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## Sexual Disorder

### 1. Introduction

- This is the second talk in our four part series of Love, Sex and Marriage
- If you weren't here last week, then I encourage to jump online and download the talk from the website
- Because last week we looked at the sexual foundations God lays down for us in his word
  - We looked at God's good pattern for Love, Sex and Marriage
- And we saw that
  - marriage is the **public, permanent** and **physical** union between two **equal** but **different** and **interdependent** people, that is **ordered**
  - marriage has a purpose – serving God, procreation and pointing us to the perfect marriage in Christ
  - and that ultimately, God wants us all to be married to Jesus
- Having heard all that ... you might be thinking ...
  - "That's fine Stu, but that's not how it is now"
  - "That's not the reality we live in"
    - My marriage isn't perfect, in facts it's tough
    - Lots of my friends are in gay relationships
    - The world's a different place to the one you just described"
- Well if you were thinking that, you'd be absolutely right
  - God's good pattern for Love, Sex and Marriage has been fractured
  - The good order that God put in place in the beginning has become disordered
- Our task today is to explore Sexual Disorder
  - Why things have gone so pear-shaped with our sexuality and relationships

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- Given the disorder that exists, how much of God's good pattern still stands
  - This morning
    - Sexual disorder and the effect of sin
    - Sexual disorder and the teaching of Jesus
    - Sexual disorder and the challenge of the gospel
    - Sexual disorder and the good news of Jesus

## 2. Sexual Disorder and the Effect of Sin

### Genesis 3

- In Genesis 3 we see the root of all that is wrong with our world
- God gave specific instructions to A&E not to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge
  - They could from ALL other trees, but not this particular tree
- Why?
  - Because the tree was a visual reminder to them that this is God's world that they're taking care of on God's behalf and that God is their creator that they're to submit to him
- But A&E deliberately ignore God's authority and they eat the fruit from the tree
- Notice the nature of sin here is the rejection of God and his authority
  - And how is this demonstrated?
    - Ignoring his word
    - Determining that they will decide what is right for themselves
- And immediately we see there are consequences for their rebellion against God ... both in our human nature and the creation itself
- We see this immediately in Gen 3
  - Eve will incur pain in child bearing
  - Ground is cursed and not as fruitful as it once was
  - Adam will find work hard and frustrating

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- Most significantly, human relationships are marred
    - Whereas before Adam and Eve stood before each other naked and unashamed, completely open and vulnerable with each other
    - Now they are ashamed, guarded, defensive
  - In addition, God says in 3:16 - "*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you*"
    - Meaning, there will be this power struggle between man and woman as they seek to dominate and manipulate one another
  - The consequence of the Fall means that sin has infected every aspect of life
    - See it in natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and bushfires
    - See it in the tragic death of a still born baby
    - See it in the twisted minds of those who drive trucks through crowds of people
    - See it in the way our bodies wane and fail with sickness and aging
    - And we see it in the way it has affected our sexuality and relationships
  - The effect of sin on sex and marriage is seen in the various storylines of the Bible
    - Lust, adultery, divorce, rape, multiple wives, children born to different wives and concubines, as well as same-sex activity
    - All are expressions of broken human sexual desires that go against God's good design
  - The world that God so joyfully declared in Gen 1 was 'very good' has been fractured
    - Like a mirror that is hit by a cricket ball
      - Cracks spread and spread until eventually the whole mirror is covered
      - It's a fractured image of what it once was
  - **Application**
  - The reality of sin and the brokenness of this world has two major impacts
  - First is on the creation order itself
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- The world is no longer perfect as God created it
- God's pattern for this world is not as it should be
- Which means there are things of this world that we have no control over that affect us
- When it comes to God's design for sex and marriage one of the consequences is that not all couples who marry will be able to bear children
  - Remember God's commission to A&E was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth
  - But because our world is now broken, childlessness is a reality for some people
  - It's not their fault > it's not because they have sinned or God is punishing them ... it's the consequence of sin in our world
- One of the other effects of the fall on humanity is on our sexuality and gender
  - God's good design for humanity was to create us male and female and the two would become one flesh in marriage
  - But because our creation is broken, there will be some who experience SSA
  - That is they won't be sexually attracted to a person of the opposite gender ... they'll be attracted to someone of the same gender
- A similar, but more complicated outcome is that others will experience gender dysphoria
  - There are different aspects of our sexuality which include
    - birth sex - sex you & I are assigned at birth, which correlates with our genitalia
    - gender - inner feelings we experience / feel of being male or female
  - For most people birth sex and gender align

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- Gender dysphoria is the distress a person (like the decathlete Bruce Jenner) experiences when there is a mismatch between their birth sex and their gender
  - There are some who are born male, but identify as female and vice versa
  - Now it's important to understand a couple of things here
  - Firstly, we don't really know why some people experience SSA or GD
    - Some want to argue that it's all **nature** > that is, you're born that way
    - Others argue that is all **nurture** > that is, it's your upbringing and environment that causes this
    - Truth is, we just don't know and the most likely explanation is, it's a combination of both
  - Second thing, which flows on from this is ... people don't choose to experience SSA or GD
    - They can choose how to respond to what they experience
    - But no-one chooses to be SSA or GD
    - But the Bible helps us to see that this is just one of the many consequences of the fall on our created world

#### Matthew 15:19-20

- The other effect of the Fall, is not just the brokenness of the world, but also the brokenness of us
- In Matt 15:19-20 Jesus says these words
  - *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'*
- Pharisees (and many people today) agree on the reality of sin, but they think of sin like dirt or a stain ... it's something that's outside of us

- Jesus totally undermines this idea of sin
  - Jesus says ... 'what comes out of the heart' is the issue
  - Sin not 'out there' to be avoided ... sin is in each and every one of us > it's in the heart
  - It's part of our natural being
  
- Our culture says in order to flourish as a person
  - you need to look into yourself
  - you need to find yourself
  - you need to discover the real you
    - and embrace that and express that and remain true to that
  - When you do that our culture celebrates that
  
- But when we look into ourselves properly, when we actually take a good look at our hearts ... we don't find the solution ... we find the problem
  - For there we see our sinfulness and brokenness
  
- In Matt 15:19-20 Jesus lists a bunch of sins here which are by no means exhaustive but he includes 'sexual immorality'
  - Sexual Immorality = means any sex outside of marriage > adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexual sex
  
- You see what Jesus is saying
  - The Fall and the impact on all of humanity since has resulted in us all being sexually broken
  - God's good design for sex and marriage has gone pear shaped
  - We're all sexually disordered in one way or another
  
- Sam Allberry
  - Author of the book 'Is God anti-gay?'
  - "No one is straight. We're all bent in some way when it comes to our sexuality"
  
- Which is why ...

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- Divorce, adultery, abortion, DV, teen sex, rape, pornography ... all are common part of our broken sexual culture
  - But our sexual brokenness is not limited to the extreme either
  - Our sexual brokenness is why
    - Marriage is hard, even a good marriage
    - We look lustfully at a person we see at the beach or on the street
    - We will try and sleep with someone before we're willing to marry them
  - And being a Christian doesn't make you immune from the brokenness of this world – whether that's falling ill, facing tragedy, experiencing anxiety or disordered sexuality
  - All of us will experience fallen, broken sexual desires – whether they are heterosexual or homosexual desires

### 3. Sexual Disorder and the Teaching of Jesus

- Given the sexual brokenness of our world ... how much of God's original design for sex and marriage still holds?
  - Can we say that because SSA is a part of our world now, that SSM is okay?
- A really helpful passage is Matthew 19 where Jesus gives us an answer to that
  - <sup>3</sup> *Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"* <sup>4</sup> *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'* <sup>5</sup> *and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?* <sup>6</sup> *So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*
- The Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus on the issue of divorce

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- If Jesus says divorce is ok ... the Pharisees will say 'Jesus soft on sin - you're a liberal'
  - If Jesus says divorce is not okay ... then that puts him in danger with Herod (who had John the Baptist beheaded because he rebuked Herod for divorcing his wife to marry his brother's wife)
    - The Pharisee could call up Herod and dob Jesus in
  - Now in answering their question on divorce, Jesus refers to them to Gen 1 & 2 in v4 & 5
  - They've asked about divorce ... but Jesus answers with marriage
  - Basically, Jesus is saying ...
    - You won't understand divorce until you understand marriage
    - You won't understand marriage unless you understand God has made us male and female ... that God created us sexually different
  - And because God has made us male and female, we have this thing called marriage ... and marriage is tied to our sexuality
  - And so
    - even with all the brokenness in our world marred by the effects of sin ...
    - even though God's good design for sex and marriage has been fractured
      - Jesus confirms that marriage by definition is between one man and one woman
  - Now this is a really important moment
    - Because if there was **ever** an opportunity where Jesus could have taught that sex and marriage should evolve with the times – **this was it!**
    - But he doesn't
    - He goes back to Gen 1 and Gen 2 and then Jesus even adds his own confirmation at the end of v6
      - *Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate*

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- However, what we also see from Jesus teaching is that there are some developments that have taken place now that sin has entered the world and affected God's good design
  
  - The first development is that not all marriages last for life
    - You see how Jesus says in v7-9 says that God permitted divorce in certain situations because the hearts of the people were hard
    - It's a way of saying that because human sinfulness is in the equation now, there are times and circumstances when God's good pattern for sex and marriage won't be lived out
    - And God knows that ... and God has made a good and gracious provision for human sin, even within his Law
    - And so Jesus acknowledges there are certain circumstances which allow for divorce
  
  - The second development we notice is that not all people will marry
  - Matt 19:10 after Jesus has outlined God's pattern for marriage ... the disciples respond
    - <sup>10</sup> ... *"If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."*
    - They realise that marriage hard ... and that if that's how it's meant to be, then maybe it's better to avoid the whole thing altogether
  
  - Jesus response to them is significant
    - <sup>11</sup> ... *"Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. <sup>12</sup> For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."*
  
  - Eunuchs were people who could not or chose not to marry
    - Jesus indicates their celibacy might have been
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- the result of birth; > physical defect > unable to have children; or
  - because of human intervention > in those times some slaves and court officials were castrated > or perhaps by accident; or
  - because they chose to
    - v12 says “...and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven”<sup>1</sup>
    - It means they voluntarily chose to be single and celibate rather than marry
  - Why? Because they are living in the kingdom of heaven
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- Whatever the cause, Jesus makes it clear here, that the only alternative to God’s design for sex and marriage ... is chaste singleness
    - That is, for Jesus, celibacy is the alternative to marriage
  - You can see the implications here for SSM and those with SSA
  - According to Jesus, there’s no third possibility
    - Not same-sex marriage
    - Not sleeping with your boyfriend / girlfriend before you get married
  - As far as Jesus is concerned, the godly alternatives before us are heterosexual marriage or celibate singleness
    - Both are right and good and godly ways to live
    - Both are to be valued and both are ways in which we serve God and his kingdom
      - Much more to say about singleness next week

#### 4. Sexual Disorder and Challenge of the Gospel

- There will be people who hear Jesus teaching on sex and marriage and think this is harsh
  - That to deny your sexuality sounds is unreasonable, cruel and damaging
- They’ll say

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<sup>1</sup> A better translation is “... and others have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven”. However, not saying they castrated themselves

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- "This is crazy – to live a life without sex is sub-human! We're made sexual beings. To deny that is to take away our humanity"
  - In Mark 8:34 Jesus says
    - *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*
  - Notice Jesus says, "If ANYONE wants to follow me you must deny yourself"
    - To deny yourself and follow me is a call to ALL people
    - It's costly for every person to follow Jesus whoever you are
    - It's not just SSA people or single people who Jesus calls on to deny themselves
    - Whether you're gay or straight ... Jesus says following me means you will have to deny yourself
  - And Jesus is not talking about denying yourself chocolate!
    - He's saying 'No' to self
    - He's saying 'No' to some of the deepest longings, desires and ambitions you have
  - We ALL have things we need to repent of and handover to Jesus
    - All of us are fallen ... and sin taints every aspect of life > including our sexuality
    - Because what Jesus says about sex and marriage challenges everyone, not just SSA people
    - We all have disordered desires and affections
  - And so there'll be times in ALL our lives when we feel Jesus is calling us to deny ourselves
  - Others will hear Jesus teaching and say it's unfair
    - "It's okay to be married and have sexual intimacy if you're heterosexual ... but not if you're SSA ... that's hypocritical, it's not fair"
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- The Bible affirms that singleness is good and godly thing
- Jesus example shows us this is the case
  - To say that being single and celibate means you're somehow unfulfilled is to say Jesus was unfulfilled
  - We know Jesus was never married > he never had sex
  - And yet he is the most perfect, complete and fulfilled human being ever
- And therefore Jesus shows that sex and marriage are not intrinsic to being human

## 5. Sexual Disorder and the Good News of Jesus

- The obvious question that comes from this is ... "Is it all worth it?"
  - The good news of Jesus means the answer to that question is an emphatic "Yes!"
- You see the paradox of denying yourself to follow Jesus ... is that when you lose our life to him ... you truly gain it
  - *Mark 8:35 - For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*
- In the words of Sam Allberry
  - *"It's never a bad deal to follow Jesus. Whatever you give up for Jesus he will give you much more. What we leave behind will never compare to what he gives"*
- What does Jesus give?
  - Many things ... but let me outline three
- Jesus gives you
  - A new identity
  - A new start
  - A new community

### ***New Identity***

- When you follow Jesus Christ ... he gives you a new identity

- Loved by God
- Child of God
- Made whole in Christ
- Citizen of heaven
- “The death you should've died” says Jesus “I died for you”
- The judgment that should've come to you ... Jesus takes that bullet for you
- The perfect life you could not live to be right with God ...
  - Jesus says “ I lived it for you and I wants to give it to you”
- This is gift that Jesus give to ALL sinful and broken people who turn to him
  
- And this gift of a new identity in Christ is particularly powerful for us in our present culture and climate
- This truth – a gift of a new identity – has particular power for those who experience SSA or GD
- Because it tells us that your sexuality is not your identity
  - Your same-sex attraction or gender identity is not the sum total of you
  - And this is true whether you're a Christian or not
  - Even for someone who's not a Christian ... your core identity is in being a human being made in the image of God
  - And when you're a Christian ... then your core identity is made new in Christ
- Yes your sexuality is part of who you are ... even a deep part of who you are ... but it is not the key to unlocking your humanity
- That's the first gift Jesus wants to give us ... a new identity

### ***New Start***

- Second thing Jesus wants to give us a new start
- Jesus welcomes everyone to himself > he was known for hanging out with sinners and tax collectors

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- And without his welcome, without his love, without his mercy ... none of us would be here
  - But no one who comes to Jesus ever stays the same
  - 1 Cor 6 describes the new start that comes to all sinners who are willing to repent and follow Jesus
    - <sup>9</sup> *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*
  - Firstly, notice that the Apostle Paul says that unrepentant greed and deception and drunkenness are just serious as sexual immorality, adultery and homosexuality
    - Paul doesn't single out the LGBTI community for special mention
    - He just says ALL forms of rebellion against God is an issue
  - Secondly, notice that no-one is beyond God's forgiveness
    - No-one is unable to be made right with God
    - "*For this is what some of them **were***" says Paul
  - In other words, Jesus gives a fresh start to all sinners who are willing to put aside their disordered desires and follow Jesus
  - And while
    - our transformation is gradual > our sins don't disappear overnight
    - our status before God is completely renewed in Christ – washed, sanctified, justified
  - Which means ... regardless of who you are, what you've done, or how you feel ...
    - No one is considered damaged good in God's eyes
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- Your past cannot disqualify you from the new start you can have in Christ
  - That's the second gift Jesus gives, a new start

### ***New Community***

- The third gift Jesus gives is a new community
- Those verses from 1 Cor 6 describes what the church is like in Corinth
- It was a messy church, a broken church, a church full of sinful people
- But still 'the church'!
- It's a community of
  - forgiven, broken people
  - washed sinners
  - people who are brothers and sisters in Christ
  
- Keller Illustration – Churches
  - *Churches should be like waiting rooms for doctors not like waiting rooms for job interviews. In the latter we try and look as competent and impressive as we can. Weaknesses are buried and hidden. But in a doctors waiting room, we assume everyone is sick and needs help. And this is much closer to the reality of what is going on in church*
  
- I attended conference last term where Sam Allberry spoke
- He said there are things churches can do to ensure they are being a loving community that welcomes people like him who have SSA
  - Avoid using the word 'gay' in a pejorative way
  - Be gracious about how you speak about the LGBTI community
  - Because when you do that ... church will feel like a much safer place for someone like Sam to share what they're going through and ask for help in standing firm in their walk with Jesus
  
- The other thing is providing good friendships

- Sam said the hardest thing about being SSA is not sexual temptation, but loneliness
  - And therefore one the most loving things we can do as a church family is to be like a family to one another
  - To be a place where we cultivate good, strong friendships with one another, so that those who are SSA can experience love and intimacy that they crave within our church family
  - Say more on this next week
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- There is much more to say
  - We're all sexually broken ... we all have disordered sexual desires we need to repent of and that need transforming by Jesus
  - But the great news of the gospel ... is that
    - when we repent and come to Jesus ...
    - when we're willing to deny ourselves to follow him
  - He gives us much more than we can ever imagine
  - He gives us
    - A new identity
    - A new start
    - A new community

## **PRAY**

### **Next week**

Singleness – never married, divorced, widowed, SSA – single and celibate  
Intimacy, friendship, idol of marriage