

RUF Bible Study – Dating Sex and Marriage
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Sex Part 2

When I was maybe sixteen I got to go on a date with Cherie Westfall. I had wanted to do that for a long time, so we were getting ice cream up on Springfield when we ran into a relative of hers. I think it was an uncle. We chatted with him for a few minutes, and he was quite a jokester character. Loud and boisterous. After just a few minutes, he told me to check my fly because my zipper was down. I said, “I’m not falling for that one,” and I ignored him. He shrugged and we went and sat down. A little while later, I had to go to the bathroom, and sure enough, he had been right. So I had the embarrassment of my zipper down and then also of not listening to someone trying to help me.

It’s amazing to me that something like that can first of all be so embarrassing and shameful. After all, it’s not like my underwear was hanging out of my pants or anything. I’m not sure what it is. We can’t take care of ourselves? There is a little opening to our private life and private parts that is not sealed off? And then, I can still feel that some twenty plus years later. It’s right there in my mind and in my heart. I’m not sure that little part has been healed after all this time. Sexual things have that sort of power over our lives. This is a very, very small one. And yet it still is there for me. How much more the deeper issues and events of our lives.

Last time we looked at the designer of sex (God), the context of sex (marriage) and the mechanics of sex (uh...). We saw how sex works or should work in the life of a Christian, and how we should respect it and care about it and how it works and the power it can and does have in our lives.

This week we’ll look at the reason for sex (oneness), the brokenness of sex (pain and suffering) and the picture of sex (the gospel). Let’s jump right in.

The Reason for Sex – intimacy, one flesh

So what is the reason for sex? “Secular society tells us, simultaneously, that sex is no big deal and that it’s the most important thing in the universe. Sex is so banal and meaningless that we can have random, casual sex with our next-door neighbor, yet sex is so hugely significant that we can’t possibly live without it.”²

Every song, every movie, every television show talks about sex over and over again. Yet often what these media seem to say is that sex is no big deal. That we shouldn’t care at all about it. Casual sex is the theme of the day. So if it’s no big deal, then why are you so obsessed with it?

We said last time that sex is about procreation. It is how we make babies. That isn’t the only reason for it, but it does speak to bringing another life into the world, of opening up our lives for something more than privatized and personal pleasure.

But there certainly is pleasure. It’s recreational. It’s fun, or mostly fun or often fun. It’s why people want to do it. It touches heaven in a way unlike anything else can do. It gets us out of ourselves and into another world. It’ll get you and keep you pretty warm on a cold February night.

It’s also a communion. It’s a fusing. It’s a bringing together of two people in a way that joins not only their bodies but also their souls. It’s what we’ve called before cleaving to each other. Remember, the Bible says this to be best done and rightly done in the context of marriage, so that is what we’re mostly thinking of. However, even outside of marriage, two people’s hearts are woven together when they have sex.

I want to use the words of Mike Mason from his book *The Mystery of Marriage* and his chapter about sex as my very own words. He writes, “I sometimes wonder what it is like for nudists: whether they ever really get used to it. As for me, I still haven’t gotten used to seeing my own wife naked. It’s almost as if her body is shining with a bright light, too bright to look at for very long. I cannot take my eyes off her – and yet I must. To gaze too long or too curiously is, even for her, a breach of propriety, almost a crime. It is not like watching a flower or creeping up to spy on an animal in the wild. No, my wife’s body is brighter and more fascinating than a flower, shier than any animal and more breath-taking than a thousand sunsets. To me her body is the most awesome thing in creation. Trying to look at her, just trying to take in her wild, glorious beauty, so utterly unchanged since the beginning of time (despite what the evolutionists think), I catch a small glimpse of what it means that men and women have been made in the image of God. If even the image is this dazzling, what must the Original be like?”³

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For this series, I used several books as background reading and listened to sermons by as many people as I can find, especially Tim Keller, Les Newsom, Richard Vise, Jeff Ferguson, David Jones, Ray Cortese and Jean Larroux. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

² Lauren Winner, *5 Paths*, p.29, found in David Jones’ sermon on this topic.

³ Mason, 137

The very idea that this woman would disrobe in front of me and get into a bed with me thrills my soul. We were made for this. We have vowed before God and everyone else to be true to each other till death do us part. We are not perfect people by any means. We have to say we're sorry and ask for forgiveness all the time. But we are covenanted together.

Sex then is a covenant renewal ceremony. It is a celebration of our oneness, of our vows, our commitment to each other and only each other. Sex is a place where you say, I am only your and you are only mine. It's a covenant glue. You don't get to do these things with anyone else. The wife says, these breasts are for you. These curves are your curves. These muscles are your muscles. These spots are places only you get to see. That should thrill your soul.

It's not born out of a competition but out of a mutual self donation. You are giving totally of yourself when you give to your spouse in sex. That's the way it has to be. It will not do to hold back part of who you are.

Mason puts it this way, "For to be naked with another person is a sort of picture or symbolic demonstration of perfect honesty, perfect trust, perfect giving and commitment, and if the heart is not naked along with the body, then the whole action becomes a lie and a mockery. It becomes an involvement in an absurd and tragic contradiction: the giving of the body but the withholding of the self. Exposure of the body in a personal encounter is like the telling of one's deepest secret: afterwards there is no going back, no pretending that the secret is still one's own or that the other does not know. It is, in effect, the ultimate step in human relations, and therefore never one to be taken lightly. It is not a step that establishes deep intimacy, but presupposes it. As a gesture symbolic of perfect trust and surrender, it requires a setting or structure of perfect surrender in which to take place. It requires the security of the most perfect of reassurances and commitments into which two people can enter, which is no other than the contract of marriage."⁴

Sex is the deepest possible connection or communion that is possible between two human beings. You give yourself to your spouse. Not out of a drunken stupor. Not to make him like you more. Not to use the other person for your own purposes. But because you love that person, and have shown that love by your commitment of marriage. Sex fuses you together, both literally and figuratively or symbolically.

How can I give you an application to this? I guess I need to say that you must understand this and then wait until you're married before you give this to anyone else. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6 that you give your heart away and join yourself to someone else when you have sex with anyone. This isn't a threat. It's a reality. Stop.

The second thing I want to say is something that is probably stranger, much stranger. I think the closest thing you get to sex is the taking of the Lord's Supper. It is a way of picturing communion with God with signs and symbols. You take in the Lord's body and the Lord's blood when you eat and drink the bread and wine. They aren't the body and blood. But yet Jesus is spiritually present in the meal. It is so earthy and real. God gives us this picture, sign and symbol in order to show us that he really is with us, that his covenant to us is real and working, that he is ours and we are his. We renew that covenant with him every Sunday when we take the Lord's Supper. We say again, that we are his and he is ours.

Does that make sense? Probably not. But I hope it will start to make more sense. You are doing something very important and very unifying and connective when you take the Lord's Supper. It is something you should care about and do often.

There would be something very biblical and "romantic" for you to say to your spouse, "Hey, baby, let's renew the covenant tonight." Try it out in your marriage.

The Brokenness of Sex

This sounds all nice, but the reality of our world is something entirely different isn't it? We live in a broken world. We've mentioned this time and time again, but it gets a whole subpoint here.

What about for those of us who have not experienced this chastity, this purity, this fidelity in our lives before marriage? What are we to do? Where do we go?

Psalms 10 is a place for us to go. *Why O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?* The psalm continues in a way that expresses a deep disturbed soul, someone who is longing to try to understand God's ways in his life. Why did you do this, God? Why did you let this happen? Why didn't you stop these bad people from their evil plans?

Have you felt this way? Why, God, did you let that babysitter alone with me? Why did he touch me? Why did I like it?

Why did she put the moves on me like that? Why did she take her shirt off? Why didn't I stop?

Why was I at that party? Why did he get on top of me and why did I go along with it? Why am I made this way? Why am I attracted to this? Why did you give me this experience?

Can you relate to the psalmist?

Psalms 10:8-11 *He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes steadily watch for the helpless; he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it."*

⁴ Mason, p 141-142

Many of you feel as if your very life were robbed that day. Something was taken from you, and you've never gotten it back. Maybe this happened more than once. You wonder why you didn't struggle or cry out, but you were afraid, and you didn't know what to do.

Sexual abuse and sexual sin captures our heart in a way that nothing else really does. This should confirm to you that there is something more than physical going on here. Unfortunately, it pictures it in the negative for you. You have been used. You have been treated as an object for someone else's wrong desire. This is not how it is supposed to be! This is wrong! This is sin! This isn't just the way things are supposed to go, like some sort of evolutionary biology the strong prey on the weak thing. This is injustice and your heart cries out for justice.

Does God hear? Does God see? Yes he does. The rest of the psalm cries out for a justice: *Arise O Lord; O God lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. Why does the wicked renounced God and say in his heart, 'You will not call to account'?* But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it to your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness into account till you find none. The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

I want you to know that there is a justice coming. It may be delayed, but it is coming. God will not let sin go unpunished. There is forgiveness in Christ alone, but that wrath will be dealt out and justice will be meted. You want that. You know you want that. We have to have it. We cannot live in a society where there is no justice. You are angry that people do no pay or get found out. God knows. God hears your cry. He is with you. There is a hope in the last day that all will be set aright and the world will be the way it is supposed to be. As Samwise Gamgee says, "Everything wrong will be undone." You must hope in that day, the day of the Lord, the day of Jesus' return.

That hope should also help you for today. God didn't prevent suffering from happening. We might wish he did. But he didn't. He didn't prevent suffering from happening to his own son, Jesus Christ. His most beloved son was allowed to live and suffer – for a greater glory. God seems to get most delight from redeeming broken things.

I've told the story before about teacups in Japan. I've heard that when they break teacups in Japan, they fix them with pure gold. The pure gold bonds the broken pieces together. Thus the more broken up the teacup is, the more valuable it is when it's fixed. It's filled with more gold.

Tell your story. Don't let it in any more. Name the people in your life who have hurt you sexually. Talk about your stories and your hurts and your heart.

If you start to read the Bible, you might notice that there aren't really any good families in it. There are really messed up people and a lot of the stories you read about their sin deals with their sex lives. It's a little crazy to read all that, who is sleeping with who and whose wife is jealous and how they want him to sleep with someone else and on and on. Think of mighty David, the great king, and his huge problem with Bathsheba, which led him to lust, murder and adultery. Bad stuff. The Bible doesn't seem to pull back from telling the stories of the real people really grappling with grace in their real lives. This includes their sex lives.

That is the only way you will be healed, the only way you will start to be able to forgive and walk in freedom instead of shame. If you continue to lock those away in shame, you will never emerge from those stories in grace and love. Don't let them define you any longer. Be defined by Christ alone.

Let me mention another way of brokenness. There is the brokenness that is out there, that is done to us. There is also brokenness inside of us. In our own hearts. Not only have we been done wrong to, we have done wrong ourselves. So often we think of protecting our girlfriends, but we need to protect them from ourselves. We think of protecting our hearts, but we are manipulating men with our bodies and emotions and controlling them.

We forsake God's design and plan with our same sex attraction and homosexuality. We throw out God's context for sex by longing for it and going for it in dating, casual sex and hook ups. We get right up to the line and then back away, thinking we will be fine as long as we technically don't have sex. We dress up to attract attention. We are angry and lonely and cry out for a bodily attraction and attention.

Last week I went and saw *Where the Wild Things Are*, the movie based on the book by Maurice Sendak. It was strange for sure. I thought they did a masterful job of picturing what was going on inside of Max's life. He's mad at his mom. He isn't getting the attention he wants. He doesn't know what to do with his emotions and feelings. He can be having a great time one second and then be crying the next. He's out of control in anger and fear.

So he goes off to a place of his own imagination where he can be in control, where he can be king of his own kingdom. If he's in charge, he can banish sadness and loneliness, both things he himself doesn't want in there. He can control a whole pack of monsters to do and create the things he wants.

But there's only one problem – he's still there. Because he is there, things start to go wrong. The projects don't quite work out. The sadness is still there. The loneliness isn't gone even when he's in charge. It really doesn't work.

Why not? Because where are the wild things? They aren't out there. They're in his own heart. The wild things reside in his heart. That's where the anger, confusion, fear, sadness and loneliness are.

Matthew 15:19 says, *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.* When you create your own kingdom, you are still there. You may think you will be able to escape in your bed sheets for a few hours. You may think you can control her with what you're doing. You may think you can create a new kingdom with him with, and use your body as a project to keep him interested. But the wild things are in your heart.

The brokenness of sex is there because things have been done to you, and because of you yourself. You are a part of the brokenness. Can you see that?

The Picture of Sex – relationship with God

This is a lot to take in. We see and understand the reason for sex. We can relate to and admit the brokenness of sex. But then we're left in a pretty bad place. Where do we go from here?

There is something maddening about sex. Since it involves all of you, when you are in that place of vulnerability and intimacy, things don't always work out the way you think they should. Why not? Because it's you! You are all there, and all of you is not good. When I show up all of me in a way that is raw, real and vulnerable, it means Julie gets anger, fear, frustration, control, manipulation, hurt and all sorts of other things. I'm not just a happy, awesome person all the time (hard to believe, I know). Neither are you.

Sex brings this out. The wild things are in there. Sex is a place where you get to deal with them. Because sex isn't just about sex. It's about something else.

How can I explain this to you? I have sat on the edge of my bed many many times over the years in complete anger. I have been furious at my wife because she didn't want to and wouldn't have sex with me. Many times she had good and legitimate reasons not to. Sometimes she didn't. Regardless, the anger in my heart was way out of proportion to the "crime."

I would get up and go sleep somewhere else. Then I'd go back, thinking, Why do I have to sleep somewhere else?! This is my bed! So I'd stomp back. She'd be sleeping, which would make me even madder and madder. This process would repeat several times until finally I would be rational enough to think about Jesus.

But here's what I would think: Jesus, you DO NOT know what this is like. You were never married. You did not have a wife at all much less a wife like this one. So you just don't know what this is like. I'm alone on this one to figure it out. I cannot rely on you for any help. Sure, you might be able to talk to me and give me general principles, but you are out of your league on this one. Thanks, anyway, Jesus.

I felt that way for a long, long time, though I couldn't have put words on it.

Then I realized something. Two things actually. The first was the way Jesus talks in the gospels, and especially John, is in very intimate language.

Hear John 17:20-26: *20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

Do you hear Jesus' language here? It's extremely intimate and personal. I would even say, and I don't mean to be weird in any way, that it is sexual language to an extent. It gets at that type of "knowing," which is the biblical idiom for sex. Can you see that without freaking out?

This is because sex isn't the end goal. Sex isn't what it's all about. Sex points to something else. Sex is a huge pointer or picture of our relationship with God, where we can be ultimately vulnerable and safe and known and loved and given to and give.

So Jesus does know what it's like when I sit on the edge of my bed alone and spurned. He knows because he was spurned by God on the cross. He experienced rejection to a far greater degree than I did. When Jesus was on the cross, God turned his back on him and the relationship they had, the intimacy he had. Jesus cried out, *My God, My God why have you forsaken me?* This is the cry of the wounded, rejected lover. Forsaken. Turned out. Rejected.

He experienced the ultimate rejection of someone who had loved him and known him in a way that my sexual expression with Julie only hints at. So he can speak to me and know me in that way. That is a huge deal. Jesus does know. He can relate. Not only that, but because he did experience the ultimate rejection, I can then turn to my life in love. He took my pain. He took my grief. He bore my sorrow. So I can be freed to love. Not out of neediness and a grasping at things to make me a man or make me whole or make me significant. But out of a giving of myself and a joy in meeting her needs and loving her. That is totally different.

Jesus also experiences this in regards to the church. The Bible says that the church is Christ's bride. In Ephesians 5:21-33, there is a whole discussion about marriage between men and women. Paul talks about the roles and the duties and the love of wives and husbands for each other. In the midst of that, Paul says this, *Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.* Paul quotes Genesis two about marriage and sexual

intimacy. Then Paul says something else: *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* Badow! Paul! What are you talking about?

He goes from marriage and sex in marriage to the church. When we are talking about marriage, we are talking about Jesus' love for the church.

This means that Jesus also knows what it's like to be spurned from the other point of view. He loves his people, his bride, the church. But his church has played the harlot. She has been a whore. She has been unfaithful. She flirts with other lovers at the party. She gets her fill with other lovers, sometimes even in the same bed and bedroom. She takes in other lovers despite the love of her bridegroom.

This is all sexual language, and language that God himself uses over and over in the Bible. It's because this imagery has the power to connect with our souls at the deepest level. Because sex itself and marriage too is a sign of something greater, a pointer and a picture to something else. It's relationship with God.

God desires to enter into your deepest place and deposit a part of himself there. He has made you that way. You have an ache that will not be filled by anything else. Do you understand this? Do you realize this?

Are you still trying to date God? Are you still saying to him that you want intimacy with him without commitment? Are you offering him just parts of yourself but not the whole thing? Have you vowed to be his and he yours?

If so, are you faithful to him? Are you participating faithfully and honestly in renewing the covenant with him? Do you talk to him and spend time with him? Are you flirting with other gods out there? Maybe status or grades or being good or the right look or right friends or right house or right whatever?

Come back to him. He wants you. He wants to love you and know you.

All of us fail this and fail him. We all wander. We are prone to wander, Lord we feel it, prone to leave the God we love. Admit it. You have failed God not only in the specific area of sex itself, but also in the very thing sex points to.

But here's the good news. God saves sinners. He chases after the lost and the wandering. In fact, if you read through the Bible you will notice that all of these broken sexually people have a deep heart for God that changes them. If you read the gospels, you see that Jesus himself seems to especially love the sexually broken people. The woman at the well. Several prostitutes. They all are loved by Jesus, and they seem to flock to him.

In fact, the people that don't like Jesus are the proud, the arrogant and the legalistic. The people who cannot see their brokenness, who think they are good enough to be loved by God and don't understand the reality of their own hearts.

It's very easy to hear all of this stuff and start to think you have to get your life cleaned up and your thoughts all right in order to first of all walk with God and then that's the only way you're going to get a good wife or husband and be happy.

Some of you think your prospects are now ruined. You have looked at porn. You've had sex. You've had oral sex. So now you have to marry someone of equal "messed-up-ed-ness." Like we're going to match up all those who have sex with each other and all those who've looked at porn together and you don't think anyone would ever have you.

Stop. Don't think that way. God has someone for you. What you need to do is be a person who repents of his or her sins and understands *grace*. This is what changes a person. Not having sex before marriage is not the ultimate goal. That actually will not make you happy or a better person if it keeps you away from Jesus. I have seen time and time again in premarital counseling that the person who comes from a divorced and broken home and who admits sexual brokenness understands the gospel better than the person from a good family who a virgin. The goal is to walk intimately with Jesus. To know and be known by him.

That is what we're talking about. We're talking about our hearts and about intimacy with God. Sex is only pointing to that. Get the real thing. Are you thirsty for grace and for knowing God? He is offering this type of love for you, in grace through faith. Not of yourselves. Not by works. But by grace alone so that no one, no one, no one can boast.