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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

February 19, 2023

Shame Free Sex Week #1

Sex And Shame / Pastor Paul Taylor and Farrah Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Share a memorable story about a date you've been on.
2. Our Shame Free Sex series is about going back to what God says and discovering His beautiful, intimate purpose for sex. We understand that the topic of sex can be a difficult and awkward one to discuss even with your spouse, let alone a small group. We're also aware that for some, talking about sex stirs up feelings of shame.

Community Groups are designed to be a **safe place** where you can share what you're comfortable revealing. Additionally, what you share with your group should be kept in confidence with one another. Know that as we discuss this sermon series, you shouldn't feel pressure to share something you don't want to. But we also want our groups to be a place where difficult conversations can be had and where group members listen well, support, and encourage one another.

If you're willing, share your answers to the following questions:

- What are you looking forward to with our Shame Free Sex series?
- What are you nervous/anxious about with our Shame Free Sex series?

"73% of couples simply weren't comfortable talking together about the most intimate part of their relationship. Just 27% of couples reported that they could talk about sex without awkwardness or difficulty." - Marriage Intimacy Project

3. Read Genesis 2:18,21-15 together and the following quote from author Brené Brown. Then discuss the corresponding questions.

Genesis 2:18,21-25 (NIV) - ¹⁸The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him..." ²¹So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

"When two people can reveal themselves to the other without shame or fear of judgment, when each feels he or she is fully known and understood by the other, that is intimacy. It is not achieved by rubbing naked bodies together no matter how long or how hard we might rub. Intimacy is the ideal of two people seeing behind the facade and accepting the other person they see without disappointment, maybe even loving the other one because of who they really are rather than in spite of. I see the real you and I love you and it." - Brené Brown

- a) Do you believe there's a difference between intimacy and sex? If so, how would you explain this difference? How might intimacy and sex be related?

- b) Genesis 2 gives us with a picture of Adam and Eve in shame free relationships with one another and with God. Read Genesis 3:6-10. After Adam and Eve sin, what do they do? How does this impact their relational intimacy?

Genesis 3:6-10 (NIV) - ⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some

and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

DIVING DEEPER

4. Pastor Paul and Farrah spoke about the difference between shame and guilt. Read about those distinctions before diving into the next set of questions together.

Guilt is holding something we've done or failed to do up against our values and feeling psychological discomfort. It can be adaptive and helpful. Conviction, which is from the Holy Spirit, reveals our guilt before God so that we can face it, receive grace and forgiveness from God, and move on shame free.

John 16:8 (NLT) - And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

Romans 8:1-2 (NIV) - ¹So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. It comes from things we've experienced, done, failed to do, or something done to us. Shame is the language of Satan as he doesn't want us to connect to God or connect with another in shame free sex.

Revelation 12:10 (NLT) - Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, "It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night.

- a) If you're comfortable sharing, how and when have you experienced guilt and/or shame when it comes to the area of sex?

As our church continues to study and talk about sex, we've curated a significant number of resources. These can be found at <https://riverscrossing.com/shamefree/>.

- b) How can we discern whether something we're feeling is shame (and so not from God) or actually guilt (and so conviction from the Spirit of God)?

5. Pastor Paul and Farrah shared four ways that people tend to view sex:

- Sex is deified (i.e., worshipped)
- Sex is my duty
- Sex is dirty and disgusting
- Sex is our delight

- a) Which of these perspectives resonates most closely with your current view of and/or experience with sex? If you're willing, explain why.

- b) Read Ephesians 5:21-33 together. What stands out to you from this Biblical passage on marriage? How might “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” be applicable to experiencing shame free sex?

Ephesians 5:21-33 (NLT) – ²¹And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. ²⁴As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. ²⁵For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. ²⁷He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. ³⁰And we are members of his body. ³¹As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” ³²This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ³³So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- c) In her book *The Great Sex Rescue*, Sheila Wray Gregoire outlines seven things God designed sex to be in order for it to be experienced with delight by both a husband and wife:

- 1. Sex is designed to be personal** | It is a chance to enter into each other’s very being to truly become one; it is a knowing of each other that leads to deep intimacy.
- 2. Sex is designed to be pleasurable** | Sex was designed to feel good—really good—for both people.
- 3. Sex is designed to be pure.** | Both partners can expect the other to take responsibility to keep themselves free of sexual sin.
- 4. Sex is designed to be prioritized.** | Both partners in the relationship desire sex, even if at different levels, and both partners understand that sex is a vital part of a healthy marriage.
- 5. Sex is designed to be pressure-free.** | Sex is a gift freely given; it’s not about getting what you want through manipulation, coercion, or threat.
- 6. Sex is designed to put the other first.** | Sex is about considering your spouse’s wants and needs before you consider your own.
- 7. Sex is designed to be passionate.** | Sex was designed to allow us to enter into a state of joyful abandon, to completely surrender ourselves

Which of these stand out as an area you’d like to grow in when it comes to experiencing shame free sex (if you’re married) or preparing yourself for shame free sex (if you’re single or engaged)?

TAKING IT HOME

6. Based on this week’s sermon and your group discussion, is there a conversation you want to or should have with any of the following – your spouse, yourself, or God? If so, schedule that conversation and commit to having it!

If it helps to facilitate conversations, know that Rivers Crossing has developed a set of Conversation Starters for our Shame Free Sex series. You can find those online by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/shamefree/>.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary | Join us for a night of worship and prophetic ministry on Sunday, March 19th at 6pm at our Mason campus. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary is an incredible way to experience God's power firsthand in a tangible way through extended worship, ministry time, and corporate prayer. Come expectantly and join us as we seek the extraordinary life together.
2. Baby Dedication | Have you welcomed a new baby to your family over the last year? If so, we're excited to celebrate your child at Baby Dedication on March 25th. The Baby Dedication experience will teach you how to lead your child in their faith, show you ways that Rivers Crossing will partner with you on this journey, and give you the opportunity to dedicate your child. Learn more and register using the link below! <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1544572>
3. 2023 Global Trips | Have you ever wanted to serve on a Global trip to help our international church partners? From Ghana to Guatemala, this year might be the best time for you to get involved with what God is doing beyond our borders through Rivers Crossing! Find out more information by clicking the link below! <https://riverscrossing.com/global/>
4. 2023 RC Students Summer Camp | Next summer (June 19-24, 2023), RC Students is going to Eagle Sky of the Ozarks for camp! We truly believe that Summer Camp is one of the best ways for your Junior High or High School student to get connected in RC Students. They'll build lasting bonds with other students and their leaders that will continue throughout the year. Most importantly, your student will have a week to focus on connecting with Jesus in a new way. Learn more and register below: <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1450605>