

Taking it Home:

- If you are married consider how to approach your next sexual encounter with your spouse as an act of worship wherein you affirm God's precious gift of sex, the spouse he has given you, and the reality that sex at its very best hints toward greater satisfaction when we are face to face with the Lord of Glory. You might consider praying in advance about how you might serve your spouse, being a "giver" and not a "taker."
- Whether you are young or more seasoned in life, take some time to write down and/or discuss with a friend the messages our world gives you about sex and sexuality that is one dimensional and self-promoting, as opposed to a gift that can be multi-dimensional, worshipful and other-centered. To what extent do you buy into the world's lies, and how will you redirect your thinking?
- If you are non-married what messages do you believe about sex and sexuality, and how do you either intentionally or perhaps unintentionally communicate those messages in your realm of influence? If you are honest, are they messages that elevate the dignity and majesty of sex as a special gift from God, or are they messages that depart from that and reinforce the many distorted ideas within our world?

For a restatement of Pastor Matthew's sermon points, visit pastormatthew.net and click on the "Write This Down" tab.

Crazy Sex | Embracing God's Best in a world gone crazy Dr. Matthew R. St. John
Created for Community Bethel Church
Genesis 1& 2 ; Matthew 22 May 8, 2011

Created for Community

Notes:

For more information about Growth Groups, Growth Group homework, and a podcast of sermons with homework, visit www.bethelfc.com.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of May 8, 2011

Genesis 1 & 2 ; Matthew 22

Quick Review: In a world that presumes men and women are nothing more than paper plates to be thoughtlessly discarded and replaced, we find an entirely different understanding of sex and sexuality in the mind of the Maker of Heaven and Earth. As scholars Jack and Judith Balswick have written, “Sexuality is a good gift, meant to draw persons to deeper levels of knowing self, others and God.” Genesis 2:25 highlights the power and beauty of shameless and good sexuality. And Matthew 22:39 reminds us that an other-centered love and care is commanded and esteemed. Sex and sexuality is given to complete a male and female in a covenant relationship. It is also given to forge a sacred community.

My Story:

- Some church traditions teach that sex is strictly for procreation (i.e., to have children). The idea is that sex is generally utilitarian and that to treat it as something more than for procreation is to give into lusty desires that are not good for the soul. Have you been influenced by this thinking? Was this something either implied or overtly taught to you as you were growing up?
- Have you ever found yourself afraid or, at least uncomfortable, believing that the act of sex could be something really good and special? Would you be willing to share your thoughts or feelings about any fears you may have or have had?
- Have you ever been made to feel ashamed because of an interest you have had in sex or sexuality in general? What is the root of that shame?

Growing Deeper:

- In his previous message, Pastor Matthew said, “God created us as relational beings, sharing in his moral code, and for whom shameless, covenantal male and female sexual expression is the ultimate symbol of joy, hope and responsibility.” Read Matthew 19:4-6 and process what Pastor Matthew implies by the word “covenantal.”
- Pastor Matthew indicated that as an expression of our humanity with all of its deep longings, sex and sexuality is a special, God-given gift designed to deepen one’s connection with the self, others, and even God. Evaluate this statement and process what is meant by it.
- Scholar Phyllis Tribble wrote that married couples “treat each other with tenderness and respect. Neither escaping nor exploiting sex, they embrace and enjoy it. Their love is truly bone of bone and flesh of flesh, and this image of God as male and female is indeed very good (Gen. 1:27, 31). Testifying to the goodness of creation, then, eroticism becomes worship in the context of grace.” When she speaks of sex as an act of “worship in the context of grace,” what is she suggesting? Consider Romans 12:1 while answering the preceding question.
- Carefully read through Matthew 22:34-40. Now, process what Jesus’ words mean within the context of sex and sexuality. In what way does the command to “love your neighbor” impact how you think of sex and sexuality? What are the implications for you if you are a non-married individual? What are the implications if you are married?
- Now, consider Matthew 22:34-40 as you reflect upon what the world tells you about sex and sexuality. Is there a clash of values, and if so, how and why?