

Sex and the City of God, Class #1: (The City of Man)

Preliminary Notes & Questions:

- Augustine's City of God: An analysis of the city of man vs. the city of God. Our class will address this dichotomy as well.
- Why talk about sex?
 - As Christian kids, why would we need to hear about this teaching?
 - Don't be fooled into thinking that temptation to sin in this area is just for "those people".
 - Sexual sin is not just physical. It can also be mental. All sin has its root in the heart.
 - What is the difference between propriety and taboo? Between modesty and prudishness?
 - In what places does the topic of sex show up?
- How would you sum up the worldly view of sex in 10 words or less?

The World's view of sex:

- The world says 2 things primarily:
 - Principle #1: Sex is a natural appetite or a physical requirement, like food, water, going to the bathroom.
 - This is an evolutionary mandate:
 - Just like animals, we MUST procreate.
 - This is necessary for the propagation of the species.
 - Interestingly, the evolutionary argument for sexual deviance comes from a similar (if contradictory) place:
 - Overpopulation causes natural selection to make some genetically sexually deviant, thus slowing population growth.
 - Principle #2: Thus, all types of sexual desire should be normalized.
 - An objection: not ALL types, just consensual, non injurious types
- The prevailing attitude of the world throughout history:
 - What has that attitude been?
 - Might makes right.
 - Sex is more economic than romantic.
 - Polygamy, incest, prostitution, sex as magic.

- Romans & divorce, Greeks & pedophilia, Vikings & rape, Babylonians & prostitution.
- It is surprisingly similar to the contemporary ethic.
 - An animal appetite which **MUST** be fulfilled.
 - Anything goes.
- I would go as far as to say that, apart from the church the prevailing cultural view of sex doesn't ever change.
 - The view that teens or adults 'are just *going* to have premarital sex' is no different from the old fashioned view that sex is an animal appetite which must be filled.

A response to these 2 cornerstone principles of the world's sex ethic:

- Let's look at those two ideas (sex as natural appetite and all sexual desire should be normalized).
 - I'll play the devil's advocate and you tell me if the argument works or not. Think about:
 - Are they consistent? Are they logical?
 - Are there other problems that arise from them?
 - Based on Principle #1:
 - How could sexual activity which does not produce children be a physical 'need'?
 - It is not true that a person couldn't survive if they never procreate, like hunger, thirst, etc.
 - Based on Principle #2:
 - Where is the line for non-injurious and who sets the line?
 - Examples: the homosexual lifestyle (see Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, Baker 1996), NAMBLA.

We'll look next week at how the Biblical sex ethic is radical (neither ascetic nor licentious).

Sex and the City of God, Classes #2 & 3: (The City of God)

Preliminary Notes & Questions:

Last week we saw that the prevailing world sex ethic does not change. It is viewed as an animal desire that we should just stop making such a big deal about. To contrast this we want to do two things: first, look at what the Biblical sex ethic actually is, and next, look at its impact on the culture.

First, consider what happens: after many years of very worldly attitudes toward sex, along comes this guy named Moses, who hands down from God some rules for sexual behavior. Do the people say, "Whew! Thanks! We've been murdering each other out of jealousy and killing our offspring. Glad someone put some rules on this stuff." Do they immediately seek to follow them with their whole hearts? No, in fact, they don't like the laws. The first chance that they have they throw a religious sex party (which is just what the Canaanites do). The Canaanite religious rites (both sexual and otherwise) stick with Israel throughout its history.

This rejection of the Biblical ethic is in the church today as well. Some think that what God has said plainly about the issue 'can't be true' because of cultural biases.

- Is sex divided from family in the Bible?
- Is sex divided from love?
- Is sex ever considered an animal passion? If so, in what context is it regarded this way?
- Is there ever a 'men/teens/etc just can't help themselves and must give in to this temptation' attitude?
- What words would you use to describe a Biblical sex ethic?

The Biblical sex ethic in 3 'P' words: purpose, purity, and propriety. Or 3 'M' words: meaning, marriage and morals.

- What is the purpose of sex?
 - The glory of God
 - Procreation
 - Definitely the main purpose of sex. So much so that I think it would be wrong to divorce it from procreation.
 - That is to say, marriage and children go together. Not everyone can have children, but

it is probably the case that every married couple should try.

- God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God's intent is that there would be a large community of people to whom he can show love.
- Historical perspective: Concupiscence – the notion that sex is a necessary evil. This is a holdover from Gnosticism, which is not found in the Bible.

○ Marital Unity

- *'The two will become one flesh...'*
 - Sex is a symbol of the unity of the husband and wife.
 - It is the highest form of intimacy, and creates strong emotional connections.
- A blessing from God on the marriage relationship.
 - This is never a perfect relationship, but God provides this unique connection to create strong bonds between husband and wife.
- The Song of Solomon, for example, shows a decidedly positive view of marital love and physical affection.
- Question #1: How can it serve the purpose of building and strengthening the most important relationship in the family if it is not saved for this relationship?
- Question #2: How does an intimate marital unity give glory to God?

□ Why is purity so important to God?

○ The glory of God

- The lives of Christians show Christ to the world.
- Consider Ephesians 5:3 *"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."*
- Colossians 3:5 *"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."*
- 1 Corinthians 6:18 – *"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body."*
 - There are 2 greek words that are of interest here:
 - Porneia – prostitution, unfaithfulness, unchastity; most commonly translated as a very general term: 'sexual immorality'.

- Moixeuin – adultery
 - Sexual immorality is not a word that meant what we would call perversion, but rather, any rejection of God's purpose for sex. Thus, premarital sex, pornography, etc fit here.
 - Notice that a prohibition against adultery is a part of the top 10 commandments. This means God places unfaithfulness in the same camp as murder and theft. Why?
 - The marriage relationship as a metaphor for (and witness to) Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5). We are showing forth God's faithfulness to an unbelieving world. We say to the world that He is worth waiting for.
 - Because faithfulness is important to God. Israel's primary sin (indeed, mankind's primary sin) is faithlessness to a faithful God.
- Propriety: how God's people deal with sex in a fallen world.
 - We do the following both to care for one another (physically, emotionally and spiritually) and to show reverence for our Creator who made us. It is an expression of our love for God and one another.
 - **Modesty** – we don't throw around our sexuality. No advertising for sex.
 - **Chastity** – we wait until marriage and we keep sex inside marriage.
 - **Faithfulness** – we do not violate that special intimacy that God intended. Neither do we seek to violate someone else's marriage.
 - **Respectful speech** - we don't talk about or listen to lascivious things.
 - This includes dirty jokes or explicit gossip.
 - **Gentleness** – we show love and tenderness to our spouse and the opposite sex in general.
 - **Putting others before yourself** – we show a selfless attitude toward both matters of sex and gender.
 - Thus, way back when a man would give his seat on a bus to a woman, etc. Not because she was incapable of standing on a bus, but because he showed a deference and respect because of her opposite gender.

- To protect one another from sin, married couples are to put the other person's desires ahead of their own. Consider 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 *"But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."*
- **Keeping yourself out of harm's way** – we mustn't put ourselves in situations in which sin could happen.
- **Keeping our minds and hearts (and eyes) from lustful things** - If our goal is purity we don't keep company with evil.
 - Psalm 1:1-6 *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
 - The logic is essentially this: if you are going to fill your time, mind and appetite with immoral things, you are very likely to follow into immorality.
 - This is quite obvious and common sense, but nothing makes more trouble for us. TV, movies, music, friends, etc. The company that you keep will influence your thinking and moral reasoning.

The Biblical sex ethic and its impact on the culture

These are in sharp contrast to the world ethic that we saw last week.

- First, it is the only religion which treats women as co-inheritors of the kingdom. These are sisters in Christ, deserving esteem and respect. God made them in His image and they need the gospel as much as men.
 - John 4:27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"
 - It was customary for a rabbi to ignore women when he went around to teach. Jesus not only spoke with women, they were the first he appeared to. They had an important place among his followers.
 - The church has been worldly in its treatment of women, but the mere fact that they were alike under grace and that there was 'no difference in Christ' and that there was 'no favoritism with God' lifts the lot of women exponentially. No longer are they property, but rather equals. This is not true in any of the other major religions.
 - Something to think about: Feminism and any perspective on the equality of women in the world has not been possible without a Christian (perhaps Judeo-Christian) attitude towards sex and gender.
- Second, adultery (and divorce - Matthew 5:32) is considered a weighty sin (for both genders), and faithfulness is greatly esteemed.
 - What kind of influence might that have on a culture? What kinds of ills are solved with this?
- The family is instituted by God and the culture must build laws and practices that respect this order.
 - This is true of the rich and the poor, slave and free.
 - This, it can be argued, is the basis for the entirety of the modern legal and ethical system in the West. Try to think of a moral or legal issue that does not intersect with this principle.
- The world sees something different in the Christian community and gives glory to God. We can call this 'living the transformed life'.
 - From The Epistle to Diognetus, a letter written to Marcus Aurelius around 120 AD describing the counter-cultural Christian community. Look for references to sexuality:
 - "They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a

fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things. They are dishonored, and yet they are glorified in their dishonor. They are evil spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby quickened by life. War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them by the Greeks, and yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason of their hostility. In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world.”

Conclusion

Thus, a unique balance is struck. Biblical Christianity seeks to provide esteem to human sexuality, while not being prudish about it. It is neither licentious nor prudish. It provides healthy guidelines and parameters, while still affirming the beauty of God’s creation. Genesis 1 says He made them male and female and good. Thus sexuality is a part of the created order, as is procreation.

In various cultures, this unique attitude has lifted women out of oppression, eliminated infanticide, eliminated gynocide, argues against abuse, etc. No other world ethic has done this much. Certainly not Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism. Christianity also uniquely provides a cure for societal problems related to sex.

Some essential reading on this topic:
Life Together, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Passion and Purity, Elizabeth Elliot
Song of Solomon

Sex and the City of God, Class #4:
(The Christian Virtues in Practice)

The 10 Christian virtues:

1. Modesty:
 - a. What does it mean?
 - i. We don't throw around our sexuality.
 - ii. No advertising for sex.
 - b. How do we show modesty?
 - c. Is trying to look attractive vanity?
2. Chastity & faithfulness:
 - a. What does it mean?
 - b. We wait until marriage and we keep sex inside marriage.
 - c. We do not violate that special intimacy that God intended.
Neither do we seek to violate someone else's marriage.
 - d. How far should I go with the opposite sex?
3. Respectful speech:
 - a. What if I just listen to others speak disrespectfully about sex?
 - i. We don't talk about or listen to lascivious things.
 1. This includes dirty jokes or explicit gossip.
4. Propriety:
 - a. How do I treat a girl so that she knows I like her but that I'm not going to go there?
 - b. What should be my goals for the courting process? (What am I looking for?)
5. Gentleness
 - a. We show love and tenderness to our spouse and the opposite sex in general.
6. Kindness
7. Putting others before yourself
 - a. Show a selfless attitude toward matters of sex and gender.
8. Keeping yourself out of trouble
 - a. We mustn't put ourselves in situations in which sin could happen.
 - b. Internet
 - c. Dating:
 - i. Should I date?
 - ii. How does one date? How do you get to know people without casual dating?
9. Keeping yourself out of harm's way –
 - a. Keeping one's mind and heart (and eyes) from lustful things.