

Week 34 – Tough Questions – Why Does the Bible Use Sex as a Metaphor for Spiritual Faithfulness?

Hey there, this is Tim Perry here, pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church. This is week 34 now of Tough Questions.

Why don't we do something out of the prophet Ezekiel where Ezekiel is talking about the nation of Israel and its spiritual condition. He's concerned about their idolatry. But listen to the metaphor that he uses to confront them in their idolatry.

23 The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ³They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed. ⁴The older was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. They were mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem. Ezekiel 23:1-4

So using these adulterous sisters to talk about Samaria, which would have been the capital city of the northern tribes of Israel and Jerusalem, the capital city of the southern tribes of Israel.

⁵“Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians —warriors ⁶clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen. ⁷She gave herself as a prostitute to all the elite of the Assyrians and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after. ⁸She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when during her youth men slept with her, caressed her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her. Ezekiel 23:5-8

God is using this parable, if you will, of two sisters who wander into prostitution to describe the spiritual condition of Israel at the time of the exile. He goes on to say this:

³⁵“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Since you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution.”

³⁶ The LORD said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then confront them with their detestable practices, ³⁷for they

have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; they even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to me, as food for them. ³⁸ They have also done this to me: At that same time they defiled my sanctuary and desecrated my Sabbaths. ³⁹ On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house. Ezekiel 23:35-39

.....⁴³ Then I said about the one worn out by adultery, ‘Now let them use her as a prostitute, for that is all she is.’ ⁴⁴ And they slept with her. As men sleep with a prostitute...Ezekiel 23:43-44

The passage gets even more lewd in its description of what these two adulterous sisters do.

Here’s our question this week: Why is it that God and the Bible use sexuality as a metaphor for spiritual faithfulness? Well, this is such a huge question, I thought I would put it to several of my staff colleagues here at Christ Community Church. So rather than me wowing you with all of my tremendous brilliance, I thought I would go out and find out what some of my fellow staff members think of it.

It turns out, they had a lot of really good things to say. Check these out.

Question from Tim Perry: Why does the Bible use sex as a metaphor for spiritual faithfulness?

Gavin Johnson: “Sex in particular, not marital fidelity, but you’re talking sex like in Jeremiah and Ezekiel?” (laughter)

Dave Irwin: “I would say that the Bible doesn’t use sex as much to define spiritual faithfulness as it does the marriage relationship and to the degree that sex is a key part of that. And you can’t protect the marriage relationship if you don’t protect the sexual aspect of that. So to the degree that we are supposed to be as husband and wives faithful sexually to one another, we should be faithful to God in the same way.”

Marc Montayne : “I would say it has something to do with the covenant we have with God. We have that same covenant with our spouse.”

Anna Wastell “I think that as a recently married woman, I have a very soft spot in my heart for the love of my husband and for the relationship that we have. So I can see where using marital faithfulness or sexual faithfulness as a metaphor or simile for how people should be faithful to God would provide a very real life practical example and it would be something that people would be familiar with overall.”

Gavin Johnson: “Say it one more time.”

Tim Perry: “Why does the Bible use sexuality as a metaphor for spiritual faithfulness?”

Gavin Johnson: “Oh great! I’m thinking of the Proverb that says drink water from your own cistern – right? - from your own well talking about faithfulness. Why does it use it analogously as a metaphor for faithfulness? I think that sexuality is something that we have an understanding of pretty naturally as sexual people, and (I can’t talk about sexuality with the girls here – laughter) as we understand in a marital relationship fidelity with each other, it gives us a picture of God’s faithfulness toward us and His required faithfulness to Him. And just as we would see marital unfaithfulness as an atrocious thing – right? With very few exceptions cultures understand that sense of fidelity. It gives us a glimpse into the seriousness of God’s covenant love, his relational love with us and how he views idolatry, unfaithful people in an analogous way to marital/sexual unfaithfulness. It’s a horrible thing. But faithfulness is a beautiful thing.