

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

SIGNIFICANT OTHER | SEXUAL FORMATION: PART 2

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Alright, alright. How are we doing today? Doing good. Doing good.

Hey, I want to welcome everybody across all of our physical locations, anybody joining us online. So good to have you.

If you have a Bible would you please find 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6 is where we are going to be today.

And if today is your very first time here and nobody warned you, maybe the girl that you're really into before she said she'd go out with you, she said, "You need to go to church with me, today," you're going to find out why here in just a minute. And I would say that I'm sorry, but I'm not.

Anyway, to kind of catch you up to speed, two weeks ago I preached for nearly an hour on the subject of sex. And I received a lot of attention from that. I've always been told if you want to draw a big crowd to church, do a series on sex, or do a series on the end times or better yet, do a series on will there be sex in the end times. So lots and lots of attention.

I didn't have time to cover everything that I wanted to cover in Part 1, so we split it into two parts. Today I'm going to cover everything that I didn't have time to cover then. So if you missed that message go back and listen to it later today.

You guys have made my job a whole lot more difficult because you sent in questions. Lots and lots of good, good questions came in so I'm going to try to address as many of the most common ones that came in, both today and next week. There is just no way I can get to all of them in this series, so we may even have to do a special podcast where I speak specifically to some of these really, really good questions that you all sent in.

If you are just now joining us, we are halfway through a series of messages called *Significant Other*. And here's the big idea of the series. You and I were created in the image of our Heavenly Father. And because He is a relational God, we are relational people. We crave relationships with friends and family and a potential significant other, a romantic encounter, maybe a marriage relationship one day.

All of this is found in Genesis, chapter 2. So in Genesis, chapter 2 we see that God created the universe. He created the world and everything in it. And then He created Adam and Eve, male and female He created them. And they were designed to not fulfill or complete each other, but to complement each other in every way: physical,

emotional, spiritual. It's those words of Adam when he first laid eyes on a very naked Eve, he was like, "At last."

But then in Genesis, chapter 3 we see that Satan comes and he destroys and distorts this image of God within us. So what I mean by that is that marriage and sex in that order is God's design. And He actually designed it and He gave it to us as a gift and He knows how it works best. Therefore, we do not have the authority to edit it or to redefine it. So God designed sex as consummation not just merely recreation. And it's meant to mirror the covenant relationship that God has made to us in and through Jesus Christ.

Here's another way of saying it: Sex consummates the covenant, which is why we are to wait to experience it after promises are made to each other for life. It is a powerful thing, the fusing of two bodies into one.

In fact the Hebrew word for intimacy, we learned this two weeks ago, is *dode*. And it means the mingling of souls. And it is emotional, and it is even spiritual, which is one of the many reasons why sexual abuse and trauma is so damaging, because it strikes us at a spiritual core level. This also explains why Satan attacks and counterfeits it.

So by way of review I said a couple of weeks ago that when God instituted a marriage, Satan initiated a war. And he's been waging war ever since. And in Genesis, chapter 3 sin entered the world, and what it did was it put a wedge in our relationships with one another and with God. It distorted our view and understanding of this good gift that God has given us in sexual intimacy and it shattered the image of God within us.

That's when Adam and Eve experienced, for the very first time, sexual brokenness. And their response was to hide in shame. And that has been our response ever since.

I can remember the very first time that I was exposed to porn in junior high, it was probably like 99.9 percent of the rest of your stories. I was in my driveway shooting baskets in the middle of the afternoon, a friend of mine came over on his bike. He hopped off of his bike. He has something tucked up underneath his shirt. It was one of his dad's hidden *Playboys*.

He pulled it out, ripped out a picture, handed it to me, I did not know what I was looking at first, and then I found out it was an image of a very naked woman and here was my immediate response: excitement followed by hiddenness. I wadded it up, put it in my pocket, didn't throw it away, put it in my pocket and then felt shame. And those three emotions are what most of us experience when it comes to sexual sin and brokenness: excitement, hiddenness, and shame.

Satan is a deceiver and he is an accuser and he is a counterfeit. And sex tops the list. See, God designed sexual intimacy and Satan seems to destroy it.

So, a number of questions that came in over the last couple of weeks, and I hear this a lot as a pastor, it's sort of around this idea of, "Well, if I have certain urges and desires, then God made me that way and how can it be a sin if God gave it to me?"

And I need to speak very directly to this, but I want to speak very empathetically and very pastorally. I need to get the tone of this right. This whole issue of, “Well, God kind of gave this to me so I need to act on it,” I just need you to know: No, He did not. It is a distortion of what God made in you and for you.

Now, those of you who are pushing on me, you’re not quite sure what you just heard, you are uncomfortable with that, go with me on this, understand—let’s just make a list of all of the things that existed before sin. Did you know that work existed before sin? Food and rest existed and attraction and sex—all of that stuff existed before sin. Sin is a distortion of desires and the gift.

So food existed before sin. Gluttony is a distortion of the gift. Work existed before sin, but workaholicism and finding my identity in it, ignoring my family—all of that is a distortion of the gift. Rest existed before sin. Laziness is the distortion of the gift. Attraction existed before sin. Lust is a distortion of the gift. And sex existed before sin. Anything outside of one man, one woman for life in a covenant relationship is a distortion of the gift.

And God called this sexual immorality, which is not our favorite term. It’s not very popular. But remember what I said two weeks ago. Every time the Bible talks about sexual immorality, that is our Heavenly Father saying, “Please don’t hurt yourself. Man, please don’t hurt yourself.” It’s like a manufacturer’s warning label on something really powerful.

But then Satan baits us into it, counterfeits it with a lesser version of what God intended for it. And then here’s what he does, he accuses you in your shame. What you need to understand is that Satan knows your name and he calls you by your sin. Jesus knows your sin, but He chooses to call you by your name.

What Satan does is that in the midst of your loneliness, brokenness, and shame he flashes images of your sexual past across your mind convincing you that you could never be received by God. That you are totally outside of His grace as you sit in the ashes of your addiction and shame.

What I need you to know about Jesus is that He never once scolds, shames, or shuns somebody caught in sexual sin. Not one time. Not one time. Now, I’m loving these little golf claps. You know, not fully in, but just kind of there.

In Luke, chapter 4 Jesus said, “I have come to bring Good News,” not bad news in this area. He’s come not to condemn the world but to save. Now, He will convict. And many of us are going to get that. I was telling somebody, “This is kind of one of those messages,” you know it’s like, “If I’ve got to run into oncoming traffic, I’d rather square it rather than just put a leg out and lose a limb.”

Today, I know this is just one of those messages, you’re going to either leave angry or changed, but at least there will be some sort of response. And I just want you to know

that Jesus is not bringing about condemnation in your life, He's trying to bring Good News. God does not have a low view of sex; He actually has the highest view of sex.

Remember what we said a couple of weeks ago. The Bible is pro sex within boundaries where it will bring blessings and not pain. But all of us have been discipled, me included, in the culture of what is called the sexual revolution ideology of the past 60 years or so. And it has shifted our view and understanding of sex as something sacred, spiritual, and selfless to something that is common, carefree, and casual just as long as it's consensual.

We need to understand that ultimately our understanding of human sexuality is a lordship issue. I need to say this at the top of the message. This message is primarily for those of you who would identify as Christians. If you are like, "Man, I'm a Christ follower. I've given my life to Jesus. I'm not perfect but I'm in process. I've been baptized. I want to follow after Jesus in every area of my life." This message is for you and this a lordship issue.

If you are not a Christian, and you're here because somebody invited you—first of all, you can have that conversation with them later, alright? Secondly, you need to audit this message. You can audit this. How many of you ever audited a college class? "I'm here but this is not for credit."

Now, one day, do I hope that you would give your life to Jesus? Absolutely. But you need to audit this. This is so important for you to understand, I'm speaking to those of us who have claimed to be followers of Jesus in our lives.

This is a really particular struggle with all of us because I've got you at best, about once a month. Studies show that committed Christians attended church 1.7 times a month before COVID. Because of COVID it's dropped too once. So, I've got you once a month and your screen has you the rest of the time.

The reason why this is so tense and uncomfortable for us is because we are marinating in the exact opposite messaging in our culture 24/7. So it's important to understand that you are discipled by whatever shapes your beliefs, determines your perspective, or guides your decisions.

With that definition in mind, I just want you to get really curious about something in your life. If your view and understanding of sex has shifted dramatically in the last 5, 10, 15, 20 years why is that? What changed?

Chances are it's because we've been inundated relentlessly in the dominant ideology of our culture. Or maybe there is a family member or friend you love and care about very, very much and they are living outside of God's design for them in this area of their life and we changed our view in order to stay in a relationship with them.

What we need to understand is that there is the Word and there is the world. There is a constant conflict between the two and the question that we need to answer for

ourselves is, “Will I let the world override the Word or will I allow God’s Word to overrule the predominant things I’m hearing and experiencing in the world? Will I edit the words of the Creator to be more palpable to the way that I want to live my life, or will I submit this area of my life to Him knowing that He’s a good, good Father and He knows what’s best.”

Catholic theologian and philosopher John Veneri put it so well. He said, “We all have to choose between two ways of being crazy, the foolishness of the gospel or the nonsense of the values of our world. So pick your crazy and then go with it.”

So, that’s my introduction. Aren’t you happy? As we get into the text one of the things I think you need to understand about the city of Corinth... Paul writes this letter to a church in Corinth and before we walk through this passage together, you need to understand that the church in Corinth had a lot of similarities to Broad Ripple here in Indianapolis. Everybody was young, single, and trendy. They shopped local. They supported sustainable business. They were environmentally conscience. They ate kale, drank IPAs.

Every election cycle they are feeling the Bern. They are making up pronouns. Waking up at the crack of noon. Alright? And all of them are talking about moving to Nashville. So, Midtown, I love you guys. I will have an IPA with you anytime.

So understand, that’s this church and here’s the thing. They meet Jesus and they get saved in a dramatic fashion. God moved powerfully and dramatically in their lives. And I think it surprised a whole bunch of people.

Now, this is just a little sidebar here. I do not think that we need to compromise truth in order to reach people. In fact, I think that people are craving truth right now more than ever. But we need to understand how that truth is delivered is really, really important. So I just want you to know what kind of a church you walked into today or what kind of a church that you’re a part of. We can, as a church, keep these two things in tension with one another: truth and grace.

We can be on one side of the column and we can be a church that’s just all about truth and obviously we want to be about truth. But some churches can go truth, truth, truth, truth, truth at the absence of grace and what they end up turning into is they turn into legalists, they forget their experience of grace, they end up becoming theological snobs and they sort of give off this impression even if they don’t mean to, that you’ve got to clean up your act in order to belong there.

Or we can go to the other side of column—we need to be a church that is all about grace. We can be progressive Christians and it’s just basically, “Well, no. These are just suggestions, and you just do you and God is love.”

Neither one of those things have teeth in them that bring about transformation. See, this is the kind of church that we are striving to be. We are not perfect by any means. All

kinds of stuff is wrong with us because we're human beings. We are trying to build bridges of grace that are supported by columns of truth.

See, all truth and I can't hear you. All grace, it won't change me. So we need to be a church in a collection of churches that is about truth delivered in grace.

I had somebody say to me a couple of weeks ago, he was like, "You know, I was hearing you talk about human sexuality and all of that. I'm really disappointed. I thought you would be a more progressive pastor." I just want you to know, I am. I want to help you progress more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

So understand that this is what was happening in the church in Corinth. They got saved in an instant because it's not anything you bring to the equation. Your salvation happens in a moment. When you place your trust in Jesus, are you all cleaned up yet? Nope. Do you have the answers to all of your questions yet? Nope. Has God come and said, "Way to go. You figured this out"? Nope. You just claim Jesus. You accept His sacrifice on the cross for you.

Then after that is the process of what we call sanctification. It's this up and down, back and forward, this striving in process to look more and more like Jesus. You will be in this until the day you expire or Jesus returns, whichever comes first.

So this is what was happening in the city of Corinth and because these new, baby Christians got saved out of the environment of Corinth, the sex capital of the world at the time... You need to understand that they made Vegas look like Sesame Street. These Christians bring all of these attitudes, mindsets, and ideologies about gender, marriage, and sexuality into the church with them, which was inconsistent and incongruent with God's best for their lives.

Here's what Paul is doing. He is throwing himself into oncoming traffic and he is confronting, in chapters 6 and 7—we'll walk you through both of these chapters this week and next week—and he is discipling these new baby Christians in the areas of sex, marriage, and what it means to be single. And he's helping them to be formed more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus by the way that they think about and practice sex.

Let's look at verse 9 together. He says:

"Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin," I just want to stop right there and point out that there is such a thing as sexual sin. That would include: hooking up, knocking boots, late night booty calls, second base on the first date, or shacking up with someone you haven't made promises to for life yet.

Now, let me just tell you what just happened in some rooms somewhere just as I said that. Some guy just leaned over to some girl that he is with, and he put his arm around

her, and he whispered in her ear, “Hey, baby. He’s not talking about us. We’re married in our hearts.”

Now, let me just talk to the girl who just got whispered to. What he really is saying is, “We’re married in our pants.” And God wants something better for you. And He wants to give you a man who will respect you and your future marriage, whether that is with him or someone else one day, who will love you and honor you and give you a commitment just as much as what it is that he is asking for from your body.

Paul goes on and says:

“... or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.”

And, man, you read that, and you should be at least a little bit exhausted and go, “Man, I don’t know if I’m reading this right. It’s almost sounds like we are all going to hell.” Yeah, if the verse stopped there, that means that everybody would go to hell. It’s what we all deserve. It’s what I deserve. Yet here’s the Good News about the gospel. It goes into really bad places, and it rescues us out of what you and I were (key word is *were*) and helps us to become who Jesus died for us to be.

Think about it. Jesus didn’t just go to a cross for us to say, “Okay, now I believe in you. I’ll just continue to live the same life I’ve always lived.” It’s like, “No, man. I want you to be completely changed and transformed. And you don’t do it in your power; you do it by My power, My Spirit that I placed in you.”

Now, check this out. Verse 11:

“Some of you,” he’s talking to the Corinthians. *“Some of you were once like that.”* Now he’s reminding them of who they are in Jesus. *“But you were cleansed;”* he didn’t say you got holy, he said, *“you were made holy;”* he didn’t say you got yourself right, *“you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

He says, “Man, that is what you were. But you were washed. You were sanctified. And you were cleansed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What that means for us today, somebody needs to hear this, you are not your affair, your divorce, your porn addiction, your victimization, your fornication, or your orientation. That no longer gets to define who you are. Jesus defines who you are.

And now what Paul is going to do is he is going to make things really uncomfortable, alright? Paul is going to lean into this area of sexuality in verses 12 through 20. I just want you to know that this is a grip it, rip it text. The more controversial the subject matter, the more closely I just need to stay to the text. So if I’m looking down, it’s just because it’s awkward. So, verse 12. This is what it says. He goes, “Hey man....”

"You say," quote, "I am allowed to do anything" unquote, "—but not everything is good for you. And even though," quote "I am allowed to do anything," unquote "I must not become a slave to anything.

"You say," quote, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." unquote. "(This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.)"

Now, what is Paul doing? He does not have a split personality; he's not talking to himself. Here's what Paul is doing with the quotations, he is quoting back to these Corinthian Christians with the questions and objections that they texted to him with the word *relationships* to 87221. And now he's going through them and he's going, "Hey, here's all of the stuff that you guys sent in. Let me quote the question or objection back to you and then let me answer it."

And so they are coming along, and they are saying, "Paul, as long as we're not breaking any rules, as long as we're not breaking any laws, it's okay. Two consenting adults, what's wrong with it?"

Paul is going to borrow a principle that he applies in another area of the letter where he's like, "Hey, this might be lawful for you as a Christian, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is beneficial." And he applies this to sex. He's basically saying, "Hey, man. Just because it's legal, doesn't mean that it's moral. Just because culture says it's okay, doesn't mean that God says it's okay. Just because a nation says it's okay, doesn't mean that the Kingdom of God says it's okay."

And then he goes on in verse 13:

"But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

"Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, 'The two are united into one.' But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

"Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?" Once again, he's speaking to Christians here. *"You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."*

So what Paul is saying here, in a nutshell, is what you and I do with our bodies is a type of formation, it is forming us into the kind of people we are becoming. So the question is, who do want to become?

Now, a lot of questions came in really around this kind of idea. And this was from both single people who are dating as well as married people, they both had a form of this question. Basically, the question is: What are we allowed to do? How far is too far? How physical can we be?

In other words, "Pastor, what are the boundaries so that we can run up and down them?" So really what I want you to know is... I'm going to try to speak specifically to some of this here in just a minute, but the Bible doesn't speak specifically to, "Hey, you're allowed to do this. You're not allowed to do that." But it's really the greater question of, "What am I becoming by what I do?" That's a greater question.

So maybe you might be technically allowed, whether it's morally or ethically or lawfully or whatever, to do a certain sex act, even within a marriage relationship. But is that helping you become more like Jesus? Is it helping your spouse to become more like Jesus? Those are questions and conversations that you're going to have to have a lot of communication around.

See, the tension not to give in to certain impulses wants and desires is forming our character while giving in deforms our character.

Now, we know that to be true when it comes to things like diet and exercise. We just know that. My body naturally craves deep dish pizza and corn dogs and all of that 24/7. I would just eat myself.... The fat kid inside of me wants to win. And just understanding that I really don't want to work out. It's going to be painful.

But we just know that, "No, I'm going to actually form my body into something by abstaining from certain practices." We just know that to be true: diet and exercise. It's the same with sex. See, the Spirit of God is going to confront those things in our lives and He's going to bring conviction.

And it's important to understand the difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit is not condemning you. He is convicting you toward something better. And He says, "I want to bring you back into alignment with God's best. You're covered by grace, but I'm going to bring you back to God's best."

And we've all got to face this decision in our lives, "Will I chase my sinful instincts, or will I train them?" This is the idea of training, and this is one of the many, many differences between us and the animals.

The Corinthian Christians came to Paul and were like, "We're just highly evolved animals. We've got urges. We act on them. Nothing wrong with that." And in the words of that Nickleback song, which sounds like every other Nickleback song, right? "Animals." "No were never going to quit. Ain't nothing wrong with it. Just acting like we're animals." Such a catchy tune. Awesome to work out to. Questionable lyrics. We're just animals. We're going to act on it. But have you noticed that animals do really silly things?

We have a 90-pound silver Lab named Winston. He's amazing. He's a big bear of a dog. And my son and I went to visit my parents a couple of years ago and they've got this tiny, little Australian Sheep dog. They were playing in the garage. And I walked out, and I found this, [the Sheep dog humping the Lab]. So, this is our dog. This is my parents' dog. I don't know if you can see the look on my dog's face. He's like, "What are doing?" It was just insane. You can remove that. That's very awkward having that in my peripheral preaching.

We look just as silly when we chase after all of our impulses, instincts, and desires rather than train them. And here's the thing. You may not agree with me, you may not be a Christian, but I think you know that in other areas of life. Like, "I've got to train myself. I can't just act on all of my impulses."

See, we're not just animals. We are image-bearers of God. And as an image-bearer of God you have dignity and worth and value. So when you have sex it's not like two animals who don't have souls, it's two people who do. And, by the way, nobody, anywhere actually believes we're just animals.

You ask rape victims if what happened to them was the same thing as their mom force feeding them Brussels sprouts when they were a kid. And they will be so offended, because it is not just another natural, biological appetite that somebody is seeking to fulfill. It is deeply spiritual, emotional, and supernatural.

So we tell generations, it's just an animal's desire and then we act surprised at the epidemic of sexual addiction and assault in our culture. You tell a whole generation they are nothing but purposeless animals, don't be surprised when they act like purposeless animals.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul says this. No, no, no:

"I discipline my body," and I keep it under control, and I'm blessed for it.

And we all have to do this. We all control our desires for the good of society and for our own spiritual and emotional health and for the health of our marriages.

Now, this doesn't make us less of a person. This makes us more of a person who God created and designed us to be. And it is called submission to the Lordship of Christ. And it's what we all have to answer to every single day, "Will I edit the words of my Creator, or will I change them because I want to actually do what I want to do?" And you have that choice.

And we don't like submission to the Holy Spirit because we are autonomous human beings, especially in the western world. We value our freedom. And so we say, "You know what? I want to be free." But following your sexual desires, wherever they may lead you, does not result in freedom.

In fact, the Corinthian Christians were saying to Paul, “Paul, we’re finally free of all of these oppressive religious rules. We are enlightened, sex-positive people who can enjoy sexuality free from the guilt of antiquated rules holding us back from being our true selves. Paul, we are liberated.”

And Paul says, “Okay. You think you’re free, but actually you’re slaves to your desires.”

And so are we. Porn addicts who stay up late into the night gazing at the glow of fake images with their pants around their ankles. Man, you’re not free. Giving it up on the first or second date because you really want him or her to like you and you’re tired of being alone, man, you’re not free. Sneaking around and hoping nobody sees you walk into or out of that hotel room after being with somebody who isn’t your spouse, you’re not free.

2 Corinthians 3:17 describes freedom:

“... wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

So listen. God’s got a plan to bless your life. Satan has a plan to curse your life. And just like your company’s HMO you get to decide what plan you are on. Everybody gets to decide.

Society is beginning to see that the sexual revolution ideology of 60 years ago just isn’t working. It’s slowly beginning to recognize this. I said this two weeks ago. Sociology is just catching up to where good theology has been for thousands of years. And in study after study, non-Christian studies, by the way, are just revealing that this so-called liberation has just enslaved us.

Here's a couple of examples. *The Washington Post*, not necessarily known for its Jesus-centered content, had an article called “Consensus is Not Enough.” And it said that we need a new sexual ethic. And it talks about all of the stats of how porn and hook-up culture are ravishing this generation. Let me just read you an excerpt from it. It says:

This generation is the most sexually liberated, but least sexually satisfied. In our post sexual revolution culture there seems to be wide agreement among young adults that sex is good. And the more we have of it the better. That assumption includes the idea that we don’t need marriage to be tied to a relationship, but our proclivities are personal and not to be judged by others, not even by participants.

In this landscape there is only one rule. Get consent from your partner beforehand.

Now listen to this last sentence:

But the outcome is a world where young people are both liberated and absolutely miserable. This generation is the most sexually liberated and also the least sexually satisfied.

Fascinating.

The Family Institute did a big study on relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. Let me just show you the graph. Lots of content here. Basically... I'm going to kind of break this down for you. They basically asked couples, "How satisfied are you in your relationships? Take sex out of it for just a minute, just your relationships."

So all the way over on the left the least satisfied couples were either shared, secular gender progressive, or gender traditional couples. All the way over in the right the most satisfied in their relationships were highly religious, gender progressive or traditional couples. So translation, a scenario where a guy meets a girl and gets married and makes promises to her for life are the most satisfied.

Now, let's talk about sex for a minute, the next slide. "How satisfied are you in your sexual relationship with your partner?" All the way over on the left, the least satisfied were shared, secular couples. All the way over on the right, highly religious couples.

What that means is that if you meet somebody, you decide to honor God in your relationships, you get married and you come to church regularly, the stats are showing that you're having the best sex ever.

A number of questions came in around cohabitation. This idea of, "Is it wrong for us to live together? We love each other. We're going to get married. Is it wrong, is it a sin for us to live together before marriage?"

And there are all kinds of reasons that we use to justify this: financial and all that kind of thing as well as, "Like, we've got to test it out first. We've got to see if we're compatible."

You just take everything that God's Word says about it out of the equation. Here's what secular studies are saying. "Cohabitation increased the likelihood that your marriage will end in divorce by 30 to 50 percent."

The Wall Street Journal in an article called "Too Risky Not to Wed" says, "Research shows that marrying young without ever having lived with a partner makes for some of the lowest divorce rates."

Johnathan Grant in his book *Divine Sex* describes premarital sex and living together as "Sub prime relationships." And he describes what he means.

If intimate relationships were mortgages, we might call these sub prime commitments. They are high risk projects with little or no collateral security. Unfortunately, just like sub prime mortgages, these relationships are designed to fail. Only one in five results in actual marriage, significantly increasing the likelihood of divorce. Women who co-habit multiple times before marrying divorce twice as frequently as those who do not.

Serial monogamy, a string of consecutive sexual relationships, hinders actual marital satisfaction. Sexual experience before marriage is a good indicator for the increased likelihood of infidelity later in marriage.

Let me translate that for you. If you've been living with somebody who is not your spouse, and you've been having sex, or multiple partners, you've just been training yourself to have an affair one day.

Here's what I mean by that. If, before marriage, you're not actively training your desires, you're not resisting temptation or controlling your drive, you're not submitting to the Holy Spirit and you say, "Well, one day when I find the one and I get married, then I'll refrain," just keep in mind that you do not have the practice to do so.

What I mean by that, let's just say...

Let me talk to all of the unmarried people right now. You find the one, one day. He sweeps you off of your feet. She's just perfect for you. And you decide to get married. Newsflash. You are still going to find that hot girl or guy in the gym attractive. And the ability to rein it in becomes really challenging when you haven't developed the instincts, patterns, or pathways to train your desires rather than to chase them.

When I was growing up I heard this all of the time in the locker room from guys talking about dating girls and living together. They would say, "Well, you know, you'd never buy a used car without test driving it first." "You wouldn't buy a pair of shoes without trying them on first."

Listen, man. A woman with hopes and dreams and a soul isn't a used car or a pair of shoes.

The Corinthian Christians come back, and they were like, "Hey, Paul. Honestly, at the end of the day, it's my body. Not hurting anybody else. I'm going to do with it what I want." In Corinth they had *My body My choice* bumper stickers all over the back of their camels.

And in verse 13 Paul speaks to this. He says: "Hey, man. The body wasn't made for sex but for the Lord, and He cares your body."

I'm going to talk about this next week. We follow a King who stayed single His whole life and never had sex and He was the most fulfilled person ever. You don't have to have sex to be a more complete person. That is a lie straight from the pits of hell.

Verse 15:

"Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ?"

And then he says, really the most specific thing about it in 19 and 20, he says:

"Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

Alright class, pop quiz. Don't you love those?

Who made your body?

God.

Very good. You're much better than the 9 o'clock, 9 o'clock was very confused by that.

Who came in a body, lived a perfect life in a body, and was crucified with nails through His body, and was resurrected bodily?

Jesus.

You're super, super sharp.

Who is coming to judge the living and the dead for the deeds that we committed in the body, and then we will spend eternity in heaven with Him in a new body?

Jesus.

So, here's Paul's point. Your body: you didn't make it, you didn't redeem it, you didn't resurrect it, it is not yours, it is God's. And it is on loan to you from Him. And He bought you with a high price.

Now listen. If you are not a Christian, you just audit what I just said. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul says, "What do I have to do with judging anybody outside the faith?" But for those of you who are, Jesus didn't just die to be your Savior and to get you into heaven one day when you die. He died to be Lord of your life right now. And we attempt to keep God out of this part of our lives.

And, honestly, I've been there too. It's what we might call being a sexual atheist. Meaning we are good with God speaking into most every other area of our lives, "Aaron, I'm going to come to church more than once a month." "Aaron, I'm going to serve in a ministry." "I'm going to read a psalm a day." "I'm going to be in a group." "I'm all in." "But when it comes to the bedroom, God, would You please do not disturb? I don't want You in here."

Some of the most shameful moments of Christian history, I think many of you will know this, are the Crusades. And how the Crusades even happened was Christians would get baptized and when they got baptized they would literally hold their swords out of the water as a visible representation to say, "Jesus is Lord of everything, except what I'm going to do with this in battle because I know that He wouldn't approve of it."

Now, in our culture, we don't get baptized holding swords out of the water, but we do get baptized holding our checkbooks and our sexuality out. "God, You can have every part of me except for those two things."

And, ultimately, at the end of the day, this is a lordship issue.

Now, I've got to land the plane. So let me just give you a couple of takeaways. All of the married people listening to this, here's your takeaway. A number of questions came in from married couples asking, "What does God's Word allow us to do, intimacy wise, in a

marriage relationship?” And I would actually kind of read the questions, but you all made me blush. You said things where I was like, “Whoa. Learning some things here. Wow.”

So I feel really honored that, as your pastor, you felt comfortable enough to say those words to me. It was just, “Wow.” I always hesitate to give really specific answers to such a broad group of people. Like, honestly, I lose sleep over this if I think about it too much. I would just crawl into a ball and cry. I’ve got to stand on this stage and preach a message to thousands of people knowing there are thousands of perspectives, and maybe it’s going to hit you wrong, and personality tests, and all of that stuff.

Just understand that very specific answers to questions in such a broad group of people, I just can’t do it. And, let me just say there is no chapter and verse on oral sex. However, where we don’t have chapter and verse, we do have biblical principles and that is what we have to lean on.

So, understand. Here’s what the Bible says to married couples. It talks about mutual submission. It talks about being considerate of each other’s need, wants, and desires. It’s understanding that if one of you has experienced sexual trauma or abuse, you need to take that into consideration and ask yourself, “Is what I’m asking my spouse to do brushing up against that wound?”

I have a close friend. He’s been married to his wife 20 some odd years and after the last 12 to 15 they’ve not been able to be intimate because of her health. And he is just as committed to her and loves her and is not going anywhere.

So understand that we’ve got to be really, really considerate of one another, alright? Now with all of that said, when it comes to—I can’t stress this enough—emotionally healthy and spiritually healthy marriages, we’ve got to understand it is not just procreation, it is recreation.

The Song of Songs, it gets really, really graphic between this married couple, this husband and wife. He’s talking about laying between her breasts and she’s talking about tasting his fruit. So just use your imagination, okay.

So when it comes to healthy, spiritually healthy, and emotionally healthy Christian marriages, I said this two weeks ago, we need lots of Pentecostal marriages, lots of tongues and laying on of hands.

1 Corinthians 7, for those of you who weren’t here two weeks ago, 1 Corinthians 7—we’ll get into this more next week. Listen to what Paul says. He goes:

“The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs.”

Some of you just found your life verse. You’re just like, “That’s it. That’s my next tattoo.” You’re like, “Yes, ma’am. Reporting for duty. I can apply that right now.” So in emotionally healthy, spiritually healthy marriages, man, you work to keep it red hot.

Now, my wife will tell you I can make anything sexual. She comes home, she says, “I think the tires on the truck need to be rotated.” I’m like, “I’ll rotate your tires right now.” She’s like, “I don’t even know what that means.” I don’t either. It sounded good. They texted it in to me. Use that. Verse 5:

“Do not deprive each other of sexual relations,” now listen to this, *“unless you both agree to refrain,”* this is good, healthy communication, *“from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”* And then he says this. *“I say this as a concession, not as a command.”*

I’m not commanding this; I’m saying this is a wise thing for you to consider.

So, a whole bunch of questions that came in around what we can, and can’t do, it all comes together under the umbrella, and I’m going to get into this next week, your marriage will not work if you’re not first operating as Christians, and second operating as friends and you having good, healthy communication with one another.

Unmarried people, I’m going to get really specific to all of the singles next week because Paul address this in chapter 7. Here’s your action step, single people. Flee sexual immorality. It’s like, “Hey, man. That’s so good. Thank you very much, pastor.” That moment of awkward silence was the best. Oh, man. I wish I would have had a GoPro to record that.

So here are a few questions that came in. “How far is too far when it comes to dating?” And then they would specify: Is making out a sin? Kissing? Placing hands on hips. Cuddling fondly. Well, I wonder what you’re doing.

Here’s another one. “My boyfriend and I have been dating for one year. Can we sleep together, no sex, and kiss sometimes?”

Let me just say this. Man, you are—once again, where are the borders that we can run up and down? And just saying, “Hey, can we sleep together and not have sex?” that’s basically like saying, “I’m starving to death. So, I’m going to go to bed with my cheeseburger and I’m not going to eat it.” That’s what that is.

“What determines the limit for non-married couples? Holding on to a woman’s waist while dancing is fine, but six inches lower, is that a sin?” And, that one just made me chuckle. I was like, “Did you fall asleep during your high school biology class?” Six inches lower is where the who-ha—totally different thing. Totally different thing.

“Is masturbation wrong if you don’t watch porn while doing it?”

I mean, I just really appreciate all of the honesty in these questions. And here’s what all of these questions are asking, “What are we allowed to do and not do, because I’m just going to run it right up to that border?”

Once again I'm just going to throw this statement out to you about formation. You might technically be allowed to do it, but who are you becoming by what you do? That's the greater question.

In a letter to the Ephesians, it says if you come face to face with Satan, like literally, like you face him in an alley, here's what you do. You put on the full armor of God. The breastplate of righteousness, the sword and a shield, and you go toe to toe with Satan. We're talking like no shrinking back, UFC Octagon blood bath. That's what you do.

But it says something very, very different when it comes to sexual temptation. See, everywhere it talks about sexual sin, because it's so unique and different, it doesn't say that you face it and fight it, it says that you resist it, that you flee sexual immorality. Why? Because you and I don't stand a chance.

Here's, practically, what that means. If you walk out to your car today when the service is over, and you see Satan leaned up against your car. He's just kind of throwing a ball up in the air and he wants to fight you, here's what you do. You go toe to toe, and you fight him right then and there because greater is He that is in you that he that is in the world.

Now, if you walk out to your car, guys, and a 1990s Pamela Anderson is laying on your hood looking all *Baywatchy* and Corinthian, alright? Here's what you do. Run for it. Run. You do not stand a chance. You just run. Every time somebody fell into sexual sin, here's what happened. They decided to stay and flirt rather than flee.

What this means is that some of you are going to have to make some really hard decisions today that are not going to be very popular with your significant other, friends and family, or even with yourself. And the question is, "Am I going to trust God in this or am I going to trust what I really want to do and what culture says?"

And there are these really beautiful moments in this. I don't mind throwing myself into this tension because I know it's where we're all living anyway. And I'm just hoping, I'm just hoping that many of you would come to reach out to the truth and the grace that Jesus is offering because the other way does not work.

At the end of the first hour, I had a young couple come up to me in their 20s and they said, "Hey, could we talk to you for a minute?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure." And they said, "One of the questions that you read specifically, that was ours." And at first I thought, "Oh, man. They are going to be mad at me. And then immediately they teared up and they said, "Thank you for speaking so directly and so kindly and so beautifully to us."

And I said, "Can I pray for you guys?" And they said, "Please do." And just through a whole bunch of tears I just laid my hand on them, and I prayed for them and watched them walk out of here hand in hand.

These next few moments are going to be really hard for some of you. And I knew that preparing this message. And I prayed specifically for you because some of you are

going to have to walk out of here today and you're going to have to end that relationship and I'm so sorry because I know that you don't want to be alone. And I know that you really care for this other person, maybe you even love them, and I'm not even saying you need to end it for good. But maybe for now, it's what's best.

Some of you are going to need to walk out of here today and you're going to move out because you're living with your girlfriend or your boyfriend and you're saying that you're a Christian, but you're harming your future marriage relationship. I'm so sorry because that's going to be awkward and it's going to be inconvenient, and it might cost you something.

Some of you have already started a family and you're living together with kids. And I want you to be a God honoring man, and I'm speaking to the man right now because the sin of men is passivity and abdication. And you need to give her, with your life, what you've already been asking of her body. You need to make a commitment to her.

Some of you are going to need to set really hard boundaries in your dating relationships because not only are you running up and down the borders, you've spent plenty of time on the other side of them. What that means is that you're going to have to stop being alone together. You're going to have to stop being alone in the dark together. It means that you're going to have to commit to say, "We are going to stay vertical and not horizontal because we want to honor God in our relationship and in our future marriage.

Who or what is going to be Lord of my life? And here are your options. It's either short-term pain or long-term pain. Short-term pain: breakup, move out, set limits, be made fun of. That's painful in the short-term. Or long-term pain: broken marriage, joint custody, damaged reputations.

"Will I choose between short-term pleasure or long-term pleasure?" Short-term pleasure: the make out session, the orgasm. Or long-term pleasure: committed love, maturing affection, and emotional health.

I want you to know that, as your pastor, I don't take any of this lightly. We've hopefully been able to have fun. And you've gotten to laugh about some of this stuff, or you just cry.

But I want you to know that there is a conversation that I refuse to have one day because I know that one day I'm going to stand before Jesus in heaven and I do not want to have this conversation, "Jesus, it was such an honor for me to be the primary pastor and shepherd for Traders Point for all of those years, one of the greatest churches in all of the world, people I love very, very much. But, God, You said some things about sexuality that I knew was going to hurt their feelings and I knew it was going to make them uncomfortable, and I knew that they were going to get mad at me, so I refrained from telling them."

I don't ever want to have to say that. That would be really selfish of me because just like anybody I want to be liked. I don't want you to be angry with me. I don't want you to send me a scathing email. I want to be friends.

But even more than that, I don't want to undercut the truth that there is a good, good God and Heavenly Father who loves you more than anything. And what He says about this area of your life is for your good. And I trust some of you will receive that and it will completely change your life, it will completely change your relationships, and it will completely change your marriage.

But not without some pain. The question is: What pain will you choose?

Jesus went to a cross so that you can be redeemed and washed and sanctified and cleansed. So when He looks at you He knows your sin, but He calls you by your name. Today, would you step into that identity?

Father, thank you for being a good, good God. Forgive us where we have failed over and over again in this area of sexual sin. God, forgive me. I have stumbled and fallen in this area of sexual sin. And it's hard, especially in this culture in which we live to run into oncoming traffic in the primary direction of where everyone seems to be traveling. But, God, we want to trust You.

So, God, I pray right now that You would set captives free. I pray that the blind will see. I pray that the oppressed will be unshackled by that. That there would be people right now in the seats where they are, that they would experience Your incredible truth wrapped in grace through the person of Jesus Christ. May we step into that identity trusting that You've done everything that we need for our salvation. So now we want to follow. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.