

## The Church, Sin and Sex

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1. God loves us and wants our good - His instructions are given for our good, not our harm
  - **Jeremiah 29:11** - <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
  - Doesn't mean his commands & instructions aren't sometimes difficult to hear and difficult to obey, but they are always given for our good
  - Need to be those who understand that God doesn't always say we have it easy or good; sometimes the word of God to us is that the path ahead will be difficult, but always, always it is for our good
  
2. We need a biblical understanding of sin and God's wrath
  - God's purpose in Christ is to transform us into the image of his Son, to make us like Christ
    - **Romans 8:29** - For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers
    - **2 Corinthians 3:18** - And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
  - To become like Christ is to become truly, fully human
  - Sin wars against our transformation into the image of Christ, and by implication the attainment of true humanness
  - Sin impacts our relationship with God and results in the loss of our humanity, not the gaining of it.
  - God's wrath towards our sin is worked out in a rather surprising way: he allows us to do whatever we want
    - **Romans 1:18-32** - <sup>18</sup>The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and



exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. <sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup>They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. <sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. <sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

- God's wrath consists in him handing us over to our sinful desires, allowing us to do whatever we please; the end result is not freedom, but destruction. Why? Because the more we are transformed into the image of Christ, the more human we become; the opposite holds true: the further we move from the image of Christ, the less human we become. Sin ultimately causes us to become less human, not more.
  - God's grace and love rescue us from destruction by setting limits and boundaries on our human desires, not abolishing them, in order that they may become truly human.
3. To be truly human is to have control over our desires and emotions, not to be mastered by them
- **1 Corinthians 6:12-20** - <sup>12</sup>"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?



Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!  
<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>17</sup>But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. <sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8** - <sup>1</sup>Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control his own body<sup>[a]</sup> in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup>not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.
- We are not animals; it is possible for us to be the master of our desires and emotions

#### 4. Sex outside of marriage is sin

- God invented sex: Genesis 1:27 - created humans male and female; created us as sexual beings
- The context of our sexuality is marriage - Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:29-31 (not some new dispensation in the NT: Paul makes direct reference to Genesis 2:24)
- **1 Corinthians 6:18** - <sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. The Greek word *porneia* is translated here as sexual immorality, but can also be, and is in fact translated fornication (sex outside the bounds of marriage). This is one example among many in which we are commanded to flee or abstain from sexual immorality, which includes both fornication and adultery (Acts 15:20, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4, Colossians 3:5)
- **1 Corinthians 6:16-20 (The Message)** - <sup>16-20</sup>There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us



more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

5. Sex, like marriage, is not a private affair

- 1 Corinthians 8:1-9** - <sup>1</sup>Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. <sup>[a]</sup> Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. <sup>2</sup>The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. <sup>3</sup>But the man who loves God is known by God. <sup>4</sup>So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. <sup>5</sup>For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), <sup>6</sup>yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. <sup>7</sup>But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. <sup>8</sup>But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. <sup>9</sup>Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. <sup>10</sup>For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup>So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. <sup>12</sup>When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.
- My apparently "private" choices - whether to sleep with my girlfriend or not, whether to commit adultery with my secretary or not - have implications and consequences for the people of God, the church. How I exercise my freedom must be governed by its impact on the church.
- Jesus issues a severe warning to those whose sin causes others to stumble (Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:1-3).
- Our sexual choices do not impact us alone and as such are never private.



- For this reason, among others, Paul warns us to avoid even the hint of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3): we need to pursue absolute purity in these things (the appearance of evil)
6. Avoiding sin can be costly, but it is worth paying the price
    - Matthew 5:29 - if your eye causes you to sin gouge it out
  7. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”
    - Sin strikes at our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with one another. The breakdown of these vertical and horizontal relationships damage the unity of the church. Sexual sin is deeply damaging of these relationships.
    - The seriousness with which Paul views the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit in the church is seen in his very strong response to sexual immorality in the church: **1 Corinthians 5:1-6**

Let me deal with some specific reasons given for moving in together and engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage:

1. “I have physical needs” - yes, you do, but you are also a son/daughter of God and, as such, are not to be mastered by your needs and desires. There is also the grace of God to sustain us in our singleness. Singleness, and hence celibacy, can be the call of God on your life; God empowers those he calls to live out their calling.
2. “I am lonely” - marriage is not an institution you enter into in order to solve your problems; it’s an institution you solve your problems in order to enter into. Some of the loneliest people are married. Sex outside of marriage can often result in people feeling even lonelier than before they slept with the person.
3. “We’re moving in together for financial reasons” - get a roommate, tighten your belts, take the financial knock - financial need is not a good enough reason to sin (Matthew 5:29 - take radical action to avoid sin)
- 4.



