

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ONEGEN IV, Sex and Relationships. You might remember at the start of this year at ONEGEN I, we had the people vote on a topic to cover tonight, and the winner was sex and relationships. So that is what you have walked into.

I've been thinking a lot about this topic and talking with people about what would be most helpful to cover. That topic, sex and relationships, could go many different directions. Community, friendship, loneliness.

Really important topic, but outside of what we're covering tonight. Tonight, we're going to rename it to be gender, marriage and sexuality. That's what we're looking at.

That includes dating, singleness, divorce, LGBTQ plus issues and porn and the whole host of things that comes with that. So dating, marriage and sex.

The structure for tonight is for the next 30 minutes, I'm going to aim to give us an overarching view of the Bible's teaching on gender, marriage and sex. It'll take half an hour.

For the next half an hour, we're going to have a panel Q&R based on the Slido link that you should have from the WhatsApp or the Instagram. You can submit questions, we're going to discuss.

And then the last half hour of the night, we're going to break up into guys and girls groups and have a conversation around these issues.

So the cool thing is we kind of move from monologue, one person monologuing for half an hour to a bit of a dialogue, to a lot of a dialogue in small groups.

But my hope is that if, when tricky questions come up as part of this topic that can't be handled well in this context, you might have a coffee with someone and talk about it. That would be the best thing. Lots of really sensitive stuff.

There's no way that one person talking to 30 people at once could handle that topic sensitively. So hopefully, you might have a coffee with someone and talk about it. So gender, marriage and sexuality.

What we're going to do is trace that topic throughout the story of the entire Bible as we see it in the four chapters of the story of the Bible. Creation, fall, redemption and renewal. That is, we're asking four questions.

Why did God create it? How has sin distorted it? Where is Jesus redeeming it?

And what will it be like? You ready? All right.

## 1A: GENDER IN CREATION

Diving into chapter one, creation. Why did God create it? We're going to look in each chapter at gender, and then marriage, and then sexuality.

So firstly, gender in creation. Good, good, good, good, good, good, very good. The pinnacle of creation in Genesis 1 is the end of the sixth day when God creates human beings.

Genesis 1, 27, God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created the male and female. He created them.

The image of God is where this topic has to start, because God created human beings to be his representative on earth, like a 45-degree mirror, to reflect his goodness and his love into the world, and then to reflect the world back to him.

Human beings are made in the image of God, and that means to be fruitful, to increase in number, to grow, to rule and subdue the earth. But notice the third line. It says, male and female, he created them.

That line is radically countercultural. In this ancient world, the time that Genesis was produced, it was thought that kings were the image of God. So not only men exclusively, but a select number of men.

So here comes Genesis making the claim that not only is it not only the kings who were the image of God, but all men, but male and female together make up the image of God. This is a wildly countercultural idea.

And this is kind of such an important starting place to make the point that the image of God is only present if male and female are present. Because the image of God is male and female.

In Genesis 1, it's only after the image of God is placed on earth that God saw all that he had made and said it was very good. And so God looks at male and female, the image of God placed on earth, and he says it's very good.

This is God's intention for gender. Gender was his idea. God made us male and female.

I don't know if you've ever thought about the fact that God could have made us without bodies. You know he made things without bodies. They're called angels.

They don't have this kind of thing. Or God could have made us with bodies that were asexual. I'm sure there's a word for animals that reproduce asexually.

He could have made us like that. But God made us male and female. In the image of God, he created us.

## 1B: MARRIAGE IN CREATION

Which brings us to part B, marriage in creation. Good, good, good, good, good, good, not good. Genesis 1, sorry, Genesis 2 is the close-up, zoomed-in story of creation.

Genesis 1 is a wide-angle. Genesis 2 is a close-up. And it really zooms in on the sixth day of creation, the creation of humankind, and the way that God made male and female.

So in Genesis 2, God stoops down and forms a man from the dust of the earth, breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. He comes alive, God places the man in the garden.

But then verse 18 of chapter 2, the Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

Now in the poetic cadence of Genesis, this not good jumps out because we've just heard, good, good, good, good, good, very good, not good. God says, It is not good for man to be alone. Now the problem here is not loneliness, it's vocation.

The problem is not that Adam doesn't have a friend or he doesn't have a wife for companionship. The problem is the Garden of Eden is enormous and he can't rule over it by himself. It is not good for man to be alone.

So God says, I will make a helper suitable. Now these words have caused controversy for a long time. Diving into the Hebrew, the word helper is ezer.

Most of the time when the word ezer is used, it refers to God. God is the helper. The word means someone who comes alongside to help you in achieving your goal.

The word ezer has no implication of hierarchy or inferiority. It just means a partner who comes alongside. And then the word suitable, as in I will make a helper suitable.

The word suitable is kinecto, which literally means in front of. So Steph is kinecto me. She is in front of with the sense of opposite.

And so when you put these two words together, God makes a helper suitable. We get this image of a partner standing shoulder to shoulder in the same work partnering together, but not the same type of person, a complimentary person, male and female.

This is the way that God has made us. So God makes the helper suitable. He brings, God brings the woman to the man.

And then Genesis 2 verse 23, the man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. And just like in English, how there's a play on man and woman, the same thing in the Hebrew.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

This is the institution of marriage, the constitution of male and female relationship in marriage. I think that idea of the helper suitable is a really helpful one for marriage.

You're looking for someone, if you're dating, you're looking for someone who is going the same direction as you, someone who you could partner with in a shared work.

But you're also looking for someone who is not the exact same as you, someone opposite. Now, obviously that means a female if you're male and a male if you're female.

But even with this sense of someone who completes, not completes, complements you, a helper suitable. Stepping back for a second, looking at the way God created marriage. Notice, it's not primarily romantic.

Marriage is primarily missional. There is a big garden, a big world that God intends human beings to rule over, and they can't do that on their own. And so God brings them to each other in order that they might fulfill the mission of God.

And he gives them this gift of sex for procreation, because two people can't do it. One person can't, two people can't. They need to grow.

And so God creates marriage as primarily missional, but that's not all that he makes marriage for, which brings us to part C, sexuality in creation.

## 1C: SEXUALITY IN CREATION

Good, good, good, good, good, good, good. Marriage is about mission, the mission of God to expand the order of Eden, but it's also about romance.

God makes male and female, he gives them these hormones and feelings of love, its mission and its romance.

Genesis 1 and 2 refers to human sexuality as primarily about procreation, but there's a whole book of the Bible that is devoted, one of 66 books in the Bible is devoted to the idea that sex is not only about procreation, it's also about pleasure.

That book is the Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon. I won't read it out in a church, even though it's in the Bible, read it when you get home. But it's the central message of Song of Songs is that sex is good.

Sex is a gift that God made. The voice of God, the voice of the church, the voice of Christianity is often heard as being negative about sex. Don't do this, don't do this, don't do this.

That we miss the positive. God made sex. Monkeys didn't make sex.

The devil didn't make sex. God made it and he said that it was good. He created it for a specific place.

And that place is within marriage, the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. And so when we think about this, we see that sex is procreation and pleasure. God has put these two things together, but sex is never impersonal.

Sex is always about the person. That's what love is. Love is to will the good of another person.

Lust is the opposite, and we'll talk about that later. But sex is not two strangers with hot bodies coming together and doing it all night long. That's not what the Bible says the best sex is.

The best sex according to God is two lives coming together, two persons, not just two bodies, but when your entire life fuses together with another person.

It's interesting that studies actually show that the couples who report the highest sexual satisfaction in their relationship are like middle-aged couples who've been married for a long time.

That is wild, because our world wants to say that the best sex is hook up strangers with hot bodies, but the Bible has a better picture than that. So why did God create gender marriage and sexuality?

He says it's good when male and female bear his image, but it's not good to be alone. So God made us for each other for a mission and for romance, and that's what the gift of sex is for.

## 2A: GENDER IN THE FALL

Which brings us to Chapter 2, Fall. How has sin distorted it? Part A, Gender in the Fall.

Three words are important here, humility, shame, and pride. Humility, firstly, in Genesis 1 and 2, we get this incredible picture of the goodness of the male and female body. God made them male, He made them female, and He said it was good.

And so, gender starts out with us human beings, male and female, receiving that gift with humility. God made us male and female, we receive that.

But when you go from Genesis 1 and 2, from that picture of humility to Genesis 3, you turn from humility to shame.

So straight after, the man and woman eat from the tree, we read in Genesis 3 verse 7, the eyes of both of them were opened, that's the man and the woman, and they realized they were naked.

So they sowed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. This is the first consequence of sin. As in, think of human history and all of the consequences of sin.

This is the first one. The man and the woman looked down and they realized that they were naked and different and they were ashamed. Previously, the Bible said that they were naked and unashamed.

So, humility leads to shame. That's the first consequence of the fall. Today, we experience this, all of us, I'm sure, body image.

It's hard to fully love the body that God gave you. We move from humility to shame. Gender dysphoria is a real thing.

And again, this is not something which could be well handled in this context. So, have a coffee with someone and talk about it. But the word dysphoria literally means to carry poorly.

Someone who is not carrying the weight of the fact that God made them male or female, not carrying that well. So, the pendulum of gender in the fall swings from what should have been humility to shame, and then from shame, it swings to pride.

You and I live a long, long way away and a long time after the Garden of Eden.

In fact, we live in the only culture, the only time in the history of human beings where it has been possible technologically, physiologically to change your body to the extent that we can now.

I'm talking about kind of hormone replacement therapy, gender reassignment surgery. For the first time in history, human beings have been able to change their bodies to a significant degree.

And so our world wants to say that gender is an archaic social construct that has no relevance with chromosomal biological sex.

Those two things are completely separate, which means that who I feel like I am on the inside is the identity that comes out. This is in sharp contrast with receiving the gift of who God made us to be with humility.

And so I wonder if in kind of postmodern 2026, Genesis 1, verse 27, recontextualized is I created myself in my own image. In the image of me, I created myself. Male or female, I created myself.

And so in the fall, gender swings from humility to shame and then to pride.

## 2B: MARRIAGE IN THE FALL

What about the relationship between men and women? That brings us to part B, marriage in the fall.

Very quickly, in the story of Genesis 3, the man and woman go from hiding and ashamed of their bodies to pointing fingers and casting blame at each other. Genesis 3.16, To the woman God said, I will make your pains in childbearing very severe.

With painful labor, you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. Marriage was meant to be about a mission.

Husband and wife working together for God's glory, for the good of the world. But in the fall, marriage is turned inwards into conflict. There's power dynamics.

Husband and wife, gender, they don't fit together as well. There's a consequence in sin. That line that we sometimes say in weddings, to love and to cherish becomes to dominate and to desire.

This is the inversion of marriage. It was meant to be missional. God created marriage for the sake of mission, that his people would do what they're designed to do as the image of God.

But we've made marriage optional, meaning marriage today is only about my desire and what I want to do. So I'll get married with whoever I want to get married to, or I won't get married. And we see this.

This is a growing phenomenon of people who delay marriage, delay having kids, or just not get married at all. And so the fall of marriage, as in when sin is applied to the institution of marriage, it leads to a few things. Firstly, cohabitation.

That is, couples living together before they're married. And often people say, it's, you know, try before you buy. We're kind of seeing if we're a good fit for each other before we commit and get married.

The problem is, study after study shows that that is not the pathway to a faithful and successful marriage. It leads more likely to divorce than to a healthy marriage. God said that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife.

There's this sense that you are coming together as one in marriage, not before marriage. Certainly, that's God's intention. The fall of marriage leads secondly to divorce.

Again, this is not an appropriate, super helpful time to bring up such a touchy, pain-filled subject for a lot of us. But God's intention was not that marriages fall apart. Jesus said, what God has joined together, let no one separate.

And yet, we live in a world that is broken. Marriages die. Jesus seems to be aware of that.

He gives grounds for divorce, but it's not God's heart. The third thing is in parenting, in procreation, so many couples can't have kids who want to have kids.

This is a result of the fall, that the fruitfulness that we are supposed to have in a good and perfect world is frustrated by sin. And then you have couples who don't want kids at all, or they're having kids later.

This, yeah, parenting is frustrated. Marriage in the fall ceases to be about the mission of God, and it becomes about my personal preference and my desire. And speaking of desire, part C, sexuality in the fall.

## 2C: SEXUALITY IN THE FALL

The big picture here of what sin has done to the good gift of sex is it has turned love into lust. Love is the will for the good of another at the expense of the self. Self-giving love.

But lust is love turned upside down. It is the desire for the good of myself at the expense of the other. This is what sin has done to our sexuality.

We see this kind of falling out in our world in what I kind of see is four ways. Firstly, that sex was meant to be God's intention. Sex treasured inside marriage.

A good gift that God gives to bind husband and wife together. Treasured inside marriage. But then, when the fall, when sin is applied to sexuality, sex is taken outside marriage.

The Greek word for sexual immorality is pornea from which we get pornography. God has created marriage and he's created sex to live within marriage. When you take it outside of the context that God created it for, it hurts people.

You might have heard the term casual sex. Our world wants to say that I'm hungry so I eat, I'm thirsty so I go drink, I have sexual desire so I go and fulfill it.

In fact, the world kind of says that the only two criteria that matter is consent and age. As long as your prospective sexual partner is the right age relative to you and they're consenting to what you're doing, go for it.

In fact, do it is kind of a euphemism for sex. You know what an old euphemism is? Make love.

I think if the world personified generally, were to hear that sex is make love, they'd be like, what does love have to do with sex? I don't even know this person. It's lust.

It's two bodies coming together in the dark. It's desire. This is sex taken outside of marriage.

Thirdly, sex is turned inward. I'm talking about the twisting of love for the good of another into lust, the gratification of the self. Pornography is the twisting of a desire taken away from another person and put onto yourself.

In porn, it doesn't matter who the person is. They're nameless, like that's not their name. They're pixels on a screen, sometimes faceless.

It's not about the person. It's about this good gift of sex that God made turned in on myself. And fourthly, sex is twisted downward.

This is really the bottom of what people do to each other, sexual abuse and rape and violence. Awful, awful, awful, awful things people have done with God's good gift of sex.

Our desires are corrupted by sin and twisted, and they get twisted and twisted and twisted into very, very dark places. But this is not the way that God created sexuality to function.

3A: GENDER IN REDEMPTION

Which brings us to chapter 3, redemption, finally. Where is Jesus redeeming it? Part A, gender in redemption.

We'll start with Jesus. To state the obvious, Jesus was a man. He was male.

Jesus was a male. God the Father, God the Spirit, they are not male. I mean, we are invited to use masculine pronouns.

God is Father, not Mother, like 99% of the time. The Spirit is a he, not an it. But they are not male.

Jesus was male. The Word became flesh and became a man. Now, that is an astounding affirmation of the goodness of the human body.

Because Jesus did not become one of us only to throw away that dirty, gross human body. He took on flesh and he's still in flesh. This is our Lord Jesus.

Our bodies are not to be cast aside in the gospel, but they're the very place where we are being redeemed. This is the gospel. Think about the gospel.

The climactic moment of the gospel happened on that thing in our body. God could have like said words or done things mystically to solve humanity's problem. But he took on flesh in Jesus.

The death and resurrection, the crucifixion of Jesus is a bodily thing. I think this tells us something about how much God cares about the body.

When Jesus walked the earth, as he was bringing the kingdom to earth, he opened blind eyes, he made lame people walk, he unstopped the tongue of mute people. He was transforming bodies because that's the business that God is in.

When it comes to gender, Jesus was radically affirming of women. Do you know the first witnesses of the resurrection were women? In a culture where women, their testimony is not valid in court because they're seen as the inferior sex.

Jesus affirms women. His financial sponsors for his ministry were women. He was constantly flipping the script in his engagements, his conversations with women.

Think of the Samaritan woman, John Four. It's wild that a man would be talking to a woman, a Jew to a Samaritan, a rabbi to an adulterer, somebody who's been married multiple, multiple times.

Jesus is, I don't want to say feminist, because that's a very loaded political cultural term. But if feminism simply means very pro-women, Jesus was the first feminist. He is radically affirming of the place of women in our world.

And this is good news. Paul says in Galatians 3, There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Now Paul's not saying gender doesn't matter, sex doesn't matter, but he's saying it's not a salvation barrier. All are welcomed in the good news. And so I think that the Christian voice on gender should be good news.

So often it's kind of perceived by the world as a wagging finger with negatives and condemnation.

But the gospel is good news for our bodies, because God is in the business of redeeming our bodies and the way that we relate to each other, speaking of the way that we relate to each other.

### 3B: MARRIAGE IN REDEMPTION

Part B, marriage in redemption. We said earlier that marriage has a mission. It points forward to something.

It's not an end in itself. That mission is fulfilled in Jesus. Paul says in Ephesians 5, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

That's quoting Genesis 2. And then he says, this is a profound mystery. And it is.

But I'm talking about Christ in the church. So Paul seems to think that the gift of marriage was not an end in itself, but it was pointing to something. And the thing that it was pointing to was Christ in the church.

God dwelling among his people. The work of the gospel. This is such an incredible picture of marriage as a taste of new creation.

And so for those of us who are married, we have an incredible opportunity in the way we relate to our wives and husbands to point to the way Christ loved the church. To point in the way that we relate to the truth of the gospel.

Because marriage points us to Jesus. But what about those who aren't married? Well, again, to state the obvious, Jesus never married.

From what we can tell, Paul never married. Those are, I mean, obviously Jesus, probably Paul, the two most significant lives in the history of humankind. They didn't marry.

They didn't have sex. The gospel, Paul, Jesus, God is radically affirming of singleness. 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says singleness is actually kind of preferred over marriage.

Because if you're single, you have more capacity for the mission of God. Now, that's a very easy for me to say that it's singleness as a gift. It's not, I've not spent a lot of time trying to live with it as a gift.

But this is the good news. Paul says it is a gift of singleness. He says in 1 Corinthians 7 that we are to live in undivided devotion to the Lord.

So whether we're married or single, whatever our status is, there's a calling to be devoted to the Lord undividedly, which brings us to part C, sexuality in redemption.

### 3C: SEXUALITY IN REDEMPTION

The good news is that we are not defined by our past in Christ. For those who, for sexual harm done to us, there is healing and wholeness in the love of Jesus. From addiction to pornography, there is freedom and power in the blood of Jesus.

From a mind enslaved by lustful thoughts, there is renewal and transformation in the way of Jesus. From sexual sins committed by us, there is forgiveness and a fresh start in the resurrection of Jesus.

In some, in the Gospel, lust is transfigured into love. The desire for the self, as God does a work in our heart, turns into the desire for the good of the other. That's the work that God does.

### 4A: GENDER IN RENEWAL

Which brings us to the final chapter of the story. Renewal. What will it be like?

Part A, gender in renewal. Our hope as Christians is not in the immortality of the soul, but in the resurrection of the body.

Meaning, the thing that we look forward to at the culmination of the ages is not that we would get rid of this body and become a genderless blob.

The hope of Christianity is that this corruptible flesh would die and be raised imperishable the way Jesus was.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 4, For while we are in this tent, and that's a metaphor for this broken body, we groan and are burdened because we do not wish to be unclothed, meaning to be a genderless, amorphous blob, but to be clothed instead

with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. And that's exactly what the resurrection of Jesus accomplishes for us. We one day will have the body, not the exact one, the kind of body that he has.

Do you remember in the Gospels, Jesus teleported through walls? We're going to be able to do that. Just think about that.

The resurrection of Jesus, the giving of his Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing that we're going to become like him. This is our hope. The word is glory.

What we're looking forward to is a body that is not marred by aging, by tears, by cancer, by death, but a body that is like Jesus' body. And the word is glory.

#### 4B: MARRIAGE IN RENEWAL

What about marriage in renewal? Marriage in the age to come. You know, the Bible begins and ends with a wedding.

Genesis 2, the man and woman leave father and mother. They united as one flesh. It's a wedding.

And at the end of the Bible, Revelation 19, it's the marriage supper of Christ and the church. That thing which marriage was always pointing towards is perfectly fulfilled when God dwells among his people, Christ and his bride.

We said from the beginning that marriage is a mission. Marriage points to something beyond itself. Yes, it's romance, but it's a mission.

The thing that marriage points to is fulfilled in Jesus, in the new creation.

Jesus says in Mark 12 verse 23, well, a Sadducee says to him, at the resurrection, whose wife will a person who's been married seven times, convoluted thing, whose wife will she be since the seven were married to her?

Jesus replied, are you not in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God?

When the dead rise, he's talking about the age to come, when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but they'll be like the angels in heaven.

And maybe the married people go, oh, what does that mean about the way that I relate to my spouse? You'll know them for sure. But individual marriage will be fulfilled and will pass away in the new creation.

Because the people of God will be dwelling with him. He will walk with us, Christ himself. And so they won't be marriage in the new creation.

What about sex?

#### 4C: SEXUALITY IN RENEWAL

Sexuality in renewal. Will there be sex in the new creation? Again, you got to think, what was sex all about?

Why did God make it? God made sex so that we might love, not lust. That we might give for the good of another.

And that purpose, again, is radically fulfilled. When Christ himself dwells with us, every desire will be satisfied. That mystery which marriage and sex are just a hint of now, will be fully consummated in the new creation.

And so, it's not that we will be asexual, but that we will be fulfilled in every desire that we have, because we will know God and walk with him.

## CONCLUSION

So, there you go. That is an overview in slightly longer than I was hoping to go for, of what the Bible teaches about gender, marriage and sexuality.

We've traced it through the four stories, the four chapters of the story of the Bible, creation, fall, redemption and renewal. We've traced through these questions, why did God create it? How has sin distorted it?

Where is Jesus redeeming it? And what will it be like? The grand story, I'll finish with this, the grand story of gender, marriage and sex, is the journey from good to very good to glory.

God is taking us somewhere. He's bringing unity to all things under Christ. And that's what marriage points towards.

That's what male and female point towards. That's what sex points towards. This journey from good to very good and to glory.

So I might pray now, it seems fitting. This feels like a sermon in church. And so I'll pray.

And then we're going to have a Q&A and see how this applies. So let me pray. God, we thank you for your kindness.

We thank you for your goodness, that you made everything good. You made marriage and gender and sex as good, and yet we live in a broken world, marred by the fall and marred by sin.

We've twisted your good gifts and done evil with that, and we are sorry. We thank you for our Lord Jesus, for his life and death and resurrection, for the way that he transforms our lowly bodies, that we might one day be like your glorious body.

I pray for all of us in the midst of the questions that we wrestle with on this topic, that you would give us wisdom, and that you would keep us for yourself. In Jesus' name, Amen.