

1 Corinthians 6.9-20

*Sex, Marriage, Singleness & the Glory of God Pt 1 –
“THE TALK”*

April 9, 2016 – Spence Shelton

WARNING – Today is a PG -13 sermon. We are talking about Sex a good bit so if you have a little one in the room who you haven't talked with about this yet, you decide whether or not to bring them into our awesome kids programming. First, I'm going to talk about Easter for about 3 minutes. While I talk about Easter you can slip out and check them in to Mercy Kids and make your way back in.

New Service Times | Easter

So Easter is next week. How we doing handing out the Easter Squares? I had to reload this weekend. We are asking you to STAY in town for Easter and invite people to come. Invite strangers & invite friends. These cards are for both. I've got some newer acquaintances and these are great for that. Invite your server, invite your cashiers, invite your baristas. Some of you were one invite to church away. And next weekend is such a great time to make that invite. Maybe it's to Good Friday, maybe to Easter Sunday. We hope you will fast with us on Friday and come ready to pray and worship. We want to see God move in our city. We must pray!

Ok let me say one more thing: We are right at DOUBLE the size we were last year at this time. Which is pretty exciting. BUT, we need to make room for people because we really cant grow anymore in our present facility situation. I need you to know that we've been knocking on every door we can find. In fact, you would not BELIEVE the number of ALMOSTs when it comes to finding a facility either permanent or temporary. Multiple high schools that have been open for decades have, in the last few weeks, closed their doors to churches. So I need you to know we are ramping up our search even more in the coming weeks. Pastor John will be leading a facility search team. So if you have a lead on a place, let pastor John know. Also, please join us in praying. We are even going to hold some prayer gatherings around the city to pray for a space.

Lastly, I need to ask you to help us make the most of this space while we are here. See we are over capacity in our parking at both the 9 & 11am services on a regular basis. We are bumping up against it in our Kids' space. The only place where we have a little bit of room is here in the worship center. But, if parking and kids are maxed, we wont grow in here. So, we are going to experiment with some solutions for this facility. Our first experiment is going to be adding a 3rd service time. We are going to keep our Easter Service times for a short run following Easter. Probably about 6 weeks. To really try this, we need 100 people to attend the 8am service. Listen this is going to stretch our church. I'm not going to soften it.

You giving up your seat and your parking space for someone else is a small but significant way you can be a part of the mission of God here at Mercy Church. I'm not joking. If we don't do this we will not grow anymore. Again we are hunting a facility and I believe a new facility will be a great tool to help us reach people. But, the only way we ever reach people is if together we have a spirit of sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. I don't ask lightly. This is our best guess ok. So we are going to try it out. And see how it goes. Give us 6 weeks and lets see what happens. 100 people. Out of 400. That's a big move. Here's the cool thing: These service times will actually make it easier for parents to join a ministry team because they are just a hair shorter and closer together. Ok, think about it and let's go!! Gotta get into sermon:

Passage Intro

Today we are picking up 1 Corinthians 6 and with that we are getting into a new section that will talk about sex, marriage, singleness, & the glory of God. First of 3 or 4 sermons in that arena with a break next week for Easter. How many of you had "The Talk" with your parents or guardians? Mine was great. I was 15 and my dad and I were playing ping-pong. He says to me "son, if you get her pregnant I gotta pay for it." And back to ping-pong we went. I've heard some horror stories from some of you about the awkwardness of your parents with "The Talk". A friend of mine was having "the talk" with her daughter and at the end of it her daughter just screamed NO NO NO! THAT'S GROSS!!!

Maybe you had the talk, maybe you are like many in our church whose parents never talked to them. Today Paul is going to give "the talk" to the adults in the Corinthian church. And none of them had ever heard this stuff before.

See Corinth was arguably the most happening place in Greece. A port city that you had to travel through to get from east to west in the Mediterranean. In 146 BC, they rebelled against Rome, and Rome crushed it. About 40 or 50 AD, the Romans realized its strategic importance and rebuilt it. Result: No one was from there. People who came to get a good start, build a resume. Mostly young people. Extremely expensive to live there.

Why this matters for this passage: The sexual energy was really strong. Moms and Dads weren't around. Looking at the skyline, the "Acra Corinth," was a temple you could see for miles away, the temple of "Aphrodite," The goddess of sex. To become a true Corinthian was to become a part of the sexualized culture there. It became a verb, "to Corinthianize." You know it's bad when your name is a verb that means sex. Orgies & open marriages were really commonplace.¹

Not all together different from Charlotte. Ranked 4th last month on Forbes Magazine's list of best places for Young Professionals to live. Anchored by finance industry the city now becoming a hub for many other industries. And young single people are moving in to get a job. And they are

¹ Corinth background from J.D. Greear sermon series in 1 Corinthians titled "Authentic Christianity."

waiting longer to get married. The average man is now 29, the average woman 27 (up from 22 and 20 a generation ago).² Those stats are even 4 years old because we are about to get a new census. Why are they waiting to get married? Is it because they are using this time to focus on their careers and their relationship with God, and memorize Scripture? No. It is because most of them are having sex before marriage and don't need marriage to get it.

Much Like Corinth, we live in a sex-saturated culture.

- Porn sites now get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, & twitter combined.³
- It's impossible to accurately estimate how large the porn industry is but in 2007 it was estimated the porn industry in the U.S. was \$10 Billion.⁴ That year, it took in more money than Major League Baseball, the NBA, and the NFL, *combined*.
- **79% of men and 76% of women ages 18-34 say they view Porn at least once a month.**⁵
- Porn isn't the only way sex is saturating our culture. A Vanity Fair article recently called the impact of Tinder and other dating apps as the "Dating Apocalypse." Flirting, talking, the finer things of

² Eleanor Barkhorn "Getting married later is great for college educated women" article first appeared in *The Atlantic* on March 15, 2013.

³ From Ben Stuart's talk given at ERLC August 25, 2016 called "[God, Guys, and Girls - Pursuing Sexual Purity in a Porn Culture.](#)"

⁴ Covenant Eyes research report from 2015. Accessed at www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats

⁵ Ibid

romance and conversation have been replaced by "swipe right." Sex has become a ready-order commodity much like a book on Amazon.

- Not just on your phone or computer but also on your TV - By the time a kid graduates from high school, the average kid will have seen no less than 14,000 depictions of and references to sex.

Here's why I tell you all that: because Paul is writing to a *church establishing* itself in a sex-saturated culture.

Corinthians were converting to Christianity. And when you become a Christian, God flips your whole life upside down and calls you to a whole different way of living. But you are still living in Corinth. And so your friends still go out and swipe right and make the goal of their night hooking up with someone. They still celebrate sexual conquests, etc. Many of these new Christians were struggling to break out of this lifestyle and were slipping back into it. Not unlike today. In a recent survey⁶ of Christians, 11% of Christians indicated they were willing to wait until marriage to have sex. 11%.⁷

Much like in Corinth the majority of Christians today are stumbling over themselves when it comes to following Jesus in their sexuality. So Paul begins "the talk" being very clear about what he's talking about:

⁶ conducted by ChristianMingle

⁷ Article by Morgan Lee from Feb 24, 2014 titled "[Christian dating culture.](#)"

[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality...

I know you see a few things in that list but the first one, sexually immoral, that's the umbrella term for Paul, so Let's define "sexual immorality."

- Sexually immorality: "*porneia*" (we get "pornography": your Bible may say, "fornication"). It's a junk-drawer word that means **any** sex outside of the marriage of a man to a woman. All of it. **If it's not sex between a man and a woman within a marital commitment then it is *porneia*.** Nothing hard about this to understand, nothing controversial. You say, "What about engaged couples or people planning to get married? Outside of marriage between a man and a woman—*porneia*. Well how about if you don't go all the way? Groping or petting or masturbating?" No, anything that is sexual outside of marriage is *porneia*. "What about if you don't penetrate? Oral?" *stop looking for loopholes*. All of it. Outside of the marriage commitment there is to be no intercourse, no outer-course, no upper-course, lower-course, downer-course—no coursing of any kind.⁸

A LOT OF YOU FEEL REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE right now. Here's what I'll say. First that's ok. You may be used to

⁸ Thanks again to my big brother J.D. Greear for this colorful articulation of what the word "*porneia*" means.

culture shaping your view of sex through images, innuendos, and vague language. The bible talking directly about sex may even be surprising to you. But you can either let culture tell you what to think about sex or let God tell you. I'd rather God's version of "The Talk" make you clear on what he calls you to even if it is uncomfortable. Part 2 of the talk will come the week after Easter.

Ok first thing I want to point out: In giving them "the talk" Paul talks to them about what those around them are saying. He shows them the two prevailing views on sex in their day & what both of these views are both wrong & just missing something. He even quotes Corinthians as he shows them these two views:⁹

1. Verse 12: [12] "All things are lawful for me," **Sex is no big deal so just do it** -- This is the Corinthian who says hey no rules on sex here! These are the young pagans moving into the city so no one could tell them what to do. "It's my body." If no one gets an STD what's the harm? Even the Christians were saying, "Well I'm free in Christ right?" Don't tell me what to do with my own body. Look he quotes them again [13] "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food". Just like food is meant for the stomach, sex is meant for the body. It's just nature right? How can you deny your appetite? I don't want to starve myself! Sound familiar at all?

⁹ Tim Keller, sermon on 1 Cor 6.9-20 titled "Sexuality"

2. [1] Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." Sex is bad so don't do it - There were other groups teaching sex was bad. The idea was that It keeps you from focusing on the things of God. It defiles you by giving yourself over to the carnal passions of your flesh, even polluting your soul's desire for God. This is the fundamentalist church that thinks saying the word "sex" in church is a sin. And maybe you grew up in that setting where you don't talk about it & then one day storks deliver kids to your house... I know some of you came from this background. Because I've heard you talk about "the sex talk" you had with your parents. "Don't do it. The end."

Ok there is something these two seemingly polar opposite views of sex have in common: Both of them have a really low view of sex. One says its just physical. The other says its evil. Paul looks at both of these and says both of you are such cheap alternatives to the real deal. Paul is going to show them a much higher, better view of sex than anything the world has to offer. He's going to hit the first one this week and the second one in chapter 7.

The critical components of "the talk"

[11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1. In Christ you are free from your past.

I need you to see Paul's structure to this passage because the structure itself is a message to you. Paul begins and ends "the talk" focusing their eyes and hearts on who they are in Christ. Everything he is about to say is a product of their identity in Christ. This is huge for you no matter where you are. If you are a parent: start with identity. If you are not a Christian – God doesn't care what you do he cares what you believe. This is for Christians. We are informing you today. And God willing I hope you see something better than what you've known.

If you have a past....oh listen to me. Because of the culture we are in basically everyone has a sexual past. Porn, sex with your girlfriend, sexting, whatever. But Jesus says...that isn't you. That WAS you. But in Christ...that's not you anymore. You are NOT defined by your sexual past. See he's saying when you become a Christian God recreates you. And look at the language. He washes you. He makes you clean. And there is something about sexual sin that makes you hide in the darkness feeling unclean. And Paul reveals the power of the gospel. Yes you WERE a sinner and apart from Christ you are covered in sin. You are stained & broken. And in fact you deserve death for your sin. It was rebellion against God. The gospel says when Jesus went up on the cross he not only paid for your sin, but he washed you. He made you holy so you can stand in the light completely new. That's where we start. From that beautiful promise, that new creation identity, from that FREEDOM God has given you...now let me show you the new creation God has made you into. Next thing to know

1. You have a spiritual body

Ok I know at first that sounds like a pretty lame pick-up line. Husbands, you are welcome to try it out. But sermon points usually don't work as romantic moves. **Believe me.** Look at vv 13 – 14

...The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. [14] And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

Paul is saying your body and soul...they are one. Your body isn't just physical. It was meant for the Lord. And in fact...it is a body you are going to have, in some sense...forever. That's what 14 is getting at. Is that the God who raised Jesus will one day return and will raise our dead bodies to life. And Paul says Christians are the visible picture of the hope of the day to come. Where our bodies will be at their fullest so why would you defile it now?

So to those who say sex is just physical, Paul is responding by saying that's not possible. Because your body isn't just physical. And in sex, that physical oneness is to be matched by oneness spiritually, economically, and socially.

To reinforce that he uses the image of a prostitute:
[15] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! [16] Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one

body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." [17] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

A prostitute is one who exchanges sex for some other commodity. I give you sex, you leave \$100 on the table. There is no intent on creating a oneness right? Paul is using the most crass form of *porneia* to get his point across that all of it is, in some form, prostitution. That's easy to see with a hookup right? We both swipe right because we are lonely or stressed or we want the thrill of the chase. We pick a time and place and we exchange goods. That's modified prostitution. A girl who is lonely and wants to have the security of a relationship will exchange sex with a guy for that security. See what happens there? She says I give you sex, you give me companionship. It's a commodity exchange.

And Paul is saying you are not just a physical being so you can't treat your body like it's a commodity. That's why he says sexual immorality is so harmful. Again any sexual activity outside of marriage...it joins you to that person, that thing.

My kids love to do crafts. And every year around January they'll make a snowman with cotton balls & cardboard paper. And they'll put super glue all over the cotton ball & then stick it to the page. That thing ain't going anywhere. But 3 minutes goes by and they want to move the cotton

ball...You cant. That bad boy is stuck. You can't unstick it. If you try, you will tear the cotton ball.

The process of becoming a Christian is surrendering your broken self to God and God brings you in and heals you. You unite yourself to him. You clothe yourself in his righteousness. You take on him. And so Paul says you are joined to Christ. So anytime you join yourself to someone else, or to your phone, or your computer...you are doing that to Christ because he's with you. Think about that for a minute and it will kill the mood. Paul is saying you are the cotton ball & sex is like super glue. It joins you to whatever you use it on.

This Spiritual Body now belonging to Christ...this is just Paul again saying you have a new identity. I know some of you saw "**homosexuality**" in verse 9. And certainly there is no more of a hot-button topic in our city. Couple things: First Paul doesn't begin there. He begins in Christ. Because listen: All "porneia" is searching for love in the wrong place. So to the person who says "I am gay, that's me." I say...you may be attracted to the same sex...but that's not who you are. Don't buy the lie of culture that your sexual attraction determines who you are. Many who say they cannot "deny who they really are" are suffering from a severe lack of divine love. You will never find in a person, or in a lifestyle, the love you were made to find in Christ. To the heterosexual who wants to condemn homosexuality...you are a victim of the same emptiness. Maybe you look to your works righteousness to fulfill you. That you "behave"

correctly. But that's just another false love. Go back to the love of Christ.

Rosaria Butterfield, who used to be the chair of women's studies at Syracuse and was an outspoken lesbian & feminist...became a Christian a few years ago. She talked about how hard that was for her in her book *Secret Thoughts of an unlikely convert*. When she talked about that process I thought this was so revealing and good:
"When I looked in the mirror I looked the same. But when I looked into my heart through the lens of the Bible, I wondered, *Am I a lesbian, or has this all been a case of mistaken identity? If Jesus could split the world asunder, divide marrow from soul, could he make my true identity prevail? Who am I? Who will God have me to be?*"

Lastly I'll tell you what C.S. Lewis says in the beginning of his chapter on sexual morality in his book *Mere Christianity*. If this is a problem for you when it comes to Christianity...just punt it for now ok? Again it is not the primary thing to us. Jesus is. Ok next:

[18] Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body

Next critical component of the talk that Paul lays out

2. Sex is POWERFUL

Sexual sin is in some sense, according to Paul, the worst sin you can commit on yourself. Now you may say, “wait, all sins are equal right?” Yes. We’ve said before: *while all sins are equal before God, not all sins have equal effects*. There is a way that sexual sin imprints itself onto you and it stays with you. You know this to be true. Whenever someone comes to tell me their deep dark secret they’ve been living with, it almost always involves a sexual past. But listen, what makes it even worse, what makes it so uniquely tragic to you is that it is the only sin that can create a union with something. The drunk doesn’t unite himself with alcohol. The glutton doesn’t unite himself with food. They use it in excess. But the sexually immoral person takes his or her union with Christ...that spiritual body...and damages it by uniting it with false lovers. The way one scholar said it...sex with a prostitute sabotages your union with Christ. Do you see how powerful sex it!? So make sure you treat it right.

- BRIEF PASTORAL ASIDE: Premarital sex is one of those things that, even if I didn’t believe in God, I would say is a bad idea, knowing what I know now. This why couples who live together before they are married have a higher divorce rate than those who don’t. They think they are cohabitating to see if they will fit well, to see if it will be a good marriage, and hopefully save themselves from a divorce (or, as was explained to me, you wouldn’t buy a car before you test-drove it.) Statistics show just the opposite, because there is a dimension of oneness without the other components of oneness. There is physical vulnerability without emotional, spiritual, and

economic vulnerability. What you are practicing for is “separateness”—where you can use one another for a while and then get out of it when it is not convenient. That is practice for divorce, not marriage. Teenagers don’t want to wait to have sex because they are afraid they’ll miss out on something. God tells you to wait precisely because he doesn’t want you to miss out on something

- My roof about flew off my house this week. Pretty crazy. And everyone was concerned because if rain got in...that’d be what? That’d be disastrous. Now why is that? Rain isn’t bad. I need rain for my grass to grow for our city’s water supply to stay up. We desperately need rain. The thing is...water in the yard is good. It actually nourishes and sustains life. It’s vital. Water in the attic? It is incredibly destructive and can ruin a whole house. Sex inside of marriage is vital to a marriage. Has to be there. We’ll talk about that in a few weeks. And when it is healthy it is life giving to a marriage. But sex anywhere else is destructive.

Here’s the next thing Paul says in “the talk”

[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own...**

3. Your Body belongs to God

This is a pretty logical next step from what he's been saying. But even though he's kind of assumed it, he comes around and reinforces it to make it abundantly clear.

Paul draws a pretty clear line in the sand here. And I don't want to try and avoid it in any way. The idea that telling you to avoid sexual immorality because "its dangerous" is true, but in it of itself will not keep you from it right? We all know that. One guy told me the only way to convince our culture to avoid sex is to tell them its fattening. So hopefully you are hearing God's heart and my heart that it is destructive. But Paul here draws the line in the sand

If you are a Christian, your body is not yours. Everything in our culture says, "don't tell me what to do with my body." I'm not, I'm telling you what God says to do with his body. And that's the mindset you need to see here. When you become a follower of Christ God creates this new, restored, redeemed body. He cleans you & he comes and resides in you. And he says...You are mine now. I am living within you.

So down at the heart of all sexual sin is the same as all other sin...it's an ownership issue. Do you belong to God or do you belong to you? Christian – Too many of us treat obedience to Christ like obedience to traffic signs. Speed Limit...EH, that's more of a suggestion. Yellow light...go faster. Stop – slow down for a second. No U-Turn – welllllll, no one is going to get hurt. That's how a lot of us view obedience to God's commands on our sexuality. And God

says no, you are mine. These aren't suggestions. They are for your good!

Ok final component in THE TALK

[20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Paul finishes where he started. In the gospel. You belong to God...but you were not free.

4. Your redemption was the ransom payment of a loving dad

See you ran from God. And you chose your way over God's way. And you made a mess of your life in some way or another. You have baggage, you have a past, and you became enslaved to a master. Maybe that master is SELF, maybe that was sex, maybe it was something else. Whatever it was, it controlled you and your decisions. Wherever you were. Maybe as I'm talking you need to hear this in present tense. Whatever master you are serving now, however broken your sexual past is or any other part of your past...God loves you. If you are a prostitute...God loves you! God loves prostitutes!

In fact he loves you so much he paid not to use you but to set you free! For God so LOVED you that he gave his son that whoever believes in him will have life!

You know whatever version of sex you are enslaved to, whatever other master you are living for...it doesn't satisfy. It promises love or satisfaction or joy or a thrill...and maybe it delivers...for a minute. But it leaves you empty and

ultimately you are paying for emptiness. But in Christ, he gives himself to you and you receive fullness of joy forevermore. That's his promise.

That's how valuable you are. He ransomed you to set you free! But don't confuse what freedom is. To those people who would say, "I am free to do whatever I want," Paul says: *Christian liberty is not privilege to do whatever you please (like destroying your life); it is power to do what you ought to do.*¹⁰

Which leads us right to our two points of application today:

There are only two commands in our passage. The first [18] **Flee from sexual immorality**
FLEE – have this appear underneath the verse

Bottom line – Don't play with this. Don't think you are strong enough to endure it. That you've been exposed to enough that it won't harm you. No...flee. Like a madman or madwoman.

Be like Joseph. Remember that story? Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him. He runs so fast she's still holding his coat. Guys & Girls: If you are like "I just can't control myself with him or her." RUN FOOL! You don't need boundaries you need to run! And can I say something that is very much gonna sound like a big brother: Don't be dumb. Example:

¹⁰ David Jeremiah, *The Authentic Christian Life, II*, 52.

We are going to sleep in the same bed together but you know, fight to not fall into sexual immorality...That's like saying I'm going to put a marshmallow over a fire and try not to let it melt. That. Is. Dumb. If you don't want the marshmallow to melt keep it away from the fire! Put it literally anywhere else except there. "I'll just look at her on instagram or snapchat but not like hard porn sites." That's being a marshmallow head. You are going to melt. FLEE!

The second command:

[20] for you were bought with a price. **So glorify God in your body.**
GLORIFY GOD! - have this appear underneath the verse

Here is where I think many Christians miss how to deal with sexual immorality. You don't *just* flee. You don't just run away from something, you run towards something. The better way to flee sin is to fix your eyes on God and run hard towards him. I know guys who think of a successful day in their spiritual life is "I didn't look at porn today" or "we haven't had sex together in like 2 weeks." Well, yeah that's good you are measuring success by what you've run from. But when you fall, man that's gonna be killer for you. Because your identity is in what you are avoiding. Why not instead focus on running towards Christ? In this case on radical obedience to God as it relates to your body.

Instead of trying to avoid "crossing the line" of sin, run hard after Christ! "Today I'm going to glorify God with my body." I promise you go hard after Christ what will happen is that

you will look up and realize man, its been weeks since I've looked at porn, etc.

Women one aside – Glorifying God with your body is a great dress code for believers. Cause I'm not saying you should wear denim jumpers ok. I'm saying your body belongs to God. And if you are trying to use your body to get attention you've missed the love of God for you. God has given you all the affection you need. So instead glorify God with your body. And ask a woman who you aspire to be like in the faith to speak into your life beyond that.

Last thing: What do you do if you have a broken past? Like I said, this is most of us I think in some way or another.

I gotta take you back to verse 11 cause that's what the Gospel is about—God's forgiveness, and His ability to make things new. You can be **washed** (the dirtiness and guilt can be gone) **Justified**: forgiven. **Sanctified**: Made holy (a virgin in God's eyes). The Gospel is that the blood of Jesus forgives you and cleanses you and makes you a new creation.

That can be you today. Close in time of confession.