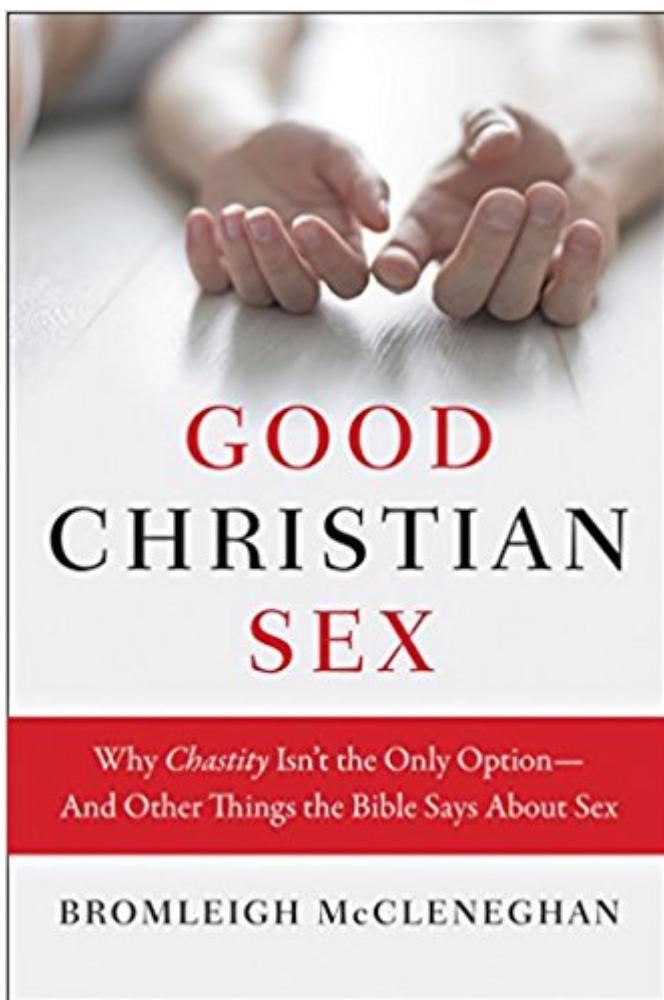


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# Good Christian Sex: Why Chastity Isn't The Only Option-And Other Things The Bible Says About Sex



## Synopsis

Moving beyond the deep-seated cultural feelings of shame that have long fueled the conflict between Christianity and sex—•and the belief that there is only one right and valid way to practice one—•as sexuality—•this renowned University of Chicago pastor uses enlightening personal stories and examples from theology to show how sex is powerful and holy. For years, Christians have been told to adhere to one singular path when it comes to sex: abstinence and purity. Yet this limited focus ignores the reality that people—•as sexual and romantic lives differ widely, even among those who consider themselves devout believers. Church leaders have often refused to address the topic—•or have preached in ways that are harmful to the emotional and spiritual growth of the faithful in the pews. Pastor McCleneghan is determined to reshape the issue—•and fundamentally transcend this disconnect between sexuality and spirituality that has left many Christians feeling guilty and sinful. Written in her measured, non-judgmental voice, *Good Christian Sex* combines humorous personal anecdotes with theological research to transform how Christians think and talk about this basic human need, offering a new understanding that reconciles human love and religious faith. Breaking with outdated conventions, McCleneghan explains how the Bible and Christian tradition inform our beliefs about desire, pleasure, nudity, fidelity, premarital sex, and the variety of sexual practices, and encourages Christians to talk about their bodies, their sensuality, and their longings in a frank, positive, and realistic way. Warm, insightful, and honest, *Good Christian Sex* is a message of hope, that at last lifts the veil of shame felt by many religious people.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“McCleneghan argues against a rule-based look at biblical purity and opens up the scripture to a more holistic approach.” (The Washington Post "Acts of Faith" Blog)

“McCleneghan explores topics of sexuality and nudity and looks at how the Bible and Christian traditions have informed beliefs about desire, premarital sex and sexual practices.” (Chicago Tribune) “Where the church’s singular focus is often around maintaining purity, and where popular culture emphasizes the complex dance of sexual freedom and sexual consent, McCleneghan brings a multiplicity of lenses, joined together with humor and grace. Her refreshing voice is that of a fellow traveler with a wide theological vocabulary.” (Christian Century) “When we attempt to repress or sublimate our desires and human needs, accept the shame or condemnation of our humanity as embodied creatures, this does not connect us with God. In fact, this is when we begin to run into trouble, McCleneghan explains.” (Beliefnet)

“McCleneghan offers ways to rethink biblical passages and find a compromise so that faith and embracing human sexuality don’t have to be mutually exclusive.” (Publishers Weekly) “McCleneghan offers a provocative alternative to the tired conversations about sex in Christian culture. Read *Good Christian Sex* if you desire a broader, practical conversation about sex, and a redemptive way of living out intimacy in all our relationships.” (Rev. Mihee Kim-Kort, author of *Yoked: Stories of a Clergy Couple in Marriage, Ministry, and Family*) “Good Christian Sex is an important corrective to the unhealthy ways we imagine bodies, pleasure, and sin. Our conceptions of sexuality are mostly tied up in the traditions of religion, and Bromleigh is a wonder at untying difficult knots. I will be passing this along to friends.” (Rev. Julian "J.Kwest" DeShazer, Senior Minister at University Church Chicago, Adjunct Professor at University of Chicago Divinity School and at McCormick Theological Seminary)

“McCleneghan might surprise you. She’s like an uncommonly wise, witty, and faithful big sister, telling you just enough of her story to help you figure out the contours of your own. I can’t imagine a more liberating invitation for Christians to receive the good and gracious gift of sexuality.” (Katherine Willis Pershey, Associate Minister of First Congregational Church and author of *Any Day a Beautiful Change and Very Married: Field Notes on Love & Fidelity*) “In seminary, a professor asked where we’d learned about sex. Nobody in that group of churchy young adults mentioned church. McCleneghan has written the book we’ve needed all along; it’s funny, honest, vulnerable, intelligent and challenging, and loving. It’s for friends, lovers, partners, spouses, pastors, parents and very likely, you.” (Rev. Heidi Neumark, Trinity Lutheran Church, and author of *Hidden*

Inheritance: Family Secrets, Memory, and Faith)“Good Christian Sex shows what openminded, sex-positive encounters with the holy can and should look like.

McClenneghan’s tour de force is a reckoning with Christian tradition and an absolute delight to read. A must-read for anyone who wants to engage their heart, soul, and bodies. (Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, author of *The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism*)“I’ve read books with “sex” and “Christian” in the title before and know the formula--dish out mortal shame, add fanciful gender stereotypes, and mix in some unrealistic puritanical expectations. But McClenneghan defied my worries with *Good Christian Sex* and left me with a faithful celebration of intimacy and pleasure. (Carol Howard Merritt, Pastor and Columnist for the *Christian Century*)“What you thought was naughty may actually be holy. That’s the message of *Good Christian Sex*, Bromleigh McClenneghan’s attempt to free Christians from shame about having premarital or extramarital sex. (Religion News Service, "Jonathan Merritt: On Faith & Culture.")“Theologically thoughtful, ethically coherent, narratively interesting, and accessible. I can’t wait to hand it to members of my church. (Fidelia’s Sisters Magazine)“Crucial to [McClenneghan’s] theology is this: always put first respect for the autonomy, humanity, and wishes of the partner also much wiser than a great deal of traditional theological ethic-izing on the subject. (Huffington Post "Novels of Sex and Spirituality" blog)“Bucking against conservative Christian tradition advising against extra-marital sex, the Rev. Bromleigh McClenneghan says single Christians can have sex as long as it’s “mutually pleasurable and affirming.” For McClenneghan, single Christians don’t need to abstain from sex to remain pure since being chaste is about moderation. (The Christian Post)“Refreshing. In a very healthy and beautiful way, McClenneghan views sex as an extension of God’s grace, an expression of living the Christian life. Good Christian Sex is a good read - and an important one, too. McClenneghan’s voice is an important weight to balance out the noise. (Patheos "Jerseygirl, JESUS" blog)

Sex for all Christians that is powerful, even holy. We need to change how Christians talk about sex, says pastor Bromleigh McClenneghan. Instead of landing on extremes such as “Sex outside marriage is always a sin” or “God is uninterested in your sex life,” McClenneghan explores the Bible in conversation with the wisdom of theologians, ethicists, and psychologists to find a better way for Christians to understand and practice their sexuality in light of their deep faith.

This book is a good addition to Christian conversation on sexuality. If you truly believe that the God of Jesus Christ is about love, healing, and restoration, you have to deal with the arguments presented in this book. This may not change your view on anything, but it is a refreshing look at the subject from the love side of the equation versus the rules side.

This book is terrific! We have needed something this accessible, clear, generous, and faithful for a long time. Progressive churches, rejoice that we no longer need to leave the realm of sexual ethics completely alone or be seen as conservative. Theologically rigorous and grounded, rich, descriptive, and vulnerable, this book will be a treasure that I will hand out to people in my congregations for many years to come.

Note: I actually read this book. Reading an interview with the author does not give you a full understanding of what she is saying. This book is more thoughtful and robust than I expected. Ms. McCleneghan, who was brought up and pastors in a mainline church (something she notes as an important distinction), questions and addresses our assumptions about what the bible says about sex, including the broad and unclear definition of fornication, and inconsistent sexual standards throughout the Old and New Testaments that we try to apply today (let's consider, for example, that adultery in the Bible only counted when the woman was married). The main point of this book is that in sex as with everything else, we should practice the Golden Rule and strive to treat others with love and respect (I include honesty and not bearing false witness in this category). Despite the fact that the author is a married mom who spent very little time as a single adult, she correctly diagnoses the problems singles too often have in relationships with their pastors, churches, families and friends (i.e. no acknowledgement of grief and fueling shame to an already challenging situation for many). She easily comes across as an empathetic and knowledgeable friend. I don't think you have to agree with her ultimately to get something out of this book, but her challenges to traditional, though not necessarily Biblical, beliefs gives one something to think about beyond the black and white rules.

I loved this. A fresh and honest take on a subject many are unwilling to tackle openly.

The last few chapters could be used as a reference for marriage counseling. Bromleigh's references to the Bible as she speaks of the importance of love and faithfulness in marriage are well done.

Thank you for having the courage to write this important book.

As a young clergywoman myself, I was so delighted to read Good Christian Sex and am hoping to use it in youth groups and with adults too. Not only is it a good read, hooking you with the storytelling, but the theology is desperately needed in a church too concerned about sex inside of marriage to actually talk about what good sex actually is. Oh and she talks about sex as a means of grace. Highly recommend this book to basically everyone.

McCleneghan offers a clear, accessible sexual ethic for the 21st century. It follows in the traditional feminist theology, which unapologetically begins from the lived experience of real people. It is an embodied work in every way, and as an ordained Christian pastor, I am greatful for it as a resource. The humor, narrative format, and academic theology in plain english makes it such a clear, enjoyable read.

In a sea of Christian books advocating abstinence and obedience at all costs, the main tactic of many being shame, Bromleigh recognizes that human relationships are more complex than signing "purity pledges" and "kissing dating goodbye" (which have done a considerable amount of damage over the years...the stories are plentiful and even certain authors are reconsidering what they've helped cause). Sure, the title's provocative. But it's hard not to be when writing about a view of sex that is faithfully Christian yet alternative to the limited options that some insist upon. The big spoiler: there are other ways to think about it besides "nothing before marriage." Bromleigh discusses topics like fidelity, respect, self-discovery, enjoyment, and truthfulness. She places all of this alongside Biblical narratives, ethical concepts, and a lot of honest personal accounts from her own experience. It's thoughtful and funny, and presents alternative way to view sex and relationships in healthy faith-based ways that recognizes the complexity of humanity and how we interact. I found this book refreshing and wish there were more on the market that took such a 3-dimensional view of such issues for people of faith.

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