

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 30, 2013

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Pray we will all look to Scripture as the ultimate authority when asking questions about sex and sexuality. Pray for God to convict us to take seriously the Bible's prohibitions regarding sexual activity. Ask God to grant us the humility to examine our own attitudes toward sex as we seek to adopt His. Pray we will be gracious yet truthful toward those who do not share our convictions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding in answering questions we have about sex and sexuality. Pray we will seek the righteousness of Christ in our lives over our own desires and pleasures.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the ministry of Shepherds Fold located in the Princeton area of Birmingham. Shepherds Fold (shepherdsfoldinc.org) is a Christian ministry that provides homes and training to help men and women re-enter society after prison and experience genuine life transformation. We are also praying for Shades Mountain Independent Church and Harry Walls, Pastor.*

Small Group Guide

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- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for the Brook Hills Mid-Term Amanda Giles. Amanda is teaching at the Davis Foundation in Ecuador this summer. The Davis Foundation is an organization that serves over 120 orphanages in Conocoto, Ecuador. Amanda is using her skills as a teacher to teach English at the foundation school on campus. To learn more about Amanda and ways to pray for her visit her blog at www.enormous-esperanza.blogspot.com. We are also praying for our Short-Term Teams serving with Long-Term Missionaries the Brocks and Coes in Ecuador and with Long-Term Missionaries the Mayottes in South Africa.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- The central exhortation: Flee sexual immorality (6:18).
- The biblical clarification: Flee sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman.

Supreme Court Reaction...

- It is good to be grieved...about the degradation (and supposed redefinition) of marriage (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22-33).
- It is right to be concerned...about religious liberty in our country (Mat. 22:21; Acts 4:18-20; Rom. 13:1-7).
- It is imperative to be loving...toward our gay and lesbian friends and neighbors (Gen. 1:26-28; Mat. 22:37-39; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- It is wise to be confident...in the resiliency of marriage, in the opportunity for the gospel, and in the sovereignty of our God (Mat. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:1-10).

Clear Sexual Prohibitions...

- No sex outside of marriage (Exodus 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Prov. 6:28-32; Mat. 19:17-18; Rom. 13:9; Heb. 13:4).
- No sexual worship (Deut. 23:17; Ex. 32:2-6; 1 Cor. 10:8).
- No sexual prostitution (Lev. 19:29; Deut. 23:18; Prov. 6:25-26) or violence (Ez. 45:9; 1 Cor. 13:4-5; Eph. 5:25).
- No homosexual activity (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26).
- No sex with animals (Lev. 18:23-24; 20:15-16), relatives (Lev. 18:6; 1 Cor. 5:1-2), or children (Mat. 18:5-6).
- No sexual lust...having wrong sexual desires for others (Mat. 5:28; Ex. 20:14-17; 2 Pet. 2:14).
- No sexual immodesty...provoking wrong sexual desires in others (Rom. 14:21; 1 Tim. 2:9-10).
- No sexual allurement (including inappropriate emotional attachment) outside of marriage (Prov. 4:23; 5:1-23; 7:1-27).
- No sexual looking (Gen. 9:22-24; Job 31:1-4; Mat. 5:27-29) or touching (Deut. 25:11-12; Heb. 13:4) outside of marriage.
- No entertaining ourselves with or joking around about sex outside of marriage (Eph. 5:3-12).

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Common Practical Questions...

- How far is too far between a single man and a single woman?
 - Three God-ordained categories...
 - The neighbor relationship: sexual activity prohibited (Lk. 10:25-37; 1 Cor. 7:7-9).
 - The family relationship: sexual activity prohibited (Lev. 18:6; 1 Tim. 5:1-2).
 - The marriage relationship: sexual activity commanded (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
 - One God-glorifying conclusion...
 - Regardless of whether you are single or married, flee any and all sexual activity outside of marriage (1 Cor. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 4:3-8).
- What about masturbation? (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 13:14)
 - God designed sex to be relational; masturbation is lustful.
 - God designed sex to be covenantal; masturbation is non-committal.
 - God designed sex to be intimate; masturbation is superficial.
 - God designed sex to be fruitful; masturbation is fruitless.
 - God designed sex to be selfless; masturbation is self-centered.
 - God designed sex as a complex union; masturbation involves personal isolation.
 - God designed sex as a complementary heterosexual act; masturbation is a personal homosexual act.
- How do I fight pornography?

THE GOSPEL AND PORNOGRAPHY

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.
1 Peter 2:11

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...
2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The Character of God

- Cultivate unshakeable zeal for the glory of God's name (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Sam. 12:10-14; Mat. 6:9-10).

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
Matthew 6:9-10

- Acknowledge your sexual drive as a good gift from a gracious God (Gen. 2:24-25; Prov. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Gen. 39:7-9).

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
Genesis 2:24-25

The Sinfulness of Man

- Run from every temptation, knowing that one sin is enough to warrant infinite damnation (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Rom. 13:14; Job 31:1).

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20

whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

- Guard yourself with godly friendships and gospel accountability (Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25).

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:12-13

The Character of Christ

- Contemplate the price Christ paid for your purity. See Him writhing on a cross in agony. Fight tempting images with that image (1 Pet. 1:13-19; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 10:26-29; 1 Cor. 6:15-17).

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

1 Corinthians 6:15-17

- Consider the compassion Christ has for the souls of men and women. Love and pray for them; don't exploit and abuse them (Mat. 9:36; Jn. 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:16).

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:36

The Necessity of Faith

- Believe that God is for you...and knows what is best for you (Ps. 34:8-10; 84:11-12; Rom. 8:32; Mk. 10:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:13).

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Psalms 34:8-10

- Memorize and meditate on Scripture (Ps. 119:9-11; Ps. 1:1-2; 1 Jn. 2:14).

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Psalms 119:9-11

The Urgency of Eternity

- Ponder the eternal danger and destruction associated with sexual sin (Mt. 5:27-29; Mk. 9:43-48; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5-6; Jude 1:7; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:14-15).

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Matthew 5:27-30

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

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June 30, 2013

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- Ponder the eternal delight and joy associated with future salvation (Ps. 16:11; 73:25-26; Phil. 3:12-21; Rev. 19:1-8).

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Revelation 19:6-8

Final Gospel Exhortations...

- Repent of (and run from) any and all sexual activity outside of marriage (1 Cor. 6:18).
- Rejoice in (and run to) sexual activity in marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
- Receive today (and rest in) the forgiveness and freedom, hope and healing that are found in Christ alone.

Message Summary

This week's message is part two of our examination on how the cross of Christ informs human sexuality. While last week's sermon focused on sexual sin through the lens of the gospel, this week examines common questions regarding sex and sexuality such as how far is too far, how to fight against pornography, and what about masturbation. The Bible offers clear prohibitions on sexual activities of various kinds, and it is important that we have a solid biblical and theological understanding of human sexuality to address our contemporary culture.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Take time to review the passage and content discussed in part one of "The Cross and Christian Sexuality." In light of the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions this week regarding the Defense of Marriage Act (*United States v. Windsor*) and California's Proposition Eight (*Hollingsworth v. Perry*), discuss these cases and their implications. An additional resource that explains these cases is "9 Things You Should Know About the Supreme Court's Same-Sex Marriage Cases" by Joe Carter on The Gospel Coalition blog (thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/). How should we as Christians respond to these cases? Consider using Pastor David's exhortations as a helpful outline to discuss these rulings.

When monumental events like this happen in our culture, the church has the opportunity, challenge, and privilege of responding with Christ-honoring compassion and love. As you and those in your group inevitably hear people around you talk about these rulings, how can you speak the truth in love? How do these cases present us with a greater opportunity for gospel witness? How do we often fail to respond with compassion to situations like this in our culture? Paul told the Ephesians to "Be angry and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26). While it is certainly good to grieve the degradation of marriage and even to be angry, how do we do so without sinning? In your conversations about this issue over the past week, have you lived this out? How can we best love our LGBT friends and neighbors? How does responding with hatred and frustration minimize the witness of the church? Ultimately, remind the group that we can be completely confident in God's goodness and purpose in marriage. Things in this life may often seem uncertain, but God is not taken by surprise by the rules of the

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 30, 2013

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Supreme Court. How do recent events allow us to model our hope and confidence in the Lord to a hurting world?

The Bible gives many clear prohibitions to sexual activity of various kinds. In a co-ed group, consider dividing into same gender groups to discuss these prohibitions and to create an environment that invites people to openly share. Review the ten clear sexual prohibitions from the outline. How can we guard our hearts and lives against them? Do any members of your group struggle with these? If so, what steps could they take to live a life free from these sexual sins. The first five prohibitions all involve physical activity, and the last five have to do with attitudes and actions of the heart. What are the differences between the two? How does sexual sin affect both the body and the heart? For example, while it is clearly wrong to commit adultery, how is it equally wrong to form inappropriate emotional relationships with someone who is not your spouse? Do we treat both of these with equal seriousness? Why do we more freely forgive emotional sins than physical?

Do you or the members of your group entertain yourselves with sex outside of marriage? Consider the jokes you make, the books you read, the music you listen to, or the movies and television shows you watch. What do these reveal about you? After participating in the above activities, can you give thanks to God for what you just watched or listened to or read? Discuss how to determine whether a gray area like television, movies, and music is acceptable. In *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges offers four helpful questions to ask when making such judgments: (1) Is it helpful? (2) Does it bring me under its power? (3) Does it hurt others? (4) Does it glorify God?

If you were to spend time with non-believers or a new Christian, would your lifestyle indicate to them that you value biblical sexuality and marriage? How do we hold ourselves to a higher standard without seeming humorless, uptight, or judgmental? How would you respond if you were with a group of people who were watching a movie that caused you feel uncomfortable or if the people you were around made off-color jokes? How do you exhibit grace in these situations?

To the world, Christians can sometimes be stereotyped as people who are defined by what they do not do; why is this too often the case? How is this a misunderstanding of the Christian life? Ask the group how they could respond to someone who felt this way? How would you explain Christian freedom to a new-believer, child, or non-Christian? While it is often easy to state prohibitions in the negative (do not have sex outside marriage), how could they be framed in the positive?

When dealing with a topic like sexuality, there are undoubtedly many practical questions that arise. Do the members of your group feel comfortable answering questions people might have about sexuality? God's Word defines marriage between a man and a woman as the only appropriate means of sexual expression. However, often in our culture there are issues of sexuality that many people see as being gray areas. How should we as believers address these gray areas? Though the Bible does not directly address issues like physical boundaries between people in a dating relationship, masturbation, or pornography, there are places in Scripture that inform our understanding of these things. What Scripture would you reference to help a believer who has questions about these issues? Does anyone in your group struggle with some kind of sexual sin in their life? How can the group help them be vigilant in their fight against sin?

In your group, there are likely some who have been victims of sexual sin (abuse, rape, etc.) as well as those who have engaged in premarital sex, extramarital affairs, or pornography. Be intentional in spotlighting God's grace and forgiveness for those who have sinned. While God forgives, some people struggle in forgiving themselves or in forgiving those who have sinned against them. How does the gospel affect our capacity for forgiveness? How does the gospel enable us to combat shame and guilt? How do we find healing in Christ alone?

If you lead a group of men, consider spending the group's time discussing "The Cross and Pornography" portion of the sermon. Ask why pornography is such a temptation for men. How can Christian men fight against this sin? How can Christian men help each other resist this particular temptation? What are specific actions steps that can be taken this week to fight against pornography?

Small Group Guide

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For small groups consisting of parents, ask if any of them discussed last week's sermon with their children, and if so, debrief how it went. Ask the parents if they feel equipped to discuss sexuality with their children. What questions do they have about talking to their children about dating, sex, homosexuality, etc.? How can you the small group leader and the church come alongside these families to better equip them to discuss such tough issues with their children? One resource is the Faith Family Worship Guide that is produced with each sermon to assist families in discussing the sermon with preschoolers, children, and students (radical.net/media).

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Review how the Bible defines sexual immorality. What is the one central biblical exhortation for all sexual immorality?
- How would you characterize your response to the recent Supreme Court Decision? Why is it good to be grieved by the recent decisions on DOMA and Proposition 8?
- How can we live and submit to God's will in a cultural climate where it is increasingly difficult to do so? How should we respond as we face a rising tide of cultural opposition to biblical ideals?
- Our LGBT (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender) friends and neighbors are not our enemies. How can we as a church be loving and gracious towards the gay community? What does that look like in your own life?
- What does the Bible say about homosexual activity? Why is important to know what Scripture says on this issue? How would you respond to someone who believes commands against homosexual activity are outdated and are dangerous commands? How would you respond to someone who asked why we do not follow Old Testament dietary and ceremonial laws (prohibitions about eating shellfish (Leviticus 11:10) or wearing clothing made of mixed fibers (Leviticus 19:19), but uphold a biblical model of human sexuality?
- For the women, with regard to sexual immodesty do you consider God's ideal when you dress? What types of clothing are immodest? What are heart reasons for why women dress immodestly? For the men, what steps can you take to ensure that you are not looking lustfully at women? Beyond clothing, what are other ways we provoke wrong sexual desires in others?
- Why is inappropriate emotional attachment outside of marriage wrong? How can we protect our marriages from this type of activity? While we may not recapture the initial "head over heels" excitement and attachment experienced at the beginning of a marriage, what can you do to invest in the emotional health of your marriage?
- Read Ephesians 5:3-12. Is your speech characterized in this way? If we are comfortable with crude sexual humor and innuendo, what does that communicate about us to the outside world? How does this compromise our witness?
- While there are clear prohibitions to sexual activities outside of marriage, the Bible does not view sexuality negatively. What is the biblical picture of sexuality? How can we show confidence and joy in the biblical model of sex and sexuality?
- How can single men and single women in a friendship or in a dating relationship glorify God with their sexuality?
- Define neighbor, family, and marriage relationships. How do these relationships help us understand the "how far is too far"? Why does the Bible never directly address this issue? How would the first century audience have understood passages like 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8? Why is "how far is too far" really the wrong question to ask? What is a better question to ask? How can we teach appropriate boundaries to younger Christians and new believers? What are appropriate boundaries for dating or engaged couples?

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 2)

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- How does masturbation stand against the seven biblical purposes of marriage that Pastor David mentioned in the previous sermon?
- Do you or have you ever struggled with pornography? How can you fight against it? If this is a personal struggle for you, what resources could you rely on to aid in your fight?
- The power of sin is often in its secrecy. How can we develop relationships and friendships to guard against a many different types of sin? What role does accountability play in sanctification? What is biblical accountability?
- What role does Scripture memorization play in your live? How does this spiritual discipline help us fight sin in our lives? How can you begin to memorize more Scripture? Is there another brother or sister you could team up with to encourage you in this discipline? What particular Scripture would it be helpful to memorize and meditate on that address particular struggles in your life?
- In light of the gospel, how do we receive and rest in the forgiveness of Christ? How do we forgive others and ourselves for sexual sin? How we handle shame and guilt over past sins? How do we find healing in Christ?