

Jesus is better than sex

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[0 : 00] I'm sure you all know this, but ask any advertising agent and they'll tell you that sex sells. It doesn't matter what you're selling.

If you want a surefire way to boost your profits or sales, then sell it with sexual images or association. So if you turn on the TV, you'll see scantily clad women used to sell everything or anything from ice cream to hair products to cars to sport.

Now, of course, nowadays, the males get in on the act as well with their perfectly chiseled upper bodies, distracting viewers from the products themselves.

But how is sex related to ice cream or hair products? It's rather tenuous, isn't it? Of course, we know what they're trying to do. They're trying to arouse our sexual desires and then intimate that if you use their products, then you'll have those desires met.

Whether there's any truth in it, well, that's beside the point. We can see that, can't we? We all know what they're trying to do to us, and yet many of us fall for it anyway. The same goes for TV shows, movies, reality TV.

[1 : 18] Often the promos will have some, you know, titillating detail to suck people in to watching the show. Now, at one level, we can take the moral high ground and, you know, look down on these grubby advertisers and scriptwriters.

But at another, they're just very astute, aren't they, about human nature. Sex, just like the other two topics that we're doing in this series, money and power, these three things are what preoccupies society.

So, so with sex, studies have shown, for instance, that the average young man, aged 18 to 25, this is in the US, but I think it's probably applicable here, thinks about sex 19 times a day.

Whereas the corresponding woman, still relatively high, 10 times a day. And we can see the fascination with it, can't we? Because of the pleasure that sex promises.

But there are also other attractions with sex, as I've indicated in my outline, because aside from pleasure, many desire sex as a means to intimacy. We all long deep down to be loved, and we fear loneliness.

[2 : 31] And we think sex and the intimacy it gives, cures the latter, that is loneliness, and is the answer to love. And that's why the act of sex is often described in such glowing terms as making love.

Because we think that the person we're in bed with loves us, and we in turn love them. At least, that's the ideal we imagine for ourselves. And so the second attraction of sex is the promise of intimacy it offers.

But there is also now a third attraction with sex, one that builds on the second reason, I think. And that is, more and more, sex is also a marker of identity. Same-sex attracted people have felt excluded from society for a long time because of their sexual orientation.

And so in the last decade or so, as society has become more tolerant, gays and lesbians have increasingly worn their sexuality as a badge of honour. So that now, a gay person's sexual orientation becomes the most important thing about them.

Their identity and sense of worth are tied up with that sexuality. And then as a community as well, they come together to find comfort and solace in being able to share with those who have the same sexual orientation.

[3 : 49] But lest we sort of belittle the LGBTI community for this. I want us to actually bear in mind that as heterosexuals, people do the same thing as well.

So, for example, many heterosexuals place their sense of worth in being married or with certain guys by the number of sexual partners they've had. But all of them are doing the same thing with sex, aren't they?

They're using it as an identity marker. Now, as I speak, you're probably beginning to see, aren't you, some of the problems with sex. And most of us know it too because we often lament how something that's so attractive, so desirable to us, is also the cause of so many personal and societal problems.

But before we delve into the problems with sex, which is the second point, let me just try and strike the right balance with it by saying that actually sex is good. It's good because it's created by God, but also, if you just look at it from a natural standpoint, sex is good because it's necessary.

I hope you all realize that without sex, none of you would be here. I know you don't really want to think about it, but unless you're an IVF baby, your mom and dad at some stage found sex desirable.

[5 : 13] That's the reality. We may laugh, but that's the truth. And so sex is actually a good thing, a useful thing, because without which there will actually not be any humans on this earth, much less humans to enjoy it.

So why then has sex been such, the cause of such problems for us? Because not a day goes by, is it not, that we don't read about sexual crimes or sexual exploitation or personally, as Johnson has shared today, our struggles with containing our sexual desires?

Now, there's no way I'll be able to elaborate on every single problem about sex tonight, nor do I claim to know each of the ones that you face personally. But I think that many of them, if you trace the problems back to the source, what we find is that these problems arise because we're ignorant of the intended design for sex.

we either invest with it, into it, more significance than it can bear, or we use it for something other than its intended purpose. So sex is indeed something that gives us pleasure, but many of us now see it as our main source of happiness, that life can no longer be fulfilling without it, and that if you are not able to have it, then somehow you are less of a human being.

Or take intimacy as another example, sex has become now the means to obtaining intimacy, when what's intended is that it was an expression of one form of intimacy, that of marriage between a man and a woman, and from there, commonly, the joy of children as well, according to Johnson, the baby-making-ness of it.

[6 : 59] But no, nowadays, sex often comes first before commitment, when it was intended to follow commitment. So the question is, how do we get all confused about this?

How have we become ignorant of sex-intended purposes? Well, the Bible actually gives us a rather surprising answer. It's because we have rejected God.

We've given up our knowledge of Him. This is what Paul says in the opening chapter of a letter that he wrote to the Romans. So let me read you a section of it. It should be on the slide in verse 21, starting.

And this is what it says, for although they knew God, and there, here's a reference to humanity in general, 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.

[8 : 02] And then we get to the bit that's relevant to us, where Paul then says, 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 worship and serve created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised. Amen. We have exchanged the truth about God for a lie and we've started to worship things that were created for us.

We've now started to worship the things, the created things. Now Paul's not saying here that if you don't know God, then, you know, and in particular if you don't know the God of Jesus Christ, then every individual ends up giving in to all sorts of sexual vices.

Rather, I think he's saying that in a society in general where increasingly the existence of God is no longer acknowledged much less his authority over them, then society loses its knowledge of what to do with the sexual desires that they find in their hearts.

That is what it means for God to have given them over to those desires in their hearts to sexual impurity. people. And I think if we look around, we're seeing evidence of this, aren't we?

[9 : 19] And I reflect that all across our country, as boys and girls reach puberty and find that their sexual desires are awakened, many of them actually don't know what to do with it.

They haven't been given the wisdom to know what to do with their bodies and minds, how to interpret what's going on, and how to use it as God has intended. The media, the internet, and sex education at school often at most only teach about the how and not the why.

And worse still, sometimes they promote a free-for-all approach that adds to the confusion of young people without giving them any discernment as to know what's truly right and wrong.

It's just like a teenager waking up one morning and discovering that they've just inherited a fortune. There's a million dollars sitting in the trust account, but no one tells them what it's there for.

And so they start spending it on whatever they fancy, fancy clothes which they wear once and then throw away, gambling it away on betting apps or whatever, when actually the money was left for them, well, let's say to buy a home or to pay for their education.

[10 : 33] And that's similar to what's going on with sex. people use it without knowing what it's there for, to buy intimacy or belonging, or they squander it away thinking it will make them happy.

And little do they realize that when used wrongly, for example, with porn or sex outside marriage, that it actually does them long-term damage. Many think, oh, no, it's fine, you know, I'll just do what I want and one day, you know, I'll stop, I'll get married, I'll settle down, whatever.

But they do all that not realizing that in our second point, under point two, the other problem is sex, is that when we use it apart from its intended design, we run the great risk of being addicted to its false promises.

Sex was created to serve humans and in human relationships, but instead, we are increasingly being mastered by it. And this is the irony of it all, because for 50 years now, the whole sexual revolution has been going on, promising untold freedoms.

No more being weighed down by traditional prudishness is what they've promised. But you just look 50 years on at the evidence, look at it soberly, and really, we haven't got freedom, have we?

[11 : 54] Instead, we've got addiction. Just take internet porn, for instance, as one example. There was a Huffington Post article in 2013 that stated that porn sites get more traffic each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined.

In it, the article also estimates that 30% of all internet data transferred is porn-related. And as many of you, as some of you might know, sitting here from first-hand experience, this sort of traffic isn't being generated by, you know, a few small sort of deviant men locked away in their rooms.

It's a society-wide epidemic, isn't it? Just this week, I was reading a blog that was written by a pastor who shared that how it all started for him some 20 years ago, when he was just a young man, was to open almost innocently his first copy of the Playboy magazine.

And just from that one act, as night follows day, it led from one thing to another, until he was hooked onto more extreme forms of pornography.

This same article in Huffington Post, probably using US statistics, estimates that some 70% of men watch porn, and 30% of women as well.

[13 : 18] And there's even a quote by a university professor in Montreal, who was doing some research, and he said, we started our research seeking men in their twenties who have not consumed porn. We couldn't find any.

And I'm pretty sure if you then ask anyone whether using porn has really satisfied them, you'll get the answer that it doesn't. And that's because when sex isn't enjoyed the way God intended, it never lives up to its false promises, but only enslaves us to wanting more, while at the same time being satisfied less.

So those are the problems. But the question is, where do we go from here? Because it almost feels like this is such a big problem that society or individuals are powerless to stop it, to even turn things around.

Well, this is where our reading tonight, that dramatized reading, comes in. I wonder if you still remember the story at the start of tonight. In the account, Jesus comes to the well in the heat of the day, he's tired, he's thirsty, and he strikes up a conversation with a woman that comes to the well.

Now, there's several no-no's about this conversation. First, she was a Samaritan woman, not a Jew, and Jews, as it says in the text, were not to associate with them.

[14 : 41] But second, she was also a woman who had five husbands, and the man she's with is not even her husband. And so this woman has history. She is a person of ill repute.

And yet, although Jesus does ask her for a drink first, it was merely so that he could then offer her something else far more precious and satisfying. So in verse 10, which I've got on the slide, Jesus says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

Now, we all know this is Jesus not offering physical water, but he's offering everlasting life, isn't he? Life that doesn't just last forever, but life that is satisfying, joyful, and beautiful.

Life which is full of love. Life that is based on truth, that gives us a true sense of belonging, and where intimacy is genuine and meaningful.

That's why Jesus goes on to explain in verse 13, everyone who drinks this water will not be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them, sorry, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

[15 : 57] Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. What Jesus is offering the woman and all of us is a relationship with his Father, an opportunity to know the one who has created us.

that's why, again, at the end of the account, verse 24, it's said that the only true worshippers are those who worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Believing Jesus is the only way to come to know this truth, and to be given God's spirit so that we may be able to enter into a worshipful relationship with our Creator.

Now, how is this sort of related to our topic of sex tonight? Well, I wonder whether you noticed how it was odd right in the middle of that conversation as Jesus was explaining to the woman everything to do with living water and eternal life, he all of a sudden, just out of the blue, asks her to go and call her husband.

It's a bit strange, isn't it? And then in the very next verse, we discover why actually Jesus knew all along she wasn't married and that she's been married five times before there have been a string of broken marriages.

[17 : 13] Why did Jesus do that? Well, I think it's because Jesus wanted her to see that he's offering what she had failed to find in all her marriages so far.

He wasn't trying to shame her, but he was trying to make her realize exactly what he could offer, the beautiful thing that he could offer. Now, why did she have so many marriages, five in total, which is even excessive by today's standards?

Even Donald Trump, I don't think, has been married five times. And then the one that she's in, the sexual relationship she's in, is not even a marriage. Why was she got herself into?

Was she looking for intimacy, identity, sense of worth or security, or maybe all of the above? Well, we don't know, except that she was doing it, what she was doing with that is what many people do today with sex.

She was trying to find real happiness and satisfaction in life, and yet failing to do so. And by telling her that Jesus knew her history, he was telling her who he really was, that only in him can she find what she really needs.

[18 : 31] Jesus wasn't offering to marry her, no. Rather, he was giving her something better, a relationship with God that only he could offer because he is the Son of God.

In a way, this Samaritan woman has done what Paul said would happen in that passage in Romans, isn't it? That when people lost the knowledge of God, which the Samaritan woman did, they would be given over to their sinful desires and would pursue them, even though it would bring them no satisfaction.

Friends, as any of you feel like this Samaritan woman, are you sort of trying to find the source of happiness and joy and maybe looking at sex or relationships or even marriage to do that and coming up short?

Well, the one thing I want to encourage you to do tonight is to come to Jesus and receive what only he can offer, that he offered the Samaritan woman and now offers each and every one of us.

For he is the Son of God and not only that, he died for us to take away the sin and the rebellion that bars us from a relationship with God. Now, it may be that you're here tonight and you don't really know enough about Jesus to be able to trust in him.

[19 : 51] Maybe you want more time and information. And I think that's perfectly fine. But again, my encouragement to you is check him out. Consider Christ. Everything we speak of can be found in the Bible.

If you like, come and speak with me afterwards. I'll be more than happy to point you in the right direction. Now, the other wonderful thing that happens when we come to Jesus is that by putting God back in his rightful place as our master, then sex also is returned to its rightful place.

You see, when we are enslaved by something like sex, we just can't simply break free from it, can we? That's the reason why it's called slavery. We're actually powerless to rescue ourselves.

Instead, it's only when someone more powerful comes along that we are truly freed from what we are enslaved to. And that person is Jesus. Look at it another way.

The pool of sex is so strong that we actually need a stronger desire to take its place. Something that's so deeply satisfying that it overwhelms or makes our sexual desires pale into nothing by comparison.

[21 : 05] Jesus promised the woman and us living water so that we will never thirst again. That is satisfaction that is stronger than our physical desire, whether it's hunger, thirst, or sex.

Once we've found our true happiness in Jesus, then sex, relationships, or marriage isn't what we look to to give us happiness or joy.

what happens is then these things are put in their rightful place. What happens is sex can then be used as the gift that it was intended, as Johnson shared, within marriage to serve the one we're married to.

And even if we remain single, all the joys of being a child of God overwhelms, is more satisfying than sex. Johnson was being very honest tonight to share about his struggles with his sexual desires.

And yet, did you hear that he was also able to share how in knowing Christ and God, and by having this spirit, he's actually making progress in putting sex in its rightful place.

[22 : 14] God has strengthened him constantly for that task, even though he admits he's not quite there yet. And so let me say quite plainly that this actually shows that contrary to how he feels, or how the rest of you might feel, sex is no longer his master.

Sex is no longer our master when we are submitted to Christ. God is. That is true for everyone who's believed in Jesus. And that is something that we can all take great joy in.

Now, if you're here tonight and you're already a Christian and yet you struggle with this, again, let me say, come and talk to me. There is no condemnation in facing this struggle openly and honestly.

Many of you will know Hugh Hefner died this week, or was it last week? He was the founder of Playboy. And this man, sadly, was actually touted by many in the celebrity world as an icon and a trailblazer, someone who liberalized our views about sex.

How wrong they are. One of the saddest quotes I read from Hugh was in an interview he gave in 1992, where some 40 years after he found the Playboy, he tearfully admitted that actually, even though he had slept with thousands of women, he'd been looking for love in all the wrong places.

[23 : 39] And I think still at the time of his death, he was still looking for them for love in the wrong places. Friends, let's not fall for his mistake.

Trying to find love, satisfaction, joy, and meaning in the free-for-all sex that Hefner was promoting, that's a dead-end street. Even Hefner, the chief promoter, has admitted as much.

It's only in Jesus that we find what we truly need. It's only when we receive Him as our Lord and Savior that we enter into a relationship with our Creator who knows exactly what we need, who understands our desires.

He knows what is wholesome and what is not, because He made us in the first place. So again, I say, if you don't already know Him, then please make the effort, spend the time to seek Him out and seek out His Son.

Let me pray for us. Father, open our eyes to the folly, the false promises that sex alone, used out of context, used against its intended purpose, brings.

[25 : 00] Increase our hearts in joy and desire for the Lord Jesus, for you, our Creator, so that sex can be put back in its rightful place.

For those of us who are seeking, open our eyes to help us see what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. We pray and ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.