

sex

Leader's Guide

BIG IDEA

Sex is a gift from God. But, we abuse this gift by redefining its boundaries. The Gospel confronts both the way we pursue sex as life's highest pleasure and the way we reduce sex to either an appetite or procreation.

SEX POP QUIZ

SAY "To begin this study we are going to take a quick Sex Pop Quiz. Let's read through all the questions first and then flip the sheet upside-down to see the answers."

WHAT YOU DON'T HEAR IN CHURCH

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

Growing up, what side of the sex as "God or Gross" spectrum did the people around you fall on?

THE PROBLEM

LEADER READS THE SMALL SECTION UNDER "THE PROBLEM"

SAY "Now we are going to read a few passages of Scripture that talk more about sex. Can I have five volunteers with a Bible each read one of these passages? We are going to read through these passages quickly to get a clearer definition of beauty. The answers might come easy, but it will be very helpful to go over them."

READ Proverbs 5:18-19

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex? Sex was designed for pleasure, not just procreation. What is the passage urging you to do? To be sexually satisfied with your spouse.

READ Mark 10:6-9

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex? Sex was meant for a man and woman. Also, sex unites a man and woman permanently in God's eyes. What is the passage urging you to do? Refrain from homosexual relationships. Also, we should refrain from sex until a permanent commitment has been made.

READ Matthew 5:27-28

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex? Sexual sin starts in the heart and isn't just an outward action but an inward nature. What is the passage urging you to do? Pay attention to the sins of your heart, not just your outward actions.

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex? We shouldn't have sex whenever, wherever. What is the passage urging you to do? This passage contrasts the self-controlled with those who lack self-control. We honor God by controlling our body's lustful urges.

sex leader's guide cont.

READ 1 Corinthians 10:13

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex? If you struggle with sexual temptation there is hope. God will always offer you an escape door and will give you the power to walk through that door.

What is the passage urging you to do? When you are tempted, remember God's protection and look for the open door that he has promised.

SAY "Hopefully these passages helped you to get a clearer picture of God's take on sex. To summarize, **sex** was designed by God to be enjoyed by a man and woman in the commitment of marriage. Since **sexual sin** isn't just external but internal, we are to pay attention to our hearts since that is where sin begins. Lastly, God urges us to live holy lives by controlling our bodies. This last piece leads us into the next section. We will see that our lack of self-control leads to us to minimize the power of sex."

THE ROOT

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

How have you experienced others around you stretching the boundaries of sex to get approval, power, comfort, or security? How have you done this?

SOLUTION

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

What is your reaction to the Gospel message above? Potential follow-up questions:

- *How will deeply knowing The Gospel change the heart of someone who a) feels guilty because of their sexual history or b) is using sex to get ultimate pleasure?*
- *What else stood out to you from this section?*

REDEEMING SEX

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully? Potential follow-up question: Which of these areas have you struggled with in the past?

SAY "Thanks for sharing. Let's spend the last few minutes in prayer."

PRAY

Sex

Pop Quiz

- 1) ___% of guys say they have more respect for girls who say no to sex.
 - A. 33
 - B. 53
 - C. 73

- 2) The average person has their first sexual experience with another person at age _____.
 - A. 13
 - B. 16
 - C. 19

- 3) ___The number one consumer of pornography are:
 - A. Girls ages 25-30
 - B. Guys ages 12-17
 - C. Guys ages 18-23

- 4) ___% of guys say that sex won't make them stay in a relationship they don't want to be in.
 - A. 25
 - B. 50
 - C. 75

ANSWERS:
 1) C (73%)
 2) B (16)
 3) B (Guys ages 12-17)
 4) C (75%)

Quiz sources: (#1, 4) "That's What He Said" report by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy; (#2, 3) Pastor Mark Driscoll sermon "Peasant Princess: Let Him Kiss Me."



WHAT YOU DON'T HEAR IN CHURCH

Sex has had a tremendous amount of power over our culture. *First, we sing about it.* If you turn on the radio, you won't hear people singing songs about their jobs. Rather, you will hear them (in graphic detail) explaining what they'd like to do to the opposite sex. Marvin Gaye, Prince, Pussycat Dolls, Lady Gaga, and Justin Timberlake are just a few of the well known pop stars who have made songs about sex popular. *Second, we write about it.* Have you seen the magazines on the grocery store rack? In addition to bread and milk, you can purchase a stack of magazines with endless sex tips. *Third, we think about it.* Statistics show that over half of men think about sex every day.

Contrary to popular belief, the Bible has a lot to say about sex. The book *Song of Solomon* paints a beautiful, graphic picture of what redeemed sex looks like yet it never mentions pregnancy at all! The sexual imagery in this book is detailed and surprising. You'll never think of cisterns, wells, trees, and fruit the same way again!

The Bible shows us that sex was authored by God himself. He didn't fall off his throne in heaven when he saw Adam and Eve "figuring things out" for the first time. The God who created the Universe (with all its complex laws and formulas) also carefully designed the art of sex. He gave us this beautiful gift for the purpose of *pleasure* (Song of Sol.), *children* (Gen. 1), *oneness* (Gen. 1), *comfort* (2 Sam. 12:24), and *protection* (1 Cor. 7).

Pastor Mark Driscoll says that people normally view sex as either "God" or "Gross." The first group turns a *good thing* into a *god thing*. They see sex as the ultimate thing in life by which they can experience the highest pleasure. The second group (which includes many church people) tend to view sex as gross - totally sinful, evil, and only necessary for producing offspring.

Driscoll advocates that we should view sex as a *gift* from God. He says, "*Sex is a gift to be received, treasured, enjoyed, saved, given in marriage, and cultivated in marriage.*" This biblical view rides the fine line between the errors of *license* (having sex whenever we want) and *legalism* (having sex for procreation purposes only).

Why are we so infatuated with sex? The reason is that the human body is the apex of God's creation here on earth. It should be no surprise then that sex (the powerful mingling of two souls and bodies) is the most sought after experience of our day.



Growing up, what side of the sex as "God or Gross" spectrum did the people around you fall on?

sex is a gift

the problem

Sex is a gift from God, but we've abused this gift by redefining its boundaries.



Read

- 1) Proverbs 5:18-19
- 2) Mark 10:6-9
- 3) Matthew 5:27-28
- 4) 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5
- 5) 1 Corinthians 10:13

Answer the questions below after reading each passage of Scripture...

How is the passage urging you to think differently about sex?

What is the passage urging you to do?

THE ROOT ISSUE

We've redefined the boundaries that God has put around sex. We have moved the protective boundary markers not realizing that...

"...boundaries are for our good - helping us to contain the power of sex so that it maximizes pleasure... When we don't respect the power of sex and don't get a handle on it, it spreads decay and destruction in our lives."

- Pastor Tim Keller

First, moving the boundaries of sex minimizes pleasure. Ben Patterson says, *"The pleasures of sex are heightened, not lessened by proper restraint, in the same way the Colorado River is made more powerful by the walls of the Grand Canyon. The very narrowness of the river's channel there makes for a great river. Farther south, as the river flows through the deserts of California and Arizona, it is shallow, wide, and muddy, even stinky in spots. Wider boundaries diminish the river; sharper, stronger, and narrower boundaries strengthen it. Less is*

more." Second, moving the boundaries of sex spreads decay and destruction. If a fish decided, for the sake of freedom, to live outside of the boundaries of water, it would start to break down and die. Additionally, if a person allowed their fire to spread beyond the fireplace, the house would start on fire and eventually burn down to the ground.

The boundary of marriage therefore was not created by God to diminish pleasure, but to protect and enhance it. As we have seen though, we have turned away from God and have used sex to get the following things that we should be looking for in him alone:

Approval and appreciation. "Having sex makes me feel wanted, loved, approved, and affirmed."

Power. "I feel powerful when I am able to sleep with multiple guys/girls."

Intimacy and physical comfort. "Sex makes me feel closer to him/her" or "Looking at porn makes me feel less lonely" or "Having sex or looking at porn relieves my stress."

Security and control. "I think that having sex will make him/her stay with me" or "I like to give or withhold sex to get what I want."

We lust after these things when we lack a relationship with God or have a weak one. Lust starts in the heart (Matt. 5) and grows as we ditch the promises of God. Lust causes us to use people. For example, men may give affection to get sex and women may give sex to get affection. In these examples, sex is used as a means to an end or an end in itself. Sex here is reduced to a commodity - an exchange of goods. The problem is that if the sex isn't good enough or the affection purchased by sex isn't strong enough, then the relationship could fail! Without a commitment, sex is a high risk activity because there is no guarantee that the one you've been emotionally and physically vulnerable with, will hold onto their independence.

If you are dating someone right now, don't disrespect the power of sexual activity. Your physical and emotional well being is on the line. In our culture, sexual restraint is frowned upon. But sex within the restraint of one, life-long, committed relationship always breeds a sharper, stronger, and more powerful form of pleasure.

How have you experienced others around you stretching the boundaries of sex to get approval, power, comfort, or security? How have you done this?

solutio

The Gospel confronts our views and practice of sex. If sex becomes our ultimate pursuit, then we will be severely disappointed. When sex doesn't come through for us, we have to have more, jumping from one relationship (or porn site) to the next. Sex gets reduced to an appetite that we feed when we have urges. On the flip side, if sex is reduced to producing offspring, then we strip sex of its power to produce radical pleasure and oneness in the marriage bed. Both of these practices reduce sex to something far less than what it was intended to be.

The Bible tells us very clearly that everyone who misuses the gift of sex will be judged. Those who engage in adultery, sex before marriage, pornography, rape, bestiality, voyeurism, incest, pedophilia, prostitution, and the like will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). Included in this group are those who might not have acted out their sexual fantasies, but who have lusted in their heart (Matt. 5:27). Ephesians 5:3 reminds us that *"...there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality."* Not even a hint.

But, listen very closely to the good news. Even though the way out of the Kingdom is sexual immorality, the way back in isn't to clean up your sex life. In one of the most remarkable stories in all of the Bible, the religious leaders drug a sexually immoral woman out in front of everyone to kill her as a punishment. Jesus stepped into the hostile situation, saved her from death, and told her that he didn't condemn her (John 8). How did she get off the hook so easily? Because Jesus was on his way to die for her on the cross. Like the woman in the story, Jesus dies for us *while* we are in sexual sin, not *after* (Rom. 5:8). Jesus was even bold enough to say that prostitutes who repent will enter the Kingdom of God before the hypocritical religious leaders (Matt. 21:28-32).

Even though sex is a great gift to the world, it is important to remember that Jesus lived a single life. This is something we shouldn't overlook. As we look at the life of Jesus, we see that sex is not the highest end a person's life. Sex is a signpost that points beyond itself. Psalm 16:11 says, *"...in [God's] presence there is fullness of joy; at [His] right hand are pleasures forevermore."* Through Jesus we can receive unceasing pleasure from God. And those who do experience this kind of pleasure will be freed from using sex in all the wrong ways.

Sex is a visible sign of two people becoming one flesh forever. It is a vulnerable, self-sacrificial act that communicates a heart of commitment to the other. The cross is our visible sign that God sent Jesus to die for us so that we might be one with him forever. On the cross, Jesus became vulnerable and self-sacrificial to prove his commitment to his unfaithful bride, the church.

redeeming sex:

You can't **redeem** sex without being redeemed yourself. So the first step is to trust in Jesus, who lived a perfect life and died to make you righteous before God (2 Cor. 5:21). Those who are made righteous by God are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), who empowers you with the motivation and ability to redeem sex in the following ways:

fasting and fleeing

First, Jesus said that if something causes you to sin sexually, deal with it in a serious manner (Matthew 5:27-30). If you need to fast from a book, computer, TV, or dating relationship for the time being, then do so if it's holding you back. Remember that getting rid of the object won't cure your problem, *but* it will help you in that it will stop feeding your sinful desires. Second, we are to flee from sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). In most cases (although not always), men will give into visual temptations that seek instant gratification (i.e. porn, one-night stands) and women will give into emotional temptations that build slowly (i.e. romance novels, fantasizing about men). Discern which things make you the most vulnerable and run!

don't awaken love

"Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires (Song of Sol. 2:7)." Ben Patterson says, *"She issues a call of restraint... Her message is that the experience of lovemaking is too powerful, too all-consuming, to stir up until the lovers are ready, until they have the commitment proper to sex."* Michael Lawrence says, *"Foreplay is the one-way on-ramp onto the highway of sexual intercourse. In our cars, we are not meant to slow down on an on-ramp, and we are not meant to go backwards. That is not what on-ramps are designed for. They are meant to get the car up to speed. So it is with foreplay."* Even if you are not having intercourse with someone, things like erotic kissing, petting, and dry sex are all "on-ramp" activities that awaken love and diminish its power before the right time.

tell others

You should tell others what you are doing with your alone time or boyfriend/girlfriend. James 5:16 says that confessing your sin to other Christians is the path of healing. Once they know, they can be praying that God would give you *protection* (from temptation) and the *power* (to change). Plus, they can continually remind you of the consequences of your actions as well as God's amazing forgiveness toward you through Jesus.

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully?

What is your reaction to the Gospel message above?