



Start Where You Are...

SEXUALITY AND IDENTITY CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED, like the fingers or toes you were born with. Or, they can become elements which need deeper exploration, especially as a person matures into their own self. Such often generates questions, personal and interpersonal dissonances, sometimes trauma. Many times, our sexual feelings, behaviors, also come clashing into our beliefs and seem to threaten our spirituality.

Whatever the case, when we recognize that our sexual behaviors, attraction, identity, gender, or any combination of these are concerning us, we should not hesitate to take a deeper dive. Equally, when we have questions we can't readily answer, don't let them linger out of angst about what may be the reasons. Certainly, don't let guilt become a stumbling block for your inquiry of what is going on!

Unfortunately, a good deal of contemporary culture has taught us to constantly contrast and compare. When we bring these lenses into our sexual-emotional concerns, questions, behaviors, we immediately get into trouble: Sexuality and identity are rarely so homogenized in any culture as to create singular uniformity, or singular answers.

The tendency to then compare and contrast often makes for skewed results when we do so. That is also true when we hear someone's religious evaluations of sexuality. That may lead to some assessment on what's going on *in us*, but rarely does it lead to *self-understanding*.

NOW, MAYBE YOU ARE SMARTER THAN ALL OF THIS, and you don't compare and contrast. Maybe even, not jump to judgment or conclusions. But you still have questions about your sexuality, or about your gender, identity, or your sexual behaviors. About how your faith

and what you've learned may inform answers—answers you may not want to hear. If you do have questions, keep reading.

THE POINT IS, WE NEED TO START WITH YOU, with how YOU feel, and how YOU act, and not from a point of contrast or comparison.

Start by framing the concern or question in real and honest language,

- *What about my sexuality, specifically, has become concerning to me?*
- *If I'm truthful with myself, what can I point to as being involved?*
- *What makes me feel 'different' (or 'uncertain'), or pushes me to question'?*
- *Is there a history to this situation, feelings, set of behaviors, (etc.) that I need to explore further? What's involved here that I may be leaving out?*
- *How does shame or embarrassment enter the picture? If it does, what do I need to know about it in my sexual history and trajectory?*

Starting from where we are, and honestly exploring with open questions and no judgment, whatever is the case, prevents us from jumping prematurely into positions. We need to *understand* before we can *explain*; and we need to *explain* (to ourselves) before we can *act to make changes*, or whatever is needed to help move us along to a more comfortable and fitting sexual place.

FOR THE PERSON OF FAITH READING THIS, if you are Christian, “starting from where you are” shouldn't feel like an alone venture. To the contrary, Scripture is quite specific in encouraging us to enter any exploration by bringing Christ into our fray (James 1:5; Proverbs 2:6, 2 Tim. 2:7). God already knows more about us than we could ever understand about ourselves (1 John 3:20). God takes us “*as we are*,” and “*with our questions and flaws*,” as long as we invite God in with an open mind and heart (John 6:37; Matthew 11:28; Revelations 22:17).

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mean leaving God locked
out of your inquiry**

Why not? If the goal is to *also* grow our faith and allow God's will in our lives—perhaps here, at a deeper level than we even realize—it's important

then for us to put this on the table: *God is willing* (Mark 9). *God is able* (Romans 4:21). *God isn't ashamed of you, or your sexual questions* (Hebrews 11:16). Starting with “you” shouldn't mean leaving God locked out of your inquiry for fear *it's all going to be damming or constricting*.

HERE ARE SOME FUNDAMENTALS culled both *from science* and *from Scripture*. Think on these dimensions as you contemplate “starting from where you are”:

- God's good gift of sexuality isn't just for species reproduction. Our sexuality is “good” in many ways anatomical, hormonal, for health and emotional well-being. It should be regarded as one of the Creator's wondrous gifts to humans. We are sexual, sexed, motivated by our sexual appetite for elemental union as well as procreative reasons. There's more to sex than babies and vibes!
- Yes, there are parameters to everything human and interactive, and it's no different with sexuality—be it expressed as mental or physical activity, as identity, or as attraction. We can't blame hormones and genetics for all that occurs within the frame of our sexuality and gendered selves. We have to understand what “enables” or “disables,” whether it's biological or psychological, social or ideological. Hopefully, this site will help you get informed. Then,
 - We need to be honest with ourselves and with the questions we ask ourselves, and how we respond to them. Here, keeping a register on how you interact with God on all these points, and what may be fundamental expectations as we move into Scripture, is not only honest, but allows God to interact with us as we process.
 - I get it. There are difficulties in “interpretations” of what Scriptures may say about “this or that” related to sexuality and identity. So, when you've parsed the questions as accurately as you can, seek out depth responses that don't just repeat hermeneutical or theological “givens.” Explore the parameters, good science included! (Check this site for information, some of which we've ignored as Christians, and yet is so important.)
 - For now, but not “finally,” keep searching for answers to your questions. Most of our sexual concerns *can be understood*; and many, if problematic or seemingly out of sync with what is concluded from Scripture or predilection, *is changeable*.

START FROM WHERE YOU ARE, NOT WHERE YOU WISH TO BE!
Once you've gotten the questions stated right, they will point you to what may be needed to answer them. And, what to do next: **Keep searching!**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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