THE QUESTION

Is it wrong for a Christian to want sex with their own spouse?

Asked by a THF member on August 14, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 30 early Christian passages and 150 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/is-it-wrong-for-a-christian-to-want-sex-with-their-own-spouse

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

No. These early writers do not call desire for one's own spouse wrong. Lactantius says desire aimed at its lawful object is without fault, and church rules say lawful married union does not defile. What they condemn is desire for someone else, and they still call married couples to faithfulness, kindness and self-control.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Desire aimed at a lawful object is faultless	2	6	Faithfulness to your spouse guards the heart	4
2	Lawful married union does not defile	2	7	Married desire still calls for self-control	4
3	Married union is not shameful	3		What these passages don't tell us	5
4	A husband should seek to please his wife	3		The Sources: 30 early Christian passages and 150 Bible verses, with links	5
5	The sin is wanting someone else	3			

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 1 OF 7

Desire aimed at a lawful object is faultless

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius says the feelings God gave are not the problem; the question is where they are aimed. Desire that stays with its lawful object is without fault even when strong. The vice is desire for what is forbidden, even if it is mild.

1

"For sensual desire, if it does not wander from its lawful object, is without fault, even if it is strong. But if it desires an unlawful object, then even if it is moderate, it is still a great vice."

later in the same passage

"Therefore, it is not a disease to be angry, or to desire, or to be stirred by lust. But it is a disease to be hot-tempered, to be greedy, or to be licentious."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 16 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 29, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Lawful married union does not defile

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions reject the idea that married relations make a believer unclean or drive away the Holy Spirit. They say a couple who come together in lawful marriage are clean and may pray without any special washing.

2

"For neither lawful union, nor childbearing, nor menstrual cleansing, nor a nighttime emission can defile a person's nature or separate the Holy Spirit from him."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 24, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

3

"Therefore, when a husband and wife come together in lawful marriage and then rise from one another, they may pray without any special observances, and they are clean without washing."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 25, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 3 OF 7

Married union is not shameful

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Explaining why Christ was born of a virgin, Ignatius takes care to say this was not because married union is abominable. He treats the virgin birth as unique to God, not as a judgment against marriage.

4 “This happened not because the lawful union of husband and wife is abominable, but such a birth was fitting for God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

A husband should seek to please his wife

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions tell a husband to be kind and generous to his wife and to try to please her alone. Married love is pictured as gentle care for one's spouse, not selfish use of her.

5 “Let a husband not be insolent or arrogant toward his wife, but compassionate and generous, willing to please his own wife alone, and treating her with honor and kindness, trying to be pleasing to her.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 23, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

The sin is wanting someone else

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Theophilus quotes Jesus' warning in a form that speaks of a woman who is not the man's own wife. Hermas lists desire for another person's husband or wife first among the evil desires that kill God's servants.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

6 “Whoever looks at a woman who is not his own wife, in order to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Theophilus of Antioch,** *To Autolycus* 13 (c. 169–183 AD) **Source 8, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

7 “First of all is the desire for another person’s wife or husband, and for extravagance, and for many useless delicacies and drinks, and for many other foolish luxuries.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 3, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Faithfulness to your spouse guards the heart

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas says that keeping one's own wife in mind keeps a man from sin. Lactantius tells the married man to be content with his wife alone and to keep their marriage bed pure.

8 “But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 1, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

9 “Let the man who has a wife seek nothing more. Instead, being content with her alone, let him keep the secrets of the marriage bed pure and undefiled.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 66 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 28, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Married desire still calls for self-control

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Lactantius warns that too great an eagerness for pleasure is dangerous and ties married union to having children. Origen sees some of Paul's marriage rules as an allowance for human weakness rather than the highest path. Both still expect restraint inside marriage.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

10 “Let lust not go beyond the marriage bed, but be subject to the begetting of children. For too great an eagerness for pleasure both brings danger and produces disgrace, and, what must especially be avoided, leads to eternal death.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 62 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 30, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

11 “Some of the laws were written, not as the highest good, but as an accommodation to the weakness of those to whom the law was given.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 21, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not spell out how often married couples should come together or where pleasure becomes excess.
- Some writers praised staying unmarried as a higher path, but none here calls desire for one's own spouse a sin.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 30 early Christian passages and 150 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–30, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 31–53, in Bible order), then 127 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *30 passages from 11 writers*

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 1–4*

1 *Shepherd* **Quote 8, page 4** “if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

2 *Shepherd* (1885 English) “it is a wicked and horrible wish in an all-chaste and already well-tried spirit to desire an evil deed… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Shepherd* **Quote 7, page 4** “of all is the desire for another person’s wife or husband, and for extravagance, and for many useless delicacies and drinks, and for many other foolish luxuries. For all… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Shepherd* (1885 English) “it not your opinion that a righteous man commits sin when an evil desire arises in his heart… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 5–6*

5 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 4) “be ye subject to your husbands in the fear of God… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “took place] not as if the lawful union [of man and wife] were abominable, but such a kind of birth was fitting to God… [continues online] **read ›**

Minucius Felix, *c. 150–270 AD · source 7*

7 *Octavius* 24 (1885 English; on point 7) “the desire of procreating, we know either one wife, or none at all… [continues online] **read ›**

Theophilus of Antioch, *c. 169–183 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *To Autolycus* 13 **Quote 6, page 4** “our thoughts. We must not even think any evil in our hearts, or look at another man's wife with lust in our eyes. So Solomon, who was a king… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *To Autolycus* 28 (on point 4) Adam was driven out of Paradise, while he was in that condition, he knew Eve his wife. God had formed her for him as a wife out of his rib… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *To Autolycus* 35 (on point 5) “indeed teaches us that we must not sin with so much as a turn of the eye, saying, "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight… [continues online] **read ›**

Athenagoras, *c. 170–190 AD · sources 11–12*

11 *Resurrection of the Dead* 23 (on point 5) “the distinction between male and female does not exist in souls. Nor do they have any ability for sexual relations, or any desire for them. And where there is no… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Resurrection of the Dead* 22 (1885 English; on point 7) “what shall we say of self-control and temperance, when there is no desire drawing it to food or sexual intercourse, or other pleasures and enjoyments, nor any other thing… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 13–18*

13 *Stromata* 3 (on point 2) divine providence through the Lord does not now command that the one who rises from the marriage bed should be washed again, as in former times. For the Lord, who… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Stromata* 3 (on point 7) little toward self-control, commanded them to hear the words of God after they had abstained from sexual pleasure for the next three days, Exodus 19:20. Therefore we are… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Stromata* 3 (1885 English; on point 1) “hoc est lignum cognitionis, si non transgrediamur leges matrimonii… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Stromata* 3 (on point 3) that is hoped for will not suffer? Even those who worship idols abstain from foods and from sexual relations. But, he says, "the kingdom of God is not food and… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Stromata* 4.20 (1885 English; on point 2) “13:14-16 And then, as putting the finishing stroke to the question about marriage, he adds: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Instructor* 3.8 (1885 English; on point 2) “she did not take a husband in addition to a husband, But in the house the marriage-bed remains unpolluted… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 19*

19 *On Monogamy* 11 it is for a man not to touch a woman; but, on account of fornications, let each one have his own wife.” He shows that there were some who, having… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · source 20*

20 *Exegetical Fragments* 1 (1885 English; on point 5) “that say, You shall not covet, do you desire to corrupt the wife of your neighbour… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 21–22*

21 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 **Quote 11, page 5** “have her own husband," 1 Corinthians 7:2; and this, "Let the husband render to the wife what is due to her, and likewise also the wife to the husband… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 2 (1885 English; on point 1) “will undoubtedly follow, that as the devil is not the cause of our feeling hunger and thirst, so neither is he the cause of that appetency which naturally arises at… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 23–26*

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “the husband not be insolent nor arrogant towards his wife… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “the conjunction of man and wife, if it be with righteousness, is agreeable to the mind of God… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 3, page 2** wives, be subject to your own husbands. Esteem them, and serve them with fear and love, as holy Sarah honored Abraham. For she would not bear to call him by… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) “said it in the law by Moses, but now I say to you myself—"Whoever looks at his neighbor's wife to lust after her has already committed adultery with… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 27–30*

27 *Divine Institutes* 23 (on point 6) “of chastity. God limits this not only within private walls, but also to the lawful bounds of the marriage bed, so that when a man has a wife, he should… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 66 **Quote 9, page 4** “let this be kept in all the duties of life, and let it also be kept in marriage. For it is not enough if you keep away from another man… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Divine Institutes* 16 **Quote 1, page 2** “sensual desire, if it does not wander from… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 62 (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** “lust not go beyond the marriage-bed, but be subservient to the procreation of children… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *23 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

31 **Susanna 1:8** And the two elders used to watch her going in and walking about every day, and they came to desire her. **read ›**

32 **Susanna 1:11** for they were ashamed to declare their desire—that they wanted to lie with her. **read ›**

33 **Susanna 1:14** And when they had gone out, they parted from each other; and turning back, they came to the same place, and when each questioned the other about the reason, they confessed their desire. And then together they agreed on a time when they could find her alone. **read ›**

34 **Matthew 5:28** but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. **read ›**

35 **John 2:16** To those who sold the doves, he said, “Take these things out of here! Do not make my Father’s house a marketplace!” **read ›**

36 **Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **read ›**

37 **Romans 16:1** I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, **read ›**

38 **1 Corinthians 6:16** Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body? For he says, “The two shall become one flesh.” **read ›**

39 **1 Corinthians 7:1** Now concerning the things you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. **read ›**

40 **1 Corinthians 7:2** But because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

41 **1 Corinthians 7:3** Let the husband give his wife the affection owed to her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. **read ›**

42 **1 Corinthians 7:5** Do not deprive one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **read ›**

43 **1 Corinthians 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. **read ›**

44 **1 Corinthians 7:28** But even if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such people will have trouble in the flesh, and I want to spare you. **read ›**

45 **1 Corinthians 7:36** But if anyone thinks that he is acting improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the prime of youth and it must be so, let him do what he wishes; he does not sin; let them marry. **read ›**

46 **1 Corinthians 7:38** So he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better. **read ›**

47 **1 Corinthians 11:11** Nevertheless, neither is man without woman, nor woman without man, in the Lord. **read ›**

48 **Ephesians 5:28** Even so husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. **read ›**

49 **Ephesians 5:33** Nevertheless each of you must also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she respects her husband. **read ›**

50 **Colossians 1:11** strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory, for all endurance and patience with joy, **read ›**

51 **Colossians 1:14** in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. **read ›**

52 **Hebrews 13:4** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. **read ›**

53 **1 Peter 3:7** You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman as to the weaker vessel, as also being joint heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *127 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 4:25

Exodus 7:7

Leviticus 15:18

Deuteronomy 8:18 · 20:5 · 20:19 · 21:13

Job 1:6

Psalms 24:4

Proverbs 4:25 · 6:27 · 9:17

Isaiah 50:9

Jeremiah 13:1 · 23:24

Ezekiel 1:28

Zechariah 3:1

Matthew 5:8 · 5:27 · 5:31 · 5:32 · 5:42 · 6:19 · 6:24 · 7:21 · 11:18 · 18:7 · 18:20 · 19:3 · 19:4 · 19:6 · 19:9 · 19:10 · 19:11 · 23:9 · 24:19 · 24:37

Mark 10:9 · 13:17

Luke 6:30 · 6:46 · 16:18 · 17:28 · 20:25 · 20:27 · 20:34 · 21:23

John 3:6 · 6:27 · 6:67 · 14:6 · 19:36

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Acts 1:7 · 12:13 · 17:24

Romans 3:29 · 6:2 · 6:13 · 7:4 · 7:7 · 7:12 · 7:17 · 7:18 · 7:20 · 8:2 · 8:10 · 14:3 · 14:17 · 14:19 · 14:21

1 Corinthians 3:2 · 3:11 · 6:12 · 6:18 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:10 · 7:11 · 7:27 · 7:32 · 7:39 · 9:5 · 11:1 · 12:31 · 15:8 · 15:22 · 15:50

2 Corinthians 6:16 · 7:1 · 11:2 · 11:3 · 11:23

Galatians 2:19 · 3:3 · 5:13 · 5:17

Ephesians 1:4 · 2:12 · 3:9

Philippians 2:25 · 4:3

Colossians 2:18 · 2:20 · 3:2

1 Thessalonians 4:3 · 4:14

2 Thessalonians 3:14

1 Timothy 3:2 · 4:1 · 4:3 · 5:14

Titus 2:3

Hebrews 5:11 · 5:14 · 12:14 · 13:5 · 13:14

James 4:6

1 Peter 1:6 · 2:11 · 3:6 · 5:5

2 Peter 2:22

1 John 3:1

Revelation 4:1 · 17:3 · 21:10

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Is it wrong for a Christian to want sex with their own spouse?” on August 14, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Is it wrong for a Christian to want sex with their own spouse?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/is-it-wrong-for-a-christian-to-want-sex-with-their-own-spouse. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 29.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY