

# THE IDOL OF SEX

DATE: SUNDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER 2019 | SERIES: IDOLS - PART: 3

## ROMANS 1:21-25

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

### NOTE TO LEADERS:

This is week 3 of our Idols series. Our focus is the idol of sex. You might consider splitting your group into separate men's and ladies circles for this discussion. This week's group discussion aims to help people understand that a relationship with Christ brings long-term joy vs ungodly sexual expression, which offers only short-term pleasure. At all costs, please avoid lengthy discussion around homosexuality or transgender issues. That is not the main aim of this week.

## START TALKING

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from Sunday's message?
2. How has the media influenced people's attitude towards sex?

## START THINKING

Consider Romans 1:21-25.

1. Discuss how our present-day culture and the culture described in the scripture above are similar. What is the answer to combat the problem of the idol of sexuality?
2. What are some of the problems with an incorrect view of sex and sexuality? What are the consequences for an individual personally? For the family? For society?

## START SHARING

1. Steve shared some staggering facts around pornography (see notes). How would you define pornography? If a friend confided in you that they were struggling with pornography, what would your initial reaction be? What would you suggest as their next step to dealing with this?
2. Of the list of things that are high priorities in your life right now, which is the one that most tempts you to seek satisfaction, identity, and well-being from it instead of from God. Share one small "next step" that you feel God is calling you to take in the next seven days.

## START PRAYING

Pray for those caught up in sexual immorality to find freedom. Pray that God's truth will replace pop culture lies about sex.

## START DOING

Look through your social media feeds (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Unfollow those accounts where the posts have the potential to lead your thoughts in the direction of sexual sin.

# SUMMARY

## OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in the third week of our Idols series, Steve began the message with a quote from CS Lewis's book, *Mere Christianity*: There is a story about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was "The sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it." Fortunately for us, God is nothing like that. This week we look at the important topic of sex and how to approach it from a Godly point of view.

### 1. Sex is God's good creation

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number ... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* Genesis 1:27-28,31. Sex, in the context of a marriage relationship, is God's idea! And He made it good!

Previously in this series, we spoke about an idol being anything in our lives that is more fundamental to our happiness, meaning in life or our identity than God is. An idol is a created thing that we look to, to give us what only the Creator can provide us with, e.g. true contentment, satisfaction and redemption. In week one, Steve used the illustration of chairs to show the priority of passion and love in our lives, with the ultimate chair being the place where we look for contentment, satisfaction and redemption. Whatever we put in the ultimate chair is where we look for redemption, satisfaction, meaning and purpose in our lives. In the 4th century, Augustine said: "the essence of sin is disordered love." i.e. having these things in the wrong order. God, the Creator, is the only one who can fulfil our need for redemption, satisfaction, meaning and purpose. We were designed to have Him on the ultimate chair (throne) of our lives. When we look to creation (other things) to fulfil those needs, that's what Augustine calls "disordered love".

Throughout human history, humankind has made an idol of sexuality: It has been more fundamental to our happiness, meaning in life or our identity than God is. People have consistently looked to sex (and sexuality) to provide true contentment, satisfaction and redemption. Man has consistently put sex and sexuality higher up on the order of loves than God. And the results are catastrophic.

### 2. Sex in disordered priority is dangerous: (like any idol)

In other words, sex outside of the marriage relationship. The result of man putting sex above God (i.e. disordered priority - making an idol of sexuality) is:

- Celebration and commercialisation of sex (in pop culture sex sells - movies, adverts, social media)
- Promiscuity is rampant. Adultery is considered a norm - we call it 'having an affair' to make it seem less damaging.
- Pornography. [Covenant eyes](#) gives stats around online porn usage:
  - 28,258 users are watching pornography on the internet.
  - 68 million search queries related to pornography are generated per day (25% of total searches)
  - 116,000 queries related to child pornography are received per day
  - 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography
  - 40 million American people regularly visit porn sites. 30% of them women.
- Sexually transmitted diseases: According to the [WHO](#), more than 1 million sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are acquired every day worldwide. [StatsSA](#) tells us that the total number of people living with HIV is estimated at approximately 7,52 million in 2018 (13.1% of the population). Nearly [2000 adolescent girls](#) in our country infected with HIV/AIDS each week. None of these diseases would be the epidemic that they are if we didn't have a problem with disordered priorities when it comes to sex.
- Sexual crimes (primarily, but not exclusively, perpetrated against women and children). [The South African police](#) estimate that a woman is raped every 36

seconds. Another report said a child was being raped in South Africa every three minutes. A third of the cases are committed by a family member or close relative. All of the above issues lead to broken families, emotional and physical trauma, identity confusion, insecurity, guilt, shame, rejection, violence, and often death.

Romans 1: 21-23, 25 links idolatry and sex: *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, ... they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images [made to look like created things]... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.*

The result of this being: *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.* Romans 1:24.

*Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones [with one ... Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error ... so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.* Romans 1: 26-28.

We've looked at the big picture of sex as an idol, but on an individual level, people often comment on having sex outside the relationship of marriage, saying that it's not a problem because they are doing it consensually. But in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Paul tells us to: *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.* Anything outside of consensual, heterosexual sex in a marriage is sexual immorality. It might not feel sinful in the short-run, but that's why God gives us long-range warnings.

While you may think that the above example doesn't apply to you, consider Matthew 5:28 where Jesus said: *"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* Lust is an example of disordered love. It is so commercialised and part of pop-culture that it seems like it's okay. Sexual crimes etc. are horrifying, but what about you? Have you looked at anyone lustfully?

### 3. Sex and sexuality are deeply spiritual (the solution)

Because sex is in part a physical act, we approach it physically. But part of the solution to re-ordering sex and sexuality in our lives and hearts is to fully commit to the idea that sex and sexuality are deeply spiritual: "Your sexual life is always an expression of what you truly worship. Sex is deeply religious. In sex, you are either self-consciously submitting to God or setting yourself up as God. In other words, sex is never simply a horizontal thing. Sex always connects you to the God who created your body, gave you eyes to see and a heart that desires, and tells you how you are to steward this aspect of your personhood." Paul David Tripp.

In other words, when we recognise that sex is deeply spiritual, it all has to do with who's on the ultimate chair. (God on the throne vs Me on the throne). If it's God, then we should want our lives to line up with that no matter how difficult it seems. If it's us on the throne, we will always live with the consequences of idolatry. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. (Westminster Confession of Faith.) If Christ is on the throne, then I'm glorifying God by:

- abstinence if single,
- sexual expression if married,
- purity of heart and thought (all of us)

"God does not forbid sexual sin because He's a killjoy, but because He opposes what kills joy." John Piper.

#### **4. Suffering and sin impacts our sexuality**

Any kind of pain, abuse or sexual sin in the past impacts our sexuality into the future. God wants to break into our story and heal wounds and/or forgive sexual sin by His Spirit, bringing us freedom. He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Revelation 21:5.

God points out the source of pain and sin not to condemn, but to make things new!

Men, as God works in our hearts, lets honour women. Let's be the kind of men who cut out 'locker room talk', crude, below the belt jokes, soft porn on WhatsApp chats (it's not just "a bit of innocent fun for the boys"). If we're going to live with God on the ultimate chair of our lives, let's allow Him to do a full clean up on these things.

#### **5. The pleasure of knowing Christ deeply displaces the pleasure of pursuing sexual pleasure immorally**

You don't shift the order of chairs just by trying harder. Priorities and idols are displaced by superior joy. When we get to know Christ more deeply, that displaces the joy of sexual immorality. *And we all, who ... contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory...* 2 Corinthians 3:18.

The difficulty is that Christ is invisible and sexual expression is physical. It's about learning that a relationship with Christ brings long-term joy vs sexual relationships which offer short-term pleasure.

John Piper puts this idea so beautifully when he talks about looking at Christ and how He mastered sexuality: "When I look at Jesus's sexual life, the same thing happens. Three decades – well, maybe two, of masculine virility. He had an

adolescence first, a puberty. So one and a half or two decades of masculine virility, yet not one single millisecond of a sinful thought or feeling or immoral act.

Women were hanging on his words, following him around. Former prostitutes wept over him and wiped his bare feet with their hair.

He lived a life from one angle that you could say was supercharged with sexual temptation – and he never sinned. He never once committed any lustful thought or act. He denied himself perfectly without denying the goodness of sexuality. I watch him. And as I watch him, I love him. I admire him. I stand in awe of his purity of mind and body, and I find myself in that admiration hating my own little compromises and I find myself longing to be pure and to be found holy at the last day and above reproach and glorious in purity. And his purity, sexually, is contagious."

This is the same Jesus that lives inside of us! Christ lives in our hearts by faith, and He wants His purity to ooze out into our lives so that we can walk in the ways he has for us

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* Colossians 3:1-2.

*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* Colossians 3:5.

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* Colossians 3:12.