

Gospel Sexuality

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[0 : 00] Welcome again, if you don't know me, my name is Chris, I'm one of the leaders here, and we're starting in a new series which is like a time bomb.

It's the kind of issue that churches divide over, people leave the faith over, it's an issue which both scares and excites us, because if you start talking about sex, the room is usually full.

But it's a very challenging topic, I think, for many of us, and we want to start in this series because if you look at the world that we live in, the world we live in is very different from the world 20 or 30 years ago, right?

Just our culture is sex-saturated, right? You just go down to Causeway Bay, look at the billboards there, you think about music videos, you think about online porn.

Sex is big business, sex sells pretty much most things, right? And it's not just the kind of, the fact that it's everywhere, it deeply impacts us in every area of our lives, some very personal ways.

[1 : 15] Whether that's from the gay rights to transgender to broken marriages to women complaining about not having adequate quality guys in Hong Kong to men despairing that no money, no honey.

And then we have the selfie culture, which, you know, if you're walking along the road, you just see everyone trying to look as sexy as possible because it's all, we all judge each other based on our appearance and what and sexy counts.

And then we have cohabitation and divorce on the rise and we have compensated dating, we have consumer sex, we have online hookup websites, we have apps like Tinder, and then we haven't even begun to start talking about Me Too campaigns, the sexual bullying and pressure at schools, and you could go on and on and on, okay?

Does anyone know what I'm talking about? Right? It's everywhere. Everywhere. And in churches, whether you're married or you're single, the shame of sexual sin or the longing for intimacy is very prevalent.

And the church has often seemed to come across very harsh and often even hypocritical because it's often married pastors like me who are even failing in their own marriages, just tell everybody else, just don't do it.

[2 : 32] And they just say, don't, just say no. That's the message you get. And it all seems very unfair and even harmful to people.

And I don't know where you personally are up to with this area. But my prayer is, the reason we want to go through this as a series is because we want to have an open conversation and for us to hear from God rather than just hearing from the culture of what he wants to say to us.

So that I, my prayer is that your heart would be open for him to speak to you wherever you are right now. Because, you know, we've, we've seen even in the, we deliberately did the series in one Peter first because we wanted us to see the calling that God has on us as a community to be a distinctive community in a tough world.

And we're living in a city which we need to have a different, more beautiful story than the story our culture is telling us. And we need to know the story that the Bible gives of sexuality, not just up here, but deep in here.

We need to know it inside out so that our lives are shaped by this story because we find it attractive and compelling. That's what God wants to do in us as a community.

[3 : 58] And so the same kind of situation we face in Paul's day, their young church that he's talking to in 1 Corinthians was also surrounded by a sex-saturated culture.

And Paul speaks to two views of sex that were very prevalent as they are today in his world. And he's going to show us actually the Christian view was totally radically unique than any other view that was there.

And so the first view is actually found in chapter 7, verse 1. First view is, it's not good for a man, sorry, it's good for a man not to have sex with a woman.

So traditional Chinese culture, often traditional church culture, the message is sex and sexual desire is necessary, but it's really unclean.

You know, it's taboo. You just don't talk about it, okay? Because it's a little bit dirty. You know, I'm from UK and they used to have this film which used to say, no sex please, we're British.

[5 : 10] And I think we have this kind of, no sex please, we're Christian. You know, that's kind of what we come across. Like, how many of you, did your parents talk openly to you about sex and sexuality, boundaries in dating, all those kind of things?

How many of us in church have ever heard people talk about how to have good sex within marriage? Anyone? Like, if the only time that we talk about sex is usually, don't do it until you're married, and then we condemn and shame anyone who doesn't fall in line, that's generally the impression we give.

Someone, I was reading this the other day, someone said this, religion has only ever made us feel bad about sex as if it's shameful and dirty. Everything fun is a sin. Again, when I abandoned religion, I gave myself permission to have a healthy sex life with all that guilt and shame attached.

That's so common. And which is why many people go to the other view of sex, and in Corinth, they had this other view of sex, which is found in chapter 6, verse 12.

It says, the second view is this, all things are lawful for me. As long as it doesn't harm anyone, what you do or your neighbors do in the bedroom isn't my issue. You can do whatever you like.

[6 : 33] You should be free to express yourself. It's your body. Sex is the way to have happiness. So you don't want to restrict anyone from finding happiness in life, do you?

That's repressive. That's what these conservative religious people do. Set yourself free. So, here was another quote I found in The Guardian from someone sharing about this.

They said, each individual has the right to explore their own sexual or romantic preferences. Nobody ever wants to be placed in a box. I never did. I just wanted to live my life and love whom I wanted to.

Has anyone got any friends who say that? All of my friends will say that. And in Corinth, here's how they argued it. They said, the stomach is for food, and the food and food is for the stomach.

In other words, this is their version of, do you know that, remember that song which goes, you and me baby are nothing but mammals, so let's do it like they do it on the Discovery Channel.

[7 : 31] Does anyone know that song? Everyone's going to be Googling it now afterwards. Right? What they're saying is, since we just evolved animals, mammals, with natural biological desires, sex isn't a big deal.

Okay? If some people can have it, why can't everybody have it? Bonobos do it, so why can't we? Okay? You have needs, fulfill them. That's the idea.

And that's where when people talk about pornography and masturbation and they argue for it, what they'll say is, it's just fulfilling a need. And so, like Freud, the psychoanalyst said, he said, it's harmful to repress things, so express yourself.

That's what the people in Corinth were saying. And so, if you go into Fifty Shades of Grey, everything is okay, as long as it's just consensual. Right?

All things are lawful. But we know everything's not okay, as the Me Too movement and sex trafficking shows us. We know that if I expressed all my desires, just think of what sometimes you've thought about your boss, if we actually expressed them, we'd get locked up.

[8 : 44] Right? But in our society, we have no bigger vision and purpose behind sex than our own self-fulfillment.

And what happens is, if you have few boundaries, the vulnerable always get exploited by the strong. And so, Paul and Christianity comes with a radically different vision of sexuality, which is not the first view.

It is not, it is good not to have sex. It is not, all things are lawful for me. It is something else. And now, I want to just share that in three things. A vision, sexuality, brokenness of sexuality, and a redemption of sexuality.

Okay? Everyone with me? Okay. Okay. Good. Okay. If you have your bulletin with you, I'm going to go through a little bit of the passage. 6, verse 13 says, the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

What he's saying is, there is a purpose to sexuality. Sex is not nothing, no big deal. Sex is not everything that means to happiness. Sex is not dirty or shameful, but sexuality is a sacred calling.

[10 : 09] It is a holy gift because the body, your body, is for the Lord, and the Lord is for your body. What he's saying is, anything outside of God's design, what is for him, is sexual immorality.

What he calls, that's the word in Greek, porneia, which is where we get pornography from. Saying anything outside of that is going to miss the purpose for it, of God's design.

So what is God's design, is the question. If you go to Jesus, Matthew 19. Jesus is dealing with the kind of hot ethical issue of their day, which was divorce.

Because pretty much everyone got married, but that seemed overly restrictive to people. And so some people wanted to kind of get easy out divorce, so they could just fulfill themselves.

And they asked Jesus about this, and here's his reply. He says, Have you not read that he who created them male and female, and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?

[11 : 19] So they're no longer two, but one flesh. And whatever God has joined together, let not man separate. Do you see what Jesus is doing? He doesn't go, well guys, it's kind of up to you in the debate of what you're wanting to do.

Because the Bible's difficult, and it's open to lots of interpretation. He doesn't do that. He says, have you not read? And then he goes all the way back to the original design in Genesis 1 and 2.

He says, God created humans, male and female, in his image. Just stop and think about that for a minute. God created them male and female.

In other words, God created sexuality. Our sexuality is part of who we are. It's not all of who we are, but it's part of who we are.

It's part of imaging God and his glory. You know, he put higher levels of testosterone in men so that they grow beards, and you know, they get physically stronger.

[12 : 25] They get man flu. And they have a penis. I can use that word in church. And the woman has extra estrogen in them, which is where the breasts develop, and they get larger hips, and they get a vagina.

Okay, some of you are getting uncomfortable, but it's okay, because it's God's idea. It's God's idea. And God says, it's not good for man to be alone, and he creates Eve, and he brings him to Adam.

And do you know what the first thing Adam does? He goes, woo-hoo! He bursts into song. It's actually, or it's kind of like a rap. He goes, hey, at last, flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones.

It's a poem. Because what is it saying? And God says about it, it's good. It's good. It's very good. He's not going, oh, man, what are they up to?

Because the holy God who created us to worship him created everything for his glory and our good, created sex and sexual desire for his glory and our good.

[13 : 35] So finding someone physically attractive is not wrong. It's meant to lead you to worship God, not to a self-indulgent stare.

You know, I've got friends that go, God, I love the summer because everyone's wearing so little. That's not worship. That's self-indulgence. But enjoying the body of your spouse is meant to lead you to say, God, you're so good, and to praise him because you're goodness.

But you know when we stay silent and we get embarrassed in church in talking about this or as parents, maybe because of our upbringing, do you know what we're actually saying? The message we come across is it isn't good because we don't want to talk about it.

Just thinking that if you're married, when was the last time you actually had a conversation as a couple about how you can make your sex life better for the glory of God? Because it's good.

But what we do is we end up twisting this. And no wonder people go from, it's not good for a man to have sex with a woman, to everything is lawful very quickly because we have desires that God has made.

[14 : 54] And this is why we need to be talking about this and get beyond the fear and the shame that we held. It is good. But the design is not just it is good.

He then says, Jesus then says, since God made us sexual beings, therefore, therefore, just have sex with whoever you want as long as it's fulfilling.

No, he doesn't say that. He says, therefore, a man leaves his father and mother, one man, one woman, entering into a covenant relationship of commitment with her.

He holds fast to her. That word hold fast means to be glued together, to become one flesh.

And one flesh doesn't just mean physical sex. As a society, we're generally fixated on the act of sexual intercourse. But the Bible says sexuality is more like what somebody called the mingling of souls.

[15 : 57] It actually embraces the intimacy, the vulnerability of being naked and unashamed physically, emotionally, relationally before another, which includes sexual intercourse, but is not only restricted to that.

It is far bigger. You know, chemically, when you have sex, it releases oxytocin, which is the same chemical which actually helps a mother bond with her child.

Because sex is not merely an act. It's a whole life, whole person bonding experience. I don't know if you've seen the movie Vanilla Sky, but Cameron Diaz says this, When you slept with me, your body made a promise, though you did not know it.

Your body made a promise. Our society increasingly says, sex is for recreation and self-fulfillment, but we don't know that we're making a whole life promise when we do it.

You see, some of my friends, they say, don't commit to someone until you know you're sexually compatible. But it's really surprising how no one says, well, it was good for me, but not for you, therefore we should break up.

[17 : 08] Because we've actually made it all about ourselves. But the scripture says, the only place that self should come is before giving, donation, denial.

And so if someone is not willing to give you their whole life, their whole person to you, which means legally, socially, economically, spiritually, which is what the marriage covenant is about, then sex outside of that always cheapens the act away from whole person, whole self-giving experience to the other for the glory and worship of God.

You know, it's like taking diamonds and using them as toilet paper, and that always hurts. So in our marriages, guys, we need to be taking the initiative to say, how can I develop deeper intimacy, relational intimacy in my marriage?

To be asking our partners, what do you find sexually arousing? So that I can serve you better. It's not just about me. And if you're single and you're going, well, what do I do?

I've got these desires and I can't do anything with them. It's time to say, well, my body is a gift for the Lord. How can I use my singleness to develop greater relational intimacy and vulnerability within his church, within the community, particularly with people of the same gender?

[18 : 39] How can I learn not to indulge myself by just going on 50 holidays, but actually learn self-sacrifice on his mission? Because I'm learning that true sexuality of self-giving.

Does that make sense? Sex is good. It's about a whole person thing. It's about a self-giving thing. But secondly, sex is broken.

He says the body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. But then he has to go on and he says, you know, guys, you were bought with a price.

He says that down in verse 20. You were bought with a price. Why does he have to say that? Why does he have to say that? Paul is saying our sexuality and our desires were made for Jesus.

But the reason Jesus died and rose again for you and for me, and including our bodies to raise them again, was because we've become enslaved and kidnapped by our own desires.

[19 : 44] And Jesus pays a ransom on our cross to set us free. He's bought us. You know, I've shared before, but I had a former colleague who we got talking, and I started sharing to him that Fiona and I were not going to sleep together before we got married.

And his response to me was, I wish I was like you, but whenever I see a hot woman, I have to sleep with her because I'm a slave to my desires.

He was honest. That's it. Captivity to your own desires. Because you see, when Adam and Eve turned away from God, they still had those desires for intimacy and fulfillment, which were meant to be found in him, in God, but so they had to start looking elsewhere.

So you think, why does our culture, more than any other culture in history, like look to romance and sex to be the ultimate fulfillment? Why? Because we've removed God from our sexuality, and so we're now trying to make finding the one, our new God.

You know, someone said this, every man who rings the brothel bell is unconsciously looking for God. Here's what somebody else said.

[21 : 05] This guy, Ernest Becker, he actually was a prize-winning author. He said, after all, what is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to the position of God?

We want redemption, nothing less. We want to be rid of our faults, of our feeling of nothingness. We want to be justified, to know that our creation has not been in vain.

That's what we're looking for from somebody else. He actually says, and no human being can take that weight. One more quote.

Somebody else said this, ironically, one of the reasons our society is so sex-saturated is because we're so transcendence-starved. Unable to reach the heavens, we go under the bedsheets.

It's because our society senses that there must be something more to life, something more to sex than casual encounters, that people continue to ramp up the experience, trying new methods, new partners, new medicines, staking their identity in their sexuality, whatever it takes to achieve sexual satisfaction.

[22 : 09] Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, that one, or that, in that marriage partner, that you either wish you had, or that you have, and you wish you had another one, that is a desire, because you're ultimately longing fulfillment that only God can provide.

I mean, just ask anyone who's married if your spouse fulfills you fully. But how many of us, if you're married as spouses, particularly after an argument or you've seen all the faults in your spouse, sometimes secretly wish that you were married to somebody else?

Anybody? Okay, I've got some nods, so we're getting honest now. This is good. Just look at your partner and say, I'm sorry. But why do we do that?

It's because at that moment, we're looking to a human to fulfill that deep longing and desire that only God can fulfill. And this is so important for us as a church to get.

In a church community like ours, when we hear about marriages breaking down, when we hear about adulterers, when we hear about sexual sin or someone coming out as gay or transgender, whatever, our natural tendency is often to go into shock or to go, how could they?

[23 : 30] And then we begin to judge or get scared and withdraw. Because in our hearts, we believe the lie that if we're married or single and we're not sleeping around, we're sexual saints and everyone else is a sexual deviant.

But Jesus said, out of the hearts comes porneia, lust, envy, greed. You see what Jesus is saying when he says that?

And this is what the gospel says. Our greatest problem in the area of sexuality is not our sexual orientation or what we do with our genitals. It's our heart orientation.

It's because we are self-centered, self-gratifying, self-pleasing instead of God-glorifying, self-giving, self-denying, intimate relationships. You know, that's the issue with masturbation.

It's actually not about self-giving. It's about self-taking for me. If I can be real now, which means every single one of us in this room is a sexual sinner.

[24 : 38] Do you know that? Every one of us. Because every one of us is living in a way of our heart orientation which is not fully seeking to glorify God and self-give to others.

You see, some of us are into porn. Some of us have sex outside of that full body, mind, soul commitment. Some of us actually believe our value and our worth is found in finding a partner for us or whether we're in a relationship or not.

Do you know that's idolatry? You know, some of us, because in marriage we've been withholding, not self-giving. Some of us, our marriages are functional and we just kind of do the tasks, kids, other stuff, but we're devoid of passion and intimacy and love and we've taken no steps to remedy it and it doesn't glorify God.

We're all in the same boat, guys. I am, we all are. We're all broken in this area in some ways or other. And we all have not just sexual sin, we also have sexual sufferers.

Like, just think, how many of you had parents whose marriage was emotionally dysfunctional? Many of us.

[25 : 56] How many of us have desires for that whole life bonding with someone and we're going, will I ever find someone? And there is a suffering involved in that.

And sometimes that suffering makes us doubt the goodness of God's design. you know, but if we get that reality that we're both sexual sinners and sexual sufferers, then we'll not be a church when somebody comes in and comes up to you.

Like, so many of my friends say, I don't want to go to church because I know what I'm going to get from church people. So many of us don't actually want to admit the things which are going on in our lives because we're afraid that we're going to be judged and condemned.

But if you see that actually all of us are in the same boat, what that does, that liberates us to say, this is the areas where I have messed up. These are the areas where I'm struggling and we begin to walk alongside each other.

And like Jesus, you know, with the woman who was caught in adultery, he was brought to her. She'd come out of a hot, steamy affair. It was not good. And yet Jesus says to her, I don't condemn you.

[27 : 04] I don't condemn you. But he says, don't go and sin any longer. As a church, we're not about judging people who sin, but we're also not about people just saying, hey, it's okay.

It's just your choice. We're going to say, hey, it's okay not to be okay. But we're going to walk alongside each other to not stay there, but to come into God's design for what he's called us to be. That's the brokenness that we experience.

Sexuality's good, but we all suffer from ourselves, from other people, but the third thing is the redemption of sexuality.

I've got three things from the passage which it shows us of how the gospel reshapes our sexuality. First thing, you're already taken.

It says here, for he who is joined to the Lord, this verse 17, becomes one spirit with him.

[28 : 11] And then verse 19, it says this, 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.

You know that word joined? It's the same word that Jesus used for what happens when a husband holds fast, joins, same word, to his wife. He's saying, do you know, the Bible starts with a wedding and it ends with a wedding, and our sexuality now is a trailer for that final day when we will see our great lover, the one that we are joined to.

because that whole Bible story is about a story as God is a passionate lover seeking a rebellious people as his bride. And his greatest demonstration of sexuality in the way that God has demanded it and called for it is a love which is self-giving, self-sacrificial, dying on a cross so that he could hold you fast.

All sexuality is providing you a taste, starter, the appetizer for the main meal which is God himself.

And so that means if you've, we come to God with nothing in our hands but sin and shame. If we repent and come to him, if we've turned to him as a believer and said, God, I need you to shape and to heal me.

[29 : 47] To do what only God you can provide. Do you know what it says in verse 9 and 11 which we didn't read? It says, he says to the Corinthians, some of you guys were just messed up in so many ways sexually.

But that is who you, that is not who you are. That is not who you are. That is who you were. Some of you right now, you have a lot of shame in your life. You have a lot of things that actually you don't want to share because you know, you know some of the things and it still weighs on you.

But this passage says, that is who you were, that is not who you are now. Because you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified by God, you are his. Your body is no longer yours to do as you please.

Just as a married guy, I can't do what I want. But that is not restriction, that is freedom to focus my attention on the intimacy and longing that I have and want to develop with my true love of God himself.

You know, he says, you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, of his presence. Do you know in Hong Kong, what's the temple in Hong Kong where people go to worship?

[30 : 59] Well, there's a few little ones, but actually the biggest temple is the shopping mall. Right? That's the temple of worship in Hong Kong. And actually, it's the temple where we often go and trade our bodies in for somebody else making us feel good.

Or we withhold intimacy and love when our desires are not satisfied. But the gospel says you're not a good to trade. You're not damaged goods because you've abused your body.

You're not leftover goods because you're not in a relationship. You're not soon to expire goods because your sexual desire is waning. You are the temple of the living God. That means your sacred space.

You're defined by the Spirit of God living in you, not by anything else or what anyone says about you. So don't cheapen yourself for anything less than what honors and glorifies God with your body because he selflessly gave himself for you.

And we're to reflect that love in the way we use our own bodies. You're already taken. Second thing, your sexuality is a community thing.

[32 : 11] He says, do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Modern society has privatized our sexuality to be all about the individual. It's all about my desires, my identity, my choice, as long as it doesn't harm anyone.

But Paul is now saying, as a church, your bodies now belong to Christ. You are members of him. And that word member is the same word that he later uses for being members of the church body where Christ is ahead and we're interconnected together.

And he's saying, your sexuality doesn't just affect you, it affects your relationship with God and your relationships with others. You know, I once got on a plane and we're flying at 38,000 feet.

And you know on the door there are those levers, those red levers which have do not pull while flying. Have you seen those? And there's this little kid who started walking up and started playing with the lever.

Now I know there's probably some extra security measures but just think, if I at that point said, well it's okay, you just follow what your heart desires to do at the moment.

[33 : 20] Like, it's okay, I don't want to restrict you in any way. That's scary, right? I mean, he's not just going to take himself down, he's going to take the plane down.

And actually, that's the same thing. Sin is never individual. It always has communal effects on other people. You know, I was in one church, one of the leaders had a fair.

It devastated the community. Another time, I was talking to a non-believer and they said to me, the reason I don't believe in Christianity is I see no difference between the way you Christians do sex than anybody else does.

He says, the only difference is you guys get more guilt put on you. You see, our sexuality impacts others and impacts the gospel, which is why we need to be real with each other, with the struggles we go through.

It's why if you know your marriage is just functional with no passion, you need to start talking about that with other brothers and sisters here. It's why we need to start openly confessing and repenting where the areas we've not lived up to God's design and receive the grace from the community around us.

[34 : 40] It's why if you're married, you should be engaging with singles in your life to help them both experience their intimate family but also give realistic expectations that a marriage partner is not going to be the ultimate one.

Your sexuality, you're already taken. You're God's. It's a community thing. Last thing, your happiness is in your holiness.

He says this, verse 18, flee from sexual immorality. He says, every other sin a person commits is outside the body but the sexually immoral person sins against the body.

He says, flee it. Don't just kind of dabble with it. Flee because you're sinning against your own body. He means because sex is a whole body, whole soul, whole mind thing unlike other sins, it's a sin which is going to defile and tear off a part of your soul.

It's not going to give you life. You know, traditional Chinese society cared little for the afterlife but said sex is essential for you to have a family which is the essence of life and happiness.

[35 : 54] That's why if you're single and approaching 30 or over 30 all your relatives are coming up to you seeing whether you've found a partner or not yet because they're worried that you might list out on life if you don't have one.

It's FOMO, right? Our culture says there's no afterlife but YOLO, get maximum happiness now. Now, you see, our society believes sex is essential for your happiness.

I read a BBC article it said, it was entitled The Sadness of Living Without Sex. That's the idea. So to restrain yourself now is to just say kiss goodbye to happiness.

That's what we believe in the culture. And the church has often said no, life is not about happiness it's about holiness so just cut off your desires and hold on until Jesus returns and then you'll get life.

But the gospel says your happiness is found in your holiness. Because Jesus himself the epitome of the man Christians we believe lived the most fulfilling life how great was his sex life?

[37 : 05] He was single. He didn't date. He wasn't playing around. He never acted out on his sexual desires. Instead he gave himself out of love for us.

Jesus said if anyone wants to follow me he must deny himself take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to follow me sorry whoever wants to find his life will lose it but whoever loses it for my sake will find it.

That means even if you're following Jesus in his design and it will sometimes feel like dying. It will sometimes feel painful. But Jesus is saying if you choose me and to find your glory and your satisfaction in me whether in marriage or in singleness you will find life in finding the one that you were truly made for.

Jesus Christ himself. So let's be a church which celebrates sex that delights in the good gift but let's be real about the brokenness of it and let's be walking with each other to point each other to the only one who will truly satisfy and fulfill us.

cool comments. Thank you.