only to those who participate in God’s divine pattern with our bodies. When a Christian chooses to live in accordance with God’s commandment, sexual or otherwise, this is a decision to participate with that cosmic pattern and receive eternal joy from our temporal behavior. To deny this pattern is not to deny all joy, there is much earthly pleasure that we can gain from the world itself. Only that this pleasure is fading and incomplete. This is what Moses discovered in the pleasures that he found in Egypt:

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

-Hebrews 11:24-26

This is why it is actually correct and right for Christians to seek pleasure within their sexuality. This is not the final end or purpose of our sexuality, but it is an important component of the divine pattern that we are called to live within. And, even though we

are talking about sex in particular, remember that sex is the consummation of all other forms of intimacy contained in our romantic relationships. This means that a Christian marriage is not defined by what we refrain from doing, or only by our decision to not divorce. While these are important, the true purpose of Christian marriage is to glorify God in all His wonderful, glorious, and eternal joy. The Christian couple should be intensely concerned with the joy within their relationship and the type of love that they are showing one another. Within this joy and intimacy, God is glorified and we are given the ability to understand and revel in God's eternal joy and intimacy.

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

-Psalm 16:11