



**The
Real
“Comprehensive”
Behind
Comprehensive
Sex Ed**

by Heather Ruesch

At the core of the biblical mindset on sex, we find the true source of nourishment from which all behaviors derive: **God's value of every human life.** This value is what captivates and empowers the way we approach human sexuality ourselves and how we teach it to others. When we comprehend the immeasurable love of God for us, His most priceless possessions, it changes a person's very sense of self and worth. This psychosocial approach to a comprehensive sex education is the framework that gives order to each of the important questions and topics we have about sex and our sexuality as Christians.

“Is (sexual) purity a choice I make?”

“Is my sex life connected to my identity?”

“Is birth control a form of abortion?”

“Why do relationships hurt so much?”

“Does my gender determine my value?”

“Why are guys only interested in one thing?”

“How do I tell my girlfriend she's coming on too strong? I like her, but it turns me off when she makes everything about sex.”

“Do STDs cause infertility?”

“Why do people punish girls for having abortions when they don't teach them how to not get pregnant in the first place?”

“What does waiting for marriage do for me?”

“Pornography helps me to not have sex outside of marriage. This is good, right?”

“Why do I feel sad/guilty after I have sex?”

“Does God hate me because I'm gay?”

“How do I help my friend who is transgender?”

“Why does God exist?”

These are actual thoughts and questions, offered anonymously by students from all across the country. The concerns of our youth today go far beyond the logistics of how to have “safe” physical sex. With the rise of technology, the breakdown of the modern family, and our fast-paced way of living, interpersonal relationships have been reduced almost entirely to superficial interactions. Surrounded by sexual propaganda, which intends to use the addictive qualities of sex/lust to sell us products in a way we are most likely to receive them, the human mind internalizes and processes its sense of self and worth through the lens of sexuality rather than God’s value of every human life.

Intrinsic, unchanging value and identity in Christ is twisted and distorted to become subjective, superficial worth, influenced by and dependent upon circumstances, feelings, or opinions. The media, by near or complete absence of Christ, becomes the disciple to whom our children turn in order to find their purpose and way through life. The media, to bring it full circle, is pointing us to lust after superficial, physical things as the means of finding deep and companionate happiness, identity, and quality of life.

As we dig deeper into the “real” or “true” comprehensive instruction on sexual education for youth, two major themes distinctly stand out and separate a biblical sexuality mentality from the “safe sex” mentality.

The first theme is what we’ve already brought to light—that the value of every human life is not subjective.

The second theme is that as human beings we are intricately made.

We are designed, to be sure, with a physical body and the desire to be sexually active, but also with mental, emotional, social, and spiritual elements. All of these physiological wheels work together to create ... YOU.

Sex has the power to affect our entire sense of self because it affects us on every level of our being, producing either vitality or decay in the heart, mind, spirit, and body.

You Are God's Most Priceless Possession

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

There is a profound and powerful little word in this already-profound and powerful passage of Scripture. Can you find it? What do you think it might be? “Loved”? “Sent”? “Believes”?

Actually, it's the word “so.” A seemingly insignificant adverb that gives us the greatest affirmation of HOW God loves each and every one of us.

In this way God loves you: He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and take upon Himself the sin that separates you from God, so that we might not be separated from Him anymore.

Christ takes our sin upon Himself and crucifies it with His own shed blood. Why? Because we are God's most priceless possession. To really understand the magnitude of this love and significance, we must go back to the very beginning of creation. “Why does God exist?” “What is His purpose and intention?” God's entire existence is about being in relationship and that includes you. We have a relational God Who has created us to be relational people. When sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, He could not *bear* the thought of being separated from you for even a moment. So what did He do? He sent us Jesus to take our sins upon Himself and restore us into relationship with His Father once again.

How, then, does God care for us, His most priceless possessions, in the midst of a sinful, fallen world where Satan and darkness tempt our flesh and mess with our

thoughts and feelings and interactions? ... JESUS ... every part of Jesus, directly applied to every intricate part of us.

God Created Order, In Order to Care for You

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

From this one sentence in Genesis, we can take away so many crucial insights that give us a clear picture of God’s intentions for human sexuality. First, there is a father and a mother who bear a son. That son becomes a man, who was mentored to take a woman as his wife and unite with her in a way like none other, to become as “one flesh,” caring for each other as they would their own bodies. Next, we can see God’s created order for man and woman to bear children and raise a family together, as the generation before them had done. This is the first picture of earthly marriage, companionship, and family that God gives us in Scripture, and He does it almost immediately. There’s absolutely no beating around the bush when it comes to the merit, the significance, God places on both sexes, male and female, and their impact on all of society. In this most foundational example, God establishes through His words, “in the beginning,” the power of the created family order, male and female vocation, and the innate need that He instilled in each of us to crave relationship, to be together in communion, *to love and be loved*.

In society today, we see an enormous amount of confusion about whether marriage and parenting and gender and sexuality are really all that big of a deal in the grand scheme of living a happy life and being a good person. Scripture points us time and time again back to God’s created order, daily restored to us in Christ Jesus, as the only source of true and eternal happiness, health, safety, strength, and faith—not just for ourselves but for our families and

society's families as well. There is nowhere we can go in this world that the actions and beliefs of others won't have an impact on us. When God's value of human life and His created order that cares for our lives is not the central focus through which every other relationship and decision are filtered, we are left chasing after momentary, superficial "feel-goods" that tear us down and distract us from seeing the only true source of our identity, purity, and integrity: Jesus Christ, our Lifeline to getting through this world and the One Who freely distributes every single commodity we need to stay connected and focused on Who God the Father and Creator of all things says we are—are blessed, chosen, adopted, accepted, redeemed, and forgiven (Ephesians 1:3-14).

Taking a Step Back to Look at the Problem

Rates of mood disorders and suicide-related outcomes have increased significantly over the last decade among adolescents and young adults with the simultaneous rise in social media and less face-to-face interaction.¹ Pornography and sexual addiction have increased.² Divorce rates persist at 40% to 50% with infidelity listed as the number one contributor.³ Nearly 22 million American youth are being raised in single-parent homes.⁴ Homosexuality and gender/identity dysphoria among teens and young adults are increasing.⁵ One in four women have suffered through the pains of abortion in our country since its legalization in 1973.⁶ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has publicly declared that we are in the midst of a sexually transmitted infection *epidemic* in our country, with over half of all newly diagnosed STIs being attributed to young people 15-24 years old.⁷

The reckless promotion of sensuality and lust, the defacing of all that God holds dear, the "dumbing down" of His created order and intrinsic value of human life: all of this and the separation that ensues from it have brought

us the most devastating suicide rates among young people (again, in the age demographic of 15-24) in all of history. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death in this age group. Human sexuality has more to do with our sense of self and our identity as men and women than it does with our physical bodies. *It is a stronghold meant to protect us from separation.* Our sexuality conjoins us to our husband or wife and, *together*, we fight against the daily physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual distortions of Satan.

Marriage and sexual intimacy with the one to whom we're married are meant to give us a microcosm—a *picture*—of how God loves us and cares for us. When we have a sexual relationship with someone, we (quite literally) strip ourselves bare before another person. We reveal ourselves to that person and share in the closest physical bond possible. But when we have sex outside of marriage, we've still held part of ourselves back. We haven't given our commitment. We haven't promised our protection. We haven't pledged to lay down our lives for that person.

God shows us in His love for us how it is done. We have a God Who gives of Himself completely and perfectly. He promises His eternal care for our well-being. He refuses to allow Satan to snatch us from His grasp. He doesn't hold Himself back from us but instead goes the length of giving us even His own Son by means of the body and blood of Jesus. He shows us that we are His "beloved." Even though we've been "stripped bare" before Him and He has seen all of our sin and guilt and shame, He has poured out His grace and mercy upon us to redeem us for Himself.

In the same way that a spoiled child abuses that which he doesn't value, Satan and our sinful flesh throw our fragile, "handle-with-extreme-care" sexuality around and then we look everywhere but to the Source for a solution to the loneliness, separation, and pain we face as a result. Because Satan wants to twist and distort Christ's relationship with me, he will attack my sexuality. Because Satan wants to mock

Christ's relationship with me, he will attack my identity. Because Satan wants to *destroy* Christ's relationship with me, he will attack my value. But because I am a child of the real, present God, I know that my identity is found in Christ alone. What He did for me shows me the value of my life and the power of my sexuality.

Let's Talk About Sex


Sex sells. We've established that and we see it happening all around us. With the amount of sexual propaganda that's surging through our televisions, headphones, social media, consumerism, and societal ideology, it's so easy to confuse *passionate*, physical sex for *companionate*, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and physical *honor*. *True* love and companionship “[**bear**] **all things**, [**believe**] **all things**, [**hope**] **all things**, [**endure**] **all things**” (1 Corinthians 13:7).

The momentary shot of “feel-good” hormones (oxytocin and endorphins) sexually attracts us to another person. God created these hormones to benefit the body in many ways, but sexually, He intends them to keep us coming back together with our spouse as the throes of life weave in and around us over the course of building a life, and a legacy, together. It's the aftermath of *casual* sex, however, that perpetuates a whole-body dysfunction, enabling an addiction-like abuse of endorphins and oxytocin—guilt, remorse, resentment, substance abuse, infection, unplanned pregnancy, heartbreak, anger, pain, break-ups, division, destruction, and overall destruction of one's self and others. Only when we stop putting the “band-aids” of condoms and birth control on the symptoms and begin addressing the root causes will we see lives and statistics change. And the root cause, of course, is our sinful nature and our incomprehension of the whole, physiological human beings that we are. Fearfully, wonderfully, intricately made—and attacked in the same ways by sin, death, and the devil.

Casual sexual relationships, sexual activity outside of complete monogamy (in the church, that's marriage), inherently assume that the value of human life (my own and all others) is subjective and superficial. This mentality indoctrinates our perception of the family unit as well.

Family is the Very Foundation of Every Person's Life

Family is the source from which we build our mentality, worldview, and individual approach to *every other* decision we will ever face. There is significant and powerful research indicating the effects of the family structure on crime and overall ability to thrive.⁸ (I recall all the Scriptures where Jesus is referred to as the Bridegroom and we, the Church, are His bride. Together, with Christ, we are the family of God; our earthly family flows out of this very first foundational family.)



One in every four parents living with a child in America is unmarried.

There are 300% more single-mother-led families in 2019 than there were just 60 years ago in 1960.⁹

“Houston, We Have a Problem”

Comprehensive sex education in our public schools is not working. To be fair, abstinence education curriculums don't seem to be working either. The critical breakdown with both is that their mindset, their place of origin, is skewed. The philosophy behind comprehensive sex-ed places the student's focus on the physical body. Its platform is that engaging in sexual activity however and with whomever is healthy and normal as long as mutual consent is involved and “safe-sex” methods (condoms and birth control) are used for the purposes of reducing sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies. The trouble with this ideology is that we are not just physical bodies with physical needs and consequences. Approaching sexuality education with this mindset fosters the line of thinking that “a talk” and “a fix” are sufficient methods of preparation for which to build an entire life and healthy future.

In regard to condoms and hormonal birth control, there is sufficient evidence proving their ineffectiveness as well as the inconsistency with which young people use them. Just Google the statistics for sexually transmitted infection/disease rates in our country. Look into the insane amount of Plan B (emergency contraceptives) and birth-control prescriptions that were given out by Planned Parenthood last year (*Guttmacher Report, 2018 Contraceptive Use in the United States*).

Research the medical and surgical abortion trends in recent years. All of these scientific statistics point us in one clear direction: **There is no such thing as “safe sex” outside the confines of marriage.** While a condom (used consistently and correctly) can reduce exposure to some sexually transmitted infections, it does nothing to protect against herpes, HPV, and syphilis which are spread by simple skin-to-skin contact and, untreated, can have serious long-term effects. Often times STIs are

asymptomatic, meaning that a person can be infected and contagious without ever experiencing a single symptom. When a person chooses to have sex outside the confines of marriage, they expose themselves to any and every sexually transmitted disease out there, many of which are asymptomatic and/or viral, as opposed to symptomatic and/or bacterial infections which can be diagnosed and treated. Long-term effects of untreated infections can lead to painful secondary diseases, transmission of diseases to newborn babies, infertility, and even cancer. Again, you cannot pick the STI/STD you're exposed to. If you're willing to expose yourself to one, you're saying you're okay with whatever infection and potential long-term effects come with it. It is a literal game of Russian roulette. I would also propose that we pay attention to the person's state of mind who is okay engaging in this risky behavior in spite of all the warnings. Are there deeper psychological needs that require attention?

Hormonal birth control (used consistently and correctly) can reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy but also can alter the hormones of a growing, developing adolescent body. The effects of this are staggering. "Progesterone dominant hormonal contraceptives can cause depression but are given freely to teenagers from young ages"⁹ (BMJ 2018). The intensifying links between mental health concerns, hormonal birth control, and risky sexual behaviors should warrant a great deal of regulation and intention on the part of parents and educators today. Furthermore, research supported by the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians & Gynecologists, as recently as September of 2019,¹⁰ clearly and scientifically identifies all hormonal contraceptives as potential abortifacients, meaning they have the potential to cause the abortion of a human embryo in its earliest stages of development. Beyond even these impressive concepts, however, we may question the mentality, the motivation, behind why a girl would need to be on birth control in the first place. *This* is the most important conversation that a parent or any adult can have with himself/herself

when contemplating whether or not to administer birth control to a loved one. Am I doing that child a disservice by enabling the lie that identity, worth, and purpose are found in sexuality? Would she be better served with my time, attentiveness, and biblical mentorship instead? Developing this frame of mind about comprehensive sex education addresses the whole person's well-being, but it also requires us all to slow down and diligently place the value of a person's life at the forefront of our priorities.

Subsequently, it is in this area that abstinence-only education curriculums do pretty well, with much of their teaching being focusing on the entirety of a person and how their actions and choices will impact their future. The breakdown, however, comes from a philosophy that tends to place the student's focus on their sexual purity as something they possess and that must be given to God in the form of a "pact" or a "pledge," empowering that person to withstand sexual temptation until their wedding night.

This teaching has damaged the Christian family in two devastating ways. The first is the natural rebellion against the unrealistic requirement to "make this pledge and go live a pure life." Sinners sin and, unfortunately, when it comes to living a sexually pure life, those sins (and their consequences) are typically kept very, very quiet. Vulnerable teens are left to suffer in silence and isolation. This false doctrine—that I must be good enough for God—has not only tainted the way young people see God's role in their lives but also their approach to sex and sexuality. The result is an attitude of rebellion rather than understanding: "This is not realistic, so why bother?"

The second way abstinence education has damaged the Christian family is by setting false expectations about what sex actually looks and feels like. The glamorization of lust and sensuality in our culture today sets an already unrealistic standard for everyone involved, on every level:

physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. Suddenly we find ourselves at a crossroads: the marriage relationship which necessitates time, effort, emotions, imperfections, etc., or the more idealistic version of sex and sexuality that surrounds us in pornography and vanity. And even if it's not us chasing down passion, we all find ourselves questioning whether we're "enough." This philosophy of abstinence education and purity pledges has wrongly taught Christians to "be more" for God—or for their parents or for their spouse.

Biblical Sexual Integrity: It's the Only Way

The truth is that sexual fulfillment is developed over time as we grow deeper and deeper in relationship and knowledge of our spouse. The true glamour of sex is much less about the physical body and much more about the bonding and intimacy that are created only as each person seeks to *honor* and *know* the other more and better—withholding nothing from one another. This is, of course, the same template we are given to approach our relationship with Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom, as well.

The next question we should all be asking ourselves at this point is, "Now what?" How do we give students and young people the tools they need to make healthy choices and have happy, healthy, safe, strong, and faithful futures?

We start by teaching them to honor the value of every human life. This is done over time and through relationship: Jesus directly applied to every intricate part of us through critical thinking, conversation, sharing experiences, and missionally serving those around us.

Tangibly, that all starts and ends with receiving everything Jesus gives us in our Baptism, where we find our identity having been joined with Him: blessed, chosen, adopted, accepted, forgiven, and redeemed members of God's family—"Christian."

We receive Jesus in the forgiveness of all our sins. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Every one of us needs to be reminded of this convicting but comforting aspect of our physiological make up.

We receive Jesus in His Word, which guides and directs us and draws us into a deeper understanding and knowledge of our value to Him.

And lastly, we receive Jesus in His very body and very blood, given for you to strengthen *your* body and purify *your* blood. Think for a moment about the power food has to restore the body. How much more are we restored then when that food is our Lord—moving through every part of you with its healing touch and power? Where can we always find these things? Where can we always find Jesus so as to directly apply Him to our complicated, raveled bodies? We can find Him at church, in the Divine Service, where *He* serves *us* with **all** that we need to get through this life. You see, when we receive the gifts God gives us in Christ—over and over again for all of our lives—and when we expose our children to these same gifts over and over again, something critical to our philosophy on life comes from it, freely and wholly: fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and *self-control*—can then be given out and applied to our real, everyday situations and lives. This is where we see the integrity and the character of a person mature from acting on the prompting of the flesh to acknowledging the power and grace of Jesus' capability to transform lives. *This is how we change the culture surrounding our kids so that no matter what lies the world throws at them, they will be able to discern The Truth and respond accordingly.*

Biblical sexual integrity comes from being taught biblical integrity. Biblical integrity comes from knowing and receiving Jesus over and over and over. And what's more, when they fail, when *we* fail, it's not all over for us!

God's grace, all we receive in Jesus, is sufficient for every hard lesson we go through in this life. It's our stories and experiences that open the doors to deeper connections and allow us to relate to others around us, all for the purpose of turning our eyes to Him Who creates a clean heart in each of us!

So, what is the real "comprehensive" behind comprehensive sex ed? That *you matter*. You've always mattered. And Jesus is the proof.



Endnotes

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