
Biblical Context for Sex - Relationship

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Review

One of the items that Joni McNeese does as the counseling secretary is to make sure that I get things done in enough time so that there isn't a last minute rush to get things done. And one of my duties is the Family Enrichment Conference and Retreat. Joni starts sending me weekly "tasks" to my Microsoft Outlook to remind me (I would call it "bugging") about the theme for the conference, etc.

Russ and I have been talking about doing a series on Biblical sexuality for a couple of years. We have seen the need for this type of series in our counseling, but actually putting it together has not been a priority. As we talked about the theme, we decided that the Family Enrichment Conference was the setting for the series on Biblical sexuality.

The next time Joni enquired about the theme for the Conference, I told her it was Biblical sexuality. Now, most of the time when she hears the theme she will make a remark like, "That sounds really good", or "I think we need that", or something like that. This time she said, "Oh". Just the sound, "Oh". Amy must have been looking at Joni while she made this comment because the look on Joni's face caused her to ask what was going on. When Joni told Amy the theme of this year's Conference, guess what she said. That's right; you guessed it – "Oh".

Maybe that has been some of your reactions – "Oh". Maybe some of you even went so far as to say, "Oh no". Or perhaps, "You've got to be kidding". But we aren't kidding. I am really looking forward to this series. Not because I'm one of the presenters, although there is a degree of satisfaction and delight in bringing the Scriptures to bear upon the lives of God's people so that they are instructed, warned, and challenged to change into what God desires. My anticipation has been based on what I see in the lives of those I counsel on Mondays. And I know that there are some of you here at the Chapel who are struggling in this area. I have yet to teach the class on Biblical sexuality in the Biblical Counseling Training Course without having at least one person come to me with questions, and in many instances serious issues, in this area of sexuality.

So let's review the aims that we have for this Conference:

- To call for Biblical purity and holy practice of marriage oneness. We are shooting for understanding God's purposes, His precepts, and the practice of marriage oneness as He has outlined in His Word.
- To shape our thinking by a Biblical Theology of sexuality. We want to use the entire Bible looking through the lens of Christ and His Cross as we understand the truth and apply it in the context of being a community of New Covenant believers here at the Chapel.

- To counter the world's influence in the areas of sexuality and sensuality. We are going to both affirm what we believe to be the truth of God in these areas as well as deny what we believe to be the lies of this world in these areas.

So having begun with that short review, let's pray and ask God to give us understanding and wisdom as we look at this area of the Biblical Context for Sex.

Introduction

I would like to start tonight by making a statement that might surprise or even shock you. Here is the statement. In the majority of marriages, I can ask one question and tell you what kind of marriage relationship you have. I would go so far as to say that it is the barometer of your marriage. (Pause) I hope that many of you are evaluating that statement. Hopefully, some of you are trying to figure out what that question would be. Some of you may be trying to decide whether you believe that to be true or not. Some of you may not be sure you want to know what that question is. And probably, some of you may not really care if it's true or not, or even what the question is. I hope that the number in that last category are few. However, here is the question:

“Evaluate the sexual relationship of your marriage?”

Now I'm not asking you to tell me about your sexual techniques or any of the details of your love-making encounters. I am asking you to describe what you **think** (your evaluation) about the physical relationship in your marriage. I am asking you to say **verbally** what you **think** silently about your physical relationship with your spouse.

Are you surprised that this is the question? Do you think that it is possible to tell about a marriage by asking about the sexual relationship? Maybe you think that I'm some twisted sexual pervert who gets his jollies by digging into everyone's sex lives? Let me assure you that I am not that kind of person and that is not what I do in counseling. However, if you don't think that question can tell much about a marriage, it is probably due to the fact that you don't think that a couple's physical relationship and their non-physical relationship are vitally connected. In fact, it is the non-physical relationship that is the context for the physical relationship.

Let's start with a hypothetical couple. I'm going to call them Ben and Rosie. I don't know of any couples by the name of Ben and Rosie here at the Chapel, nor have I counseled any couples by those names. So if you are here tonight and you happen to be Ben and Rosie, it is purely coincidental.

Ben is the type of guy who is hard working, serious about issues, and wants to be thought of as the guy who has it all together. He brags about his job, his car, his home, and his prowess as a softball player and golfer. In fact, if you asked his softball teammates, they would tell you that he is one of the reasons they have finished as the division champions the last 5 years. And his golf team depend on him to bring them through every week. When Ben comes home, it is usually to catch a quick bite to eat. , He will give his wife a dutiful greeting and kiss, pat the kids on the head asking how they are doing, and gather up his ball uniform or golf clubs and run out the door. For Ben, he is a good husband. He works hard, supplies the needs of his family, is faithful to be at all the church services available.

Rosie and Ben have been married for 10 years. Rosie quit work when the first baby came 3 years after they were married. The second child came two years later. Rosie and Ben didn't do a lot together before the kids were born. They each had their own interests – Ben his athletics and Rosie her girlfriends and all the activities they did together. But with the kids came a change in lifestyle for Rosie. Ben's lifestyle didn't change. He is going at the same speed he has gone for their entire married life. It seems that the only time that Rosie has to themselves is when they both collapse into bed at the end of the day.

Let's follow Ben and Rosie as well look at the context for Biblical sexuality which is our relationships.

Understanding our Personal Responses

In the Level One Biblical Counseling Training Course we spend several weeks going over the theology of the heart. In Level Two, it is the main theme of that entire course. We can't do that tonight, but I want to briefly develop a theology of the heart that will help us to understand why and how we respond to one another the way we do. Please turn your Scriptures to Matthew 15:10-20.

Its Root in the Heart

Matthew 15:10-20

What the religious leaders of the day were teaching was the same lie that we are being taught today – our behavior is the result of external influences. We behave the way we do because of our past, our family influence, the way we were reared, our education, our economic condition, our surrounding culture, blah blah blah.

But Jesus cuts through all of those lies and teaches what is the source of our actions and desires. He says it is our hearts. All the other reasons that we give for our behavior are just excuses. We behave from what is in our hearts. Who we really are is betrayed by our behavior. You are not an angry person because that is the way it was in the family in which you were reared. You are an angry person because you have chosen to have a heart that is believing lies and a heart that is wanting what is contrary to what God wants for you. And when you don't get what you believe is rightfully yours and you don't get what you want, you choose to respond by getting angry. I will grant you that the influence you had while growing up has made it easy for you to respond in anger, but it is not caused by your family – it is your choice and yours alone.

So what is our heart? The heart is who we are on the inside. There are only two people who know what is in hearts – the person themselves and God. From Hebrews 4:12-13 we learn that the heart has two functions. One function is to determine what we believe to be true. The other function is what the old Puritans referred to as our affections. It is what we want or desire. The heart is where the process of thinking in words is used to convey what we believe and what we want. At the risk of sounding like psychobabble, it is that talking that happens in the quiet of our minds as we relate to one another. We silently express what we think to be true and what we want to happen in our lives.

Its Responsibility in Choices 2 Corinthians 5:9, 14-15

So when Jesus exposes the reason for our sinful behavior is our hearts, then that puts the burden of our behavior on us. Turn your Scriptures to 2 Corinthians 5: 9, 14-15. We must examine our hearts to see and evaluate our thinking. Is what we are thinking really true or is a lie from the god of this world? Is what we are wanting God-honoring or self-centered and selfish?

We must choose what is pleasing to God, regardless of our background, family situation, education, culture, boss, circumstances, spouse, and the list continues. We must make it our aim to please Him Who died for us. We are to live for Him and not for ourselves as we have in the past.

Its Requirement in Repentance Joel 2:12-13

What that means is that there must be true repentance as God puts His finger on our hearts and their ungodly thinking. Please turn now to Joel 2:12-13.

What we see here is that true repentance means we renew our thinking – we change our hearts. We evaluate and change what we have as our false beliefs and false wants. We put-off the old way of thinking and put-on the new way of thinking. We put on the mind of Christ.

True repentance also means real change will show itself by putting-off sinful behavior and putting-on God-honoring behavior in very practical, everyday life.

Let's return to Ben and Rosie. Let's ask him THE question. "Ben, how would you evaluate the sexual relationship in your marriage?" What do you think he's going to say?

Well, here's how he responds. "Greg, I'm glad you asked that question. I have been wanting to tell someone about this for a long time. Our sex life stinks! On a scale of 1 to 10 I would rate it a minus 5. After all I do for her, this is the thanks I get. I work my tail off to provide a great place to live, food for the family, including eating out as often as she wants to, a new car to drive, new furniture; in fact, I give her anything and everything she asks for. You would think that she could at least show a little gratitude when it comes to the area of our physical relationship. You would think that I was asking her to sacrifice her first born child when I ask her for some physical attention. I am so tired of having to beg and manipulate in order to have the very infrequent times that we do have. And is it too much to ask for her to at least act like she enjoys it!?"

Do you think that I'm making this up? I assure you this is a frequent song that is sung on Mondays here at the Chapel Counseling Center. I would go so far as to say that there are those of you men listening to me now who would answer the same way, and maybe even more strongly and cuttingly.

Let's ask Rosie the same question. "Rosie, how would you evaluate the sexual relationship in your marriage?" What do you think is going to be her response?

"Greg, I'm so glad you asked. It is absolutely awful. My husband is the most self-centered person on this earth. All he wants me for is maid service and sex. If his softball uniform is not clean for the next game, or his league golf shirt is dirty, he acts like I have cut off his right hand. I'm sorry that our kids have to hear some of

the things that he says to me. And then he comes home from the game or round of golf and plops down in front of the TV with the remote control and sits and snoozes for the rest of the evening. He doesn't talk to me; he doesn't help me with the kids; he doesn't do anything around the house unless I nag him like my mother used to do to my dad. It's awful living with such a man. And then to top it all off, after he's had the evening to relax in front of the TV and take a nap, he expects me to be some kind of sexual tigress in bed. It's like he expects me to be able to throw some switch in my head and have great desire for this guy that just 5 minutes before I absolutely couldn't stand to be in the same room with. What does he expect? He can forget about sex until he starts thinking about me for a change!"

What lies are Ben and Rosie believing to be true? What is Ben and Rosie wanting? Do you see how the talk that we do in our hearts comes out in our actions? All of the things that these two have now said verbally have been rehearsed in their thinking for years. And each time it is said gives it more weight that it is the truth.

Are you starting to get the picture that the context for our sexual lives is in our non-sexual relationships?

Practicing our Biblical Roles

Let's begin to chip away at some of the lies that we believe to be true and some of the desires that are God-honoring. The Bible places a real emphasis on the dynamics of our roles in marriage.

In a Wife's Loving Submission

Ephesians 5:22-24

Let's turn to Ephesians 5:22-24. As it pleases God, Biblical submission pictures the relationship between Christ and the church and draws out a husband's heart to lovingly lead her. The wife voluntarily submits to her husband. The picture is not a submission the wife grudgingly grants. She willingly and lovingly gives herself to his leadership. Her submission draws out his heart in such a way that he lovingly leads her.

In a Husband's Sacrificial Leadership Ephesians 5:25-31

In verses 25-31, we see sacrificial leadership as it pleases God. It pictures the relationship between Christ and the church and draws out a wife's heart to lovingly follow him. He does not demand submission. He does not coerce and beat into submission. His sacrificial leadership causes his wife to lovingly give herself to his leadership.

What is going on in the lives of Ben and Rosie? Are the Biblical pictures of sacrificial leadership and loving submission clearly seen in their marriage? Do they believe in what the Scriptures say about the roles of husbands and wives, or are they believing lies about what their roles are? What is it that they want? Let me be clear here. I think that we can honestly say that both Ben and Rosie would say that they wanted a God-honoring husband and wife. They would not deny that the picture that we have seen in Ephesians is something they want for their home. They would say that they believed that the Scriptures were true and that is what they truly believe. Some people might describe their situation as Ben and Rosie have head knowledge but not

heart knowledge. There is no such thing as head knowledge vs heart knowledge. The problem is they do not have a believing faith. They do not have an obedient faith. They truly are believing lies. They want the other person to change before they make any effort to change. We have not seen that in any of the Scriptures that we have looked at so far. In fact, we have seen the opposite. God calls us to change and to please Him no matter what the other person does or does not do. Our behavior and obedience are not contingent on the behavior and obedience of someone else. When we believe something in an obedient way, there will be change. What would be different in Ben and Rosie's roles if they truly believed what was taught in this passage of Scripture? What would they be thinking in their hearts if they truly responded in faithful obedience to this teaching?

I want to insert here a word of exhortation to our teens and singles. You may be tempted to your their minds in neutral at this point. I have been talking about a married couple and you think that you can tune out since you don't fit into that category. No so. Even though you aren't married, you must be very aware of the habits that you are developing in this area of relationships. You must learn to evaluate your hearts and to develop the ways of thinking that are part of God-honoring relationships, no matter if you ever get married or not.

As you teens are involved in the dating process, take this time of life to develop Godly relationships based on His Word. Don't work hard on learning the techniques of manipulation and playing games in order to get your way. Learn to have a heart that seeks God's ways in all of your relationships.

I have counseled with singles who are concerned that they aren't married yet. They think that time is slipping by too quickly and they are never going to get married. I have had to tell some of them that they are not marriageable material. They have developed self-centered and sinful ways of thinking that make them undesirable, not only to the opposite sex, but to everyone. We all know the "Bitter Bettys" and the "Loser Larrys" of the world who can't see any farther than themselves. Please pay close attention as we continue in learning to develop Godly relationships.

Cultivating an Authentic Relationship

Modern Christian culture often defines marriage relationships in worldly ways that setup expectations that the Holy Spirit and God's grace are not enabling. The effect is to frustrate everyone. What is needed is a Biblically authentic relationship.

By our Connection

1 Peter 3:7

One of the principles that is foundational, and yet so easily overlooked is found in 1 Peter 3:7. What we forget is that we are connected at a level that is basic. Christian spouses generally are to treat one another as brother and sister in Christ, first. Paul says "since they are heirs with you of the grace of life". The footnote renders another reading as "since you are joint heirs". How would Ben and Rosie's hearts be changed if they obeyed this teaching in a believing way? How would their behavior and language toward each other change? What would be the words that would be going through their minds?

By our Concern**Philippians 2:1-5**

Please turn to Philippians 2:1-5. What we have is a passage that has huge theological emphasis. It is referred to as the *kenosis* passage – Christ emptying Himself in order to procure redemption. But the passage is not there just for some lofty theological concept. Paul uses this high and lifted up teaching about Christ to command us in how we are to live in our relationships. In the context of this Conference, we learn that Christlikeness is exhibited when we put our spouses' interests first.

Do you think there would be any impact on Ben and Rosie's relationship if one or both of them obeyed in a believing way this teaching of being concerned about the other more than about themselves?

By our Communication**Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

And then turn back a couple of pages to Ephesians 4:25. We could spend an entire month on this passage alone. But the summary of the passage concerns the way we communicate with each other. Nothing can destroy marital relationships like ungodly talk and nothing can build it like grace-imparting words.

These are not only the words that we verbally say, but also the words that we say in our minds. Remember, whatever is in the heart will come out in our actions. You can't fill a pitcher full of water and pour even one drop of milk out of it. What is on the inside will come out. The children's rhyme about "Sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" is a lie. Proverbs tells us that words have the power to kill.

What would Ben and Rosie's relationship sound like if they obeyed this teaching in a believing way?

By our Companionship**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

The last principle we are going to look at tonight is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How does love actually conduct itself? If these rebukes were needed in the midst of relationship problems in the church, how much more do we need to hear them in our homes?

One of the biggest problems that we face with our spouses is believing that we can tell what is in the other person's heart. Even though the Scriptures tell us that there is only One Who can see into a heart, God Himself, we assign motives to our spouse's speech and actions. We believe that they are trying to do us harm and cast things in the worst possible light. But one of the areas that this passage speaks to is "believing all things". This means that we give the other person the benefit of the doubt in the most positive light possible.

We could spend enormous amounts of time in each of these areas, as well as many others. But I think that you get the message.

Let's return to Ben and Rosie. Let's assume that Ben and Rosie have been convicted about their non-physical relationship and have been working on the areas that we have mentioned tonight. Granted, they will not be experts in all areas, but there is progress in most. One of the areas that they are working hard on is the thinking that

is going on in their hearts. They have been working on being keenly aware of the talk that they do in their minds. They are capturing the lies that they are believing and they are getting a handle on what they are wanting. They have been focused on truly repenting at the heart level and the behavior level. What do you think their responses would be like now to our question “how would you evaluate the sexual relationship in your marriage”? Let me assure you that it would be totally different.

Jay Adams describes it this way: All through the day we have been collecting the garbage. We have been putting into our garbage bag our thoughts, our words, and our actions along with the words and actions of our spouse. And our spouse has been doing their own garbage collection. When we climb into bed, the first thing that we do is dump our garbage bags all over the bed. Is it any wonder that we have difficulty in intimacy when we have to climb around and over such stinking piles of garbage?

Conclusion

Do you understand why I made the opening statement that I can ask one question and tell you about your marriage? God has given us the gift of sexual intimacy in the context of our relationship with each other. Our sexual relationship is generally a barometer of our marital relationship.

May I ask you this question, my brother and sister?

How would you evaluate the sexual relationship in your marriage?

And then the closing question – what are you going to do about it?

Message Review

Aim To show how pleasing God with our spouses frames intimacy.

- Agenda**
- To connect our physical union with all other aspects of our marriage union.
 - To define those aspects Biblically.
 - To show the danger and destruction arising from failure in maintaining a Biblical home.
 - To give practical wisdom guidance for implementing a Biblical home.

Summary ➤

**Discussion
Questions**

