

# **Dr. James S. Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13, Sexual Morality**

## **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13, Sexual Morality, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This excerpt from a Christian ethics lecture by Dr. James S. Spiegel explores various perspectives on sexual ethics. The session begins by contrasting Bertrand Russell's permissive views on premarital sex and divorce with traditional Christian morality, which emphasizes purity and faithfulness. It then examines Kantian ethics as applied to sexual conduct by Thomas Mapes, focusing on voluntary informed consent and condemning coercion and deception. The discussion shifts to Roger Scruton's Aristotelian virtue ethic, advocating for sex exclusively within monogamous marriage for reasons of union and well-being. Finally, the lecture addresses biblical views on homosexuality, considering different interpretations of relevant passages and touching on the complexities of same-sex attraction versus practice and potential causes. The session concludes with recommended readings for further study on sexual ethics and the theology of the body.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13 – Double click icon to  
play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Theology → Apologetics → Christian Ethics).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13, Sexual Morality

#### Briefing Document: Christian Sexual Ethics

**Overview:** This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. James S. Spiegel in Session 13 of his Christian Ethics course, focusing on sexual ethics. The session explores various perspectives on sexual conduct, including modern permissive views, Kantian ethics, Aristotelian virtue ethics, and biblical teachings, ultimately advocating for a traditional Christian understanding of sexuality.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Introduction to Sexual Ethics:

- The session begins by outlining key questions in sexual ethics: obligations regarding sexual conduct, guiding philosophical and theological values, and the moral permissibility of homosexual relations.

##### 2. Modern Permissive View and Bertrand Russell:

- **Historical Context:** The lecture notes the impact of philosophers like Bertrand Russell on the evolution of Western views on sexuality.
- **Russell's Ideas:** Russell advocated for:
  - **Premarital Sex:** Believing it necessary to distinguish between physical attraction and the compatibility needed for successful marriage. He argued, "it's unlikely that a person without previous sexual experience will be able to distinguish between mere physical attraction and the sort of congeniality that's necessary in order to make a marriage a success."
  - **Easy Divorce:** Advocating for divorce through mutual consent.
  - **Critique of Traditional Morality:** Viewing traditional Christian sexual morality as stemming from "modesty and jealousy."
  - **Emphasis on General Virtues:** Suggesting that sexual relations should be guided by "the ordinary virtues of tolerance, kindness, truthfulness, and justice."
  - **Critique of Russell's View:** Spiegel points out the absence of virtues like "purity and faithfulness," which are considered central in Christian sexual ethics.

### 3. Kantian Ethics and Sexual Morality (Thomas Mapes):

- **Focus on the Second Formulation of the Categorical Imperative:** Applying Kant's principle of not treating people as mere means to sexual ethics.
- **Using Someone Sexually:** Defined as violating their "voluntary informed consent."
- **Undermining Consent:** Consent can be nullified through:
  - **Coercion:** "If a person is coerced, that's obliterating their voluntariness." (e.g., forcible rape).
  - **Deception:** "If they are deceived, then that obliterates their informant-ness." (e.g., lying about marital status or HIV status).
- **Implications:** This framework condemns sex with children or severely mentally handicapped adults due to the inability to give informed consent. It also implicitly condemns organizations like NAMBLA, which Russell's ethic does not necessarily address.
- **Forms of Coercion:**
  - **Occurrent Coercion:** Direct force.
  - **Dispositional Coercion:** Threat of harm for non-compliance.
- **Distinction between Threat and Offer:** A threat involves undesirable consequences for non-compliance, while an offer (inducement) involves desirable consequences for compliance, both potentially undermining voluntary consent.

### 4. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and Traditional Christian View (Roger Scruton):

- **Defense of Traditional Christian Morality:** Scruton argues that sex is appropriate only within monogamous marriage, aligning with a Christian sexual ethic.
- **Erotic Love as a Virtue:** He considers erotic love a virtue contributing to human well-being and happiness.
- **Monogamy as Necessary for Virtuous Erotic Love:**
  - **Union and Jealousy:** Erotic love, being about union, is prone to jealousy, which a virtuous life of love must eliminate.
- **Vow of Commitment:** Marriage vows contribute to eliminating jealousy and fostering commitment.
- **Expression of Whole Self:** Sexual expression outside marital commitment contradicts its proper role as an expression of one's whole self.

- **Critique of Non-Committed Sex:** Scruton argues that a habit of sexual passion without commitment can hinder the development of passionate love within commitment.
- **Empirical Support:** Spiegel notes that surveys suggest "monogamous couples are more sexually satisfied" and that "conservative Christian women are the most orgasmic." He also highlights that "higher divorce rates for couples who cohabitate before marriage" contradict Russell's view.
- **Quotes on Cohabitation: Waite and Gallagher:** "on average, cohabiting couples are less sexually faithful, lead less settled lives, are less likely to have children, are more likely to be violent, make less money, and are less happy and less committed than married couples."
- **C.S. Lewis:** "the monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union, the sexual union, from all other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union."

## 5. Biblical Grounds for Monogamy and Sexual Purity:

- **One Flesh Union:** Genesis describes the creation of woman from man and their union as becoming "one flesh," highlighting the unique and intimate nature of the marital bond between a man and a woman. Adam's words, "flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone," underscore this.
- **Jesus' Teaching on Marriage:** Jesus refers back to this creation account in Matthew 19, emphasizing that "God has joined together, let no one separate."
- **Command Against Adultery:** The seventh commandment emphasizes the importance of sexual faithfulness within marriage.
- **Marriage as a Metaphor for Christ and the Church:** Paul's use of marriage as a metaphor for the deep union between Christ and the church reinforces the significance of marital union and monogamy.
- **Emphasis on Sexual Purity:** Scripture consistently emphasizes sexual purity, as believers are "members of Christ and one with him" and their bodies are "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (referencing 1 Corinthians 6).
- **Human Sexuality and the Trinity:** The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is presented as a parallel to human procreation, where a child proceeds from the union of a father and mother, sharing the same human nature.

This is suggested to underscore the sacredness of human sexuality and procreation.

## 6. Homosexuality:

- **Ambiguity of the Term "Homosexual":** The term can refer to those exclusively attracted to the same gender ("sexually inverted") or those with situational same-sex experiences.
- **Distinction Between Attraction and Practice:** It's crucial to differentiate between same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior.
- **Causes of Homosexuality:** The lecture discusses the ongoing debate about genetic versus acquired causes. While early studies suggested a 100% genetic concordance rate in identical twins (Kalman), these studies faced criticism. Subsequent twin studies (Bailey & Pillard, King & McDonald) found lower concordance rates (10-50%), suggesting genetics is a contributing factor but not the sole cause. Environmental and behavioral factors are also likely involved.
- **Ethical Implications of the Causes:** Even if there is a biological basis for homosexual orientation, it has no ethical implications for those who believe in free will. Individuals are still responsible for their choices and actions, similar to someone with a genetic predisposition to alcoholism who can choose to abstain. Compassion and sensitivity are still necessary for those who experience same-sex attraction.
- **Biblical Texts on Homosexuality: Genesis 19 (Sodom):** Interpreted as God's judgment on sexual immorality, including homosexual practice (explicitly stated in Jude).
- **Leviticus 18 & 20:** Condemn sexual relations between men as "detestable" and punishable by death.
- **1 Timothy 1:8-10 & 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:** Refer to "homosexual offenders" as lawbreakers and not inheriting the kingdom of God.
- **Romans 1:24-27:** Paul condemns "unnatural relations" and "indecent sexual acts" by both men and women.
- **Alternative Interpretations of Romans 1:** Forbidding only homosexual male prostitution.

- Condemning only heterosexuals engaging in homosexual acts ("unnatural" for them).
- Condemning only perverse expressions of homosexuality (promiscuity), not committed homosexual relationships.
- **Traditional Interpretation of Romans 1:** The standard historical interpretation is that Paul condemns all homosexual behavior, regardless of prostitution, natural disposition, or the context of a committed relationship. Spiegel agrees with Scott Ray that this interpretation is the most consistent with the text.

## 7. Recommended Reading:

- *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* by Anderson, George, and Gerges.
- *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* by Kevin de Young.
- *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* by Robert Gagnon.
- *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything* by Robert Reilly.
- *Theology of the Body* by Pope John Paul II (and the introductory text *Theology of the Body for Beginners* by Christopher West). Spiegel considers *Theology of the Body* to be "the best thing I've ever read on human sexuality, period," emphasizing its grounding of human sexuality in the Trinity.

## Conclusion:

Dr. Spiegel's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of sexual ethics from various philosophical and theological perspectives. He critically examines modern permissive views, incorporates Kantian and Aristotelian ethics, and ultimately argues for a traditional Christian understanding of sexuality rooted in biblical teachings. The session emphasizes the importance of virtues like purity and faithfulness, the significance of consent in sexual interactions, the unique nature of marriage between a man and a woman, and the traditional interpretation of biblical passages concerning homosexuality.

## 4. Study Guide: Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13, Sexual Morality

### Study Guide: Christian Sexual Ethics

#### Key Concepts and Figures

- **Bertrand Russell:** 20th-century British philosopher who proposed a modern permissive view on sexuality, advocating for premarital sex and easy divorce. He emphasized tolerance, kindness, truthfulness, and justice in sexual relations but omitted purity and faithfulness.
- **Thomas Mapes:** Applied Kantian ethics, specifically the second formulation of the categorical imperative (treating people as ends, not merely as means), to sexual ethics. He focused on the importance of voluntary informed consent and the immorality of coercion and deception in sexual encounters.
- **Roger Scruton:** Applied Aristotelian virtue ethics to sexuality, defending the traditional Christian view that sex is appropriate only within monogamous marriage. He argued that erotic love, as a virtue contributing to well-being, requires the commitment and exclusivity of marriage to avoid jealousy and fulfill its role as an expression of one's whole self.
- **Voluntary Informed Consent:** The ethical standard articulated by Mapes, requiring that sexual activity be based on freely given and fully understood agreement. Coercion and deception undermine this consent and constitute sexual misuse.
- **Occurrent Coercion:** A type of sexual coercion involving the use of direct physical force.
- **Dispositional Coercion:** A type of sexual coercion that does not involve direct force but uses the threat of harm (a threat) or the promise of a reward (an offer/inducement) to compel someone into sexual activity.
- **Monogamy:** The practice of having only one spouse at a time, considered the biblically and traditionally Christianly sanctioned context for sexual expression.
- **"One Flesh":** A biblical concept from Genesis, describing the unique and profound union between a husband and wife in marriage, also used as a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and the church.

- **Homosexual Attraction vs. Homosexual Practice:** The distinction between having same-sex desires or inclinations and engaging in same-sex sexual behavior. Christian ethics often distinguishes between the two in moral evaluation.
- **Concordance Rate (Twin Studies):** The degree of similarity or agreement in traits (in this context, sexual orientation) between identical twins. Studies with less than 100% concordance suggest that factors beyond genetics play a role in sexual orientation.
- **Hard Determinism:** The philosophical view that all human choices are causally determined, leaving no room for free will. The lecture argues that even if there are biological predispositions to certain attractions, free will allows individuals to choose how to act on those predispositions.
- **Alternative Interpretations (Biblical Texts on Homosexuality):** Various attempts to reinterpret biblical passages that seem to condemn homosexual activity, such as arguments that they only forbid homosexual male prostitution, unnatural acts for heterosexuals, or perverse expressions of homosexuality, rather than all same-sex behavior within committed relationships.
- **Traditional Interpretation (Biblical Texts on Homosexuality):** The historical and widely held view that biblical condemnations of homosexual acts are comprehensive and apply to all forms of same-sex sexual behavior, regardless of context or perceived orientation.

### Short-Answer Quiz

1. According to Bertrand Russell, what was one of the main reasons he advocated for premarital sex? What virtues did he emphasize in sexual relations?
2. Explain Thomas Mapes' application of Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative to sexual ethics. What two factors does he say can undermine voluntary informed consent?
3. Describe Roger Scruton's argument for why erotic love should be practiced monogamously within marriage. How does he view the relationship between marital commitment and sexual passion?
4. What are some of the negative consequences associated with cohabitation before marriage, according to the research cited in the lecture? Briefly explain C.S. Lewis's perspective on sexual intercourse outside of marriage.



5. Describe the biblical concept of "one flesh" and its significance for understanding the traditional Christian view of marriage. How is marriage used metaphorically in the New Testament?
6. What is the distinction made between homosexual attraction and homosexual practice? Why is the term "homosexual" considered somewhat ambiguous?
7. Explain why the less-than-100% concordance rate in twin studies suggests that genetics is not the sole determinant of homosexual orientation. What other types of factors are believed to play a role?
8. How does the lecture address the ethical implications of the potential causes of homosexuality? What role does the concept of free will play in this discussion?
9. Identify two alternative interpretations of biblical texts concerning homosexuality discussed in the lecture. What is the standard historical interpretation of these passages?
10. Briefly mention two of the recommended books on sexual ethics and/or homosexuality provided at the end of the lecture. What is significant about Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," according to the lecture?

### **Answer Key**

1. Russell argued that premarital sex allows individuals to distinguish between mere physical attraction and the congeniality necessary for a successful marriage. He emphasized the ordinary virtues of tolerance, kindness, truthfulness, and justice in sexual relations.
2. Mapes argued that treating someone as a mere means in a sexual context involves violating their voluntary informed consent. The two factors that can undermine this consent are coercion (obliterating voluntariness) and deception (obliterating informant-ness).
3. Scruton argues that erotic love, being about union, is prone to jealousy, which monogamy and the vow of commitment in marriage help to eliminate. He believes that sexual expression outside of marital commitment contradicts its role as an expression of one's whole self and that commitment actually fosters a healthy and passionate sex life.
4. Research suggests that cohabiting couples are less sexually faithful, lead less settled lives, are less likely to have children, are more likely to be violent, make less money, and are less happy and less committed than married couples. C.S.

Lewis viewed sexual intercourse outside marriage as a "monstrosity" because it tries to isolate the sexual union from the other intended unions that make up the total union.

5. The concept of "one flesh" in Genesis describes the profound union of a man and woman in marriage, where they become a single entity. In the New Testament, marriage is used as a metaphor for the deep, metaphysical union between Christ and the church, reinforcing the significance of marital union and monogamy.
6. Homosexual attraction refers to the internal experience of being romantically or sexually drawn to individuals of the same sex, while homosexual practice refers to engaging in sexual acts with someone of the same sex. The term "homosexual" is ambiguous because it can refer to someone exclusively attracted to the same gender or someone who has had same-sex experiences without a primary same-sex orientation.
7. The fact that the concordance rate for homosexuality in identical twins is less than 100% indicates that genetics alone cannot fully explain sexual orientation. Environmental and behavioral factors, such as developmental challenges to gender identity, are also believed to contribute.
8. The lecture argues that even if there is a biological basis for homosexual orientation, the existence of free will means individuals are still ethically responsible for their actions. Just as someone with an alcoholic predisposition can choose sobriety, someone with same-sex attraction can choose whether or not to act on that attraction.
9. Two alternative interpretations of biblical texts on homosexuality are that they only condemn homosexual male prostitution or that they only condemn homosexual acts by individuals who are naturally heterosexual. The standard historical interpretation is that these passages condemn all homosexual behavior, regardless of context or perceived orientation.
10. Two recommended books are Anderson, George, and Gerges's "What is Marriage? Man and Woman, a defense" and Robert Gagnon's "The Bible and Homosexual Practice, Texts and Hermeneutics." Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" is considered a tremendous and profound work on human sexuality, emphasizing its grounding in the Trinity.

## Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast Bertrand Russell's modern permissive view on sexuality with the traditional Christian sexual ethic as presented by Scruton. What are the key philosophical and theological differences underpinning their perspectives on sexual conduct, premarital sex, and the role of commitment?
2. Analyze Thomas Mapes' Kantian approach to sexual ethics, focusing on the concept of voluntary informed consent. Discuss the implications of coercion and deception in sexual encounters according to his framework, and consider how this perspective might evaluate different sexual behaviors.
3. Explore the lecture's discussion of the causes of homosexuality, including the findings of twin studies and the interplay between genetics, environment, and free will. How does the concept of free will inform the ethical evaluation of homosexual orientation and behavior within a Christian framework?
4. Critically evaluate one of the alternative interpretations of biblical texts on homosexuality presented in the lecture. Compare it to the standard historical interpretation and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each approach in light of the broader themes of Christian sexual ethics discussed in the source material.
5. Discuss the significance of the biblical concept of "one flesh" and the metaphorical use of marriage in Scripture for understanding the traditional Christian view of monogamy and sexual purity. How do these theological concepts relate to the arguments presented by Scruton regarding the purpose and context of sexual expression?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Categorical Imperative (Kantian Ethics):** A central concept in Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, stating that one should act only according to principles that one would want to become universal laws (First Formulation) and that one should always treat humanity, whether in oneself or others, as an end and never merely as a means (Second Formulation).
- **Virtue Ethics (Aristotelian):** A moral philosophy that emphasizes the development of good character traits or virtues as the basis for ethical behavior and human flourishing.
- **Erotic Love:** A passionate and intimate form of love, often associated with sexual desire and romantic connection.
- **Sexual Morality:** Principles and rules governing sexual behavior, often based on philosophical, religious, or cultural beliefs about what is right and wrong in sexual conduct.
- **Permissive View on Sexuality:** A perspective that generally allows for a wide range of sexual behaviors, often emphasizing individual autonomy and consent.
- **Traditional Christian Sexual Morality:** A set of ethical beliefs about sexuality rooted in Christian scripture and tradition, typically emphasizing chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within a monogamous, heterosexual marriage.
- **Coercion:** The act of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.
- **Deception:** The act of misleading someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth.
- **Sexual Purity:** Abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage, often emphasized in Christian ethics.
- **Faithfulness:** Loyalty and commitment to one's spouse, particularly in the context of a monogamous marriage, which includes sexual exclusivity.
- **Metaphysical Union:** A deep, spiritual, or transcendent connection or joining of two entities, such as the union between a husband and wife or between Christ and the church.
- **Same-Sex Attraction:** The experience of being romantically or sexually attracted to individuals of the same gender.

- **Same-Sex Activity:** Engaging in sexual behaviors with a person of the same gender.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of biblical texts.
- **Trinity (Christian Theology):** The Christian doctrine that God is one being in three co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit.
- **Procreation:** The process of producing offspring.
- **Magnum Opus:** A large, important, and often considered the best work of an artist or writer.

## 5. FAQs on Spiegel, Christian Ethics, Session 13, Sexual Morality, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Sexual Ethics

#### 1. What are the fundamental questions addressed within Christian sexual ethics?

Christian sexual ethics grapples with several core questions, including the obligations individuals have regarding their sexual conduct, the philosophical and theological values that should guide our understanding of sex, and the moral permissibility of homosexual relations. It seeks to provide a framework for ethical sexual behavior based on Christian principles and scriptures.

#### 2. How does a modern permissive view on sexuality, as exemplified by Bertrand Russell, differ from a traditional Christian perspective?

A modern permissive view, as advocated by Bertrand Russell, generally endorses premarital sex, easier divorce, and emphasizes virtues like tolerance, kindness, truthfulness, and justice in sexual relations. It often critiques traditional Christian sexual morality as rooted in modesty and jealousy. In contrast, a traditional Christian perspective places a strong emphasis on virtues such as purity and faithfulness, often viewing sexual activity as properly confined to the context of marriage.

#### 3. What is the Kantian ethical framework, as applied by Thomas Mapes, and how does it define the misuse of others in a sexual context?

Thomas Mapes applies Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative – treating people as ends and never merely as means – to sexual ethics. He argues that using someone sexually involves violating their voluntary informed consent through coercion or deception. Coercion undermines voluntariness through force or threats, while deception undermines informed consent by lying or withholding crucial information.

#### **4. How does Roger Scruton's Aristotelian virtue ethic support a traditional Christian view of sex?**

Roger Scruton applies Aristotelian virtue ethics to defend the traditional Christian view that sex is appropriate only within monogamous marriage. He argues that erotic love, a virtue contributing to human well-being, requires monogamy to flourish, particularly due to the inherent potential for jealousy that commitment through a solemn vow in marriage helps to mitigate. He also posits that sexual expression outside of marital commitment contradicts its role as an expression of one's whole self and that empirical evidence suggests greater sexual satisfaction and stability within monogamous marriage.

#### **5. What are the key biblical foundations for a traditional understanding of marriage and sexual intimacy?**

The Bible presents marriage as a union between a man and a woman, symbolized by the "one flesh" concept from Genesis. Jesus's teachings on divorce in Matthew 19 reinforce this view. The commandment against adultery in the Decalogue underscores the importance of sexual faithfulness within marriage. Furthermore, marriage is used as a metaphor for the profound union between Christ and the Church. The emphasis on sexual purity is a recurring theme, with believers being called to honor their bodies as members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit. The concept of procreation mirroring the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) also highlights the sacredness of human sexuality within this framework.

#### **6. What is the distinction between homosexual attraction and homosexual practice, and what are the ongoing discussions regarding the causes of homosexuality?**

It is important to distinguish between experiencing same-sex attraction and engaging in same-sex sexual activity. The causes of homosexuality are a subject of ongoing debate, with research exploring both genetic and environmental factors. While some early studies suggested a high genetic concordance rate among identical twins, more recent research indicates a lower rate, suggesting that genetics is likely not the sole determinant. Environmental and behavioral factors, such as developmental challenges to gender identity, are also considered potential contributing factors.

**7. How does the concept of free will influence the ethical implications of homosexual inclinations from a Christian perspective?**

Even if biological or environmental factors contribute to a homosexual orientation, the Christian perspective that upholds free will asserts that individuals still have the agency to choose how they act upon their desires. Just as someone with a predisposition to alcoholism can choose to abstain, individuals experiencing same-sex attraction are considered free to choose whether or not to engage in homosexual behavior. This view emphasizes personal responsibility while still acknowledging the need for compassion and sensitivity towards those who experience such attractions.

**8. How does the Bible address homosexuality, and what are the different interpretations of key biblical texts on this topic?**

Several biblical passages address homosexuality or same-sex activity, including the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, 1 Timothy 1:8-10, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and Romans 1. These passages are generally interpreted within traditional Christian theology as condemnations of homosexual behavior. However, alternative interpretations suggest that these passages may specifically refer to homosexual male prostitution, heterosexual individuals engaging in homosexual acts, or perverse expressions of homosexuality rather than all same-sex relationships. The standard historical-traditional interpretation maintains that these texts condemn all homosexual behavior, regardless of the context or perceived orientation.