

Title: “Sex & Sexuality: Honour God With Your Body” NSAC

Series: “The Goodness of the Body” April 18, 2021 Pastor Dave Sattler

Texts: 1 Corinthians 6:9b-20; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Sources: Bible Gateway & NIV Life Application Bible, & JB Phillips Living Translation.

Commentaries: Gordon Fee, Leon Morris. **Books:** “*Love Thy Body*” by Nancy Pearcey (2017), “*The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*” by Carl Trueman (2020). **Sermon:** Mark Peters (Apr 11, 2021, NSAC). **Meeting:** Cam Rourke (2012). **Wikipedia:** Oxytocin & Vasopressin.

I. <Slide> Review & Introduction

- Hello, everyone! Thank you for joining us. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC today continuing our Series on “The Goodness of the Body” tackling some of the biggest, and most controversial issues of our day.
- What is sacred and what is right and what is permissible when it comes to the human body, is being radically redefined in our day—especially in the West.
- How do we respond Christianly to these tectonic shifts in culture? However we do, our approach must be seasoned with wisdom, respect, and gentleness.
- **<Slide>** ILL — I am reminded of that old 1970s JB Phillips’ ...
 - NT paraphrase of cf. Romans 12:2 that I memorized as a child, ? Q: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within ...”
 - Yet, many self-identifying Christians today tend to dismiss the Bible’s authority when it doesn’t suit them. — MP, 4/11/2021
 - Like jello poured into a mould, as Christ-followers, our thoughts, words, and actions are too often being formed by the ideologies and practices of our world all around us.
 - And this presents a grave danger.
- **<Slide>** So, just how does a biblical worldview counter, shift, or **breathe new life** into our world’s narratives, the ones we are all ‘swimming’ in every day—stories about gender identity, abortion, or medical assistance in dying, or the topic for today, perhaps the hottest of all “Sex & Sexuality?”
- Part of the problem has been the historical missteps the Christian Church has taken in its teaching and discipleship on these matters.
- Too often the focus has been on the biblical do’s and don’ts rather than the vitally important why’s behind them.
- Too many times the Church has chosen the path of militant protest against the culture and failed to present, or embody, many of the Christian Story’s compelling alternatives.
- **<Slide>** Perhaps as consequence, the anti-culture movements of the 20th Century deemed Christian morality ‘arcane’, ‘oppressive’, and finally, ‘irrelevant.’

- And, people like Darwin and Nietzsche and Joplin and Hefner launched revolutions that altered the landscape.
- With regard to sex & sexuality, Sigmund Freud is a particularly important revolutionary. Freud's work elevated the human sub-conscious—a disembodied state as the real person, void of moral code and truly free.
- This gave birth to the idea of sexuality or eroticism driving one's life.
- Q: "Humans [even children] are essentially sexual," Dr. Freud concluded.
— *Freud In Trueman, Ch.6* And the modern Sexual Revolution was born.
- However, there's a good argument that the so-called "Sexual Revolution" has actually caused widespread cultural damage and dehumanized sex. Or, at very least, separated sex—spirit from body. To humanity's peril.
- If, as Christianity proclaims, body and spirit together, by God's design, beautifully form personhood, how do we "honour God with our bodies?"

II. **Biblical Text: 1 Corinthians 6:9b-20 (NIV)**

<Slide> 9b Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And that is what some of you were. 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.

<Slide> 12 "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

<Slide> 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.

<Slide> 18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. **Therefore honour God with your bodies.**

[Pray] Lord, please move me out of the way. Come and speak to us from Your Word by Your Spirit. We are hungry to hear from You. Amen.

III. Biblical Teaching:

1. <Slide> Grace: Is everything permissible? (v.12)

- “I have the right to do anything [I want].” This may have been a catch-phrase floating around the Corinthian Church, used to justify wild conduct.
- Or, a subtle twist on Paul’s teaching of grace over against legalism.
- Paul corrects, ‘Just because it may be permissible, just because it’s common practice in the city, doesn’t mean it’s right—or even good for you.’
- A fundamental element of the Christian Story is that salvation cannot be earned, it is a gift. This is God’s amazing grace—a gift to be received.
- Yes, we have freedom because Jesus has paid the punishment for our sin.
- But, that freedom, is not to be taken lightly. It’s meant to be stewarded well—with our body and spirit together, offered back to God as our act of worship.

2. <Slide> Our body is for the Lord too. (v.13-14)

- Another misguided idea was circulating Corinth: a belief that the physical world, including the human body, was not that important—for God will destroy it one day ... and float us all to heaven to live as spirits on a pink cloud playing harps!
- A natural progression of this ideology is that the body becomes dispensable.
- If this body is destined only for destruction, then why give much care to what we do with it? And this is a dangerous worldview.
- Paul counters, ‘the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the promise that Christ-followers also will be resurrected in the body, forbids us from treating this body lightly.’ Our bodies are also part of the redemptive work of Christ.
- God, and His Church, are not merely in the business of ‘saving souls.’
- Truth is: this body has eternal purpose; so how we treat our body matters.
- The Lord made our bodies, the Lord knows our bodies best [Jesus had one too], so it’s best we not violate His instructions for how to live in these bodies.
- Or, trick ourselves into believing we can sin with our bodies without damaging our souls.

3. <Slide> Sex intimately bonds people. (v.15-17)

- “The two will become one flesh.” Paul quotes Genesis 2.
- This is the biblical imagery for sex: a physical/spiritual uniting, reserved for a **lifelong marriage relationship between a man and woman.**
- ILL — There was a temple in Corinth dedicated to Aphrodite the Greek...
 - Goddess of love. And that temple employed more than a thousand prostitutes. And, paying for sex was a ritual part of worship.
 - Knowing this was an accepted part of Corinthian culture, Paul challenges, ‘Don’t you know that hooking up with a temple prostitute is no simple throw-away act of pleasure?’

- For those who are united with Christ, it's an act of ripping away from God and forming a link with another deity.' — *Morris, p.97-98*
- **<Slide>** And Paul's psychological insight into human sexuality here is centuries ahead of his time. It is the biblical view that if you have sex with someone you become connected to them—united; like 'glue,' sex bonds two people together in ways designed by God to build intimate oneness.
- ILL — Recent scientific studies indicate that during intimate sexual contact ...
 - Vasopressin and oxytocin, male and female "attachment" or "pair bonding" hormones are released in the human body.
— *Wikipedia: Vasopressin & Oxytocin and in Fee & Percy*
 - So it appears that sex engages humans even down to the level of our biochemistry.
- As one biblical commentator puts it, Q:"Paul might well have been saying, 'When you have sex with someone, your body makes a promise to that person, whether you realize it or not.'" — *Fee, p.126*

4. **<Slide> Run from sexual sin! (v.18)**

- We mustn't underestimate the power of sexual sin to hurt individuals, families, churches, and communities.
- Why Paul issues this serious imperative, "Flee from sexual immorality."
- 'Run! Get outta there!' And ... may we trust in, lean on, cling to Jesus, and not allow sexual sin to master us.
- Now, contrary to a lot of church teaching, or public perception, sexual sin is not worse than any other sin [as you may have been taught or surmised].
- However, sexual sin does have a unique effect on the entire person—body and spirit. And its repercussions are often far-reaching.
- ILL — In my 30 years as a pastor, sexual sin has been the single biggest 'destroyer' that I've encountered.

5. **<Slide> Your body is a place where God dwells. (v.19-20)**

- Paul finishes Ch6 with some of his most powerful words.
- "Your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God ..." Wow! Such an incredible statement!
- In the OT, the people of God built the tabernacle, then, a temple, in which God made His presence known and His glory manifest among them. In the NT, God came to earth as God the Son, Jesus—"Immanuel, God With Us."
- Then, God comes even closer and makes His dwelling in us, through God the Holy Spirit. Christ-followers, this is an astonishing reality!
- **<Slide>** ILL — Reminds me of the story of Father John of Kronstadt...
 - A 19th Century Russian priest now saint of the Orthodox Church.

- He was known to hit the streets early in the mornings where he would find people passed out from their activities the night before.
 - And Father John would reach down into the gutter, grab them by the chin, and lovingly encourage them, Q: “You were made to house the glory and presence of the God of the Universe.”
- As much as it pains us, we are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings.
 - Why Paul reminds, Q: “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.” We belong to God.
 - We were bought at an incredible price—the life of God the Son Jesus.
 - And the presence of the Spirit of God in us is God’s affirmation of this body.
 - So, honouring God with our body now is a very cool thing we get to do!

IV. Applications

- Time to ‘land the plane’ now with a few applications.

A. <Slide> Sex is not simply “no big deal.”

- This is the counter-statement to a story our world seems to be selling that “Sex is no big deal.” Or, more accurately, the myth that “Sex is no big deal.”
- If our bodies are disconnected from our spirits, and dispensable, purposeless, or at best amoral to use however we wish or choose, then, it makes sense: when you feel hunger, satisfy it. ‘Do what you want.’
- This therapeutic ‘if-it-feels-good-do-it’ ideology gave birth to the sexual revolution, today’s hookup culture, and the pornography industry.
- <Slide> Pornography detaches sex from its intended personal context and requires little relational investment.
- Think about it, [especially nowadays when it no longer involves sneaking a peek at a magazine in a public grocery store], pornography presents very little risk, with very quick, and subtly destructive, impact.
- Mona Charen says of the pornography industry, Q: “Porn is, in a sense, the logical end point of the sexual revolution because it completes the separation of sex from love and relationships. Sexual release is commodified, packaged, and sold. The right to pleasure may be assured, 24/7, but it carries with it the debasement of human beings.” — *Charen in Trueman p.294*
- Pornography depersonalizes sex.
- <Slide> In today’s hookup culture, sex is seen as purely recreational.
- The concept is that one is supposed to be able to walk away from a sexual encounter—as if it never happened. No strings attached.
- These ways of thinking, and living, expose significant blindspots and pitfalls.
- In her book, *Love Thy Body*, Nancy Percy says of hookup culture,

- Q: “If you admit you want more than sex, you will be labeled, ‘needy, clingy, or dependent.’” — *p.119-120*
- Depicts such a sad and low view of human sexuality.
- One that, in my opinion, cries out for the Christian Story to redeem!
- **<Slide>** The Christian worldview declares that humans are beautifully created by God, as a body-person unit.
- Never strictly physical, sexuality, by God’s design, is an expression of one’s deep spiritual and relational longings.
- I agree with author Carl Trueman who suggests, Q: “Where sex is reduced to nothing more than a pleasant biological function, a recreational activity with no intrinsic significance, ... then human beings are themselves reduced.”
— *p.300*
- The whole notion of ‘casual sex’ is a misnomer.
- There’s no such thing. Sex is a big deal.

B. <Slide> [But] Sex is not the biggest deal in the world [either].

- Another counter-statement. It’s ironic how these two paradoxical lies seem to fly in our culture. Like air, sex is no big deal. Until you’re not getting any. Then, it’s the biggest deal in the world!
- This is the message that permeates every form of media in our world: ‘You need to be sexually active. Furthermore, you ought to be experimenting with all the sexual options in order to be ‘cool’, true to yourself, or truly human and embracing all that life has to offer you.’
- In some ways, our world has made a ‘religion’ out of sex.
- Sexual activity is seen as one of the primary ways to be fulfilled.
- And we’re ‘sold’ this story from a very young age.
- The mass over-sexualization of culture continues to pressure children younger and younger to ‘be sexual.’ And it is very disturbing.
- **<Slide>** APP — But, in the Christian Story, sexual activity ...
 - Does not define personhood! Sexual exploits do not determine one’s value or worth to God or society.
 - Rather, the Christian worldview Q: “recognizes that God has purchased humanity for higher things.” — *Fee, p.265*
 - Celibacy, by choice, or by circumstance, does not make one ‘lesser.’
 - So, to my friends who are single, I want to say that engaging in sexual encounters is futile—not what you really need, not what will satisfy, or what you should be desperately seeking after.
 - Casual sex, hookups, and any sex, outside of marriage, always has repercussions. Don’t allow yourself to be swept up in our world’s stories. Do not compromise. You’re worth far more than that.

- Sadly, there is much shame and hurt around this topic of sex & sexuality.
- C. <Slide> [But] With God there's always hope for a fresh start!**
- In v9-10, Paul gives a laundry list of sins—most relating to sexual sin.
- And, then to his much-beloved Christ-followers, he flips the script in v11:
 - “And that is what some of you were. 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.”
- ILL — Many years ago I was having a discipleship meeting with a guy ...
 - Who'd come from a very rough background and lifestyle before becoming a Christian. As he contemplated the transformation and healing he'd experienced from Jesus, of his old life, he blurted out,
 - ❓ Q: ‘I'm not that guy anymore!’
 - This is why Paul says in his later letter to the Corinthians,
 - ❓ Q: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” — *2 Corinthians 5:17*
- Cleaned up. Made holy and useful by God. Forgiven. This is the Christian Story. This is what God can do.
- **<Slide> APP — Still the pain around sexual sin cuts deep ...**
 - Attempting to capitalize on our over-sexualized culture, I believe this is an area the enemy loves to sink his talons into—to try and mess with God's beautiful plans for sex & sexuality.
 - I've heard it said, ‘The devil loves couples who aren't married to have sex and couples who are married to not have sex.’
 - Treading sensitively, I conclude with some specific words of hope for 3 particular groups of people:
 - 1) To married couples struggling ... sex is an area of tremendous tension and division. Invite Jesus to heal, to bridge the steely gap between you and your spouse, to open you up to each other anew, body and soul.
 - 2) For those whose lives have been profoundly affected by your own sexual sin ... your sin need not define you!
 - Come to Jesus. Humbly confess. Ask Jesus to wash your shame and guilt away and make you new again.
 - 3) And finally, to those who've been crushed by the sexual sins of others ... that deep hurt feeling betrayed, having your trust broken, the memories, the shame, the anger—the pain is undeniable.
 - But know this: Jesus walks with you in your brokenness. You are not alone. Invite Him in. His shoulders are big. Jesus can carry this burden with you. It's what He loves to do. Amen.