

10 Hard Questions

*“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”
(1 Peter 3:14–16 ESV)*

*“be ready in season and out of season...”
(2 Timothy 4:2 ESV)*

Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?

June 7th, 2020

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Well good morning church! It's good to be with you again today. I'd love for you to open your Bibles if you have one with you, to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Today we are anticipating a particular question from our friends and loved ones – and the question is this: Why does God care who I sleep with?

This question is of a slightly different character than the others that we have looked at thus far. In my experience this question is often asked by honest inquirers – meaning this is something that inevitably comes up AS PEOPLE are making their way toward the Christ of Scripture. You can't read too far into the Bible before discovering that God has rules and restrictions with respect to human sexuality – and while that may not have been a surprise to spiritual inquirers in your grandparent's day, it does come as a surprise to people today. Sexual liberty is one of the highest values in our current culture – and so this will come up – if you are sharing the Gospel in this culture in this century – you will be asked this. And so you need to be able to answer. You need to be prepared to make a defense here – to anyone who asks you.

So hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 6. This is God's Word to us:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God.

I think the starkness and clarity of this passage actually suggests that before we answer our loved one’s question about sexuality we ought first to affirm it.

Affirming The Question

Meaning, I think we ought to take a different approach here than I suggested last week with respect to the question: “But Hasn’t Science Disproven Christianity?” There I suggested that you begin by BLOCKING and BLUNTING that question because it does reflect a remarkable overreach. Science HAS NOT DISPROVED CHRISTIANITY – indeed it cannot. The question itself is non-sensical. Saying that science has disproven Christianity makes about as much sense as saying that Professional Sports has disproven Christianity – or Rock Music has disproven Christianity. None of those things has the scope or the capacity or the reach to falsify Christianity – and so we suggested that you begin by BLOCKING and BLUNTING the overreach of that question – but in this case, I think you should begin by AFFIRMING this question – because clearly God DOES care who we sleep with – as the passage we just read clearly indicates.

There are 10 sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – it looks like 9 in the ESV because they combine two separate nouns into a description of collaborative activity – but the NKJV retains the full list – so let me cite it in that translation:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were

washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11 NKJV)

So there you see – if you count them up – 10 sins that, according to the Apostle Paul, if you persist in – that is neither confessing them as sins nor turning away from them in the power of the Holy Spirit – will exclude you from the Kingdom of God.

So this is a serious list and it ought to be noted that of the 10 sins listed – 4 have to do with sexual sin.

“Fornicators” – the dictionary explains that as a “sexually immoral man or a prostitute chaser”. So if you persist in that – if you don’t name that as a sin and turn away from it – you will be excluded from the eternal kingdom of God.

Then we have “adulterers” – we probably all know this one. That means, obviously to cheat on your spouse, to have an affair, to sleep with a married person.

Thirdly, we have “homosexuals”. That is the Greek word *mal-ak-os*’ which means “effeminate one”, or “the **passive** partner in homosexual sex”.

And then fourthly, we have “sodomites”. That is the Greek word *ar-sen-ok-oy'-tace* which means “the **active** partner in homosexual intercourse”.

So – your friend is right. God does care who we sleep with. He has something to say to single people, married people, straight people and gay people. He is telling everybody in this passage that he is Sovereign over their sex life.

That fact cannot be avoided – that fact SHOULD NOT BE AVOIDED. Sooner or later you loved one needs to confront the issue of God’s AUTHORITY – and in our culture, this confrontation will almost certainly happen right here. You can’t protect them from this crisis. This is the crisis of conversion in our culture. This is where you will bow – or walk away. So affirm the question – and then by God’s grace, and through appeals to Holy Scripture – answer the question.

Answering The Question: Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?

I think the first part of the question ought to be this:

1. **Because he cares about all sin**

The flip side of what we just noted in our tally of sins from 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is that 6 of the 10 sins listed had nothing to do with human sexuality. Paul talked about:

Idolatry – which is worshipping the wrong God or worshipping God the wrong way or worshipping good things as if they were God things.

He talked about theft. We all know what that is. And even if you have a political or social grievance – theft is theft. And unconfessed and unrepented of THEFT excludes you from the Kingdom of God.

He talked about covetousness – which is a Bible word for GREED and ENVY. It is wanting things and craving things you do not have.

He talked about revilers. A reviler is a slanderer. A reviler is a person who says hurtful, damaging and unsubstantiated things about other people in order to harm them. If being a REVILER excludes you from heaven, then most Facebook users should consider themselves in mortal peril.

Then lastly Paul mentioned extortioners. That means to plot, connive and defraud the poor. A business owner – or a Prosperity Gospel preacher – or a corrupt politician - who doesn't confess that and repent of that will be excluded – eternally from the Kingdom of God.

You see God is of purer eye than to look upon evil – according to Habakkuk 1:13 – and therefore if you are identified with evil – if you are holding on to evil – if you refuse to confess and let go of evil – then you will be put out into the darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

That is true of all sin – and that is the first and most important answer to the question: why does God care who I sleep with? He cares because ALL SIN – SEXUAL AND OTHERWISE –

unrepented of will sink your soul to hell on Judgment Day. God cares about that – and you should care about that too.

And that’s why history continues – according to the Apostle Peter. Because God is

“patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

So God cares about all sin – that’s the first answer. The second answer I think is this. God cares who we sleep with:

2. Because sex is powerful

And we all know that – even if some people in our culture try to pretend that they don’t know that. Let me ask you a question – why is sexual assault more traumatic than a broken leg? If having sex is no different than eating a meal or going to the bathroom – if it is just a physical function – then why is sexual assault a psychological trauma?

And it is.

The #MeToo movement makes that very plain.

Sex is NEVER as casual as we try to portray it as being in the media.

It is spiritual.

It is psychological.

It is emotional.

And it is physical.

And that is why it is so dangerous – and that’s why even as our culture is talking to young people

about sex more frequently and more graphically than at any point in the history of our nation – actually, our young people are having LESS SEX than perhaps at any point in the history of our nation – or at least in the recent history of our nation - did you know that?

Researchers like Dr. Jean Twenge have been talking about this for years. *The Atlantic Journal* recently reported that: “People now in their early 20’s are two and a half times as likely to be abstinent as Gen Xers were at that age; 15 percent report having had no sex since they reached adulthood.”¹

Twenge adds: “Maybe they are naked Snapchatting or sexting, but they are less likely to take the extra step to be physically together and to actually have sex.”²

Interestingly, one of the reasons she offers as a potential explanation for the hesitance of many young people to engage in intimate relationships is the fear of “catching feelings”. According to one of the young ladies she interviewed: “You don’t want to be caught up in someone else’s problems, triumphs and failures ... At the end of the day, your 20’s are the years where YOU DO YOU. Be selfish, have fun and explore the world.”³

Whatever else is wrong with that statement – and there are many things wrong with that statement – one thing she got right is the instinctive understanding that sex leads to feelings and feelings are disruptive.

That is 100% true.

You might want sex to be merely physical – but it never is.

That’s why the Apostle Paul had to tell his people:

¹ As cited by Sam Allberry in *Does God Really Care Who I Sleep With?* (Oxford: The Good Book Company, 2020), 31-32.

² Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today’s Super Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared For Adulthood*, (New York: Atria Books, 2017), 210.

³ Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today’s Super Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared For Adulthood*, (New York: Atria Books, 2017), 214.

do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:16–18 ESV)

When you have sex with a prostitute, Paul says, you become UNITED WITH HER in a way that is more than merely physical – and you are united to God in a way that is more than merely physical – so this sexual act has consequences all over the place! It has an effect on who you are as a person, who you are as a worshipper and who you are in and of yourself.

Sex is never merely physical – and God knows that – and interestingly, more and more of our young people seem to know that instinctively as well.

So God cares about who we sleep with – because sex is powerful. It affects us – it changes us – it touches us on every level as human beings.

And then thirdly – and flowing right out of that – God cares who we sleep because sex communicates. It says something that we cannot control and mustn't distort.

3. Because sex communicates

The Bible says that sex was God's idea. He designed it. He made them male and female – that is to say – he gave them corresponding parts and he intended for those parts to go together. The Bible says:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 ESV)

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:24–25 ESV)

From these verses we can clearly see that part of what makes us the image and likeness of God is that we are male and female. We are one flesh – but we are distinct in our personhood. Well given

what we have come to know about God over the course of the canon – that he is ONE GOD and THREE PERSONS – that he is singularity and plurality in some marvelous and mysterious way – given that this is true of God then of course, it must also be true in some lesser way of us – as male and female.

And this is why God told the man to CLEAVE to his wife and to become one flesh with her. Because in that moment – in that union – in that rapturous embrace – we know something about God – we SAY something about God that we do not say and cannot say anywhere else.

The Apostle Paul spoke about this in Ephesians 5. He spoke about how men and women should come together in marriage – he gave some very practical advice – and he grounded it in Genesis 2:24 – he said:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:31–33 ESV)

So Paul says that the intimate one flesh union of a husband and wife in some sense is communicating the mystical union of Christ and the church. So coming together has its own joys and pleasures – yes – it is that – enjoy that – but know that whether you mean to or not – you are communicating. Your marriage will say something to your children, to your neighbours and to the world about the nature of God and his love for his covenant people.

Sex communicates – seemingly in every direction.

Tim and Kathy Keller in their very useful book on marriage say that:

“Sex is God’s appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another, “I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.””⁴

⁴ Tim and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning Of Marriage* (finish), 224.

And so God cares who we sleep with because how we do sex has the capacity to obscure and deface something precious that he intended to be communicated through sex. Sex is saying something – whether you mean for it to be saying that, or not.

And then lastly here, God cares who we sleep with:

4. Because sex is a matter of life and death

That sex is related to LIFE is established very early on in the text of Scripture. In Genesis 1:27-28 the Bible says:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:27–28 ESV)

According to the Bible one of the ways that we exercise dominion is by having and raising little baby boys and girls who know and love the Lord. And that’s one of the reasons why the Bible commands that sex take place inside the context of covenant marriage. Sex leads to babies – and babies need a mommy and a daddy to be healthy, to be safe and to grow up into the people that God created and intended them to be.

Parenting is a two-person sport.

God bless every woman and every man in this church trying to parent on their own – they will be the first to tell you that parenting is a two-person sport.

The data on this is pretty overwhelming. A recent study using statistics from The Bureau of Labor found that 95% of Millennials who were married before having their first child were living well above the poverty line. Whereas, only 72% of Millennials who had their first child while single or co-habiting were living above the poverty level.⁵

That’s a 23% difference.

⁵ <https://www.biggerpockets.com/blog/is-the-success-sequence-still-relevant>

God cares whether you have sex before you get married or not because he cares about the health, safety and prosperity of the child that could potentially result from that union.

Sex was designed to produce life – and if you aren't ready for that life then – far too often in our culture, it leads to death and ruin.

There were over 85,000 abortions performed in Canada in 2019. We have essentially no abortion law in this country – and increasingly abortion is treated as a form of birth control – because sex leads to BABIES as the Bible states clearly on PAGE 1.

It has ever been thus.

Sex brings the greatest joys into our lives and if we aren't ready – if we aren't in the right place – if we aren't doing it God's way – then what should have been the greatest moment in your life becomes the end of someone else's.

I would hate God if he didn't care about that.

What kind of God wouldn't care about tiny human beings being cut into little pieces – and sucked out of the womb by a vacuum tube?

Thankfully – no such God exists.

The God who is there cares a great deal about such things. The God who is there knit you together in your mother's womb. He knows your inmost parts. He knows every hair on your head. He knows what will make you happy. He knows what will break your heart – and therefore he cares a great deal about who you sleep with.

Now, suppose you answer your friend's question that way and he or she is willing to continue the conversation. If that is the case then I suggest that you say something positive and winsome about the biblical view of sex. Toward that end I offer these few suggestions.

What Does The Bible Say About Sex?

Maybe the most surprising thing that the Bible says about sex – at least when measured against your friend’s expectations – is that it is good.

1. It’s good

It’s very good according to the Bible – and our friends and loved ones need to know that. In our contemporary culture, Christianity is generally portrayed as sexually repressive. We are known for being opposed to gay sex, opposed to pre-marital sex and opposed to extra marital sex and therefore the assumption is that Christians believe that sex is bad – but nothing could be further from the truth!

The Bible says that the first husband and wife were:

both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25 ESV)

Before the fall – before sin – sex was part of the created order. It was good – VERY GOOD – and it was engaged in freely, frequently and without inhibition of any kind.

All throughout the Bible sex is celebrated in a way that might even shock the first-time reader. In the Book of Proverbs the wise father instructs his son to:

“rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.” (Proverbs 5:18–19 ESV)

Likewise in the New Testament it says:

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled (Hebrews 13:4 ESV)

The Apostle says: “Don’t let anyone ever tell you that what happens in the marriage bed between a husband and a wife is cause for shame. It is not. It is honourable. It is pure. It is good.”

That's what the Bibles says, Old Testament and New - thanks be to God!

Maybe the most surprising thing that the Bible says about sex is that:

2. Husbands owe it to wives

You may have heard me say before that many historians consider this the most progressive statement on sex ever uttered in the ancient world. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 the Apostle Paul said that:

“the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:3–4 ESV)

The idea that sex was to be mutual and that the husband owed it to his wife – and that the wife had a right to claim it from the husband and had authority over his body – was revolutionary! It was unprecedented! No one had ever said anything like that, anywhere else in the ancient world.

Far from parroting the sexual norms of the culture, Christianity taught that sex within a marriage should be free, generous, mutual and reciprocal. That counsel was at odds with the norms of the first century Roman world and it remains at odds with the wisdom of our culture still today.

Young couples nowadays are often told that they should only have sex when both parties desire it – however the Bible says that sex should be given in a marriage whenever either party desires it.

Both husband and wife should be happy to serve their spouse with their body. Of all the things said in the Bible about sex, that might be the most surprising of them all.

The third thing you might mention here is that sex in the Bible isn't just about the kids.

3. It's not just about the kids

While we do want to point out the connection between sex and procreation – as we did above – we don't want to absolutize that connection. We don't want to suggest that the only reason married couples should be having sex is in order to produce a child. We don't want to say that – because the Bible doesn't say that. In fact the Apostle Paul prescribed regular sexual intercourse within a

marriage and only allowed infrequent breaks from that – for the purpose of prayer and fasting. He said in 1 Corinthians 7:5:

“Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Corinthians 7:5 ESV)

As in the Old Testament, so in the New, frequent marital intercourse is prescribed as a guard against a wandering eye and a lustful heart. The assumption is that if we drink deeply from our own cisterns, we will be less tempted to draw from our neighbour’s well. (Proverbs 5:15) There is great wisdom – and great joy – in following that wise prescription.

The man and his wife were both naked and unashamed at the beginning of their marriage, before any children were added to their union – and they can look forward to being naked and unashamed again – once the children leave. Thanks be to God!

And then finally, and this needs to be said as well – as wonderful and pure and godly as sex is – in the final analysis, it’s not what makes us truly human.

4. It’s not what makes us truly human

The Bible makes it very clear that you can be fully and entirely human without ever having sex.

Jesus never had it.

Nor did Jeremiah.

Or John the Baptist.

Or Elijah.

Or the Apostle Paul – at least for the better part of his life⁶.

In fact there are so many life-long celibates in the Bible that some early Christians actually began to wonder if abstinence represented a sort of inside track to spiritual fulfillment. They wrote to the Apostle Paul and they asked him about that very thing. In response to their question he spoke about marriage as a general rule (1 Corinthians 7:2); he spoke how sex should be conducted within the marriage – but then he said something very surprising to the modern reader. He said:

“I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.” (1 Corinthians 7:7 ESV)

Paul says that he wishes that there were more life-long celibates! He wishes there were more people who could do as he did – travelling the world, serving the Lord, feeding the flock and building up the people of God without worrying that he was neglecting his natural family. Paul says that if he had his way there would be MORE people like that – but each has his own gift from God. God gives to some the gift of marriage and to others the gift of celibacy and Paul must submit to the Sovereign will of his Maker.

What a surprising statement!

Everything about that statement agitates and disturbs the modern mind!

So many people today define themselves by their sexuality.

They ARE who they have sex with.

But the Bible doesn't take that view. The Bible says that sex is natural for human beings, but it is not necessary. It is not what makes us human. It is knowing God that makes us human. Jesus knew that – Jesus prayed for that!! He said:

⁶ The Bible doesn't say whether or not Paul was ever married. It simply says that he was single when he entered the story and remained single throughout.

“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3 ESV)

If you know that – if you know God through faith in Jesus Christ, then you are truly human. You are alive – you’re an image bearer – you are a son or daughter of the Almighty and you will LIVE with him and REIGN with him over his creation – forever.

Sex is good, sex is a gift, sex is part of the plan for the human species – but it is not LIFE.

Knowing the Lord is life. Being his child is life! FOLLOWING JESUS IS LIFE!

Thanks be to God!

Let’s pray together.

Amen. Pastor Jody, will you come and lead us?