

Love and Lust

by Tim Keller

from the audio "Love and Lust"

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"The Bible presents a more attractive and comprehensive view of sexuality than is generally understood. The headings explored in this sermon include the integrity of sex, the challenge of lust and the future of love."

Lust says, *"What can you do for me?"*

Love says, *"What can I do for you?"*

Sermon Notes

Biblical sex ethic = sex only inside a covenant = no sex outside of marriage. A covenant creates a relationship. A relationship far more loving and intimate than a merely legal relationship. But, it's far more binding and enduring than a merely emotional relationship. A covenant relationship is more loving and intimate BECAUSE it's legal.

A consumer relationship. In a consumer relationship you relate to a vendor and you a relationship as long as the vendor is giving you a product at a good price. But you're always looking for an upgrade. So you say to your vendor "We have a relationship. But you better keep adjusting to me, because if you don't meet my needs, I'm out of here because my needs are more important than the relationship. If I can get my needs met somewhere else, that's where I'll go."

But a covenant relationship is exactly the opposite. A consumer relationship says "You adjust to me, or I'm out of here." A covenant relationship says "I'll adjust to you, because I made a promise. And the relationship is more important than my needs." My needs are less important than the sustenance of the relationship."

Now, if two people get into a relationship and one is a consumer and one is a covenanter, that will be bad for the covenanter. The covenanter will be exploited. But if both of you get into a relationship and say "We're done with the consumer relationship, we're in a covenant relationship, which is what it means to get married, there's three things that result.

ONE – You finally have a zone of security, a zone of safety, a place where you can finally be yourself. In a consumer relationship you're always marketing. You're always selling yourself. You got to perform. You got to meet the other person's need or you're out. But in a covenant, in a marriage, you finally have a zone of safety. You can finally get rid of the facades. You can finally let them know about your insecurities. You can finally be yourself.

TWO – In a covenant relationship, ironically, when you are committed to a person in spite of your feelings, deeper feelings grow. Example = parenting. A deeper, richer kind of feeling.

THREE – There's a freedom. Kierkegaard: If you're in a relationship in which I have to feel it, if you're not meeting my needs. If I don't feel the love, then I'm out of here. If you're in a relationship like that, you're a slave. A slave to your feelings. You're a puppet on a string of your feelings. Now you're controlled by your feelings. And where do your feelings come from? Physiology, your body chemistry, your past, your circumstances.

The Bible says that sex is not a consumer good. It's a covenant good. A consumer good is a way you keep someone in a relationship because you have a need (I need sex every so often, sex is a way for

me to feel good about myself, it makes me feel adored and loved), so I go out and find someone who will meet that need. Sex is a consumer good.

The Bible says sex was not designed to be a consumer good. It was designed to be a covenant good. In a covenant, when you have made a promise, sex becomes like a sacrament. An external sign of an invisible reality. When you use sex inside a covenant, it becomes a vehicle for engaging the whole person in an act of self-giving and self-commitment.

When I, in marriage, make myself physically naked and vulnerable it's a sign of what I've done with my whole life, because by giving up my independence, by making this promise, sex is a sign of what you've done with your whole life. And that's the reason why sex outside of marriage, according to the Bible, lacks integrity. You're asking someone to do with their body what you're not doing with your life. You're saying lets be physically vulnerable to each other but not whole life vulnerability.

That's why C.S. Lewis says, "The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage, those trying to indulge in it, are trying to isolate one kind of union, sexual union, from all other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up a union. To have physical without having whole life union is a lack of integrity. And if you have sex inside a covenant then the sex becomes a covenant renewal ceremony. You're getting married all over again. It's an incredible deepening and solidifying and nurturing thing.

In marriage you're saying I belong exclusively to you. I'm giving you my body as a token of giving you my life. But if you use sex outside of marriage, what are you saying? "I love the feeling I get when I'm with you. You're taking, not giving. You're receiving and holding on to your life. You're holding on to your independence. You're receiving and you're not giving. It's a consumer good. And when you use sex like that you damage its ability to be a commitment apparatus.

Many articles coming out, even in places like the New York Times, pointing out that cohabitation seems to be counterproductive. An article by a clinical psychologist, in the New York Times, The Downside of Cohabitation, is point out that there are more and more studies showing that people who live together before they marry are more likely to divorce.

It's a consumer relationship because you're always looking "Can I do better than this?" You're trying to find out if you're compatible, which is a nice way of saying, "I'm trying to figure out if this person is good enough to marry or whether I can do better." So you're looking out for an upgrade. So what is sex in a situation like that? It's marketing. It's attracting. It's enticing. It's trying to keep the relationship going. It's not trusting. It's not resting. It's not giving. Which means sex outside of marriage in no way prepares you for sex inside marriage. It's not the same thing. And what they're doing in the cohabitation is their learning to relate as consumes instead of as married partners, covenant partners, which is completely different thing.

The integrity of sex is there must be an integrity between body and life. you must not do with your body what you're not willing to do with your whole life. 1st point of Jesus – You're heard it said no sex outside marriage.

2nd point: But Jesus goes on and wants to talk about our mind and our thinking. "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a women lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jesus isn't saying that any attraction will lead you to hell. The Bible is not negative about sexual desire, per say. Genesis 2, Proverbs, Song of Solomon. The word Jesus uses has to do with idolatry and greed. For selfish reasons. Also, greed is addicting. Third, there's fantasies. A way of looking to sex to give you only what God can give you.

Four forms of this. PORNOGRAPHY and masturbation with it. Sex is not a consumer good. It's for giving. It's for serving. All sex outside marriage is using sex selfishly. It's not there for renewing your covenant. Third – just to believe you can't be a whole person and have a full life and be happy without sex. For the Christian, God has that place. Lastly, do you have in your mind the fairytale dream of having the perfect marriage? Having the perfect little family. Perfect children. Perfect

home. Are you saying that if you had all of that, you'd finally be happy? That I'd finally feel good about myself. You're making sex and love into an idol.

Why is Jesus so strong about sexual idolatry in its various forms? "If your right eyes causes you to sin, gouge it out ..." Not literal, but drastic behavior! Why? False notions – "PORNOGRAPHY is not going to affect your relationships." Not at all. It now affects virtually every relationship. #1 crushingly unrealistic expectations. #2 A diminished tolerance for the difficulties of a real relationship, diminishing people getting married. #3 All women are increasingly being forced to accommodate sexual behavior and their appearances to the images and style of pornography.

Do you see why Jesus says, "Look at how this damages you!" Do whatever it takes to deal with this issue. The idolatry of sexuality and love will destroy you! Learning to use it selfishly, making it a consumer good, getting addicted to it, looking to it to give you the kind of deep affirmation and closure and consolation that only God can give you."

How can we be delivered? He talks about hell, a place of unquenchable thirst. Unfulfilled longing. We were built to know God. And therefore, if we lose God, the ability to have our deepest needs satisfied, we lose as well. Jesus is saying that sex outside of marriage points toward that, because sex holds out the promise of such consolation, of such closure, of such affirmation. And yet, sex outside of marriage destroys your ability to really be yourself. It destroys your freedom.

And Jesus says that if sex outside of a covenant points to hell, sex inside a covenant points to what. Why does Romans 7, Eph 5 say the most rapturous sexual love between a husband and a wife a dim pointer to what it's going to be like to fall into the arms of your true spouse at the end of time?

Jesus talking with woman at well. I have a water that if you drink of it you will never thirst again. I can satisfy your deepest needs. She says give me this water. And he says what? Bring me your husband. Sir, I don't have a husband. No, you've had five husbands and the man you're living with is not your husband. Why is He talking about her messed up sex life? Her deepest longings. You've been looking for it in men. This is lust. You've been trying to find in the arms of men the kind of deep consolation, deep love and deep closure that only I can give you.

Don't look to each other to fulfill each other that only God can. You're going to crush each other. You'll fall into a consumer relationship. You have to adjust to me. If Jesus isn't your main spouse where we can be ourselves, be accepted. The main thing that gives us freedom. That gives us that deep sense of being loved. Don't make your spouse into something only Christ can be. Look to His spousal love and then, and only then, will you be in a position to avoid the great danger that we have, especially in the culture we're living in, and our approach to love and marriage will be a pointer to Him.

Lust exists, it is powerful, and we must respect its power. The Bible rejoices in sex and sexual desire, but lust is an impersonal, inordinate desire and an idolatrous search for meaning. Lust can be overcome if you esteem Jesus as your bridegroom and the lover of your soul.