

SEX FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

MATTHEW 5:27-30

Again, it's what's inside that counts. The context makes it clear that Jesus isn't just talking about adultery. He's talking any sex outside marriage—specifically in His illustration, lust.

Two monks were walking along in a downpour when they came to a swollen and swiftly flowing river. A beautiful young woman stood there afraid to cross. One of the monks, with compassion, asked if she needed help. She replied that she needed to get to the other side of the river but was afraid because of its swiftness.

So he picked her up, put her on his shoulder and set her down on the opposite bank. That evening his companion said to him, "I have a bone to pick with you. As monks we took a vow not to look at a woman or to touch her body. Back at the river you did both." The compassionate traveler replied, "Brother, I set her down on the river bank. You are still carrying her in your mind."

Just as anger is the equivalent of murder in our hearts (vv. 21-26), lust is the equivalent of adultery. It all begins inside of us. This is what Jesus is warning us about.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a new set of rules. It is about Christian character and behavior. Jesus doesn't expect us to gouge out our eyes and cut off our hand; He's using hyperbole to demonstrate the importance of controlling our passions.

All of us are sexual creatures. We are here as the result of sex. We think about sex or sexual things probably more than we read the Bible.

An 80 year-old seminary professor was asked by one of his students, "Sir, how old will we be before we stop thinking about sex?" The professor replied, "You're going to have to find someone older than me to answer your question."

Sex is part of who we are. As I have gotten older I'm still interested in sexuality, even though I'm years past the hormonal battles of puberty. And as I've counseled people, and preached and taught about it, I've discovered I'm not alone.

One Sunday a preacher told his congregation that they were going to help with his sermon. When he called out a word they were to start singing a hymn the word reminded them of. So he called out, “Cross.” They immediately began to sing “The Old Rugged Cross.” Next he yelled out, “Grace,” and the congregation sang “Amazing Grace.” Next was “Power,” and they sang “There’s Power in the Blood.” Then he called out “sex” and the congregation just sat there looking at each other. Then in the back an 87 year old grandma stood up and began to sing, “Precious Memories.”

If we think about it so often, wouldn’t you agree that we need God’s perspective and direction! Jesus didn’t ignore it, and it would be wrong for me to skip over it as we continue to look at Jesus’ sermon. This is one of the most active battlefronts in our culture today.

Girls in our culture are caught in the crossfire of our culture’s mixed sexual messages. Sex is considered both a sacred act between two people united by God and the best way to sell suntan lotion.

Parents, your children are going to learn about sex from their peers, TV, music, movies and so on. Young people make mistakes because they get their behavioral cues from the wrong sources. Singles, young and old, divorced or widowed or never married, wrestle with sexual dilemmas.

Our generation learns more about sex from television and movies than what God says because religious leaders and Christian parents seem to be afraid to talk about it. And the idea that sex ought to be reserved for marriage is antiquated, many believe.

Prime-time television implicitly condones premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, and so on, and air as many as 9 depictions of it for every 1 of sex between married couples.

The impression given by those hip young people on the screen is that they are the only ones who know what life is all about, and everyone else is out of step with society.

One man who writes scripts for television says that his goal is to get people to laugh at adultery, homosexuality, and incest. He says, “If you can get them to laugh at these things it breaks down their resistance to them.”

The sin of sex outside the bonds of marriage is tearing up more homes than any other—it is undermining the very fabric of decency in America. A strong God-based, Christian-valued understanding of sex is needed—from God’s point of view.

1. God is pro-sex

Sexual attraction brings men and women together. That’s natural! God made half of us male

and half of us female. He's the one who put within us the desire to be one flesh. (Gen. 2:24) Sex is all God's idea, and He wants us to enjoy it.

Read the Bible! Proper sexual relationships are encouraged throughout His word. Sex, God's way, is encouraged. It is special. It is meant to be enjoyed. (Read the Song of Solomon and 1 Cor. 7:3-5).

And sex is how we join with God in the creative process. A primary purpose for sex is procreation. God told us to be fruitful and multiply. Then He gave us an enjoyable way to do it. Without sex we would have become extinct long ago.

2. God knows best

Since sex is God's idea, we should trust Him. In our Scripture passage Jesus is quoting the seventh Commandment about adultery. Then He moves to the heart of the matter—it's what's inside that matters.

Sex is to be within marriage between a man and a woman. Anything other than that is outside God's intention. He knows wrongful thoughts begin in the heart. It's there we have to, with God's help, control our passions and desires.

So how does God know best about sex?

(1) God wants to protect and preserve us.

God is not a cosmic killjoy. He doesn't want to take away our fun. God doesn't forbid sex outside of marriage because he wants to put us in a box with a list of rules and no fun. No, it's because He wants the best for us.

He knows it is not best when it is outside of marriage between a man and a woman. Premarital sex, extramarital sex is destructive—plain and simple.

The Bible says in 1 Thess. 4:3 that "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality." It's talking about any sex that is not between a husband and wife. Do you see the two positive principles at work here.

God wants to protect us from the hurt and trouble that wrong sex gets us into. And He wants to preserve our relationships and our marriages. If sex is going to be truly meaningful, it must be experienced within a loving commitment of marriage.

We all know that it has become culturally acceptable for young and old alike to live together without bothering with the formality of a marriage commitment.

In their minds it makes sense. They think it's a good way to test the relationship before tying the knot. And I think it's a reaction of coming from parents of the most divorced generation ever.

But the reality is that only 53% who live together actually get married. And, for those who do get married, the risk of divorce is 50% higher than for those who didn't live together before marriage. And those who just live together are more likely to cheat on one another—because there's no commitment. Some sociologists are even counseling, “If you want a happy marriage, don't marry the one you are living with.”

Illicit sex always destroys. Sex outside of the protection of a marriage covenant inevitably hurts, emotions are bruised, and trust is destroyed. Sexual immorality is a blow aimed at self-respect and personhood. It hurts the participants and those around them.

God wants to protect the stability of the family. Every child grows up wanting parents who love each other. There is nothing more debilitating to a child than discovering that his dad or mom has found someone else they find more attractive.

There simply is nothing more destructive to the self-worth and self-image of a husband or wife than to discover the life-mate has been unfaithful. Even for singles who discover they've been used—that you are not the only one he or she claims to love, it is heart breaking.

Some of you object to the idea that we should or shouldn't do something just because God says so. After all, we live in an age of enlightenment—we're educated—we know what's what—we can make our own decisions about such things?

Think about cheating—it's always discovered—and the sense of rejection experienced by the betrayed partner, and the mistrust that accompanies it is unbelievable.

In many ways adultery is the most selfish of sins. The betrayed spouse often has real problems regaining a sense of self-worth when they know their partner has been cheating.

It may be temporarily gratifying to the adulterer, but to those around him or her and to his or her family in particular, the hurt is not only deep, it may last forever. Why does it hurt so much?

(2) Sex is more than a biological act.

One of the reasons is that the sex act joins two people together in body, soul, and spirit (1 Cor. 6:16).—there is a psychological, inner bond that develops between two people during the sex act.

“But we're in love. That makes it alright.” Really? The hidden presupposition here is that our

passions, just like animals, must be fulfilled at any cost. The world says, “We are sexual animals with sexual desires that we must give in to.”

Our culture says that you always give in to your passions no matter what. Every sensual desire of the body that screams for gratification must be fulfilled.

That is totally wrong. First, you cannot trust your passions—they lie to you. Second, we are not animals; and third, we can control our passions. You can never justify illicit sex.

God’s laws, restrictions, and commands are always for our good. They define the boundaries and guidelines that define love, relationships and sex.

(3) Illicit sex breaks five of the Ten Commandments

The 1st is “You shall have no other gods before me.” An adulterer says that there is a relationship that is more important than the relationship with God.

Then there’s the 9th, “You shall not give false testimony.” An adulterer breaks his or her vows and usually lies to cover the sin.

The 8th commandment is, “You shall not steal.” Sex outside of marriage is stealing what belongs to another. Or, what about the 10th commandment, “You shall not covet . . .”? Adultery always begins with a coveting heart.

Finally, we return to the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.” Five of the Ten Commandments are broken when you engage in sexual relations outside of God’s plan.

Sexual sin is the most deceptive temptation we face. It promises so much—gratification is right there—but in the end is always bitter. Those desires in us tell us they must be fulfilled regardless of the cost. They’re lying to you. You don’t have to give in to them.

(4) Illicit sex always results in guilt

No matter how well the sin is hidden, it is always accompanied by a nagging conscience. Illicit relationships seem to promise so much, but you pay with your soul.

Those who practice immorality are caught between conflicting emotions. On the one hand there is exhilarating pleasure, but on the other there is the knowledge that you are living a lie.

For some the guilt is overwhelming. No matter how well the affair is concealed, no matter how many precautions are taken to not be discovered, it will always be there in your mind.

When the telephone rings the adulterer wonders, “Does someone know?” When friends drop by the adulterer wonders whether, perhaps, they know the secret. Even in the most holy moments, when the adulterer wants to worship God in church, the memory of his or her sin flashes, unbidden, into the mind. As David said, “My sin is ever before me.”

3. Trust and obey God with your sexuality

Trust God in this. You may be saying, “Pastor, you’ve got me thinking.” Stop thinking and start being obedient to God. If you’re living together and not married—you need to separate.

If you are having sex on your dates, you need to break it off. You don’t need to discuss it with each other. Just be obedient to God. Leave the results in His hands.

It is better to risk your relationship with your out of wedlock partner, than to risk your relationship with God. Love God more than your sin.

God loves you, and He wants you to do things His way because that’s the best for you. Sexuality is God’s wonderful gift to us. Let it be a good gift.

Application:

God brilliantly designed us for the most fantastic relationships ever—the bonding of a man and a woman. Then He made that bonding even better—the miracle of new life. We’d all be better off if we learned what God says on the matter of love and sex and followed His directions. We’d have fewer broken hearts, and more whole families and healthier lives.