

GHarmony: Sex, Singleness, and Marriage
“The Beauty of Sex” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)
July 26, 2009 by Kevin Haah



I. Introduction

We are kicking off a four-part series called “GHarmony: sex, singleness, and marriage.” G in GHarmony stands for God. And obviously, it’s play on eHarmony.com. This series is about relationship, not just any relationship but a relationship with a significant other. So, we’re going to be talking about what God says about sex, dating and the value of singleness, marriage, and the ultimate question: how do I know he or she is the one? It’s going to be very practical. Yet, it’s not a does’ and don’ts kind of series. We are also going to talk about where we get the power to live like that? We are going to see the power of the gospel.

Each Sunday, we are going to have about 10 minutes of Q&A time right before we close in prayer. You can ask the question directly or you can write your question on the paper and put it in the offering basket.

Today’s topic is sex!

If you are here for the first time, I think you chose an interesting Sunday to join us.

I think some of you are sitting here and thinking: “Uh oh. He’s going to tell me not to do it and make me feel really guilty. Condemnation is the last thing I need.” I want to ask you to hold on and not jump to conclusions. Hear me out fully.

I think there are two major views on sex right now.

We have the secular, biological, relativistic view. Sex is an instinct, and as long as we don’t hurt anyone, we should go do it. If we are hungry, we should go eat. If we are thirsty, we should drink. It’s fun, why shouldn’t you have fun?

Or we have the moralistic view that sex is dirty or leads to sin, and if you really want to be spiritual, you should avoid it. You might be surprised to find out that this is not the biblical view of sex.

The biblical view of sex is neither secular/relativistic or moralistic. The gospel shows us another way. It shows us: (1) the beauty of sex; (2) how we made it ugly, and (3) the power to fix it.

II. The beauty of sex.

The bible is pretty open about sex. It talks about it fairly often. In fact, there's a whole book in the Bible about sexual relationship. It's called Song of Songs. It's really sensual and erotic. Let me give you a taste. Listen to this poetry on Song of Songs 4 referring to his experience on the wedding night:

¹¹ Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;
milk and honey are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.

¹² You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

¹³ Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates
with choice fruits,
with henna and nard,

¹⁴ nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with every kind of incense tree,
with myrrh and aloes
and all the finest spices.

¹⁵ You are a garden fountain,
a well of flowing water
streaming down from Lebanon.

What do you think the garden is referring to? The plants, incense, spice, fruits, fountain, the well? I don't think I have to say it.

The point is that the Bible celebrates sex.

Proverb 5:18-19 say:

¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be captivated by her love.

The word for satisfy and captivated here literally means ravished/intoxicated/filled with his wife's breast and love.

But, the Bible does not teach us to just celebrate sex. That if it feels good, you should do it. That would just be the secular view. It tells us that the context for sex is in marriage only. This is very clear.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5:

³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;
⁴that each of you should learn to control his own body^[a] in a way that is holy and honorable,
⁵not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;

The word translated here as “sexual immorality” is a word that you know. It is this Greek word “*pornea*” where we get the word porn. This word is a broad term that generally means sex before marriage and out of marriage. This word is used 53 times in NT.

Now, why does God limit sex like that? People often say: well, that's what Bible says and that's all I need to know.

But, don't you want to know WHY God says to avoid *pornea*?

Because sex is beautiful and he wants us to understand and fully appreciate its beauty.

If you want to fully appreciate the beauty of something, you must see the nuances.

Sometimes, I could be watching a baseball game where someone is pitching a perfect game and appreciate the beauty of it. Mark Burhrle of White Sox did it recently. Some of you who are not a baseball fan would just say it's boring game. To see the beauty of something means you understand it nuances:

What makes sex so beautiful?

1. Sex has the power to co-create souls.

This makes sex sacred. You can eat all you want, and it'll just give you more fat. But, if two people physically come together, they have the power to create souls. This is absolutely beautiful!

2. Sex is the ACT of one-flesh union. It is a unitive act in marriage.

Sex is a powerful thing, and the way God designed it, it actually means something. It's not just a physical sensation. *As God designed it, sex is a non-verbal communication to say: I belong completely and exclusively to you. It is a non-verbal communication to say: we are one-flesh, one organism, one person, spiritually, socially, emotionally, intellectually, economically, in every way. It seals this one-flesh union. It literally does that. It's a perfect act for it.*

So, physical union (sex) with a person without any other kind of union is an act without the meaning. It is hypocrisy. It's like giving a present without anything in the box. It's empty. It hurts. We know that deep in our hearts. We get naked physically without getting naked in any other way. It's very fake. If someone wants to sleep with you but don't want to make the commitment with you, he is she is saying I want to get naked with you but I don't love you enough to commit get fully naked with you. It's not that God doesn't want us to have fun, he says that if you don't use it the way it was intended to be used, you'll break it, you'll break your heart, you'll break her heart.

If you use sex in the way it was designed to be used, it strengthens your one-flesh union, your marriage. Sex is a commitment apparatus. It seals your commitment only if you use it in that context. Otherwise, you can lose your ability to commit.

But, if you use sex not in the way it was designed to be used, it's going to hurt you and your partner.

- If sex meant something to you in the relationship, when that relationship is broken, you lose a little bit of yourself. There is pain. It's like two cardboards which have been glued together and you try to split it up, there are bits and pieces of the cardboard on each other.
- And if sex didn't mean anything to you, and you segregate giving of your heart and life from sex, then when you come to a relationship where you do want to give your soul and heart, how are you going to make the act of sex, which has been so meaningless, how is it going to be meaningful suddenly? You are not going to enjoy it. You are used to it being at a very superficial level or pleasure. How are you going to change that?

3. Sex is beautiful because it shows us Christ's love for us.

The NT often compares the relationship between husband and wife with the relationship between Christ and us.

For example, in Roman 7:1-6: Paul says relationship between husband and wife is like the relationship between Christ and the church. Just as when woman put herself literally the arms in man, and fruit comes, if you put yourself in the arms of Christ, then we bear fruit. The analogy is very intimate and sexual. Ecstasy and joy of sex is a foretaste of the intimacy we will experience with Christ. Sex was invented by God to give us a foretaste of the ecstasy we will experience when we see Christ face to face and enter into a union with him. Sex is a signpost, analogy. It is a way to try to show us what we are after. The bible is constantly trying to tell us what it is really like when the new heavens and the new earth is establish, when Kingdom of Heaven is fully established? So, if it is used as an analogy of heaven, that shows the glory of sex. The bible's view of sex is higher than any. It is glorious.

III. But, we took this beauty and made it something ugly. Second point.

C.S. Lewis uses this illustration.

Imagine if you go to a country, when young men go off to college, they put up on the wall a life-size pictures of food. O wow, look at this one! People drool over it. Sometimes they go to a club. Everyone is hanging around the stage. Darken music hall. And the music is seductive, they slowly unveil a hot dog. What would your conclusion be? They must be starving? But you find out that it's not true. A few years ago, Dr. Sigman said we don't eat enough food. So, people have been eating like crazy. The only conclusion is that we are deeply messed up about food. We are really messed up about sex in this world. It's hard to see how we can get our standard or wisdom from this world regarding sex.

1 Thessalonians 4:2 says that **“each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathens, who do not know God.”**

If you don't know God, if you don't know his love and grace and his beauty, you engage in what Paul calls passionate lust. The word for that in Greek is the word: epi-thumia. Epi means over or super, and thumia means desire. So, it literally means over-desire. There are a lot of things that it is good to desire. But, if you super-desire a good thing, it becomes an idol in your life.

Idols are not always going after bad things. They are also good things we over-desire. A good job is a good thing. A house is a good thing. A family is a good thing. Marriage is a good thing. Physical beauty is a good thing. Sex is a good thing. But, if we over-desire (hyper-

desire) these things, they become idols. That's what idols are. They often look good on the surface. But, slowly, they replace Jesus as our savior. They become false lovers of our heart, and seek to displace the one who should be our one true love above all other loves. They have no mercy. If you don't live up to the idol, they crush you as a failure. And they never deliver when you succeed because enough is never enough. They hurt you, your family, and your relationship with God.

By pursuing your idols, you are saying to God, "Jesus is not enough. I also need sex outside of marriage to be happy."

In some ways, instead of sex being a way to communicate absolute oneness and unity in the context of a permanent relationship, we, for some men, have made it to mean conquest. I was at a store and I couldn't help overhear a conversation between two guys on the phone. One guy called to tell him about his sexual conquest with a girl who is not his wife and what he did to hide it from his wife. And the other guy was congratulating him and talking about how great it was. It was very disturbing to hear the conversation. I think if we guys have to get a woman to sleep with us to get our sense of worth and power, it's very sad. It's sad because some of you will never get it. And you are going to feel like a loser. But some of you will get it, and you are going to feel like you are somebody based on that conquest. That kind of pride is deeply messed up at many levels.

For some of us, we seek sex as a way to affirm ourselves. I am desirable. In fact, we use sex to tell us that we are wanted and accepted. It's lonely, and we long for the touch of a woman or a man. Some of us are so afraid to say no for the fear that the other person will leave us if we don't have sex. So, we end up appeasing the other person through sex. And while doing so, we lose the beauty of sex and it just becomes a bargaining chip.

For some of us, sex is an addiction. You can't help but to have sex when you date someone. It's just what you do. It's the natural thing to do. You don't want to do it, but you feel like you can't help it. It's like a drug.

For many people, it may not be sexual intercourse, but pornography is an addiction. It is a part of how we perverted sex. I think almost all guys struggle with this, and often, their girlfriends or wives don't even know that they are struggling.

IV. The power to fix it: where do we get the power to change ourselves

The gospel leads us to the realization that God's standard is indeed very high. It is not just about not having sex outside of marriage (that's tough enough), it calls us to not lust. That's what Jesus did, he upped the standard. He didn't water it down so that more people could live up to it. He raised the standard to the level of his holiness.

So, we must acknowledge our failures and messiness. We need to say to another human being. We need to confess your sexual sins.

Then, we need to get to the sin behind the sin. Why are you doing it?

Different world view?

Addiction?

Fear?

Idols?

We need to confess the reality that we have used sex to gain approval. That we have used sex to get affirmation. That we have used sex to feel like you are somebody. That you have made an idol out of sex or meanings you've attached to sex.

You must also acknowledge that you do not have the power to overcome it on your own. You need God in your life. As you have a relationship with God, he will give you a new identity, not based on our performance, but purely on grace. You see, we all need pleasure. We all need love. We all need approval. We all need affirmation. We all need security. If we find these things from Jesus because he died on the cross for our sins and gave us access to a relationship with God which gives us all of these things, then, we will find our desire for these thing veining. It will no longer be epi-thumia. It will be an appropriate desire. And we will live a healthier life. So, pursue Jesus and ask him for power. Be motivated by his grace in your life.

Then, we need community in your life. We need accountable friends in your life. We need to take practical steps toward sanctification and holiness.