

Sex: The Marriage Glue

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Date: 19 September 2004

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 19th of September 2004. The preacher is Tim Patrick.

His sermon is entitled Sex, Marriage Glue, and is based on 1 Corinthians 7, verses 1-7.

Thank you, Lord God, that you give us your word. Help us to hear it and live by it.

Amen. Well, you don't need me to tell you that in our society and our culture, sex is everywhere.

It's more and more acceptable to the mainstream of Australian life. You go to the supermarket, magazine covers are draped with sex.

[1 : 0 1] Sitcoms on telly, all about who's sleeping with who, or the nature of a person's sexuality. If you ever listen to the radio, commercial radio stations, the endless, endless sexual gags.

There are sex shops on most shopping streets in Melbourne now. Most schoolyard conversations probably have a large slice of sex in them, and probably these days lots of dinner table conversations too.

And that's just part of a long list. You could go on forever. And it's not even just those parts of society that are actually addressing sex or focused on sex, but sex has kind of crept into everything else as well, hasn't it?

Everything seems to be associated with sex as a standard subtext, even if it doesn't kind of automatically connect. I've seen a couple of billboards lately, one for a pair of shoes, one for a brand of coffee, that showed far more flesh than I wanted to see.

You've seen the TV ads for things like photocopy paper and furniture that are disgusting. You go to the movies, not to see a movie about sex, but to see an action film or a horror film or something, there'll be a sex scene in it somewhere.

[2 : 1 9] If you watch video hits on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning, some of those film clips are nearly pornographic. It's pornographic, 10 o'clock Saturday on your TV in your lounge room. Even the things we wear, the clothes we dress in, a lot of it is to promote our sexual appeal.

Sex is everywhere in our culture. It really dominates the horizon. It's unavoidable. And the sad thing is, what's also unavoidable is that because it's all around us, it seeps into our lives.

That thinking, that perspective on sex, gets into us. And what does our cultural obsession with sex teach us? What is it that seeps in? What do we learn?

Well, there's a line from a film, I don't know the film because I didn't see it, I only saw the trailer in another film. There's a line where a guy said, Sex is like pizza.

Even when it's bad, it's still pretty good. George Michael had a song, 10 years ago or something. Sex is natural. Sex is good.

[3 : 2 2] Not everybody does it, but everybody should. This is the lesson of our culture. This is worldly wisdom about sex, right? Sex is the ultimate good. And sex is nearly always good.

And sex is a great thing to shape our lives around, to aim for, to get, to live for. Well, if we only had the world to read, if we only had our culture to inform our minds, we might end up thinking a lot of that stuff.

But as Christian believers, and as followers of Jesus, we hear what our culture is saying, but we actually have another resource. We actually have the mind of God available to us on sex, along with a lot of other topics, because you find, like we've read tonight, that the Bible is not ashamed to talk about sex.

God's not too embarrassed to talk about sex, and there's lots of it about it in the Bible, actually. Lots of bad stories about sex going wrong, but there's some good teaching and tales about how sex should be.

Well, tonight we've heard, read to us, one of the New Testament passages that talks about sex. And we're going to have a look at that a bit more closely, but I want to pre-empt some of what we're going to find in it for ourselves.

[4 : 40] And I think there are two important lessons from this passage. And two big things it says are this. It says, first of all, have sex. The second thing it says is, don't have sex.

They're the two teachings, I think, that we need to take home for ourselves from this passage. Have sex, don't have sex. How do we come to that? Well, let's have a look together at the Bible and see if we can make sense of it.

Please open up to page 929, if you're not there already, and look with me with you at these verses. This is once again in Paul's letter from the Corinthians.

We've heard a few things from Corinthians this year. It's been great to work through different parts of that letter. And in this section of the letter, Paul is actually writing in response to something the Corinthians have written to him.

So, you see there it says, concerning the matters about which you wrote, the Corinthians have written a letter, Paul's getting back to them. They seem to have suggested to Paul that it's not good for there to be sexual contact between men and women.

[5 : 46] See, it says there, it is well for a man not to touch a woman. That's talking about sexual relationships. It's good for that not to happen. It seems what was going on in Corinth, where these guys wrote this letter, was that some of the Christians had started thinking sex was a bad thing.

Maybe in reaction to their culture. The Greek culture of this day was very liberal with its promotion and practice of sex.

For them, like for us, sex was pretty much everywhere. It was one of life's great pleasures in all its expressions. And probably in Corinth, what had happened is some of the Christians who had recently become believers saw this extreme view of kind of sex everywhere, like we get, on the TV, on the billboard.

They had TV back then, I presume. They saw sex all around them and they reacted against it. And it's likely that they reacted by going to the opposite extreme and thinking, no, no, that's what the world says about sex.

That's dirty and immoral. Christians, then, must say no sex ever under any circumstances. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. Well, some people in our culture, I think, some very, very conservative people, I think, still have a similar attitude to this, don't they?

[7 : 08] Sex is kind of dirty. It's not dirty, immoral and contrary to anything spiritual or holy. And it's not appropriate to talk about it, to promote it, or to think about it even.

We see that, I think, very rarely now, but it's still out there. It may even be, though, for the Corinthian Christians who wrote this, there's more to it than this. It may be that the strength of what they're saying is that there shouldn't even be any sex in marriage because sex is always dirty and immoral.

And even in the marital bed, it's less than ideal. It's kind of making a concession to the immoral ways of the world. Well, if that's what they've written to him, it's well for a man not to touch a woman.

And how does Paul respond? Surely, the apostle Paul, the great teacher of the church, is going to agree with him. Surely, his moral standards will be as high as theirs, if not higher.

Surely, he'll say, that's right, there's no place for this dirty, immoral, yucky sex stuff among God's people. Well, what does he say? Let's have a look. Verse 2, Paul says, The word have there probably is about have sexually.

[8 : 27] Like, each man who is married should have sexually his wife and each woman should have sexually her husband. It's not, this verse isn't saying every single guy should get a wife and every single girl should get a husband, but the married people among us should have sex with one another.

This idea is, this understanding is reinforced by the next verse, where you see, it's spelled out in a bit more detail. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise, the wife to her husband.

See, contrary to the belief of the Corinthian Christians, Paul doesn't seem to be saying that Christians should abstain from sex. He, in fact, says, no, Christians should do it. Christians should have sex.

But he's not here, of course, selling out to this permissive sex everywhere, sex in everything, culture that's all around him. No, he's not loose on sexual morals. He's saying that what Christians should do is have full sexual relations in the context of their marriages.

In the context of their marriages. Husbands and wives should have sex together because sex is part of the marriage relationship. Paul is also then saying sex has no place outside the marriage relationship.

[9 : 44] You see, the start of verse 2 gives us the reason why husbands and wives should have sex in marriage. It's, you see there, because of cases of sexual immorality.

What Paul's saying is sex should happen within marriages because if it doesn't happen there, husbands and wives might look for it somewhere else. You see? and sex outside marriage is immoral.

So, sex in marriage is the antidote to sexual immorality. If you have sex in marriage, you're protecting yourself against sexual immorality and the need to look for sex outside marriage.

Perhaps it'll help us to understand Paul's mind on this. If we think about sex as marriage glue, this is not Paul's term, it's mine, but I think it might be useful.

Has anyone here ever built a model aeroplane? You know, it comes with that model aeroplane glue. Now, model aeroplane glue is really bad for sticking paper together because it's quite thin and hard and it warps the paper and it makes the paper crack.

[10 : 53] It's too strong. It's not the right glue. Model aeroplane glue is no good for repairing furniture. It's too weak. You need joinery adhesive to repair furniture or something like that.

But, do you know what model aeroplane glue is really good for? Making model aeroplanes. It's exactly what it's designed for and it works really, really well. And sex is like that with marriages.

Sex is marriage glue. It has no place in a relationship other than marriage because it wasn't designed to work in those relationships. You see, if you use sex outside the marriage relationship, it'll warp or fail.

It will do more damage than good. It will also upset the designer, God, the one who designed humans and their sexuality because that's not how he designed sex to be used.

God gave the gift of marriage glue, sex, not to be used and abused any way we want, but to bond and hold marriages together.

[11 : 57] To bring two people into that tight one flesh relationship. If there's good sex in a marriage, it will be hard for that marriage to fall apart. Like purpose design glue to hold the couple together.

Now, I think this is in line with what Paul's saying about marriage. Paul is promoting that even in a culture full of wrong ideas about sex. Paul doesn't say all sex is banned, sex is a dirty, immoral, improper thing.

Paul says, what's the design purpose for sex? It's designed as a glue for holding marriages together, for bonding couples in wedlock. And in that context, it should be used full and liberally.

In fact, you should have sex in a marriage relationship because sex in marriage protects you from sexual immorality from seeking sex outside marriage. So, if you're a married person, Paul's instruction is this, have sex.

If you're a single person, Paul's instruction is this, don't have sex. Sex, marriage glue, use it in the marriage to hold it together.

[13 : 14] If you're not married, you have no use for it. Now, this is quite plain and straightforward, I think. And it makes sense of the verses that follow if we read thinking this way.

Look at verses 4 and 5 with me, if you will. Verse 4 says, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a set time to devote yourselves to prayer and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Although this all makes sense when you think about the place of sex as something that takes place within a marriage, to bond the husband and the wife together, as something that the husband and wife have rights to share with each other, but not to be used liberally beyond that, we still might have some side issues, some questions that we want to ask that have come out of this way of thinking.

You see, when you read through those verses, you might think, does this then support the idea that within a marriage, Christian partners can demand sex from each other?

I mean, as we read through verse 4, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. The husband doesn't have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Does this mean that if one partner's tired one night and the other partner comes home, that partner can pull out the Bible and say, you have to have sex with me?

[14 : 44] The Bible says so. Well, I think that would be to manipulate the Bible for rather selfish ends. I think there certainly is an issue if one partner is constantly withholding sex from the other, and that might need to be addressed in appropriate and healthy ways.

But, even though there's a sense in which in a marriage the husband and wife do give their bodies to one another for exclusive use, abuse, they don't give it to each other for abuse.

There's no room for manipulation of marriage partners. There's no room for one partner dominating another. In fact, it's really interesting as you read through verses 2, 3 and 4, notice how balanced and equal this whole relationship is.

Verse 2 says a man should have his wife and a wife should have her husband. Verse 3 says the husband gives to his wife and then the wife to her husband. Verse 4, the wife doesn't have authority but the wife does.

You see, it's balanced. There's no room for flexing muscles one over the other here or demanding of each other but it's mutual giving in the context of the marriage relationship. Christian marriages are not about demands and manipulation.

[16 : 03] Christian marriages are about sacrificial love and in two weeks time we're going to think a bit more about marriage and what a sacrificially loving marriage looks like. another thing for us to note well from what's written into this passage part of the whole argument that Paul's presenting to us here is that he knows that Christians are not immune to temptation even married Christians.

Remember this whole discussion is in response to their statement that it is well for a man not to touch a woman and Paul's response all comes off the back of the statement because of cases of sexual immorality.

You see what Paul's teaching here is to counter the real possibility of sexual immorality within a marriage. In verse 5 Paul again writes this he says do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time to devote yourselves to prayer and then to come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self control.

What Paul's saying here isn't married couples should have sex 24 hours a day 7 days a week don't deprive each other only stop for 10 minutes to say grace no Paul's not saying that.

What he's saying is the idea of in verse 5 depriving one another by agreement is something akin to the idea of fasting. Having a set period where the couple decide not to have sex because they want to give that extra time to extra devotion to prayer.

[17 : 45] And Paul says in the case of this I will permit you in your marriage to not have sex for a period. But even in the case of this special prayer vigil or period of fasting, even in that case it can only be by mutual agreement, it's only for a set time and you must come together sexually afterwards.

Why? Because he tells us why. So that Satan might not tempt you. Paul knows that sexual temptation is a real risk for all people.

And the longer married couples abstain from sex in their relationship the more likely they are to look for it elsewhere. So the way to stop sexual immorality again is to keep the marriage sexually vibrant, to keep marriage glue in your marriage if you like.

And if you must stop, here's the one time you can stop for a period of prayer, but even then with conditions. Satan knows where our weaknesses are and this is where he'll go after us.

We need to protect ourselves. Married Christians need to keep their marriages sexually satisfying. The risk is so great, I think that the sense of what Paul's saying here is that he'd actually rather that married couples didn't take these prayer vigils.

[19 : 15] He says in verse 6 that he says it by way of concession, not command. He'll let them have these times off from their sexual relationship, but only to cater for their need to have these special prayer vigils, these times of high purity.

It's not a command for abstinence, even for a short time. It's a concession and perhaps reluctantly made. And for us, I think all of this shows us that Paul is warning his audience not to be naive.

Sexual temptation can happen to you, even if you're married. I know of Christian marriages that have ended in adultery. I've heard of another one in the last few weeks.

I know also of single believers who've had sex outside marriage. That's probably not that uncommon, sadly. It's a sad and real threat to all of us.

So because it's real, we have to be on guard. I want to say that the flip side of this is because it's so real, we need to be compassionate and understanding and not just self-disciplined.

[20 : 29] If you find out, if we find out that someone we know is struggling with sexual temptation, we need to understand that really is a hard thing and to be ready to offer them lots of support and love to help them through that.

If we know someone who actually falls into sexual sin, we've got to be careful not to look down our noses at them and think that they're spiritual weaklings or moral failures.

Because although we can't condone that behaviour, we need to realise how much Satan has been wearing away at those people. and at some level we must be very compassionate towards them.

We can't take the moral high ground because it's only by God's grace, not our own strength, that we haven't failed in similar ways.

A little later in this letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns us against any attitude of moral superiority. He says, so if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.

[21 : 32] 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 12. Well, another thing to keep in mind as we read through this teaching on sex is that despite the fact that this whole section is all about sex, Paul is still quite unlike the culture of his day and of our day.

He doesn't think sex is the meaning of life. You see, this part of the letter is not saying this. It's not Paul saying, hey, sex is really good. Let me explain you what you need to do if you want to get lots and lots of sex.

Just get married and then you can do it all the time. That's not where he's coming from. That's not where he's coming from. You see, sure, Paul wants the Corinthians and us to be sexually pure, and for many people this will mean having a sexually vibrant marriage, but in fact Paul's real preference is singleness.

Look at verses 7 and 8. I wish that all were as I myself am. That is, single. Paul's not married.

But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind. To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am.

[22 : 54] Paul's preference is that single believers would remain single. How can this be? He's just been all this time arguing that people who aren't having marital sex are at risk of sexual immorality, so how can he now say that you should stay single?

Well, what Paul recognises is that for many people it is true that if they're not having sex in their marriage relationship they might be tempted to have sex somewhere else. But what he's also recognising is that God has gifted some people not to struggle with sexual temptation.

Some people have that gift of not struggling with that temptation. And so for these people one of the main reasons for getting married or one of the big reasons for getting married isn't there.

You see marriage is the only appropriate place to express sexual desires but if a person doesn't have those desires that's one less reason to get married. And singleness as we saw is Paul's preference.

Why is singleness Paul's preference? Singleness is Paul's preference because Paul's primary focus in life is Christian mission. And a single person can be more single-mindedly committed to mission than a married person.

[24 : 14] Singleness is a great freedom and blessing in Paul's eyes. There's quite interesting and a different take on singleness than we often hear. And next week we'll be thinking about that a bit more and Paul writes more about this whole idea of being single for Christian mission.

But again tonight his focus is really that for some people sexual temptation is a struggle and therefore a sexually active marriage is appropriate.

In verse 9 he says, If they're not practicing self-control they should marry. It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. Well there are many great unfortunate jokes about that aren't there?

It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. Marriage is the great passion quencher. No, the implication isn't here that you can't have passion in marriage. The implication is that it's dangerous to be aflame with passion outside of a marriage setting.

It's worth bringing out here something about Paul's criteria for Christian marriage isn't it? He says that single people who are aflame with passion have a good reason to get married.

[25 : 28] He doesn't have any notion though that that is anything to do with really fulfilling what we would call romantic dreams. See, for Paul marriage is not about falling in love and being swept off your feet by that perfect guy or girl.

Marriage is about purity. Marriage is about avoiding sexual immorality. That's the primary criterion here for a marriage partner. Someone with whom you can be sexually pure.

See, Paul doesn't say if they meet someone with a great sense of humour, who's interesting and kind, has a great job and a nice family, no emotional hang-ups or odd habits, who's attractive and has a great body, who dresses well, who speaks articulately, who doesn't smoke or gamble, who can cook, who surprises them with spontaneous little gifts, who wants to have kids but not straight away after they do some travelling together first, then they should get married.

No, that's all rubbish. Paul says if they're not practising self-control, they should marry. Now, I don't think Paul has necessarily the goal to be rid of romance, but it's interesting to note that he doesn't want to sell out to a Hollywood picture of romance.

As a picture of Christian marriage, they're different things. Paul is far more interested in purity than romance. And I think that Christian singles who want to get married do well to bear that in mind.

[27 : 01] When you think about the person you want to be married to, what's the criteria? And how do they compare with Paul's criteria? Is it being aflame with passion?

Not practising self-control? That's a good reason to get married in Paul's eyes. But not a romantic Hollywood dream. What we should look for is someone with whom we can be pure.

Someone with whom we can avoid sexual immorality. In God's mercy, the single ones among us might find someone who does both. But it's good to keep those priorities in order.

Sexual purity above romantic ideal. I've seen too many Christians who've gotten married to people who fulfilled their romantic desires but didn't help keep them pure as believers.

And I don't think those marriages were built on particularly godly foundations. Foundations that aim to honour God. Purity honours God and purity is what we're designed for and according to Paul, sexual impurity is avoided by keeping sex in marriage.

[28 : 11] So we've seen positively this means married people should have sex. Negatively, single people shouldn't have sex. If single people want to have sex, then they should get married.

Now before we finish up here, I need to say one more thing. What's laid down for us tonight is a high ideal. A high ideal. Some people would even say this ideal is unachievable.

Some people even within the church say this is unachievable. In The Age, a few weeks ago, Muriel Porter, who's a vocal Anglican layperson, wrote this.

The standard of sex only within formal marriage is unrealistic and impossible. In the complexities of the modern world, the call for sex within marriage only is just an unachievable dream.

That's someone from within the church saying that. Is that true? Is Paul's standard really too high for us? Was it a standard that was suitable for 1st century Corinth but not really suitable for 21st century Australia?

[29 : 24] Well, I don't think it was much easier for 1st century Corinthians to keep pure than it is for 21st century Australians. They were still flesh and blood people.

Just like our society today, their culture surrounded them with loose sexual standards, but Paul still set this high bar for them. And the reason that he's done this is because Paul knows sex was given for the marriage relationship, like that purpose designed glue to bond a marriage together.

Now, that picture might well make sense, but you still might have Muriel Porter's question. Is it realistically achievable? Well, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then it is.

although the pressures of the world might seem impossible for frail human beings to resist, God's strength is enough to overcome them. And through the gift of his Holy Spirit, Christians have God's strength to get them through these challenges.

Again, from this same letter to the Corinthians, Paul says, No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength.

[30 : 43] But with the testing, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13. Isn't it amazing that against the pressures of this sexually corrupt world, that as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has given you the strength to be sexually pure.

God has given you to be pure. We can only agree with Muriel Porter and say that it's an impossible goal if we forget that the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

But the Holy Spirit does work in our lives if we're Christian believers, and we therefore have the strength to be pure in this area of our lives. That's an amazing truth. That's an amazing strength that God gives us.

But do you want to know something that's even more amazing than that? Even more incredible than the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit can keep us pure, is the fact that God is actually able to fully and freely forgive anyone who fails his standards.

Even his high standards of sexual purity. See, it wouldn't surprise me, even a gathering this size tonight, that there were people who had failed to keep sexually pure.

[32 : 05] Now, I'm not saying that with anyone particular in mind. I'm just saying that the number of us here, the fact that sexual temptation is really real, Satan tempts us really in that way, that the lure is strong, that our whole culture works against us in this matter, it wouldn't surprise me if some people have fallen into sexual immorality at some stage.

And if that's you, then reading through and thinking through Paul's words tonight in 1 Corinthians might have made you feel very uncomfortable. You might know that you failed.

You've had sex outside marriage. You've failed to keep God's high standard. Well, let me remind you of the most basic Christian truth. God loves and welcomes sinners.

God loves and welcomes sinners. If you call on God for forgiveness and trust in the saving work of Jesus on the cross, God has wiped your sins away.

They no longer stand in God's record book of your life. If you have your hope and trust in Jesus who died for the sins of the world, you are completely clean and free from God's judgment against all of your sins, including your sexual sins.

[33 : 30] We can learn this again even from Corinthians. Just look back with me on the same page we're reading from chapter 6, verse 9. It's down the bottom of the first column on that page.

Paul writes this. Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Fornicators, that's people who are sexually immoral. Idolaters, adulterers, again people who are sexually immoral, male prostitutes, again sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God and this is what some of you used to be.

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God. If you are a Christian believer, God loves you so much that he's taken away your guilt before him.

And so tonight's call to follow him in purity of life isn't called out in the face of our guilt or fear. It's a call to forgiven people who through the power of the Holy Spirit are now able to live new lives being the people that God made them to be, pure and holy before him.

God's love and forgiveness are even greater than our failings before him. And we must praise him for these amazing mercies. Let's pray. Well, take a moment to stretch if you want.

[35 : 04] But I think sex is such a great topic. I'm open for anyone who'd like to ask any questions. Does anyone feel they'd like to ask a question?

It's okay if you don't. I understand it's kind of awkward, but if you do, you can. Do everyone hear that?

Verse 9 says that if a person's not practicing self-control, they should marry. But the question is then, if they're not practicing sexual purity, they're not practicing self-control outside marriage, how can they practice self-control inside marriage?

How do you know they won't be a faithless partner? Well, what I would say again from what we've looked at tonight, the strength of Paul's argument is that a sexually healthy marriage is the best antidote to that problem.

So if someone's not practicing self-control, they marry and have a sexually satisfying marriage, there'll be less need for them to look elsewhere for it.

[36 : 19] I think that puts actually a high demand on the nature of sex within marriage, in that it really needs to work hard to be satisfying.

Now, that might be different for different couples. I don't want to prescribe what that looks like. But it means that couples have to work hard on making sure the satisfaction is there. I also think, though, there is a real tension there.

And there is, like we've read again, Satan will want to tempt us. Verse 5. Oh, beg your pardon. Verse 6.

Satan wants to tempt us because of our lack of self-control. That's a real threat. So I think what Paul's saying here is one, is his way of countering that. But I think it's also good to be sharp and not to be naive and to know how to struggle.

I don't think there's going to be any water tight guarantee except we need to strive for holiness in prayer and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

[37 : 23] The great news is if we stuff it up, our God's a God of reconciliation. The Holy Spirit keeps us pure.

How do we access the power of the Holy Spirit when we're feeling tempted? That's a great question. I want to say part of the answer is, as a believer, you already have the Spirit within you.

And so, to some level, looking to access the Holy Spirit is looking for something you've already got. I want to say that is there within you.

My pat answer is through prayer, but this is not an answer that I'm going to be able to substantiate for you right now. I mean, we know from Luke's Gospel that God doesn't deny the Holy Spirit to anyone who prays for it, Luke chapter 11.

How that applies here, I'm not sure. But, as a practical piece of advice, this is not something I can bring a text to immediately.

[38 : 39] A practical piece of advice, I might say something like, it's actually really good, even within marriages and for single people, when their sexual temptation is not to be private about it.

That is, I think Christians need strong enough fellowship that these things can be discussed and prayed for and we can keep each other accountable and all that kind of thing. The Holy Spirit works amongst us as a community as well as individuals.

So, I think that's the beginning of an answer. It probably doesn't satisfy you fully. Yep.

The suggestion is that the prayer spoken about in verse 5 might be communing with God in such a way that the Spirit is more immediately powerful for us then.

I think that's possible. I'm not sure that, I've not read the passage saying that that prayer is specifically prayer about sex, but just a prayer time. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[39 : 54] Yeah. Yeah. So, the question is, we've seen that Paul's priority is sexual purity. The question is, how does that balance with other parts of the Bible, such as Song of Songs, where there's a kind of celebration of an overflowing of romantic love?

Like I say, I don't think Paul's denying romantic love, but I think it needs to come in the context of purity. So, my understanding of Song of Songs is that's romantic, fully sexual love in the context of an appropriate relationship.

there's different ways that people understand Song of Songs, and I'm not the expert of how many characters are involved in that sort of thing. Well, if there is such a thing as romance, that Song of Songs seems to say there is, and if Paul says purity is a priority, then romance must be able to exist within purity, within a pure relationship.

I hope that people have romantic weddings. Thanks goodness me. Yes, that's right. The statement is that people seem to be getting married in the church quite young, but that can be a kind of mistake you regret for a long time.

Again, I don't want to say that what Paul is suggesting here is hasty leaping into marriage with the first person you find because you're sexually driven. I don't think this throws wisdom out the window, but still might be...

[41 : 28] I don't think that there's necessarily anything wrong with the early marriage. And in fact, late marriage is probably more a function of the last couple of generations than...

and early marriage is probably more standard. Yeah, I take the point, though. It's balance. Certainly, I don't want to advocate anyone rushing off and getting married with two weeks' notice to someone they've just met because they're feeling hard to control themselves.

It still needs lots of wisdom and maturity and forethought. I might just take one more and then we'll end because we need to move on with the rest of our service. Does anyone have...

Yes. Yeah, it's a little ironic that someone who's not married is giving marriage advice. You're talking about me or about Paul? Yes.

Yes. Not really, because Paul's not actually saying, in some ways, anything particularly profound. He's saying the model for marriage can be found in the Bible.

[42 : 29] Marriage, as stands... This model stands, comes from the beginning of the Old Testament. It's not good for man to be alone. God creates partner for Adam.

I think he's harking back to God's model. I don't think he's kind of giving how to kind of make marriage work day-to-day advices in downloading years of experience.

friends, but... And see... It's great. ... It's great.

It's great. Hello. But, um...■... ...