|  |
| --- |
| [Desiring God](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-j/) |

|  |
| --- |
| [Can We Do Whatever We Want in Heaven?](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-t/)  John Piper / December 8, 2016  Can We Do Whatever We Want in Heaven?  In the age to come, when there will be no more sorrow or sin, we will experience perfect freedom for the first time. |
| [The Wisdom in What God Doesn’t Say](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-d/)  Jon Bloom / December 8, 2016  The Wisdom in What God Doesn’t Say  We know that God is very wise in the things he says, even if they can be very difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16). But I think it’s the things God doesn’t say that cause us the most difficulty.  It’s what God doesn’t say that makes us ask, “Why, O Lord?” (Psalm 10:1) “Why is my pain unceasing?” (Jeremiah 15:18). “Why then do I labor in vain?” (Job 9:29). “Why do you forget us forever?” (Lamentations 5:20). “Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?” (Job 21:7). Why is there so much oppression (Ecclesiastes 4:1)? “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?” (Job 3:20).  Living by faith requires we grow in our trust that God is just as wise in what he chooses not to say as in what he chooses to say. He’s as intentional with the information he excludes as he is with information he includes.  We might call the wise silence of God the “dark matter” of divine revelation. There is real substance in what we can’t see, but it’s detected with a different kind of inquiry. “Why *didn’t* God say that?”  Let’s look at a few macro examples and explore some of the dark matter of divine wisdom so that we might better understand our own experience of the silence of God.  **The Creation Story**  God says so little about his creation of the cosmos. Genesis 1 is a massive biblical example of the fact that “now [we] know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:12).  Thirty-one simple, Spirit-inspired verses tell us God created the world in a certain sequence, but they gloss over an astronomical amount of detail. They resemble ancient creation myths in certain ways, and yet they make remarkable sense the more science discovers about the universe. The ambiguities in the account and in the Hebrew language have spawned debate inside and outside the church for 2,000 years.  Why didn’t God say more? One reason is to humble us. Genesis 1 shows us indeed “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).  God chose a creation account that would provide a basic, accurate understanding of creation for his people over the course of multiple millennia, in thousands of radically different cultures with many different worldviews, conceptions of time, levels of education, and stages of technological advancement. It had to be understandable to pre-scientific, primitive, and illiterate peoples, and able to withstand withering critique by the most brilliant, educated minds of antiquity, as well as those in the modern scientific age. Its framework had to be simple enough for a child to understand and complex enough to account for a palaeontologist’s discoveries.  And that’s what we have. The Bible’s explanation of creation has taken an incessant beating and is still standing. Its apparent simplicity contains carefully designed ambiguities, making it the most resilient, and most culturally and scientifically adaptable religious account of origins in human history. And it has continually humbled both believers and unbelievers since the time it was written.  **How Far Is Too Far?**  The Bible is very clear in both Testaments that sexual immorality profanes God’s holiness and therefore is prohibited (1 Corinthians 10:8; Numbers 25:1–9). Intercourse is clearly forbidden outside of marriage between a man and woman, but what else? For a dating or courting couple, how far is too far? The Bible isn’t highly detailed in its description of where the line of immorality is crossed. Is any kind of touching allowed? What about kissing? What about embraces and hand holding and intimate conversation?  Why didn’t God say more? One reason is because God’s will for us is our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3), which means God wants hearts, not just behaviour. And what our hearts really want can be revealed as much in how we respond to moral ambiguity as to how we respond to moral clarity. God wants us to wrestle with the grey areas in light of knowing there’s a “holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). How will we seek to love Christ by obeying his commandment to love each other (John 13:34; 14:15), and help one another pursue a “pure heart and good conscience” (1 Timothy 1:5), when we must discern what purity means for us in our place in the world and in history?  To encourage Christians to pursue holiness and make this pursuit most adaptable to culture, time periods, and individuals, God wisely determined we should not be governed by detailed rules of sexual purity, but by the principles that “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23) and that we must “love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22).  **The Second Coming**  The first coming of the Messiah was cloaked in prophecy. Jesus came just as it was written about him and yet so few recognized him. He came in a way no one expected and did what no one expected. It was all there in the Scriptures, but even his closest friends who listened most to him didn’t fully see it until he helped them see (Luke 24:27).  The second coming will be similar. We have the prophecies, but the timing, events, and meaning of symbolism in Scripture have provoked much debate throughout church history.  Why didn’t God say more? One reason is because God always wants Christians to live in dependent expectation of Jesus’s imminent return. “The Son of Man is coming at an hour [we] do not expect” (Luke 12:40) because he means for us to “stay awake at all times” (Luke 21:36), and keep our lamps trimmed (Matthew 25:1–13). God knows our fight against indwelling sin, and our sense of urgency for the mission is better served by knowing Christ’s return could be at any time than that he will be long delayed (Matthew 24:45–51; 1 Corinthians 7:29).  **Wisdom in the Silence**  So much more could be said about what God doesn’t say. But what’s important to remember is this: God is very wise and intentional in what he makes clear to us and does not make clear to us.  Jesus understands the cry of “why?” that pours out of a heart in pain. He too made this cry in the hour of his greatest agony: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). And there was no thunderous answer. So in dark silence he endured the cross in faith for our salvation and our example (Hebrews 12:2).  God wants us to live by faith, trusting his reliable promises more than our unreliable perceptions (2 Corinthians 5:7). But a thorough, careful reading of the Bible causes us to detect in God’s wise silence the dark matter of divine revelation: God’s trustworthy purposes in not telling us everything.  Because of what he *does* make clear, we can learn to trust him just as much in what he *does not* make clear. God is silent for only very good reasons. |
| [Swim in the Deep End of the Bible](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-h/)  John Piper / December 8, 2016  Just because you’ve done your morning Bible reading doesn’t mean you’ve actually seen what’s there, or what it means for your life. God wants to give you more. |
| [You Are Not Alone: For Women Fighting Every Man’s Battle](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-u/)  Calley Sivils / December 8, 2016  You Are Not Alone  I am a twentysomething single female whose heart is awed by the grace of God on display in grand scale wonders and minuscule everyday miracles. But I also struggle with allowing lesser pleasures to take my eyes away from him in the form of intense lust.  And no, I’m not talking about those light, fluffy, cute, and tingly little butterflies it’s “okay” for females to feel.  I’m talking about a heady, intense, burning stampede of crazed elephants that (if left to my flesh) might mercilessly trample anything that gets in their way. The kind that, in some minds, is exclusive to men.  After talking recently to female friends who share in my struggle, it seemed that such battles are often either totally hushed up in church circles (“Ladies, don’t talk about that”) or completely toned down (“Surely you don’t mean *that* sort of feeling”). Thus, many women following Jesus feel shameful or like they’re the only ones with strong yearnings for sex.  Well, let me reassure you, sister, you are not alone. I have smothered my desire for sex beneath moral resolve and discipline, fooling those around me for years. However, the Christian walk isn’t about fooling anyone; it’s about honesty, vulnerability, and redemption.  My struggle with lust has been a regular, even daily, and (often) unsuccessful battle. And because I am a woman, it has often been lonely. The following questions are for women like me, in the moments we begin to slip (or perhaps even afterward), when we wonder why we should resist at all, when fleeting pleasure starts to look better than eternal Loveliness.   1. **Is it wrong for a Christian woman to want sex?**   No, indeed not. A high view of sex and sexual pleasure (and its inherent goodness) is actually more conducive to resistance. Sex is cheap and its value degraded in this culture of one-night stands, hormone-driven decisions, and rampant objectification. That reality today, though, is not what sex was created to be.  God made sex. And, like all he made, he made it good. He commanded us to multiply and fill the earth through sex (Genesis 1:28). He didn’t have to make procreation such a wonderful and satisfying experience. He was pleased to do it because he is a good Creator and a generous Giver.  The idea that the word of God condemns sexual relations outside of marriage is one of the most undermined commandments in America today. Its decline has, among others, twin roots: “God doesn’t want us to have any fun” and, “As long as we’re committed, who cares?”  Both of these undermine God’s goodness in his commandments and his goodness as a holy Father. Because of his holiness, he seeks our holiness (1 Peter 1:14–16). Therefore, he’s quite willing to set “fun” on the back burner in order to give us something far greater, safer, and more satisfying. He will withhold fun to make us into something new. His motives in doing so are not harmful (Romans 8:28). He set sex within marriage to protect and increase its intrinsic pleasure and its accompanying intimacy, not rob us of it.  C.S. Lewis describes this situation in his eighteenth [*Screwtape Letter*](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-o/):  The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured. From the true statement that this transcendental relation was intended to produce, and, if obediently entered into, too often will produce, affection and the family, humans can be made to infer the false belief that the blend of affection, fear, and desire which they call “being in love” is the only thing that makes marriage either happy or holy.  Because of his perfect fatherhood, he seeks our eternal joy more than our “here and now” happiness and our fleeting pleasure. He sets limits. Parents’ limits are most often to keep children safe, though from the child’s perspective, it may seem like the parent merely wants to keep something from them. So it seems to those who would make God into a sovereign fun-stealer and good-withholder.  That is not his heart towards his adopted sons and daughters (Psalm 103:13, Luke 12:32). He is eager to give us pleasures at times, in ways and increments that are best for us. He is indeed the good Giver whose presence radiates throughout, yet supersedes all true pleasures.  **2. Does sexual purity earn good standing with God?**  No. Jesus placed lustful hearts on par with adultery (Matthew 5:28). God knows already the most lewd desires of my heart (Jeremiah 17:10).  To be sure, presenting one’s self as a virgin on a wedding night is a precious thing in God’s sight. Furthermore, those who are lifelong singles, forgoing sexual pleasure because of God’s calling and joyfully submitting to his high view of sexual union, present a uniquely fragrant living sacrifice to him. Their undivided attention and unyielding diligence brings opportunities to glorify God married men and women won’t have, and avoids the hardships marriage inevitably brings (1 Corinthians 7:32–35, 7:28).  Still, God’s standard for holiness and purity cannot be earned, even by the most innocent minds. We all fall short of his requirements and that’s why Jesus’s perfect, holy, sinless life and death was needed to intercede for us and satisfy God’s wrath (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:23–25; 1 John 2:1–3).  We don’t fight for purity or guard our virginity in order to earn God’s love for us, but instead to declare the intensity of the love we have for him.   1. **Is sexual desire only for men?**   Again, not at all. Sexual desire is not for men only, as noted throughout the Song of Songs:  Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. . . . Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. (Song 1:2, 4)  Sexual desire and pleasure are very good things and should be expressed intensely and passionately at the right time, by men *and* by women. I desire it, and feel ready for it now. But sex is about far more than my readiness; it’s about far more than my feelings, emotions, and the temporary pleasure of catering to my natural senses and impulses.  **The Sovereign Ruler of My Sex Life**  I am not ruler over my own sex life. When I came to know Christ, he became Lord over all of me. Nothing in my life is withheld from him. Thus, my body is not my own and not for me to use as I please (1 Corinthians 6:18–20), but as he please, and for his glory alone. He cares deeply about my body, my relationship to my future husband (Hebrews 13:4), and most of all to himself (1 Corinthians 6:15–17).  This means he determines, in love, how long I will struggle against my desires, and when, if ever, I will be free to enjoy the good gift of sex in marriage. Until that time comes, these desires aren’t things to be ashamed of, but things to be held in check (avoiding both tempting situations and fantasies), and redirected with hopeful expectation. Sex is not shameful and I mourn that it has been twisted into a bad thing by insecure moralism and into a cheap thing by popular culture.  I already hear a question: “But what if that ‘right’ and ‘good’ circumstance never comes?” What if we never marry?  Our relationship status doesn’t change the fact that Jesus is our Lord and Treasure. By his power, we are able to honour him with our bodies, experience fullness of joy and abundance of life, and refrain from sex (as impossible as that may seem right now). As much as our flesh would like us to believe this, God is not punishing us with a sex-starved season of singleness. It is unimaginably good for us single, dating, and engaged ladies to not have sex at this point in our lives.  **No Need to Fear Missing Out**  “But I’m missing out on so much!”  Yes, sex is an amazing expression and foreshadowing of love and affection that God intends to add to many lives in marriage. I hope to experience it one day. But it’s supplemental, not vital. We don’t need it to truly live, like our society seems to think we do. We certainly don’t need it to thrive and grow and flourish as godly women.  Jesus is better than sex, and even just a few moments with him in eternity will eclipse the height of every pleasure we’ve experienced in this life. That includes a good meal, a favorite book, and yes, sexual union.  Sex’s ultimate purpose is far greater than a momentary muscle spasm; it foreshadows an intimacy every believer will experience when we enter into God’s presence — the one who knows every line on our skin (Psalm 139:13), who is well-acquainted with every strand of hair on our heads (Luke 12:7), and who died in love to satisfy us forever with himself. We will be his bride, his church (Revelation 19:6–8).  Do I want to have sex? I do. But I trust it is incomparably more satisfying to know the God of infinite wisdom and mercy, to serve him with everything, including my body and my thoughts, and to devote all my desires completely to him. |
| [1 Peter 4:17: God Is Working in Your Suffering](http://desiringgod.cmail2.com/t/j-l-urnlik-vuttjudiu-b/)  John Piper / December 8, 2016  It’s hard to hear in the moment that God is sovereign over our suffering, but in the long run it makes all the difference. |