

Tough Questions – Why Does the Bible Use Sex as a Metaphor for Spiritual Faithfulness? Part 3 of 3

Ben Hawley: “The Bible uses sex as a metaphor for spiritual faithfulness because sex is the most intimate way that two people can relate to each other, and God loves his people even more intimately than that. But the best way for us to understand this as humans is for God to correlate his love for us with human sexuality and intimacy between one human and another.”

Eric Carpenter: “Well, from what my friends have told me, sex is kind of a big deal in the marriage context. And basically the reason why is because sex is something that God created for enjoyment and it’s actually a covenant so to show that we are in covenant with God, he wants us to be faithful in what it is that he has given us – which is sex – and so it is important for us to show our faith in God to be faithful in not having sex before marriage.”

Brad Mock: “I think that God does that because sometimes our relationship with him can be hard for us to figure out because He is spirit and He is different than us but when we put it in terms of the context of human relationships, it’s easy for us to see that. From sexuality and marriage relationships – those are relationships we can look at and we can see what they look like and feel what they look like and so when He uses those same terms – it’s like – Oh – that brings my relationship with Him into a human context which I can really understand. Also sometimes He just does it because it’s just real blunt and blatant and it gets our attention really well when other language might not be so striking to us so we just kind of gloss it over it in the scriptures.”

Klint Bitter: “Well, I think sex is a very heavy activity. It’s weighted in not just physical activity but in our hearts as well. The Bible talks about sexual sin being separate from other kinds of sins because it’s a sin against our own bodies. So I think that’s part of it. I think there’s the metaphor with the church being the bride of Christ that plays into all of that, and I think it just highlights the depths of betrayal that God feels when His people reject him and fall into idolatry. So that’s my thought.”

Steve Walters: “God created marriage and God created sex. God created man and woman – so He picked marriage to be an illustration of forgiveness, grace, commitment and faithfulness and serving. So when there is the analogy of God’s faithfulness and marital the faithfulness between God and Israel, he is just saying – you need to be faithful, you need to be committed, you need to choose to love me even if you don’t feel loved because I have loved you with an everlasting love. So there’s a love give and take, there’s a covenant, and there is an unconditional commitment. I think a lot of times people think of sex as more of contractual – if you do this, I’ll do this. If you make me feel good, then I’ll feel better. So it’s a need – the world has switched sex into more of what I can get out of it rather its pornography, having affairs or what not, but God created sex in a covenant

relationship where there's an intimacy and sharing and forgiveness so it's a very personal, very intimate experience that God wants with those that follow Him.

Tim Perry: Well, let's wrap up Week 36 this way. There are four or five conclusions I want to come to on this topic of sexuality and spirituality.

First of all, sexuality and spirituality make sense really only in a covenant context. In marriage, sexuality works when we look at it through the covenant of a marriage agreement or matrimony – a covenant context in which one man and one woman can enjoy sexuality. They can be faithful to one another and promise their faithfulness to each other. Similarly, God promises his faithfulness to us.

Second of all, sexuality and spirituality have a common denominator in the area of commitment. Commitment over time is required both in our relationship with God as well as in the fulfillment of our sexuality. Whenever people in our culture grab for instant gratification with sexuality, almost always wind up hurting themselves and hurting others. What's intended with sexuality is that it's learned in a relationship of commitment over time. The same is true in our expectations in our relationship with God. God doesn't just bounce into our life, answer all of our prayers and give us everything that we want – He wants to develop a relationship with us that we experience over time when we get to know Him, where we develop and grow in our relationship with him.

Third of all, it requires fidelity. Sexuality requires fidelity. Being faithful to God in a relationship with Him requires fidelity. Fidelity is that property of sticking to the truth over time, of remaining loyal, of following through on your word, not breaking your oath, not breaking your covenant. The same is true in a relationship with God. He requires a lasting, enduring relationship with Him. He is willing to forgive our mistakes because He values the relationship so highly. We need to value fidelity in that relationship so that we seek forgiveness when we have failed. And we need to be willing to pay attention to the fact that God is a God of absolute fidelity to us. He will never leave us, never forsake us, and never trade us in for somebody else.

Fourth, sexuality and spirituality are exclusive and singular in nature, not inclusive and plural. When two people are married, they exclude all other options. They rule everything else as out of bounds because they focus on their exclusive relationship with each other. It's the only context in which to create safety, security to raise a family. To admit other people into sexual intimacy within a marriage – people that don't belong in that – it always damages the marriage. We're not to have multiple lovers – we're not to try to include other people. Sexuality is not plural – it's singular. That's how God designed it.

Then lastly, sexuality and spirituality are relational in nature – not commercial. There's not a transaction where we pay for something in order to get something else. In marriage, sexuality can actually become manipulative if one of the members of the relationship views sex as something to withhold from one another

– or as some kind of currency to reward one another. Our relationship with God is not meant to be a commercial transaction where we pay our tithe at church in order for God to bless us and give us more.

So – five terrific reasons why sexuality and spirituality belong together – why sexuality can be a fitting metaphor for spirituality.

Well, thank you for being with us this week. It's been really fun to tie into this touchy topic of sexuality and spirituality. I hope you've learned a lot and if you want to interact with me – or you've got something you want to say to one of the staff members that you recognized on our video this week, hit on the "comment" link down there and let me know what you're thinking.

Thanks for being with me. This is Tim Perry, pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church. Have a great week.