

Sex, Social Media and Self-Worth:

Why the Gospel is Good News for Women in 2026

1. The Sexual Revolution

Social movement in the West, late 1950s to early 1970s. Advocated for sexual liberation and challenged norms about sexuality and relationships.

Medical advances: The Pill was introduced in the 1960s

Two important legal changes:

- The Sexual Offences Act 1967 partially decriminalised consensual homosexual acts between men over 21 in private in England and Wales.
- The Abortion Act of 1967 legalised abortion.

2. The Digital Revolution

1950s-60s: Governments and large organisations started using computers for complex data processing

1980s: personal computers become widespread

1990s: internet becomes available, mobile phones become more widespread

2004: Facebook launched

2007: First iPhone launched.

Late 2000s: Smartphones became commonly used

2005: YouTube launched

2006: Facebook becomes available for anyone

2007: 'Charlie bit my finger' goes viral – one of the first viral videos

2010: Instagram launched

2011: Snapchat launched, Siri brings AI powered assistants into mainstream

2016: TikTok launched

2022: ChatGPT launched

2026:

- 100% 16-24 year olds have a smartphone
- ChatGPT has 810 million weekly users, 1 billion people use AI monthly
- 63% of Gen Z use YouTube daily
- 58% of Gen Z use Instagram daily
- 56% of Gen Z use TikTok daily

3. Overlap of the sexual and digital revolutions

2007: Pornhub launched

2012: Tinder and Hinge launched

2016: OnlyFans launched

2020: Pandemic. Porn use goes through the roof. 5.81 billion visits per month to top 3 porn sites.

2023: 68% of men and 45% of women aged 18-24 use porn at least monthly.

2025: Bonnie Blue has sex with 1057 men in 24 hours, setting new record.

2026: Tinder has 75 million active users. Tinder, Hinge and Bumble use AI to improve match relevance over time. Average age that children first see porn is 13. 10% have seen it by age 9.

How have women and girls been particularly negatively impacted?

Part One: Sex, dating and relationships

Men and women are different: biologically, and sexually.

David Schmitt's study in sociosexuality (the desire for sexual variety) shows that most men are higher and women lower. In other words, most women want a long term, committed relationship rather than lots of sexual variety. But this is the opposite of what the sexual revolution has given women,

7 ways that the sexual revolution has been particularly bad for women

1. Dating apps commodify people and remove accountability
2. If most men are stronger than most women, hook up culture leaves women particularly vulnerable
3. Porn desensitises users to normal sex and normalises extreme fetishes
4. Women often don't enjoy casual sex as much
5. Pressure to have sex early in dating
6. Double standards about promiscuity still exist
7. Commitment is no longer assumed.

9 ways the Bible tells a better story

1. God created men and women equal and different, in his image

'So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1.27)

2. God created sex for one man and one woman in marriage for life

'The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.' (Gen 2.23-24)

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'" (Matthew 19.4-6)

3. Sex is God's design for how babies are made. It's not just about reproduction, but it's not less than reproduction.

'God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1.28)

4. Sex is a God-given pleasure that married couples are told to enjoy

'May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be intoxicated with her love.' (Proverbs 5.18-19)

5. Sex should be about giving yourself to your spouse. It's not about performance.

'But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except

perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.' (1 Corinthians 7.2-5)

6. God shows us what passionate love looks like

'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' (1 John 4.10)

7. Marriage is about Christ and his Church

'This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.' (Ephesians 5.32)

8. In our relationships outside of marriage, we're to treat each other as brothers and sisters

'Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.' (1 Timothy 5.1-2)

9. Shows us that we're all sexual sinners – and that Jesus died for sinners like us

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' (Matthew 5.27-28)

10. Not all desires are good

"... but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:13-15)

How can we be witnesses in this area of our lives?

1. Don't underestimate the witness of your life – whether married or single
2. Preach the gospel of grace

Part Two: Social media and impact of self-worth and body image

What's changed? Age-old insecurities, but a much harder landscape to navigate them in

- Smartphones are everywhere
- We see our faces all the time
- Social media algorithms are designed so you spend more time on apps and more money on things they advertise
- Photo editing is easier than ever, thanks to AI
- Filters have increased body dysmorphia and led to fillers
- Everyone is a make up artist now
- Beauty standards are impossibly high (and often impossible because they're filters/edits) – but influencers make it look attainable
- Increase in disorders, and social media cashes in on this with online therapy ads

How does the Bible speak into this?

1. God created you – not just 'humans' in general, but you!

'For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you

when I was made in the secret place,

when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.' (Psalm 139.13-15)

2. Flee from comparison and envy

'A heart at peace gives life to the body,

but envy rots the bones.' (Proverbs 14.30)

3. Look at yourself (and others) less, and on Jesus more

'And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.' (Hebrews 12.2)

4. Beauty is fleeting. Good news - God cares about our hearts.

'Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.' (Proverbs 31.30)

'The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' (1 Samuel 16.7)

5. Older women, younger women need your help in this

Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus 2.4-6)

How can we be a witness?

1. Ageing with joy! Resisting pressure of a culture that increasingly normalises cosmetic procedures
2. Spend less time complimenting physical beauty and more on inner beauty
3. Spend less money on beauty products
4. Share your struggles in this with close friends. And share what God is teaching you and how that is helping you.
5. Talk about social media and how you (and your children) use it. Avoid being judgemental, share personally about the spiritual reasons why you do what you do (or why you're making changes)
6. Share with them about how you've been learning about how God cares about our hearts, unlike our world that cares about our outward appearance, and how freeing you've found that.

Further Reading:

'The Case Against the Sexual Revolution' – Louise Perry

'Girls' – Freya India