
Sinful Distortion of Sex - Immorality

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Introduction

We have come to the last message in our 2004 Family Enrichment Conference. Our theme has been the Biblical Theology of Sexuality. For those of you who are visiting with us for the first time, you may be shocked that we would be teaching on this theme from the pulpit, especially on Sunday morning. In order to put this in the proper perspective, let me review our aims one last time:

- To call for Biblical purity and the holy practice of marriage oneness.
- To shape our thinking by a Biblical Theology of sexuality.
- To counter the world's influence in this area.

I don't think that anyone would argue that these aims are not worthy of consideration in light of what we face daily in the culture in which we live. We began our conference by stating that we would be affirming the truth of both what we are for and what we are against. And what we are for and against must be defined solely by the Scriptures or else we may become either legalistic or licentious in our thinking and practice. Today we are going to consider what we are against – what is immoral. I will warn you that the Scriptures are not *politically correct* in this area. But the God Who created sexuality has given us His directives on what is *spiritually correct*. So let's ask Him to help us as we consider this area of immorality. <Pray>

The Principles of Intimacy

I think that it is necessary to begin this topic by laying a foundation for our thinking. This foundation is what we have discovered thus far in the area of biblical sexuality. By defining the parameters of what God has said regarding intimacy, we have the proper context for looking at what He defines as immoral.

Russ began our series with God's call to purity from Hebrews 13:4 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. Sexual relations are God-honoring only within marriage. The will of God for us is holiness. Growing in holiness is our sanctification. And sexual purity is part of our sanctification. We are to abstain from immorality which means that not only are we not to do it, but that we are to distance ourselves from it. We are to exercise self-discipline over our bodies. The unmarried must wait in self-disciplined holiness. The married must exercise self-discipline to focus on their spouse and not to wonder in eye or thought.

Next I looked at the context for our physical intimacy which is our relationship with our spouse. I made the claim that I could tell a lot about your marriage and relationship with and to each other by asking one question – “Evaluate the sexual relationship of your marriage.” Our responses to our spouses come from our hearts – what we think is true about our spouses and what we want from them. We learned that

both of those heart functions were based on our choices, not on what our spouses did or did not do. Our roles involve a wife that exercises loving submission to her husband and a husband who exercises sacrificial leadership to his wife. Many believe that our sexual relationship is separate from and not related to our marital relationship. But nothing could be further from the truth. Our physical relationship happens in the context of our marital relationship. It is impossible to have a God-honoring sexual relationship when one or both spouses bring their sacks full of hurts and unforgiven sins to the bedroom. With hearts that are believing lies and that are full of selfish desires, they dump their sacks full of all that garbage all over the bed. Is it any wonder that physical intimacy, as God designed it, is impossible with all that stinky yuck piled everywhere?

Then I explored how and why God designed marriage. From Ephesians 5:32, we found the key that opened our understanding. God's design of marriage was intentional from the very beginning. God deliberately created a male and a female to picture and foreshadow Christ and His church. God designed marriage as a continual testimony to each generation of the ultimate glory of our eternal marriage to our eternal husband. Our earthly marriages are to reflect what our ultimate marriage will be like. This understanding of marriage is the reason that we keep ourselves sexually pure. We are in the waiting period before our marriage union to Christ. The purity that unmarried people keep pictures the fidelity between Christ and His waiting bride. The fidelity that married people keep pictures the fidelity between Christ and His bride. God purposefully designed marriage as a one flesh relationship to foreshadow the one flesh relationship that believers have in Christ. That is why sexual purity is commanded and demanded by God.

Lastly, Russ took several messages to display the joy of God's gift of sexuality. Contrary to the beliefs that physical intimacy is dirty or just a duty, we learned that intimacy is another expression of our worship to God and of joyfully serving our spouse. We saw the importance of words and wants as they give direction to our affections and our actions. We observed how the husband courts his wife and how the wife charms her husband. 1 Corinthians 7 and Proverbs 5 taught us that our sexuality is for the exclusive purpose of bringing pleasure to our spouse. Our bodies are not our own. They belong only to the one with whom we have entered into the covenant relationship of marriage. God has designed our physical intimacy to be mutually satisfying, mutually initiated, and actively and frequently pursued. God's design of joy and delight in our earthly physical intimacy is a small foretaste of the joy and delight that we, His bride, will experience when we are eternally united to our Husband, the One Who gave Himself for us.

The Practices of the Immoral

Hopefully, you have seen our physical intimacy as the good and glorious gift from God that it is. But every good and perfect gift from our Father's Hand can be perverted and used for sinful, evil purposes. Physical intimacy is no exception. And it is understandably a target of Satan since it is such a grand demonstration of the oneness that believers have in Christ.

Fornication

By the 6th chapter of Genesis, every imagination of man's heart was evil continually and God was sorry that He had ever created man. It is safe to assume that those imaginations included sexual immorality. The first practice of immorality that I would like to consider is fornication. The word fornication is used in some translations of the Scriptures like the KJV. The NASB, NIV, NLT, and ESV use the words sexual immorality or immorality.

It is common for us to believe that fornication and adultery are the same thing. We would define adultery as having sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse when you are married, and fornication is having sexual relations when you are not married. It is unfortunate that these are the common understandings of these terms. We misread those definitions back into the Scriptures. I'm going to cover adultery next. But for now, fornication or sexual immorality, as used in the Scriptures, is any sexual activity not involving your spouse. The Greek word used is *porneia*. Does that suggest any word that we use today? That's right, pornography. The Scriptures are clear and specific in their use of this term. It is always used of any and all kinds of sexual sin. It includes incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and lesbianism. It does not have any reference to whether or not the person is married.

Adultery

On the other hand, adultery is always used in reference to the covenantal relationship of marriage. It is violating that covenant by introducing a third person into that relationship. And once again, the Scriptures are very specific in their use of this term. Please come with me to Matthew 5.

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of **sexual immorality**, makes her commit **adultery**. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits **adultery**.

Sexual sin in marriage is always adultery, but adultery is not limited to sexual sin. It is possible to commit adultery without ever being involved in sexual sin with someone who is not your spouse. Anytime that we have a relationship that takes the place of the companionship that is due your spouse, it is adultery. This has drastic implications when we consider the use of internet chat rooms. How many men and women begin chatting innocently, only to find that they are being sucked in by their increasing desires. It is a serious issue when a husband or wife has a friendship with a person of the opposite sex who becomes their confidant and with whom they feel more comfortable and relaxed than with their spouse. That person at the office that is such a good listener and is so intensely interested and interesting is feeding desires that should only be for your spouse.

I don't want you to misunderstand what I'm saying. It is a very serious issue when sexual activity is involved. But don't be fooled into thinking that the inti-

mate conversations you enjoy with someone else is innocent. It is a very fine line between friendship and adultery.

The Perversions of the Immoral

If you believe the literature and the experts of our day, the next three items that we are going to cover are not perversions of sexuality. They are extolled as being part of the freeing of ourselves sexually and the means to mental health. What used to be diagnosed as abnormal behavior in previous editions of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* is now diagnosed as being legitimate alternate lifestyles and methods of self-understanding, self-discovery, and mental health.

Pornography

Pornography used to be relegated to the dirty, sleazy streets of larger cities. One of the best deterrents was the fear of being seen going into those shops by someone you respected or having to ask the clerk at a convenience store to retrieve a magazine from behind the counter. But not anymore. It is as close as your computer screen and TV.

Statistics for Cybersex, the term used for pornography on the internet, change very quickly. But the research that I found from what are described as reliable sources indicates that Cybersex generated about \$2.5 billion in revenue in 2003. 12% of the total websites are classified as Cybersex. That number is up from about 5% 3 years ago. It is estimated that 72 million people worldwide visit Cybersex sites annually with about 40 million of them being from the United States. 20% of men and 13% of women responded that they view porn at work during working hours. And 10% admitted that they had a sexual addiction.

Now before you slough this off as the low-life of society, listen to these numbers for those who said they were Christians. 47% of Christians confessed that Cybersex was a serious problem in their homes. 53% of the men who had attended Promise Keepers in the past 12 months admitted that internet porn was a weekly activity. And before you ladies think that it is only men who are involved, 1/3 of the participants in Cybersex are women.

With those kinds of numbers, I believe that it is a fairly sure assumption that some of you sitting before me this morning are struggling with this perversion. The easy access to and the secrecy of this activity make it very alluring and appearing to be safe. With the more than 372 million pages available 24/7, is it any wonder that we struggle with this sin. But it is a fantasy life based on lies. There are a number of intricate lies that are believed by those caught in this sin. And I would refer you to an excellent article in the Fall 2003 issue of *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* for a discussion of these lies.

My brothers and sisters, this secret sin is not without consequence. Your relationship to God, your spouse, your family, your employer, your friends, and your brothers and sisters in Christ is greatly impacted. Please don't delay another day without dealing with your sinful heart!

Masturbation

This next area is just as cloaked in secrecy as the previous one. Those who consider themselves to be moral and upright would not even consider it a topic of conversation. The attitude is that it is discussed only by those who are perverts and of low status. And consequently, it is fraught with much misunderstanding, guilt, and worldly thinking.

First, let me define what I mean by the term masturbation. I am not talking about the mutual activity that goes on between husband and wife. That is legitimate. I am talking about the self-gratification that is done apart from your spouse.

Just the very definition of this solo activity being separate from your spouse makes it sinful. In the beginning of this message, we looked at the reason that God had made us sexual beings – for the exclusive purpose of bringing pleasure to our spouse. This purpose excludes self-gratification. Honoring God with our bodies excludes this from the activity of someone wanting to please God with their life.

Homosexuality

And finally, the most politically incorrect teaching of Scripture, according our society, is homosexuality. I am using this term for the sexual relationship between two people of the same sex.

God created Adam and Eve. God did not create Adam and Steve. God created Adam and Eve. He did not create Adie and Eve. Remember, God deliberately and purposefully created male and female. This creation of marriage and physical oneness between one male and one female was designed to picture and foreshadow Christ and His church.

This is not an alternative lifestyle. It is sin. There may be attempts to explain this perversion of what God created as being a genetic predisposition, but God pronounces it sin. It is a perversion of the picture of His relation to His people. There may be struggles and a desire for this activity, but it is never God-honoring or endorsed by God.

The Punishments of the Immoral

I do not want to spend a lot of time in this area of God's punishments of the immoral. I only want to make you aware that God does not look lightly at this area of sin in our lives.

Disease – Folly and Futility

In Romans 1:24-27, God describes His action toward those who exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator. He gave them up to impurity, which was the lust of their hearts. He gave them up to dishonoring their bodies among themselves. He gave them up to dishonorable passions all of which resulted in receiving the due penalty for their sin. In Proverbs 5 verses 7-14, the Teacher gives a warning to his son about the immoral woman. He says that you will groan at the end of your life and your flesh

and body are consumed. The NLT translates this verse as groaning in anguish when disease consumes your body.

Who has not seen the effects of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS. We are moved with compassion for those who are reaping the harvest of sin, but the answer is not **just** finding a cure for these diseases, as the Hollywood celebrities claim. Yes, we would like to be able to medically help those in need, but the ultimate answer is found only in Christ and His sacrificial death for the sins of the immoral.

Destruction – Failure and Frustration

Pornography provides a very distorted view of the physical union of a husband and wife. It is a fantasy world produced for profit. How many woman are pressured into performing according to the fantasies of husbands who are so duped that the fantasy is reality. How many husbands are frustrated by wives who do not have the fortune of bodies that are air-brushed into perfection. How many marriages endure a sex act as opposed to glorious worship of the loving God for His gift of physical oneness and the giving of sacrificial service to the mates with whom we have become one flesh. The glorious and gracious gift of mutually giving pleasure and meetings the needs of your spouse has been replaced with anxiety about performance and frustration over failure.

There is also the wasting of resources that have been given by God. The \$2.5 billion includes the money of Christians. How much credit card debt can be attributed to immoral activity? How many people have secured individual credit cards with statements sent to addresses other than home in order to conceal their sin? How many Christian homes are struggling financially from sexual sin? How many ministries could be doing more for the glory of God if those resources had not been consumed by immorality?

Many of the people who seek help for sexual immorality, especially Cybersex, give testimony to the increasing amount of time that is given to these activities. They stay up later and later at night. They rise early in the morning. They steal time from their employers. Most men haven't read one entire book in a year. What would it be like if they devoted the wasted hours to productive reading? What would their Christian lives be like if they spent time in the Word instead of on the Web? What effect would their lives have for the Kingdom if they spent their time with Christ instead of with Cybersex?

Most corporations have strict rules about internet use. Many have policies that warn of dismissal for offensive activity on the web. How many employers are wasting their resources on employees who spend company time on Cybersex? How much productivity is lost from employees abusing their access to the internet? How many families suffer because of the loss of the job of the family breadwinner?

Damnation – Judgment and Wrath

And then there is the most chilling of punishments. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, as well as other passages, gives this somber warning: “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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

My Christian brother or sister, if you are participating in any of these immoral activities without guilt, without chastening, and uncorrected by God, then you need to give serious consideration to your relationship to Christ. You may not be a believer. You may not have believing faith, and you are on your way to an eternity without Christ and without hope.

For believers, Christ has paid for all of your sins – past, present, and future. But consider how the sexual sins in which you are participating have added to Christ’s burden that He bore on the cross. Your heart should be breaking as you realize that your lifestyle has added to the penalty that the sinless Son of God suffered for you.

The Paths to Implement

This has not been a happy time this morning. We have looked at the yuck of hearts that lust after something other than God. We have looked at the person who is living according to their desires – living according to a selfish, self-centered view of life. We have looked at **our** hearts – I have looked at mine, and hopefully, you have looked at yours. We have been appalled at what we have seen. It is hard to look at things that affect all of us. This entire series has been good for me. I have been reminded again of the preciousness of my marriage and of my dear wife. I have discovered that my marriage has been designed by God to be a reflection of Christ and his church. And I have been reminded of the great sacrifice and love of my heavenly Lover Who gave Himself for me. I would be very surprised if there is anyone who has listened to all of these messages and has not be convicted of sins in his own life.

I would like to bring our series to a close by giving some practical suggestions on how you can change for the glory of God. Each situation is different, but I’m going to give a survey from 30,000 feet of the paths that you need to consider in your goal of growing in sanctification in the area of Biblical sexuality.

Change what you think

First, turn your Scriptures to Matthew 7:1-5. "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

If you will recall the message on relationships, I reviewed the heart and how it is the source of our behavior. The heart has two functions – what we think and what we want. The first path that you need to examine is your thoughts. And you need to begin with where the problem really lies – you! Repent of your haughty attitude and prideful spirit and humbly and meekly seek the forgiveness of your Savior and your spouse.

Jesus told us that we begin with examining the log that is in our eye. Picture the exaggeration of this illustration. Can't you see this person with a telephone pole sticking out of his eye and trying to use the tweezers to get the floater that is in his spouse's eye. It is laughable. And yet, that is exactly the opposite of what we think. The problem is not me, it is my spouse. If she would only do this or that. If he would only say this or that. Jesus says, you look at you. You are the problem!

So when you are tempted to say in your mind, "My wife is as cold as a dead fish", you should be saying instead, "How can I show love and affection to my wife in the way that Christ gave Himself for me?" Instead of thinking, "My husband is only concerned about himself", you should be thinking, "How can I be a wife that honors God by honoring my husband?"

The tape recordings that you constantly play and rewind to play again and again become your reality. You have begun to believe the lies that you have been saying. May I suggest that you begin to write out those thoughts that you play over and over in your mind. Look at them. What is God's evaluation of your thoughts? Is He glorified in your thoughts? Are you a better spouse because of what you are thinking about your spouse? Be honest! Evaluate critically. And then write out the God-honoring thoughts that you should be thinking instead. Write them on a card and carry them with you so that you can pull them out when the recorder begins to play the old tape.

Change what you want

Next, you need to examine what you want. Husband, are you wanting a wife who is understanding like that attractive gal who happens to meet you during breaks, or sits close when you are at lunch? She understands you so well. She is so sympathetic. She sends you those encouraging e-mails during the day just when you need them. Why isn't your wife more like she is? You scream, "I want my wife to be like she!"

Wife, are you wanting a husband who is as concerned about your problems as the guy who is working on the same project as you are? He is so supportive! He understands your needs like no one else. He always has time to listen. Why isn't my husband more like he is? You scream, "I want my husband to be like he!"

What is it that you want, husband? You should be looking at the telephone pole in your eye – not the floater that is in your wife's eye. Husband, what you should be wanting is to be the kind of husband that reflects the servant leadership of Christ to His church. You should be wanting to be a husband that gives his life for his wife. You should be wanting to be a husband who knows what his wife needs and supplies it to the best of your ability.

And wife, you should be looking at the telephone pole in your eye. You should be wanting to be the kind of wife that reflects the willing, voluntary submission to your husband that the church is to Christ. You should be wanting to be a wife who pleases her husband and meets his needs. You should be wanting to be a God-honoring wife who loves her husband.

May I suggest that you write out what you want. It will probably be worded, "I want blank." The blank is something that you want for yourself. What you should

be wanting will be worded as, “I want to be or do or think blank” with the blank being what you want for someone else.

Change what you do

When our thinking has changed to be God-honoring and our wants are directed toward wanting what God wants, then this will be reflected in what we do. We will change our behavior.

There needs to be a concrete plan for change. Are you struggling with the internet. Place the computer in a public area. Take it out of that private room. Put it where other people are. No secret use. Purchase some software that will keep a record of your websites and send it to someone who has agreed to keep you accountable.

Husband, begin showing your wife how special she is. Tell her over and over how much she means to you; how grateful you are for God’s gift of her to you. Begin calling her during the day. Send her love notes. Work on your relationship so that it is God-honoring.

Wives, don’t you dare criticize the initial efforts of your husband in being romantic. Encourage him. Praise his efforts, no matter how feeble. Tell him how attracted you are to him. Tell him how much you appreciate him. Shower him with your love and affection.

And for both of you, if you are struggling in this area of physical oneness, begin by honestly talking about the issues. Agree on the vocabulary that you will use as you discuss issues. Wife, don’t be embarrassed to help your husband by telling him what you enjoy. Husband, be considerate and patient as you prefer your wife and her pleasure to your own.

And may I make a couple more suggestions. Make a list of 30 things for which you are thankful about your spouse. Make another list of 30 things that are attractive to you about your spouse. Pray these lists to God each day, thanking Him for the spouse He gave you and what it is about that person that is attractive to you. Each day make it a goal to tell your spouse one item on each list. Use the lists as guides to your thinking about that person each day. And then, add one item to each list every day until you have at least 50 on the each list.

I can hear you now. “You’ve got to be kidding! 30 things I’m thankful for. I can’t even think of 5!” That’s OK. I know that you can do it. Work hard at it. Make it a priority. Pray asking God to help you change your hard heart and give you a tender heart toward the mate He has given you. This is not impossible. Just be glad that I didn’t start out with 50! As the slogan for Nike says, “Just do it!”

There are so many issues that can be involved in your marital relationship. Please do not continue living as if there is no problem. God has designed sexuality for mutual enjoyment. Go to your elder. Seek help from those you know can be of help. And brothers and sisters, let us not be so prideful that we would look down upon someone who needs and asks for our help, or be so proud that we don’t seek help from those who can provide it.

Conclusion

What would be appropriate for concluding this series?

- Let us honor God with our bodies. They belong to Him and to our spouse.
- Let us honor marriage and keep the marriage bed undefiled.
- Let us look forward with great anticipation to that time when we will consummate our marriage to our eternal Husband and enjoy the ultimate one-flesh relationship prepared for us from eternity past.
- Let us encourage one another to live lives that bring honor to God in the area of our sexuality through the power of the Holy Spirit using His Word and His people.

To Him be all glory and praise both now and forever, AMEN and AMEN!!