



Biblical Ethics

Sexual Ethics
Part 1: Sex & Marriage

February 11, 2024
Adult Sunday School
Lewis Lake Covenant Church

Case Study:

It's 1843. John and Sally are the sole survivors of a shipwreck in the South Pacific and find themselves washed up on an uninhabited but habitable island. Sally is 16. Her parents drowned in the shipwreck. John is 21, and engaged to be married the following summer to a young lady in New York. Unsurprisingly, after a couple weeks they begin to experience romantic feelings for each other. They also begin to realize they may be stranded indefinitely, perhaps for years.

They remember Paul's words, "if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Cor 7:9).

With no guarantee of returning to civilization anytime soon, and passions starting to bubble over, what should they do?

Sexuality

Introduction: The moral revolution regarding human sexuality.

Creational Realities Surrounding Sex.

1. Man is sexed - male/female
2. Man is sexual - by design
3. Sex is powerfully creative
 - A. Creates feelings - chemical/spiritual
 - B. Creates relationships - 'one flesh,' marriage
 - C. Creates people - children
4. Sexuality has a moral structure to it.
 - A. Number of participants: 2
 - B. Nature of participants: one male, one female
 - C. Setting for participants: within the covenant of marriage: binding oneself to the blessings of sexual, emotional faithfulness for a lifetime, and putting oneself under a curse for violating the same.
5. Sexuality properly construed is very good. (Song of Solomon)

Fallen-World Realities Surrounding Sex.

1. Sin touches everything

2. The more powerful a thing touched by sin, the more devastating it can be.
 - A. Anger
 - B. Sexuality
3. Deviation from the sexual norm happens
4. Deviation from the sexual norm is a violation of God's moral standards for humanity
5. Deviation from the sexual norm is harmful
 - A. To the participants
 1. Relationships
 2. Bodies
 3. Soul/ "Mental health"
 - B. To the participants' community (family, village)
6. Examples in Genesis
 - A. Polygamy (Gen 4:19; 26:34-35; 29:21-30)
 - B. Whatever was happening in Genesis 6:1-4
 - C. Whatever happened in Noah's tent (9:22-23)
 - D. Concubinage (16:1-4)
 - E. Homosexuality (19:5)
 - F. Incest (19:33)
 - G. 'Surrogacy' (30:3-4)
 - H. Rape (34:2)
 - I. Prostitution (38:12-18)

7. Other biblical examples
 - A. Fornication (Num 25:6-8)
 - B. Adultery (2 Sam 11:2-4)
 - C. Bestiality (Lev 18:23)

Marital Realities Surrounding Marriage.

1. If sex outside of marriage is ethically transgressive, this begs certain questions, such as: what is marriage, how is a real one created, and who can enter into it?
2. Marriage is created and therefore defined by God
3. Marriage is discovered and therefore recognized by man
 - A. Marriage is a ‘cultural universal.’ That is, every human society recognizes marriage.
 note: This is unsurprising: neither men nor women like sharing their sexual partner with other people. So, it’s natural that under natural circumstances a man and a woman would want to signal to each other and their community their exclusive commitment.
 Some ‘unnatural’ circumstances:
 1. Dearth of men due to war (Isa. 3:25-4:1)
 2. Men in unique positions of power (1 Kings 11:3)
 3. Men who consider women to be inferior and treat them as possessions, not companions (Esther 1:10-11)
 4. Men and women who abandon the notion of procreative marriage and pursue unnatural

sexuality (Rom 1:26-27)

4. Marriage is a mystical, spiritual, but very real union
 - A. How is it created?
 1. Presentation of a willing woman (Gen 1:22; 24:8)
 2. Acceptance of a loving man willing to forsake his family for her (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:25)
 3. Entering into a covenant before God & community (Mal 2:14-15)
 - a. Male/female
 - b. Exclusive
 - c. Permanent

“For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.”
 - B. This union is created by God and affirmed by the community. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt 19:6)
 - C. Marriage is to be celebrated, protected, and honored
5. Marriage belongs to all humanity
 - A. Unbelievers can be truly married in God’s sight
 - B. The state has a duty to recognize the reality of marriage

- C. It is good for the church to be involved in the creation and regulation of Christian marriage, but Christians should never think marriage only belongs to them.
6. The reason for marriage
- A. The right kind of companionship (Gen 2:18)
An opposite-sex companionship and cooperation without which neither will ever be complete.
 - B. The right place for procreation (Gen 1:28)
 - C. The *only* ethical (and safe) place for sexual enjoyment (Prov 5:18-20; 1 Thess 4:3-7)
God didn't have to make sex enjoyable - but he's just really good like that.

Fallen-World Realities Surrounding Marriage

- 1. Widespread acceptance of fornication - who needs marriage?
 - A. Logic: "You and me, baby, ain't nothin' but mammals So let's do it like they do on the Discovery Channel"
 - 1. Prohibitions against fornication are based on religious dogma, not 'real world' realities
 - 2. Sex is a purely physical, non-spiritual, therefore non-moral act.
 - 3. Major (only?) moral consideration: consent
Note: currently, the only thing protecting against consensual pedophilia is the notion of 'age of

consent.’ However, this ‘age’ has no firm intellectual footing and is being eroded by abortion and transgender activists.

4. Historically, certain cultural realities helped control fornication:
 - a. Public shame for committing a significant moral transgression (*The Scarlet Letter*)
 - b. Bringing shame on one’s family name
 - c. The nigh-inevitable consequence of pregnancy and public pressure to have that child grow up within the context of marriage. (*Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*)

B. Consequences

1. A chemical and spiritual connection/commitment is made (oxytocin for women, vasopressin for men) outside of any relational, social, and spiritual pressure to honor and maintain that commitment. *“Even if you think you are having a no-strings-attached hookup, you are in reality creating a chemical bond - whether you mean it or not.”* (*Nancy Pearcey, Love Thy Body 127*)

Breaking this biological “commitment” creates an emotional distancing to deal with the pain.

“The hookup culture is unraveling the social fabric. It produces isolated, alienated adults who come together temporarily for physiological release... Many people fail to learn how to form the strong, resilient bonds needed to create happy, fulfilling, long-term marriages and families.” (Love Thy Body 128)

2. Marriage loses its significance.

It is no longer the creation of something new. Instead, it is a symbol of some kind of ‘deeper commitment’ of what already exists.

 - a. Pay attention to wedding ‘vows’ recited in television programs – covenant language is gone
 - b. If going into marriage is of little significance, walking out of it will be also.
3. Women give men ‘what they want’ with no commitment to receive ‘what they need.’
4. Proliferation of single parents (usually women)
5. Children born into single-parent households

“Research shows that children who grow up in two-parent homes, on average, have the following benefits over children who are raised by single parents:

More secure financially.

Do better in school and are less likely to drop out.

Less prone to experience anxiety and depression.

Less likely to take drugs or become addicted to alcohol.

Less likely to experience sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Less likely to commit crimes and be in the juvenile justice system.

Less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior thus avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

Unfortunately, fewer children have these advantages in today's world. In the United States, about 41% of all children are born to single mothers. In the 1960s, the out-of-wedlock birth rate was about 5%.” (www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/1/25/22239283/two-parent-household-privilege-children-research-strong-homes)

“From 2000 to 2012, the share of 15-year-olds living in single-parent families increased from 18 to 21 percent in the United States... At the same time, the achievement gap between children from single-family and two-parent families in the United States is among the largest, at 27 points, comparable to one year's worth of learning. Disadvantages of growing up in single-parent families in the U.S. include lower educational attainment, greater psychological distress, and poor adult outcomes in areas such as employment, income, and marital status.” (<https://www.ajc.com/blog/get-schooled/students-from-two-parent-families-achieve-grade-level-higher-than-children-single-parents/OR3uPiQPk22bDgN6FGqbBJ/>)

6. Weakening the family (fundamental building block of society) weakens all of society.

note: This is why the state has a legitimate interest in encouraging, preserving, protecting, and regulating marriage.

2. Sinful people struggle to do marriage.
 - A. Men fail to love their wives
 1. Rather than protect, they dominate (Gen 3:16, 5:23), sometimes violently.
 2. Rather than nurture & cherish, they demand, sometimes cruelly.
 - B. Women fail to respect their husbands
 1. Rather than build up, they tear down (Job 2:9)
 2. Rather than trust, they manipulate (Gen 16:2; Matt 14:3-11)
3. Marriage covenants get broken
 - A. God instituted divorce laws (Deut 24:1-4) “Because of your hardness of heart... but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt 19:8).
 - B. If a marriage is ultimately created by God, only he can effectively ‘uncreate’ it.
 - C. If one spouse acts like marriage has been ‘uncreated’ and it hasn’t, he commits a sexual transgression (Matt 19:9)
 - D. How can we know a marriage has been truly ‘uncreated’?
 1. Death (Rom 7:2)
 2. Sexual immorality (Matt 19:9)
 3. Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:15)
 - E. What about separation? (1 Cor 7:10-11)

...a man shall leave
his father and his
mother and hold
fast to his wife, and
they shall become
one flesh.

- Genesis 3:24

