

Solomon on Sex - Culture, Sex and God

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Good morning Faith family. If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. Today we finally get to rock 'n' roll on our new series called *Solomon on Sex*. This will be fun. It will be very fun. I expect this series will take at least three months, but I haven't decided how long it will go. We will see how this unfolds.

This morning, I want to give you some background on our culture and sex. I also want to give you an overview of the Bible and sex. Next week we will get to the Song of Solomon. At the end of the message, Cindy and I will answer a few of the questions you submitted through the solomononsex.com website. There is a lot to cover so let us dive in.

How should I think about sex?

There are three ways people have viewed sex both inside and outside the church.

1. **Sex is God** - Sex is worshipped. You put your money into it. You put your time into it. You put your energy into it. Your identity comes from it, and your whole life is about sex.
2. **Sex is Gross** - This is the ultra-fundamentalistic church youth group view of sex. It is dirty, nasty, wrong. It is an overreaction to the world.
3. **Sex is a Gift** - This is realizing sex is a gift God gives us to treasure, to cherish, to steward, to enjoy and within marriage, to share.

Sex is god.

Worship of sex is nothing new. In the Old Testament, the Jewish nation was an island in a sea of cultures that treated sex like religion. For example, the Canaanites had gross stuff going on with their gods and goddesses. Archaeologists tell us most of them were pictured naked. Worship in their temples involved people getting together for illicit sex. That is how they did church. They had prostitutes in the temple to help you worship. The Old Testament world was not much different from our own and in some ways it was far worse than our own. Fast forward to the New Testament.

The Greek culture was dominant in the first century and it heavily influenced the Roman Empire. It was extremely perverted. For example, it was acceptable for older men to be with young boys in inappropriate ways. It was just acceptable in that culture. Today, we call that pedophilia, and we lock people up who do that.

In addition, many of the temples in Greek and Roman society had sex as part of their worship. For example, the city of Corinth had the temple of Aphrodite. It housed a thousand temple prostitutes that aided the worshipping the crowd. This explains why in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he had to teach them the basics of God honoring sexuality. They were just too messed up to figure out what was right and wrong sexually. Paul had to tell them they could not have sex outside of marriage. They could not have sex with their father's wife. That is obvious to us but Corinth was so perverted that people lost track of what was right.

Fast forward to our day, and we discover not much has changed. A professor at the University of Virginia sociology department compiled these interesting statistics. The average individual has their first sexual experience at age 16. One-third of all children are aborted. Of the children born, one-third are born to unwed mothers. Pornography is a \$60 billion a year business. Twelve billion of that is spent by Americans. That is more money than is spent on pro-baseball, basketball and football combined. More money is spent by Americans on porn than the revenues of ABC, NBC and CBS combined. Americans spend more money on porn each year than our country gives in foreign aide.

A new porn film comes out every hour. Porn sites are 12 percent of all Internet sites. Porn is 24 percent of all search engine requests. 20 percent of men admit to viewing porn at work and 13 percent of women. Three thousand dollars is spent on porn in America every second. Twenty-eight thousand Internet users are viewing porn every second in America.

Who is the No. 1 consumer of porn? Boys ages 12 to 17. Some of you are concerned we are talking about God's view on love, sex and marriage in a church service. You think it might is inappropriate for children. News flash! Statistically, your children already know much more about the opposite sex than you think. Just this past week I counseled a parent who caught their 10 year old looking at Internet porn.

Ten percent of Americans admit to being addicted to porn. Of that 10 percent, 28 percent are women. Porn addiction is not just a guys' problem. Seventy percent of men ages 18 to 34 visit a porn site at least once a month.

All this to say we live in a very defiled, grotesque, and confused culture where sex is a religion. It is what people live for and what controls them. It is where they put their money and their time. Paul said in his day some people had their stomach as god because they loved to eat. Many still worship their stomach, but many more have moved their worship a little farther south.

Since sex is worshipped in our culture, many inside and outside of the church have overreacted against it. They say sex is gross.

Sex is gross.

When the New Testament was written, there was a group of philosophers called the Stoics. They had a negative influence on the early church fathers. The stoics based their philosophy on Plato. Plato was a dualist. Dualism claims we are composed of two parts. A body and a spirit. The body is bad. The spirit is good. The goal is to die, leave the body behind and live a spiritual life. This is unbiblical. Unfortunately, the stoics had a powerful influence on many in the early church. Many early Christians followed the stoic thinking of their day. They thought their body was bad, pleasure was bad, sex was bad and intimacy was bad. That is unbiblical, but many of our church fathers believed it.

This was an overreaction to the sex-crazed culture of their day. Let me give you some examples. Tertullian and Ambrose, two church fathers, said, "They preferred the extinction of the human race to continued marital intercourse." Origen, said the Song of Solomon, the book we are about to study, was purely symbolic and he castrated himself. He read the part where Jesus says that if a part of your body, like your hand, causes you to stumble, cut it off.

He took Jesus' metaphor literally. Chrysostom, another early church father, taught "Adam and Eve didn't have sexual relations until after the fall." Jerome, when he was sexually tempted, would throw himself onto sticker bushes. When he saw a cute girl, he jumped on thorns. Apparently, that solved the problem, though I would not recommend it. Gregory of Nyssa claimed Adam and Eve had no sexual desire prior to the fall. He taught that Eve was originally designed to become pregnant by eating of a special tree in the Garden of Eden. You don't find that in the Bible. These overreactions are funny and sad at the same time. They were overreacting to the sex-crazed culture around them and teaching things that weren't in the Bible.

You come to the Middle Ages and priests are forbidden to marry in the Catholic Church. By the fifth century, celibacy was considered the best life and if you did get married, you were not to have sex for any other reason than having children.

The Catholic Church then began writing manuals telling people what they could and could not do in their bedroom and what days they were allowed to be intimate. By the time they were done, only 44 days of the year were left open. If you came back from a business trip, it was possible you had to wait more than 40 days to be intimate with your wife. That was a serious bummer for the newlyweds.

They considered sex bad. They considered marital pleasure evil. The body was considered evil. The less fun couples had together, the better.

That leads us to the Victorian age where modesty got out of control. Women wore long gowns that went to the floor because it was thought that if a man saw a woman's ankle, he would lust uncontrollably. Then they noticed the table legs were smooth, sleek and round. They thought a man would lust after them. That is when floor length table clothes were introduced. I know this sounds far fetched, but it is true. These were the concerns in the Victorian era. (By the way, if you are a man who finds table legs something you lust over, please get help. I mean you can leave the sermon now and get help. That is an urgent matter.)

This leads us to the present day when a lot of Christians still view sex as evil. They don't come out and say sex is evil, often times it is much more subtle. You know they think sex is a bad thing because all you hear Christians talk about is what they are against. Fornication is bad. Adultery is bad. Porn is bad. That is what you always hear Christians say. While all that is true, they forget to talk about what is good about sex. They forget to say sex was God's idea. It is a great idea. God created a place, a time and a person when it is to be enjoyed - that is called marriage. In fact, he commands us to practice an active and passionate sex life in marriage. According to 1 Corinthians 7, to not be sexually satisfying your spouse is sin. Not many of us expected the Holy Spirit to convict us that the lack of sexual love we express towards our spouse in an area of sin in our lives, but it is true. Don't believe me? Turn to 1 Corinthians 7. It is written in plain English.

Some Christian women think sex is gross. Maybe you were abused. Let me be sensitive to you on this point. If you were molested as a child or raped as an adult, if you had a negative sexual experience similar to that, you were sinned against. Those experiences are powerful and hurtful. You will have a tendency to see all sexuality as gross because your experience of it was gross. Your *experience* of sex might have been gross, but that doesn't mean sex *is* gross. It means your experience of it was hurtful. If that is you today, you need to allow God to renew your mind and let God's Word teach you how to think about sex biblically and to think about your sexuality in a way that honors God.

Some guys think about sex negatively because it controls them and drives them to do things they don't want to do. They are sex addicts. Guys, in this series, learn to think about sex biblically and positively. If sex isn't a god and sex isn't gross, how should we think about it?

Sex is a gift.

Our sexuality is a gift given us from God. Like any other gift it is to be saved for the right time, the right place and the right person to be unwrapped. That time, place and person come about in marriage.

Since sex is a gift, some of you will want to get on Amazon and find all the books you can on sex and techniques on how you can enjoy it. Let me speak with you frankly. The world has a way of taking marital sexuality and twisting it. The world's sex books are often twisted. Their focus is on how to satisfy yourself. According to the Bible, your sexuality is given to you to serve your

spouse. The world's understanding of sex is self-centered. The Bible's understanding of sex is serving-your-spouse-centered.

If you are thirsty this morning for more information on sexuality, you can go to Amazon to get your books and they will satisfy you. The problem is that you will be drinking toilet water. If you want clean, pure and fresh water to satisfy your thirst then stick with us for the next three months as we study the Song of Solomon.

Why did God create marriage and sex?

Now I want to give you an overview of sexuality from the Bible and how this gift is to be used. Biblically, we need to understand God gave us marriage and sex in marriage for multiple purposes. It is not just for making babies.

1. **It is for pleasure** - You might think this is rather direct but the Song of Solomon never mentions kids. It talks about the pleasures of marital sexuality. If you are married, enjoy intimacy with your spouse to the glory of God.
2. **It is for children** - Genesis 1:28 tells us to "Be fruitful and multiply." Outside of the immaculate conception, there is only one way to have children. Cindy and I have three kids. We don't have as much money because kids cost money, but I wouldn't trade any of them for all the money in the world. If Cindy did not have an autoimmune disease, our tribe would be bigger. Kids are a blessing.

3. **It is for oneness** - Genesis 2:24 says “the husband and wife will become one.” One flesh, one covenant, one house, one bed, one checkbook and one mind. Marriage and sex fuses people together as one.
4. **It is for comfort** - 2 Samuel 12:24 talks about the time David had a child die. Sometimes there is nothing to say in those situations. You just need the one who loves you to hold you. The text says that at that time he was intimate with his wife, and she conceived. They were together sexually to comfort one another.
5. **It is for protection** - 1 Corinthians 7 says that if you have sexual desires, they are to be met in marriage. If not, you are open to temptation to sin. Paul says in the Corinthian letter that “it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” So if you are burning with passion, focus on getting married, not doing everything you should be doing in marriage outside of it.

So sex is not the god we worship. It is not gross. It is a gift from God to be treasured and enjoyed at the right time and in the right place. Now let's open our Bibles and go to the beginning so we can study the foundation of marriage and sexuality that the Song of Solomon was built upon. Turn to Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,

and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:18–25 (ESV)

Let's make some observations.

1. Notice the woman comes from the man's side. She isn't in front leading him like a feminist. She isn't behind cleaning up after him like a chauvinist would enjoy. She is from his side. This may explain why women are typically slightly shorter and it works for a husband to put his arm around his wife. She fits right back into the place she came from.
2. Notice what the writer of Genesis does with this. He uses the word *therefore*. It is because of how God created men and women that they are to relate to one another in a particular way. First, a man will leave his father and mother. The guy moves out and gets his own place. Second, he holds fast to his wife. That doesn't mean he moves in with her. It means he marries her and commits to her. Third, the two become one flesh. Then they enjoy marital intimacy. They are both naked and they are not what? Ashamed. They know this is good. This is right. There is no shame or guilt in their sex lives. There is joy.
3. We should notice God created Eve, a woman, not another man. God created heterosexual marriage, not homosexual marriage. You wonder what is wrong with homosexual marriage, here you have it. God says Adam and Eve, not Adam and another man.
4. We should also notice there is only one place to be sexually active, that is in the context of marriage. Before marriage we call that fornication, outside of marriage we call that adultery. In marriage, we call that bringing glory to God.

5. We need to notice that Eve was Adam's standard of beauty. We watch "The Bachelor" and a guy gets a house full of sex-crazed women chasing him. He gets to choose which one excites him the most. That is not the way God worked it. I don't know what Eve looked like, but compared to the Tiger shark and the lizard, she looked amazing. God said to Adam that his wife was to be his standard of beauty.

As a culture, we follow "The Bachelor" television show method. Young people date, break up, date, break up, connect emotionally and physically, then tear apart. That is not God's plan. God plans for your spouse to be your standard of beauty and to save yourself for your spouse. God's plan is not to have 27 different women all competing for a man sexually.

This means if you married a tall woman, your standard of beauty is a tall woman. If you married a short woman, guys, your standard of beauty is a short women. If you married a plus-size woman, your standard of beauty is a plus size. If you married a skinny woman, your standard of beauty is skinny. If your wife looked one way at age 25 when you married her, she will not look the same at age 75. What she looks like at age 75 is your new standard of beauty, not what she looked like at age 25. Lust is comparing your spouse to another or desiring your spouse to look like a different spouse. What does the Bible say?

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. Job 31:1 (NIV84)

That is the introduction. Next week, we get into the book. As I wind this up, I want to invite Cindy to come forward so we can answer a few of your questions. Some of you wonder why she is doing this part with me.

I have known this woman for almost 20 years, and she is really smart. She is especially good with questions that come from women. I am a man. As a guy, there is only so much I understand about ladies so I want her to help with the questions. I feel we will do this better together than alone.

The outline and some of the data for this message were taken from a sermon delivered by Mark Driscoll on the same text. The sermon can be found in an ebook. (Driscoll, M. (2009). Mark Driscoll Sermon Archive 2005-2009. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.) Mark has reformatted this material and expanded upon it in a recent book, (Driscoll, M., & Driscoll, G. (2012). Real marriage: The truth about sex, friendship & life together. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)



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