

06/06/10

## Developing a Biblical View of Sex – 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

- Please tell me if you would agree with this premise...we live in a sex-crazed culture...
  - would that be a hard case to make?...that's like shooting fish in a barrel...there's examples everywhere.
- 1. You can hardly turn on the TV without some sort of sexual messages being sent either in the programming or the advertising...
  - that's one of the reasons I believe Christians should spend as little time in front of that particular entertainment medium as possible, along with all the other related forms of electronic entertainment...not just because the sexual messages are so "in your face"...it's that the messages that are so "in your face" are so contrary to Scripture...
  - that's also why parents who use TV as some sort of electronic babysitter are making a significant error in judgment...because unless you carefully monitor what's occurring, unbiblical lessons are being taught and reinforced over and over every day...
  - so we take them to SS on Sunday (that's when we get around to going and if we got there on time to get to SS)---but then we allow them to sit in front of anti-SS the rest of the week...
  - and since the TV program gets a whole lot more hours than the SS teacher does---is there any question in your mind who's going to win that one?...
- 2. The same is true with music. I was driving down to the airport the other day – and I was having trouble getting K-love...and I was trying to find it in Indy...so I'm punching the numbers, and driving, and probably sending a text (: -- but I'm hearing all these snippets of different kinds of music...
  - and it's amazing, especially in certain kinds of music, how much of it is sexual in nature...it's like – what did he just say?...are you serious?---someone is going to sing about that?...I'm talking about sexual deviancy – being celebrated through various art forms...
- 3. Then there's how that filters down in cultural choices and behaviors...
  - a. Take the issue of abortion – do you realize that abortion is not a baby issue, it's a sex issue...
    - if there was no sexual sin, there would be no unwanted babies...do we all get that?...and I realize you could probably make an argument here and there that might balance that a tad...
    - but the bottom line is that you could look at many of the social challenges that exist in communities all around our country – and the plain truth is – it's a sex problem...which of course ultimately is a worship problem – a God problem...
    - but an unbridled approach to human sexuality – "no rules, just right"...just accelerates relationships before a young man and woman have any sense of relational maturity, and oh yea—the marriage piece---so that when sex occurs and when children are conceived, there is not any foundation at all on which a child can be loved and raised by a mom and dad who love them...
    - as a result, we have all these societal problems that are heartbreaking and expansive... there's and underlying sexual ethic.

- [develop – Child Abuse Panels – tried to discuss the relationship between teaching sexual values and the way that would impact child abuse in our community (because there would be fewer children to abuse – some of the folks present looked at me like I just arrived from another planet...
  - develop also – well, isn't the real problem that young, poor women don't have enough access to reproductive health?...that was shorthand for her to say – we need to have greater access to abortion so that every child is a wanted child, etc, etc...
    - so we teach young women, and young men, that it's OK to take the life of your baby in the womb (which is a fairly abusive act...)...but then when you have a child you want and allow to be born, somehow you're just going to flip some sort of switch and treat that child with love and honor...
      - that is completely illogical...
      - if you want babies to be respected, then you might want to start talking about how the process of conceiving babies should be respected...
  - of course you know why many adults in that room would have little stomach for that conversation?...because they couldn't bring themselves to talking to their teenagers about only making healthy, wise sexual choices because they're not willing to do that themselves as adults...
- again – we could go on and on and talk about examples of this all day – we live in a sex crazed culture...
- now here's the real question – what are the people of God supposed to do about that?...
  - what is the church's response...to the way we instruct our kids, to the way we order our lives, to the testimony we seek to have in our community...
  - what are the people of God supposed to do?...
- 1. Here's an option – don't ever talk about it...
  - The subject is dirty....it should not be mentioned in God's house...etc. etc...
  - and that is probably the most prevalent response among evangelical churches...
- 2. We better start saying "no" regarding all this sex business...
  - no, no, no, no, no...
  - stop it – stop it right now I tell you, stop it...
- is that really the best we have to offer?...
- do either of those approaches even remotely resemble Scripture...
- no, we need to proclaim in a clear, positive, and thoughtful way all the Scripture says about this subject...
- "no" to sexual sin – absolutely...but "yes" to a healthy, biblical view and practice of godly human sexuality within the boundaries of monogamous marriage...
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 7...page 133 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- our theme this year is, **Taking the Next Step, with Joy.**
  - we're doing a verse by verse exposition of the book of 1 Corinthians...
  - we've been away from this study for the past 7 weeks, because we've been working on the question, who are you---coming to grips with your identity in Christ...

- but now we're back...and we took that break at that point in the book of 1 Corinthians on purpose...because now there is a significant switch in the material...
- in fact, if you just glance down at verse 1...you'll see it...
  - **v. 1 – Now concerning the things about which you wrote...**
- so obviously, these are questions that the Corinthian church had posed to the apostle Paul that he is now going to answer for them...
- now if you say – do we have the list of questions they sent him?...no, but we can make educated guesses based on how Paul answered...
- but – this is an important point – Paul is not seeking to tell us everything there is to say about marriage, or singleness, or human sexuality...He's answering their questions...
- that is a very important aspect of hermeneutics, or principles of Bible study...
  - what kind of literature are we studying?...again, in this case – specific answers to specific questions that had already been posed...
- another important principle of hermeneutics, or Bible study...is that we always interpret a seemingly obscure verse of Scripture in light of what the Bible says about that topic in other places...
  - [develop – the unity principle...]
- with that in mind, let's read our passage...read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7
- we're talking this morning about **Developing a Biblical View of Sex**, and with the time we have remaining...let's look for **three principles that will help us please the Lord in sexual relations.**

### I. Singleness is OK.

- now, you might say – that's kind of bland wording – what's that about...
- I actually chose that word very carefully...
- now, before I explain why the word "OK," let me just mention that these verses have been used to supposedly teach all sorts of things...
  - 1) if you're really spiritual, you'll stay single...that's what's really good, singleness is best...
    - some religious groups would even use that as a requirement for ministry...the man has to be celibate...and they would go to verses like this to try to prove that...
    - how that jibes with passages like 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 which teach that a pastor should be the husband of one wife is a mystery to me...
  - 2) Others have said that this verse is teaching teens and young singles not to get involved with touching one another before marriage...
    - well, we would definitely encourage young people to maintain caution and sexual purity...
    - well, there's a lot better verses to use on that topic than this one...(cf. 1 Thes. 4:6 – warning against defrauding...stirring passions that cannot be righteously satisfied...)
    - but some would come back to this passage and say – see, a man should not touch a woman...
      - some would even go so far as to say – you should not touch ever – in any way – so a guy shouldn't offer his arm to a young lady on a slippery sidewalk...

### A. Meaning of the phrase “touch a woman.”

- when Paul uses the phrase “touch a woman”, he’s speaking euphemistically...(using a euphemism)...
- That’s a big word some English teacher came up with to describe a word or phrase that is less expressive or direct but is also considered less distasteful or offensive...
- that’s part of the way we talk –
  - some people don’t use the word “pregnant” – they say “she’s expecting”...
  - not “died” – but “passed away”...
  - not “the corpse”...but “remains”...
- the phrase “touch a woman” means “have sexual relations with her”...and everybody in the Corinthian church would have known that...
- and the word is used that way in many other places in the Bible...
- for example, in Genesis 20, this is when Abraham lied about his wife Sarah and said she was his sister. So Abimelech, the king of Gerar, took her into his house...
- Genesis 20:6 - Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.
  - in that culture – that meant – taking her into your harem and having sexual relations with her...the word is used the same way in Ruth 2:9 and Prov. 6:29...
- so Paul is saying – it’s good for a person to remain unmarried and not have sexual relations...
- now at this point we ought to say – now wait a minute – is Paul saying that remaining single and abstaining from sexual relations is good...and by implication that getting married and having sexual relations is bad?..
- if we took that position, we would be violating a direct passage of Scripture...
- **Genesis 2:18 - Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”**

### B. This cannot mean that singleness is good and marriage is bad.

- so we still have to answer the question – what was Paul telling us?...
- the answer to that comes from understanding:

### C. The meaning of the word “good.”

Good in this passage isn’t “morally good”...that would have been a different word in the original...

- the word Paul uses here is the same word we would use in our culture as “OK”...it’s not especially good, but it’s certainly not bad...it’s OK...

- now, you might ask – why would Paul have to even say that?---here’s why...while there were some people who thought being single was especially spiritual...

### D. Some rabbis taught – “marriage is the unqualified duty of man.”

- in other words – everybody should be married...

- so the Corinthians would obviously have some questions...

- should we get married like the rabbis say?....should we stay single like the ascetics say?..

- what’s more spiritual and therefore most pleasing to God?...

- Paul's answer is – neither...if God gives you the gift of celibacy, fine...pursue that gift and learn to serve and function with joy in that position...
- there's nothing inherently wrong with that – there's nothing inherently right with it – it's OK...

- now, Paul goes on later to say...

**E. You may especially want to consider this in light of the present distress.**

- if you peek ahead at verse 26, you see that Paul alludes to the rising persecution of the church...
- in that sense – singleness might actually be preferred...it's OK to do that if that's the gift God has given you...

- but if you choose that path...

**F. Singles must maintain moral purity.**

- so it's only OK if you don't touch a woman...if you avoid sexual sin as a single...

- take aways?

1. Let's celebrate our singles and not be pushing them into marriage...
2. Let's pray for their purity...that is not an easy row to hoe...

- then Paul goes on to make a statement that has to be understood using the principles we discussed earlier...

**II. In Most Cases, Marriage is to Be Preferred.**

**A. Reason.**

- please tell me – what is the reason given in verse 2?...

1. **v. 2 - because of the immoralities**...the porneais – the rampant sexual sin and temptation that existed in their society and our society...

- now, we have to be very careful here – because while the point Paul is making here is very, very important... if it's not balanced with the rest of the Scripture, a person could really go to seed on this one...

2. here's the **principle**, then we'll go back and put some balance on it...

- **One of the purposes for marriage is to help your spouse maintain moral purity.**

**3. Other purposes for marriage**

**a. Partnership**

**Genesis 2:18 - Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."**

- ...(companionship...)

**b. Procreation**

- **Genesis 1:28 – God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

**c. Pleasure**

- **Proverbs 5:18-19 – Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.**

#### d. Picture

**Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,**

- John MacArthur, Commentary on 1 Corinthians

- so all of those are important and we talk about all of them often and in many settings...
- but its right and its accurate to add this one from 1 Cor. 7:2...that is that marriage helps the partners maintain sexual purity...
- now, it would be wrong for someone to go out and say...Steve says that the primary purpose of marriage is some sort of release valve for sex...
- that's not what we're saying – that's not what the passage is saying...but let's not throw the passage out...
  - helping our spouses maintain moral purity is one of the reasons for which God ordained marriage...
- maybe it will help to think about this...there are clearly...

#### B. "Levels" of motivation in the Bible.

##### 1. At the highest level – God's great love for us.

- if we lived properly every day – that's all the motivation we'd ever need...
- **1 John 4:19 - We love, because He first loved us.**
- and because we love God, we naturally want to meet the sexual needs of our spouse out of the outflow of a heart that really loves God...
- in other words – we should want to do right --- if God loved us...

##### 2. A lesser level – the importance of obedience.

- **1 John 3:23 - This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.**

##### 3. A still lesser level – the possibility of judgment for disobedience.

- **Proverbs 13:15 - Good understanding produces favor, But the way of the treacherous is hard.**

##### 4. Another still lesser level in 1 Corinthians 7:2

- there is no sequence necessarily to #3 and #4 – that's not the point...
- but we're saying – this passage is not giving the highest motivation to seek to fulfill your spouse' sexual needs---but it still is a reason...

- [if time – develop series of safety nets at a circus, or construction project...]

- now, let's come back around to the point -- helping our spouses maintain moral purity is one of the reasons for which God ordained marriage...

- now, here's my question for ever married person in this room – is there evidence in your life that you get that?...

- so what's the take away?...well, that's pretty simple, isn't it?...both logically, and also because it's right here in the text...

### III. Stop Depriving One Another.

- now, please notice the principles Paul gives just to be sure we get it...

### A. Sexual relations is a mutual obligation.

- he describes sexual relations as a duty...
- **1 Corinthians 7:3 - The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.**
- now I realize you might say – I don't like this topic reduced to this level...I want to talk about romance, I want to talk about problem solving, I want to talk about whatever...
- I refuse to think about sexual relations from the perspective of duty...
- does everybody here get the fact that it is not my job on a given Sunday to try to figure out whatever everyone wants and then serve it up on a silver sermonic platter....
- like the mom running around – what do *you* want for dinner, what do *you* want for dinner...
- frankly, I'm not particularly interested in preparing what you think you want for dinner...I'm interested in preparing what the Bible would want you to have for dinner...and then I'm going to serve that up...and then encourage you to clean your plate...is there anything unclear about our roles...
- and of course – the question here is so obvious it almost doesn't have to be asked – For every married person, are you fulfilling your duty?....
- and if you would say --- I don't even need to think about it that way...because I've the other higher motivation things going on so much that my spouse asks me to leave him/her alone long before the duty thing even has to kick in...Great...

### B. The goal of sex is giving, providing satisfaction for your spouse.

- this has to be one of the most critical points of the passage especially in light of the culture in which we live...
- this is a selfish society, and that selfishness is no more evident than when sexual issues are being addressed or discussed...
- we need to recognize—those selfish habits start early when it comes to this subject...
  - I've purposely avoided any illustrations that come right from the garbage can of our world on this subject...
  - but let me use one from the world to try to illustrate this point...
- Many of us can remember growing up in schools as unbelievers and hearing the question in the locker room after someone had been on a date – and what was that question – “What'd you get?”....sex is getting, sex is pleasing oneself...
- our world has spun off entire industries and selfish acts devoted to that principle...
- and it's not just a problem of our world – it's a problem of our hearts...
  - at the core of all of this is that how we behave ourselves sexually is an act of worship for the Savior who died...
  - **2 Corinthians 5:15 - and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**
- the goal of sex is giving – to provide sexual satisfaction for our spouses...

C. To deny sexual relations is a forceful robbery.

- v. 5 - deprive – a forceful theft
- spouses who don't make time for this, or who bargain with this area, or manipulate with this area...are behaving like thieves...
  - because they're taking something from another person that is rightfully theirs...
- take aways...
  - a. For singles...
    - are you satisfied in the state you're currently in and looking for ways to serve with the extra time?
    - are you taking precautions to stay morally pure?
  - b. For married folks...
    - do you have a selfish view of this area of life, and if so, how is this manifested?...
    - have you been a thief in your own home in that you've defrauded your spouse?...
- not sure – homework – go home and ask your spouse if you are meeting his/her sexual needs?...
- what if we need help – get counsel...
- what is spouse has also sorts of bizarre desires because of access to porn?...get counsel – no one should be forced to do anything that conflicts with their conscience
- with if my spouse won't obey?...pray, get log out of your eye, confront, get counsel, get happy, may need to bring to the elders of the church...(cf. this being a disciplinable issue)

**D. Temporary exceptions may be made by mutual consent.**

**v. 5 – except by agreement for a time...**

**E. Un-delayed resumption of the relationship is mandatory.**

**v. 5 – come together again so that Satan will not tempt you for your lack of self-control...**

- that is a fascinating point – because you would assume that the self-control is when you're not having sexual relations – this passage makes it clear – self control comes when men and women are participating in sexual relations wholeheartedly, aggressively, and passionately....
- sometimes some aspect of your self has to be controlled in order to make that happen...so be it...
- the solution to a sex-crazed culture is not to...

1. ignore the topic
2. just say no
3. teach and live a robust theology of human sexuality

**[recommend resources – on power point]**