

INTRODUCTION

We live in interesting times. Last fall, on November 6, 2012, voters in Washington State approved two controversial issues, same-sex marriage and personal marijuana use. It's interesting that the Bible says in Leviticus 20:13, "If a man lies with a man; they shall be stoned." When Moses wrote that 3,500 years, who knew it would make sense in 2013?

We sent out a notice this week to parents of young children announcing my topic. Of course, I won't be using graphic language or saying anything I wouldn't say to my own grandchildren, it is a topic that can lead to questions from children. Moms and dads, here's a parenting tip: teach your children about sex before their hormones hit. If *you* don't teach them, someone else will.

Today, I'm joining several thousand pastors around America to speak clearly about sexual morality and the definition of marriage. The reason pastors are speaking on this subject is because the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule this week on whether or not to overturn, DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act passed in 1996, the federal law that defines marriage as a union between one woman and one man.

So there is speculation that this week, America may have a new definition of marriage. For several thousand years the definition of marriage in Western Civilization has been "the lifelong union of a man and woman as husband and wife." The Supreme Court could redefine marriage as "a combination of any two consenting adults."

So, before the Supreme Court of the United States rules, I want to remind you that they are not the Supreme Court of the universe. There is a Supreme Judge of humanity, and He is the Lord God. He hasn't changed His definition of marriage.

I planned this series from 1 Thessalonians about 11 months ago, and "it just so happens" that the very next text in our study deals with sexual purity. What a coincidence. So, let's see what God's Word says about Sexual Purity in an X-Rated Culture.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. "Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

We're living in an x-rated culture. When I was a kid, Playboy magazines were kept under the counter at the local Piggly Wiggly. Today, we live in a sex-saturated world where any kind of sexual act can be seen with a couple of clicks of your mouse. Our nation's sexual morality can be summarized as "As long as it's consensual, you can have sex as many different ways as you

want; with as many different partners as you want; and at any time you want." All the boundaries have been removed.

If you choose to live a life of sexual purity, you will be considered an oddball. And when you embrace the truth about Biblical marriage and sex, you will be called worse names.

As I thought about this message, I realized that what I'm going to tell you is so foreign to what you are exposed to in books, movies, TV shows, and music, that I'm going to sound like someone from another planet—or maybe from an alternate reality.

Then I realized our situation is like the movie "The Matrix." In the Matrix the world is run by computers that have everyone fooled into thinking their existence is real. People are kept asleep by malicious computers. But Morpheus leads a small group of people who have awakened and escaped from that dream world. They enlist Neo, but he's skeptical. Morpheus holds out his hands offering a red pill or a blue pill. He says, "I'm trying to free your mind, Neo, but only you can walk through the door." If Neo takes the blue pill, he'll wake up and continue his life of blissful ignorance, like everyone else. If he takes the red pill he will awaken to truth and reality.

When it comes to sex, most of the people in our culture have taken the blue pill. Americans are so obsessed with sex and their sexual rights that it's almost like they're hypnotized. It drives their entire existence. They think they cannot be happy unless they are free to fulfill every sexual fantasy.

But God wants you to take the red pill, the truth pill. He wants you to see the reality of life from His perspective, not the world's. Jesus is the red pill. He is the way, the truth and the life. God wants you to embrace the truth about sexual purity, even though almost everyone around you is gobbling down the blue pills called sexual freedom.

Let me give you four red truth-pills about what the Bible teaches about sex. If you chose to believe these, you will be living in a totally different reality than most Americans.

1. SEX IS GOOD; GOD CREATED IT

Sex wasn't created by Satan, Hugh Hefner, Carrie Bradshaw, HBO, or by the internet. Sex was created by the Holy God of heaven, where purity reigns. He gave each of us a sex drive to be used for His glory. If he hadn't given us a sex drive, sex wouldn't exist. And by the way, we wouldn't exist without sex.

Our x-rated culture has made sex a dirty topic. A joke about sex is called a dirty joke. I remember the first dirty joke I ever heard: A white horse fell in the mud.

The fact that you may feel uncomfortable as I'm talking about sex is because the world has stolen what God created and made it into something vulgar and wicked.

Dr. Al Mohler, the President of Southern Seminary, wrote: "Christians have no right to be embarrassed when it comes to talking about sex and sexuality. An unhealthy embarrassment in

dealing with these issues is a form of disrespect to God's creation. Whatever God made is good, and every good thing God made has an intended purpose that ultimately reveals His own glory."

God created the heavens and the earth. He created all the animals, and he created Adam. He told Adam to have dominion over all the animals and to name them. So Adam saw a couple of tall animals with long necks, and he said, "That looks like a giraffe." Then a couple of wide-bodies waddled out of the river and he said, "That looks like a hippopotamus." As this continued, Adam began to notice something. For every Mr. Giraffe, there was a Mrs. Giraffe. And with Mr. Hippo, there was Mrs. Hippo, although she didn't like being called that. But Adam looked around and there was no Mrs. Adam. God saw that he was all alone and said, "It's not good for man to be alone." So God put Adam to sleep and performed surgery. God removed one of his ribs. You might say Adam had a spare rib and God turned it into a prime rib. Because when Adam woke up, he saw this beautiful creature named Eve. And he said, "Whoa! Man."

No actually, Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That's what Adam said, and here's what God said: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:23-25) That's the first reference to sex in the Bible—flesh that is joined as one) Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

They lived in a perfect, pure world. They were naked and there was no embarrassment, because there was no self-consciousness. The reason we're embarrassed about anything is because we suffer from a sense of self-consciousness, we want to protect "self." We don't want anyone to laugh at "self." Adam and Eve didn't live self-centered lives; they lived God-centered lives. There was no shame.

And things were great until Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Suddenly, they became sinners—they became self-centered and thereby self-conscious. What was the first thing they did? Ooops! (Cover up). They realized they were naked, and made fig leaf suits for themselves. Adam wasn't picky, but I suspect Eve tried on a sycamore leaf, oak leaf, and maple leaf before she settled on the fig leaf dress. And that's why we're all wearing clothes today. Here's the second red pill of truth about sex.

2. GOD CREATED SEX TO BE SHARED ONLY BETWEEN A HUSBAND AND WIFE

Marriage is the most important institution in the world. Before God established nations or the church, he established marriage. The Bible begins with a marriage in a Garden and ends with a Wedding in Heaven, when Jesus the Bridegroom is united with the church, the Bride of Christ.

God created sex for two purposes: First, to unite. It is an act of love that joins together a husband and wife on the deepest levels, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. That's why we often call it making love. The second purpose is to procreate, to make babies. Before Adam and Eve sinned, God told them to be fruitful and multiply, and to fill the whole earth.

The x-rated world treats sex just like other animals. It's just a physical urge that needs to be released. Have you ever seen a movie or TV scene in a bar where the drinks are flowing and the

music is hopping? Men and woman are on the prowl to hook-up. They're just like animals in mating season.

Now think about it: All mammals have sex, but none of them are doing it to express love. God gave them a sexual instinct to propagate their species. When a farmer is breeding cattle he doesn't come in and say, "Martha, the Bull and the Heifer are making love." Farmers and breeders say, "The animals are mating."

Sex between a husband and wife is a sacred act in the eyes of God. Pick-up sex between animals, both the four legged and two legged versions, isn't sacred, it's just a physical act.

Last summer there was a firestorm about Chick-fil-A when Dan Cathy said he and his family are Christians and believe the Bible teaches that marriage is for one man and one woman for all time. Gay activists called for a boycott of Chick-fil-A. Of course, the boycott backfired, and so many supporters showed up that the lines wrapped around the blocks and Chick-fil-A set a one-day sales record. In response to the failed boycott, GLAAD, the Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, declared the following Friday as open-mouth-kiss-your-partner day at Chick-fil-A.

There were a few protestors who showed up with signs and stood in front of the Troup Highway Store. In a photo in the *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, one of the protestors was holding a sign that basically said: "What Jesus said about same-sex marriage..." And the rest of the sign was left blank. Communicating, in that person's opinion, that Jesus was silent about homosexuality and same sex-marriage. That protestor had a right to express his opinion, but when he misquoted my best friend, I felt the need to correct him. So I posted that picture on Facebook. I simply stated that when the Pharisees asked Jesus a question about divorce, He took the opportunity to give His definition of marriage. He said, "At the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 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.'" (Matthew 19:4-5) Jesus was quoting Genesis 1:27. That's the red pill. That's the reality many people in America ignore.

While we're talking about marriage, it's not just a matter of male and female. God's plan is one woman for one man until death parts them. Western Civilization has been influenced by Judeo-Christian morality. But in other parts of the world, there are different definitions of marriage. For instance, Islam teaches that a man can have as many as four wives, and loyalty is required only from the wives to the husband, not from the husband to the wives. For instance, in Egypt all a man has to do to marry wives numbered two through four is submit their names to the registry. When I was in Saudi Arabia, I learned that wealthy Saudi men often fly to Thailand and marry a girl for twenty-four hours, and then divorce her. The Chief Imam endorses that practice.

Of course, some men in the Old Testament had multiple wives. Solomon had a thousand wives, but the Bible says his wives turned his heart from God. But from the beginning, God's plan was one man and one woman. God gave Adam only one wife. And by the time of the New Testament, one man married to one woman became the standard. Leaders in the church are to be husbands of one wife, and in Ephesians 5 Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church." (Ephesians 5:25)

That's the second red truth pill. God created sex to be shared only between a husband and wife.

3. ANY SEXUAL ACT OUTSIDE MARRIAGE IS SINFUL

Just this past week, people living alongside the Mississippi River had to evacuate their homes because the river flooded beyond its banks and caused extensive flooding. That area has been declared a disaster area. A river is a beautiful thing until it breaks beyond its barriers.

Sex is like a powerful river. It's a beautiful thing, when it is kept within the boundaries of marriage. But when it goes beyond God's barriers, the result is always disaster.

The Bible speaks clearly about the destructive nature of sexual sin. Paul wrote, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

I suspect we have people here today who are guilty of every one of those sins listed. You've either done them, or you're doing them now. It's not a hit list; it's a love list. God loves you and He can rescue you from sin and forgive you.

The word of sexual immorality is *pornea*, from which we get the word pornographic. It is often translated "fornication" and appears 85 times in the Bible. It covers a variety of sexual acts including premarital sex and sex between any partners not married. Adultery is when a married partner has sex with someone other than his or her spouse. Homosexuality is when people of the same gender have sex.

Premarital sex is a sin. Adultery is a sin. Homosexuality is a sin. None is any worse than the other, and anyone who has committed them can be forgiven. Read my lips: God loves all adulterers and He can forgive you and change you. God loves everyone who has had premarital or extra-marital sex. He can forgive you and change you. God loves everyone who has committed homosexual acts, and He can forgive you and change you. God loves everyone who has committed the sin of gossip, and God can forgive you and change you.

The topic of homosexuality and same-sex marriage has become the cultural dividing point in our nation. Let me address two questions Christians are often asked about homosexual behavior. First, same-sex marriage advocates ask, "The prohibition against homosexuality is in the Old Testament book of Leviticus. If you believe that, why don't you observe the Sabbath, the kosher food laws and observe the Sabbath? All of those are in the same book."

That's a good question, but it reveals a lack of understanding of the Bible. The Old Testament ceremonial laws were given to Israel, and they passed away when Jesus died on the cross. Colossians 2:14 says Jesus took them away, nailing them to His cross. But there are many moral laws from the Old Testament that are still in effect. You still can't kill, lie, or steal. These laws are all repeated in the New Testament. Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to

observe the Sabbath or refrain from eating pork. But the moral law against homosexual conduct is repeated several times in the New Testament.

For instance in Romans 1, Paul wrote about people who reject God. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (Romans 1:25-27)

You can't get any clearer than that. A natural sexual relationship is a man and woman in marriage. It is not only sinful; it is unnatural for same sex acts. Nature itself teaches that a male and a female join together for the purpose of creating offspring. Homosexual conduct is unnatural and outside the boundary God has established.

The second question same-sex marriage proponents ask is, "How could my marriage to a person of the same sex that I love harm your marriage?" It doesn't hurt my marriage, but it affects our culture in a negative way. If the Supreme Court redefines marriage, they are at the same moment, redefining parenthood. The attorneys and judges here recognize the legal term, "presumption of paternity." That means every child has a biological father, whether that father is present or not. That biological father (or mother) has protection under the law. But in a marriage where there are two men or two women, what role does the biological father or mother play in cases of child custody? And when marriage is redefined from one man to one woman, the next step is for other relationships to demand marriage equality.

Great Britain is facing this issue as well. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey recently wrote: "Once we let go of the exclusivity of a one-man one-woman relationship with procreation linking the generations, then why stop there? If it is about love and commitment, then it is entirely logical to extend marriage to two sisters bringing up children together. If it is merely about love and commitment, then there is nothing illogical about multiple relationships, such as two women and one man."

So if you want to ask me, "Pastor just what sexual behavior is sinful?" It's easier for me to tell you what sexual behavior is sacred. Draw a circle. Inside that circle there is a husband and wife. God blesses sexual activity within that circle. Any and all sexual conduct outside that circle is sexual immorality according to the Bible. Our x-rated culture disagrees, but take the red pill.

4. SEXUAL PURITY IS ESSENTIAL TO WALK WITH GOD

This begs the question, "Why should I be sexually pure?" The answer: because it is essential for you to walk in fellowship with a holy and pure God. Jesus was never married, so He never had sex. But He faced sexual temptation. We all do. Surveys reveal that 99% of Christian men admit struggling with sexual temptation. The other 1% are lying. There is even a growing trend of females who are addicted to internet pornography. God wants you to remain sexually pure if you aren't married, and He wants you to remain sexually pure within your marriage.

Even Christians sometimes say, "It's my body, I can do with it what I want. As long as I'm not hurting anyone else." I'm sorry, but if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, your body is not your own. The Bible says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:20)

The Bible is full of characters who messed up sexually. Lot committed incest. Abraham had sex with his wife's handmaid. Rahab was a prostitute. Samson was a one-man sexual tornado. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. These were real people like us who struggled with sexual temptation. But God forgave them. So if you've sinned in the past don't despair. God can forgive you. Remember this phrase: Admit it; quit it; forget it. Confess your sin to God. Refuse to continue that sin. Then accept His forgiveness and move on.

CONCLUSION

For thousands of years, the marriage between one man and one woman has been the stabilizing force in western nations. It has been the relationship through which generations have been connected. Our country may be on the verge of changing the definition of marriage. What's the harm in that? To answer that question, I wrote a little parable.

Once upon a time there was a happy village where gold was considered the most valuable metal. Gold was precious because it was rare and beautiful. There were other metals, like silver, copper, and nickel, but they weren't as valuable as gold. People worked hard and were paid in gold coins. They used gold coins to buy homes, food, and to raise their children.

This village lived and thrived because everyone recognized the importance of the gold standard. But some of the villagers became angry because they didn't have as many gold coins. So they made copper coins. And because copper was more common than gold, they were able to make many more copper coins. But of course, the merchants only accepted gold coins. The people with the copper coins were outraged and demanded the copper coins be equal to the gold. But the merchants scoffed, "But copper isn't gold!"

The copper proponents weren't satisfied. They organized themselves and minted more and more copper coins. They gave them to the people of the village, and enlisted them in their cause. They even marched to demand the equality of gold and copper.

An election was held to equalize copper and gold, but the people voted that gold would remain the standard. So the copper movement took their case to the courthouse and told the judge they were the victims of discrimination. They were persistent, and finally the judge agreed that, from this day forward, gold and copper were equal. The copper advocates cheered their victory.

But soon, gold lost its value. The merchants who had bought their goods with gold found it impossible to stay in business. Stores were closed. Meanwhile, other villagers minted coins of lead; others made coins of wood. They demanded the same equality as copper and gold. Within a short time the village was destitute and deserted. And nobody lived happily there or after.

My point? Biblical marriage is the gold standard for a thriving, healthy culture. It has no equal among relationships.

We live in an x-rated culture. But don't take the blue pill and join the crowd. Instead, embrace the truth from God's Word and make a commitment to live a life of sexual purity!

OUTLINE

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Jesus said, "At the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 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.'" *Matthew 19:4-5*

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"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes