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## SEX IN THE BIBLE

### FANTASY BY BETTY CHURCHILL • CHAPTER EXCERPT

Fantasy is a collection of insights from several contributing writers, about all the stuff women talk about and some they don't, but should. Sex, dating, relationships, the "m" word (not marriage, the other one), but, of course, we talk about marriage, too, as well as the beautiful people, the need to be in control and how God, Jesus and the Spirit fit into it all.

Like its male counterpart, Flesh, Fantasy is divided into three sections: small group discussion material, topical articles, and a month of daily devotionals.

Partial List of Topics: Masturbation, How Far is Too Far, The Role of Fathers, Confession-Forgiveness, Community, Filling of the Spirit, Cosmetic Surgery, Worship, Singleness, Faith, Homosexuality, Why Wait?, Body/Self Image, and Pornography.

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FANTASY

# The Same Page

Sometimes when you start talking about the Bible and morality in your average group of Jane Shmoes, certain phrases tend to pop up. Phrases that people think make them sound smart and make them feel better about themselves and their choices: “Well, the Bible doesn’t really say that, exactly” or “It’s all in how you interpret it” or “Culture is so different today; you can’t really apply what the Bible says.” It’s funny because often, if you ask, “Have you read the Bible yourself, or do you know what it says?” the answer is a muffled no of some sort. These people are going with the word on the street, what they’ve heard others say, the cultural tide. God forbid that you would be in that ignorant camp. No, really: God forbids it.

Throughout this book, many of the articles will refer to passages of Scripture and develop thoughts and principles from those passages. But I want you to have a cheat sheet, your very own “quick reference user’s guide to key biblical passages about most things sexual.” (There should be a shortcut term for that—QRUGKBPAMTS doesn’t roll off the tongue.)

You should know where to go to see what the Bible says for yourself. I’ve found this “quick reference guide” quite helpful, as I’m convinced I have early-onset Alzheimer’s.

## The Quick Reference User’s Guide to Key Biblical Passages about Most Things Sexual

### Genesis 2:24-25

A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

### Leviticus 18

The whole chapter contains laws regarding incest, adultery, bestiality, and homosexuality.

You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. (v. 22)

### Proverbs 5

The whole chapter addresses the perils of adultery.

Let your fountain be blessed,  
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.  
As a loving hind and a graceful doe,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
Be exhilarated always with her love.” (verses 18-19)

### Proverbs 6:27-28

In the context of adultery...

Can a man scoop fire into his lap  
without his clothes being burned?  
Can a man walk on hot coals  
without his feet being scorched?

### Song of Solomon

Pretty much the whole book is a picture of love, marriage, and sex.

Awake, O North wind,  
and come, wind of the south;  
make my garden breathe out fragrance,  
Let its spices be wafted abroad.  
May my beloved come into his garden  
and eat of its choice fruits! (4:16)

### Matthew 5:27-30

You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

### Romans 1:26-27

God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said,

“The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

### 2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

### Galatians 5

*The whole chapter is about how to live by the Spirit, not by the flesh.*

Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (verse 16)

### Ephesians 4:17-19

I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

### Ephesians 5:3

Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

### Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.

### Colossians 3:4-6

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

### 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong [defraud] his brother or take advantage of him.

### Hebrews 13:4

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

### 1 Peter 4:1-6

Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according

to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

### HERME ... WHAT?

Okay, so now you've had all these random bits of Bible thrown at you. I realize these pieces may raise more questions than they answer in some cases. You may want to take some time out and study these passages on your own before you go any further and see what we have to say about it all, lest you claim you've been brainwashed in the end.

So, you may be wondering how does a person go about that—studying a passage of the Bible, figuring out what it all really means and what it has to do with you. There's a big, fancy term for that called *hermeneutics*, a.k.a inductive Bible study methods. People spend lots of time and money becoming proficient at such things. However, the beauty of it is that you can take a crash course for free. Go to [www.godsquad.com](http://www.godsquad.com) and click on "Bible Study Resources." Everything you need to figure out what these passages mean and how they apply to your life is right there at your fingertips with some instructions on how to go about it. Also, [www.studylight.org](http://www.studylight.org) and [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) are excellent resources, but you might start with [godsquad](http://godsquad.com) to learn the how-to's and then use the

resources available at the other sites. You can also use the book *How to Study the Bible for all Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

### THE SHORTCUT

Some of you are not so motivated to do the work, but you want to know what the Bible says. Understandable—you're busy people. You usually have Cliff's Notes for things you don't have time to read. I get that. Here's the deal: go to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), look up a passage, and choose to read it in The Message version.

The Message is a paraphrase, as opposed to a translation, which is a word-for-word English translation from the original languages (Greek, Hebrew) in the manuscripts. In the case of The Message, Eugene Peterson has done the hard work for you—he's exegeted the whole thing, every last jot and tittle, and paraphrased the passages in contemporary language in a way that communicates the heart of what the biblical writers were trying to communicate to their audience. Really, it's worth buying a copy of The Message or one of the other paraphrased versions of the Bible for yourself. Such a Bible is a whole lot easier to understand as a quick and easy reference. However, you still need to know the context of the passages and to meditate on how they apply to

you, so you're not totally off the hook, just slightly off the hook.

## SEMANTICS

I want to help you out a little and give you a head start. Here are some definitions of some key words addressed in Scripture, some based on their original Greek and Hebrew counterparts. A few words are not from the Scripture passages but are words that may come up in our discussion.

## The Sex Lexicon

**Sex** (Greek, *koite*)—Interestingly, this word is not used anywhere in Scripture. The biblical writers preferred to use euphemisms, such as “He went in to her” or “She lay with him.” But for the sake of our discussions, sex is anything and everything that leads up to, but is not necessarily inclusive of, an orgasm. For all intents and purposes, it is anything that causes sexual arousal.

**Intercourse** (Hebrew, *shekubah* or *shekobeth*)—copulation, most often translated as “lie with carnally.”

**Lust** (Greek, *epithumeo*)—to covet things forbidden, or as my friend Brett defines it, dwelling on What would hormones do? (WWHD?).

**Fornication, Immorality** (Greek, *porneo*)—illicit sex. You see where that's going. This can refer to adultery, but it also includes sex before marriage, homosexual sex, prostitution, incest, sex with animals, and so on.

**Adultery** (Greek, *moichos*)—unlawful sex with the spouse of another.

**Homosexuality**—sex with someone of the same sex. Again, the Bible uses terms like “men burning with desire toward other men” or “the exchange of natural functions for unnatural” rather than the direct label.

**Sodomy**—homosexual sex. It may also include anal sex between a man and a woman.

**Orgy**—sex with multiple partners at the same time (on my list of “words I don't like”).

**Incest**—sex with family members. Again, in Scripture, terms like “uncovering the nakedness” of a blood relative are used.

**Bestiality**—sex with an animal.

**Prostitution**—receiving payment for sex.

**Obscenity, coarse joking**—inappropriate sexual comments or innuendos.

**Impurity**—living out thoughts, words, values, or actions that are secular or pagan in nature, not holy.

**Pure**—without contamination, undefiled, holy.

**Defraud**—take advantage of (steal).

**Pornography**—sexually explicit printed or visual materials intended to stimulate erotic rather than emotional feelings.

**Love** (Greek, *agape*)—unconditional love; (Greek, *phileo*)—brotherly love; (Greek, *eros*—romantic love). *Agape* is characterized in Scripture by things like laying down your life for one another, considering others more important than yourself—all that stuff in 1 Corinthians 13.

**Celibacy**—a lifelong vow of abstinence.

**Chastity**—a commitment to having sex in its proper place.


**Abstinence**—choosing to not have sex (in the secular realm, typically referred to as a form of birth control).



## SO, IS THAT STILL GOING TO BE ON THE TEST?

It can be sometimes confusing to know whether a principle or guideline in Scripture is applicable today or whether it was just part of their culture at the time. There are a few basic principles of interpretation that you may want to keep your eye on.

The difficulty of application for many passages of Scripture lies in the relationship between the Old and New testaments. On one extreme are those who see complete “continuity” between the Old and New. The Old Testament provides a map as relevant for life today as does the New Testament, for we in the church are (more or less) Israel. And then there are those who hold to extreme “discontinuity.” Apart from its historical value, much in the Old Testament is irrelevant to Christians and the church. Theologically, denominations fall somewhere along this spectrum.



The invaluable decoder ring is to see that when the Old Testament is squeezed through the keyhole of the Cross, it comes out the other side (the New Contract) transformed. Thus the New Testament becomes our interpretive key to understand what has changed and what has not. For example, the book of Hebrews says that Christ has fulfilled the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. (That’s a relief. We don’t have to kill our pets to atone for sin.) Do we have a sacrifice like the Old Testament? Yes, but it is Christ, and His was a one-time sacrifice.

Here are a few more examples. Holiness (set-apartness) extended even to the food eaten by the Israelites. Yet we learn in the book of Acts, through a revelation given to Peter, that dietary laws are no longer in effect. (Another relief, because shellfish was on the list of unclean food, and shrimp scampi is a personal favorite.) Also, blessings in the Old Testament were often more material in nature, while in the New Testament “blessing” moves in a more spiritual direction.

While we’re on a roll, perhaps the sexual restrictions against homosexuality and sexual immorality also expired. It’s possible. Some of the Corinthians thought so. Here Paul quotes one of their slogans, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food,” the meaning of which was that neither food nor sex affected the spiritual life. Paul, obviously, does not buy the argument. “ ‘Food for the stomach and the stomach for food’—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13).

As you read through the New Testament passages above, you will note that sexual purity is as foundational to the New Covenant as it is to the Old. While in biblical interpretation, there are nuances to be worked out in many areas in order to accurately understand how the period after Christ relates to the period before, the sexual area simply isn’t one them. Annoying, perhaps. Tricky, no.

## CULTURALLY BOUND

Because God's revelation was implemented within a culture, there are a few occasions where God's truth is bound to a cultural practice. In such cases, it is not the cultural practice that is timeless but the principle within. I do not affirm a covenant by killing an animal or exchanging my left shoe, as was the Israelites' custom, but I am certainly to be a person of my word.

We are also to be aware of what cultural practices communicate and be sensitive to our witness concerning them. A head covering, in certain locations during the first century, expressed respect for one's husband and his leadership; not wearing one expressed contempt. The apostle Paul says to the women at Corinth who had shelved their head coverings, "Wear the head covering and think about your witness and what you are communicating by your actions." In France, women sunbathe without their tops. If you chose to do so in America, it would injure your witness and cause men to stumble. Paul would have written, "Wear a top."

If you are looking for a cultural loophole on what the New Testament communicates on sex, I'm afraid the "head covering" is the only place you'll find an "out" clause. But enjoy it—go get yourself a perm and some highlights.

## IT'S BEEN A COUPLE THOUSAND YEARS; THINGS CHANGE ...

Not so much, really. As for the Bible in general being relevant to the culture today, have you read 1 and 2 Corinthians? Corinth was the Hollywood of its day, known for materialism and sex. It was at least as perverse as our culture is today. One Greek writer reports that the name Corinth was even slang for fornication. Instead of looking for a "hook-up," you might be looking for someone to "go to Corinth." Much of the culture of the day was similar to that in Corinth.

We often think that the Bible was written to a puritanical society. In reality, though, it was a wild and woolly era—pagans gone wild. In many ways, we're more civil and morally regulated than they were. We live in a culture that at least has a Judeo-Christian moral basis for law. In their era, the early Jews and the Christians were not so influential. (Slaves and prisoners usually aren't.)

The Bible always has been and always will be countercultural. Today we just have more high-tech manifestations of our debauchery. Most of the passages listed are New Testament teaching given directly to believers so that they would live a life honoring to Christ. These are timeless moral principles and most assuredly were as countercultural to their original audience as they

are to us. No matter what you think about whether the Bible is totally true, nothing could be more applicable to people trying to live an "alternative" lifestyle today.

You should know that the reason God gives these and every guideline in Scripture is either to provide for you or to protect you. His intent in no way is to keep something good from you or to punish you. Like any good parent, He disciplines us for our own good. But He has drawn out these guidelines to protect your soul, your spirit, and your body—to give you the opportunity to experience sex in the way He intended it to be. When we follow the guidelines, there are great gifts to be experienced.

## IN THE GRAY

Now you at least know where we're coming from, and I hope you're on the same page or at least in the same book. We've reviewed some passages and we've worked out the semantics, but when it comes down to it, some things still may not be clear in Scripture. Not everything is specifically addressed.

These fall into what some people like to call "gray areas." And we like to think that if it's not spelled out with a clear yes or no, we can make a judgment call based on what we feel is best for us. However (you knew that was coming) ... however,



if something is not specifically addressed, there is typically a broader principle that can be applied. The broader guideline may give some parameters, but it also may give some freedom within those parameters. Things tend to become less gray when we learn to think this way.



For example, clothes. The Bible says nothing about whether to wear clothes or not. So, for instance, wearing clothes in the shower is not wrong per se, but maybe it's not "wise" or "beneficial," as Paul advises. Not wearing clothes at the grocery store is not so much about you being embarrassed as much as it is about applying the broader principle of not causing your brother to stumble (or, in my case, the principle of considering others more important than yourself).

Another example from the realm of fashion. If your mother was any kind of mother at all, then you should know the fashion principle that white shoes are not allowed after Labor Day (with noted exceptions in the state of Florida and southern California, where fashion rules do not apply). So let's say you're shopping and come across a fabulous all-white ensemble on sale for a bargain price. It will be just the thing for your fall formal, which is, of course, post-Labor Day. There are no stated fashion principles against actually wearing a white outfit, given that it is not linen. (Apropos seasonal clothing is based more on style and fabric weight than color, unless, of course, you're in Europe, where black on black is always the most fashionable choice year-round.) The problem is that you know that if you wore this outfit it would require white shoes. Considering the broader principle regarding shoe color and season, you have to pass up the outfit and the bargain. (Note: if the example is "winter white," then all bets are off—make the purchase. Winter white boots are an added bonus to any wardrobe and are suitable for fall and winter.)

### **DON'T JUST TAKE MY WORD FOR IT (I MEAN, DO ... BUT DON'T)**

Hopefully these passages, definitions, and principles give you a grid to develop some opinions on your own and discuss these matters with some measure of knowledge and, ideally, conviction. It is never my desire for someone to take my word for it (okay, actually that's always my desire, because I like to be right—or at least thought of as being right), but it's probably better for you if you do read the Word for yourself and figure these things out on your own with some consideration of what I and others say along the way.

