

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

– Psalm 139:14

David who wrote Psalm 139 knows better than most how devastating the work of the enemy is in his poisoning of the purpose of sex in God's wonderful work – he himself committed adultery, one of his sons raped one of his daughters, his 'wise' son Solomon had hundreds of sexual partners in his years of rebellion. We as the people of God - the people of the Word - are to be lights in this dark world, no more so than in the area of sexual purity.

Read Matthew 19:1-12

1. Why Do You Ask That? (verse 2-3)

Why do the Pharisees ask that question at that moment? The scene has been set, and Jesus has healed 'large crowds' – what would be the question we would ask? Questions about pain and suffering, about the power to do miracles, and asking if we can also do these things – but the Pharisees ask about divorce. Seeing the following Jesus had garnered, He is confronted with a controversial question – and we expect the Pharisees knew that this question will stir up angry sentiments among the people – because sex is not just an idol in 21st century society.

The question about divorce is just as controversial. This is a different day and age, and the 'rules' of society are different then than now - but there is the same underlying moral corruption. 'Sex before marriage' was not a big issue, with many married very young – often arranged by the families. Instead, their question is 'how can I get out of this marriage?', 'how can I have sex with someone else other than my wife/husband?'

How do we see 'the sex question' being so controversial in society today?

Does the Christian view on 'sex only within marriage' prevent people from investigating the gospel message?

2. The Answer You Need From God (verse 4-6)

Jesus answers as if the 'better question' had been asked – 'how do I glorify God with my body? How do I glorify God sexually?'. Jesus quotes from Genesis in their original context: Sexual union between a man and woman - within the context of marriage - reflects the very nature of God. This is a stunning picture of intimacy and complementarity – different and one. This is God's design. Sex was in the world before sin, and therefore it is God glorifying - when performed within the parameters marked out in Genesis 1&2.

Read Genesis 1:27-28 & 2:24-25

Marriage and sex is given for pro-creation for our God is a Creating God. To image Him is to be creative; no caveats. It does not say to married couples 'go forth and multiply once you have sorted out all your finances, or once you have a big enough house'. It does not say 'go forth and multiply - unless of course you don't like kids, or don't feel very maternal/paternal'. A healthy marriage involves lots of God glorifying sex.

How has the Church portrayed sex as dirty and sinful? How can we prevent sex being seen like this?

What obstacles do married couples face to following the instruction 'to multiply'? How can the church help?

3. Why Are We Not Satisfied with Jesus' Answer? (verse 7)

Read Genesis 1:26-31

This Pharisee is not content with Jesus' answer. He goes to work arguing for another outcome, using the Bible to do so. He's not after God's best – he doesn't want God's best. But the hearts of men and women are 'hard' as Jesus puts it. They had created 'laws' which essentially permitted a man to get a divorce if he no longer found his wife attractive or found someone more attractive. The 'laws of Moses' were stretched and stretched. Jesus essentially says it's because of sin - and thus the painful and devastating consequences of infidelity - that divorce was put into the Bible.

Sex - which was originally entirely about the self-giving, faithful, pro-creating love between husband and wife - became a casual, frivolous, self-centred lust with little serious concern for the needs of others. That philosophy and way of thinking originates with Satan and wickedness and it is deplorable. Divorce is offered by God in an extreme, last resort – when there has been a break down in the marriage. Jesus doesn't focus on the exceptions, but focusses on the better way.

How do people (within and outside the Church) respond to the Biblical guidance on sex and marriage?

How can we distort the purpose of sex to get what we want from it? How does this take glory from God?

4. A Yet More Challenging and God Glorifying Way to Live (verses 10-12)

Jesus talks about eunuchs – people living a celibate life. Whether this is because of how they were born, by the actions of other men (particularly acts of mutilation, more common in society then), or by their own decision, eunuchs were not having sex, and Jesus lifts up these people. Paul echoes this message – to avoid sexual immorality and glorify God with our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18-20) - a gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:7-8).

This is a counter-cultural message now, as it was then. Society mocks those who live their life as virgins. However, the Bible calls this a gift. Our society would see a person living a celibate life as 'deprived' and disadvantaged. Sex is good within Genesis 1&2. Once sin happened, God was on mission to restore people back to Him, and that is what our lives are about. Our lives are not just about getting married and having kids. The even greater thing is to live for the glory of God. We need to live the life to which we have been called.

How is 'celibate-life' seen as missing out? How can we see celibacy as a 'gift', rather than a 'time of waiting'?

How can we support, encourage and learn from those living a single, celibate life?