

The
SEX SPIRAL

ENDORSEMENTS

The Sex Spiral offers a message of hope to those enslaved in internet pornography. In a day where we see so much sexual brokenness, this book outlines a healthy theology of sex. We are so thankful for Dustin's story and the freedom that many will experience by reading this timely and informative book.

—Dr. Archibald Hart and Dr. Sylvia Hart Freijd
Authors of *The Digital Invasion: How Technology is Shaping You and Your Relationships*

If you want to understand the way sexual sin robs your soul of hope and joy, and the pathway to full life in Jesus Christ, then *The Sex Spiral* is the book for you. Dustin is candid, concise, and caring in his writing on such a difficult topic. There is hope for living a life of sexual integrity in the midst of a sexually confused culture, and this book will help you navigate this tricky terrain.

—Jonathan Daugherty
Founder & Director of Be Broken Ministries
Author of *The Four Pillars of Purity, Grace-Based Recovery*, and more

Fighting the lure of pornography is exhausting for so many. *The Sex Spiral* holds a new approach to experiencing both forgiveness and freedom in Christ and finally severing the addictive hold of sexual temptation. Bravo to Dustin Daniels for sharing these realistic triggers for every man to follow.

—Shaunti Feldhahn
Social Researcher
Best-selling author of *For Women Only* and *Through a Man's Eyes*

We may know our position on pornography, but that hardly helps the person entangled in porn to free himself. What we need today are more tools—practical, clear, Biblically based—so the habitual porn user can learn what to do about the problem rather than hear yet another sermon on how serious the problem is. Dustin Daniels has contributed just such a tool. *The Sex Spiral* is both an eye opener and a challenge, and those in bondage to porn, as well as those who minister to them, will find answers and approaches here.

—Joe Dallas

Author of *The Game Plan*, *The Complete Christian Guide To Understanding Homosexuality*, and more

The Sex Spiral offers an effective balance of biblical truth and practical application of that truth to the real-life struggle of sexual sin. Dustin shares openly from his own journey toward freedom, serving as an encourager and trusted friend to you as you read. This is a compelling resource that I'm delighted to recommend to anyone battling sexual sin.

—Dr. Juli Slattery

Psychologist and President of Authentic Intimacy
Author of *Sex and the Single Girl* and *Pulling Back the Shades*

The
SEX SPIRAL

Forgiven and Free From Pornography

DUSTIN DANIELS



AMBASSADOR INTERNATIONAL
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA & BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

www.ambassador-international.com

The Sex Spiral

Forgiven and Free from Pornography

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AMBASSADOR INTERNATIONAL

Emerald House

411 University Ridge, Suite B14

Greenville, SC 29601, USA

www.ambassador-international.com

AMBASSADOR BOOKS

The Mount

2 Woodstock Link

Belfast, BT6 8DD, Northern Ireland, UK

www.ambassadormedia.co.uk

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This book is dedicated to Jesus Christ, my Savior God.
Thank You for the gifts of forgiveness *and* freedom.

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FOREWORD

RECENTLY, A COLLEAGUE OF MINE wrote a very discouraging e-mail. He asked, “Mark are we losing the war?” By that he meant that there are many days when it seems like we Christian counselors are having no effect on our sexually-saturated culture. All of us who are old enough to remember the more innocent times of the 1950s have seen the explosive growth of pornography and sexually-explicit behaviors too numerous to mention. It does seem like Christians have lost the battle for the soul of our culture. My good friend Josh McDowell has called the current situation the greatest moral crisis in the history of the Church.

I wrote my colleague back and simply said that we are called to be a witness to the “remnant,” those few who are Christ followers and seek a moral path. We are the minority. Our nation has lost its way. Great moral declines like this are familiar to the Church. The apostle Paul describes the moral decline that eventually led to the decline of the Roman Empire in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans. Later in that same letter Paul writes that we should not be conformed to the ways of the world, but be transformed by the transformation of our minds.

That is our challenge today. To be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We Christians are always called to be the “light” to the nations. We will be the minority. We therefore need voices of truth to constantly encourage us in this daily struggle. We will doubt ourselves and be challenged by the measures of Satan spoken through the voices of our culture. To tell the truth is often the unpopular and well-criticized path. It takes great courage.

I have known Dustin Daniels for quite some time now. He has been a “voice crying in the wilderness” or more accurately the desert of Arizona. His has been a strong and biblical voice over the airwaves of his radio show. He has spoken and taught the truth. Now he has put his wisdom in this book. I encourage you to read it and be blessed. My further encouragement is that you too will be part of the remnant who doesn’t conform to culture. I encourage you to be a person of moral integrity. Finally, I hope that you will be a voice of truth to those you influence, perhaps mainly your own family.

—Mark Laaser, M.Div., PhD.

Dr. Laaser is nationally recognized as the leading authority in the field of sexual addiction and healthy sexuality with over 29 years of recovery experience. Mark has written fifteen books on the subject of sexual addiction.

INTRODUCTION

I WAS STANDING IN A closet with a loaded 9mm gun in my hand. I was hiding from an unexpected guest. I don't remember how long I was in there, but it seemed like forever. Regardless, I was somewhere I shouldn't have been—having relations with a woman who wasn't mine. Her son had decided to stop by and check on his mom. He had heard that she had moved out and was planning on filing for divorce. After he finally left, his mother opened the closet door to let me know it was “safe” to come out of hiding. She saw the gun in my hand, looked at me, and said with a scowl, “What were you going to do—shoot him?”

How does someone end up in that situation? I mean, this is the kind of stuff you watch on the local news. We think to ourselves, *This kind of stuff would never happen to me. What an idiot!* Well, idiot or not, up to this point in my life, most people would have told you that I was a really nice guy, a great employee, and a good neighbor. What they didn't know—what nobody knew—was that for over twenty years of my life, I was addicted to pornography.

I certainly didn't plan on becoming an addict, nor did I wake up one day and choose to become one. So how on earth did this happen? In other words, how does a child who found his father's collection of pornography wind up in a closet, hiding like a coward and still acting like that little boy—only now with a loaded gun in his hand—over twenty years later?

This book is somewhat of a narrative of how that happened to me, but more importantly, it's instructional. *The Sex Spiral* is saturated with God's Word and practical application to prevent the same idiotic type

of thing from happening to you. Ultimately, this book isn't about me or you. It's about Jesus Christ and the grace He offers to sexual sinners through a blood-stained, Roman cross.

I find it fascinating that Jesus' first sermon came directly from Isaiah 61:1 (ESV): ***“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me (Jesus) to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”***¹

That passage is really, *really* good news. Read it again, this time slowly and out loud from the New Living Translation: ***“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.”***

Are you beaten down and brokenhearted? Would you like to feel true comfort? Do you feel like a prisoner inside your own, self-imposed prison cell? Is the thought of being free from pornography only wishful thinking? Well, you're in good company, my friend, because you're not alone.

WE'RE DROWNING

When I was a child, my dad and I were playing on this pontoon-type raft at the lake. It had worn-out, sun-blazed, greenish blue, putting green carpet on the top. It was tied down by some sort of makeshift anchor. There were several teenagers playing on the raft as well. They soon began rocking the raft from side to side—up and down, up and down. I moved to the middle of the raft because I got scared and asked my dad, “Is it going to flip?” He reassured me that it wasn't. Needless to say, my dad was not a prophet; as those words exited his mouth, the whole raft tumbled over.

Everyone dove off, but I didn't know how to dive, let alone swim! I jumped as far as I could into the water, but the raft came crashing down

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

on me. I was in the water for just a nanosecond before it slammed onto my head, pushing me further underneath the water. I opened my eyes, and all I could see was that greenish blue carpet. I kept hitting my head on the raft, trying to escape, but it was directly over me. I was paralyzed with fear, and panic set in. I was gasping for air but only gulped lake water.

At this moment, I didn't need someone yelling from the shore, "Hey! You should have learned how to dive before you played on that raft." I didn't need another person pointing and laughing at me because I didn't know how to swim. I didn't need to be completely ignored, and I surely didn't need someone telling me to "try harder; just hold your breath for a little longer; and everything will be okay."

No, I needed someone to *save me*. I needed someone to get in the water, risk their own life, and pull me out from underneath the raft. I needed *someone else* to do something. My life was completely out of my control at that moment. Ultimately, I needed a savior. I was a little boy who was utterly helpless. I was drowning and moments away from dying. Thankfully, someone did save me. They grabbed my arm and pulled me out from underneath the raft. To this day, I still don't know who that person was.

Today, the Church is also drowning with its passive reluctance to address the painful reality of what's going on in our homes. Many people call pornography a "white elephant." I vehemently disagree. I believe we are way past cute metaphors that most people ignore. Lust is an enraged lion that is seething to devour Christian homes at a pace that human history has never experienced before. We have a pandemic of pornography in the pews of our Bible-believing churches that is destroying families while ferociously corrupting our children. Yet it seems that we have the same mentality for solutions—we're trying to give swimming lessons to those who are drowning.

For example, you know you need help with your porn problem, but the terror of telling someone (especially some type of pastor, minister

or priest) has prevented you from doing so for years or even decades. You finally get the nerve to tell someone you believe is trustworthy, but, unfortunately, something like this takes place:

1. He immediately gives you a mental checklist of things that you “should” be doing and another checklist of things that you “shouldn’t” be doing. Basically, he has given you more rules (laws) to follow.
2. He laughs nervously at the topic because sexuality is way too uncomfortable to do otherwise. He makes you feel like you’re the only one with this “problem” and tells you to pray harder (whatever that means). He has essentially ignored you.
3. He spends enough time with you so that you can confess your sin. He also prays that God “will take away this desire,” but, ultimately, there is no guidance, resolution, or plan as you walk out his door. He believes that he has done his part as a pastor and privately hopes that you will never bother him again. After all, he has a church to lead.

If one, all, or a variation of those things has happened to you, I’m so sorry. I truly am. I want to reconcile that conversation with this book, workbook, and video series.² I want you to know there are people who care and are willing to answer your questions on this journey toward sexual sobriety.

A BOLD STATEMENT

Christian evangelist Josh McDowell says that “pornography is the biggest threat to the cause of Christ in over 2,000 years.”³ Wow, that’s a pretty bold statement, don’t you think? Statistics are all over the board when it comes to how many men and women, boys and girls are viewing pornography—intentionally or by accident. Regardless of

² Visit www.DustinDaniels.org to learn more.

³ *Dustin Daniels Radio Show*. “Let’s Do Something About the Porn Epidemic.” Episode 118. October 24, 2015.

what the stats are, my concern is that there are real people like you and your family behind those numbers. Those statistics represent people that are being raped by a lie. Ironic, isn't it? I could list dozens of statistics to prove why I think Josh is on to something. The problem with stats, however, is that those numbers won't change our behavior. If statistics actually had any influence on our lives, then we wouldn't smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or eat double cheeseburgers.⁴

“The Control Cycle”

I met Dr. Bruce McNicol of Trueface⁵ in 2007. I read his book *TrueFaced* (now called *The Cure*⁶) and became an instant fan. I had the privilege of sharing the same office space with him and his team for more than a year. In that time, Bruce gave me an audio lesson titled, “The Control Cycle.” I listened to it and was so excited about what he and Bill Thrall taught that I asked if he would be willing to modify it for sexual integrity, so I could teach it within the purity ministry of Seven Places[®]. He smiled and said, “No, but you sure can! It would be an honor for you to take our material and customize it.” So with Bruce's blessing, that's what I've done.

Over the years, I've reworked and renamed this material *The Sex Spiral: Forgiven and Free From Pornography*. The reason for this specific title is because there are countless people sitting in our churches who are *forgiven* by the blood of Jesus Christ, but by no means are *free* to live the life God has promised them. Galatians 5:1 is prophetic: **“So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.”**

We have millions of people who go to church and raise their hands during the worship service on Sunday morning, yet they use those same hands to click on pornography only hours later. The Apostle James, the half-brother of Jesus, writes in James 3:10, **“And so blessing**

4 Smith, Bruce: Alliance Defending Freedom—Messaging University, 2014.

5 <http://www.trueface.org>.

6 Thrall, Bill; McNicol, Bruce; Lynch, John: *The Cure: What if God Isn't Who You Think He Is and Neither Are You?* Carol Stream: NavPress, 2011.

and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!

WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND IS NOT

Tragically, there are many Christian recovery programs that involve more psychology and human reasoning than biblical theology. This is heresy. We, as Christians, must first have a correct understanding of theology *and then* apply psychology and behavior based principles to our recovery. On the flip side, there are many colleagues of mine and many more faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who operate Christ-centered recovery programs. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge them here and thank them for being faithful to their calling in Christ Jesus.

With that being said, it seems to me that the most popular recovery methods of the past have lost their impact. It seems to be the same packaged and repackaged materials for different groups of people. I believe many recovery programs have never gained traction because they don't have the power to complete what they proclaim. The prophet Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 17:14, ***“O LORD, if you heal me, I will be truly healed; if you save me, I will be truly saved. My praises are for you alone!”*** At the end of the day, most of us don't need ongoing and intensive counseling or therapy. We need discipleship that includes a correct theology of God's holy judgment on sin (Isaiah 6:1-8). We read in Proverbs 3:7b-8, ***“ . . . Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be a healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones (ESV).”***

Many programs rely on personal self-will and strength. Others focus on manmade rules that lead to more bondage. These things may change our behavior temporarily, but it will never set us completely free. Why? Because these programs refuse to get to the *eternal* root issue. Our biggest problem is *not* an addiction to pornography; it is a strained relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah writes again in Jeremiah 6:14-15, ***“They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace***

when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their disgusting actions? Not at all—they don't even know how to blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be brought down when I punish them,' says the Lord. Jeremiah also writes in Lamentations 2:13b, “. . . ***Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?***”

The root issue in dealing with addiction and recovery is called *sin*. Therefore, *The Sex Spiral* specifically deals with sin. Its power comes from cooperating with the Spirit of God, engaging in the presence of God, and reading through the Word of God.

From a practical perspective, we will concentrate on *triggers*. A trigger is a thing or event that initiates the desire to engage in questionable behavior. A trigger could be anything—an attractive person, a picture on a magazine, a song on the radio, a certain aroma, a thought that crossed your mind, a good day at work, a bad day at work, a traffic jam, etc. It's important to know that a trigger is not a temptation or a sin, but it can certainly lead to that when not addressed immediately. Triggers explain the location as to where you are *right now* in the habit, bondage, or addiction to pornography.

Think of a trigger on a gun. When you pull the trigger back, something drastic is going to happen. You must make sure that your gun is pointed in the right direction, or someone will get hurt. Once the trigger has been pulled, a series of choices and consequences follow. These choices and consequences are two sides of the same coin. You can't have one without the other. Triggers are *immediate* feedback in your recovery journey, which then gives you an *immediate* course of action to exit your sex spiral.

The Sex Spiral is not a program like that of a twelve-step model, nor is it a Christian version of one. The twelve-step program is used as guiding principles that outline a course of action. These steps are meant to be long-range goals that members wish to accomplish. *The Sex Spiral*, on the other hand, focuses on the relationship and presence of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ as we learn our own triggers. So, rather than focusing on sin, we focus on our Savior. Think of it this

way: steps in a twelve-step program are similar to looking at the face on your watch so that you can tell the time, while triggers are the little gears and motors underneath the face of the watch that show us how it operates. Triggers ultimately draw us closer to answering the question, ***Why am I doing the very thing I don't want to do?*** (Rom. 7:18-24).

The Sex Spiral will teach you God's design for sexuality, the triggers that lead to pornography addiction, and an exit strategy. This material can also stand on its own or be incorporated into any twelve-step program or purity group.

Make no doubt about it, pornography addiction is a series of predictable habits that we have created for ourselves. The bad news is that we don't realize it at first. The good news is that as you learn to cooperate with God by recognizing your own triggers, you (by God's grace) *will break free from the bondage of porn*. Jesus Christ did not die for your sin and rise from the dead for you to remain an addicted Christian!

With that being said, there is one last thing to consider as we start this journey together. I want you to consider letting go of everything you think you know about sex, addiction, psychology, pornography, recovery, etc. You have to give up trying to do this *your* way. Jesus gives us some insight into the recovery process in John 8:32, ***“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*** What Jesus didn't tell us is that the truth hurts like crazy at first. Many of us think we have the answers, but in reality, we don't even have the vocabulary to ask the right question. King Solomon writes in Proverbs 20:24, ***“The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?”*** When we try to control our own recovery, we'll *never* get well. We are not in charge. God is. We are on His timetable. For you to become truly free from lust, you must lay down your ego by being silent and coming to the Lord as a child to be taught. The Prophet Habakkuk writes, ***“But the Lord is in His holy Temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him”*** (Hab. 2:20). Yes, indeed, true healing begins in the presence of a holy God.

DEALING WITH ADDICTION

What does the Bible actually say about addiction? We see the English word translated only once in the English Standard Version in 1 Timothy 3:8: **“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.”** The Greek in the ESV literally means “to occupy oneself with, to devote yourself to.” The New Revised Standard Version also translates the word *addiction* in Titus 1:7: **“For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain.”** The Greek in the NRSV is similar and translates the word *addiction* as “to give yourself over.”

The Bible talks much more about being “a slave” or being “in bondage to sin,” rather than “addiction.” Why? Because the word *addiction* has a tone of victimization and hopelessness to it. In today’s vocabulary, if I claim to be an addict, then it’s really easy for me to blame others or circumstances. Therefore, I don’t need to change; it’s everyone else that needs to change around me. From a biblical worldview, this is unacceptable. The original Greek uses the word *doulos*, which means “slave.” It’s used 126 times in the New Testament. Unfortunately, its translation to English has been watered down considerably to the word *servant* or *bondservant*. *Doulos* is not only the idea of being a slave, but also the attitude that corresponds with being a slave as well. A slave is one who is completely controlled by someone or something.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 6:16 (NRSV), **“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”** It’s important to notice the change in terminology here—moving from this concept of *addiction* to *slavery*. Whether we admit it or not, we spend time with the things or the people we love. In our context, a slave is submissive to impurity and controlled by wickedness. Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 6:24,

7 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” The word *master* means “lord” or “ruler.” Jesus is talking about money in this context, but we could easily substitute the word “money” for “lust”—or any sin, for that matter.

CALLING IT WHAT IT IS

My personal healing journey toward sexual sobriety never included a twelve-step model, nor was it based in psychology. That’s not a dig; it just is what it is. My journey included small groups of men at local Bible-believing churches with Jesus Christ as the foundation. In a word, it was *discipleship*. This is where I learned who Jesus is, who I am, and what sin is. These godly men called my perversion “sin” and *not* “addiction.” If we want to learn how to walk in freedom from lust, we must call our behavior exactly what it is—*sin*. It’s not a “mistake.” We didn’t “mess up” or “slip up.” No, we willfully and consciously chose to *sin*.

2 Peter 2:19 (ESV) says, ***“They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved”*** (emphasis mine).⁸ From this point forward, I will refrain from using the words “addict” or “addicted” but rather use the words “slave” or “bondage” instead as to be biblically accurate.

FACE TO FACE WITH A TORNADO

Being in bondage means that you are being held against your will. Proverbs 5:22 reads, ***“An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him.”*** When it comes to lust, we have created a habit, tried to stop, but ultimately can’t. Maybe your behaviors have led to life-altering circumstances that are beyond your control. There’s a good chance that your marriage, children, career and/or finances are being impacted as well. Regardless, you never intended your private porn use to impact your public life, but it has. That’s why this book

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

is called *The Sex Spiral*—because your involvement in pornography is destroying other aspects of your life—just like a tornado.

Do you know how a tornado works? A tornado is a violent, rotating column of air that usually develops from a thunderstorm. When moist air and cool, dry air collide, they create instability in the atmosphere. Tornadoes have windspeeds of 100 to 300 miles per hour, are anywhere from 250 feet to two miles wide, and can travel dozens of miles before they dissipate.⁹

Being involved with pornography is like personally inviting a tornado of unpredictable destruction and death into your life. When the reality of your life collides with your fantasy world of pornography, it's as if a tornado devastates everything you have ever known. It destroys everything in its path. Nothing is spared.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

So how does a little boy go from stumbling onto his dad's collection of pornography to winding up in a woman's closet with a loaded gun twenty years later? Are those two events even related? How in the world did some of my biggest life choices lead me down the path of two devastated marriages, bankruptcy, multiple career failures, dozens of ruined relationships, chronic depression, and suicidal thoughts?

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 7:21-24, ***“I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?”***

9 Howard, Brian Clark. “How Tornadoes Form and Why They’re So Unpredictable.” *National Geographic*, May 11, 2015. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/05/150511-tornadoes-storms-midwest-weather-science/>, (accessed July 1, 2016).

I don't know about you, but it sounds to me like a sinner (dare I say "addict"?) wrote those words. It seems as if the apostle Paul somehow peered into my life. I was stuck in this spiral of desiring to do what is good but had no idea how to actually carry it out. At the end of my long, pathetic journey with lust, I felt like I had only two options for relief—more sex or commit suicide.

THE END GOAL

My goal in writing this book is to provide a biblically based purity plan that you can put into action the moment you are triggered. I will also answer the question posed by the apostle Paul in Romans 7:24b: ***"Who will free me from this life that is dominated by (sexual) sin and death?"*** (emphasis mine).

You've picked up this book because I'm guessing you've asked yourself a version of that same question. Maybe you're the spouse, parent, or friend of a loved one whose life is out of control because of pornography. Regardless, *The Sex Spiral* is a journey into the next chapter of your life. I actually like to call it a "beautiful disaster." Truly addressing your propensity toward lust is one of the hardest things you will ever do (as is coming alongside a loved one who is in bondage). Yet, it's glorious at the same time. Jesus said that we must learn to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24-25). In other words, we must do what we don't want to do on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis.

This is why so many people start the journey toward sexual sobriety but never finish. They believe the lie that it's too painful to deal with the perversion that they've attached themselves to. It makes us sick to think of the secrets we're hiding. We find it nearly impossible to admit the depravity of our own hearts and to confess these evil thoughts that run through our minds. We underestimate the power of sin and overestimate pop psychology. Too much psychology empties the cross of its power. Being overly spiritual does the same thing.

We also underestimate the name of Jesus Christ and overestimate our own self-will.

We fool ourselves into thinking that living a mediocre Christian life is good enough. After all, you've learned to function inside your dysfunction, right? We rationalize our behavior by saying, "It's just this one little part of my life. It's not that big of a deal. Nobody needs to know. I can take care of this myself." However, I'm living proof that God has so much more for you than an uninspired life, a mediocre marriage, and Facebook friendships. By God's grace in my own life, I will show you God's intentional purpose behind your sexual struggle.

I want you to know that I've struggled how to communicate this material in book form. I thought it would be fairly simplistic to take my teaching notes over the years and write this book. I thought wrong. The reality is that I'm used to teaching in front of small groups that provide immediate feedback and allow me to address questions and concerns on the spot. Obviously, that is not the case with this book. Unfortunately, you can't hear the tone of my voice or see my demeanor.

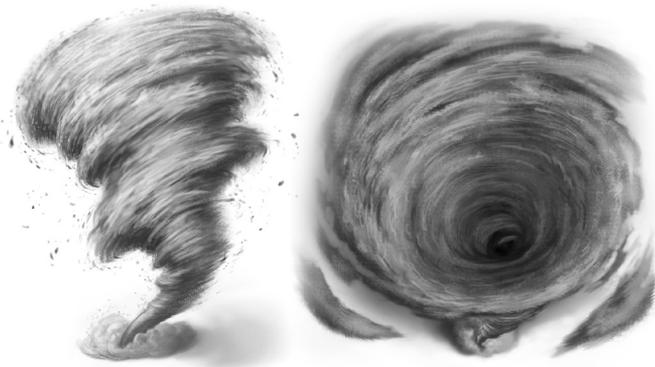
As I've written and edited this manuscript, I must confess that, at times, I found my words surprisingly blunt—especially in the chapters dealing with justification and blame. I've also struggled with using the personal pronoun "you." The last thing in the world I want you to think is that I'm angry with you and pointing my finger at you as you read. No, no, no. That's not my intention. My job is to confront your sexual sin, point you to Jesus Christ, and provide a biblical structure for you to walk this journey with Him. My intention is to come alongside you and teach you what the Lord—through others—has taught me. To do that, we must call sin what it is. That alone is a heavy pill to swallow (Rev 10:10). I will say some things that you won't want to hear, but please know that I say them in love—sometimes tough love. I will also share Scripture passages that will pierce your heart. This is where iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). It is also where healing begins.

are twelve triggers. The rotation of these triggers is similar to that of a clock. We will spend a full chapter discussing each trigger in detail. You'll also notice that each trigger has an arrow pointing to a mini-spiral in the middle. The longer we stay in the spiral, the further we get away from God's presence. To exit *the sex spiral*, we have three choices:

1. Flee/Run
2. Confession
3. Prayer

You can flee, confess, and pray separately or in combination with one another. The goal of *The Sex Spiral* is to exit at the first trigger. As you start spinning around the spiral, it becomes increasingly harder to exit.

It's important to note that as you move through these triggers, it appears that you are spinning around in a linear cycle. In other words, it seems that we are starting at the same place each time. This is misleading because when we're involved with something as demonic as pornography, we never go around and start at the same place. Each time we start over, we move into a lower level of depravity. That's why when you turn this cycle on its side, it looks like a spiral or tornado.



Before we dive into the actual triggers of *The Sex Spiral*, we first need context as to what sex really is, where it came from, and why we're so fascinated by it. Once we know what is right, we can then identify what is wrong.

CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

I WAS LYING IN MY bunk bed with a female babysitter. Turns out, we were both naked. I don't remember how old I was—maybe five or six. I'm guessing she was in her early teens. We had made a “fort” out of the bed earlier by hanging sheets and blankets from the top bunk. I don't remember exactly what all happened to me physically that day, but I do remember her pointing, laughing, and saying something about my body. I had no idea that her words would subconsciously control my life for the next two decades.

Several years later, I found my dad's collection of pornography in his spare bedroom. I still remember the way the room looked. It was small and simple, and it smelled old. I remember the wood paneling on the walls and where the bed and dresser were placed. Tragically, I also remember those pornographic photos, as they seem to be burned into the recesses of my mind. Those two events were my introduction to sexuality. So let me ask you this:

- Was this the right way to introduce a little boy to sex?
- What exactly is the right way?
- Who has the moral authority to determine the right way from the wrong way?

Before we move into *The Sex Spiral* material, I want to first discuss sexuality from God's perspective. Contrary to the sexual revolutionaries

of our day, there is a right way and a wrong way to understand sexuality. Just as a builder uses a ruler as a fixed standard of measurement, a doctor uses a scale for our weight, and a banker uses math to calculate currency, God has also set a standard and a template for His children to abide by. Without God's moral standard on sexuality, we are left to our own individual opinions of what's right and what's wrong.

King Solomon writes in the Song of Songs 2:7 ***“not to awaken love until the time is right.”*** Unfortunately, “love” was awakened way too soon in my life and possibly for you as well. And for that, I'm truly sorry. Those things were wrong. However, we can choose to start making those things right *today*. A big part of our healing journey is to renew our mind (Rom. 12:2) by learning what healthy sexuality really looks like from God's perspective. To do that, let's turn to the very beginning of human history and learn from our ancestors, Adam and Eve.

THE CREATOR OF SEX

I once had a woman tell me that Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy Magazine*, “invented sex.” I just stared at her in disbelief. Surely, she's kidding, right? Nope, she was dead serious.

As Christians, we recognize that God Himself is the Creator of all things—which, of course, includes sexuality. It's been said that God created man, and the devil slapped on our private parts. Many of us might not actually say this, but it seems that we believe it to a certain extent. For us to get the full picture of sexuality, we must start at the beginning. Unfortunately, many of us have heard the Creation story so many times that we've become numb to it. However, I would like to reintroduce it to you with fresh eyes and a soft heart. For us to truly understand what God intended with sex, we must first slow way down as we read from Genesis chapters one and two. It's also critically important to understand the meaning of the words in the original Hebrew language. With that being said, I'm going to teach you several Hebrew words which will give us a roadmap and provide much-needed clarity to learn God's design for sex, marriage, and the family.

REVISTING GENESIS 1 AND 2

We read in Genesis 1:26a (ESV), “**Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’**”¹⁰ Have you ever noticed that God changed His wording from the previous Scripture passages:

- “**Let there be light . . .**” (Gen. 1:3).
- “**Let there be an expanse . . .**” (Gen. 1:6).
- “**Let the waters . . .**” (Gen. 1:9).
- “**Let the earth sprout vegetation . . .**” (Gen. 1:11).
- “**Let there be lights . . .**” (Gen. 1:14).
- “**Let the waters swarm . . .**” (Gen. 1:20).
- “**Let the earth . . .**” (Gen. 1:24).

The words *let us make* in Genesis 1:26 mean “we will make man.” This is where we learn that human life is created in the very image of God—“after our (God’s) likeness.” This is also the first time we see Father, Son, and Spirit working together as one. Now note here that although God says man is created in His own image, God doesn’t tell us what the image actually is. A.W. Tozer says, “When the Scripture states that man was made in the image of God, we dare not add to that statement an idea from our own head and make it mean ‘in the exact image.’ To do so is to make man a replica of God. To think of creature and Creator as alike in essential being is to rob God of most of His attributes and reduce Him to the status of a creature.”¹¹

Secondly, notice the word *man* in Genesis 1:26. Contrary to popular belief, this is *not* a person named Adam! The word is *’ā-dām*.¹² It actually means “mankind, humankind, and/or humanity.” Therefore, this

10 *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

11 Tozer, A.W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. New York: Harper One Publishers, 1961.

12 McDaniel, Chip. *The English-Hebrew Reverse Interlinear Old Testament English Standard Version*. Lexham Press, 2009.

verse could literally be read: “Let us make *’ā-dām* (mankind) *in our image, after our likeness.*”

Let’s now replace the word *man* with *mankind* to give us a new perspective on this text, starting in Genesis 1:27 (ESV): “**So God created the *’ā-dām* (the man who represents all mankind) *in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*”¹³ This verse could also be translated: “**He created people, both the man kind and the woman kind. In the image of God He created it¹⁴: male and female He created both¹⁵.**”¹⁶**

What exactly are the types of people that God created? From Scripture, we see that there are two:

1. Male—*zākār*. This Hebrew term simply means “being of the masculine sex.” It specifically refers to a species that is *not* female. It also means “to remember.” In other words, a man wants to be remembered for his legacy and accomplishments.
2. Woman—*nēqēbâ*. This Hebrew word means “being of the feminine sex.” The woman is the one that bears eggs or produces young. This word is a general term that specifically refers to *not* being male. It also means “hollow” or “hollow-spot”—referring to a woman’s womb.

Obviously, these Hebrew words very much refer to the anatomy differences between male and female. Contrary to the world’s confusion of someone being able to change their gender based on how they think or feel at the moment (gender fluidity), God is a God of order, structure, simplicity, and, most of all, reality. He specifically created only two versions of human beings (and of all species): male and female.

13 Ibid.

14 This pronoun is *hu*. *Hu* is translated as “he,” “she,” or “it.”

15 This pronoun is *hem*. *Hem* is translated as “they” or “both.”

16 Reyburn, W. D., and E.M. Fry. *A Handbook on Genesis*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1998. 51.

DIGGING DEEPER

Genesis 1 gives us the overview of the Creation story and the impression that man and woman were created at the exact same time. Let's flip the page to Genesis 2 for the specifics and continue to apply our new understanding of the text by replacing the word *man* with *mankind*.

Genesis 2:7 (ESV) says, **“Then the Lord God formed the ’ā·ḏām (the man who represents all mankind) of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the ’ā·ḏām became a living creature.”**¹⁷

The word *formed* in this verse describes the work of an artist. Could this be the reason that God changed His wording from “*Let there be*” to “*Let us make*” in Genesis 1? It's as if God also changed His tone here as well, don't you think? It seems as if He was slowing down and taking more care with this particular creation.

Secondly, let's look at the word *dust*. Dust can refer to ashes, debris, and rubbish. It's even defined as “crumbs of the earth.” How much is dust worth? Nothing! People will certainly pay for dirt, mud, and clay when landscaping their yard, but not dust. Interesting, isn't it? To think that human beings are not just made from the ground, but specifically from the dust of the ground.

Speaking of the ground . . . the Hebrew word for ground is *adamah* (’ādāmā). Sound a little familiar? We just learned that the Hebrew word for man is ’ā·ḏām, which is a generic term for “mankind.” Do you see the story God is starting to tell? From the ground, *adamah*, God creates *adam*, mankind.

Still with me? Let's keep going; this is where it gets really fun!

17 *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

Genesis 2:18 (ESV) says, **“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the ’ā-ḡām should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”**¹⁸

Did you notice that this is the first time that God states that something is *not* good? Everything else was *very* good up to this point. It’s here that we start to see the importance of relationships.

Genesis 2:21-22 (ESV) says, **“So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the ’ā-ḡām and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the ’ā-ḡām He made into a woman and brought her to the ’ā-ḡām.”**¹⁹

Let’s now take a look at the word *rib*. Growing up, I’ve always understood it to simply be a single bone that was taken from a person named Adam. However, the Hebrew word for rib is *tsela* (ṣē-lā’).²⁰ *Tsela* comes from the words “rib, side, or side-chamber.” Look at one side of your entire rib cage from your collarbone to your waist. This is your side-chamber. Is it possible that instead of God simply taking one single rib bone from ’ā-ḡām, God split ’ā-ḡām almost in half to create woman? I always pictured this as a very simple, clean, outpatient operation; but once again, is it possible that God cracked ’ā-ḡām wide open to create woman? Is it possible that God took a huge part of ’ā-ḡām that included flesh, bone, and, of course, blood? After this major operation, look what happens.

WEDDING BELLS ARE RINGING

Genesis 2:22 (ESV) reads, **“And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the ’ā-ḡām He made into a woman and brought her to the ’ā-ḡām.”**²¹

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 McDaniel, Chip. *The English-Hebrew Reverse Interlinear Old Testament English Standard Version*. Lexham Press, 2009.

21 *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

The Lord is now *bringing* the woman to the man. This presumes that there must be some distance between the two, correct? Now, wait a minute, what does this look like to you? We have God (the Father) bringing a woman (His daughter) to be introduced to a man. Doesn't this resemble a father walking his daughter down an aisle to be given away to her husband? Of course it does! So how does 'ā-dām respond?

According to Genesis 2:23 (ESV), ***“Then the 'ā-dām said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”***

Isn't it interesting that 'ā-dām admits that woman is not just bone, but flesh and, presumably, blood as well? Now, this is where it gets really interesting. Have you ever wondered why the words *Woman* and *Man* are capitalized (or italicized) in this verse?²²

This Hebrew word for woman is 'ishshāh (pronounced *ish-shaw'*),²³ while this Hebrew word for man is *ish*²⁴ (pronounced *eesh*). Adam was consistently called 'ā-dām up until this point, but now something is very different. He's not the same. A large part of him is gone. It's in this verse that 'ā-dām no longer represents the entire human race, but, rather, God specifically creates two beings *from* 'ā-dām—man and woman. This is also where we see 'ā-dām representing mankind transition to *Adam*—a person using his proper name.

THE CREATION OF SEX

Genesis 2:24-25 (ESV) says, ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”***²⁵

God now defines what sexuality is (and is not) in this verse. “Holding fast” is the concept of clinging together as one, to keep

22 These words may be capitalized, italicized, or in quotes, depending on the version of the Bible you have.

23 McDaniel, Chip. *The English-Hebrew Reverse Interlinear Old Testament English Standard Version*. Lexham Press, 2009.

24 Ibid.

25 *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

one another close in a very specific and strategic committed relationship that includes sex (“becoming one flesh”). Therefore, sex is the exclusive activity that defines the marriage relationship. It’s the single activity that is reserved for husband and wife.

We can now see how God designed men and women. God split *’ā-dām* in two, taking out the characteristics of femininity and leaving the characteristics of masculinity.²⁶ We must also notice that God didn’t make an exact replica of *’ā-dām*. Men and women are equals who are created by God to complement one another physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This is called *complementarity*. It means that men and women are equal *but different*, each having different roles and responsibilities in the marriage.

Ladies, did you notice that God created woman *last*? Is it possible that He wanted to make sure everything was just perfect with a home and husband before you were created? There is an old saying, “Save the best for last,” but you have much more worth and dignity than a cliché. You are indeed a woman made in the very image of God—the pinnacle of God’s creation!

Gentlemen, since women are the pinnacle of God’s creation, could that be the reason that we are so intrigued by them? Could that be the reason we are drawn to their form and beauty? Is this the reason we want to be in their presence? Of course it is! When we look upon a woman, we see a glimpse of the beautiful holiness of God.

Question: What happens when husband and wife have sex—“become one flesh”? Are they not coming back together as one, representing *’ā-dām* (mankind)?

They are. Now think about it. Does this explain the natural desire for companionship between men and women? Could it explain the sexual desire for men and women to come back together as one? I believe it does. Therefore, marriage is defined as:

²⁶ Garlow, Jim, Blackstone Conference, Morning Devotion, Alliance Defending Freedom, 2013.

Marriage: A lifelong blood covenant established by God between one biological man and one biological woman consummated (completed and fulfilled) with sexual intercourse (Gen. 2:24).

Why is marriage a *blood* covenant? Hidden in the female body lies a mystery that baffles biologists to this day. This mystery is called a hymen—a small lining of tissue that partially covers her vagina. When a woman has sex for the first time, her hymen is penetrated and causes her to bleed lightly.

Throughout the Bible, we read about God making a promise and then confirming that promise with the shedding of blood. For example, in Genesis chapters fifteen through seventeen, we read about God's promise to Abraham. The promise is to make him the father of many nations. Now, keep in mind, Abraham has no children and is ninety-nine years old when this promise is made. God makes this promise and also fulfills it—not only by the shedding of blood through animal sacrifice, but also by the circumcision of Abraham's foreskin. Thus, blood was used to fulfill *and* seal God's promise. The same can be said with God's covenant with King David that was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ Himself.

Although secular biologists may not know what the hymen is for, I would propose that God specifically designed the hymen to fulfill *and* seal the marriage promise. Just as blood seals and bonds God's promises to His people, blood also seals and bonds husband and wife together in marriage. Blood is a physical manifestation of a spiritual reality that we'll discuss later. But for now, please note that *sex is what fulfills the spoken promises (vows) before God and man*.

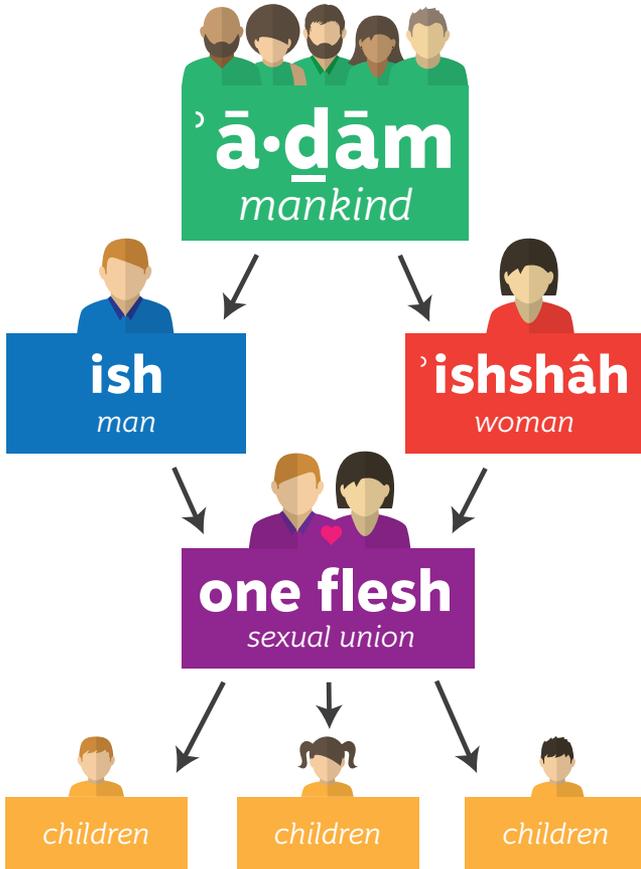
It's worthy to note that marriage was ordained by God before any city was ever built, any nation ever formed, or any law ever penned.²⁷ Marriage is the first institution that God created. This inevitably tells us of its supreme importance. Marriage did not come from man and, therefore, cannot be redefined by man. When I refer to marriage, I'm

²⁷ Alliance Defending Freedom, Blackstone Legal Fellowship Conference, 2014.

40 THE SEX SPIRAL

referring to the biblical definition of marriage in Genesis 2:24. I'm not referring to "marriage" as defined by the United States Supreme Court in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision on June 26, 2015.

Humans are the *imago Dei*. We are created in God's image and reflect His beauty, glory, and sexuality (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:1-2, 9:6). I know it's unusual to think about, but sex between a husband and wife actually brings glory to God (Song of Songs 1:1-4). God tells us to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28, 9:1,7, 26:4, 24, Lev. 26:9, Ps. 127:3-5). Therefore, sex reflects the creativity of God by a husband and wife becoming one, experiencing pleasure *together*, and having the capacity to create life *together*.



THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

I've been married three times and divorced twice. I'm embarrassed and ashamed of my past. I'm a former liar and coward. My first marriage was out of ignorance, and my second was out of rebellion. To have to tell people my story and share my marriage failures repeatedly with strangers is humiliating to say the least, but that's the whole reason for this book. It's to show you what sex is and is not as defined by Almighty God Himself.

It's quite an understatement to say that my first two marriages were not what God had in mind. Undoubtedly, many people will call me a hypocrite to teach about sex and marriage from a biblical foundation when I've been divorced twice (which is fine, as I've been called much worse). Many people ask, "Doesn't God hate divorce?" As church people, we love to categorize sin, as if divorce and homosexuality are the only things that God condemns. Of course, God hates divorce. God hates *all sin*. In fact, He hates sin so much that God actually divorced Israel because of her adultery:

The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to Me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord" (Jer. 3:6-10—ESV).

As we see in the above text, God has divorced us all because of our hard hearts. The good news, however, is that Jesus made everything right by proposing to us from a Roman, blood-stained cross (Lk. 23:34).

THE SPIRITUAL REALITIES OF MARRIAGE

Let's now transition from the physical side of sex and marriage to the spiritual. God also uses marriage as a spiritual illustration throughout the Bible. He calls marriage "a mystery."

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body. As the scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one (Eph. 5:25-32—emphasis mine).

We are familiar with a man being called a husband and a woman his bride, but in this text, we see a great mystery unfolding. The apostle Paul is telling us that Jesus Christ is our Groom, and we, as His Church, are His bride.

Let me give you a really simple (and silly) illustration. Think of it this way: our earthly marriage is like playing baseball for the minor leagues. God is preparing us through testing, trials, and temptations for the major leagues. Ultimately, Christ's marriage to the Church is playing in the majors. Jesus sets the standard for all marriages. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the *perfect* Groom! He just happens to be married to an

imperfect bride (that's us). Therefore, our physical marriages here on earth are much more important than we think. Marriage is teaching us a spiritual reality that we see in Revelation 19:6b-8: ***"Praise the Lord! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself."***

In Genesis 2, God creates the institution of marriage; and in Revelation 19, Jesus Himself fulfills the covenant of marriage in His original design (Rev. 19:7-9). Think of these two marriages as book-ends. God purposely weaves this theme of marriage throughout all of Scripture in between Genesis and Revelation. It's this picture that Jesus Christ is the perfect Husband while the Church (all believers) are His bride (Isa. 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20; Eph. 5:25, 32; Rev. 19:7-9, 21:9).

Ultimately, marriage is about intimacy. What makes marriage so special is the private, sexual union that is shared between a husband and wife. It's the idea of "knowing" one another intimately. Believe it or not, this is the kind of relationship Jesus wants with us and why He chose to use the analogy of marriage. I know it's a little strange to think of God in this way, so let me give you an example.

As we read God's Word, we learn God's eternal plan for marriage in Hosea 2:19-20, ***"I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as the Lord."***

This word "know" in Hebrew is *yāda'*. It's the idea that we develop a relationship *through experience*. Essentially, we *become* known. It's the same word that's used in Genesis 4:1a: ***"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain."***

Yāda' is also found five times in Psalm 139:

1. ***"O LORD, You have searched me and known [me]"*** (v. 1 ESV).
2. ***"You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thoughts from afar"*** (v. 2 ESV).

3. ***“Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it altogether”*** (v. 4 ESV).
4. ***“Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it”*** (v. 14).
5. ***“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts”*** (v. 23).

Hmmm, that’s kind of weird. Those Scripture passages don’t seem to be talking about sex at all. What’s going on? Yāda’ is the idea that we *become* known—to be clearly understood, cared for, chosen. It’s to be known emotionally and spiritually—not just physically.

MARRIAGE VS. THE ILLUSION OF MARRIAGE

In the historic, biblical, Hebrew culture, many marriages were prearranged. A woman could be married around the age of puberty, while the man was generally slightly older.

Today, living in the United States of America, we can’t even fathom such an event. Our culture is repulsed by the thought. So how is it possible that two people who didn’t choose to be with one another can actually live with one another, work together, love one another, raise a family together, and thrive?

There’s a difference between biblical marriage and worldly marriage. Marriage, first and foremost, is not about sex—it’s about God. Unfortunately, we have allowed emotional sex to become the foundation of our dating and, then, marriage relationship. This has drastic implications on the health of the marriage as we see this in our divorce rates. Is it a coincidence that nearly fifty percent of high school students are sexually active,²⁸ while the divorce rate is steady at fifty percent? Of course not. We have allowed our feelings and emotions to rule our lives. The problem with *emotional sex* is that it’s extremely volatile. We tend to believe that the better the sex, the better the marriage. This

²⁸ Conklin, Kurt. “Adolescent Sexual Behavior: Demographics.” AdvocatesforYouth.com. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/413-adolescent-sexual-behavior-i-demographics> (accessed August 9, 2017).

couldn't be further from the truth. The pleasure of sex in our marriage doesn't cook dinner, pay the bills, or assist in raising children.

Real marriage—biblical marriage—is intended to *change us* into the likeness of Jesus Christ—the Groom of all grooms. It's through the covenantal relationship of marriage that we find true joy, not just temporary happiness based on emotional sex. This means that when marriage gets tough, we are to work out those issues as mature adults being husband and wife. We are to develop our communication skills with our spouse and sacrificially give to the marriage rather than quitting like cowards. **“God so loved the world that he gave his Son”** (Jn. 3:16—ESV).²⁹ Once again, my life is “Exhibit A,” as I'm speaking from painful experience here. Sex *by itself* doesn't make a marriage strong. It simply adds to the overall emotional, spiritual, and physical health between husband and wife.

The reason that prearranged, Hebrew marriages worked was because God intended that we find romance *in and through marriage*, not before it and not outside of it. Did these Hebrew marriages work perfectly? Of course not! Everything is stained with sin (Gen. 3). We don't have to look much further than Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 16:1-2). Yet, even through all our sexual sin and the relational sin that has come from our decisions, God continues to move His plan forward, despite our rebellion. It's like God is the ultimate chess player. Yes, indeed, God is fundamental to marriage and manifested through this covenant between a husband and wife, witnessed by God in vows such as these:

*to have and to hold
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until death do us part.*

²⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

Now that we know that marriage and sexuality were designed by God to be two sides of the same coin, let's turn our attention to what sex looks like outside the covenant of marriage. This is called *sexual sin*.

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For more information about
Dustin Daniels
&
The Sex Spiral

please visit:

www.DustinDaniels.org

www.SevenPlaces.org

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