

HEALING BROKEN SEXUALITY
The Christian and Sexuality
Dr. George O. Wood

This is the last message in this series on the Christian and sexuality. It's been kind of an ice breaker for me and for me at least an experience of breaking through some taboos, some off limit subjects that you just don't talk about from the pulpit. I trust this series has been helpful to you I pray that as we open our hearts tonight to the last subject.

Of the five messages that I have given on the Christian and sexuality I think this one is the most difficult – Healing our broken sexuality. It is difficult to speak one for a number of reasons.

First of all there is a great variety in this audience and in any audience, a great variety of sexual wholeness or brokenness. Some of you in this group are very put together in every area of your life including sexuality. Some of you are not and feel a kind of deadness and brokenness within. It's rough to speak when there's such a variety of experience because how can one word possibly fit everyone in their experience. Yet this is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit presence whenever we gather together that the Spirit gives words that are translated in your hearing to apply to where you are.

This message will therefore be as personal to your need as the Spirit is personal to our own life.

I use the word brokenness in our sexuality to refer to the condition that occurs within us that through a wrongful use of sex distances us either from God or other people or from within ourselves. Someone has said man's problem is theological – separation from God; it's sociological – separation from fellow man; and it's psychological – it's separation within ourselves. To any degree that we are not whole in our relationship to God or another or within ourselves because of sexuality that has been misused or harmful sexual experiences which have damaged us to that extent we are broken.

Some in this audience have very wholesome sexual experience. Others struggle with lust. Others with masturbation. Others with being a victim of sexual abuse. Others struggle with homosexual feelings. Others with real guilt, some with false guilt, some with difficult adjustments and perspectives and disappointments in married life. It's about as difficult to deal with this whole subject as a medical doctor to announce that he was going to be speaking on disease. There's so many ways to get sick and stay sick.

The problem with generalizing is we might miss the need of the individual.

A second difficulty in speaking on the subject of healing our broken sexuality is that we keep our sexual brokenness to ourselves. It is not something we let out or we share with anyone. Who among us that is married has the courage, would risk sharing with their husband or wife, that they may be dealing with sexual lust or sexual fantasy about other people. That is something that we do not, even in the closest human relationships, trust one another sufficiently. Maybe not everybody in the marriage relationship is ready to hear the other partner's sexual struggles. Because for them it would be such a devastating experience. One should confess when it is a healing act and it is not an act when it brings the other person into bondage and brings themselves into brokenness. Not everyone has the strength to receive a confession. I think that's

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a real key. Am I saying then we shouldn't be honest in a relationship? No, not at all. But there is a tendency to keep our brokenness to ourselves.

If you think when you get married you're going to resolve all the feelings of lust that you have, you're crazy. That's probably not going to happen. Because of the nature of the fall of man. That nature of our brokenness as human beings.

Who is going to identify themselves to another person that they have been a victim of incest in family? Or they have been a victim of rape? Who is going to share and trust another person to say I struggle with homosexual feelings? Who is going to share that their sexual experience in marriage is traumatic and frustrating? Or who can be authentic and open up and say masturbation has become compulsive with them. These are the kinds of things that are very much within us. And should be within us. Yet how do we deal with our brokenness?

I would not recommend in any way that we open up in a group. Generally the principle should be that the circle of confession should be limited to the circle of the sin. If you have committed sin in an area it's not necessary that you broadcast it and confess it to the whole world. But it is helpful that you confess it to the circle that was affected by your sin. The level of confession and the level of sin being equated with one another.

It's difficult to speak on this subject because of the inward nature of our sexual brokenness and our sexual need.

Finally I think it's a difficult subject to speak on because much sexual brokenness needs to be worked out through the patient and godly understanding of someone we can trust. We have created prisons of silence. One of the things that the devil likes to do is isolate us. He wants to make us feel like we are the only one in the world that has committed that particular sin or that thought. All of the other children are doing great but we're this weirdo who is still being bothered and the audacity of us to try to remain in the kingdom when we're so wicked. What happens is that our sin so isolates us and we think "I'm the only one who's ever committed this sin or thought," that we begin to be pushed away from God. If Satan can do anything he likes to isolate sheep away from the flock. We need to get away from the idea of being the only one who has ever struggled with this.

I think we need to get away from looking for quick cures. I think the Holy Spirit can in a moment of time bring healing. But often what the Lord wants us to do is work patiently through a discipline and a process of healing that may require the listening ear of someone we can trust and who can give us godly wisdom and counsel. Surely we are to cast our burdens on the Lord. But the scripture also tells us that we are to share our burdens with one another.

Even with these limitations I risk speaking on the subject because I believe God makes the wounded whole. Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6 "Such were some of you. Sexually immoral, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders." Such were, he says, some of you. But now you are washed, now you are cleansed, now you are God's own children.

I want to speak about overcoming the barriers to sexual wholeness. How do we get healing? What barriers do we need to overcome if we are broken in our sexuality?

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I'll use one word to describe the whole three points I'm going to give. It is the word "repent." In the Greek the word means to change your mind. Frequently when preachers use the word we use it in a very kind of threatening sense. There is way that that is a valid use of the word repent where we in effect summon the person to judgment and responsibility.

But as is the case with many words it's meaning is determined by the tone of voice. Three things that we need to change our minds about that can bring us into wholeness if we are broken. So we change what we have been holding within us, as we repent, God is free then to begin to work and to flow in his cleansing into our lives.

The first barrier that we need to repent for having held is our failure to forgive others.

If we are sexually broken in our lives it is very possible that that has occurred because someone has let us down. Someone has betrayed us. Someone has made fun of us. Someone has cheated on us. Someone has treated us as an object, not as a person. At the bottom of our discontent and our trouble may be a person or persons who are greatly responsible for us being where we are tonight in sexual brokenness.

God wants us to release things through forgiving. By the way, for those of you who will be parents, I want to tell you that the time to begin praying for a child is if not before conception should at least start at conception. I believe there is a sense that the prayers of parents can literally mold and shape and be a welcoming sign the Holy Spirit gives in the subconscious level to a child that he is wanted and loved by God. So many children are born without being wanted let along without ever being prayed for.

If you have a degree of sexual brokenness in your life, whether it's a small chip or crack or you feel like you're shattered in pieces what contributed to your sexual brokenness? Was it the security that you wanted as a child from your parents and perhaps never received? Is it the person who said, Never once in my life did my father ever put his arms around me and hug me. In all my life, I've been reaching out for someone to hug me. The quest for sexual intimacy comes because the person is still looking for someone to put their arm around them. In all the sexual encounters is not saying "You're ok," but saying, "I want you to use you for a while." And the person winds up never being affirmed in the relationship and wonders why they're so broken and hurt.

We need to know what it's like to forgive in order to be released. In a marriage, forgiveness is the key to the restoration of that wholeness. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean a continual submission to physical abuse or perversion. In marriage we must ask the Lord for the power to forgive. Often there is resentment in a marriage on the part of a husband for his wife's constant disinterest in sex. Or the wife resents the husband because he only appears to be loving when he is in bed. Somehow both need to break that cycle without waiting for the other to break it. And to begin to release one another in forgiveness. It seems to me that forgiveness best applies to marriage where we are taught to forgive seventy times seven. I don't know any marriage that can survive on just seven forgivenesses. If we do not forgive we retain the anger and the hurt. If we forgive we can release it and we can begin to be healed.

A second barrier to experiencing sexual wholeness is the failure to receive forgiveness for ourselves.

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Sexual brokenness can happen one of two ways. It can happen because we were a victim. Or it can happen because we ourselves have willfully chosen to sin. There may be a third way – a combination of the two. If we are a victim we obviously need to reach out and to forgive others. If we have been the one assuming responsibility for the sin which has had devastating consequences in our life when we've come to the Lord and changed our mind about that sin, when we have repented, somehow we need to come in contact with the forgiving grace of God.

I'm convinced that often we look for this only on the feeling level. If we don't feel forgiven we assume we're not forgiven. If I'm in court and declared "not guilty", that verdict is true whether I feel it or not. If I will meditate on it long enough I suppose the feeling will sooner or later come. But God's grace is there to forgive us and pick us up and we must let ourselves go from our own judgment in order to experience wholeness. If God has forgiven me now is the moment I can forgive myself.

I think of the apostle Saul. I think one of the reasons he becomes such a free and dynamic person was that he in his life did not retain the sin, which he had committed against Stephen. He had been responsible for Stephen's death. He had voted for the punishment to be carried out. He had held the garments. I'm sure that after he became a believer that memory must have haunted him. I suspect in somewhere in heaven we'll hear Paul say, God had to give me freedom from that so I could be released. Because the rest of my life I'd been going around saying, "I'm the one who killed Stephen," there would never been a chance of any development of any thing else in my life. All my life I'd been bearing the guilt." Paul had to learn from experience that there was one who had born his guilt. One alone. Paul was not qualified to bear the guilt. The person who can truly bear our guilt is Jesus on the cross. We need to release our guilt to him and carry it no more.

The old has passed away. The new has come. We are forgiven.

If the Lord in marriage relationship or any other relationship calls us to forgive seventy times seven how much more does the Lord forgive us? I'm intrigued by the fact that the woman of Samaria instantly had an experience where she forgave herself. The Lord comes to her and he talks with her and he wins her to himself. Then she leaves the Lord and goes back to the village. "Come see a man who told me everything I did! Could this be the Christ?" To me that's humorous. Everybody in that little town knew everything she had ever done. How could it possibly have been hidden that she had had five husbands and the man she was living with now was her live-in lover. Everybody knew that. She goes back and says, come meet a man who told me everything I did. I can hear one of the skeptics in the crowd going, "We don't need to meet him. We know it all!" But for the first time she was willing to be open about it. She was trying to carry this thing herself and now suddenly Jesus had set her free so she could admit what she's been through. The whole town eventually comes out. Many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the woman's testimony. "He told me everything I ever did." I think she knew the healing release of the Lord in her life.

Anybody had a secret sexual sin? You knew that because of God's grace you would be in heaven. But you dreaded being there because at the judgment the Lord was going to tell everyone that secret sin. All the people who really knew you well in heaven will be shocked. The great thing is when he's forgiven our sins he's buried them in the deepest sea. One of the

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things we don't realize about forgiveness is that God truly forgets. Even if the whistle ever were blown on our secret sin we would be like the woman of Samaria and say "This man told me all I ever did." It'd be a liberating act. The Lord is not our condemner. He's not the prosecuting attorney. He is our defense attorney, the Holy Spirit is. The Lord knows and accepts us and frees us. We don't look forward to the judgment as though the judgment is against us. We need to receive Christ's forgiveness in our lives. "Thy sins," he said to the paralytic, "be forgiven thee."

A third barrier to experiencing wholeness in our lives is our failure to accept and to love ourselves aright.

Jesus said, "Thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself." In order to adequately love your neighbor whether it's just a friendship relationship or a marriage relationship, which involves sexuality it is loving as you love yourself. Our sexuality is simply the tip of the iceberg of our personality. The basic part of our personality doesn't have to do with sexuality. It's a manifestation of a deeper inner life. The sexuality may be simply the manifestation above the water. Sexual immorality is a manifestation of the inner life. It's a false love of self. I think many people who commit sexual immorality if you could go beneath the water line of the personality you would find either self-hatred or wrong self-love. Self-hatred comes out as "I must have you love me so I know I'm worth something." The sexual experience is used to authenticate their own lives and their own personality. There's loathing and disgust for self.

Or the opposite is that immorality is caused by self-indulgence. "I don't care. Just gratify my appetite."

Both reflect a lack of love and proper care and esteem for the self. The foundation for self-love starts with God's grace. He accepts us. Then he continues through his building in us self love, self-esteem and self respect. When we can truly love ourselves and respect ourselves and esteem ourselves God brings us to a place of freedom and wholeness.

Respect for another person is the foundation for love. Respect for self is the foundation for love. Scripture puts it this way, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," or saying that the foundation of everything is basic respect for God. An awe in his presence. A humility. A regarding him as he truly is. As we come to that perception of him we have the freedom to come to that perception of ourselves and of others. Self respect.

Re-image the past and pre-image the future is the basis of self-respect and self esteem. If in your life there is sexual brokenness because of traumatic experiences in the past what you need to do is look back and re image that and quit remembering the scene or the situation with the horror that was present, with the darkness that was present. Instead see Jesus Christ in that scene and put him there and ask him to speak to you and begin to give you understanding. Begin to remember the situation in a whole different way.

And to pre-image the future. Instead of looking at the future and going, "I'm going to suffer from this the rest of my life. I'm always going to be broken. I'm always going to have self-loathing. I'm always going to have the struggles I'm having. We're always going to have the problems in our marriage. We're always going to be tight and tense and quarreling and fighting." Begin to pre-image. It's called faith. Without faith it's impossible to please God.

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Without faith it's impossible to change anything. You begin to see a new day, a new marriage, a new person, a new you.

Jesus does this with Simon when he first calls him. He pre-images him. He says to Simon, "You're no longer Simon. You're Peter and upon this rock I'll build my church." You're a rock. Peter didn't yet see himself as a rock. But Jesus saw it before Peter ever got the self-concept. The Lord wants us in our inward nature to be whole, to have self-respect and self-esteem.

As we begin to realize that and draw upon that strength in our lives God can then use that to help us overcome these barriers to wholeness. Forgive others, forgive yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the esteem and respect that God has for you.

Prayer:

Think back and ask yourself the question, Was I a wanted child or an unwanted child? If I was unwanted, was it really I wasn't wanted or was it inconvenient or I wasn't planned? Has that had any influence on my life? If you were an unwanted child I'm going to ask the Holy Spirit in this moment to put his healing presence in your life on deep level and to set you free. Because it wouldn't surprise me that if there is sexual brokenness in your life it may go all the way back to desiring deep within you to reach out to another person. If your meaning as a person has always been on whether somebody else liked you, your life has never been determined by what God thought of you, or the value you have in your own eyes as a child of God. Have you been sexually promiscuous out of this deep desire to be wanted by someone. Ask the Lord to change that. Lord, we would in this moment for your healing presence as we remember the psalmist who said, "Thine eyes beheld my unformed substance. In thy book were written the days concerning me." We believe that at the very moment our lives began you were in the planning, you were in the uniting and your will was present. You knew that those who bore us was being in life and you saw that we were good. For everyone here who was not welcomed into life, for everyone who came into life as a burden, an unwanted necessity of someone else, we see you in the room of birth taking us as a little child and holding us in your arms. We acknowledge that we are loved and accepted by you. Never again do we choose to look at our past or our origin as something accidental or unwanted. We choose to re-image the past and believe that we have been welcomed by you and you use this loss of human love in our life to bring about in us a greater good and greater glory. We're excited about what direction you may lead from here. You've taught us that you work good in all things. Others were hurt at an early time. The scar has left deep marks. We ask, Lord Jesus, for your healing, the presence of your Spirit to invade those memories now and wash them clean and take the sting of the hurt away. Help us now to reach out and deliberately say in our mind to those who have wronged us "In the name of Jesus Christ, I forgive you. I release you." Even if the person is no longer alive it seems like they have power over us from the grave. In the name of Jesus now we release them from our bitterness, anger, rage and regret. We bring the healing presence of Jesus into our lives who has taught us to say, Forgive. We remember those experiences where we were the perpetrator. Where we initiated the wrongful action. Where we ourselves sinned and fell short of the glory of God. We pray your healing upon us now. Like St Paul when we have been converted we might no longer carry the dark memory but now really be free in you. We remember who you set free shall be free indeed. We think of your words to Simon,

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When you are converted you will strengthen the brethren. Lord, you come in and unlock the prison doors that we have sealed shut with our own key of unforgiveness toward ourselves. We believe you're here setting us free in this moment. Bringing us in your reality. We claim it for ourselves and accept it. Bless us here Lord. Bless us in your presence. For the marriages here, Lord. May your healing peace be truly present. May the marriages be whole. For single persons, give us your grace to live as complete sons and daughters of yours. Whole. We thank you. We thank you because you have answered our prayer and in our heart a new day has dawned as we commit ourselves to you. We recall the scripture, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable to God which is your reasonable service." In a very private and quiet way we bring our sexuality to you. The private parts that belong to us physically and psychologically we give to you knowing that only you have the wisdom and the power to control their usage so that our sexuality might be healing for us rather than hurtful and destroying. We thank you, Lord, that you've been here. We honor you and praise you because you answer our prayer. In the name of Jesus. Amen.