

**PODCAST START:**

Brian: Hello there, and welcome to a special edition of the Queer Theology podcast! This week we are taking a break from the lectionary to talk about all things sex. We've mentioned it in previous podcasts this month, and if you are subscribed to our emails, you might have seen emails about it. All month long here at Queer Theology, we're going to be talking about sex, and in particular faithful, Christian sexuality – and even more specifically, what a queer Christian sexuality means and looks like. So, we want to take a little bit of time today to sort of talk about why we think it's important for a Christian podcast or a Christian website to be talking about sex, what we're going to be talking about, what we're not going to be talking about, and some ways you can get involved in this conversation. So Shay, why are we talking about sex?

Fr. Shay: [laughs] Well, first of all, because it's *awesome*.

B: Yesss!

FS: But more broadly, I think the biggest question, just in sheer volume, the number of questions that we get around sex is second only to the question, "Is it okay to be LGBTQ?" Right – so as soon as someone kind of comes to the realization that it *is* okay to be LGBTQ, then the next question is, "Well, what do I do about sex? Can I have it? When can I have it? What does that look like? What's okay, what's not okay?" We get questions almost every single day about this topic. Even though we already dedicated a month to it a couple months ago, the questions just keep rolling in, [laughs] so we thought, you know what, we've got to tackle this again. And it makes sense, right? Because sex is so integral to so much of our lives, for most of us. It influences how we interact with and connect with other people, and it's something that's really important to most people. It makes sense that people would have questions about it, and it makes sense that, as we try to equip people to be their full selves, their full, authentic, healthy selves, that questions about sexuality would come up. And so that's why we're doing this!

B: You know, when I was starting to figure out that I was queer, there were these two separate and parallel realizations that I was having. One was that I felt a closeness and a longing to share affection with, and to build a life together, or cuddle or kiss or hold hands with, or care about deeply, men. And then there was also this sort of undeniably physical, sexual component of like, ooh, I wanna be intimate with this person, or with these people. And so figuring out that I was queer is very much wrapped up in figuring out how to be a sexual person. I remember, for me, I didn't quite have a handle on if it was *really* okay to be gay,

and if it was okay to have sex or under what circumstances was it okay to have sex. When I was 18, 19, coming out and starting to be sexual, those first few years were very tumultuous [laughs] and shame-ridden. And I've spent the past fifteen years trying to undo a lot of that shame and figure out, what does a faithful sexuality look like? What does a healthy sexual ethic, a healthy sexuality, look like? You know, this month, we'll be sharing our experiences, the wisdom that we've learned, some tools and tactics for how to figure out what your values are and what your sexual ethic should be. I think it's really tempting, coming from a church that used to tell me exactly what to believe and how to act, to then, when looking for a *new* way to think or believe or act, look towards someone to say, "Well, this is what you should believe instead." We're not here this month to tell you to have sex or to not have sex or when to have sex, but to sort of help you to figure out what feels right, for you to sort of express who you are and who God created you to be.

FS: You know Brian, what you just said really resonated with me. I think that so much of my coming to terms with my own sexuality is also wrapped up in shame, particularly because the messages that I received around sexuality – and not just queer sexuality, but sexuality in general – were just so shame-based. Right? Sex was something that was dirty and needed to be kept hidden and secret, and you didn't do it and you didn't talk about it and you didn't talk about your desires. It even felt like, once you were married and it was okay to have sex, people still didn't talk about it. It was this kind of secretive thing. I think that all of that kind of adds to shame. In the first article [1] that I wrote this month, I talked a lot about how the first step in coming to terms with sexuality, and in figuring out what a sexual ethic looks like for you, has to be working through these issues of shame. Because it's impossible to figure out what feels good to you, what feels right, if your sexuality is still so tied up in shame. I think it's a really – it's a really long process, or it can be a long process. It requires a lot of patience and a lot of trying things and a lot of living through mistakes, but it's so important to be able to talk openly about what we're learning about sexuality, how we interact with our sexuality, in order to get rid of that shame, and to work towards wholeness and healing.

B: You just made me think that, so often, we get about sex and about being queer, messages that ask us, "Can you just point me to the verse where it says, in the exact language that I need to hear, my identity is okay" – or like, the particular kind of sex I have a question about is okay or not okay. And you know, as someone who grew up in a conservative version of Christianity that had sort of a verse that they cherry-picked for every particular belief or value that they had, it can be really tempting to look to the Bible for, like, an exact verse that says exactly what I'm supposed to think or do or believe. The Bible says so many

things about sex and sexuality, and about God, and about justice, and so many things in general – looking for those Bible verses, one or two sentences that you can remember, feels easier, I think, than taking a deep look at your desire and sifting through all of the scripture and the through-line of what God is doing in the world and amongst God’s people. Discerning what feels right and comfortable and in line with the divine – and uprooting all of this, like, sex negativity and shame that we’ve been taught. I think there’s sometimes a desire to sort of skip over all of that and be like, “Well, just give me the two-sentence summary of why it’s okay.” This month, we’re not going to be saying, “Well, if you just look at x book, x chapter and x verse, you’ll see exactly what you should believe about sex.” Because that just isn’t there! The Bible says so many different things about sexuality. One of the articles that I’m writing is looking at all of the often-times conflicting messages that the Bible has about sex and sexuality [2]. We’re going to be doing, instead, the hard work of finding the heart of God. This is not that we don’t take the Bible seriously. Last month was all about Christian fundamentals. Shay, you wrote this great article about what to do with the Bible [3]. That sort of lays the foundation for what we are and are not looking towards the Bible to do for us when it comes to sex and sexuality. So I’m really excited to continue this conversation all month long, in articles and future podcasts and specifically also in this webinar that we’re hosting on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm EST. It’s totally free. You can sign up at [QueerTheology.com/sextalk](http://QueerTheology.com/sextalk). And, all month long we’re also having these discussions more in-depth inside of Sanctuary Collective, our online membership community with members around the world. You can learn more information at [QueerTheology.com/sanctuarycollective](http://QueerTheology.com/sanctuarycollective). This month, we’re going to be having a post-webinar after-party, just with Sanctuary Collective members. So if you want to keep the webinar fun rolling, we’re going to be hanging out, talking about sex interactively, face-to-face. There’s just a lot more going on behind the scenes in Sanctuary Collective, where we have the time and the space to really dig into this more. If you really are looking for support from a community around the world, Sanctuary Collective is the place to be.

FS: If you’ve got specific questions that you want to ask us, you can always send us an email to [connect@queertheology.com](mailto:connect@queertheology.com). We’d love to take your questions and to interact with you there.

## PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker

## Articles referenced in the pod:

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- [1] – What to do with shame, sex and Jesus,  
<https://www.queertheology.com/shame-sex-jesus/>
- [2] – What the Bible says about sex, <https://www.queertheology.com/bible-says-sex/>
- [3] – Building a Bible-based faith (that isn't terrible)  
<https://www.queertheology.com/building-bible-based-faith-isnt-terrible/>