

Series - Be Wise

Date/s - 21 July 2019

Topic - Redeeming Intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:1-24)

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like "This Is Amazing Grace", "God Is Here", "Stay Amazed" or "Build My Life".

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Understand the ultimate purpose for sex as designed by God, which points to the covenantal relationship between Christ and the Church.
2. Reclaim the holiness of sex from the world's distorted version, which cheapens its value and deceives the Church.
3. Commit to fight for sexual intimacy in our marriage because God delights in it.

Word [45 min]

Before Pastor Ernie delved into 1 Corinthians 7:1-24, he emphasised the importance of today's topic because:

1. We have neglected to teach about sex and sexuality from the pulpit for too long.
2. We are constantly besieged by a sex-crazed world with unbiblical views on sexuality.
3. We must redeem the true meaning of sex from the Enemy's perverted version.

Dividing his sermon into two parts, Pastor Ernie focused on *Marital Intimacy* (more than *Divorce and Remarriage*) as it is critical for the church to first understand God's purpose and intention for sex.

Marital Intimacy (vv 1-5)

1. Sex and sexuality from a biblical perspective

In Paul's teaching, he pointed out that husbands and wives have equal responsibilities and privileges in marriage, and one should not deprive the other of sexual intimacy. This is important because sex and sexuality was originally God's idea in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:24-25). It was intended for marital pleasure but it has a much higher purpose. Marital intimacy is actually a holy metaphor of Christ's covenantal relationship with the Church.

Sexual union then is a covenant renewing ceremony between husband and wife, and is therefore a celebration of that covenant (Ephesians 5:31-33). The goal of sex is oneness or *YADA* (Hebrew: *to know intimately*) or "one flesh" (v 31). Sexual intimacy is much more than physical, as popular culture would

have us believe. The “one flesh” principle of biblical sex involves sacrifice, commitment, exclusiveness, vulnerability, and emotions. As Christians, we must view sex from God’s perspective and not from the world’s. For us, sex is holy, not dirty. It delights God when a husband and wife renew their marital covenant through sexual intimacy. Even a whole book in the Bible, Song of Solomon, is dedicated to the celebration of sexual intimacy. God loves sex!

2. Sex from a biological perspective

Sexual intimacy forms intense physical, mental, and emotional bonds between spouses. This happens when four vital hormones are released during sex:

- i. *Dopamine* makes one feel good.
- ii. *Oxytocin* helps one to bond. It is found more in women but it is released more in men during sex.
- iii. *Endorphins* makes one happy.
- iv. *Vasopressin* helps one to commit to another. Primarily released in the men’s brain, it arouses loyalty and commitment, and inspires a protective sense over one’s spouse, after sexual intimacy.

In God’s design (as exemplified through these hormones), human beings are made biologically for a monogamous and committed marital relationship. The hormones released strengthen the marital relationship between spouses.

Hence, sex outside the covenant of marriage is not just wrong because the Bible says so. Illicit sex, including casual sex, adultery and pornography, creates an inability for spouses to bond vulnerably and intimately, and breeds selfishness between husband and wife (due to the re-molding of the brain). Pastor Ernie encouraged married couples not to withhold sex from each other as God is pleased with sexual intimacy in marriage.

Divorce and Remarriage (vv 6-16)

Paul’s teaching regarding the issues surrounding divorce and remarriage in the Corinthian church can be summarised as:

1. The Widowed and Remarriage (vv 8-9)
 - i. The single state and the married state are both gifts from God (v 7).
 - ii. Paul advocates remaining single for those who have lost a spouse but allows for remarriage (vv 8-9).
2. Divorce and Remarriage (vv 10-11)
 - i. Paul forbids remarriage after a divorce.
 - ii. Why? Because of the “one flesh” principle and to promote healing and reconciliation between the spouses.
3. The Multi-Faith Marriage (vv 12-16)
 - i. Paul forbids divorce because salvation of your spouse can happen through the testimony of your commitment to the marriage.

(Note to leaders: Some may have questions regarding our stance on marriage, remarriage and divorce. We do encourage them to write to the church office (office@riverlife.org.sg) to have their questions answered. It is important to note that when Pastor Ernie presented the church’s position on this matter, its goal was not to condemn those who do not live up to these positions, but to communicate the church’s stance so that the

*holiness of God is protected in the church, and to inform those who are considering divorce or remarriage. Our approach towards divorce and remarriage must not be to find a loophole so that one can proceed but rather to give marriage and reconciliation **every chance** with proper counseling and guidance from the church. For those who feel offended due to our church's positions, do encourage them that the church is not condemning them or ostracising them. They are still part of our family and we love them the same as everyone!*

Conclusion

In conclusion, Pastor Ernie encouraged the church that in whatever marital status we find ourselves in – whether single, married, divorced, or widowed – we are to steward it well and run our race with our eyes fixed on the Giver and not the gift (vv 17-24). For married couples, he urged us again to keep fighting for intimacy within our marriages and for the sexual intimacy within the marital relationship, because it is a gift as well as a divine picture of Christ's covenantal relationship with us.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What thoughts and feelings do you bring to a discussion about sex? In what ways has your personal experience, family background, or religious upbringing influenced your comfort (or lack of comfort) in discussing this topic?** [15 min]

- 2. [For married couples] Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-5. Share from your heart after you have read this passage. What mutual obligation do a husband and wife have to each other? Have you been fulfilling this obligation to your spouse? If so, share your story. If not, why?** [15 min]

[For unmarried individuals] After hearing the message, what are some mindsets do you have concerning sex that have been shaped by culture rather than by God's Word that need to be corrected?

- 3. [For everyone] Read 1 Corinthians 7:7-24. Whether you are married or single, how might you "live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned" (v17) and be "responsible to the Lord" (v24) in your present circumstances? What practical steps can you take in your present state in life to grow in holiness?** [15 min]

Resources

The following are resources that your members can refer to deal more with the topic discussed.

For those struggling with sexual issues ranging from pornography to sexual addictions or a wounded past:

Restoring The Pleasure – Clifford & Joyce Penner

Yes, Your Marriage Can Be Saved – Joe & Michelle Williams

<https://2.bebroken.com/>

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/>

Biblical Perspectives on Sex & Sexuality:

Rethinking Sexuality – Dr. Juli Slattery

Passion Pursuit – Linda Dillow & July Slattery

Unmasked – Ps. Ben KC Lee

Passion & Purity – Elizabeth Elliot

God Loves Sex – Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman III

“5 Surprising Things That the Bible Says about Sex” by Paul Carter

<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/5-surprising-things-that-the-bible-says-about-sex/>

Marriage Resources

Strengthening Marriages – Paul David Tripp

Focus On The Family Resources – <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/church/promos/building-a-thriving-church-marriage-ministry>

You And Me Forever – Francis & Lisa Chan

The Meaning Of Marriage – Timothy Keller

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. (If majority of your cell consists of married couples, divide the groups into females and males and encourage them to share their struggles to cultivate intimacy within their marriage before praying for each other.)
2. For every married couple to work towards passionate intimacy within their marriage (YADA).
3. Every RiverLifer sees sexual intimacy as God defines it, not as the world portrays it.

Announcements

1. **We Belong**

RiverLife Conference

23- 24 Aug 2019

Sign up online at www.riverlife.org.sg/webelong by Sun, 4 Aug

2. **Marriage Preparation Course**

8, 15, 22, 29 Sep & 6 Oct (Sundays, 1.45pm-5pm) and 12 Oct (Sat, 9am-5pm)

\$260 Per Couple | Faith Chapel, RiverLife Church

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 1 Sep. For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at

christinetan@riverlife.org.sg or 65114141

3. **No Cell Guide for 2 Aug cell**

All cells are encouraged to attend Pre-Conference Prayer Meeting on 2 Aug.

Church Vision:

“A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations.

Mission:

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.