



# THE PROBLEM OF GOD

## Week Six

### **A Note to Group Leaders:**

Today's conversation is about sex. If your group is for couples' or everyone, you may want to consider separating into gender-specific groups for this discussion. This is not a requirement, but please know going into the conversation the depth of honesty and openness may need to be guided wisely in all groups, but especially mixed gender groups.

Also, if this topic stirs up any wounds in anyone or if someone needs additional help to walk towards freedom, please feel free to encourage them to visit the Mental Health Resource page on the website ([eastlakechurch.com/next-steps/mental-health-resources](http://eastlakechurch.com/next-steps/mental-health-resources)).

### **Opening Prayer**

God, thank you for being here with us. Help us to find you here today. May we use this time to become more aware, awake, and open to what you have for us. Amen.

### **Talk it Over**

This week we are wrapping up our series The Problem of God. In large part, this series has been about making space for the fact that we can have reasonable faith while still embracing critical thinking, questions, and doubts surrounding faith, God, the Bible, and so forth. As we have moved through this series, we have been encouraged to remain open to where the evidence of each week's conversation may lead — instead of pushing for where we hope the evidence leads or where we feel the evidence should go. Furthermore, we have done this knowing it's not our job to change anyone's mind on any of the topics we have explored.

- Consider what we have talked about or even how we have engaged in conversation throughout these difficult topics brought up by this series. How has this series helped you?

Many people believe the Christian worldview on sex is too narrow, repressive, and outdated in our modern world. Even though sex has been a part of the Christian narrative since the beginning, it's not uncommon for people to think that the Bible says sex is bad and God is trying to keep people from enjoying sex. Now, along these lines, this week we did address the sad reality that the church throughout periods of its history has actively contributed to these negative stereotypes by the way it's chosen to teach on the topic. For example, at various points in history, the church added extra rules regarding when married couples could and couldn't have sex.

- Have you ever been exposed to negative teachings on sex?
- What dangers might arise when/if people are taught about sex in negative ways?

Today we are going to be looking at some cultural beliefs about sex alongside some Biblical ideas about sex.

### **Cultural orthodoxy says sex is only physical. Christian orthodoxy says sex is not just physical.**

Cultural tells us sex is not a big deal as long as it's consensual and no one gets hurt. But the Bible says our physical life is deeply connected to our spiritual life. We undervalue what it means to be human when we dumb

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down sex to be nothing more than a physical connection. One example of the interconnectedness of sex can be seen in the trauma caused by unwanted sexual advances.

- Looking at your current life, in what ways do you see culture teaching you sex is only a physical thing?
- How much or how little do you currently buy into the idea that sex is not just physical?

**Cultural orthodoxy makes sex a matter of personal preference. Christian orthodoxy makes sex a matter of divine design.**

The modernist view of sex says, “I have the right to do whatever I feel is right and who are you to deny me my desire”. This comes from the idea called “The Priority of the Autonomous Self.” This is a Western worldview that prioritizes the self above all else. One example of this worldview can easily be found by looking at the porn industry. Porn is an industry fueled by the idea that we deserve to have our desires met.

- How has “The Priority of the Autonomous Self,” which prioritizes self above all else, affected your view of sex?
- In what ways have you been impacted by porn?

**Will someone read 1 Timothy 4:4 (NIV) and 1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV) out loud for us?**

While our sexual desire is God-given and originally inherently all good, it’s been marred by sin. There is a big difference between the inherent goodness of something and the abuse or distortion of something that is good. Along these same lines, while it may sound old fashioned and idealistic, the Bible says that sex is intended to be a mutual action shared between one man and one woman within a marriage relationship. This is what we see in the Genesis creation story, what we see Jesus reference, and what the Apostle Paul wrote about.

- How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with this divine design for sex? Why is that the case?
- What gifts might come from us prioritizing sex as a divine design intended for marriage?
- In what ways have you seen people hurt by the misuse of sex?

**Cultural orthodoxy makes sex and bodies into idols. Christian orthodoxy says our bodies are for the Lord.**

We live in a culture that worships bodies, but we don’t worship every type of body — just the young, the firm, the sports stars, and the gorgeous young actors. Often the bodies we worship are airbrushed. Our culture teaches us that we must look like certain ideals to sell, to be liked, to gain attention, and to matter. But when we treat bodies as commodities, we are denying what human beings really are and what our bodies are truly intended for. And that is, humans are made in the image of God, God sees us as his children, and our bodies are for the Lord. In fact, the way we view, treat, and handle our bodies is intended to tell of God’s faithfulness.

- In what ways do you feel our culture has skewed your view of your body?
- What would it look like to view your body the way God views your body?

While it’s common for churches to talk in such a way that elevates the status of marriage over singleness, it’s important to understand the ideas we have looked at matter whether we are married or single. Plus, the Bible highlights singleness as a beautiful way to honor God.

- If you are single or thinking back to when you were single, are there other thoughts on this topic you’d like to add?
- Whether we are married or single, what are some practical reminders, ideas, tips we can use to honor God and ourselves regarding this topic?

**Will someone read 1 Corinthians 6:16-20 (Msg) out loud for us twice?**

- This is one of many verses in the Bible that talks about our bodies or sex. Was there anything that stood out to you about this verse?

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- What parts of this verse seem to run counter culture to messages you see around you?
- What is one thing you want to take away from this week's teaching and discussion?

**Will someone read our theme verse Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) out loud for us as we close things out?**

### **Closing Prayer**

*Leader Instructions: Feel free to lead this week's closing prayer either using the prompt below or praying your own prayer for the group.*

God, thank you for giving us this safe space to process. Please help us to grow in our faith in you and what you are leading us towards — even when we have questions, thoughts, and doubts. Help us to embrace the tension of living faithfully despite all that we don't know with certainty. Amen.

### **Closing Reminders For Our Group**

- What is the plan for our group moving forward? Are we planning a celebration? Are we going to keep on meeting? What logistics do we need to cover to ensure we are ready to go for whatever is next.

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### **How To Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.

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