Sexuality.

John 8:1-11; John 4:4-26. Rev. Bruce Stanley
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- AIDS. In 2007, there were 33 million people living with AIDS worldwide. Africa has 11.6 million AIDS orphans. 25 million people have died from AIDS since 1981.
- The internet – 2006 –
    - There are 4.2 million porn websites. That's 12% of the entire internet. 420 million pages of pornography.
    - Every second, 28,000 internet users are viewing pornography.
    - 35% of all downloads are pornography.
    - $2 billion a year is spent on pornography in Australia.
    - The average age of first exposure to porn on the internet is age 11.
    - 47% of Christians say pornography is a major problem in the home.
    - 13% of women and 20% of men admit to accessing pornography at work.
- The average age of when an Australian person first has sex is 16½ years old.
- About 30% of women become pregnant whilst teenagers. About 50% of them have an abortion.
- In Australia in 2007, there were 47,963 divorces.

Why all these figures? I want us to see that the way we express our sexuality affects our society. AIDS, the internet, sex outside of marriage, pornography – the way we express our sexuality has an impact on our society.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Sexuality as "Capacity for sexual feelings"
Here's another definition I found: "Sexuality" is the second track on Prince's 1981 album, Controversy. The song was also released as a single in Germany, Japan and Australia.

Let me give you my own broader definition of sexuality:

Sexuality is the way we express ourselves in our human relationships.

If we give "sexuality" this broader definition, we can actually understand its real impact on our world. So today we're going to talk about the way we express our sexuality in 3 ways:

1. Sexuality and our relationship with the world
2. Sexuality and our relationships with each other
3. Sexuality and our relationship with God.

1. Sexuality and our relationship with the world – SHINE AS LIGHTS

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus says: *"Let your light so shine before men that may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven."*

Christians are called to be ***different*** in society and to ***shine*** as God's lights in the world. The way Christians practise their sexuality should be a reflection of their relationship with God – a relationship we want to share with the world. But how do we share these beliefs with our world?

III – Each year the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras event is held, and a well known politician and former minister of the Uniting Church is reported to lead the opposition to this event each year with a prayer for rain on the event.[6] I wonder what you think of that approach?

Think about this: When we share our beliefs with the world, do we do it in a way that shines by example? Or do we do it in a way that judges? In other words, are we showing people HOW God wants us to live, or are we just telling them that they're wrong?

Let's think about Jesus' ministry. Jesus didn't agree with prostitution. But he's always hanging around prostitutes. Jesus never condoned prostitution. Yet he was a friend to prostitutes. Look at the woman caught in adultery in John 8. Jesus ***defends*** her by pointing out that everyone who is standing there is also a sinner. "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Even Jesus doesn't condemn her. He loves her but still calls her to leave her sinful life.

Again and again, Christians let society know that they don't agree with certain expressions of sexuality. And there is a place for that. But do we also show people that we ***love*** them? Jesus showed ABOVE ALL that he loved those who needed direction and help. ***Do we love?*** Or do we just judge?

2. Sexuality and our relationships with each other

What is the PURPOSE of our sexuality? Obviously in Genesis, we can see that God's design of humanity means we are sexual beings. Part of that is the procreation of children. But what is the purpose of our design? What is the purpose of our sexuality?

Relationships. Sexuality is about relationships. Whether it's marriage, having kids, or being with friends, everything about our sexuality is about ***relationships***. This is why God speaks so much in the Bible ***against*** sexuality that destroys relationships.

A good example of this is adultery. If one married man commits adultery with another married woman, two marriages and two families and two family communities are deeply affected by that sin. But even things like pornography and lust affect communities of people. That's why Paul writes these instructions to Timothy about the way he relates to those in his church. 1 Timothy 5: 1-2 –

"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."

Paul wants Timothy to treat his church like his family. As fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers. Because the way we express our sexuality is seen in the way we relate to EVERYONE. It doesn't matter if you're married or single or if you have children or not. Paul wants us to relate to each other as a ***family***.

Let me suggest just 3 things to focus on today as we develop this family relationship with each other:

Trust. Intimacy. Affection. Let me explain these in more detail.

Many people grow up in a family where they are abused. Others grow up in a family where parents are divorced. Others grow up in a family where there is no trust, inappropriate affection, or a real lack of intimacy. Maybe that's what your family is like. Has a family member lost your trust? Did your father ever say he loved you? Did you parents hug you? Could you be open, honest and intimate with your family?

III – Do you know in Australia, there are 7 suicides every day. And 210 attempted suicides.

Our world, our society, and you and I, we NEED a place where we can experience real trust, affection and intimacy. That's why it's SO important to be ***different*** as a church.

I don't know about you, but I need to be able to **trust** people at church. I need church to be a place where I can express my true emotions and affections for people. A place where I can be intimate and open with people about my life. The church family MUST be a place where we can expresses our sexuality in a godly way. Where older men

are treated as fathers and younger women are treated as sisters – with absolute purity. Otherwise, we cannot be lights to our world.

3. Sexuality and our relationship with God.

Let's turn back to John 4 and the story of the woman at the well.

Jesus meets a woman at a well. And she's a Samaritan. And Jesus talks with her. And he offers her living water. He offers her eternal life. And then Jesus tells her to go and get her husband. She says she has no husband. And then Jesus says:

"You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands and the man you have now is not your husband."

Jesus ***knows*** this woman. He knows everything about her. So what's the point of this? Jesus offers eternal life to this woman EVEN THOUGH he knows what she's done. He knows her sin. And he knows her life. Jesus knows ***us*** completely too. And no matter what **we've** done, or how **we've** lived, or what relationships **we've** had in the past, no matter if we've been abused or been an abuser, God wants to offer us a trusting, affectionate and intimate relationship with him through Jesus.

He loves us **completely**, even though he knows us **completely**! If we want to have real, meaningful relationships, the way God intended, we need to embrace a sexuality that is not just about sex! We need to experience and embrace the trustworthy, intimate and affectionate relationship of God **FIRST**.

A great example of this is King David when he writes Psalm 139. David shows trust, intimacy and affection with God.
"O Lord you have searched me and you know me… you created my inmost being… Search me O God and know my heart."

1. We need to **trust God** to provide all that we need.
2. We need to be **intimate with God.** That means being open with him and wanting Him involved in every part of our life.
3. And we need to receive and accept **true affection** from him. Affection that is sacrificially loving.

Healthy sexuality begins with a healthy relationship with God
What we need is to find true trust, intimacy and affection in our relationship with God. ONLY THEN will we be able to have that sort of relationship with people. For example, how can you ***be*** a trustworthy person if you don't know what trustworthiness is? How can you be intimate with someone if you don't know what true intimacy is? How can you be truly affectionate, if you don't know what true affection is? Our relationship with God teaches us what true sexuality is about.

...As for sex itself, (just briefly!) we cannot use sex to get intimacy, or gain trust, or find affection. We need intimacy, and trust, and affection to have a meaningful sex life. For those of us married, that means that building trust, affection and intimacy in your relationship will give you a more meaningful sex life.

Our society corrupts our sexuality. Society wants us to be free to express our sexuality in a way that feels right to us. But that's not what we ***need***. God wants us to express our sexuality in a way that strengthens our relationships.

Let me suggest 3 things today to finish with:

1. Don't judge those in the world. Love them.
2. Live it out in your church family. Develop relationships of trust, intimacy and affection with your brothers and sisters here. Deepen your relationships with one another.
3. Trust God, be open and intimate with him and accept his affectionate love for you through the forgiveness he offers for your sins. **And most of all, love as Christ loved you.**