



TIME OF GRACE®

Sexpectations: Sex Is Unnecessary

Study Notes

Summary

To many in the modern age, a 30-year-old virgin is a fascinating species. Is he dying inside? Is he repressed and frustrated? Ask Jesus. He was fully man in every way, a sexual being, yet fully content to be sexless. Jesus proves that sex is not required for a satisfying life, which is thrilling news for singles, divorcés, widows, and couples struggling with their sex lives. Having a joyful connection to God makes sex a good, but unnecessary, gift from God. Need more proof? You'll spend eternity without sex . . . and be happier than you've ever been!

- Review
 1. Sex is _____.
 2. Sex is _____.
 3. Sex is _____.
 4. Sex is _____.
- Sex is _____.
- Proof: _____.
- **1 Corinthians 7:1,2,6,7:** ¹Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ²But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. ⁶I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.
- **Philippians 4:4,5,11-13:** ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! . . . ⁵The Lord is near. . . . ¹¹For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
- Proof: _____.

- John 17:13: I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
- Psalm 84:10: Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.
- Sex is _____.

Points to Ponder

1. Agree/Disagree: Americans are obsessed with sex because they have stopped being obsessed with God.
2. Read Philippians 4:4-13. How do Paul's words affect your answer to #1 above?
3. List your top two to four takeaways from the *Sexpectations* series. Share them with a trusted Christian friend.

Homework for Next Week

Read Luke 2:1-7.

“When people . . . spend themselves and risk their lives and fortune in the cause of God’s truth and in love for other people, then God is revealed for who He really is: infinitely valuable and satisfying—so much so that His people don’t need the fleeting pleasures of sin in order to be content.”

—John Piper

Time of Grace Ministry
Sexpectations: Sex Is Unnecessary
Philippians 4: 4-13
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Pastor Mike Novotny

Paul dares to say, "I wish that all of you married people were like me; the single Christian." And tell me, when is the last time you heard that in church?

Back in 2005, actor Steve Carell - who became famous through his role as Michael Scott in the show *The Office*; ever seen that before? He played the role of Andy Stitzer who was an electronic salesman and avid toy collector and as the title of the movie said, a 40 year old virgin. I don't remember much about the movie *The 40 Year Old Virgin*; I'm guessing it's pretty raunchy so be careful if you're a Christian. But I do remember like the poster picture for the movie. It was Steve Carell with kind of this nerdy, parted hair, this tight fitting, crisp polo t-shirt, and this expression that looked kind of like this which I hope looks kind of awkward and weird cause that was the point. The point was that if you're 40 and you're still a virgin, you're awkward and you're weird and something is wrong with you. And if Wikipedia has the plot line right, when Andy's friends found out that he was that old and still a virgin, they thought his virginity was a problem to be fixed. Which is kind of what our world says, right? I mean, you could be 14 years old and be a virgin and still be okay. But if you make it through prom night and then you make it through your college years and you get into your first relationship, if you're not sexually active like, that's kind of awkward. If you make it all the way through your twenties, if you can pass the thirty year mark and you're not regularly active in having sex, like something must be wrong with you. If you can live as a human being who was born with a sexuality and yet not regularly express that with some person or exploring your own body, like you must be repressed and depressed and frustrated and angry and less than. I think pop singer Bruno Mars probably said it best in his famous song *Locked Out of Heaven*. Ever heard it? He sings about this girl, "Your sex takes me to paradise," but when she's not giving him any sex, he sings, "You make me feel like I've been locked out of heaven." It's like a good life, the better place is to be in a bed where sex is happening, and when he's not getting it, he says it's like he's been locked out of heaven; condemned to this depressing, sexless hell.

It's been a while here in our church since we've sung any Bruno Mars but you know, that same idea kind of floats around Christian circles, too. This idea that if you're not in a romantic relationship, if you don't have that special someone that you can go home to, if you're not regularly connected somehow in a sexual way, like you can't possibly be that happy, right? When the girls are sharing a bottle of wine and things get a little bit honest and one says, "I haven't had sex in so long," what's the reaction? Like, "Oh, my goodness, how do you do it? We need to introduce you to a guy!" Or when someone says to their children who are going through their teenage years and the hormones are firing more than ever before, and you say, "God wants you to wait; to not turn to a relationship, to not turn to pornography, to practice self-control." When that seems like crazy, like that would somehow scar us and we'd explode because of the sexual tension, well, that proves that exists here. When we don't honor and respect and even admire our bachelor brothers or our single sisters in the faith but somehow think that we married

people have to set them up with the other single people at church, like something is wrong. And what's a good thing - a relationship or a marriage or a sexual connection - has been exalted to like a God-thing that we need, and that's a bad thing. Just imagine if you believe that rumor, that sex was necessary for a satisfying life, what would happen? What would happen when you don't have a relationship? What would happen when you're in a relationship but things aren't great and you need to do some good work of rebuilding intimacy and connection? What would happen after your spouse passes away and you're a widow? What would happen after the divorce when you're very experienced sexually but now God hasn't opened that door for you? What would your happiness and contentment, satisfaction, look like if you believed you needed sex?

Which is why I don't want you to believe that because both logically and biblically, we should know that sex is not necessary for a good, satisfying, healthy, content life. Even before I opened the Bible today, you know that's true, right? Just crunch some numbers with me for a second. If you had sex for an hour every day, which would be a lot, you'd spend what? Four percent of your adult life having sex? Do you think that means you'd be 96 percent sad, depressed, and unsatisfied? If we dropped the sexy time to a more realistic one, like one to two hours a week, that would be one percent of your life. So I'm guessing almost all of us in the room today are between 99 and 100 percent sexually inactive. Does that mean we're 99 percent repressed? A hundred percent sad? Frustrated 99 to 100 percent of the time? No. We know that there are incredible ways to find happiness and satisfaction. We have really good days where sex isn't a part of them. Logically, we know it's not true. And biblically, we find out that that's true, too.

I have one big point I want to teach you today and it's really important so I want you to write it down. I want to teach you from the Bible that sex is unnecessary. It's a good gift, it's a wonderful gift if God gives you that gift, but if you're not having sex, you don't have sex this week or this month or this year or even this life, you still have everything you need to live a really good, satisfying life in God.

Now to prove that point to you, I want to introduce you to two single men that many of you Christians admire and one of those men you actually worship. They had zero sex but they were filled with joy, peace, and satisfaction in their souls. So here's the first case study. Let me introduce you to a man named Paul. If you know much about the Bible, you might be familiar with the name of the Apostle Paul or Saint Paul. He wrote, what, about half of the books of the New Testament and from everything that we can tell in his story, Paul never once had sex. We know when he writes his books in the Bible, he's a single man and the way he describes that he was such like a rule keeper growing up, it seems that his struggle was not with like a prodigal sexual, sinful lifestyle; he struggles with other things but not that. And yet, when Paul writes one of his letters to his friends in Corinth, Christians living in a Greek city that was infatuated with sex, he said the most fascinating thing about finding a satisfying life. Look with me at the words of 1 Corinthians 7. The apostle Paul said, "Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife and each woman with her own husband. I say this as a concession not as a command. I wish that all of you were as I am but each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, and another that."

Now that is stunning Scripture. I mean, Paul's honest enough to know that lots of people struggle with patience and self-control and sexual immortality. He knows that for most people, pursuing a romantic relationship and having sex will be a good, godly thing for many reasons. And yet, what he says at the end of this passage is shocking because Paul says, I'm saying all this to you people as a concession, and not as a command. In other words, I'm not really jealous of your relationships or what you're doing on a Friday night after a couple glasses of wine. But Paul dares to say, I wish that all of you married people were like me; the single Christian. And tell me, when is the last time you heard that in church? I mean, apparently Paul isn't like writing the Corinthians to just, you know, test the waters and see if they have any single sisters. And he's not going home on the weekend with a pint of Ben & Jerry's, you know, and some sappy movies and praying that he would find a wife just like the apostle Peter. Paul actually says, "I wish that you were like me. I wish you had a life that did not include sex." Paul knows not everyone has that gift but he still calls that a gift.

How in the world could Paul say that? How could he be so happy without romance, without romantic love, without sex? Well, the answer to that question is really important and it's important whether you have this gift and will forever live a single life or you just have seasons and relationships where you're not having sex. Where did Paul find his happiness; his source of contentment? And the answer to that is in our next passage; it comes from Philippians 4. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I'll say it again, rejoice. The Lord is near. I've learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Paul had learned the secret of being content no matter what his life looked like. He found a way, he said, not just to rejoice on Sundays but on all the days. And he said it again, rejoice. And did you catch how? He said, "I can do everything through the one who gives me strength." Smack dab in the middle of that section, Paul reminded us of the most important thing: That the Lord is near. See, Paul believed that God was with him and he didn't believe in this like dinky, unimpressive, oh yeah, God is with me but what I really want is sex and marriage. No, he believed in this glorious, exalted, magnificent God and when he thought, like that God is with me, it gave him more long-term happiness and pleasure than any sexual experience ever could. And that was Paul's secret: If God is a huge deal to you, like if he excites your soul, if you stop believing in this like lowercase, unimpressive god, you actually believe that a big God is with you. You can be content, you can practice godliness with contentment, and he knows that is incredible gain.

Maybe you can think of it like this: I brought with me some donuts. Sex and donuts, gentlemen. You're welcome for this sermon. These are actually special donuts. I received these donuts, hand to hand, from the CEO of Kwik Trip himself. Can you believe that? These are glazed donuts from the man, the myth, and the legend. Now let's imagine that you haven't eaten anything in days and you're starving and you see these four glazed donuts just waiting to be eaten and no one's rushed up to grab them. You might think in your head, "I need those donuts!" And my answer to you would be, "No, you don't." Your body might need calories and it might need energy but it doesn't specifically need these donuts. Like what you're craving is something but it's not necessarily this something. And it's kind of the same with sex. You might think at points in your life, like I need that; like I can't survive, I can't be happy without sex. And I'd say, yes,

you can. Because what you're craving deep in your heart is not sex itself but what sex provides. And just like there are different ways to satisfy your body with calories, there are different ways to satisfy your soul.

Reason with me for a second: Why does a person, after they visit a prostitute, not feel satisfied and good about their life? Because they didn't really want sex; they wanted connection. They wanted intimacy. They wanted lasting pleasure and that experience couldn't provide it. When we crave a sexual connection, we're looking for a thrill; we're looking for something satisfying, something good. We're looking for a release from tension, a break from our stress. We're looking to connect and deal with our loneliness. And the beautiful thing that Paul found out is there are other ways to satisfy those cravings of the human heart. That there is a God who not from time to time like sex, but continually, wants to offer us excitement and purpose and a place to go when we're stressed; a God who is thrilling. Psalm 16 says, "God, at your right hand there are eternal pleasures." Like, if you think it feels good to have a sexual experience, to see God, to be in his presence, face to face, is a thousand times more satisfying. And the proof is that when you get to heaven, you will not have sex. Jesus said in heaven there is no marriage or being given in marriage. We will become like the angels who are completely satisfied despite the fact that they are not married. They don't get Valentine's Day cards. They just see the face of God and it's enough to satisfy their soul.

It makes me think of an old friend who once was honest enough with me to say he regularly visited strip clubs. And I expected him to have visited strip clubs for the obvious reasons that people visit strip clubs; because there are women who are not wearing a lot of clothes. But when he explained his reason to me, that wasn't it. Do you know what my friend said to me? He said, "Mike, I really like going because those places provide," - here was his quote - "temporary company." What does his heart want? Company. He was lonely. And he found out if he paid enough money, someone would sit next to him and pay attention and listen. I have a feeling though at the end of the day, that craving of his heart wasn't satisfied. But it can be in your heart. God wants to offer you today more than temporary company; more than just one time a week excitement. He wants to open your eyes; it's why we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "God, hallowed be your name." Let your name, what I think of you, be so big and glorious that when I think about the fact that you are with me, I could have sex or not and I'd still be good. See, Paul learned the secret of being content. I can do all things through this glorious, big God who gives me strength.

But Paul wasn't the only one who found that out. There's someone even better who did the same thing: A 33 year old virgin. And you might know his name - my second proof for you today - is Jesus. Jesus was fully God and fully man; he was sexless and yet, completely satisfied. I love the quote of how one blogger put it. Garret Kell wrote, "Jesus never had sex and, yet, he was the most fully human and complete person who has ever lived." He was fully human. I mean, he had a body, he had hormones, there was testosterone in his body after he passed through puberty and yet, he never had sex and, as the quote said, "He was fully complete." Which is confusing to a lot of people. Do you know centuries after Jesus returned to heaven, they started making up these stories and legends that Jesus had a relationship with one of his disciples? Because they knew how content and peaceful he was and they thought, well, he must have had something. Like he must have had romance or - maybe him and Mary Magdalene on the side and they kept it secret

and the disciples covered it up; like the church could not fathom that Jesus could be that happy without a relationship. But he was. In John 17, Jesus prayed this incredible prayer. He said to his heavenly Father, "I'm coming to you now but I say these things while I am still in the world so that they," disciples like us, "may have the full measure of my joy within them." It's like if you could peek into the heart of Jesus and you could see his joy, it wouldn't be running on empty because he wasn't having sex. It wouldn't be half and half until he finally got a human relationship. He said, "God, I want these people to have what I have; the full measure of my joy." Because Jesus, like Paul, believed that God was glorious and that God was with him so everything in this life was optional because he had the one thing that was truly needed.

And so, this is my prayer for you. Like you will never believe my premise today that sex is unnecessary until God becomes the only thing your heart needs. And if your view of God is that he's just kind of nice in the background and he's powerful and maybe when I get cancer or there's an accident I can communicate with him, like that will not work. The secret of self-control is to magnify your view of God, to sing praises to him, to remind your own soul how glorious and good God is, to forget not all the benefits you have through Jesus Christ until God is so wonderful that you can be totally rejected for sex and you can still smile and say, "But I'm still good."

There's a guy who figured this out. He wrote a song in the Old Testament, Psalm 84; look at this incredible verse. The psalmist says, "God, better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." He said, "God, if I could just walk into your presence, if I could be in your courts for one day, you could have 1,000 of the best sexual experiences of your life and it wouldn't be nearly as good." See, he believed that God was incredible and that God was with him and you can, too.

Let me apply this to two groups of people here today. For those of you who are not having sex, you're not in a marriage relationship, I want to start with you and then secondly, I want to talk to those of you who are married. Where are all my single people here today; those of you who are not married, no rings on your fingers just yet? Hands nice and high; don't be ashamed, Jesus was single and we worship him. Yeah, about half of us here today? Do you know that you can be just as satisfied as the married people next to you? Let me tell you about marriage. I've been married for 15 years, I have two daughters, and it's amazing. And that big idea to realize like how glorious and good God is, so much of my view of that comes from being married and as a father. You know, it's snuggling with my daughters and watching a movie like we did last night. It's going in the basement and seeing the song and dance number they prepared for daddy like I did this afternoon. It's holding hands with my wife and going on a walk, enjoying intimacy, like we so often do. Those things remind me like if life can feel this good, God must be so, so great. But do you know those moments that I call the "this" moments, that trampoline my heart up to the glory of God, they cost me time. A lot of time. I actually did the math; I tried to crunch the numbers of how much time I spend investing in my marriage and in my kids. Like how much free time would I have if I was single and do you know what the answer was? Thirty hours a week. Thirty hours! It's almost a fulltime job to be a husband and a father. And so, if you don't have kids or you're not married, you might not have the same like moments that can trampoline your heart up to God - sexual experiences and sweet moments with your kids - but there are other trampolines that can get your heart to the glory of God. Like you have 30 extra hours a week to

enjoy good friendship and good food; to travel and to enjoy music. If it costs - and I cringe every time I hear the stats - \$250,000 to raise, sorry parents, \$250,000 to raise a kid from birth to age 18, that means the two kids I have are going to cost me a half million dollars, which you can spend on experiences that will remind you, man, if this is this good, if this place is so beautiful, like if this food can make me feel so good, like what must it be like to see the face of God? I wonder if that's how Paul did it? He had so much time to experience the goodness of God that he was good because he knew God. And so your good blessings from God might not be the same as the married people in your life but they don't have to be. We can all use the blessings that God gives us like little trampolines that, boom, get our hearts up to God to say, "Wow, he must be incredible if life can be this good!"

And for you married people, this message is just as important because although God gives sex as a gift to those who are married, you probably know that sex doesn't always happen when you want it. And if you believe that lie that you need sex in the moment, if you lack self-control even within marriage, it will sabotage your intimacy and your relationship. You will become pushy and desperate, which is not desirable. You'll whine and you'll beg and you'll plead, which is the least sexiest thing you can imagine. If you don't have the patience and the willingness to wait, you'll think that you need it and you'll turn to destructive places like an affair or pornography and it will blow things up and sex will get much worse and not much better. Like unless God satisfies you, unless you can reach out to your spouse and they can say "not tonight" or "not yet" or "thing's aren't good," or "we need time to rebuild our relationship and this part of our relationship," like what you need is patience and you can't have patience unless God is really good and he's enough.

And so maybe your marriage isn't perfect; maybe things are struggling. Maybe this series has been hard because you are married and yet when you go home, like you're just not at that point yet. But if God is enough for you, then you'll have the time to know, to serve, to love, to respect until one day you can enjoy one more good gift that our heavenly Father gives.

So no matter what your calling is in life, I know this: If you have access to God, you have all that your heart really needs. And the best thing I can tell you today is that you do. No matter what your story, no matter what the baggage you bring into this place from your sexual past, you can walk into the presence of a glorious God. You can see him face to face; your heart can live in his courts. And the reason is our last fill in the blank for today: Because sex is forgivable. There's nothing you have done, sexual or otherwise, that would get in the way of your full access to God and the reason why is Jesus. Because there was a 33 year old virgin who went to a cross to unlock the doors of heaven. There was a Jesus who was willing to be the Lamb of God, who would die in your place to erase your sin and give you life in God's courts. There is a Jesus, a Savior, who would do whatever it would take to get you into his presence.

And that is such good news. If you're like the majority of people in our church family, in our nation, you haven't done this all right. There's stuff you regret, a big rewind button that you wish you could install in your heart but you can't. But you don't have to be afraid. I think of a Christian I once met who told me the story of his sexual past that was not pretty, not perfect and not godly. At the end of it, I remember what he said to me, like, tears in his eyes, he said, "Pastor, I hope you still see me as a human being and not as a terrible sinner." And I said to him,

"Neither. I see you as a saint cause that's what Jesus sees." You see, if sex is forgivable and if the word "forgive" in the Bible means to send something away, as far as the east is from the west, that when God looks at us through faith in Jesus, he doesn't just see terrible sinners or even just human beings, he sees those who have been cleansed and made perfect by the blood of Jesus Christ. He sees those who can, like we often sing in our church, boldly approach the throne of God. Like we can run into his presence and not be ashamed because we got naked at the wrong times. Instead, we can rejoice that God is a heavenly Father and as much as I love seeing my kids, God rejoices over seeing you. And you don't have to drag your feet and hang your head when you walk into God's presence. If Jesus forgave you - and he did - that you can walk into God's presence until your heart is filled up; to know that that glorious God is yours because of Jesus Christ.

So brothers and sisters in him, I can't guarantee you're going to have sex tonight, or this week, or this year, or ever. But that's okay! Because what your heart needs is not sex. Sex is good but it's not God. And you might not always have sex. But because of Jesus Christ, you can always have God.

Let's pray.

Jesus, we love you. You open the door to heaven. We can come to the Father through you, the Son, and we are so grateful for that. But we need you to send your Holy Spirit. It is so easy to be impressed by romance and fame and money and power and earthly things that are so short-term and forget about the long-term glory of an amazing God. And so, we need your Spirit to open our eyes to remind us that all the good things in this life are just a glimpse and a taste of the greater thing; the presence of God.

So help us to take advantage of this week. Lord, whether we have a great sexual experience or just a good meal, a good joke, we see an amazing show, our song comes on the radio in the car, someone pays us a compliment, every good thing, God, let it trampoline our hearts into your glorious presence until you are enough. God, we want to be like Paul. We want to be godly and be content with that; that would be great gain for us. We want to be like King David who said if the Lord was his shepherd, he would not be in want; that his heart would lack nothing. We want to be like the psalmist who said if just one day in your courts, God, would be better than a thousand elsewhere. But we need your help to be those kind of people.

I thank you, God, for the last four weeks. I thank you for our church family and a community that didn't run me off the stage but instead was willing to listen and to learn and I know you've made us stronger. I thank you, God, for all the emails and texts and stories of people who found out that the church can be a safe place for sexual sinners. God, let that always be the case. And I pray no matter what our story - prostitution or promiscuity, pornography or adultery - when we mess things up we would know exactly where to go. We would come to you and your people who know what it's like to be forgiven by God. Help us to be that kind of church, God. Help me to be that kind of pastor and teacher. Please bless us as a church family and help us to honor you in the years to come with our bodies knowing that you are all that our souls truly need. We pray this all, God, in your amazing name because that's what we think about you - you are amazing - and we pray today in your presence because of Jesus. In his name, Amen.

