

Sexuality AND CREATION



AN INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY IN GENESIS

2. WORD BANK

SEX IS:

GOOD BAD FULFILLING CONNECTING

DANGEROUS SINFUL MESSED-UP POWERFUL

USEFUL COMFORTING BLESSING

OTHER:

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

²⁹ Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

2 ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

²⁹ Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

2 ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 1:2-2:3

6. DIGGING IN - PART 1

A. "The text describes seven days. Choose a coloured pen and draw lines dividing the text into seven sections – one for each of the seven days. Label them 1 to 7."

B. "Each of the days has at least one set of pairs. For example, the first pair is "Heavens" and "Earth". Day one has "Light" and "Dark" or "Day" and "Night". Choose a coloured pen and scan through the text circling as many pairs as you can find."

C. "Choose a coloured pen and draw a box around the parts of the text that are about sex and sexuality. You may think there are one or two words – you may think that the whole thing says something about sex and sexuality. Whatever you think."

7. DIGGING IN - PART 2

1. a. Which repeated words or phrases did you underline?
b. Why do you think they are important?
c. What does this say about sex and sexuality?

2. a. What pairs of words did you circle?
b. Why do you think Genesis 1 contains so many pairs?
c. What does this say about sex and sexuality?

3. a. What sections of the text did you draw a box around?
b. Why did you choose these sections?
c. What do they say about sex and sexuality?

14. DIGGING IN - PART 3

1. What sections of the text did you draw a box around?
2. Why did you choose these sections?
3. What do they say about sex and sexuality?

10. QUOTE: KARL BARTH, RELATIONSHIP AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

Karl Barth argued that a significant element of the “image of God” in Genesis 1:26 is the relational nature of humanity.

“God created him in His own image in the fact that He did not create him alone but in this connexion and fellowship. . . . God exists in relationship and fellowship. As the Father of the Son and the Son of the Father He is Himself I and Thou, confronting Himself and yet always one and the same in the Holy Ghost. ... He is not solitary in Himself... it is not good for man to be alone, and God created him in His own image, as male and female... similarity in dissimilarity... God is in relationship, and so too is the man created by Him. This is his divine likeness.”

Karl Barth

Church Dogmatics III/2 §45

pg 323-324.

- What do you think of this view?
- How important are sex and gender in this view?
- What could this view add to our understanding of sex and sexuality?

² ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

¹⁸ The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called "woman",
for she was taken out of man.'

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

2 ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

¹⁸ The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called "woman",
for she was taken out of man.'

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

16. DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. **Genesis 2:18** says:
“It is not good for the man to be alone.”

What do you think this means?

Is this mostly about God creating a sexual partner for the human, or is it mostly about God creating other human beings?

What problems might it cause if we read this as “It is not good for the man to be incomplete”?

Can a relationship complete us?

2. **Genesis 2:22** says:
“The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man.”

Does this communicate the connectedness of male and female?

Does this communicate that male and female are two parts of one whole?

How else could this be read?

3. **In Genesis 2:23** the man says of the woman:
“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

Is this communicating familiarity, recognition, attraction, connection, or something else?

Do you think these words relate only to sexual relationships, or to other human relationships? Why or why not?

4. **Genesis 2:25** says:
“Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

Why do you think this detail has this been included? Does it communicate their complete vulnerability with one another, or something else?

In Genesis 3, when the woman and her husband eat the fruit, they realise they are naked and they hide from God. What is this communicating?

What things make people feel ashamed of nakedness?

17. INVESTIGATE: GENESIS 2:24

In small groups:

Read either Matthew 19:5 or Ephesians 5:31

Discuss:

What is this text about?

Why does it quote Genesis 2:24?

In larger groups:

Report back to one another: What is your text about and why does it quote Genesis?

Discuss together: Why do you think Genesis 2:24 is considered significant?

22. QUOTE: TIM MACKIE, CIRCUMCISION AND OPPRESSION

BibleProject's lead scholar Tim Mackie draws the parallels between circumcision as the sign of God's covenant in the Abraham story with the sign of the covenant in the flood story:

"The rainbow is ... a sign of the covenant. It's both a symbol of judgment and mercy. Because the storm clouds have to be present for the rainbow to appear. And the storm cloud is God's judgment in the flood story. But the rainbow is this beautiful promise that God will bring new creation somehow out of this whole mess."

He comments:

"a part of Abraham's body through which he wronged the Egyptian immigrant, is now being cut offBut at the same time, it's marking the very part of the body ... that contains the future promise of the seed. So it's very much like that rainbow. It's both a sign of divine judgment and hope."

*Tim Mackie,
Abraham, the Immigrant, and Circumcision
BibleProject Podcast
December 14, 2020*

In this reading, circumcision is a symbol of blessing because it marked the place of generation, symbolically marking future generations as belonging to the covenant and instruments of God's blessing.

Circumcision is also a sign of inclusion - anyone could become part of the family of God by the symbol of circumcision.

Significantly, circumcision physically marks a warning that sexuality (maybe particularly male sexuality) is something that can be an instrument of oppression and harm if not limited and controlled.

What do you think of this view?

Is there anything you had not considered before?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this view?

What could this view add to our understanding of sex and sexuality?

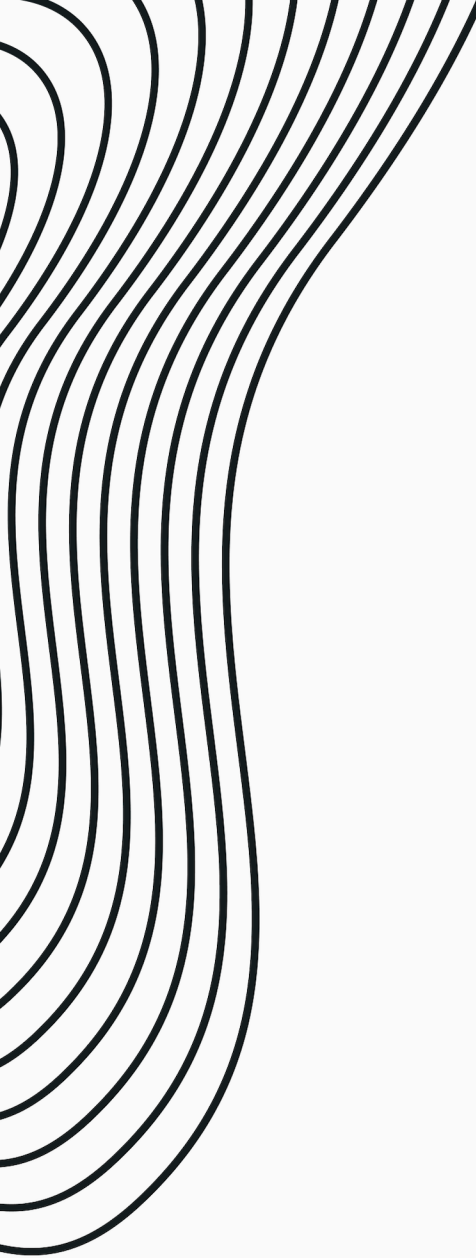
28. RESPONDING

This week, ask yourself:

- Where do I see the “goodness” of creation around me?
-
- Where do I find that “flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone” connection?

You might want to respond in some more ways. Here are some suggestions.

- Make a poster summarizing the big ideas from this scripture.
- Write a personal prayer responding to what you’ve heard in the scripture.
- Read or listen to the scripture again at BibleGateway.com.
- Create something: a poem; a painting; a list; a sculpture; a meal; a photograph; a wordcloud.
- Write a poem or monologue from the perspective of a character in this story.
- Choose just one word or phrase and think about what it means.
- Look at a piece of art based on this scripture and ask questions: why the artist has chosen this setting, this pose, these colours etc...
- List some personal commitments that you want to make in the coming week.



FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD • LIVING WHOLEHEARTEDLY AS FOLLOWERS

© 2024 The Methodist Church in Ireland. Registered Charity No. 108435 (NI) No. 20000578 (ROI).