



God's Startling Analogy

What characterizes worship? An intimacy that invades our deepest being. What characterizes godly sex? The same thing. God parallels passion with Him and passion with each other. His words about worship teach us about our sexuality. His words about sexuality teach us about worship. You may be surprised, as was I, at the vivid explicitness of His language. Do you find His analogy startling? Are you intrigued?

God knows we can't see Him, so He tells us stories about things we *can* see. And these stories (God's analogies) reveal the depths of His heart. Sometimes God calls Himself a father. Sometimes He likens Himself to a mother or a shepherd or a friend. And sometimes He portrays Himself as our sexual intimate – as our lover. These stories, the lover stories, vividly expose His passion for us.

God's lover stories vividly expose His passion for us.

I'm not making this up. In Isaiah 61, God the bridegroom rejoices over His bride. In Ezekiel 16, God makes love to her. In Ephesians 5, Jesus is the bridegroom. In the gospels, the Spirit enters Mary and she conceives. In Revelation 19, the Lamb, Jesus, celebrates at His own wedding banquet. Some biblical descriptions get so graphic that you'd expect spiritual censors to show up and tear multiple pages out of our bibles. Most people, whether they believe in God or not, mimic the attitude of these imaginary censors: they think God looks away when couples make love.

That is not how God reacts. He loves pleasure. He loves to provide us with all kinds of pleasure; it thrills Him to do so. And, as with any lover, it thrills Him when we welcome His gifts. Romans 12:1 tells us that God is "well-pleased" when we surrender our bodies to Him. English translations of this verse are far too weak. Instead of saying that such a gift is merely "acceptable" to God, they should tell it like it is: gifting our bodies to God *pleases Him well*. The next verse lets us know that He intends to please us well in return.

Christians, often justifiably, have the reputation of being anti-pleasure. Specifically, we have a reputation for being against sexual pleasure. Our discomfort with our own sexuality, our tendency to put a lid on passion, our unwillingness to talk openly about intimate matters – all of these responses suggest to the people around us that God dislikes sex. What a tragedy. We live in a world where sex is a god. Perhaps, if our attitudes and behaviors reflected God's take on sexuality, unbelievers might decide to get involved with God.

God hungers for an intense relationship with us. His analogies make that quite clear. Don't put sex and worship in separate folders on your desktop – let them blend. The best sex is carried out in the presence of God and affects our entire being. It's much more than physical. The best sex is spiritually overwhelming – far better than anything we could ever think of on our own.

GOD'S STARTLING ANALOGY – A FEW QUESTIONS

- How do you react to God's revelation of Himself as our lover?
- Think a bit about the experiences of worship and of sexual intercourse. What similarities and differences come to mind?
- What might worship teach you about sexuality?
- What might sexuality teach you about worship?
- Do you think God closes His eyes or looks away when you make love? (Do you turn the lights off?)

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This post previews content from my current book-in-progress,
Sex & Worship: The Presence of Intimacy, Passion, and Pleasure.
Preview its [Table of Contents](#).
(Look for the completed book in 2016.)