

God's View of Sex

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Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. The scripture reading comes from 1 Corinthians 6 and 7. Please follow along on the screen, the bulletin, or your own Bible.

Starting in chapter 6, verse 12, we read, All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.

Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food. And God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord.

And the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord, and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

[1 : 17] For as it is written, the two will become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Flee from sexual immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body. But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

[2 : 38] Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

This is the word of God. Thank you. Thank you, Iris. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Chris. I'm one of the leaders here at Watermark, and we're going through this series looking at sex, gender, relationships, marriage, cohabitation, singleness.

And for some of you, this is actually really, really sensitive topics. And just as we looked at marriage last week, and we looked at how it's not just a partnership or a self-fulfillment thing, it's a one flesh union thing, this week we're actually going to look at another painful topic of sex.

And so before I start and before I pray, I want to just say to each one of us that actually we want this community to be a place of safety. We want it to be a place where wherever you're up to, if this really touches on some particular areas and we can't cover everything just in one or two or three talks, please come and talk to us.

Because this is not a journey that we want to go on by ourselves. It's a journey to go on together as a community. So let me just pray for us as we begin to look into this topic.

[4 : 16] Father, I thank you that you're the God who wants to be with us. You are the great lover of our souls.

Thank you you're the one that we were made for. And thank you that you're the one who knows us. And thank you that you're the one who comes to us wherever we are and you want to speak to us. You want to draw us to yourself. You want to heal us. You want to restore us. You want to use us for your glory. And I pray that today you would would just go into our hearts. I pray, Lord, remove anything that's just unhelpful.

But I pray, would you make us the kind of church which reflects the kind of God you are, the kind of love that you have, and you change us through it.

In Jesus' name. Amen. I remember when I had the sex talk. I was 11 years old and my dad and I were driving along in the car.

[5 : 19] And my dad turned to me and he said, son, he probably didn't say that, but he said, I think we ought to talk about sex. At that moment I went, I sank into my seat, I went bright red, I thought, I hoped the ground would swallow me up.

Because he said the S word. And then he said, I'll give you a book. And I went, phew, that's great. Because, like some of us, I kind of grew up and we'd grown up with this traditional view of sex, which in the line of the film, kind of, no sex please, we're British.

Or no sex please, we're Christians. Or no sex please, because we're traditional. And, it's one of those things that in churches we just don't talk about.

And when you don't talk about something, or actually the church's message is just generally, just say no. You know, no porn, no sex before marriage, no masturbation. What comes out of that is actually, you feel like it's something dirty, something shameful.

[6 : 33] And in the Corinthian church, there was a group like this, and they said things like, it's good for a man not to have sex with a woman. And that is very much what a lot of us have grown up with, that kind of impression.

And, opposed to that, in reaction to that, modern, a lot of modern society, has, has said, well, look at how repressive that is.

Instead, we, we have something else that we need to offer. And they say three things. They say sex is nothing, sex is everything, and sex is private. And so, sex is nothing. Well, in Corinth, people were saying, well, all things are lawful for me.

I can do what I want. They can say, food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food. In other words, sex is nothing. It's just biological desires, like food, which must be met.

And I've got needs, and not to meet my sexual needs, is repressive, and it can cause psychological, and physical damage to us. So, in the words of the 90s song, you and me, baby, are nothing but mammals.

[7 : 45] So, let's do it like we do it on the Discovery Channel. Because, sex is nothing. It's just biological need. But we also say, sex is everything. You know, I read this article, with a headline from the BBC, which said, the sadness of life without sex.

Because, you see, sex in our culture, is seen as the ultimate place of happiness, the ultimate source of fulfillment. And if you think of celibacy, not having sex, that's a dirty word.

That's sounding like, you're condemned to a life of misery, a life of loneliness, a life of suffering. And who wants that? And some of us feel that, right?

We say, sex is nothing. We say, sex is everything. But then we also say, sex is private. And, our culture says, well, it's your body to do what you want to do with it, with who you want, when you want, just as long as it doesn't harm anyone.

And we then define what harm means. And so, as long, and in this kind of me too world, as long as there's consent, everything's on the table.

[8 : 58] But it's fascinating where all of that has led us to. I could go on for a long time. I'm just going to give you some highlights.

Look at the trail of wreckage in families, where affairs and porn addiction and divorce are justified by. I just couldn't help it. You weren't meeting my needs, and so I had to look elsewhere.

Just think of all the dating singles who feel pressured into sex because it's expected and even demanded of you, even if you don't want to do it.

Think of the sexting among yous leading to shame and fear. Think of the pressure to be good in bed, which leads, research shows us, to a massive outbreak of performance anxiety.

And in this world where we actually have sex more readily available to us than any other time in human history, you know, we've got Tinder, you've got online hookups, you've got porn, you've got everything available to you just at the click of a button.

[10 : 08] In this world, do you know that global research is showing that people are having less sex than ever before? You know, from Japan to Denmark, governments are getting seriously worried.

You see, I heard one person summarize modern sexuality like this. He said, it's an ever-increasing demand for an ever-decreasing pleasure because people are never getting enough.

And people are showing that the porn industry amongst singles and marrieds is diminishing people's desire and appetite for real-life relationships and real-life sex. And they know that it's less satisfying from the surveys, but it's just too much work to do real relationships. And there's so much other research out there, it's amazing. And all of this, we're told, is sexual liberation. You know, I've shared before, but I had a colleague that I went away with and I shared with him that Fiona and I would not have sex before we got married.

[11:17] And he looked stunned. And then he said to me, I wish I was like you, but I'm a slave to my desires. And whenever I see a hot woman, I have to sleep with her.

You see, when your desires rule, what happens is not freedom, but slavery. You see, slaves become addicts who become users, not lovers.

That people become objects to satisfy them rather than those that we're to cherish and care for.

You know, relationships become trades with your body as a commodity.

And as long as you're meeting my need or each other's needs, then we're fine. We'll stay together. But the moment it doesn't, then we're not compatible and we move on. And I have spoken to so many people who have said to me things like, you know, I realize after our relationship, really they were only interested in getting me into bed.

And it's left a whole generation confused, scarred, torn. And this is not my opinion. This is what all the research is showing us. But the Bible has a more beautiful, more freeing vision of sexuality and sex.

[12:41] You know, Paul himself, he says, all things are lawful, but I will not be dominated or enslaved, is the word, by anything. Because Christian sexuality is about freedom.

And I want to talk about this just in a few aspects. I don't have time to go into everything, even in this passage, but I'm just going to pick out some highlights. You see, our society says, sex is basically an end in itself, it's just a personal experience.

But God says, sex is a means to a greater end. And I have a, just a simple definition here. Sex is a God-glorifying act of self-giving between a husband and wife for the purpose of deepening intimacy, procreation, and pointing us to our heavenly husband, Christ.

It's God-glorifying act of self-giving between a husband and wife in marriage for the purpose of deepening intimacy, procreation, and pointing us to Christ.

Let me unpack some of that as we go. And I'm going to do that in a few ways. So the first, sex in the Bible is good.

[13:59] It's not nothing, it's not everything, it's not bad, it's very good. You see, when God created man and woman, it says in Genesis, they were naked and unashamed.

You know, we are wired by God for intimacy and vulnerability. when nothing is hidden and you feel utterly safe, utterly known, and utterly loved.

That's at the heart of God's God-given desire for sex. And He wired our bodies with all kinds of chemicals like testosterone, estrogen, dopamine, oxytocin, all these different things for pleasure and orgasms.

You can say that in church. And orgasms and attachment that bring physical pleasure in sexual intimacy. Do you know what the first command in the Bible is?

Have lots of sex, be fruitful and multiply. God wasn't going when He saw Adam and Eve together. My goodness me, what are they up to?

[15:12] He says, no, this is good. In fact, it's very good. And if you don't believe me, there's a whole book of the Bible, the Song of Songs, which is an erotic love poem which a lot of people in history got very embarrassed about because it's a husband and a wife who are delighting in each other's bodies, in intimacy, delighting even in the naughty bits.

And it's in the Bible. And God says, it's good. So spouses, let me speak to you for a second. When did you last express appreciation for an aspect of your partner's body?

Now, singles, don't go around doing this. It's going to get creepy. Okay? But spouses, when do you last say something like, hey, your eyes are really beautiful. I love your smile.

Because that is God honoring because in saying that, you're saying, God made you good. And that's true. And in our very sexualized culture, many of us actually, if we're honest, we struggle with our bodies because we don't feel that we match up to the oppressive ideals that our culture tells us we should be to be sexy, whatever that means.

And what God wants us to hear today is that though our physical bodies are broken, they're not all they should be, He created you and when He looks at you, He says, that is good.

[16:52] So don't call ugly what God calls beautiful and don't allow culture to define the way you see your body. Let God's Word define it. And He says, you, your body, your sexuality, it's a gift from me and it's good.

That's the first thing the Bible shows us. Sex is good. The second thing, and we're going to come into a little bit of the passage now, is sex is worship.

Now, I'll explain what I mean by that. Paul says this, he says, the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

And then later on, he goes down and says, don't you know, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our culture says, your body is your body for you.

Scripture says, no, if you're a Christian, your body is not yours, it's for the Lord. It's a temple and a temple is a place of worship.

[18:02] And what you do with your genitals, what you do with your desires, will either serve and worship Jesus or you'll serve and worship your idolatrous desires, which will enslave you.

You know, in the words of Bob Dylan, you've got to serve somebody. And with your body, that's also true. And this is key. Because a lot of people ask me questions like, is it okay to masturbate? Or how far is too far in a relationship? And the question that Scripture would come to us, which should be the foremost question when dealing all these practical issues, is can I do this and glorify God with my body?

Because sex is worship. And it glorifies God. And let me unpack, how does it glorify God? It glorifies Him in a couple of ways. And here, I'm going to move on to my next thing.

It glorifies it when sex deepens intimacy. Okay? When sex deepens intimacy. So sex is good, sex is worship, but that is expressed in glorifying God when it deepens intimacy.

[19:17] Paul says, do you know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh.

And that word joined actually means glued together. It's from Genesis chapter 2. In one flesh union. And Kevin explained some of this last week, but let me reiterate.

One flesh could be translated a mingling of souls. It's a whole person union of body, mind, spirit, every part of you, legally, economically, in every way, united and bound together.

It's the place where if you are to be safe and known and loved and naked and unashamed, then only with someone who has committed their all to you in marriage do you even have the possibility of that level of security and safety for true intimacy in that one flesh union where someone has said, all that I am I give to you and the other has replied, yes, all that I am I give to you.

You know, if sex is actually just physical, why are rape and sexual abuse so devastating to the whole person? The reason is because sex isn't just physical.

[20:47] It's a deeply spiritual, soul-embodying thing. And so then the greatest intimacy, which is sex, requires the greatest commitment, which is marriage.

And anything outside of that is like taking a beautiful flower petal tearing out of the stem of the intimate one flesh relationship from where that is meant to flourish.

And when you take out a petal, what happens? It looks great for a while and then it withers and dies. You know, Cameron Diaz, that well-known theologian in the movie Vanilla Sky says, don't you realize that when you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise even if your mind does not. Your body is saying, I am totally yours. And if that's not the reality, in a one flesh marriage union, you are taking too much and giving too little.

You're doing the act but not the all that I am I give to you. And that's like gluing two things together and then tearing them apart and that's always going to rip you apart and research shows that with the amount of shame, regret, anxiety amongst sexually promiscuous people.

[22:16] It's sinning against your own body. But if that promise is a reality, then when you have sex together, it's like a regular renewal of your wedding vows.

It's drawing you deeper into one flesh union. How are we doing? What does that mean?

If you're married, let me talk to marriage, prioritize sex. If you're single, that may sound very strange. But there are seasons like when you've got young kids and I know about this, or when life is just busy, it can just be hard.

You're tired. But scripture says, don't just neglect it. Plan it. Give your best time. Get babysitters. Get someone from the church to look after your kids.

Whatever. Because actually it's about strengthening your relationship together. Don't neglect it. But also, and here's a key thing, don't detach the act from one flesh.

[23 : 22] You know, a former pastor said to me, sex starts at 8 o'clock in the morning. Well, I looked at him, it's like, wow. Okay, but by which he meant though, that if you think you can be emotionally absent during the day, and yet still have physical intimacy at night, or if your marriage is filled with blaming and negative put-downs and an unwillingness to apologize, don't think you're going to have a great sex life.

Your sex will be like a petal cut from the stem, a detached act, when actually intimacy is a whole person thing, emotionally, relationally, in every way.

It's about intimacy. Sex is about worship. It's about intimacy. intimacy. It's about also self-giving, okay, or service.

This is one I don't think we think about that often, but this is at the heart of it. You see, Paul goes down into chapter 7 verse 1, and he's replying to some questions from the Corinthians, and he says, the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights.

That means sexual rights. And likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

[24 : 57] And everyone in Roman culture would have stopped there. Wives give your husband sex on demand. That was the culture. But Paul says something utterly radical for his day.

He says, likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying sex is not about domination or just about you.

Sex is about mutual serving and mutual self-giving. Our society says it's your body to do what you want with it, and we end up as users. God says, it's not your body, it's for me and for the worship of me, and I want you to give it a lot of service to your spouse.

That's how to be a lover. Judy Slattery, who, if you want to, she's got a great website called Authentic Intimacy, I highly recommend it, deals with a lot of issues there.

She says this, sex is designed to be more than an expression of love between a husband and wife. It is also the refining fire of love.

[26 : 07] It tests and teaches a willing man and woman to reach beyond their natural desires and learn what servant love really is.

This is so profound. You know, I have had people in church say, my wife wants it but I don't want to so I think we should split up because we're not compatible.

That is insane. Because sexual compatibility is a myth. You know, I don't know any husband and wife who have perfectly aligned sex drives in every season.

I've never met one. And you know, this can be, you know, we desire sex at different times, in different ways and it can be a massive source of frustration and tension in marriages.

Some of you know this. Again, if you're married, let me ask you, how often do you actually talk about sex, your sex life together?

[27 : 13] What you enjoy and what you don't enjoy? How you're feeling at this time? Because let me tell you, from experience, silence doesn't lead to intimacy.

Because how do you know how to truly serve your partner best if you haven't been talking to them about it? and instead of withdrawing, instead of demanding, start talking and mutually on both sides going, how can I both serve the other person best in this season?

And that will cost you at different times. But if both of you are doing that, that is a recipe for deepening sacrificial love and intimacy in your relationship, if you're single, okay, you don't get away with this, our sexualized culture has conditioned us to believe, do you know the movie When Harry Met Sally?

It says, men and women can't be friends because the sex gets in the way. Do you know that one? That's not true. That's just the way our culture thinks.

And so I want to challenge us as singles to think how we can develop healthy, appropriately intimate, non-sexual friendships with people of the opposite gender.

[28 : 43] Like, girls and guys, like, guys, just, let's start talking about how we can serve the women in the church so that they flourish and don't just feel like we're all out to get them.

Girls, how can you serve the guys in the church so that they flourish as brothers and sisters, not as targets to aim for or threats to avoid, but as people made in the image of God.

You know, selfishness, when we're self-indulgent with our sexual desires, whether in porn, whether in masturbation, in all kind of fantasies, do you know when selfishness is unmasked, it isn't sexy.

Do you know what's really sexy? It's somebody who is willing to lay down their life for you. It's somebody who loves you at your best and at your worst. And you learn how to do that even when you're single.

So guys, grab lunch together. Like, do it in community. Share with older people, like, as safeguards for your own heart so you don't go beyond yourself.

[29 : 47] But let's learn how to be brothers and sisters where the other people feel, members of the opposite sex feel like they're safe, like they're known and like they're loved. Sex is good.

Sex is worship. Sex is intimacy. And it's also self-giving. And all of that's great. Except there's a key thing that we all know and we all need to recognize.

Sex is also broken and it needs healing. In our culture and our lives. And here is my final point. It's the healing of sex. You see, I was in a church once and one of the leaders fell into sexual sin.

And you know, sex isn't private because it was devastating for the whole community. It wreaks havoc on everybody. And Paul says this, and this is in chapter six, early on.

He says, don't be deceived. He says, neither the sexually immoral nor the idolatrous nor adulterers will inherit the kingdom of God. Here's the hard part.

[31 : 09] He's saying, ongoing, unrepentant sexual sin is serious. If you are treating your spouse like crap, if you are having an affair, if you're sleeping with your girlfriend or boyfriend and you just don't care, Paul says that has got eternal consequences in hell.

It's serious. So God says, don't take it lightly. But there's an offer. He says, repent. Come back to me. Come into the light. Let an elder or brother and sister walk with you to healing before it's too late.

Some of us need to hear that. But that's not where he finishes, where he lands. Because even as Christians, many of us, we struggle in all kinds of ways.

And even if you don't struggle, you know, as Christians we can be great at thinking if we're not doing porn and we're not committing adultery, then we're sexual saints. And everybody else is the deviance. But you know, Jesus says, sexual immorality, doing sex outside of God's design, comes out of the heart, out of a self-focused, self-gratifying, idolatrous heart.

And who here amongst us hasn't taken a second look? Who hasn't fantasized? Who hasn't objectified people who are made in the image of God? God, which means all of us are sexual sinners in some way.

[32 : 48] And it also means all of us are sexual sufferers in some way, some more than others.

And to those of us who are wrestling with sin and you just feel like you can't beat it, those of us who are filled with shame and guilt from your past, the decisions you've made, those of you who have actually felt just used and objectified by other people, those of you who feel lonely or devalued or unwanted, Paul says this, he says, to the sinners, such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

God, what he's saying is this, he's saying when you run to Jesus in repentance for sin or to Jesus for healing where there's hurt, Jesus doesn't condemn you.

He doesn't say you've gone too far for me, you're too messy for me. He says through my blood I've washed you, I've made you holy, you're acceptable, you're mine.

Your shame is cleansed, your guilt is forgiven, your purity is restored by the holiness of Christ. You are not soiled space, you're not damaged space, you are sacred space if you trusted in me.

Because no matter how anyone else has treated you, you have a heavenly husband. You're taken by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He dwells in you.

[34 : 35] You know, a diamond bought for a billion dollars is not passed around like a paper bag. It's treated with the highest care. And if you are a believer in Christ, you've been bought with something way more precious.

You've been bought with the blood of the eternal God of Jesus Christ himself. He's taken up residence in you. And what does that mean? That means you're priceless.

Holy. Glorious. And so he says, if that is true, don't cheapen yourself in any way than anything less than the glorious freeing vision God has for your sex life.

love. I know of a guy, and I'll finish here. I know of a guy, a boss who went on a business trip with his team.

And he came back to his hotel room to find that one of his young, attractive female members of staff was there in the room and acting and dressing extremely provocatively and propositioning him.

[35 : 47] And he looked at her and he said, no, I will not. And she looked astonished.

And do you know what she said? She replied, she said, I've never met a boss who turned me down before. And then she broke down. And she said this, she said, I was taken advantage of sexually when I was young.

And I've always seen myself as damaged goods. And my body was just being used as a tool to get love, to get attention, to get the benefits that I wanted in life.

And then she said, why are you so different from all the others? And he said, I'm a Christian. And I believe that you are dearly loved by God, which means you are too valuable for me to use just to satisfy my own desires for now.

And she went, how can I know this God? And that began a road of healing for her. You see, that healing for broken people takes place when we come to know Christ, but also when we come into a community which models not judgment, but love and safety for broken people.

[37 : 13] Where the security in Christ means we can walk honestly with each other in all of our sexual struggles. Where singles and brothers are brothers and sisters looking out for each other and where romantic feelings are developed, we don't just jump on them straight away, but we go to older people to give us wisdom and walk through so that we love people well.

And where there's a place of healing intimacy where people can truly be safe and known and loved without always wondering what else is going on behind the scenes.

It's a gospel witness to people. And that's my prayer that we become this kind of community. But the very last thing we need to say, with all of this vision, human beings will always let you down.

Sex will always disappoint you. You know, our wedding night wasn't exactly the way things work out in the movies. Our sexual desires will not always be met, whether you are single or married.

But the disappointment of sex is designed to lead you and point you to the place where all our desires are ultimately to be fulfilled in our heavenly husband, Christ, who is not self-centered, but he has sacrificed everything for us to be intimate with us.

[38 : 52] Someone once said, he who rings the brothel bell is looking for God. We're looking for one who takes leftover men and women, who takes broken, sinful men and women, who takes shamed and suffering men and women.

And he says, come to me, because with me, like there's nowhere else on this planet, you can be utterly safe, utterly known, and utterly loved.

Because he knows your deepest thoughts. He knows your darkest secrets. And yet he gave himself entirely for you. He's the only one who's ever been fully faithful to that promise.

All that I have, all that I have, I give to you. And because of that, he calls us to come and worship him with our bodies.

And that is the place of freedom and healing. God, let's just take a minute. I want you just to take a minute to actually think, what is God trying to say to you right now?

[40 : 11] God, let's just take a minute to run. I want you to take a minute to run. Where do you need to run to Jesus right now? I'm going to invite the band to come up and play.

But don't rush from this moment because God actually wants to do a work in you. Some of us have got a lot of shame and a lot of guilt in our lives.

And you wonder whether you can ever fully be cleansed from it. And Jesus wants you to run to him today because he says, oh, my grace is sufficient for you.

Some of you are in ongoing sin. And God's calling you today, don't wait another minute to actually repent and come back to me.

And go and tell someone today about this so they can walk with you. Some of you just need to know that you are truly loved and truly valuable.

[41 : 24] And to praise God for the way he sees you. So just pray before God right now.

Father I believe there are some people who need your real healing today would you show them that you are not like all the other men or women that they may have experienced that you are the

greatest lover the faithful lover Lord I pray that you administer your healing power today I pray
Father that you would give us as a church a newfound confidence and backbone not
embarrassment about what you say about sex but an utter confidence that what you say is the way
things are and you know the way that we should live in freedom Lord I pray give us that courage as
a church I pray teach us how to love teach us how to love teach us how to love in Jesus name
Amen