

The Divine Design and (Homo)Sexuality

Introduction:

On June 4 1996, the maiden flight of the Ariane 5 launcher ended in a failure. Only about 40 seconds after initiation of the flight sequence, at an altitude of about 3700 m, the launcher veered off its flight path, broke up and exploded. The rocket was on its first voyage, after ten years of development costing \$7 billion. The destroyed rocket and its cargo were valued at \$500 million.¹

A board of inquiry investigated the causes of the explosion and in two weeks issued a report. It turned out that the cause of the failure was a software error in the inertial reference system. Specifically a 64 bit floating point number relating to the horizontal velocity of the rocket with respect to the platform was converted to a 16 bit signed integer. The number was larger than 32,767, the largest integer storeable in a 16 bit signed integer, and thus the conversion failed.² In layman's terms, the software developer attempted to use 16 bits of space to hold a 64-bit number. The storage space was designed and intended for a 16-bit number, but it was used to attempt to hold a 64-bit number. This simple misuse of storage cost almost \$8 billion.

It doesn't take long to look at our culture, to look in our own lives, and see brokenness. Unfortunately, so much of the destruction and devastation that fills our lives is a result of our own choices, especially those choices to ignore the perfect plan and purposes of God in pursuit of our own desires. When it comes to our (relationships/sexuality), we see in Scripture that God gave rules, instructions, and guidelines about what we are to do with the gifts He gave us, and He promised us blessing and favor for letting Him lead our choices. As we talk about (relationships/sexuality), let's pay close attention to how we were designed, and how we can find blessing in following them.

Primary Scriptures:

Genesis 1:27-28 ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ *God blessed them*; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 3:7 ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Genesis 9:1-3 And *God blessed Noah and his sons* and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. ³ Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 ²⁶ "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ *the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God*, which I am commanding you today; ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

¹ Accessed February 9, 2018 at <http://www-users.math.umn.edu/~arnold/disasters/ariane.html>.

² Ibid.

Joshua 1:7 ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may *be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.* ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

John 8:1-11 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴ “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

⁶ They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹ When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

¹¹ “No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

Secondary Studies:

1 Corinthians 6:18 ¹⁸ Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. ⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Romans 5:19-21 ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰ God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more

and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Central Truth:

Blessings come with obedience to God's plan.

Practical Applications ("Take-Away" Truths):

- When we operate within God's design and His command, we can expect and enjoy His blessings on our lives.
- When we operate outside the boundaries of God's design and His command, we can expect hardship and brokenness and destruction.
- Our (relationships were/sexuality was) intentionally designed to fulfill His command and His purposes for us.
- Jesus responded to sexual sin the way He responded to all sin—with grace and truth.

Main Ideas from the Texts:

- God had a grand design, a great plan for our (relationships/sexuality). (Gen. 1:27-28)
 - We image Him more completely in relationships with others.
 - He reveals Himself to us more clearly in our (relationships/sexuality).
- Scripture declares that blessings come with obedience to God's command. (Deut. 11:26-28)
 - Provision, Peace, and His Presence are promised as long as we follow His leading.
 - We were designed to fulfill His plan and His purpose for our lives—from our mother's womb, we were created with purpose and intentionality. (Ps. 139:13-18; Jer. 1:5-10)
- Sin has corrupted our (relationships/sexuality).
 - Sin introduced fear and shame. (Gen. 3:7b)
 - Sin made us selfish. (Gen. 3:7c)
- Scripture warns about curses and brokenness that comes as a result of disobedience to God's command. (Deut. 11:28; 1 Cor. 6:18, 10:6)
- Scripture announces God's grace in spite of our weaknesses and imperfections—that His Son made a way for us to find forgiveness, no matter our sin.
 - Jesus saw the woman as a person made in the Image of God.
 - The Pharisees saw her as a pawn in their agenda to discredit Jesus.
 - Our response to those who are broken by sexual sin usually follows one of these two models;
 - A kneejerk condemnation
 - A heartfelt compassion

Background and Contextual Considerations:

- (Relationships were/Sex was) part of the Divine Design.
- Animals were not suitable for human companionship; the animals did not correspond to Adam in the most fundamental ways.
- (Relationships were/Sex was) created by God and He called it “very good.”
 - It was very good within the parameters in which He created it.
 - Male and female
 - Monogamous, married relationship
 - It was destructive outside of the parameters of God’s creation.
- Humanity has been given the choice to obey God, or disregard Him, and we have been made aware of the results and consequences of our choices.

Teaching Hints and Applications:

- Note the often-repeated chorus throughout the Genesis creation narrative, “after their kind.”
- Note that no such phrase was mentioned about Adam—that instead, both Adam and Eve were made “in the Image of God,” i.e., after His kind.
- (Relationships were/Sex was) made perfect by the way it served and protected the other person, not the individual.
- The essence of sin is a focus on self; so much of the brokenness and curse that we experience in this world is a result of people attempting to cater to, or preserve self.
- When (relationships become/sex becomes) about me and my desires and my needs and my circumstances and my self, then I am walking outside of God’s purpose for me and setting the stage for my own brokenness.
- We were made in two genders to complement one another, to populate the earth, and to image God by our intimacy with one another.
- Sex was an intentional creation; procreation and recreation. Man and woman image God in a sexual relationship.
- When you take something that God created, and you use it for something it was never created to do, then you create problems. Sex was never designed to become what it has become... and all we’re getting now is brokenness.
- That woman had been caught. She knew her circumstances, and the consequences of what she did.
- She was openly shamed by the religious leaders, the people who should’ve represented God.
- In the moment Jesus had the opportunity to grab a rock, ... He stooped down and wrote on the ground.
- Our response is usually grabbing a rock, not reaching out to the person.
- All of us have brokenness in our life. All of us start out with sin, with weaknesses—our sins are no less grievous to God than those of the homosexual.
- When we say, ‘our sin isn’t as bad as that,’ then we line up with the Pharisees, and we grab a rock to execute.
- Jesus quoted Scripture; He didn’t disavow their claims about her consequences. He simply pointed to

the same Scripture they referenced.

- Jesus said, “I know you’re broken, but I’m not condemning you; I’m giving you a chance to start over.” “There is mercy; go and don’t continue this lifestyle.”
- Quit picking up rocks.

- The problem unbelievers have with our stance from Scripture on (relationships/sexuality) is often presented in the, “But what about...,” framework, raising objections on the basis of experience in the “real world.”
 - “...but what about this circumstance?” describing an exception to a general norm.
 - “...but what about this person?” attempting to manipulate convictions by appealing to compassion.
- We start with the Bible, take it’s truth to be the authority over our lives, and then speak to our circumstances on the basis of what Scripture tells us.
 - Circumstances and situations in life that seem to contradict or controvert God’s Word MUST submit to His Word.
 - We build our lives on His truth, not try to constantly reshape *truth* in order to match up to our lives.
- We cannot promise that strict obedience to the Word of God will keep us from ever facing difficulty or hardships.
 - Scripture informs us oppositely; that we should expect adversity and opposition when we try to obey God.
 - The enemy of our soul is constantly attacking us with every imaginable (and unimaginable) weapon to distract and destroy us.
- We can rest in His promise of His Power, His Presence, and His Provision in our lives when we walk in obedience to Him—we can overcome the enemy’s attacks by the power of God in us.

Illustrations/Multimedia:

Middle School Small Group Questions and Prompts

1. Take a moment and make a list at your table of at least 10 rules you are expected to follow every day, whether at school, at home, on the court, or anywhere else.
2. Look at a few of those rules and talk about the consequences you know you'll face if you disregard those rules.
3. Who sets the consequences for those rules?
4. Who enforces the consequences of those rules?
5. What's the purpose behind those rules? Why were they instituted?
6. Is there a promise attached to any of them?
7. What are the rules and guidelines given to us from God about our relationships?
8. Where do we find those rules and guidelines from God?
9. What are the rules and guidelines given to us from our parents/guardians about our relationships?
10. What is our first responsibility towards those who don't follow God's commands and design for their lives? (*think Love*)

High School Small Group Questions and Prompts

1. When it comes to relationships and sex, especially, what are the biggest conversations and conflicts happening around you and in society in general?
2. Can you observe any kind of guideline or ethic that governs how people make their decisions about love, sex, and relationships? Is there any common idea that most people follow, or value that most people put first when it comes to love, sex, and relationships? (*think Feelings, or Carnal Desires, or Stability and Security*)
3. Can you think of a benefit to having ONE standard, ONE guideline for all people, across all time, and in every place? What makes it beneficial?
4. Do you think it's helpful (or fair) to apply the same sexual/relational standard to every person in the world, regardless of their circumstances?
5. How does God's grace intersect with His commands? In other words, God knows that even on our best days, we are going to fall short of His perfect plan. Is there any wiggle room in following His commands? How does He demonstrate compassion towards our weaknesses, and in spite of them?