

SEX AND MARRIAGE

Genesis 1:28, Song of Solomon 5:10-16, Hebrews 13:4

By Raymond White

Traditional marriage (meaning one man and one woman) has long been the foundation of society and civility. Today traditional marriage is under attack, or if “attack” is too strong a word, at least it is being challenged by alternative life styles.

But when has traditional marriage not been challenged? There has always been homosexuality, and shack ups, and prostitution, and polygamy, and celibacy — all of which compete with traditional marriage for society’s approval. Yet traditional marriage has survived and thrived. Why? Because it works — better than any other arrangement.

What does the Bible say about marriage? A lot. There are three issues to cover: (1) marriage itself, (2) sex within marriage, and (3) sex without marriage. I’ll cover them all. But beware, this is X-rated. So if such things offend or embarrass you, don’t proceed.

[1] WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Marriage is a contract, a license. Couples are given a marriage license to prove they are married. But license to do what? License to have sex. Marriage is, of course, more than sex — it is also love, commitment, sharing, devotion, fidelity, children, and constancy. But it is first about sex. That’s what honeymoon nights are for.

Here is God’s first commandment to the human race —

Genesis 1:28 Be fruitful and multiply.

To say it less delicately, “Adam, get the girl pregnant.” Clearly, sex is no sin. If sex is a sin and God commanded it, then God would be complicit in sin, wouldn’t he?

Let’s accept the obvious. The words, “I want to marry you,” is a gentleman’s way of politely saying to his lady, “I want to have sex with you, and often, and have children with you, and stay with you for the rest of my life taking care of you and them.” In short, it is commitment. All of that is packaged together in the single word marriage. When a man says, “Marry me,” all of that is what he is asking for.

But marriage is also one more thing. It is a *publically documented* (recorded) commitment. Without that, the claimed commitment is suspect, his or her declared intentions may be a lie. The publically documented commitment that we call marriage, is the assurance that each partner means what he and she says.

You may have never thought about it, but Adam and Eve were, in fact, married.

Genesis 2:25 the man and his wife.

Genesis 3:6 and gave also unto her husband.

Adam and Eve were not shacking up, they were husband and wife. Therefore we must dismiss the idea that sex itself is a sin and accept instead that the sin associated with sex is not the sex but the temporary-ness that men make of it. That marriage is required implies that the permanence of the sexual relationship is what God has in mind. In other words, if some is good, more is better.

The sin, then, is not the doing it, but the no longer doing it — a sin not of commission but of omission. The sin is not the “yes” but the “good-bye.” The reason that sex without marriage is a sin is not because sex is sinful, it isn’t, but because promiscuous men intend it, from the start, to be temporary — i.e., shacking up. “I want you tonight but good-bye tomorrow, or next week, or next year.” That’s what God does not want.

Someone once said a man doesn’t pay a prostitute for sex, he pay her to go home afterwards. That’s true, and that’s the sin. God’s view is the exact opposite. You can have the woman, but you must keep her. That’s the deal.

The point of marriage is to telegraph to your partner, and to the rest of the world as witnesses, just what your intentions are.

Yes, a marriage can end in divorce, and it certainly ends with death. But that is not your intention. Marriage is saying and putting on record, “I intend, right now, to bind you to me by as strong a cord as I can find in the universe so that we may never be apart. I will not let you go, ever. And if you universe rips you away from me, it will do so without my permission and out of my desperately clinging grasp.” That’s marriage.

[2] THE PIECE OF PAPER

Some say, “But marriage is just a piece paper.” Those who say that have no concept of the stupidity of their mis-characterization of the word “just.” If they are not stupid, they are lying to avoid commitment by convincing their partner that the “paper,” the commitment is unimportant.

It is a piece of paper to be sure. But much more than that, it is paper *with words*, and the words have meaning. Marriage is a public document of commitment as surely as a Grant Deed, which not only declares title but actually establishes title in the law.

If you have any doubts about the value of a Grant Deed, if you think that’s “just a piece of paper,” try moving into a house that’s not yours and you have no legal right to. When the police haul you away in handcuffs, then you will understand the value of that “piece of paper.”

That’s what a marriage license is. It establishes title, a marked out interest in law and in fact, witnessed publicly that neither the husband nor the wife can breach without violating the title. So it is hardly “just” a piece of paper.

License is permission. Permission to do what? To have sex and make a family.

Who gives that permission? The public? No. The government? Heavens no. The public and government merely witness and document the couple’s promises so that there are consequences to breaking those promises. So, who gives permission? The bride and groom do by granting to their partners access to their own bodies. Each gives the other license. And by the same declaration, they deny access to anyone else. In other words, “for your eyes only.”

That is why it is called “Holy Matrimony.” Holy (in Greek: *αγιος* agios) means apart, separate, not apart from each other but apart from everyone else so that they can be truly together as one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The difference between marriage and shacking up is the difference between owning and renting, to make a parable from real estate law. Tenants expect and hope that someday, they will actually own their own home and have something that is truly theirs by covenant and contract, as strong an ownership right as the law offers.

Marriage is like owning, and shacking-up is like renting. To extend the thought, one-night-stands are like borrowing, and adultery is certainly like stealing.

Why would anyone ever *borrow* a love partner to use and discard? Why would anyone allow themselves to be used and discarded? We discard cars that we no longer want, but cars are things and cars don't mind. But a spouse is not a car, not a thing. He or she is a person, and a person does not want to be discarded. What that piece of paper is, is a publically documented promise that each spouse will not discard the other.

“Just” a piece of paper? Hardly. Everything important is in that piece of paper.

[3] SEX WITHOUT MARRIAGE

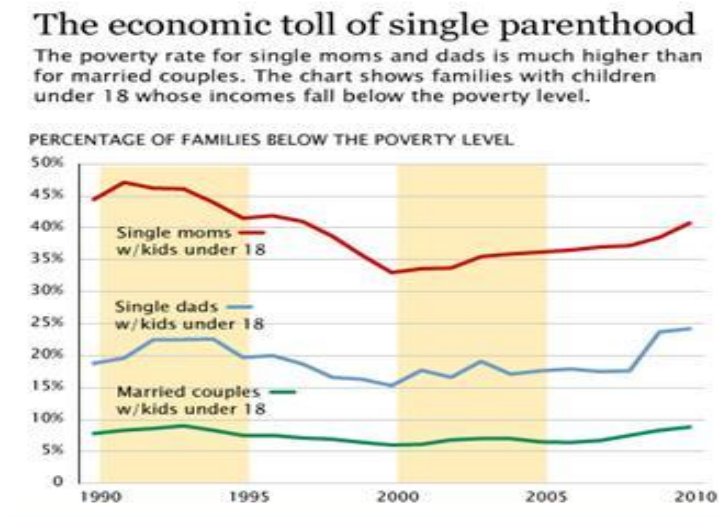
Question: Just what exactly is wrong with sex without marriage? Since God is so anxious that we *be fruitful and multiply*, why not just skip that marriage part and get right to the sex? Why do we need marriage to make sex right? Here's my list of answers:

1. Because God said so. If for no other reason, this is all we really need to know. But surely we can do better than authoritarianism, so let's ask, *why* did God say so?
2. Because it's unfair to the woman. Without marriage, the mother has the expense and burden of raising the child usually in poverty while the father goes off to his rich, fun life with other women. Marriage divides the cost of children equitably (or *more* equitably anyway) and allows the mother to focus her attention on her children. By nature women seek a safe nest. Marriage provides it.
3. Because it's unfair to the man. We have a natural drive to reproduce. It's in our genes. And this drive puts men at a disadvantage — a woman always knows her baby is hers (labor is undeniable) but a man is never sure. The only way a man knows his baby is his is to trust his wife. Marriage and fidelity is the means by which a man knows he has fulfilled his primal urge to procreate. He knows his children are his because he trusts her. Marriage provides that assurance.
4. Because it's unfair to boys. Boys who grow up in a fatherless home are more likely do not learn how men ought to behave. Instead of being responsible, they become lazy and depend on women for their living. Instead of being gentlemen, they become cruel and demanding of women because they have no father to teach them how to treat women. A boy needs his father.
5. Because it's unfair to girls. A girl's first love is her daddy, and in a fatherless home, a girl does not experience early kindness from a man and therefore may mistrust men and be less able to fall in love. A girl needs her father.

6. Because it's unfair to all men collectively. Men fight wars and kill each other routinely. And maybe what it's really all about is sex — testosterone's natural urge to kill something. Marriage mitigates wars. If all men were happily married, maybe there would be no wars, or at least fewer.
7. Because it's unfair to all women collectively. Dead soldiers leave war widows and old maids. A life of loneliness is totally unfair.
8. Because of AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, and whatever sexually transmitted diseases nature will next throw at us. Marriage is our first line defense against that. What should we wear to protect against STDs? Best answer: a wedding ring.
9. Because not being in love is such a waste.

There are many reasons to defend marriage, those are mine. You may think of others. Marriage makes sense and creates the fairest and best possible world. Marriage is not without problems to be sure, but without marriage, the world would not be a better place but a far worse place.

Let's focus for a moment on the economic disadvantage of single mothers and their children. Their economic disadvantage is not just political fodder made up to induce people to be good, the statistics are real. This graph makes it clear.



So, when the Bible calls sex outside of marriage a “sin,” it is quite right to do so. If relegating a whole class of people — single women and their children — to a lifetime of poverty is not a sin, then I guess I don't know what sin is.

Besides the commonsense-ness of marriage and the good it does, there are those things that the Bible says about sex outside of marriage, and they ought not to be ignored.

1 Corinthians 6:9 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.*

Galatians 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, :21 ...and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Ephesians 5:5 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person...hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Now we have two reasons to be on the side of marriage: (1) because marriage does good in the world, for husbands, wives, children, and everyone; and (2) because God said so. The divine threat is real.

It is noteworthy that these three verses I just shared with you are all from Paul. Why is that noteworthy? Because Paul is Christianity's greatest spokesman for grace — probably because he was the most forgiven man on the planet. Since it is he, that strong advocate of grace, who is saying fornicators and adulterers aren't going to be in the kingdom of God, considering the source, we really ought to pay attention.

The point: Grace notwithstanding, if you insist on living a life of sexual sin, you will not be included in the kingdom of God. God cares that we actually care about other people and not just ourselves, and the most caring thing that a man and a woman can do for each other is to get married and mean it.

[4] SEX IN MARRIAGE

Proper sex, biblical sex, married sex lies midway between the two extremes of promiscuity and celibacy (sex with anyone verses sex with no one), neither of which is God's will for us. Now it's time to ask ourselves this frank question: Just what is God's will for us concerning sex? Prepare to blush.

Proverbs 5:18 *Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. :19 Let her be as the living hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. :20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?*

This text demands fidelity, *no strange women*. But it also demands marital bliss: be *ravished* (the Bible's word, not mine) with your wife. Anyone who believes that sex is intrinsically sinful, has not paid attention to this verse. *Be ravished always with her love* ought to be clear enough.

The text opens with *let thy fountain be blessed*. What do you suppose a man's *fountain* is? Substitute any modern word for that private male part and this verse could get real vulgar real quick. But the picture is clear enough, sex is essentially good and not sinful, unless of course it is abused and misused.

Proverbs 30:18 *There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not. :19 ...and the way of a man with a maid.*

If *the way of a man with a maid* is one of the four wonderful things, then how can we think of sex as essentially sinful? That makes no sense.

Ecclesiastes 3:5 ...*a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.*

Sex in marriage is a right thing to do, but not always. Certainly not in public. There is a time to *refrain*. “Get a room,” is good advice. And keep your bedroom door closed. You don’t want the children walking in, they have longer memories than you think. And when they are a bit older, they may say what they saw; maybe to your friends.

Sex is, by its nature, right. But it becomes wrong if it is at the wrong time or wrong place, and certainly with the wrong person. Basically, you make sex right or wrong by honoring or dishonoring your marriage vows.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee ...*

I’m pretty confident that *live joyfully* includes sex. And notice that it is God which *hath given thee*. So if you want to give your wife back to God because you are too pure to engage in love making, well, that would be beyond puritanical, that would be ungrateful.

Catholics, I love you guys a lot, but on this issue, you are wrong. Your priests and nuns should all be married. The world needs more good Catholics, so priests, get on with it, get married. The reason muslims now outnumber you is because of your foolish celibacy. Get over it.

Jeremiah 29:6 [Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles] *Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.*

To reject marriage and child bearing is to be “diminished.” God does not want us to be diminished, he wants us to be increased. Just as God did with Adam and Eve, God is here commanding them, these exiles, to get married and have children; that is, have sex. How else are they going to “beget sons and daughters”?

This final verse is x-rated. If you blush at such things, you might want to skip it.

Jeremiah 33:11 *The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good...*

What a picture this verse conjures up — a bride and the bridegroom, presumably on their honeymoon enjoying themselves, shouting, “Praise God, God is good!” Hey, I didn’t make it up, that’s what the verse says.

Indeed, the Lord is good, and he gives good things. If marriage is at the forefront of the good things that he gives us (and this verse puts marriage at the top), then how can marriage possibly be bad and how can celibacy possibly be good? Impossible.

So far we've established three things from the Bible: God wants us to have sex, God wants us to enjoy it ("ravished"), and God wants us to be committed to each other by marriage.

[5] A BIT TOO PURE

There are two problems with sex and they are opposites. The first is immorality, of course. That is, sex without marriage. And you've heard many long talks and sermons and lessons about the sin of sexual immorality, and all of that is true.

However, the second problem is that we can get so focused on teaching our people — especially our young people — the dangers of immorality (and we should) that we often leave the impression that sex is, somehow in itself, sinful and is only *permitted* because we are married. In other words, because we are married we get a waiver.

The problem with that thinking is that it causes too many of us to want to remain holy somehow *in spite* of the sexual act we are engaging in. It almost feels like we are asking God to look the other way, that we are asking him to tolerate our sex, kind of like, "if you must, you must."

That perspective can be deadly because it can cause us to limit the pleasures we allow ourselves and the pleasures we are willing to give to our partners. And that, sadly, can result in divorce. And that is the dark Christian secret that Christians will not talk about.

The message we should be conveying is not that sex is wrong but permitted by marriage (a negative message), but that sex is right, in fact so right that it needs to be permanent (a positive message), and that permanency is achieved by marriage. Sex without marriage then is falling short of the best. It is "sin" because it is, as that Hebrew word means, "missing the mark."

You may have read studies that say that the greatest cause of divorce is money problems. Maybe that's true but I don't believe it. I believe that the greatest cause of divorce is sexual dissatisfaction, and that those studies fail to find the truth because people are too embarrassed to disclose that humiliating truth to anyone, including themselves, and certainly not to survey takers.

This is why an overly puritanical upbringing can be dangerous to marriages. Many wives can't enjoy sex because they were taught that sex is basically wrong and something to feel guilty about, and certainly not something to enjoy.

If you need permission to enjoy marital sex and not worry about might be *inappropriate*, well, here it is. A single verse —

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.

[6] TO HUSBANDS

We talk a lot about the male ego, but truth is, the female ego is just as strong and husbands need to know that. Women need to know that they are your alpha-female, really wanted, really pursued, really attractive, really "hot." When a man and a woman continually validate each other, that is a marriage that will survive.

I can't say with certainty who is the more often dissatisfied, husbands or wives, but I do believe that wives are more often dissatisfied than husbands for the simple reason that men are simple and have simple needs. And because men are quickly done, roll over, go to sleep, and leave their wives with unsatisfied passions.

Why would husbands do that? Maybe some men are too ignorant to know better. Maybe some men just don't care, they are simply unwilling or too lazy to satisfy their wives. And maybe some men, religious men, ignore their wife's passion intentionally — in their own minds, they are too "holy," too "pure" to want to engage their wife's passion directly because they don't want to do things they suppose might offend God.

I'll tell you what offends God —

Malachi 2:16 God...hateth putting away...

God does not approve of divorce. And men who leave their wives unsatisfied sexually are inviting divorce.

But we don't talk about that in church, do we? Because that discussion would be "inappropriate." But here's what's inappropriate: not satisfying your wife and divorce.

So, how are we to satisfy our wives?

I am not a sex counselor and I don't give explicit advice. But as I said, there are how-to books aplenty at bookstores that can help. But what I will do for you is to refer you again to this verse —

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...

What does that mean? It means that what you and your spouse do in bed is not defiling and is not inappropriate. That's what it says. The verse does not say, "undefiled *unless* you do this or that naughty thing." What is appropriate is what you do that you two enjoy.

Let's see what else the Bible has to say.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it :27... that it should be holy and without blemish. :28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. :29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourished and cherished it, even as the Lord the church. :30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. :31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

God loves the church like men should love their wives, and men should love their wives as they love their own flesh. Each is a metaphor for the others. Now, if men treat their wives as they treat their own flesh, wouldn't that necessarily include sexual satisfaction? Well, how could it not? Isn't that what men want *for their own flesh*?

And the text specifically says, "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh.*" So, what does *that* mean? It means sex!

Let's prove it —

1 Corinthians 6:16 *What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*

Genesis 2:24 *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. :25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

So, in what way is a man “one flesh” with a harlot? That’s obvious. And that is exactly how a man is “one flesh” with his wife, **Genesis 2**, and is therefore exactly Paul’s meaning in **Ephesians 5**. When Paul says, “Husbands, love your wives,” he means that a husband should want to give his wife the greatest good in every way, which includes, but is not limited to, sex.

Now, quick review —

Ephesians 5:28 *So ought men to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. :29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourished and cherished it.*

When a man has sex, does he expect to enjoy it? Of course he does. That’s his intent. Well, men, if you love your own body enough to want to have an orgasm now and then, then love your wife *like that* — enough to want her to enjoy what you are enjoying. If you are content to get what you want but you don’t much care about her getting what she wants, then you are an awful cad indeed.

Men, how much do you love your own flesh? Be honest with yourself. You know you love your flesh. You nourish it and cherish it, and that’s no sin. Your body, after all, is a gift to you from God, *all* of it, particularly the most male part of it. And if you love your own flesh, and you do, then you should love your wife likewise; that is, so that she enjoys *her* own flesh as you do yours. That’s what “making love” means.

1 Corinthians 7:33 *But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”*

There. That’s it. To be married means to love her, which means to want to please her as you would be pleased. It’s the golden rule in the most primal setting — do unto *her* as you would have *her* do unto you.

[7] TO WIVES

So, what is a wife’s “duty” in a marriage? A wife’s “duty” is to herself, to enjoy her entire sexual experience.

If a wife is not enjoying sex it’s because either she’s not allowing herself to or he’s not doing what she wants. Ladies, you’re allowed to train your husband, hold his hand and put it where you want. Accept that you are in charge, and be bold.

As often as not, if the wife is not enjoying sex, it is because she is choosing not to, for whatever reason. In that case, she needs to retrain her thinking and give herself permission to touch and be touched, to accept, to receive every pleasure she can imagine.

As a kid I hated spaghetti. I cannot now imagine why because now I love it.

I'm not trivializing, I'm pointing out that it is foolish to not enjoy pleasurable things that we have a right to enjoy.

Wives, it is as simple as allowing your brain to engage the wonders of erotic sex. Don't fight getting turned on. Embrace it. God made your hormones, so allow them to have their way with you. Someone said that your most important sex organ is the one between your ears. To be blunt: if a woman is determined not to enjoy her husband, then why get married? She'd save all the grief by staying single.

I have known couples who divorced for just that reason. I knew one couple that divorced because she had absolutely no interest in sex. Then a year later she was married to another man. I have no idea why. I suppose so she could destroy another man's life.

So that's why I say that celibacy and a celibate mentality disguised as chastity can be just as much an enemy of marriage as promiscuity. Nothing will make a husband feel more unfulfilled in his marriage than having sex with his "accommodating" wife who is really thinking, "Is this really necessary?" Such self-righteous wives would be shocked to learn that they are the cause of their husband's infidelity or abandonment.

What every husband needs (as what every wife needs) is validation, to know that he is her alpha-male. A wife validates her husband in two ways: *First* by what she does, enjoying him sexually. And *second* by what she says, convincing him that he is her alpha-male.

Proverbs 7:21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

Words matter. Wives should understand that it's not just about sex, although it is that, it's about how a man feels about himself. Does she want him or not? Some women trivialize their man with accusing labels like "he's an animal" which expose the truth, not about him but about her, that she doesn't want to be there, with him. That kills marriages.

The next Bible text was written by a women, maybe the only female author in the Bible. What is wonderful about this woman is that she really wants her man. She is in awe of him, her eyes are filled with stars, and she can hardly wait for him to get home.

Song of Solomon 5:10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. :11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. :12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. :13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. :14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. :15 His legs are as pillars of marbles, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. :16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend ...

What man would not want his wife to see him like that? “His legs are as pillars of marbles, *set upon sockets of fine gold!*” A euphemism for, well, you figure it out. That’s a happy wife and a happy life. He keeps her happy, she keeps him happy, and it’s all good. This couple will stay together forever, and that’s what God wants.

Ladies, I’ll tell you what your man wants. Above all else, he wants you to want him. He wants to be your alpha-male. That’s it. Simple. Men are simple. If you are hot for him, if you want him, if you enjoy his body and want him to enjoy yours, he will never leave, never cheat, never be unfaithful. He will be your beloved and your friend.

[8] FINAL THOUGHTS

Here are some final verses to wrap this up.

Proverbs 27:7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

When you are full, you don’t want another bite. When you are hungry, everything looks good. So never go shopping when hungry. Speaking sexually, when a husband or wife is satisfied, he or she needs nothing more. But when unsatisfied, thoughts drift.

1 Corinthians 11:11 Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. :12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Men came from women, women from men, and everyone from someone’s sexual act. And it all came from God. Married lovers need to understand that God wants this.

Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.

So God corrected that deficiency by creating woman.

Isaiah 65:17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. :20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, not an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old... :23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

What will the new heaven and new earth be like? For one thing, babies won’t die. That means there will be babies. And since our offspring will be with us, there will be children. And if children, that means there will be sex.

And finally, this —

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love ...

Presumably when the children are asleep.