

1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 7:1-16. Rev. Bruce Stanley

Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

On the TV show “Can of Worms” this week, they asked Australians the question: Is it OK to have sex on a first date. 56% of people surveyed said “yes”. It’s acceptable. It’s appropriate. It’s OK.

It is no surprise to us that “the world” has a different view of sex to what God teaches. God teaches us in the Bible that sex is for a husband and wife, in a committed, life long relationship, which we call marriage.

1. Sexual Design

God’s purpose and design for sex

Genesis 2:23-24: *23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

A man and a woman are “joined” together to form a new partnership, as one flesh. “Sex” is **part** of a husband and wife becoming “one flesh”. And in that way, sex is good. Sex is **one** of the things in a relationship that binds a man and woman together. YES, it is helpful for conceiving children. But it is good on its own because it brings a physical, emotional and spiritual unity between a husband and a wife. Sex is good, as God designed it. But it can also be used in a way that is bad, or unhealthy, or unhelpful.

2. Sexual Freedom

Our freedom in Christ

1 Corinthians 6:12 – *12 “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.*

As Christians we have a lot of freedom in Christ. But it’s exactly that – freedom IN CHRIST. Freedom UNDER his rule. We have freedom with our sexuality AS PART of the body of Christ, guided by his Word and his Spirit. So we don’t just do “whatever we feel like”. If we do, it can be unhelpful or even damaging. Instead, we ask the question, “What is good for the body of Christ? What is good for a man and a woman? What is good for this relationship?”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *19 Do you not know that your body is a temple 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 honor God with your body.*

We are members of the body of Christ. We were bought from slavery to sin by Christ's death on the cross. We **belong** to Christ. He "owns" us in that sense. So it **matters** what we do with our body. It matters how we exercise our freedom. Because it's not just about us. It's about the body of Christ.

So what is "Good Sex"?

3. Good Sex

Marital duty

1 Corinthians 7:3 - **3** *The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.*

Again, Paul reminds us that sex is for marriage. An exclusive and committed lifelong relationship between a man and a woman. And in every marriage, there is a "duty", a responsibility, a husband and wife have to each other. Let me suggest three words to define that duty:

MUTUAL. EXCLUSIVE. LOVE.

First of all, good sex is mutual. Both parties are consenting. There is no coercion or bullying or intimidation or force. So if one person wants sex and the other doesn't, what happens? There needs to be understanding. To have GOOD sex, a couple needs to continually seek to know each other more and more so they can have a **mutual** sex life.

Second, good sex is exclusive. 1 man and 1 woman becoming 1 flesh. A husband and wife share their bodies with each other (verse 4). Sharing our bodies with people **outside** that relationship ties us emotionally and physically and spiritually to other people in a way that damages the exclusive marriage relationship. God's *intent* is for us to be tied to one person. Of course, many people have sex before marriage or have affairs. Others are in 2nd or 3rd marriages after divorces or deaths. That doesn't mean sex in a new relationship is ruined forever. It just means that it's going to be different. There is always going to be a connection with that other partner in your life that will, in some way, big or small, affect your existing relationship. And that means, simply, that you will have some things to work through in your new exclusive relationship.

Third, good sex is about love. Marital duty is about loving and understanding the needs of your spouse. Sex is not something to be used **just** to meet an urge. It's not there **just** to give us physical satisfaction. **Every act of sex** impacts the depth of our relationships, whether it happens 5 times a week or once a year. A fulfilling sexual life does not come from the ACT of sex alone. It comes more deeply from an **intimate relationship**. God created a man and woman to be in a relationship. Sex comes FROM that relationship and FOR that relationship. It doesn't MAKE the relationship.

So, good sex is mutual, exclusive, and loving.

4. Sex Issues

When problems occur

So what about sexual issues people face? Let me mention just a few which I think affect many people:

1. Being unmarried. In chapter 7, Paul talks about “the matters you wrote about”. He addresses some of the specific problems they were facing. He says it’s good to remain unmarried. If you can. BUT, because of immorality, many people often NEED to get married. Verse 9 says: It’s better to marry than to burn with passion! But what if marriage is not an option? What if you can’t find a partner for example, or don’t want to marry? What do you do? Verse 9 says we need self-control. But remember that for a Christian, “self control” is an act of God! It’s **God’s Spirit** working in us, who strengthens us to resist temptation. How? Through prayer, reading our Bible, meeting with other Christians – and generally deepening our relationship with God in every way we can. It’s not easy to stay faithful. And sometimes we will stumble. But we must **keep returning** to God in **his** strength, trusting him to provide us the right marriage partner at the right time in our lives, and to have the strength to overcome temptations while we’re single.

So I talked to a mature Christian friend of mine. A single woman. Almost 50. Here are her top 4 tips to being a single Christian and remaining faithful:

1. Remove temptation by avoiding any situations or environments that are too tempting.
 2. Develop good relationships with other Christians to help care for your emotional needs.
 3. Be careful of coveting what other people have. Instead, be thankful for what God has given you, rather than focussing on what you might be missing out on.
 4. To Christian families – share your family with those who are single. Try not to always just hang around families with children!
2. Another issue I those who have no Children – Many couples have trouble conceiving children and that can sometimes make sex difficult. In order to address this issue well, I’m going to leave it until next week when we talk about children specifically.
 3. An inability to have sex. Sometimes people find that they cannot have sex. For lots of reasons. For example:
 - a. **Children** – People who have young children running around all the time can be tired, hardly ever in the mood and hardly ever have the time.
 - b. **Illness** – physical illness, mental illness, emotionally difficult times in our lives.
 - c. **Life events** – menopause, menstruation, post pregnancy stresses, prostate problems, erectile dysfunction, and, especially past abuse – sexually, emotional, psychological...

The thing to remember about sex, whatever struggle you’re facing, is that it’s just ONE part of the relational person God made us to be. In verse 12, Paul says:

“Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

Inside or outside of marriage, we are not to be **mastered** by sex. We are not to be mastered by that one aspect of our relationship. When our sex life suffers, we need to attend to it, not ignore it. But it is not our master. It is not all that relationships are about. There is much more to meaningful relationships.

5. Sex Life

Let's talk about sex...

But what can we do when we face problems? Or even when things are going well and we want to them to go better? Let me suggest this: we need to talk about sex. In a helpful way. Sex cannot be a “taboo” topic. We must be able to speak in a godly and honouring way about sex.

Our recent poll online showed that around 50% of parents never talked to their children about sex. But sex is good! Sex is from God! Sex is how most of us came to be here on this earth! So let me suggest 4 ways to start talking in a helpful way about sex:

1. If you're married, talk to your **spouse**. If you want a good sex life, talk about it. Talk about “when”, “where” and “how”. Paul says: (verse 4) – your body does not belong to just you. We use it to serve our spouse. And **part** of the way we do that is through sex. If you've never talked about it before, it can be difficult. But try just talking about the positives to start with. What's **good** about your sex life. That's a great place to start.
2. Parents – talk to your **children**. I went to a seminar this week here at the school with my older two boys, run by a group called Interrelate. A GREAT night! Talking about the basics of sex and conception and pregnancy. Really helpful for my boys. And GREAT for me to go with them. The very next day, they were asking me good questions and talking about it in a healthy way. Remember, if YOU don't talk with them about it, who do you think will? Of course, you have to decide what's right to talk about and what's helpful at what age. But it is a parent's responsibility.
3. For those unmarried or married – if you need to – talk to a trusted **friend** of the same sex. There is so much unhelpful and wrong information out there. If you have struggles, find someone trustworthy and faithful and ask them for their wisdom and guidance.
4. Talk to a **counsellor** if you need to. As an individual, married or unmarried, or as a couple. If sex is an issue for you that may need some professional help, get that help. And preferably from a good recommended counsellor. A Christian counsellor can often be helpful as they may better understand your ethics. But just find a good counsellor. I can recommend several.

Sex is good. Between 1 man and 1 woman in a committed relationship. Mutual. Exclusive. Loving. But remember, above all, that you are members first of Christ's body. Let me finish with verse 17:

“But he who unites himself with the Lord, is one with him in Spirit”

Paul says that to remind us of our deepest relationship – an eternal relationship with Jesus. That is what deserves our greatest attention. Always.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father – thank you for sex. It is a good part of your creation. It is a wonderful part of relationships that you have made. Help us to think wisely and in a godly way about sex. Help us to honour you with our bodies, and to honour those we are in relationships with, in the way we use our bodies. Help those of us who struggle with singleness, with infertility, with illnesses and life situations that make sex a difficult part of our life. Help us to find our strength in you to meet all the challenges we face. To the honour and glory of your holy name. Amen.