Sex. Yup, you heard me right. I just said sex. On the count of 3, say it with me: 1, 2, 3, sex. It’s ok to giggle about sex a bit. You probably walked into service tonight thinking we’d cover something like friendship, maybe cover Easter more, or talk about a biblical character. Nope, when we have a series on those things, we won’t talk about sex. But tonight, we’re talking about sex. And no, this is not awkward. Sex is not awkward to talk about. How do I know that? I’ve already said the word sex 8 times. You don’t say a word that many times if it was so awkward because it’s awkward. And sex is not that.

In all seriousness, why are we talking about sex? Because sex is incredibly important to our walk with Christ. Sex is a gift from God that He gave us in how He designed us. We know this just by looking at the creation narrative in the opening chapter of Genesis. In verse 28, God blessed man and woman and said,

“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it”.

How do you think humankind was equipped to fill the earth and subdue it? You guessed it, through sex. God created it for us, to be enjoyed by us, but sex is not a gift we have done well receiving. Culturally, to Satan’s pleasure, we have taken something good and twisted it. Sex in our culture today is about ourselves, our own pleasure, power, status, and degradation. Are these the things you want from ANY kind of relationship? One found on your own self-centeredness and without love?

We have this tension with sex as teenagers. In school, we get taught to some extent about how to have it safely because we’ve essentially accepted that you’re going to do it. We get to the end of high school and realize that a significant number of our peers we know have had sex, and most likely don’t even talk to that person anymore. There’s pressure culturally too. Most of the songs we listen to and most of the movies we watch are about sex or include sex. We’re told that sex isn’t that big of a deal and we can freely have as much sex as we want with as many people we want with zero ramifications. You’re still a virgin? What do you mean you don’t want to have sex yet? And if you have, is that not a badge of honor, a rite of passage into some twisted form of adulthood that we came up with on our own?

I want to pause here and make myself very clear about something: statistically speaking, I can assume that this topic is incredibly vulnerable for you to even be in the room about. Your story is possibly a story that involves being on the receiving end of sexual sin in some capacity. Your story could be one that includes having a history of having sex outside of the sacred relationship of marriage. **Please hear me on this: if you are feeling guilt, fear, damaged goods, or shame right now, those feelings are not from our heavenly father.** His language does not consist of guilt, fear, or shame. Our God is a God who calls us into conviction that leads to repentance, but he does not have those feelings in his vocabulary. He is not done with you, He is for YOU, and He loves you. He will heal you from your past and stay with you through your journey of exiting the damage that has happened in your life.

So, you may be asking then, Ryan, what is this design God has for sex? Why is his way so much better than the worlds way? Scripture has plenty to say about sex, and one passage that addresses how God designed sex for us is 1 Corinthians 6 and 7, an eye-opening letter from the apostle Paul in the 1st Century A.D. Here’s what must be understood about 1 Corinthians...

Paul was writing to a group of very new Christians in Corinth, a port city in Greece. Corinth was known for thousands of people to be coming and going from the city, and for being the sexual capital of the world at that time. Challenging place to be a new Christian, right?! Thankfully, they had Paul, who knew about all the adversity they faced in Corinth. Addressing why casual sex is problematic, Paul says to the Corinthians, in v13,

You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Paul makes it clear: humanity’s view and idea of sex is not helpful to following Christ. They don’t go together. The Corinthians didn’t realize that casual sex is problematic because they didn’t understand sex or understand what happens during sex. Sex was created to bond a man and a woman together, but not just any man and any woman. It was meant to unite a married couple together. When a couple is married, the two of them become one through the sacred relationship of marriage. Sex is exactly that: we are made one with our spouse through sex. It was created to bond people together, and in the right context, how incredible is that for a gift!

Sex was meant to unite us as one with our spouse in marriage, between a man and a woman. Those are the main parameters that God provides us for enjoying this gift. When it happens outside of those main parameters, that is where the damage happens. Sex outside of marriage between a man and woman is damaging to our souls. God designed it in a certain way. And that way is better than anything we could possibly imagine! Any way that humanity could come up with will end up causing harm to peoples relationships and lives.

Again, I have to be clear: the decisions that you have made in your past, or current struggles that you are dealing with in regards to sex, they do not define who you are. Shame and guilt are not feelings that are coming from God, rather lies from satan. Rather, Jesus is waiting with open arms, inviting us in with love, mercy, and grace to move on from a life of our own making, and into one of obedience, ready to experience life the way he has designed it.

So how do we do that? Paul continues on in verses 18-20 on the power of sex...

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

When it comes to the idea of sex and the romantic relationships that we go through in our lives, it has been designed to be enjoyed as a gift in marriage. If we are not married, as I am guessing most students watching this are, it can be really hard to go along with that! But Paul instructs us to honor God with our bodies: so how do we do that?

Flee from sexual immorality. Put in place safeguards and accountability in your relationships. Be open and honest and clear about your intentions within your relationships, and do not compromise on God’s design for sex.

Ask the Holy Spirit for help. We cannot overcome temptation without help from the Holy Spirit. Wake up each morning asking God to give you the strength and courage to follow in obedience to his design for life!

Finally, know that this isn’t about rule following, not at the heart of it at least. It is about going after God’s design for life and sex. Within that pursuit, there are parameters to live within, in order to enjoy life to the fullest. But that’s exactly when we begin to experience all the wonders God has for us in this life, both in our relationship with him, and others.

Sex is a beautiful gift from God that is meant to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. And, the grace of our God is big enough to restore and redeem anyone watching this and feeling like they are too far from God because of sexual sin from their past. There is nothing you can do to move too far away from God. He is waiting for you with open arms, ready to walk with you again on a path towards sexual integrity. You’re not alone. Our God is for you.