

**SEX AND THE CITY**  
**1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

**I. INTRO**

- A. It gets thrown at you every day. It's implied in almost every movie. Adolescents spend about 90% of their waking hours thinking about it. It holds people together—and pushes them apart. It brings some of the highest highs—and some of the lowest lows. It can create families—and blow them up. It can bring life—or ultimately take life. It can be an act of incredible love and selflessness—or an act of violence and selfishness. And sometimes it breaks our hearts.  
-Today we're going to talk about sex—which is without a doubt, one of the single most powerful, baffling, exhilarating forces in the world. And in a world like ours, it is one **hot potato!**
- B. Our sexuality is a profound gift from God. But when it goes in the wrong direction—it can trash your soul—and other's souls. It has the potential to create horrendous heartache and regret—and unbelievable damage. Given these facts, and they *are* facts--where do you go to get advice on how to handle something so powerful?
1. In our culture, people turn to all kinds of places. Some take their cues from **Sex In The City, or Desperate Housewives**—or **Cosmopolitan, Playboy** or **Penthouse**. Or worse. I'll tell you where a lot of people *don't* go. They don't go to God--the One who thought it up! Why? Well, sometimes those who claim to represent God have given negative, contradictory messages.
  2. Paul, an early Christian leader has to address a church in the city of Corinth on how they were handling the sexual arena of their lives. The city of Corinth was surprisingly similar to Toronto when it came to sexual ethics. Different twists and turns, of course—but the same basic problems. .  
-What Paul wrote was actually pretty clear. Overall, I don't think **clarity** is the real issue when it comes to what the Bible says about how to handle the gift of sex. I think the issue is, "Why should I bother doing what it says." And so, like them, we have to make good choices.

**II. SEX IS...VERY GOOD!**

- A. You need to know, God thinks sex is a **great** idea. Know how I know? Well, he designed the whole thing and *called* it very good. If you look back to that original story—it's touching and beautiful. Once when Jesus got asked about divorce, it's like He says, Whoa! Let's back up the train and see what GOD intended!  
-This is what He said,  
**"Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'**  
**Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together." (Matthew 19:4-6 NLT)**
1. The most obvious fact early in the creation of humans is that there was one person. Alone. Incomplete.  
God's specific comment is, "This is **not** good!" So out of one person, God makes two—and creates sex to make them **one** again on a regular basis. Cool idea!

-I've tried to imagine that first meeting between Adam and Eve. Naked and unashamed. What do you think Adam's first words were? "I'll bet she has a wonderful personality!"

-Adam's verbal response is actually a kind of a pun in the original language--almost as if he saw her and said, "*WHO-O-O-A! MAN!* And the name stuck. Wo-o-man!

2. Here's my point. Sex came from God's drawing board; how two human bodies, male and female, would fit together in this incredible experience—and ultimately – in that oneness, create an eternal soul. God's verdict on the whole deal was—***Am I good or WHAT? This is VERY GOOD!*** And that's what Jesus takes us to!

3. Unfortunately, the church hasn't always gone back to the beginning—and early leaders dragged all their own shame and embarrassment and prudishness into the Bible and into the church!

-One early religious leader found reasons to outlaw sexual intercourse between couples on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays. That made Tuesdays and Wednesdays hot nights in the parish! All kinds of gruesome things took place, ***including*** castration! ***Ouch!!!*** And it was some of these very people who were writing theology books!

B. I'm going to be *very* open and frank, here. Sexuality, the sexual organs, touching, kissing, sexual arousal, sexual intercourse --are the ***creation*** of an amazing God. Don't get me wrong--God intended for us to be modest, but He ***never*** intended us to snicker and talk about sex in whispers as if it's something dirty. Sexual desire is not a mistake--you know, something God created when He started to run out of good ideas.

1. Something else. Sexual attraction in and of itself is not dirty or wrong. And the sex act, the passionate meeting and clinging of two bodies was ***intended*** by God to be a powerful, climactic experience in the context of a marriage that would force a man and a woman to put their differences aside and make up.

2. Here's the deal. When something is ***really*** powerful—in good and potentially bad ways, what do you do with it? You protect it. Keep it contained. For example, fire is amazing; it heats our homes, cooks our food, and is used in the production of almost everything. But a kid playing with matches in California created ***massive*** damage.

-And that's precisely the point of all the Bible says about sex. It's ***so*** powerful and ***so*** addictive and ***so*** spiritual in nature that it needs some high boundaries around it to keep it contained.

3. Maybe the biggest question is—***who*** sets the guardrails? I believe that ***only*** God, designer, Creator and Lord of all does. And for God, that guardrail, that protective barrier is a marriage between a man and a woman.

-What has the reaction in the worlds system been to that? "That is preposterous! That is ***totally*** unreasonable. What ***planet*** are you from?" And many people have totally convinced themselves that it's impossible. And it's ***not!***

### III. SO, WHY THE GUARDRAILS?

- A. Sex in the city...of Corinth was a **huge** deal. Not only was sex used as an act of worship in some of the temples, it was quite common for social gatherings and dinners to provide prostitutes as the after dinner entertainment. When it comes to sex and the city in Corinth and Toronto—the context was different, but the attitude was the same. This is what Paul says:

**You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. You say, “Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.)**

**But you can’t say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead. (1**

**Corinthians 6:12-14 NLT)**

1. The Corinthians lived by a kind of **bumper sticker philosophy** when it came to their sexual ethics. In our world, their saying would go something like this: No one’s the boss of me!

It’s my body. I can do whatever I want. Hey, sex is just another appetite—like hunger or thirst. It’s no big deal! We’re consenting adults!” Anyone ever heard that? I actually saw the best summary of our world’s thoughts on sex on a T-shirt. It said, **My body is an amusement park, not a temple!**

2. What I want to lay out this morning are **2000 year old guidelines** on how to use the gift of sex the way God intended—and save yourself some heartache. As we talk, you may come to a whole new respect for the incredible wisdom in what God is saying.

-The first bumper sticker saying Paul deals with is, **I can do anything I want!** This is my body, my life, my future, my decision. Don’t cramp my style! Jesus set us free from the law, right? So—I get to do what I want, and I get God, too! My body is **my** amusement park!

-Paul’s answer is, **But not everything is beneficial.** On a purely pragmatic level—will it help you or hurt you? I am **free** to use my laptop as a hammer. I am **free** to fill my home with 100 cats and no litter box. Is it **beneficial?** Will I be glad I did? Sexual activity carries all kinds of risks with it. When you have sex with someone, you are in essence having sex with all their previous partners. Unprotected sex in our world is a little like playing Russian Roulette.

-In a world like ours, people say, “**Check! Got that covered!** Come on, Ken. We’ve got condoms, birth control, anti-biotics. Get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Even if you **do** remember that in the passion of the moment, that’s not the whole deal, is it? Whatever bravado and suaveness you may see in how sex is portrayed on TV and in movies, **it’s not real!** Sexual immorality messes with your soul and your mind—that is, unless you’ve totally cauterized your heart.

3. Know what I’d like to hear? A **single** advantage—just **one good thing** that blowing off God’s guardrail on this issue can do for us and the people in our world—besides give someone a 15 minute high. **Then** do a damage estimate. **-We** thought that trying out a relationship sexually would increase compatibility. Every study done shows that when couples cohabit before marriage, it **increases**

their chance of divorce. Our “free sex” world has damaged marriages and raised the divorce rate.

-We thought we’d solve the problems of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies with condoms, birth control pills and penicillin. STDs have increased every year for the past 30 years—and in that same time period somewhere over 40 million babies have been aborted. **Think** about that.

-We thought pornography was a form of freedom of speech. Think about the damage of **millions** of internet porn sites—destructive, explicit stuff—the main message being that women and children secretly want to be raped and hurt. Look at the stats on the increase of sexual predators, pedophilia, sexual addictions and families blown apart by affairs. And look at the stats of what’s going on in poorer countries where sometimes over 40% of the population is HIV positive.

-I’d like for someone to do a damage estimate of the massive financial, social, emotional and spiritual cost of that—and **dare** to tell me that the sexual revolution was a **good** thing. 2000 years ago, the Bible made the incredibly wise and prophetic statement, **Yes, you are free, but not everything is beneficial.** That, my friends, was a **huge** understatement.

4. But the Bible doesn’t stop there. Paul continues,

**And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12b NLT)** Anything that stimulates the pleasure center of the brain, like sex, can become highly addictive. Think of the irony of someone saying, “I’m free, then **chaining** themselves to an addictive lifestyle that steals everything from them.

-This stuff is very subtle. Here’s the way it works in our world. Generally speaking, a guy and girl will initially resist the first sexual experience. At least for a while. But eventually the inner wall or guardrail gets dismantled—and once they go that far, it’s like there’s no turning back. In the next relationship, it takes even **less** time and commitment before they’re sexually involved. When a person tears down this inner moral protective barrier against sexual immorality, they expose their soul and their heart to significant danger.

5. There’s another downside to have sex outside of marriage. Paul says, **...Our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:13 NLT)**

-Lori and I once made the mistake of buying a used 1978 VW Rabbit diesel. Anyone every own one of those things?

The biggest problem with ours was that we bought it off a grape farmer named Clyde. Clyde was a great guy—but, unknown to us, he drove this Rabbit around in the fields like a tractor. It actually didn’t have a lot of miles on it, but they were hard, **hard** miles!

-What happens to things that are not used for their intended purpose? Like when kid uses their nose to store peanuts and raisins.

Or computer is used as a boat anchor? It damages them! God says, “By the way, for your information—your bodies were **not** made for sexual immorality! How you use your body is **very** important to me!”

- B. Paul's advice up to this point on living within God's guidelines on morality just make good sense. The next turn in his letter tells us why casual sex can be so destructive. In fact, there is not such thing as **casual** sex—just sex that's treated casually.

**-Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. (1 Corinthians 6:15-17 NLT)**

1. In the act of sex, two people become **one**. That was Jesus' point. They are joined in a way that involves far more than skin on skin.

There is a **soul** connection; a connection on a deeply spiritual level. Jesus uses the word **joined...one flesh** to describe this deeply spiritual connection between a man and a woman.

-If you don't understand that word, go outside on a really cold day, get a lot of saliva on your tongue and stick it to a metal pole or fence. Then rip it away.

Sounds painful doesn't it? Because it's **joined!**

It **becomes one** with the metal. And when it's pulled off, part of your tongue stays there.

- a. The overall message God has given us on this issue is that this connection between two humans is so deep, so powerful, so spiritual in nature--that it needs to be protected with public vows. A commitment to stay—to **maintain** the oneness—not rip it apart.
  - b. The Corinthians said, "Hey—the stomach for food...food for the stomach!" We said, "Having sex is just fulfilling an appetite. Like eating. It's a funny thing, you know; whenever I've talked to someone who's been raped, they don't describe it like someone stole their dinner. They talk about it as a violation of the soul!"
  - c. Sex wasn't created for as a quick fix for people's loneliness—that leaves them more lonely. It wasn't created as something else to do for people who run out of things to talk about on dates. It was for the ultimate expression of love and oneness in the protective custody of a marriage.
2. Maybe the biggest problem with sex before or outside of marriage is that it can cheat us out of what we want the most. What **is** it that we're looking for? Well, for some it's the Cookie Monster Philosophy of sex. **Me SEE cookie, me WANT cookie, me EAT cookie!** But what we're **really** looking for at the deepest level is ongoing love and intimacy. Loyalty.  
-Here's the deal on this. When you have sex with a person, the whole experience is recorded in Techni-color and senssurround in your mind. There is no **delete** button. It's with you for a life-time.

-Think all those DVDs self-destruct when you walk down the aisle with someone? Of **course** not. And this stuff can't help but be disruptive. And a spouse can't help but wonder who all is in the bed with them. I'm not blowing smoke here.

Stats show that when a person has had a number of sexual partners before marriage, they are much more likely to seek out another sexual partner **after** they're married. And if they do, that does **huge** damage to a marriage.

- C. See, God is **no prude!** He is not trying to frustrate us, hurt our feelings, or rain on our picnic. This guardrail—like all of them in the Bible—is about His love for us. If you believe the Bible tells the absolute truth, Paul has some very straightforward words for you. And me.

**Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?**

**You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20 NLT)**

1. I realize that in an audience like this, there are a significant number of you who are unmarried. You may be thinking, "Ken, what you're asking of us is really **really** tough!"

-First thing you need to understand. **I'm** not the one asking this of you. God has drawn the line on this one. In talking to another group Ancient Greeks one this same issue of sexual immorality, Paul closes what he says with these words:

**Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:8 NLT)**

2. The message constantly sent by the world system is that you can't live a fulfilled, meaningful life without being sexually active. That's not true.

The Bible says that your sexuality is a very important part of your identity—that there are sparks when males and females get together—and that's a **good** thing. Your sexuality is essential to your identity. But your sexual **activity** is not. Jesus lived an incredibly meaningful and powerful life as a single person—as did Paul, the guy writing these words.

3. Let's just be realistic, okay? Living a sexually pure life in a sexually charged culture like ours is a **huge** struggle. I know that.

-Staying pure is going to take heroic effort. The question people ask is—**Is it worth it?** I don't think there's any question about that. Living with self-control builds self esteem. It keeps you from guilt. And in the end, you can look God in the eye—and preserve the intimacy of the most important relationship of all. I'd say delayed gratification **always** works best—and pays off.

4. The biggest question is—**HOW!?** Saying to people, "Just **don't do it!**" is like putting a sign on a bench that says, "Wet Paint." What does everyone want to do? -Paul says here, If this is going to work, you will have to **Flee sexual immorality!** Literally—run away from it. Be wise when it comes to the kind of situations you get yourself into. Can I just be really blunt and rude? I see a single guy and girl going on vacation together, and I think, "What a set-up! It's like asking either for

trouble—or to be misunderstood.” So, that’s my “Dutch Uncle” comment for the day!

-Jesus that sexual compromise starts in the mind—with lust. He said that when you lust after a person, look them over as sexual objects, fantasize about them—you’ve already committed adultery with them in your heart. His recommendation sounds quite gory. If your eye is creating the lust problem and is going to destroy your life—gouge it out! If your hand is causing you to sin—cut it off!

-What Jesus is suggesting here is something called **radical surgery**. What He says is brilliant. Jesus says, “If you know in your heart that something is going to take you down a road where you could potentially get your soul way of track—**treat it like cancer!** Find a way to cut it out of your life. Cancel your cable TV. Throw your laptop into Lake Ontario. Stop walking where you’re walking. Change jobs, if necessary. Run for your life!

5. One more powerful thing that can help. Community. Accountability. By definition, a church is not a place where people look at the back of other people’s heads. It’s a place where we love and are loved, know and are known, serve and are served. We do life together. People watch out for each other, help each other to make great choices.  
That’s why, for example, we are studying this book in what we call **Roots Groups**. A small community like that is, I think, a must if you are serious about following Jesus and doing what He says.

-If you’ve ever met **anyone** who’s escaped from an addiction of any kind—you’ll find the **someone** walked with them! Helped them. Traveled with them. So, why not join a small group? Why not?

6. All those things are **great**—but they’re **not enough!** We **all** desperately need the grace and power and forgiveness of God. A few weeks ago I made a statement. See if you remember it: **The problem is never the presence of sin; it’s the absence of repentance.**

-Are we going to try...and fail? Most likely we will. The biggest problem we have is when we just defend what we do and deny there’s a problem. “Well, we just need to find out whether we’re sexually compatible.” Ever heard that? Or “We’re not married yet. But we’re **going** to get married. We’re **committed** to each other.”

-If we will confess—own our sin without making excuses—God pours out **amazing** grace. Jesus forgave—and set free—some people who had fallen in spectacular ways. His forgiveness absolutely scandalized the religious people—and melted the hearts of those who received it.

-But he doesn’t **just** forgive us. He gives us power. Inner power to say “no.” Inner humility to ask for help.

Power to make radical decisions to save marriages, save our consciences and bring healing to our souls. And He offers that incredible power to weak people like me. And like you. And it **works!**

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. We all, **we all** struggle sexually. We've **all** sinned in this area. My point is that we **all** have needed—and need grace. Second chances. We are a community of goofed up people—doing life together imperfectly—all wanting to look like Jesus, live like Jesus, and love like Jesus. We're actually a pretty screwed up bunch! But God's grace is greater than our failure; His power is way, WAY greater than our weakness!
- B. I'm not sure where you come from this week...or this month...or this year. I don't know what your interest is in Jesus—or following Him. But I **can** tell you—whether or not you even believe in Jesus or the Bible—what it says about sex is absolutely true and right.
1. It could be that you've had a knot in your stomach this whole service. You're in a mess—and the guilt and shame and questions are overwhelming. You **know** the sex and the city thing doesn't work. Your life is proof.
 

-And I need to say—however dark your past is, and however bleak your future seems—there's **hope**. See, God is here—and whenever the God of the second chance shows up—hope and forgiveness and release is inevitable.
  2. Maybe what the Bible teaches raises huge questions for you in terms of the life you're now in. I believe God gives us time and space and grace and power to extricate ourselves. The first thing is to decide on the direction of your **very next step**. And take it.
 

-You may be carrying some deep guilt because of the past. It literally haunts you; makes you feel that you can't be forgiven—or you can't ever be free and happy again. But you can. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is **way** bigger than anything you could've done.
  3. This morning—why don't you come to Him? You don't have to have it all nailed down and figured out. Just come. Come. He's just a **prayer** away!