



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

SEX, PRAYER, AND THE SINCERE CHRISTIAN • Dan Hayes

If prayer is real at all, it should help us in our constant struggle to come to terms with our sexuality and sexual drives, among the strongest urges (not new information!) we possess.

Let's start with God's intentions. Why did He "invent" sex anyway? He did think it up you know. Neither Hugh Hefner nor Penthouse were its originators. In fact, Genesis 1:27 asserts, "And God created man in His own image... male and female He created them." See, sex is not an afterthought, a way to make more babies. Rather, it is an indispensable quality woven in the fabric of each life on this planet. Sex is not first something we do; it is primarily who we are.

Therefore (and more on that later), if transgressions occur in the sexual realm, they violate us personally, a far more serious problem than simply breaking a few Victorian taboos, the view of sexual sin most people hold.

God's intent also shows itself in Genesis 2:24: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Here we see that the union of man and woman sexually was blessed only in marriage, as opposed to today's popular assumption that any sexual relationship between consenting adults is also good, or-at worst, neutral.

At the risk of seeming too anachronistic in our divorce-wracked world, let me give a description of the Biblical intent for marriage. Marriage is the life-long, loving, committed union of one man and one woman lawfully proclaimed and entered into before society, which is the foundation of a whole new family unit. A marriage ceremony says to society, "Hands off this man. Hands off this woman. They are no longer available. They are spoken for. Henceforth, they are committed to each other." In other words, marriage builds a God-given moral fence around the two people.

Thus, sexual relationship outside of this "fence" is unprotected, and subject to griefs and great complications beyond the moral range of the blessedness intended by God, for husband and wife.

God's purpose in sexual union between spouses is at least three-fold: pleasure, propagation, and prevention. Society touts sex as pleasurable, and Christians as prudish; but again, God always intended sex for pleasure. Consider Genesis 18:9-12 in which Sarah, being old, asked herself if she would in old age have further "pleasure" in sex. Or what about Genesis 26:7,8, in which the King James Version describes Isaac as "sporting" (don't you just love it) with Rebekah? Then there is Deuteronomy 24:5, where a young married man is told to "cheer" his wife for a year (KJV). There is also the entire book of Song of Solomon as well, the holiest "marriage manual" ever written.

Propagation as a purpose for sexual union is not only obvious, but also it is Biblical: "Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth..." (Genesis 4:1). Prior to the Fall, God had blessed the union of Adam and Eve and told them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). There was then, and still now, only ONE way to fulfill that command.



The third purpose of sexual union in marriage is for prevention. Of what you ask? First Corinthians 7:2 tells us, “But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Yes, sex in marriage was given to prevent that which is so striking on every hand today: sexual relationships between those who are not married to each other. Protection of individuals and society is God’s motive, but we humans continue to snub grace.

Herein lies the rub, doesn’t it? It is all well and good for God to have such noble intentions for our sexuality, but we live in a cruddy world. And we think about, look at, and do, cruddy things, right? And most of us reading this are Christians, probably more committed than the average; and we will struggle at least with our thoughts and our eyes and some of our deeds; and some have even stopped struggling and given in because it does feel good; and everybody is doing it; and we love each other; and you said, Dan, that God gave us these drives; and so it is His fault; and I’m confused.

Now this is where prayer becomes very relevant—when I recognize that as a member of the human race, I am tempted to sin (and sometimes yield) by misusing my God-given sexuality out of His intended context, and for purposes other than His desire, whether that is fantasy (mind), lust (eye), or deed (body).

You see, prayer and sexual or marital related issues are not strangers. Read I Peter 3:7, I Corinthians 7:3-5, and Genesis 24:12-14 if you don’t believe me. But prayer and sex have more relationship than in those passages. Prayer also helps provide restoration, reversal, and resistance.

First, restoration. Psalm 66:18 is very bracing. “If I regard (fondle, wink at, let lie undisturbed) iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” There can be no restoration until we admit we have sinned and need to be restored. The prayer of confession David prayed in Psalm 51 after his sexual failure is our model. If I have sinned in this area I must not say, “Oh well, as long as I’m down here in the gutter anyway, I might as well roll around for awhile!”

No, we come to God brokenly. Admitting our sin. Confessing it and yet confident he does forgive. Psalm 51:17 says, “A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Prayer is the way we admit our sin and talk to God about our cleansing. It is in prayer we repent of our sin (change direction) and are thereby restored to fellowship with our gracious, caring Heavenly Father. C.S. Lewis stated that repentance is not what we must do before we can come back to God; repentance is the coming back to God itself.

Prayer helps in a second way: reversal. Most of us think, “Well God might forgive, but I’m scarred for time and eternity.” The amazing thing about His grace is that He not only forgives, He provides a new start. He literally can reverse the progressive trauma of sexual sin in our lives. Joel 2:25 proclaims, “Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten...”

The truth is that when we come to Him in repentant prayer (the subject of Joel 2:12-17). He imparts a reversal of process to our existence. He sets another direction. There is a reversal of the deadly sin toxin. Prayer is an IV tube through which the divine antidote can flow into us, repairing the damage which we have done to ourselves through weakness and (often) rebellion.

A third aspect of prayer related to sexual temptation is resistance. Twice Jesus said, “Pray (in order) that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40,46). Prayer is often the escape mechanism we need to avoid the dark alleys where we keep getting mugged sexually.

Prayer gives us strength for prevention of sin as well as restoration following sin. And the former is obviously preferable to the latter because it is joyous and not grievous. Though some may say, “It is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask permission,” the pain and hurt of this philosophy applied to sex makes it patently untrue. The hymn writer put it this way, “sweet hour of prayer, and oft escaped the tempter’s snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.” Prayer can give us the courage to resist the Tempter in sex.



To sum up, then, sexuality is God's gift to humankind to be expressed in its full intimacy within the moral bound of marriage. All of us wrestle with various kinds of temptations in this area, and all of us stumble in one way or another. Prayer provides a three-fold avenue for restoration, reversal, and resistance related to sexual sin and temptation.

These truths are by no means the only ones we must know in this area; but they are vital if we are to live a "normal" Christian life in this very imperfect, yet blessed, world. When sexual temptation comes, at least one word to think immediately is PRAYER.

End

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org