

## Week 4: The Sexualization of Psychology and Politics

NCAC Adult Sunday School

November 27, 2022

STRANGE

NEW WORLD

**Without God, how might a society determine right and wrong?**

**Key Resource:** *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* by Carl R. Trueman (Crossway, 2022)

**Course Goal:** To better understand how a changing concept of self has led to this “strange new world” in which we now live and to consider what Scripture teaches about how we should respond.

### HOW DID SEX COME TO PLAY SUCH A CENTRAL ROLE IN PUBLIC LIFE?

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“One of the most obvious aspects of modern public life is the central role that sex plays within it. This should strike us as rather odd: the fact that the most private and intimate act between two people has become so important to public life is surely a strange development...” (SNW, p. 71)

**How have you observed sex taking a more central role in the public sphere?**

**If all our children knew about sex was what they learned from public media, what might they believe?**

“Indeed, from legislation on matters such as gay marriage through to the apparent need of the public to know about the sexual orientation of sports stars and actors, the role of sex in our culture is pervasive and arguably unprecedented. Why should this be the case?

“The simple answer is that sexual desire has emerged in the last one hundred years as a primary category for understanding our identity. In biblical times or in ancient Greece, sex was regarded as something that human beings *did*; today it is considered to be something vital to who human beings *are*. Hence, we now have the whole notion of sexual identity and the ever-expanding letters that make up the LGBTQ+ alliance.” (SNW, p. 71)

**Sigmund Freud (1856-1939):** An Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis. According to Trueman, though many of Freud’s “psychoanalytic theories have been discredited...his legacy lives on in two important areas: his notion that sex is foundational to human happiness and his theory of civilization.” (SNW, p. 72)

**Freud, on the issue of happiness:** *"What do [people] demand of life and wish to achieve in it? The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. They strive after happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so. This endeavor has two sides, a positive and a negative aim. It aims, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and unpleasure, and, on the other, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure."* (SNW, p. 73, quoting from Freud in "Civilization and Its Discontents")

**Is Freud right on this? Explain.**

**Freud, on the issue of sex:** *"Man's discovery that sexual (genital) love afforded him the strongest experiences of satisfaction and in fact provided him with the prototype of all happiness, must have suggested to him that he should continue to seek the satisfaction of happiness in his life along the path of sexual relations and that he should make genital erotism the central point of his life."* (SNW, p. 73, quoting from Freud in "Civilization and Its Discontents")

**How do you see our culture today teaching that sex is fundamental to happiness?**

**Freud, on the impact of civilization on sexual freedom and happiness:** *"Primitive man was better off in knowing no restrictions of instinct. To counterbalance this, his prospects of enjoying this happiness for any length of time were very slender. Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security."* (SNW, p. 77, quoting from Freud in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality")

**To what extent is Freud right that sexual codes shape the kind of society in which we live?**

**How have you seen sexual codes benefit society—and thus bring good to individuals?**

## **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX?**

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**What does 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 teach us about God's view of and design for sex?**

<sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:2-5, ESV)

## What does 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 teach about a biblical view of sex and human fulfillment?

<sup>36</sup> If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. <sup>37</sup> But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. <sup>38</sup> So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. (1 Corinthians 7:36-38, ESV)

**Although the Bible doesn't place our sexual desires at the center of our identity, it does give our gender a central role—and there's no denying that our sexual desires are a part of who we are. So, how should we think about our gender and sexual desires in relation to our identity?**

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27, ESV)*

*"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 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." (Colossians 3:3-5, ESV)*

## THE POLITICIZATION OF SEX

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### VIDEO: "Session Four"

**What do we mean when we say that sex has become political?**

**Though there's a sense in which sex has always been political, according to Trueman, what has caused sex to take up the central role in politics that it has today?**

*"When Freud makes our sexual desires foundational to who we are, he makes sex a matter of identity, not primarily a matter of activity. And once sex is considered to be identity, everything changes...Once identity becomes sexual, then sex becomes political, because customs and specifically laws about the expression of those sexual desires become customs and laws about who society allows you to be. So, if society forbids a certain form of sex, then what society is eventually doing is saying to people who define themselves by that kind of sexual desire—what society is saying to those people is, 'You're not a real person. We're not going to recognize you.'" (Trueman, SNW, Video 4)*

**Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957):** An Austrian psychoanalyst and influential writer who brought together the ideas of Freud and Marx and who coined the phrase “the sexual revolution.” Reich sought to dismantle the sexual codes upon which the family is built and insisted that even young children must be taught to express themselves sexually:

*“The free society will provide ample room and security for the gratification of natural needs. Thus, it will not only not prohibit a love relationship between two adolescents of the opposite sex but will give it all manner of social support. Such a society will not only not prohibit the child’s masturbation but, on the contrary, will probably conclude that any adult who hinders the development of the child’s sexuality should be severely dealt with.” (SNW, p.83. quoting Reich in “The Sexual Revolution”)*

### **What is Trueman’s response to this?**

“The point is clear: sexual codes must be shattered if human beings are to be truly free. Those things that inhibit the free sexual expression, even of young children, are oppressive and prevent individuals from truly being themselves. Of course, the question immediately rises of who exactly is going to facilitate this revolution in sexual codes if the family (and later the church) have a vested interest in maintaining the old, oppressive standards of behavior.

“The answer lies in the last sentence of the above quotation: society will do so, by promoting this sexual freedom and dealing severely with those who oppose it. In short, sex must become a pressing political issue in which the State takes a proactive interest. Reich writes this in the mid-1930s. No one who lives in the Western world today will find his statement to be anything less than prophetic.

“From teaching elementary school children about contraception and homosexuality onward, the state has arrogated to itself the policing of the education of children in sexual matters. And this is not a random development but one predicated on an assumption about the relationship of sex to personhood. The implications of this are dramatic.

“For example, it turns on its head the traditional notion of education as the means by which the individual is formed by institutional authority to curb natural instincts in order to become an adult member of society. By contrast, this is Rousseau with a sexual twist: the authentic person is the sexual being, the one guided by the inner voice of (sexualized) nature, and the role of education is not to repress that for the purpose of personal formation but to liberate it for the purpose of self-expression.” (SNW, pp. 83-84)

### **What challenges does this present for traditional Christians as we engage our culture?**

**How might we engage our culture in a way that is compassionate and loving, but that is also faithful to the Bible’s teaching?**