

Sermon Title: What Did Jesus Say About Sex?

Series Title: Family Matters Series

Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington

Week of May 2, 2010

Sermon Based Small Group Discussion Guide

Big Idea: Jesus Christ calls us to live righteously in all areas of life. Maintaining some basic commitments will help us not only realize and safeguard sexual righteousness, but provide the hopeful assurance of restoration from sin.

Icebreaker

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:27-30

Study Introduction: A February 2007 publication of the Christian magazine Discipleship Journal dedicated an entire issue to the topic of sex. Sue Kline, editor of DJ, said this about the process of going to print with this broad, sensitive, topic:

More than once in recent months, I wondered, *What were we thinking when we decided to tackle the topic of sex?!* We knew the issue was important--don't we, Christian and nonChristian alike, live in a sex-charged culture? But I'm not so sure we were prepared for how complex this topic could be. Would we address gender issues--the blurring of the line between what is male and what is female? Should we address homosexuality, pornography, healing from sexual abuse?

In the end, the writers of Discipleship Journal chose to focus on the question that matters most: *What is God's design for sex?* The sermon this week and this week's small group discussion will focus on God's good and intended design for creating us as sexual beings. It will challenge us both to take steps to safeguard our hearts, minds, and actions from distorted patterns and to honestly assess our sexual righteousness before God. To the question, *"Is it possible for fallen, sinful men and women to experience true intimacy and lasting*

sexual fulfillment in the context of a loving, healthy relationship?" God's reply is a resounding "YES!" His Word, the Bible, shows how.

Read Psalm 119: 1-8

*Blessed are they whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who keep his statutes
and seek him with all their heart.
They do nothing wrong;
they walk in his ways.
You have laid down precepts
that are to be fully obeyed.
Oh, that my ways were steadfast
in obeying your decrees!
Then I would not be put to shame
when I consider all your commands.
I will praise you with an upright heart
as I learn your righteous laws.
I will obey your decrees;
do not utterly forsake me.*

1. What blessings exist for those who follow God's plan for their life? Conversely, what are the consequences of not obeying God's will?
2. From our own experience and observation most of us can list the blessings of obeying God's design. This week's study examines God's perspective on sex. Those who follow Christ are called to submit this area of life to God's leading, yet many of us struggle in this area of discipleship. What do you think are some reasons for that?

3. These verses imply that it is possible to take steps to ensure righteousness. During this week's sermon, we heard about five commitments that we can make to safeguard sexual righteousness. Paraphrase in your own words what it means to do each of these, then share with the group:

- a. We must acknowledge and confess our sexual fallenness;
- b. Accept God's gift of human sexuality;
- c. Keep God's standards for purity;
- d. Fulfill the marital sexual relationship;
- e. Teach your children godly sexuality

4. Individually, take a few minutes to contemplate in which areas you might need God's help to see improvement or restoration.

Note: If you are willing, ask the group or a group member to pray for you in this area.

God created sex and considers it both good and a very important part of his plan. Genesis 1:27-28, 31 draws a clear picture of God's intended design:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

In fact, Colossians 1:16 asserts this about *all* of God's creation:

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him and for him.

Sex is good. Both the Church and our secular culture can agree on this point. Beyond that declaration, though, the Christian understanding of sex parts ways with the world's perspective.

1. What messages about sex does our culture and popular media promote?
2. What are the truths to which we, as followers of Christ, hold about God's design for sex?

Read Matthew 5:27-30

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

1. In these verses, Jesus addressed some assumptions prevalent among the religious leaders of his day. What did they agree was necessary to be considered sexually righteous before God and man?

Sexual unrighteousness takes on a much larger scope when we apply Jesus' teaching to the subject. It goes beyond simply abstaining from the act of committing adultery.

2. How did Jesus challenge and expand upon this assumption?

3. What could have been his motivation for broadening our understanding of what adultery and sexual impurity are?

Jesus' response discerns the difference between obedience that is motivated, on the one hand, by a pursuit to fulfill the "letter of the law" (as delineated in Scripture), and, on the other, by a desire to please the One who knows and wants our best.

1. Do you ever find yourself asking, "How much can I get away with?" This could apply to any area of life. Can you give an example?
2. Think of a time when you successfully resisted temptation in some area of your life. What helped you resist the temptation? Are you currently going through something for which you could ask your group to offer prayer support?

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (Corinthians 10:13)

Practical Steps:

STEP #1 – CHANGE YOUR DESIRES (Romans 12-Renew your mind, Galatians 5:24-Power of the Spirit)

STEP #2 – LIMIT YOUR OPPORTUNITIES (Lord's Prayer-Lead us not, Psalm 37-Lord direct our steps)

STEP #3 – EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL (Ephesians 3:14-19 - Holy Spirit strengthens the inner man)

STEP #4 – OBTAIN FORGIVENESS (1 John 1: 9, Psalm 51: 10-12)

Closing Challenge

What are some commitments you want to make to your personal purity as a result of today's sermon study?

Optional Activity

1. If our Scripture is clear that God designed us to be sexual creatures and intended this for our pleasure, why is it so difficult to discuss this topic openly with other believers?

2. If you find yourself reticent to discuss this topic, what do you think is the cause?
 - a) Uncertainty about the biblical perspective on God's intended design for sex;

 - b) A harmful relationship that distorted your understanding of sex;

 - c) Conviction that you may be in a relationship that does not follow God's design;

 - d) Other _____.

Note: Please discuss your response to this question to the level of your comfort within the group. A growing sense of trust and confidentiality within the group will promote more meaningful dialogue.