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On the Web
MEET THE AUTHOR

GREGG MATTE

My name is Gregg Matte. I was born and raised in Houston, Texas, and I trusted Christ as my Savior at the age of 16. Since then, God has done an extraordinary work in me and through me. In 1989, as a Texas A&M sophomore, my roommates and I started a small Bible study named Breakaway in our apartment. By the power of prayer, Breakaway exploded, reaching more than 4,000 students each week. It’s still going strong today with even more students and is making a great impact in collegiate lives (breakawayministries.org).

In 2004, God called me to become the pastor of Houston’s First Baptist Church. Our church has grown tremendously and is impacting the world as never before. I hold a marketing degree from Texas A&M and a Master of Christian Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I have been able to write a couple of books before this one, Finding God’s Will and I AM Changes Who i Am. Most importantly I’m married to Kelly, the most wonderful woman in the world. She was definitely worth the wait (see my notes to her in Session 6). We have two children: Greyson and Valerie. What a blessing they both are—and a lot of fun!

I wrote Birds and Bees because the beauty and blessing of sex has become tainted since, well, the moment after Adam and Eve ate the fruit. Thankfully, God has not left us alone to figure things out. The Bible is filled with guidance for sex. My hope and prayer is that this study will help you heal and grow in your understanding of God’s plan for sex and sexuality.

As part of my passion to rescue the vulnerable from sex trade, a portion of the royalties from this study will go to As Our Own. This ministry rescues and adopts little girls from the red-light districts in India. To find out more, go to asourown.org.

SPECIAL THANKS FROM GREGG

To LifeWay and the entire Threads team, I’m grateful for your trust and hard work. Thanks to Dennis Perry, my youth minister and father in the ministry. You have lead me well on these topics. To Ralph Borde and As Our Own, what an encouragement to partner with you to rescue children from the darkest places in India into His glorious light. Houston’s First Baptist Church, it’s a blessing and a joy to be your pastor. And to Kelly, my beautiful bride, I’m blessed beyond measure to be your husband!
God has a plan
If you’ve flown on a commercial airplane in the past decade, you probably had to watch a flight attendant demonstrate how to buckle and unbuckle a seat belt. I’ll be honest: I don’t have a lot of positive feelings about those demonstrations.

That’s not to say I have anything against flight attendants—I think they do a great job, generally speaking. It’s just that I’ve been buckling and unbuckling seat belts for years, and there are few experiences in life more tedious than being forced to endure an explanation of something you already know how to do.

That being the case, let’s get something straight off the bat: You already know how to have sex. Maybe you’ve already had sex. If you’re a virgin, chances are good that you’ve seen a sex scene during a movie or TV show. Maybe you’ve encountered pornography. At the very least, you probably had to endure some kind of lecture about sexual intercourse during health class in middle school.

For those reasons and more, this study isn’t about “the birds and the bees” in the sense of an awkward conversation you may or may not have had with your parents when you were a kid. I’m not going to spend time discussing what goes where during the act of sex. (I’m not going to explain where babies come from, either.)

Rather, this study is about the deeper issues connected with sex and sexuality. It’s about the fundamental needs and longings that have made sex such a foundational element of the human experience. Best of all, it’s a chance to engage in a mature, practical conversation about those needs and longings in a way that applies to your specific situation.

**TWO PRINCIPLES**

In order to help you make the most of that conversation, I’ve framed the different sessions of this study around two main principles.

The first is that sex and sexuality are incredibly complicated topics. They involve a number of different layers and connections—physical, of course, but also emotional, social, and even spiritual. As such, a discussion about sex and sexuality forces us to examine our core identities as human beings, including gender and sexual orientation. It also helps us find answers to questions like *Who am I?* and *Why do I have these desires?*
In addition, thinking through these topics helps us discover the ways we’ve been influenced by our culture and past experiences. It gives us a chance to identify the wounds we’ve received, and hopefully start the healing process. It also gives us a chance to correct any false beliefs we’ve picked up, and to move forward with a better understanding of our needs and the needs of others.

The second issue around which I’ve framed this study is that God has given us a lot of advice about sex and sexuality through His Word. In fact, the Bible serves as both a blueprint for God’s original design when it comes to sex and an instruction manual with practical guidelines for living out that design in our day-to-day lives.

I’ve used 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 as the primary text for this study, and we’ll dig deeply into what God said through the apostle Paul in those verses. We’ll also look at several other passages in Scripture to be sure that our conversation on sex and sexuality is profoundly impacted by God’s Word.

THE BIBLE SERVES AS BOTH A BLUEPRINT FOR GOD’S ORIGINAL DESIGN WHEN IT COMES TO SEX AND AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL WITH PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR LIVING OUT THAT DESIGN IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES.

THREE AUDIENCES
Maybe right now you’re wondering: Is this study for me? Does it have anything worthwhile to say to someone in my situation? After all, a topic like “sex and sexuality” is fairly broad. And even if we restrict it to God’s views on sex and sexuality, there’s still a lot of ground to cover—a lot of different directions the content could go.

Let me save you a little time (and skimming) by revealing the three types of people I had in mind when I wrote this study.

First, if you’re single and not currently involved in a serious relationship, I wrote this study for you. I spent many years as a bachelor in search of my wife, so I know how it feels to wonder if you’ll ever meet the right person. Even if you aren’t actively looking for a spouse, this study will help you face the pressures and challenges that come with “singles life” in today’s culture.

Second, if you’re single but in a serious relationship, I wrote this study for you. Dating relationships can be simultaneously exciting and terrifying, and those feelings only intensify when you add a physical connection to the mix. Participating in this conversation will help you set a practical, biblical plan for enjoying and evaluating your current relationship.
Third, if you’re married, especially recently married, I wrote this study for you. I understand that you want to have fulfilling experiences with sex. You want to have fun and memorable experiences with your spouse, but you also want your physical relationship to open the door to deep and lasting intimacy—something that transcends “intercourse” and results in two people becoming one. Participating in this study with your spouse will help you move in that direction.

In this study we will see the truth that God, the Author of all that is good, has blessed humanity with the joy of sexual intimacy. It’s uncomfortable to talk about because this topic is personal; it brings up insecurities, guilt, joy, sadness, fear, uncertainty, and a host of other emotions. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, these pages are not an attempt to embarrass or rebuke you but to focus you on God’s intentions, as revealed in His Word.

One of the culprits of our skewed understanding of sex is the amount of exposure we’ve had to it. From childhood, we’ve seen TV programs, Web sites, and gossip magazines at the grocery checkout line guiding our views. Countless love scenes on the silver screen to gossip in the halls of high school have slowly shaped us. Through limitless TV and movies we’ve come to believe intimacy is found on the third date—or even the first. It appears to peak when feelings brim over as the soundtrack plays to the crescendo. Yet the blessing of the Lord is “sexual intimacy,” meaning intimate, between two people. Have you ever heard it called “sexual publicly”? The public aspect of our culture’s version of sex is less than God intended. While it’s possibly passionate, it’s impossibly pleasing to us or to the Lord.

So let’s reclaim intimacy for God’s glory and our satisfaction. Let’s believe the truth, not the lie. Let’s turn the pages of God’s Word instead of allowing screens to bring us wonder. Let’s long for marriage not lust for mating. There’s more to God’s plan, so much more.

Are you ready to join in this conversation? I hope so. It’s my prayer that you’ll dive into this study with an open heart and mind so that your experiences with sex can be as sweet and passionate and tender and powerful as God always intended them to be.
God
Sex
you
SESSION ONE

God, Sex, and You
The first time I heard about sex, I was an elementary school kid with strawberry blond hair and freckles across my nose. I was young, but focused, listening to someone I considered a wise and eminent sage—a fifth-grader. With a know-it-all attitude, he told me about the birds and the bees. I responded forcefully to his claims: “My parents never did that!”

Of course, as time went by my innocent eyes were pried open by TV sitcoms and movies I was too young to see (but saw anyway). I even remember receiving an NFL cheerleaders’ calendar as a gift from a relative. The inadequately-clothed ladies had autographed their photos. One even signed her photo, “Remember room 101.” Who signs autographs suggesting they have shared a hotel room? I was an 8-year-old! You should’ve seen my dad squirm when I asked, “What does room 101 mean?”

A few years too late my mom sat me down for “the talk” and that was it. My education on one of the most complex, dangerous, and wonderful subjects of the human experience consisted of a big kid in the neighborhood, a few episodes of “Three’s Company,” a cheerleader pin-up, and “the talk.” There was no mention of waiting, true intimacy, possible pitfalls, or God Himself.

I remember thinking, *There’s gotta be more!* Even at a young age, I realized I hadn’t been adequately prepared for love and sex. I just didn’t know where to look for the knowledge I craved.

**How were you introduced to the topic of sex?**

**What’s been most helpful in your “sexual education” over the years?**

**What was left out of your early conversations? What was added that shouldn’t have been?**

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In a Rand Corporation study, researchers discovered that 40 percent of adolescents had had intercourse before talking to their parents about safe sex, birth control, and STDs.¹
IT’S TIME FOR A GROWN-UP CONVERSATION
Whenever I take a trip, I try to pack my suitcase well. I try to bring everything I may need in order to live and operate in a strange place. If I forget something important—or if I waste valuable space with useless stuff—I may be in big trouble.

In the real world, many people are relying on poorly packed suitcases as they journey through understanding sex. That’s how I felt as a younger person. In fact, sometimes it seemed like my suitcase was just about empty. Maybe that’s how you’re feeling now.

Unfortunately, because we live in a sex-saturated culture, our suitcases don’t stay empty for very long. Unless we fill them with the truth about God’s design for sex and sexuality, our suitcases will become piled full of junk from the world around us as the years go by. For example, most people’s suitcases contain whispered, uneducated discussions they had with friends when they were kids. Most people carry images they picked up from billboards and magazines. They carry snippets from movies and TV shows, and the lyrics from hundreds of songs.

Others have stuffed their suitcases with their own choices and actions. They’ve experimented with sex (or have dived head-first into a sexual lifestyle). They’ve built their statuses and self-worth on a foundation of physical attraction. They’ve indulged in premarital sexual relations, cohabitation, extra-marital affairs, open marriages, or pornography.

Others have been forced to carry around the choices and actions of those around them; they’ve been abused, raped, betrayed, or abandoned. Many, including myself, have seen their parents choose divorce over marriage.

Take a quiet moment to “unpack” your suitcase. For your eyes only, write down the decisions or actions, made by others or yourself, that are dragging you down. Whisper a prayer as well.

Given all that baggage, it’s time for us to put down our suitcases and have an honest conversation. We need to open up and talk about what we’ve been dragging around all these years. We need a chance to lift up our doubts and have our questions answered. Unfortunately, there’s not a lot of opportunity for that kind of conversation in today’s culture.

Watch the Birds and Bees video for Session 1, available at threadsmedia.com/birdsandbees.
SEX AND CULTURE
Not that our culture avoids the topic of sex—far from it. Society uses a megaphone to shout its views about sex in all directions. This is especially true of the advertising industry. For example, how often have you heard the term “sex sells”?

Here’s the problem: What we hear from advertising megaphones concentrates on the physical aspects of sex. It’s void of the elements that make our sexual experiences powerful—commitment, trust, emotional intimacy, and so on. As a result, sex is reduced to variations of animal instinct and lustful desire. Just as bad, what we hear from our culture’s megaphone is often juvenile and crass. Sex is connected with cheap arousal and crude humor.

Take a minute to review what messages you receive from the entertainment and advertising industries. Place a check mark next to each scenario you’ve seen in movies, TV shows, and commercials during the past month:

- ○ A person being idolized because of frequent sexual conquests
- ○ A person labeled a “loser” because of a lack of sexual experience
- ○ Sex being used to show that people have fallen in love
- ○ Sex being used to sell a product or experience
- ○ Adultery referenced as a joke
- ○ Homosexuality praised
- ○ Other scenarios not listed above

My goal is to highlight the “lowest common denominator” approach our culture takes toward sex. It’s almost as though entertainment and advertising executives view consumers as middle-school kids who never grew up. We need to move away from this mind-set if we want to have a grown-up conversation about sex and sexuality.

If our culture is a poor venue for honest discussion, where should we talk openly about the birds and the bees?

The best option is to have a lifelong conversation about sex within the context of a loving, committed family—ideally a conversation that starts young and provides a place for questions to be freely asked and honestly answered. If you had that kind of experience growing up, you’re way ahead of the curve. You’ve been blessed.

Unfortunately, that’s not the case for most people. I’ve talked with thousands of young adults over the last decade, and most of them are still looking for a mature, godly perspective on sex and sexuality. They’re still searching for answers.

Sexuality (noun): the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors associated with being a certain gender, being attracted to someone, loving, being in relationships, intimacy, and so on.
The average age for one’s first sexual experience is 15 to 19 years old—with generally younger ages for women than for men, especially in developing countries.

What did your parent(s) do well in regard to talking about sex and sexuality?

What would you do differently if you were the parent?

Believe it or not, the next best place to find those answers is within the local church.

SEX AND THE CHURCH
I’m not saying you need to seek answers to your sex-related questions within a church building, necessarily. There’s a lot to be said for engaging deeper discussions in a setting where you feel most comfortable. But if you’re going to talk about sex and sexuality in a way that’s beneficial and productive, you need to find a community of people who are seeking to understand and follow God’s design for those issues, too. And it’s important that you find a community of people who value safety, empathy, and the power of forgiveness—in short, people who understand grace.

In my mind, the best place to find those qualities and that kind of community is the local church.

Maybe you disagree. Maybe you read that last paragraph and thought, Whoa! You’ve never been to my church. Maybe the idea of connecting “church” and “sex” makes you feel uncomfortable or even angry. If so, I can see where you’re coming from. For decades, many churches have addressed the issues surrounding sex and sexuality by saying “don’t”: Don’t have sex before marriage. Don’t do anything with another person that might lead to sex before marriage. Don’t dress provocatively. Don’t look at pornography. Those are true statements, but the conversation shouldn’t end there. So much more needs to be said.

How do you react to the “don’t” statements above? Why do you think that’s your initial reaction?
What’s missing when churches only communicate by saying “don’t”?  

Churches can’t be ashamed to talk about sex because no one else in our society is ashamed to talk about it. And the ones talking most about sex only emphasize the physical elements and feelings involved—not God’s plan.

God created us as sexual creatures. Our desires are from Him not against Him. But it takes biblical teaching and the Holy Spirit’s power to walk in the best and right direction. It requires more than will power to honor God sexually; it has to be transformational power. We’ve allowed, knowingly and unknowingly, for the wrong to overshadow the right.

And unfortunately, the church has kept quiet when it should be the loudest to speak.

Why do you think the church is often afraid to discuss sex?

How does your church handle it?

More importantly, Christians can’t afford to remain quiet about sex because we’ve been given the truth about those issues. We’ve been given the Bible, which is God’s Word. Scripture has a ton to say about God’s intentions and design for sex.

GOD’S WORD

I’ll repeat that: The Bible has a ton to say about sex and sexuality. Numerous verses and whole sections of Scripture reference those topics—including Song of Songs, an entire book focused on sexual experiences, expressions, and emotions.

That much content can be overwhelming. So, for the purposes of this study, we’re going to focus primarily on one section of Scripture from the apostle Paul:

Jesus selected the apostle Paul to take the gospel to the non-Jewish people of his day. Paul is credited with authoring 13 books in the New Testament. You can find an extended biography on him in the Book of Acts.
“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionatelust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

Re-read this passage and underline words and phrases that strike you as meaningful.

Consider memorizing this passage of Scripture throughout this study. If you’re up for it, write out verse 1 below.

Now re-write verse 1 in your own words.

We’ll explore other Scripture passages, of course, but this text will serve as our rudder and sail while we navigate some potentially stormy waters. It’s a helpful summary of God’s design for sex and sexuality. With that in mind, take a closer look at the beginning of verse 3: “For this is God’s will.” I can’t overemphasize how important those words are. The apostle Paul wrote this entire passage of Scripture, but these aren’t “just” his opinions. There’s more going on.

For more on understanding God’s will, check out author Gregg Matte’s book, *Finding God’s Will: Seek Him, Know Him, Take the Next Step* (Regal, 2010).
What we find here isn’t good advice or the latest claim from a self-help manual. Rather, these verses contain “God’s will” for sex and sexuality. They are commands that came directly from “the Lord Jesus” (v. 2). They carry His authority. They aren’t the opinions of the kid down the street but of God in His holiness, love, and power. That’s great news! That’s a wonderful reality!

God invented sex. He has a will for sex. He has a plan for sexual orientation. Those things didn’t spin out from creation by mistake or cosmic accident. God intentionally designed us as sexual beings. He has a distinct purpose—and He didn’t keep that purpose to Himself. He told us about it in His Word. In other words, we don’t have to figure things out on our own. Thank goodness (and thank God).

**Before you read further, how would you describe God’s will for sex and sexuality from what you’ve previously learned about His Word?**

How do you respond to the statement that “God invented sex”?

**GOD’S WILL**
Of course, just because the Bible contains God’s will about a topic doesn’t mean we always follow His will.

Even as Christians, there are times when our ignorance or disobedience leads us to figure things out on our own. Or we put our faith in setting up systems based on prevention—on building fences. But even properly fenced sheep still need a shepherd to lead them toward greener pastures. The fences are important, but they’re incomplete. They’re not enough.

As a result, there have been some mixed messages from God’s people in regard to His will for sex and sexuality. There have been churches and individual Christians who, from time to time, contribute to the discussion in a way that actually causes confusion rather than clarity.

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One study of sex on TV found that 70 percent of shows contained some form of sexual content.³
Mixed Messages
For example, conversations within the church about sex and sexuality have, at times, become focused on the avoidance of consequences. As I’ve said, well-meaning people, pastors, and parents (like me) often use don’t as a primary theme when they talk about sex. Don’t have sex before marriage because you’ll get pregnant. Don’t have sex before marriage because you’ll get a disease. Don’t have sex before marriage because you’ll develop a bad reputation.

Such a message is all about avoiding consequences instead of honoring God. As a result, many people have come to believe that if they can avoid the consequences connected with sexual activities, their actions really aren’t that bad. People have grown up with the idea that birth control/condoms will take care of everything—that they should follow their urges as long as they can do so without other people finding out.

That’s not what God intended. The goal of the gospel is not to manage our sin, but to defeat it and to find life. Jesus’ death on the cross calls us to the “more” of abundant life—not just to keeping consequences at bay.

Instead of don’t, our conversations about sex and sexuality should be framed by do. Do honor the Lord. Do walk in purity. Do discover the best God has for you and wait until you’re ready to receive it. Let’s state what we’re for rather than only what we’re against. God is always on offense. He doesn’t need to play defense because He knows our “yes” to Him produces a “no” to sin.

Growing up, what messages did you hear from churches on the connection between sex and consequences?

What messages did you hear from the culture?

One message we sometimes hear is abstinence solves everything. As long as you’re not having sex, you’re OK. That’s a great start, but there are soul issues at stake as well as physical ones.

Paul visited Thessalonica, an important city in Northern Greece, during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9).
The world says: “All sexual desires are good. Have sex when you want and with whomever you want.” Churches have sometimes responded by saying the opposite: “Most sexual desires are bad. Have nothing to do with anything sexual until you’re married.” Here’s the problem: Both of those messages only concentrate on the physical elements of sex. Both of those messages reduce sex to a physical act and ignore the deeper elements of sexual experiences. As a result, both messages are shallow, juvenile, and unhelpful.

Don’t get me wrong: I believe that choosing abstinence is godly and virtuous. It’s God’s plan for us to steward and cherish our bodies until marriage. But it’s important for us to choose abstinence for the right reasons. Simply avoiding sex doesn’t mean you’re operating according to God’s plan. You can be a virgin and still be drowning in lust. You can be a virgin and still use your body to attract attention from others. You can be a virgin and still judge people in your heart and treat them cruelly when their preferences and actions are different than yours. That’s not what God intended either.

The Original Design

So here’s the million-dollar question: What did God intend for sex?

How would you answer this question?

We’ll find the answer in 1 Thessalonians 4, but I want to start with some background information. That text is part of a letter Paul wrote to the church located in Thessalonica, and he used the first three chapters to offer personal greetings and historical review. Discussing his thankfulness for the Thessalonian Christians, he reminded them of his ministry in their town, and how concerned he was for the suffering and persecution they were experiencing.

Then, in chapter 4, Paul got down to business. He wrote a series of instructions and exhortations for the Thessalonians on how to live as followers of God. Verses 3-8 are instructions for sex and sexuality. Verses 9-10 deal with brotherly love. Verses 11-12 have to do with orderly living. Notice the motivation behind all of these instructions:

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

Listen to “The Birds and the Bees” by Dean Martin and “Like Wildflowers” by Rosie Thomas from the Birds and Bees playlist, available for purchase at threadsmedia.com/birdsandbees.
Paul wrote his instructions to help the Thessalonians “please God.” Specifically, he wanted them to view sex and sexuality as opportunities to walk as followers of God and please Him.

When Paul lived with the Thessalonians, he taught them the basics of living as Christians. Once he left to plant churches in other areas, the Thessalonians tried to live according to Paul’s teachings. They had made progress as new converts despite their lack of teaching. So Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in order to provide further instructions for pursuing holiness and pleasing God.

To put it simply, then, sex is about pleasing God. And a mature view of sex begins with a desire to follow Him—not just to follow the rules or avoid consequences.

It’s been that way since the beginning, which we can see in Genesis 1:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ . . . God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (vv. 27-28,31).

Just to make sure we’re all on the same page, that command “be fruitful [and] multiply” refers to sex. Adam and Eve were created as sexual beings. Their union was part of God’s design, and “it was very good.” It pleased God.

Circle the adjectives in the verses from Genesis 1 above. What do you notice about the connections between them?

Does sex still honor God today? Why or why not?

Ancient Semitic hospitality customs made Lot responsible for his visitors’ safety while under his roof—no matter the cost. The Sodomites were also guilty of pride, arrogance, oppression of the poor, and “detestable things” (Ezekiel 16:49-50).
Like everything else in the world, however, sex was distorted when sin entered the picture just a couple chapters later. People drifted away from God’s original design. Instead of viewing sex as pleasing God, they did as they pleased.

Actually, people didn’t just “drift” away from God’s plan for sex and sexuality. They dove off a cliff in their rebellion against God’s design. For example, we only need to flip from Genesis 1 to Genesis 19 to read of the homosexuality and promiscuity in the city of Sodom:

“Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.’ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, ‘No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof’” (Genesis 19:4-8).

Eden to Sodom is a big jump. Humanity went from God’s blessing in a garden paradise to debauchery in the city streets.

**Circle the adjectives in the text from Genesis 19. What do you notice about the connections between them?**

**How do the adjectives in Genesis 19 compare with the adjectives you circled from Genesis 1?**

Fast-forward through thousands of years of distorted attitudes and practices, and you’ll understand why Paul had to write the opening section of 1 Thessalonians 4. He wanted the members of that young church to understand God’s original design for sex and sexuality so that they could honor God through their obedience.

> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”” (Matthew 22:36-37).
GOD, SEX, AND US
Fast-forward another 2,000 years, and the same is true of today’s culture. The same is true of you and me. We’ve drifted away from God’s intentions, and we need to gain a better understanding of God’s plan for sex and sexuality if we want to glorify Him. We need to return to God’s design for sex if we want to experience a sexual relationship in its fullest measure—something beyond a merely physical connection.

I hope you have a lot of questions about that process. Questions like:

- What exactly is God’s design for sex and sexuality?
- How far is too far when it comes to physical intimacy before marriage?
- What about homosexuality and other issues connected with sexual identity?
- What if someone has made mistakes in the past?
- What does the Bible say about divorce?
- How do I handle lust?
- What does it mean to honor God with my sex life?

We’re going to address those questions throughout the remaining sessions of this study, all of them. Just be patient, as one session builds upon the other.

For now, however, the most important thing I want you to remember and reflect on is that sex begins and ends with pleasing and honoring God. Sex was created by God to glorify Him. Therefore, if we want to experience the full measure of what God intended for sex, we start by pursuing Jesus. If we aspire to a mature, helpful understanding of sexuality and everything that entails, we need to start by loving God.

If you’re married, start by loving God. Realize that’s where true fulfillment begins. Sex is far more than a physical act; it includes emotions, spirit, and trust. Then, take the love of Christ you’ve experienced and share it with your spouse. (More on that in Session 6.)

If you’re single and you’re wondering how to handle sexual desires with seemingly no place to go, start by pursuing Jesus. Then allow Jesus to lead you down the path He has in store for your future—whatever that path may be.

God is the Creator of sex. He’s the One who gave it to us, and if we miss that fact, we miss everything. The purpose behind our sexuality, single or married, is to please Him. It’s to be in love with Him and satisfied with Him—and that is good.
APPLY TO LIFE

> **CONNECT:** Whether you’re single or married, try to get together this week with a married person you respect—preferably someone at least a little older than you. Talk with that person about his or her overall story, marriage, and opinions about the primary purposes of sex and sexuality.

> **STUDY:** Work on memorizing 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 over the course of this study. This week, start with verses 1-2: “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

> **LISTEN:** Purchase “The Birds and the Bees” by Dean Martin and “Like Wildflowers” by Rosie Thomas (see the playlist at threadsmedia.com/birdsandbees). Add these to your regular mix of music throughout the week so that you’ll be reminded to continue thinking about God’s plan for sex and sexuality.