



FAITH
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

Gospel Atmosphere

I CORINTHIANS



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Well we are in the book of Corinthians and one of the main things Paul has been teaching us is humility in the form of submitted desires. And most recently we've been asking the question, what do we do with our sexual desires? And Paul has answered. All through chapter 6 and now into chapter 7 God has been teaching the

Corinthian church that if you want to receive God's gift of sex you have to submit your desires and listen to the designers directive. In order to be satisfied and fulfilled in sex, there are actually instructions you need to follow.

Now we live in a day and age when this whole idea that there are instructions, rules, on how to experience sex, that is literally a foreign language. I don't even understand why you would think we need to put any restrictions at all on this. What do you mean instructions? Rules? Why? Now when you interact with someone like this, it's easy to feel like they are liberated, walking around in all sorts of freedom, and here you are stuck in these old fashioned pilgrim rules.

I'm talking to everyone right now, but I want to talk especially to teens, kids, students right now in particular. When someone finds out your views on sex how does that make you feel? Probably pretty lame.

I remember back in the day, I was finished with college and teaching Bible in a high school and Nate was in Israel at the time and he called me up and said that there was this new show coming out called Survivor and that they were looking for volunteers. The idea was they were going to be filming a group of people on a deserted tropical island for a period of two months. The person who was able to survive the longest given only rice and a knife would come out the winner of a million dollars. I had no idea what I was getting into, but I filled out an application and created a video which highlighted my credentials as the perfect candidate. Now keep in mind, I was very open with the fact that I was a Bible teacher. 5000 people had been eliminated, I was in the final rounds of elimination. I was to appear before some interviewers in Salt Lake City for a 45 minute personal

interview. On the way down I was rehearsing in my head my answers to the questions I thought might be thrown my way. I figured they would ask me, "So Jason, why would you make the perfect Survivor." When I entered the studio, I was shocked. I guess I was expecting a low budget warehouse or something. This was anything but low budget. As I entered the soundproof recording studio, my chair awaited me in the dead center of the room. Bright lights and a video camera shown in my face and opposite me were two successful females with pen and paper in hand waiting to bring on a barrage of questions. There was a formal greeting. We all sat down and the two women sat looking over my application. They said to me, "So.... Jason, we see that you're a Bible teacher.

- What do you think of lesbians?"
- I said, "Well, everybody is broken and I think lesbians have adopted a view of sexuality that is broken in the same way that many straight people do. God has a different view of sexuality."
- You say here you are 24 and a not married.
- Next question, "Are you a virgin?" And they both looked at me like I was crazy.

Now, I have to admit. I felt really stupid. They made me feel like I was part of this freak cultic fringe group, so out of touch with society and culture. I felt like I was being probed and poked like some sort of specimen. Wow, I've never seen one of these strange things before.

Now why do I bring this up? Because in order to be confident, in order to be able to resist the hook-up culture on campus today, in order to not just be confident but to be a compelling light for Christ, you need an attractive conviction as to why this is way more than a rule, way more than a lame concession of my religion.

If someone says, to you. Bro, what's the big deal anyway? Why

can't you update your view? Here's the answer: because it's not ours to update. It's not our view. It's God's view.

If you are the designer you set the rules. God designed sex so he sets the rules. He tells you how it is to be used. The designer knows.

But there is a point even beyond this. Really, this is an evangelistic point. Take a moment to seriously think about this. If somebody says, "Why don't you change your view on sex?" and you respond and say, "Yeah, you know this whole Christianity thing does needs updating, let's change our stance on this issue," that proves what some people thought all along, and that is Christianity is a human idea and that it's all right for us to change it when we decide it's time to change it. Later on in that survivor interview I think this point came through and there was some genuine curiosity that gave me the opportunity to share why I felt Jesus was a compelling alternative to Hollywood. It's not my view of sex vs. someone else's view of sex. We are together being confronted by God's view of sex, this entity outside of both of us.

You see sex is not a human idea and therefore it's not ours to change. Our job is not to write the instruction for how to receive the gift but to receive the gift according to the instructions. Paul has already addressed several ways in which this gift can be abused.

- You have the man in chapter 5 who was sleeping with his mother-in-law.
- You had Paul in chapter 6 dealing with temple prostitution and
- then in that same chapter you have the reference to homosexuality as outside God's will.

So those are all the wrong ways. So what's the right way? Here's what we are going to learn in this passage. Our sexual desires are to

be directed toward one person of the opposite sex in the context of marriage. But it doesn't stop there. Just because you are in a monogamous relationship does not mean you are safe. Far from it. The dangers of misuse continue right into marriage. You can abuse the gift of sex in the context of marriage just as easily as anywhere else. And the reason is because the heart you had before marriage is the same heart you have after marriage. And so that's what Paul focuses on. Paul in our passage today actually addresses what needs to change in the heart not just for sexual fulfillment in the context of marriage but for any sort of fulfillment in any context.

Review

Now by way of summary, if you will remember from the previous messages, there are slogans of the day that Paul is confronting. And the slogans Paul has confronted thus far have all been slogans that tried to give people wide freedom in their sexuality. Have sex whenever it seems good because after all,

- "All things are lawful"
- "All sin is outside the body." So don't worry about what you do with the body.
- "Food is for the stomach and stomach for food." Just give the body what it needs.

So Paul has confronted those kinds of statements. But now Paul is going to address people who are swinging to the opposite extreme. Sure, some thought the answer was we need more sex. But others thought the answer was we need to remove sex.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

Do you see what's going on? Apparently there were some in the church who saw all the sexual abuse, the sexual freedom and the damage this was causing and said the answer is to chuck the whole thing. So they write to Paul and either quote this slogan or make it up themselves. The truly spiritual will just avoid sex all together, right Paul? Now I think there were likely two different groups of people who would have been attracted to this statement but for very different reasons. The first group is the ascetics.

Ascetics.

There has always been in history certain people who are drawn to asceticism. They reason, "Being godly is hard." Therefore, the harder something is, the more godly it must be.

Asceticism is this view that God is pleased with my self-induced suffering.

- It's hard to pray for a long time, so super spiritual people will pray

for hours and hours on their knees until they get blisters.

- It's hard to fast so real spiritual people will be rail thin because of long 20 day fasts.
- It's hard to read and memorize the Bible so the more spiritual you are the more torturous hours you will invest.

And so this applies in their mind to sex. Well it's harder to not have sex than to have sex so that must be better. And then out comes the maxim, "It is good for a man not to touch a women."

Paul says no. Your missing the whole point. Sex is a gift to be protected yes, but also to be enjoyed in marriage.

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

And so Paul's first principle in dealing with sexual desire is this.

DEALING WITH DESIRE

Desire Should Be Directed not Destroyed

Paul is correcting this faulting thinking that somehow just raw asceticism has some sort of value. Suffering, going without, discipline for its own sake - without reason has no value. God is not trying to make your life hard for no reason. If there's a command of discipline, it's for a reason. The command is carrying you into a greater joy he has in store for you.

For example, we teach our kids like I'm sure many parents do that saving is a good thing. It's easy to spend all your money on whatever the first thing is that interests you. That's easy. So we teach them self-discipline to save, to avoid that impulse. But what if my kids come to the conclusion, "It's wrong to ever spend money." [just for the record we are in no danger of this happening]. And they just saved every penny they ever earned and just lived the life of a homeless person and died without spending a penny. The principle of saving which was intended to allow you to experience the greater pleasure of financial freedom turned into the means by which you experienced the lifestyle of a homeless person.

That's what the Corinthians were doing. Instead of protecting the gift of sex so they could experience true sexual freedom, they imprisoned themselves and saw God's gift as something to be avoided.

You see just like financial freedom, sexual freedom is in this narrow band.

- If you spend everything you make, you imprison yourself.
- If you never spend everything you make you imprison yourself.
- Financial freedom is actually a function of religiously following a set of very rigid rules that allow you to spend money at the right time. And the more disciplined you are in following those rules, the more freedom you experience.

That is exactly how God wants you to experience sexual freedom.

- If you have sex whenever you feel like it, you will imprison yourself.
- If you say that sex is dirty and should be avoided at all costs, you imprison yourself.
- Sexual freedom is a function of very rigidly following God's rules in the context of marriage that releases you to enjoy sex as God intended it.

The Bible is always trying to get you away from the human abuses of God's gift. You had some who said, "The problem is not enough sex." These people said, "The problem is sex itself." Some said, "God has too many rules." These people said, "God doesn't have enough rules."

And Paul is trying to say, "No, just read the instructions. The instructions tell you exactly how to receive the gift. The Instructions are there to protect you from others and from yourself. "You have God-given creaturely limitations surrounding sex. Because you are

limited, using the gift in the wrong way will destroy you. Too much freedom and it will destroy you. Not enough freedom and it will destroy you. You were designed to thrive in this carefully controlled environment. Anything outside of that and you will ruin your soul.

Think about how you make fireworks. It's this very precise recipe. You have these very precise packages of gunpowder, these precise packages of metal salts which make the different colors, all arranged in a very precise order. You add a lift charge to elevate the package and then a detonation charge which ignites the metal salts and the results are just absolutely spectacular.

But get the recipe wrong and one of two things happen. It's either a complete dud. It never leaves the ground. Or the other option is it just explodes on the ground and injures people in the vicinity.

God wants your experience of sex to be fireworks. He wants it to be spectacular and breathtaking and exciting and surprising but there's such narrow limits in which this is possible. The formula is so touchy and so he gives you the raw materials and this list of instructions with warning labels all over it. Read the instructions and you'll get fireworks. Trust your instincts, trust your desires, and you'll either get a dud or an explosion that hurts people.

God has given marriage as the platform for this fireworks display! Paul says use it! Enjoy it. It's God's gift to you. Sexual asceticism has no place in marriage.

The Abused

Now there's something else we need to address here. Perhaps this slogan arose out of some sort of ascetic mindset. But it's equally

probable that this came from men and women who had bad experiences with sex and couldn't actually see what a good version would even look like. You could imagine a woman who was taken advantage and was raised in the temple prostitute system. From as long as she could remember men just treated her as an object, they dehumanized her and raped her. Her dignity was stripped from her. All her associations are negative. Or maybe there were men who were crushed by guilt from their involvement in that system. They saw the faces of the girls they abused and it's hard to erase that. And because of their experiences with the evils they could not even imagine a version that was good. The easiest, least painful route is to just chuck the whole thing.

And I think there are very likely many in this room who can relate to this.

There are many in the room here who have either been abused, raped, or have been taken advantage of, or who have experienced painful insults from their partners, great pain and all these bad experiences just cause you to think, I'd like to experience this gift, but the emotional energy to try and deal with these problems is too much. There are women who have been so taken advantage of by men, that they think, the only option for me to experience intimacy must be with other women. It's better to just never have to deal with it.

Or maybe you and your spouse have had problems in this area and it is a sore spot and for you it's easier to just stay apart.

It doesn't say it explicitly in the text here, but at minimum this might be a good application of verse 5. Perhaps you and your spouse have just suffered and things have been difficult and you've had

conflict in this area. Well what does verse 5 say?

1 Corinthians 7:5, Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

I can imagine this time of separation being used by God to heal and to gain perspective and allow for a new start. One of the goals of men's retreat and then this last Wednesday's women's gathering is just to try and normalize the conversation a little bit. If you are having problems, talk about it with a trusted couple. Talk about it with a counselor or pastor.

I think the big picture thing to say is that God wants you to experience this. It is worth it to work through the problems. It's worth it to re-establish trust. It isn't easy. There aren't shortcuts. But it is worth it.

So what do we do with our sexual desires? Paul says they are to be directed toward that one-flesh relationship between a husband and a wife. That is not a restriction. It's following the design instructions. It's using it according to the design.

But it's not just about sex in the context of marriage. It's not like the second you get married, you are totally safe. No, your sinful heart follows you into marriage. Paul says, yes you have to wait till you get married, but when you get married prepare yourself for more waiting. Prepare yourself for continued self-surrender and dying to self. There's a huge paradox going on here. Because on the one hand, the logic of this text says, "If you lack self-control, get married." And to the uninitiated, the implication is, when you finally get married you won't have to be self-controlled because all your needs will be met. But then the text says, the only way you will be able to have your needs met is for you to continue to exercise self-control and think of your spouses needs above your own.

For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

DEALING WITH DESIRE

Desire Should Be Directed not Destroyed
Desire Should Be Submitted not Served

Now let's start right off the bat by explaining how you should not use this verse. Here's what this verse is not saying. It's not your spouses job to fulfill you. Here's what this verse is saying. It's your job to fulfill your spouse. And you might object and say, "Well, that's nice fancy word games Jason, but the text actually does say that my wife's job is to fulfill me. It says right there that her body is not your own."

That is true. It does say that. But this is not a fancy word game. Because the second you wave that verse in her face, you've disobeyed the command directed at you. And the second she waves that command in your face, she's disobeyed the command directed to her. There's no possible way of using this verse as a demand to get what you want while simultaneously obeying the command to surrender what you want. The only way this verse should ever be used in a marriage is to remind your spouse that hey, "Just as a reminder, I'm here to serve you."

The only way it works is if both people give. You've heard the parable of 2 people sitting at a table across from one another with a

banquet in front of them.

- It's amazing food. It's unbelievable.
- The freshest fruit.
- The most creative delicacies.
- The steaming, salted meats are capturing them.
- The finest flatware.

Everything is perfect except for the fact that they don't have elbows. The only way you are going to enjoy that meal is if the other person feeds you. Whose going to go first? The second you are selfish, the whole thing falls apart. But if your both selfless, the thing is amazing. It's called love. It's called surrender. It's called sacrifice. That's a metaphor for sex.

- When there is mutual sacrifice it's bliss.
- When there is one-sided sacrifice, one is full but miserable; the other is starving and miserable.
- And when it's not done at all, you both starve to death.

What is going on in your marriage? Are you experiencing bliss, injustice or starvation. Those are the options.

The simple message of today is that if you come at sex selfishly, you will never be happy. Mutual Submission of Desire is the only way to fulfill Desire.

God designed sex to pull us out of ourselves and toward our spouse. God is absolutely ingenious in this whole thing. I constantly just marvel and laugh at the same time. We both have things the other person wants, but the only way we get what we want is by laying down what we want to serve the other person.

What do men want? Sex which leads to intimacy. What do women want? Intimacy which leads to sex. Do you see the ingenious setup here? Whose going to give? We both have arms without elbows. When neither give it's an absolute nightmare. When both gives its absolutely wonderful. When one or the other gives, it's not what it could be.

Really, the way God set this up is to remind us the difference between what we want and what we need. As men, what we want is sex. But we need is to be less self-focused and be a man of character and to serve our family. That's what we need. And God has set things up such that getting what we want goes through this channel of getting what we need. It's a great system.

As women, you want to be desired. But what you need is to be a woman of character whose identity is not wrapped up in her desirability but in her service to the Lord and to her husband. And it is in that service to her husband that she then becomes desirable.

God's design through and through is to experience love by serving the other person. If we try to just take, it can be so ugly. The bottom line when it comes to sex is don't let your desires determine what is best for you. It's the worst possible way to approach it. In order for you to be happy you have to have the deep abiding suspicion that your desires are misleading you, this confident distrust of them.

Here's an analogy that might help. What if you go to the doctor and he looks at your bloodwork and says, you are literally about to die. Your arteries are clogged. Your borderline diabetic. Your blood pressure is off the charts. This is a life or death situation. You need a complete diet overhaul. All these foods you want, you'd better not eat them because if you do, you're going to die."

So the first time you go out to eat, here's a great big steak full salt and butter and cheese. Here's a great big potato smothered in bacon and sauces and chile. Here are all the things you're not supposed to eat, and you say, "I'm going to eat it anyway." You sit down and you eat it. Right away, do you say, "This is poison. It tastes like poison?" Of course, it doesn't taste like poison; it tastes as wonderful as it always tastes, but it is poison.

Your appetite is completely incongruous with what you need, and the Bible says that is really what's happened to sex.

You want to know what one of the fundamental effects of sin is? It disorders our desires. Who can deny the fact that our selfishness and pride have created in us unhealthy desires? One of the main lessons from today is that when it comes to your sexual desire, you should be very, very, very suspicious that what you want is really what you need. When the sin came into our lives, it disorders our sexual desires in a very, very serious way. And so we submit our desires and as we do that God shapes our desires to receive his gift.

Well how do we fix that? There's a third point here.

DEALING WITH DESIRE

Desire Should Be Directed not Destroyed
Desire Should Be Submitted not Served
Desire Should Be Trumped not Trusted

I want to end our time in Galatians chapter 5. And this has always been such a helpful passage for me when it comes to dealing with my fleshly desires.

Paul says in

Galatians 5:16-17, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

What I want to point out here is that there are two sets of desires that are mutually exclusive. You have the desires of the flesh and desires of the Spirit. What's interesting to me about this is that growing in Christ does not so much seem to be the removing of fleshly desires.

- It does not say, "Walk by the Spirit and you will remove the desires of the flesh."
- It says, "Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

That implies that the desires of the flesh are still there. If that's true, what's the only way it's possible to resist them? Answer: If you desire something more. This is a key concept as it relates to our broken desires.

- Guys, as you grow in Christ do you want sex less? My answer is not one bit.
- Gals, as you grow in Christ do you find yourself indifferent as to whether or not you are desirable? You want to be wanted no matter how mature you are in Christ.

So the fleshly desires are all still there, churning away powerfully as always, but something has changed. You have the Spirit of God working in you to create new desires, stronger desires that help order and shape your fleshly desires so that you can not just merely gratify the flesh, but instead glorify the Lord.

It says the desires of the Spirit keep you from doing the things you want to do, meaning what? Meaning, your flesh is telling you to please itself but you have this conflicting desire to please the Lord and it's stronger and so it wins. Do you see that from the text?

So walking in the Spirit in this text is just enjoying and loving Christ so much that he just takes first place and then all our other desires are kept in check and don't dominate and don't cause us to worship the wrong things. That's why self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. It's not saying you are able to be more disciplined. In fact, the whole statement self-control is absurd. If you all agree, Jason has a hard time controlling himself. We need to put someone in charge of him so he is more controlled. Who should we choose. How about Jason. Jason is the problem so Jason can't control himself. What does self-control even mean according to the Bible? It's saying you have more love for Christ which means your flesh will have less control. Christ controls you more so self controls you less. The Spirit of God gives you greater desires than the desires that come from within.

And then comes this beautiful passage. When you are walking in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, whatever metaphor you want, here's what happens. These fruits start bubbling out of your life.

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Communion today is going to be an act of surrender to the Spirit. It's

going to be an act of saying, "God, I don't want my flesh to be in control. You died to free me from my flesh and I want to put you in first place. I want you in control"

We are going to take communion today and this is going to be a special opportunity in the context of communion for you to take your sexual brokenness to the the Lord and ask for both forgiveness and restoration.

Galatians 5:24-25, And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.