

Identity in Christ

(Have each student write down their worst nightmare, what they're most afraid of)

I heard a father, who also happened to be a pastor, once say that his worst nightmare had happened to his daughter. She wasn't buried alive. She wasn't hurled off into outer space. She didn't even die. She wasn't tortured. She didn't get raped or molested. She had sex outside of marriage.

Here's the thing. Sometimes when it comes to sex and sexuality and sin and relationships and purity and modesty and pornography, we can get confused.

We can start thinking that our value comes from what we do or don't do. That God's love for us depends on our behavior. On our ability to follow a list of do's and don'ts. The good news is that it doesn't.

Why does God love us?

Jeremiah 17:9 describes man's inner condition. (NLT)

“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things,
and desperately wicked.
Who really knows how bad it is?”

I mean, you could almost say that we are unlovable. Of course, you guys don't have to be told this. You're aware of your hateful thoughts, your perverted thoughts, your bitter thoughts, you're aware of the ugliness inside of you. And part of what happens during a talk like this tonight is that our ugliness is brought to the forefront of our mind and we're made aware of or reminded of just how ugly we are. But the good news is:

God doesn't love us based on who we are or what we do or what we've done.

God loves us based on who He is.

1 John 4:8 and 1 John 4:16 both tells us that “God is love.”

Romans 8:37-38 says

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Have each student replace “us” from the verse above with their name.)

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate _____ from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate _____ from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate _____ from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord

God's Plan For Great Sex

GOD CREATED SEX.

(Show magazine articles to students depicting how our culture encourages teens to be sexual)

www.seventeen.com

Are you sex savvy?

Safe sex and summer hookups

The Best Time for Sex

How can I let my mom know I'm smart about sex?

www.Gurl.com – "a website for teen girls"

10 most embarrassing sex stories

10 tips on how to feel more confident during sex

Should you hook up with your ex?

Read (Genesis 2:18-25 NLT)

I think when we read this story, the most obvious thing that's happening is that God's making it absolutely clear that He was the architect behind love and sex. This means that God knows more about sex than any magazine article that you could possibly read.

When we read the account of Adam and Eve we see that God was the one who first identified the problem – it's not good for man to be alone. I love where it says in the very first verse we read that God describes Eve as someone who is "just right for (Adam)." God was the one who created Eve while Adam was sleeping. He played no part. God didn't need Adam's input when it came to creating someone who would be just right for him. God knows us and our desires so well that He didn't have to ask Adam for any input at all.

Look how the man reacts – he didn't even realize something was wrong but when he sees his wife it's as if he sees at the exact same time, everything he's been missing out on, a secret longing of his heart, and he says, "At last!"

SEX IS MORE THAN PHYSICAL.

When Jesus says to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" he's showing us that humans are multidimensional. We're emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental beings.

(Have students identify what kind of act sex is: emotional, spiritual, physical, or mental)

Look how sex is described in Genesis. The text says,

"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."

The two are united into one. Two whole people. It's an emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental act.

In Mark 10:6-9, Jesus reiterates this fact and as he does, he can't help but stress that two are becoming one. Listen to this,

"⁶ But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. ⁷ 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, ⁹ let no one split apart what God has joined together."

I think a lot of times our culture talks about “friends with benefits.” Or maybe this idea of “Casual sex” or “meaningless sex.” But the truth is, sex, by design, cannot be casual. It cannot be meaningless. It is two whole people becoming one. It’s physical, it’s emotional, it’s spiritual. It involves every part of us.

The only time our culture seems to readily admit this fact is when someone is raped. I mean, think about it, when someone is physically assaulted – yes it’s sad but yet it’s nowhere near as tragic or as painful as when someone is sexually assaulted. If sex was purely physical – which our culture tries to pretend it to be sometimes... then when we wouldn’t need a distinction between physical assault and sexual assault. Yet we can’t help but recognize that those are two completely different types of hurt and pain. Because sex is not just a physical act.

SEX IS FOR MARRIAGE

(Have students write down the best gift they’ve ever gotten)

I dated this girl when I was in college who had this very lame mug that had pink hearts all over it and it came with a little teddy bear inside of it and was also filled with candy hearts. I quickly guessed that some ex-boyfriend of hers had given it to her for Valentine’s Day. It didn’t take a genius to figure that out. It was just one of those gifts that would be weird for her brothers or her parents or even a friend to give her. Some gifts can only be given to some people. You wouldn’t give a World’s Greatest Dad Tie to your grandma for her birthday. It just wouldn’t make sense.

Christianity says sex is the same way. Sex is a gift that’s intended for a very specific recipient. It’s not something you give to just anyone.

When we read the words of Jesus, we see that Jesus is clearly speaking of a marriage relationship. Sex is for your spouse. A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife. And the two are united into one. There’s an order to things. There’s a process. The two weren’t united into one and then the man leaves his parents and is joined to his wife but rather they left their parents (got married) and then became one (had sex).

Hebrews 13:4 (ESV) says Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

God created sex to be for you and one other person. He wants you to hold marriage in honor and one of the main ways to do that is to let the marriage bed be undefiled. Sex is intended to be a beautiful, physical, spiritual and emotional act that you share with only one person – the person that you’ve committed to spending the rest of your life with.

I think it’s good to remember that God loves you and God created you and God created sex and God is the one who made sex enjoyable. He designed orgasms. Pleasurable sex is a part of God’s will for humanity. I think sometimes we talk about sexual morality and sexual immorality and it can sound like God is trying to limit us. Like he’s trying to dampen or lessen our sex life. But the truth is... God doesn’t give us rules because he enjoys watching us suffer... he gives us rules because he wants us to avoid future suffering. He gives us rules because He loves us and He desires for us to have the best sex life we can have. The most healthy, the most fulfilling, the most God honoring.

Sometimes people end up having sex because they’re in a committed relationship and they love each other. If your boyfriend or girlfriend truly loves you... would they want you to hurt your future marriage? Would they want to rob you of the opportunity to say to your future spouse... the man or woman that you’ll spend the rest of your life with, “I saved myself for you.” I saved this for you. Out of every person in the world that I’ve met... I’ve decided that I want you to be the one that I share this with. If you really, truly loved your boyfriend or girlfriend... would you want to rob them of this? Would you want to diminish or hurt their relationship with their future spouse? Are you that selfish?

The truth is, God tells us to save sex for marriage because he loves us.

Take a 10 Minute Break

Intimacy Killers

LUST

(Have students get out their phones and share one of their favorite apps)

Raise your hand if you've ever played "Dumb ways to die" before. It was the one of the most popular cell phone games in 2014 and they created a new one too that's currently at the top of the free games app list on iTunes.

Show Dumb Ways to Die Music Video

This was actually a public safety campaign from Melbourne Australia and basically they were trying to spread the word about train safety. Things like... don't run across the tracks and don't stand on the edge of a train platform.

Why did Australia's Train system go through so much trouble to create a viral safety campaign? It wasn't to stop people from having fun, it wasn't to prevent people from having new experiences, it wasn't because a bunch of old people were used to doing things their way and wanted young people to conform. It was because they were trying to save lives. They were trying to prevent pain and suffering.

We mentioned before that God doesn't give us rules because he wants us to suffer... he gives us rules because he wants to keep us from suffering. We're going to talk about some of those rules – and I want you to know that the reason we're doing this isn't because we want to control you... It's because we love you and want to help you and because God loves you and God wants to help you.

Jesus teaches about adultery, which is having sex with someone's spouse. This could also be understood as sex with someone that you're not married to. After all, if you're having sex with someone you're not married to – chances are that's someone else's spouse. If they aren't married to anyone than it's someone else's future spouse... and you still don't have the right to have sex with them.

But Jesus adds something new to this discussion. Jesus says, (Matthew 5:27-28 NIV)

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus ups the ante. He says, not only should you not have sex with people that you aren't married to but you also shouldn't lust after them. Now, the Greek word for "lust" that's used here is a neutral term. It's neither positive or negative. It means desire. People can have good desires or bad desires. It just depends on the context in which it's used. The best definition for the word lust, as Jesus is using it in this context is probably, "Entertaining sexual thoughts and desires."

Usually we just call this, "checking people out." Rarely do we refer to this as "adultery of the heart." But that's how Jesus prefers to call it. He actually takes it even further than that, listen to what he says about checking people out.

Matthew 5:29-30 (NIV)

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to

stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Jesus is using a figure of speech called hyperbole. He's exaggerating - but it's to prove a point. His point is this: Holiness is worth pursuing. As Christians we should be doing all we can to avoid sin. Especially sexual sin.

Here's an important distinction: Jesus isn't saying it's wrong to be attracted to people or to find people attractive. God designed us to find people of the opposite sex attractive. He wired us for that. There's a difference between appreciating someone's beauty for what it is and entertaining sexual thoughts and desires.

Sometimes the distinction between admiring someone and desiring someone can be a very murky grey area. There's definitely some overlap between the two. The truth is, sometimes we do our best to act like checking people out is okay. Girl's magazines who target teenagers will sometimes call it "eye candy." Anything to make it sound innocent and harmless. Sometimes guys will say that it's not different than admiring art work or a sunset.

The fact of the matter is - you can't be sexually attracted to a sunset. It's not the same thing at all.

Moreover... every time you intentionally expose yourself to people that you're sexually attracted to... you increase your expectations for others. By looking at that girl or boy you may be subconsciously shaping your expectations of an ideal girl or boy. You may be setting unrealistic expectations for your future spouse or even someone that you're dating.

You also have to recognize that that person you're checking out is being hurt as well. You're using them for selfish reasons. They are created by God, made in the image of God, they're children of God and you're treating them as if they're made for your enjoyment. You're demeaning them and treating them as objects of self-gratification.

The Book of Job tells us that Job was the most righteous man of his time. And this is what he says about checking girls out:

Job 31:1-4 (NIV)

"I made a covenant with my eyes
not to look lustfully at a young woman.
² For what is our lot from God above,
our heritage from the Almighty on high?
³ Is it not ruin for the wicked,
disaster for those who do wrong?
⁴ Does he not see my ways
and count my every step

It's 100% possible to do this. To treat each other with respect and dignity and love. To not look at people lustfully. To not let your eyes wander. To not dwell on sexual thoughts about other people.

PORNOGRAPHY

(Have students play ppt trivia game - pornography statistics)

We have to talk about this guys. It's something that most of us in this room struggle with. It affects your pursuit of holiness. It affects your relationship with God. It affects your sense of self-worth. Some of you feel trapped. You feel like you're addicted. You've tried to stop and you haven't been able to.

One of the reasons pornography is so bad is our appetites can never fully be satisfied. They can momentarily be satisfied but never fully satisfied. And the more we indulge in something the less

satisfying it becomes. Generally, people who indulge in pornography find that their desires become stronger and stronger and more and more perverse and corrupt.

Do you know that some men would rather watch porn than have real sex with their real wives? It's this incredibly selfish, self-consuming, act. And it's addictive. Real sex is about serving one another in love. Pornography is a cheap, ugly, and dangerous substitute.

Not only that but these men and women, a lot of them, are married or will be married. When you watch pornography, you participate in a system that encourages people to commit adultery and have sex outside of marriage. All of them are someone's sons or daughters. Can you imagine, people treating your children that way? Every porn actor or actress is created by God and is loved by God. And God calls you to love them. The way that Christ loves them.

Jesus gave His Church one mission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

Pornography is very simply, not a part of the Christian life.

HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

(Show Interesting Guinness World Records)

I think it's partly in our nature as humans to want to go as far as we possibly can.

A common question that comes up is, "How far is too far?" "What's the farthest I can go before I sin?" Actually... if we're honest some of you are more likely to ask the question, "What's the furthest I can go before I sin too much?"

The truth is, all of these questions are wrong. The question you should be asking is "How can I use my relationship to honor, serve, and glorify God?" How can I treat this person with love and respect and dignity? How can I protect the person I love?

Some of you though – you'll insist on asking the wrong question.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

Don't you see how asking, "How far is too far?" Is the opposite of fleeing from sexual immorality? So take a look at this verse,

Or Ephesians 5:3 says

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Don't you think that the attitude of "How far is too far?" could very easily lead to a hint of sexual immorality?

1 Corinthians 7:4

⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.

Your body isn't yours. It belongs to your spouse. Your boyfriend or girlfriend's body belongs to their spouse. You don't have any right to do anything sexual with someone else's spouse.

The truth is, our desire is that you think of your boyfriend or girlfriend as someone else's spouse. Your goal should be that if your boyfriend or girlfriend ever gets married – you should be able to attend that wedding with your head held high. You should be able to shake the hand of your ex's spouse because you took care of her and did right by her.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5 tells us that people who follow Christ are supposed to live differently. Our dating should look different from those who don't know Christ. The way we treat our boyfriends and girlfriends should look differently:

³ God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. ⁴ Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— ⁵ not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 says

Treat younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

The fact of the matter is until you get married, every guy in your life is a brother in Christ. Every girl in your life is a sister in Christ.

Healthy Dating

(Have students create a list of characteristics or qualities to look for in a bf or gf – including nonnegotiables and just preferences)

Show Kid Snippets: Proposal (Imagined by Kids)

DEFINING LOVE

(1 Corinthians 13)

One of the first things we need to do is define love. We've done this before and I hope that it's stuck with you but just in case it hasn't: Love is a choice. Jesus commands us to love our enemies. Jesus commands us to love our neighbors. Jesus commands us to love God. Love is a choice. There's no such thing as not being able to help who you fall in love with. We can choose to love people and we can choose not to love people. You might be infatuated with someone. You might have a crush. You might experience puppy love or get butterflies in your stomach when you see someone. That isn't love though. That's hormones, that's an emotional experience. It's fleeting and it's weak and it's not nearly as meaningful as godly, intentional, continual choosing to love.

Sometimes parents get divorced and they say, "I couldn't help it, I fell out of love with my wife." Or "I couldn't help it, I fell in love with someone else." The truth is, they're either lying or they're very very very confused about the definition of love.

People date for all sorts of reasons. How serious people get when they're dating varies. I was always a very serious dater, myself. My first relationship was in 9th grade and I think we dated for over 2 years. My next relationship began in 11 grade and we dated for a year. My next relationship started when I had just graduated high school and we dated for 5 years. There were maybe 2 girls or so in between that only lasted maybe a month or so but once I knew they weren't right for me, I quickly ended those relationships.

The truth is, I'm not here to tell you that you need to be super serious when dating people. I don't know how many people you ought to date before you get married. I don't know how many dates you need to go on before you should commit to the relationship. I'm not here to tell you that.

There are a few guidelines though. There's some helpful information.

LOVE WHO YOU DATE

(Have students create a list of characteristics they should have based off of 1 Corinthians 13)

The first thing you need to do is love the people you're dating. You don't have to be in love with them but you should love them. Like the love your neighbor sort of love. You should treat them with respect. You should seek to honor them. You should desire their wellbeing above your own. You should put them first. Sometimes this might mean that you have to break up with someone. If your relationship with them is causing both of you to stumble in your walk with God and it's causing you to sin sexually... then you should love them enough to protect them from you and from themselves. Jesus said if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Well, if being in a relationship with that particular boy or that particular girl is causing you to hurt their relationship with God or your relationship with God then cut it off.

DATE WITH PURPOSE

Secondly, you can't date strictly for fun. Listen, if you know someone isn't cut out to be your future spouse, if you know that there's no chance that you could ever marry them... don't date them. It isn't wise. You aren't a person who lives for the temporary. You don't treat people as objects to be consumed. You don't get what you can out of someone and then cast them aside when you're done with them. You don't treat someone as if their lives are meant to be used for your self-gratification. That's not love. That's not treating someone with value and respect and dignity.

BE EQUALLY YOKED

Thirdly, you can't date non-Christians. Teenagers have the most difficult time with this one. My best friend Ray has been my best friend all throughout high school and college and even to this very day. We have almost nothing in common. But we both love God deeply and desire to follow him and serve him. And because our love for God is such a huge part of our lives... it comes easy for us to be best friends. Now, maybe you really like My Little Pony (like more than anyone else in the world) and you find someone else who loves My Little Pony just as much as you do and to top it all off, they're pretty and they think you're pretty. You are, more likely than not, going to want to date them. You're going to do everything in your power to tell yourself that it's okay to date them.

The truth is, God is supposed to be the most important thing in your life. Someone that doesn't know God can't encourage you in your faith, the way you need to be encouraged in your faith. They can't challenge you the way you need to be challenged. They can't understand your struggles or your victories and they can't relate to your spiritual journey. And that should matter to you.

2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

A yoke is what oxen use to pull a plow. An unequal yoke would cause oxen to pull in separate directions. Paul says, don't be in close partnership with non-believers. There's no doubt that our romantic relationships directly relate to this passage.

Christ gave his church a mission: Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And we're also told to do all things for the glory of God: whether

you eat or drink – do it for God’s glory. There is no way that dating a non-christian or marrying a non-Christian could help you do either of these things.

GOD DID NOT CREATE SOMEONE SPECIAL FOR YOU (PROBABLY)

The truth is, biblically speaking, God made some people for some people. Adam got Eve... that decision was made for him. He also played matchmaker for Issac and Rebekah. God also told Hosea to marry gomer who happened to be a prostitute and she slept with other men all the time. So it’s not always ideal for you when God has someone special planned just for you.

It also doesn’t make logical sense for God to have someone for each of us. For example, not everyone in the world is a Christian. If God created someone perfect for you and that perfect someone never decides to be a Christian than marrying the perfect person from you is no longer an option since God doesn’t want you to be unequally yoked. And so perhaps you marry someone who is a Christian but they weren’t the person God created just for you... that means you’re marrying someone else’s perfect somebody. Also, there aren’t an even amount of men and women in the world.

Additionally, the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:8 that

⁸ So I say to those who aren’t married and to widows—it’s better to stay unmarried, just as I am. ⁹ But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry than to burn with lust.

Notice, Paul doesn’t say, “Marry the one God has for you.” He says it’s best to stay unmarried but if you’re finding it hard to control your sexual urges... then you should get married.

The fact is, God calls some people to a life of singleness and singleness has an advantage to serving God.

³² I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord’s work and thinking how to please him. ³³ But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. ³⁴ His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

Jesus himself says others are celibate because they have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom from heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

The fact of that matter is... we’ve been saying that you shouldn’t engage in sexual things until you get married and there’s a chance that God might ask some of you to never get married. To never have sex. Which leads us to our next idea.

Surrender all to God

This is the basis of everything we’ve discussed. Christianity can be summed up in a continual, daily surrendering to God.

Jesus says “Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33 NIV) and what He’s saying is that only in giving our lives to Christ... can we actually be saved.

Giving our lives to Christ also means surrendering our dating to Him. It means asking ourselves and God questions like, “would God want me to date right now?” “Would God want me to date this person right

now?" "Can this person help me grow in my relationship with God?" "Will this person encourage me in my pursuit of God?" "Will this person pursue God with me?" and "How can I glorify God with my relationship?"

(\$50 object lesson. Crumple it, spit on it, tear it, use it, pass it around, it still retains its value)

(Have students look through the list of scripture and choose one to memorize)