

Living pure in an impure world

Gen 2:18 – 25

This article is based on a message by Mrs Cherith Gardiner to the young ladies of Annalong FPC Youth Fellowship on Friday 27th November 2009. It deals with the subject of sexual purity.

Think about everything you know about sex. Where did you learn the things you know? TV/film, books/magazines, internet, friends, school, parents, church?

Most of you probably thought the first few options and that the only thing you learned from your parents was how to be embarrassed and the only thing you learned in church was “It’s a sin, don’t do it!”

There has been a lack of instruction for young people on the issue of sex and physical intimacy from the church. But the church has a great responsibility to its young people to give the Biblical perspective on this issue – not just “It’s a sin, don’t do it!” because that couldn’t be further from the truth! God created sex, God is pro-sex, God made us to enjoy sex but there are conditions, and outside these parameters God is anti-sex and it will only bring sorrow and sadness rather than pleasure and joy.

We read in Gen 2 the institution of marriage. Notice in verse 24 the words “cleave” and “one flesh”. Think for a moment of the timeline. This incident occurred before the Fall, so before sin entered the world God instituted marriage and the physical aspects of marriage. Sex was not a result of the Fall. Some people treat it as a dirty thing. Often we cringe and feel embarrassed when we hear the ‘s’ word! The world has made sex a vulgar, dirty thing but it was made as something perfect and lovely. The Christian need not be ashamed of sex because God is not. BUT we mustn’t adopt the world’s attitude to sex:

- Mustn’t be crude in our terminology
- Should be discreet in who we talk to about it. Must be mindful of the unsaved and of members of the opposite sex
- Appropriate surroundings for discussion

1. CONTEXT

God has ordained physical intimacy for the marriage relationship ONLY, no exceptions. Adam and Eve were married then they “cleaved”. The Bible uses the word “fornication” to describe sex outside of marriage. The world calls it “an expression of love”, “a way of showing commitment”, maybe “harmless fun” – God says “sin”. The world says if you’re in a committed relationship then it’s OK – God says “sin”.

But why has God enforced these boundaries? To protect us. There are many physical and emotional reasons not to be sexually active before you are married: STDs, pregnancy, guilt, broken relationships, getting a bad reputation among your peers. There are also many positive reasons for waiting: the beauty of the marriage relationship when you do get married; God blesses purity; you only get one first time therefore it should be with your husband; waiting builds trust between a couple. These are practical, physical, mental reasons for waiting but the most important and compelling reason of all is that it is what God wants – He wants you to be pure because an impure relationship with a boyfriend leads to a shattered relationship with the Lord.

IMAGINE: You’ve let a situation with a boyfriend go too far, you are filled with guilt, fear of parents finding out, what if you’re pregnant, what if he breaks up with you? How will you feel when it comes to your quiet time, that time you usually spend with the Lord? How would you feel praying about those things? Could you really lay them before the Lord knowing what you have done? No, because you have sinned.

IMAGINE: A different situation. You have a boyfriend, you are alone together but you have been praying that the Lord would keep you pure and He helps you in that situation before it ever gets too far. How different when you come to your quiet time in this situation. You can read your Bible with a guilt-free heart and can thank the Lord for His protection and help.

IMAGINE: Your wedding day, you have remained pure, you can thank the Lord for bringing you so far and that you can enjoy married life the way God intended.

So sex has been given by God to be enjoyed fully within the marriage relationship.

2. CONTENT

I want us to think for a moment about how we view sex. Much of our thinking comes from TV – soaps, sitcoms, dramas. I read a book on this subject published in 1987 and then the soaps contained approximately 10,000 sexual encounters, 96% of which were against God’s commandment – how many more would there be today?? This is how the world views sex – flit from one man to another, some one-night-stands and so it goes on. I know soaps aren’t the most realistic but how many soap characters are happy? Very few. Pre-marital sex destroys lives. Ps 40:12 says “innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” Sin brings shame upon a life.

It’s so accessible now – the Internet has made it possible and easy for people to see or read about explicit actions that ought to shock us rather than excite. Be careful what you look at on the Internet. Don’t open those spam emails you get – EVER, even for curiosity, that curiosity doesn’t need to be satisfied. Even that first glimpse will be embedded in your mind, the Devil will play it over and over so don’t give him the opportunity; preserve yourself when on the Internet.

But this perverted view of sex is often the view of Christians. What I mean by this is they look at how the world views sex and it disgusts them, as it should, so they go through life thinking sex is a dirty thing, something to be embarrassed about and never spoken of. This is a mistake.

Instead of looking at the world’s view of sex we ought to look at God’s view. What does the Bible have to say about sex? As I’ve said God created sex as a gift to Adam and Eve. God made His creation and saw that “it was good”. This includes the relationship between a man and his wife.

The Song of Solomon tells the story of the King wooing the Shulamite woman. It is a wonderful picture of Christ drawing His church and how He woos us and the deep love He has for us and us for Him. But the language of the Song has a distinctly romantic tone. Read for example Song of

Solomon 2:1-6 or any other part of that Song. This type of language shouldn't surprise us. Eph 5:31-32 connect the cleaving of a man to his wife and Christ's bond to us. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." So as we read Song of Solomon these words primarily show us the love of Christ for us but they also emphasise the romance of the marriage relationship. The Bible doesn't shy away from expressing (in discreet language) the beauty of marriage so the Christian ought to have the same view and not the stolen tainted view the world takes.

As well as assessing how we view marriage we also ought to take responsibility in our attitude to sex and in our actions. One aspect of this is the issue of dress. Girls ought not to dress provocatively. There is no need to be dull and unfashionable but mini-skirts, low tops and tight clothing will only draw unwanted attention.

- You may be a stumblingblock to your saved boyfriend, causing him to think thoughts that he does not want to think as a saved young man. In Rom 14:13 we are commanded not to put a stumblingblock in a brother's way. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."
- You may be a stumblingblock to the unsaved around you. If you are dressed in a provocative way you may cause others to think impure thoughts about you. Lev 19:14 says "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD." This verse commands that no stumblingblock be put before the blind and the unsaved are often described in Scripture as being blind so we ought not to cause one to fall because of how we are dressed.

3. CONSEQUENCES

It all comes down to an issue of the heart. You can listen to all the arguments anyone can give but unless we have purity of heart it will mean nothing.

- Unsaved – you don't have a pure heart at all, all your sin is held against you. You must have that sin removed and your heart washed in the blood of Christ. Only the Lord can do this work.

- Saved – it is possible to have your heart washed clean from sin by Jesus’ blood and yet have it filled with impure thoughts. Proverbs 4:23 says to “Keep [or guard] thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

I want to think for a moment about the one for whom this message has come too late. Perhaps you are caught up in immorality – on TV, internet, in your thoughts or perhaps you have committed the act of pre-marital intimacy. This is a serious sin, one committed against the Lord and your own body. 1 Cor 6:18 “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” The most important thing is - have you repented, turned away from this sin?

The wonderful thing about our God is that He forgives all sin even sin of this kind. This in no way excuses the action. We are not to wilfully sin then ask forgiveness. Rom 6:1-2 says “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid...” We are never to continue in sin for any reason and God takes this sin very seriously. But immorality does not have to be the end of your walk with the Lord. It will damage it, shatter it even, but if you are saved there is a way back. The Lord remembers our sin no more. Heb 10:17 says “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

But even though God has forgotten the sin the consequences live on. Think of David. Read 2 Sam 11:2-5. He desired this woman so he took her. In the following verses he conspires to cover over his sin eventually leading to him being instrumental in the death of Bathsheba’s husband. The end of v27 says, “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.” But that wasn’t the end of the matter. In 2 Sam 12 we read of Nathan the prophet reproving David and telling him that the child that would be born would die as a result of David’s actions.

David had committed sin and he repented in 2 Sam 12:13. “David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.” He recognised his sin but the child still died. He had to pay the price for sin and there are always consequences for sexual sin – pregnancy, disease, shame, family rejection, guilt, broken relationship with the Lord. David’s immorality had far-reaching consequences for him and his family; his child died and some of

his other sons went on to engage in immoral relationships, David had set them a terrible example.

BUT David went on to have a fruitful relationship with the Lord. Read 2 Sam chapters 22 and 23. Even though David had lost out with the Lord he was able to say that God was his strength. His child was still dead and he had to live with that but he was able to accept God's forgiveness and move on from a life of immorality. 1 Cor 6:9-11 speaks of "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners" These were what the believers in Corinth had been, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." They were made just as if they had never sinned, they could move on from their sinful pasts and enjoy God's forgiveness and a full relationship with Him.

I would say that if you find you have difficulty in this area, you are struggling with your thoughts or a relationship then talk to someone. Gal 6:2 says "Bear ye one another's burdens", others are to help bear the burden you face. Talk to someone who will hold you accountable: a parent, a married youth worker or a mature Christian friend. Just talking through it will make it easier. BUT be careful who you talk to; some friends will just tell you what you want to hear, this may not be God's view. An unsaved teacher may lead you down the wrong path too. Ask the Lord for wisdom in whom you confide.

4. CONTENTMENT

And this brings us to the contentment there is to be had in living a pure life rather than impure. The Bible shows that immorality and impurity lead to destruction.

Abram and Hagar – Ishmael – Arab nations (Gen 16)

David and Bathsheba – death of a child (2 Sam 11-12)

Samson – his death and destruction (Judges 14-16)

But think of the blessings and contentment to be found in married love.

Adam and Eve – God's creation was "good" (Gen 1-2)

Isaac and Rebekah – romance (Gen 24)

Ruth and Boaz – romance, line of Christ (Ruth)

Contrast the sorrows in the first relationships brought about solely because of immorality, with the love, romance and blessings that came from the other relationships. Sex before marriage never brings happiness; it always destroys in some way so keep yourself from what the Bible calls “youthful lusts.”

CONCLUSION

1 Tim 6:6 says “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Phil 1:21 “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Calvin said, “Whether I live or die, Christ is my gain.”

The way to live a godly life is to think on Christ. Think about Him when you choose a boyfriend (Firstly is he saved? Then, is this boy going to help me in my Christian life?), think about Him when you dress for a date (Is what I’m wearing going to cause my boyfriend to think impure thoughts about me?), think about Him while on your date (Are my actions and speech glorifying my Saviour?), think about Him when saying goodnight to your date (Am I pushing the boundaries of what Christ would expect of me?), think about Him before you go to bed after your date (Thank Him for keeping you pure and close to Him). Is this unreasonable? It would be very difficult to be immoral with Christ on your date, He is the only One who can keep you from sin. 2 Cor 2:14, “thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph *in Christ*.” How can we know Christ? By reading our Bibles, Ps 119:9 says “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to *thy word*.” It is through the Word that we know God’s will. We must also pray that He would keep every aspect of our lives pure: our thoughts, our speech, our actions. May none of us have to say with Saul “I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.” (1 Sam 26:21)