# **Jesus & Sex - the better story**

Dan Leathers / General

Friends, I’ve spent months in preparation for this morning, I’ve read and listened to many books and articles around this subject which adds to years of reading and study to carefully balance what I believe the Lord calls faithful preachers to preach.

On Wednesday I had nearly finished my carefully balanced sermon, pastorally sensitive and rooted in scripture.

But Thursday morning, something still didn’t feel right. The sermon was good, I think, but I felt the Lord say tell them the story. So today, I’m going deliver the story of God and sex as I understand it through scripture.

My prayer is that you are able to enter into the great drama which God has blessed us with.

I have produced a hand out with some of my key points from the other sermon and most importantly, I have 4 books I highly recommend and I’d invite everyone to delve in deeper as we wrestle with sex and how that relates to the love of God. So you’ll be able to pick those up from the table at the back of Church on your way out.

But some things I need you to hear me say before I go any further.

1. Everyone is welcome

2. Every person is made in the image of God

3. Every person is loved by God

4. Church must be a safe place for all

# A better story

• In the beginning there was God. God the Father, God the Word & God the Holy Spirit.

• Three members in one complete essence, united in the most intimate love that has and ever will be known .

• God the Father spoke and through God the Word the heavens and the earth came into being.

• The land and the sea, the birds in the air and the fish in the oceans, God the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters of the creation which He had birthed.

• To crown all of creation, God created creatures to know His love. To experience His blessing and to enter into a covenant relationship which would demonstrate to these particular creatures, the intimate nature of God Himself, God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit.

• So out of His love He created a man and a woman. He carefully designed them, crafted them different, yet complimentary.

• In fact, he created them to join, spiritually and emotionally through the most physical union that two humans could ever engage in.

• At the beginning of the human race, God created us sexual beings with a design and careful intention.

• The first man and woman lived with God, they experienced an intimacy with God daily which they took for granted. They knew nothing else. And God loved walking with them, doing life with them. That was how he intended them to live.

• And, they were naked, completely starkers. It didn’t bother them, there was nothing to hide. There sexuality on display and their most intimate needs met, not in the act of sex, but in the most amazing, fundamental relationship which they were created for.

• A relationship with the God of all.

• Their own sexual union was designed to make the man and the woman one, and this act was given both as a symbol of the unity they were to have with their God, and as a way of reproducing.

• We don’t see a marriage ceremony in Eden, but when God is ever present and He oversees the commitment this man and this woman are to have for each other, I think we call that marriage.

• You know the story from here, God offered them everything and just asked them to trust Him. That He had their best interest at heart. He called them to follow Him and not themselves.

• But there was someone else in the garden. Watching them, envying them. A creature created for light, the leader of heavens worship, number two only to God himself.

• But he had sought the throne of heaven, led a rebellion against God, and ended up falling so far from the God who created him for love.

• He watched as the new crown of God’s creation, this man and this woman, spent time with God, everything he’d discarded, everything he’d yearned for and yet had lost in his rejection of the creator.

([Ezekiel 28:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Eze28.13))

([Isaiah 14:12-15](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Is14.12-15))

• Determined to destroy this relationship, Lucifer spoke to the woman. ‘Did God really say that you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’ Putting a doubt in her innocent mind.

• She tried to resist, she told him how God had allowed them to eat from any tree in the garden save the tree of the knowledge of good an evil. God had desired them to trust Him to tell them right from wrong, and to trust in His definition of good and evil. She ended ‘we mustn’t eat from it, nor touch it, or we shall die’

• But the crafty fallen angel said “You shall not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ([Gen 3.1-6](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Ge3.1-6))

• At the thought of being able to redefine reality, grasping for independence from God’s way, in a moment of defiance and rebellion, the woman took a bite from the fruit and gave it to her husband who ate it as freely, and willingly as she had.

• In that single moment they broke their covenant relationship with God.

• The relationship they were created for. They committed an adultery of the heart. Choosing their way and not to trust God’s way.

• Suddenly, they looked down and realised they were naked, and they ran to hide themselves.

• Their open sexuality was now something to be hidden, something broken.

• When God called for them, they were hiding. When God asked the man what had happened, instead of looking out for His wife, putting her needs before His.

• Instead of the loving, mutual, caring relationship which they had entered into, now He put His needs first.

• He blamed her, he even blamed God “‘The *woman* **you** put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’”

• And God’s heart was broken. His perfect creation was broken. The relationship was broken. Adultery had taken place, the faith and trust between humanity and God was broken, and the God of true love and true Justice had to expel them from His presence.

• Fast forward to the days of Noah, and that beautiful creation was broken further. As the people were no longer living in a covenant relationship with God, as they no longer experienced the fullness of intimacy with the creator, as Satan whispered in their ears about a new god. A god who he promised would give their lives meaning, a god who would give them power and status, a god who would satisfy that deep emptiness within.

• Through the lies and whispers of Satan, Sex, instead of being something beautiful to unite a man and a woman for their entire earthly lives, a symbol to humanity of the beautiful union and intimacy with the God who we are destined for, became distorted. It was used to gain power, to take advantage of others, to dehumanise god’s children, and rulers and spiritual powers took it to darker places ([Genesis 6](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Ge6))

• Instead of sex being part of God’s gift to the world designed for an exclusive faithful relationship, Sex became driven by lust and by power.

• Fuelled by lies and self-deception.

• God had had enough and He raised Noah to be His faithful servant, as God restarted afresh.

• Later we find a man called Abram who meets God in a miraculous way. Looking up at the stars above Abram, God makes a covenant with Him, that He will grow a new nation through Him and His wife. He promises to raise this nation through this old couple and Abram’s barren wife. They have an angelic visitation, possibly the God Head Himself, Father, Word and Holy Spirit. And even then Abram and Sara doubt, and end up trying to make this nation happen through Him having extra marital sex with her servant.

• God’s children seem so broken. So far from the loving and trusting intimacy of the garden.

• And it continues throughout the Israelite history.

• That covenant with Abram, later Abraham, was equivalent to a marriage. If Abraham committed His offspring to follow and be faithful to God, then they would receive His blessing and His protection. They would live under the provision of heaven.

• God loves them, He desires them. He longs for them, and that is why He makes the covenant vows.

• But through the time of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, the Kings, all the way through the prophets, God’s people keep turning away from Him, rejecting His love. When they cry out for help, He is faithful and rescues them. And then they become idolatrous, following the idols of the time, redefining good and evil to suit themselves. ‘The people did what was right in their own eyes, and the Lord’s anger was kindled against them.’

• Not because God is a wrathful God, but because His people had been joined to Him, in an eternal covenant, and yet time after time, they broke that covenant with Him.

• Through the prophets and the book of song of Solomon, as God pours out His love for us, he speaks of a romantic love, particularly toward His people. He speaks of a marriage between Himself, God, and the people of Israel. And in some shocking imagery in [Ezekiel 19](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Eze19) & 20 he speaks of the adultery of his nation to the idols of the surrounding nations. And while God is always ready for His bride to return, He allows her to walk away and experience the consequences of her sin.

• This is part of the explanation behind the exile to Babylon.

• It also helps us understand when the bible says that God is jealous for us ([2 Cor 11.2](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.2Co11.2)). He has destined His people to be His bride, and when we turn away from Him and listen to the voice of the enemy whispering his lies over us, God feels the rejection of adultery.

• While this sets it in a negative frame, the positive is that God loves us this much. So much that He has destined us to live in intimacy with Him for eternity, so much that He had a rescue plan to give us a life outside of the lies of Satan, if only we would accept that gift of love.

• The god of Sex was lifted higher, promising the gift of deep fulfilment for those who ate of it’s promiscuous fruit. The world our saviour stepped into was one with far more sexual freedoms than we often care to remember. The Greek and Roman elite’s were particularly seeking to realise their desires with those who caught their eye. And the desire of the elites becomes the desire of the everyday person. What our celebrities strive for, become our great ambitions.

• God saw His bride walking further and further away. And he saw the confusion of His children.

• They had defined good and evil for themselves. He could have left them, but His deep love, displayed in wonderful affection, friendship, compassion and yes even a perfect romantic love for us, His creation,

• And into that culture, the saviour was born.

• A man who was plain looking, ([Isaiah 53](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Is53)) a hard working labourer in a poor part of Israel. A man born outside of the wedlock of His biological mother and her betrothed husband, because of the most incredible encounter between the God of creation and this faithful woman.

• In Jesus Christ, we see God the Word become fully human. Living a truly human life and promising life in all it’s fullness ([John 10:10](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNIV.Jn10.10)) which was found in Him.

• The life of our Messiah, of our rescuer, was a life of poverty, little recognised power and a life of abstinence from sex.

• Sex was not a god to Jesus Christ. Jesus was fully human, He was a sexual being. He was also fully God. He was tempted in every way, and yet He did not give in to that temptation.

• In so much of His teaching, Jesus addressed the lies of Satan over the world. The lies of the false god of Money (Mamon), the lies of the false god of Power and the lies of the false God of Sex.

• Jesus never lived alone. He may have been physically alone at many times, but Jesus lived in the intimacy with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, that Adam & Eve were designed for. That you and I are designed for.

• And Jesus was blessed with a community. He called disciples to follow Him, to teach them and the people they ministered to, of the greatest news possible.

• That human fulfilment is found in God.

• That God is not distant

• That God is pure love. Love is not God, God is love.

• For too long God’s children had fallen, stumbling after their own definition of love, of their needs being met, their desires fulfilled, their human lusts satisfied.

• Jesus teaches a love which puts the other first, which longs to see the other flourish ahead of ourselves. This deep love expressed through godly friendships and unions, defined by the God who created us, and not our own broken hearts and minds.

• He taught a high sexual ethic.

• One which would see a man and a woman leave their parents family and unite together as a sign of God’s love. To live a faithful and self-giving life. Where just looking lustfully at someone outside the marriage is unfaithfulness of the mind. he was clear, that’s not right, that’s not how God designed us to live.

• A sexual ethic which taught that divorce is not intended by God for anyone. And these words will have cut to the hearts of His first listeners, where a man could write up a certificate of divorce, present it to his wife, and leave her to a life without status, without a means to provide for herself, without even a home.

• His choice of sexual abstinence was to be the example for those living outside of marriage, so that they could devote even more time to the intimate relationship with the God who loves them.

• God on earth, Jesus Christ, had come to restore and reconcile His people to himself. The mission of Jesus was to bring us back into the relationship we were created to live in.

• We hear His teaching on sex and we’re as challenged as His first listeners. That sex is between one man and one woman for the whole of their lives. It is a symbol, a foretaste of the marriage between God and His people, the Church.

• The reason Jesus teaches us about the lies of Satan around money, sex and power, is because He desires us. He doesn’t want us to continue living in sin any longer. He doesn’t want an eternity without us, the destination for all who are unfaithful to Him.

• In fact, He demonstrates this love, this affection for us, this other worldly friendship for us, the deepest compassion for us and yes, even the most intimate romantic desire to live with us,

• that the God of all creation would take His place on a cross of wood, to die my death, the one deserved for me as a sinner, He took my place on the cross, pronounced forgiveness on those who were torturing and killing Him, because God desired them as He desires you. He desired their hearts to be joined with His.

• That was the day it seemed Satan had won, and yet it was the day that the power of every lie of Satan was destroyed.

• This is the God who loves us, This is the God who desires us. Whether we are united in a biblical marriage or living faithfully celibate single lives as Jesus himself did, we are called together to experience His gift of love and grace.

• Friends, I am a broken man, and sexual brokenness is part of my story as it is likely part of yours.

• God is still working in me, and I praise Him for the immense freedom I now feel from the sexual immorality I have committed in my life, particularly in the area of porn.

• Our confusion is overturned when we realise that God has an opinion on our creation, in fact He’s told us how He wants us to live.

• My experience of God’s love is that we first have to accept that we are loved by God, and then we work with Him as He helps us deal with the lusts that grasp our hearts, as we allow Him to speak His truth over the lies which the devil has spoken, and the world echoes.

• Friends, this is hard for all of us, and I long for St Mark’s to be a place where you can be open about your wrestles, about where we struggle to live out a biblically faithful life, or even what that looks like. And to celebrate together where you are living that faithful life out.

• We are called to be together, we are called to be church, we are called to be family and we are called to love each other as Christ loves us.

• And the end of the story,

**Revelation 19:6–8 NIV 2011**

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.   
  
7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.   
  
8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

You are destined for God.

Jesus died so that You can experience the depth of this love.

Will you submit even your sexuality, your inner most desires to God?

Let’s spend some time with gentle instrumental music as we invite the Holy Spirit of God to meet us, convict us and encourage us.