

Why Are Sexual Sins So Significant? Special Focus: Session One
Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.
Pastor of Education

God hasn't told us all his reasons for these and for many of the other very clear commands he has given us, so we can't speak exhaustively on his rationale. However, he has told us enough. He has said in his special revelation in both the Old and New Testaments, "be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7-26; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Revelation 4:8) The verb in this call by God to be holy is in the imperative mood, thus a command, (e.g., Joel 2:16; 1 Peter 1:15-16). God has called us to be holy (that is separate from society and uncommon) to him. God is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy, the way of expressing the superlative (e.g., greatest or most) in the Hebrew language. Since he is most holy, he will not permit sin and evil in his presence; therefore, he calls us to be holy so we can have fellowship with him and in Christ be able to serve him in the progression of his plan to redeem his creation.

Nevertheless, we can infer much from his Word and from what he has disclosed to us in his general revelation, part of which involves careful science. Human experience, especially when empirically validated, provides significant information for us on this question.

1. First of all, we know sexual sins are especially serious, because God treats them that way. When he commands us not to do something, even when he doesn't give a list of reasons, we obey because we trust him that he speaks the truth. He knows things we don't (and in many cases may not understand even if he told us [just as a child has to accept without explanation rules his or her older and wiser parents establish]).
2. Next, since God is the owner of his creation (e.g., 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Job 41:11b; Psalm 24:1-2; 50:10-12; 100:3; Hebrews 1:10), he can decide how he wants people to behave in his presence. We see an analogy on the solely human plane: when you own your own home, you get to decide who comes into your house, what you will permit them to do, and what you'll prohibit them from doing. Also, if you make something, you have the right to decide who will use it and who will not. God has not only made all that is, the whole universe, he created it, i.e., he brought it into existence out of nothing; he did not use preexisting materials, as we have to do. That is why in Genesis 1:1, the original Hebrew word is **בָּרָא** (*bārā*), which means to create ex nihilo, out of nothing. Very significantly, in the whole Old Testament, God is the only subject of the verb **בָּרָא**; no human being can **בָּרָא**.
3. God has built in us an orientation to what is right and wrong, a conscience. (Romans 1 and 2) We don't always know why something is wrong, but we do know it *is* wrong. God adds to this his common grace.
 - a. Thus, e.g., most if not all cultures refuse to legitimize prostitution.
 - b. Most people consciously or at least unconsciously sense the sexual dynamic

- which exists when a man and a woman are together. To not be conscious of that reality is to court disaster from a Godly and moral perspective.
- 1) This awareness is why I'm never asked why women have to cover their arms, chest and legs when entering many religious places on the Bible study tours we take in Middle Eastern and European countries.
 - 2) Failure to recognize this dynamic has profoundly and negatively altered the lives of teen-agers who visit each other's bedrooms (and in other secluded places), naïve relatives, managers and secretaries, counselors and counselees, even pastors and parishioners.
- c. All the humor associated with sexuality indicates the special characteristics involved in this dimension of human life. Careful research in the field of psychology indicates that much of what we laugh at deals with areas in which we feel uncomfortable.
 - d. For further information on the above, see my secure and cost-free general Website, [From Acorn to Oak 12](#). On the homepage, use the Search bar to locate the subject in which you are interested. Pertaining to the theological subjects, see in particular the PowerPoint presentation, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).
4. The Bible mentions many sexual sins; the following is not an exhaustive list.
 - a. Adultery
 - 1) Physical (Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 2:12-19, 5:15-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27)
 - 2) Mental (Proverbs 6:25; Matthew 5:28)
 - b. Fornication (Ephesians 5:3)
 - c. Incest (Leviticus 18:6-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2)
 - d. Polygamy (Leviticus 18:18)
 - e. Homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:18-27)
 - f. Bestiality (Leviticus 18:23)
 5. Sexual sins are attacks against one's self. "All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)
 - a. Since we are holistic beings spiritual contamination corrupts our bodies as well. "And vast multitudes are cut off by this vice in its various forms and consequences. Its effects fall not only directly upon the body, but often upon the mind." (Matthew Henry)
 - b. Examples of sexual sins against the body abound with the many sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) which are epidemic in our country and elsewhere in the world today.
 - 1) See Romans 1:27.
 - 2) See the article, "U.S. Awakes to Epidemic of Sexual Diseases" by Sheryl Gay Stolberg (*N.Y. Times* 3/9/98).
 - 3) From Dr. James Dobson and OBGYN physician, Dr. Joe McIlhaney, in video "The Myth of Safe Sex" from the video series *Life on the Edge*:

- a) Two of the most common and most dangerous STDs are chlamydia and human papillomavirus (HPV).
- b) The contagion is such that people who have “sex outside marriage with someone who has had sex before, will almost always get a sexually transmitted disease.” Dr. McIlhaney clarified his statement to mean that this is true unless the person who has had sex before has received treatment for any STDs he or she has contracted.
- c) However, for a period of time people usually do not know they have an STD, and in that time they infect others, often many others.
- d) Furthermore, strong research evidence exists to show that males and females often lie about their past and ongoing sexual experiences.
- e) The phenomenon of babies being born with syphilis has increased 20 times since the 1970’s. When untreated, syphilis appears to go away but reappears after age 50 resulting in dementia.
- f) HPV causes cancer and many other serious effects. Until recently it caused more deaths than AIDS.
- g) Since God loves the people he created, and since he knows and wants to spare them (us) the trauma resulting from certain behaviors, it is easy to see why he would provide laws, the following of which would prevent such anguish.

6. Sexual sins cause especially deep pain.

- a. The Bible reveals marriage as God has created it to constitute a psychosomatic and spiritual relationship, which the Scriptures refer to as constituting “one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31). For example, a consummated marriage creates a psychophysical bonding that when torn by divorce is especially excruciating. This is one reason why God says, “I hate divorce,” and so do multitudes who have experienced it.
- b. One can detect empirically an integral difference between the one flesh relationship and other relationships.
 - 1) Psychosocial observation reveals the phenomenon called “personal space,” which people intuitively value as a private area surrounding them that should not be invaded by others.
 - 2) When a non-spouse does come too close a revulsion is felt to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the nature of the invasive act. Consider a couple of examples.
 - a) I knew a wonderful fellow in another church I served who was a committed and helpful servant of the Lord. He served with excellence in our education program. Yet, he was one of these people who frequently would stand about three inches from my nose when he would talk with me. When I would step backward during our conversation, he would step forward. It was quite uncomfortable to talk with him when he would come that close.
 - b) Regarding sexuality, if you are a woman, and a man, who is not your husband, invades your private space, you feel uncomfortable, *n’est-ce pas?*

- 1- You would feel uncomfortable if his lips were very close to you, particularly to certain parts of your body.
 - 2- You would not like him to touch certain parts of your body.
 - 3- **That would not be so if you were married and were one flesh, as God has designed.**
7. We can see easily why especially for Christians, but also for all other people, prostitution is wrong. In addition to what we have been just observing,
 - a. it violates the one flesh unity and relationship; the fulfillment of marital commitment, fidelity, and desire; and much more.
 - b. It violates the relationship a believer has with the indwelling Holy Spirit. God is offended by sin. (1 Corinthians 6:13b-20)
 8. Within the marital bond, adultery is an expression of lying.
 - a. It is a breaking of the marriage vows.
 - b. As such it is a breaking of one's word, which undermines that person's trustworthiness. As Harvard psychologist, Erik Erikson, has shown in his work described in his classic book, *Childhood and Society*, basic trust is essential to any relationship. Without trust one cannot have a dependable and satisfying relationship, much less a fulfilling marriage.
 9. Many of the hundreds of divorcees I have counseled have implored me, "Please tell those who are married, who are contemplating divorce, to **not** do it! The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence." (See the book by J. Allan Petersen, *The Myth of the Greener Grass*.) For more on marriage, divorce, and cohabitation, see also "[Guidelines for Selecting a Marriage Partner](#)."
 10. People universally treat the subject of sex as one of the most important to them.
 - a. Most boys desire the girl they want to marry to be sexually inexperienced. Girls want the same of their future husband. Most wives and husbands who learn of their mate's adultery are devastated.
 - b. Thirty-five percent of Americans think adultery should be a punishable crime.
 - c. Adultery, fornication, incest, and many other deviant sex acts are listed in the Illinois Criminal Code (as of 1999) as sex offenses. The code includes a statement about "the community's interest in preserving the monogamous marriage and family institution which is the current basis of our social and moral structure." (Division I, Title III, Part B, Article 11)
 11. Profound differences exist between the way men and women view sex.
 - a. Men can enjoy sex at least for a time without a relationship. When a man achieves a sexual experience with a woman he has no intention of marrying, he loses respect for her. (Cf. 2 Samuel 13:15)
 - b. Women want a relationship before, during, and after sex. Recall the adage, men give love to receive sex; women give sex to receive love.

12. The perils of cohabitation are grievous.
- a. Cohabitation is antithetical to God’s plan, marriage. Therefore, cohabitation is seriously flawed and contrary to God’s Word and will.
 - b. Monogamous heterosexual marriage is the norm for our state and is what the Illinois School Code (as of 1999) requires our public school teachers to teach their students in sex education classes. (Cf. above 10.c.) In fact, “...common law marriages are not recognized in Illinois; cohabitation alone can never result in a valid marriage;” (750 ILCS 5/212 Prohibited Marriages)
 - c. More than the following negative factors are associated with cohabitation.
 - 1) higher levels of conflict
 - 2) much shorter term relationships and much more frequent breaking up
 - 3) less effective communication
 - 4) much less security in their relationship, which negatively affects their peace of mind, since they have not committed to remain together permanently
 - 5) sexual anxiety rather than sexual freedom
 - 6) the woman (who has more to lose in such a relationship) is much more likely than a married woman to wind up providing economic support for an unemployed man and is almost five times as likely to suffer severe violence, including rape. (Cohabiting couples abuse one another more frequently and more violently than those who are married. Women in such relationships are over three times more likely to suffer from depression.)
 - 7) For much more on cohabitation, see my essay, “[Is Cohabitation an Option for God’s People—Or for Anyone Else?](#)”
13. Many children are born out of sexual sins, and the experience has numerous negatives for them.
- a. Many wind up with only one parent, which is contrary to God’s plan and typically results in many unpleasant experiences, some of which are as follows:
 - 1) Emotional disturbances
 - 2) Illicit sex
 - 3) Substance abuse
 - 4) Poor academic performance
 - 5) Discipline problems
 - 6) Antisocial behavior
 - 7) Poorer health
 - b. Some social stigmas still remain with which they are forced to cope.
 - c. Their identity struggle and self-esteem issues are exacerbated when they do not have the same name as their father.
 - d. Those involved in situations where their mother is cohabiting, or who is sexually active with a series of boyfriends, often experience severe abuse and many are murdered. Careful research and police reports indicate that most of the domestic violence cases involve a live-in boyfriend abusing his girlfriend and the girlfriend’s child(ren).

- e. Voluminous studies show the life changing and severe effects on children. As marriages dwindle in number and in strength, our society sees increases in crime, suicide, poor health, poverty, and academic failure.
14. God instituted a plan to control the effects of sin until the time is right in his sight to eliminate sin and restore paradise in and through Jesus Christ.
- a. Government and laws restrain sin. (Romans 13:1-5)
 - b. Marriage is an institution created by God, one of the functions of which is to restrain sin. (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:21-33, 1:15-23)
 - 1) It provides a civilizing and socializing effect on especially male sexuality. See, e.g., the work of George Gilder.
 - a) The generally left hemisphere oriented male is inclined toward aggression, which is located in that region of the cerebrum.
 - b) The sex drive is one of the most powerful drives in the human being.
 - 2) Without marriage, and the other constraints God has put on sin, which provides peace, security, and life, men would fight like animals for possession of women.
 - c. This is one reason why people will not marry in heaven. In heaven, sin and its resultant pain will not exist. (Matthew 22:30; Revelation 21:1-5)
15. Since, as we have just seen, sexual sins are especially divisive and destructive to the marriage bond and break down the family, they thereby also undermine the society and the church (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:1-5) and its mission.
- a. The family is the building block of the society. Destroy the family structure and our society turns to shambles.
 - b. Our most important task in life, our calling as Christians, is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, living our lives as his witnesses. (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; 1 Peter 2:9-12, 3:15b)
 - 1) We begin this witness in our families, where we have our greatest opportunity for such service to the Lord. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 78:1-8; Colossians 3:18-25; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; 1 Timothy 3:1-16)
 - 2) One who engages in sexual sins ruins his or her ability to serve the Lord, until he or she repents and stops such behavior. As one pastor aptly said, “Those who live their lives in the gutter don’t attract people to Christ and the Gospel.” (See, e.g., Ephesians 5:3.)
 - c. Homosexuality, far from “a valid alternative lifestyle,” as its proponents assert, is especially destructive.
 - 1) Remember with whom AIDS began. This is one reason God called homosexuality *תוֹעֵבָה* (*toebah*), abomination, detestable, to be abhorred. (Leviticus 18:22). See also Romans 1:27.
 - 2) In addition to serious psychological and other physical illnesses associated with homosexuality, due to their unhealthy practices, a study has revealed that the median age of death was 39 for those who contracted AIDS and 42 for those who died of something other than AIDS. The median age of death for lesbians was 45. For much more on this subject and other aspects of the LGBTQ+ lifestyle and its contrast with God’s special revelation in the Bible

and his general revelation, including sound science, see my book, [What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love](#), and other [papers on homosexuality](#).

16. If you have committed any of these sins, always remember that God is gracious to his people in Christ and offers eternal forgiveness for those who repent through faith in Jesus Christ, the genuineness of which is seen in obedience, including refusal to recommit those sins. He also provides all that is needed to overcome the temptations to revert to the practice of sexual sinning. (Isaiah 1:18-20; 55:6-7; 1 John 1:5-9; John 15:7-11)

17. To overcome sexual sins turn to the Lord and his Word.
 - a. Commit or recommit one's self to obeying the Lord.
 - b. Commit or recommit one's self to spiritual disciplines.
 - 1) Read Scripture daily.
 - 2) Pray for all involved and affected by your decisions and actions. For example, if you are sexually attracted to someone who is married, pray that God helps you destroy your adulterous thoughts and feelings (Matthew 5:28), and sincerely pray also for his or her spouse and for their marriage, including that they are able to grow in their love for each other and have the marriage that will please God. Pray for God's help to overcome the situation.
 - 3) Flee temptation; you can do it! (1 Corinthians 10:12,13)
 - c. Fulfill your "marital duty." (1 Corinthians 7:3)
 - 1) Husband, as the leader in the family, be sensitive to your wife's needs and different perspective on sex. (Ephesians 5:25-31)
 - 2) "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that." (1 Corinthians 7:2-7)
 - 3) In these ways make sure that you are not doing something that would tempt your spouse to look elsewhere for sexual satisfaction, even though if he or she did, your failure would not justify his or her doing so.

18. Finally, while I hope and trust these reflections on some of the reasons why sexual sins are so special and important are helpful, let us remember also these vital facts.
 - a. We are the creatures, not the Creator; we are limited, not unlimited; we are finite, not infinite.
 - b. Let us give up any idea that we need to know everything. We can't anyway, as God has revealed to his prophet, Isaiah,
 - ⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"

declares the Lord.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (55:8-9)

- c. God reveals only what we need to know, and he doesn't always give all the reasons.
- 1) Just as a child doesn't always understand the reason for a rule his or her parents have made, we might not understand many of God's reasons. (Cf. also Job 38-42)
 - 2) Since he is trustworthy and alone all-knowing, let's just do what he has commanded us and hold to the sure and certain conviction that it is all in our own best interests anyway.
 - 3) And with regard to the subject before us, by maintaining faithfulness in the area of sexuality, we will stand out as beacons of light helping multitudes lost in a dark world to find their way to the safe haven of marital security and joy that their loving heavenly Father has provided. Many in the world are crying out and looking for a righteous person who will actually live the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ, the truth, and model it in daily life over time with a strong track record. We will thus be fulfilling the high and holy calling he has given us. What more could we want from life?

DISCUSSION: Questions and Comments

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