Leader Guide

Theology of Sex week 6: Consumeristic Sexual Individualism
Primary Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:24-25, 1 Corinthians 6:1-20 and 7:1-5

The big theme of 1 Corinthians 6.

> **Leader Notes:** Hey LG leaders! The chapter of 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 are incredibly insightful chapters written by the apostle Paul to the young church in Corinth. Unfortunately a lot of the isight is lost on us because of our cultural detachment and Paul's language choices. The theme Paul focusses this chapter on is their underlying root selfishness (what we referred to as consumeristic individualism in the sermon) that fleshed itself out in how the Corinthian Christians approached money, sex and power (with a large emphasis on sex inside and outside of marriage).
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> This chapter also includes a famous passage that is often considered a "homosexuality clobber passage" in v. 9-11. The truth is that passage isn't a clobber passage at all. It's not an example of the Bible making a big deal out of homosexuality or treating it differently than any other sin issue. In fact it treats it very normally as a regular, normal sin issue just like the other ones included in the list; gossip (revilers), drunkenness, greedy materialism and the more broad term of all sexual immorality.
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> So to assist your group we added some chapter commentary and you are welcome to do anything you'd like to with it. You could have your group read it ahead of time, or you could have them read it for homework. Or you can use it as a reference guide if anyone gets confused or brings up the "clobber" passage and tries to make a big weird deal out of it. Hope it helps. Cheers!

While these passages are often seen as separate concepts and ideas, Paul is actually drawing a theme through these topics. In v. 1-8, Paul addresses civil lawsuits between church members and confronts their selfishness. He's shocked that they are so consumed with their own needs that they can't even see the needs of the community (**individualism**). Throughout the chapter, this selfishness specifically expresses itself in terms of feeding our never-ending materialistic desires (**consumerism**). Specifically Paul addresses this individualized consumerism in the Corinthians' finances in verses 1-8 and in their sex lives in verses 12-20.

The verses in the middle (v. 9-11) are a bit of a gospel summary and bridge between the two primary topics of sex and money. Paul says that those of us whose faith is in Jesus; who have been "washed, sanctified and justified" in Jesus are now going to inherit the kingdom of God. We've been adopted into God's family. And Paul argues that when your faith is in Jesus that will necessarily change how you approach money sex and power. Then in one list Paul links together sexual immorality, homosexuality, material greediness, alcoholism, gossip and swindling (ruthless business practices) and says none of these things fit in God's new kingdom. They are all distortions of God's design and evidence of a person who isn't living in Christ.

This list is fascinating because so frequently people get the wrong impression that God cares much more about sex (even to an extreme degree) than He cares about other sins. Even more so, Christians have been (rightly at times) accused of caring more about sexual immorality than other sins like gluttony or greed.

But this isn't the Bible's view. And it's not Paul's view.

Paul says in light of the gospel and in light of God's coming kingdom, using sex to serve our own needs is just as sinful as using money or power to serve our own needs while neglecting the needs of the community. And that all of us who are being redeemed in Jesus ought to be equally laying down our selfish desires as we lay down our lives to pursue Jesus (Luke 9:23-26 and 1 Corinthians 6:7-8).

LifeGroup Discussion Questions:

Leader Notes: This week recapped and built on a lot of the other major themes we've focussed on throughout this entire series. If you have newer folks or think it would be helpful, feel free to intro by recapping those big themes or getting everyone thinking by asking them to remember and recap those big themes.

Week 1 - We're made in God's image different from Him, yet made for Him.
Week 2 - God creates two different and equal genders; male and female that are made for each other.
Week 3+4 - We fleshed out those two different genders and how they both image God in their own complimentary ways.
Week 5 - Husband and wife show off God's image in how they compliment each other despite their differences in context of covenant where love can most easily flourish and thrive.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14. What are Paul's two pushbacks to the Corinthians' view that "all things are legal" - in other words, it's a free country and I can do with sex whatever I want to?

- Where have you seen sex be used in "unhelpful" ways? Where has sex caused pain or brokenness in your life and relationships?

  Leader Notes: In case people are using too narrow a definition of the word "sex", make sure everyone knows the Bible is talking about all sexual expression including oral sex, anal sex, masturbation, porn, all lust, sexual fantasy through entertainment (movies, books, internet, etc.).

  Help make sure the people in your group are connecting that relational pain and suffering is unhelpful whether or not they personally felt injured in themselves. Caring more about whether you felt hurt and diminishing the pain caused to the other person and the relational is exactly what we're talking about with individualistic thought.

  Also be ready for the fact that **this question could lead someone to talk about past sexual abuse** of varying kinds. If they do, here are a few resources for you:
  - You don't have to have all the answers or know what to do. But you do need to respond at some point quickly in two ways:
    1.) Make sure you respond immediately with heartfelt sorrow. Say something like: "I'm so sorry." or "That's terrible." or "That infuriates me."
    2.) Appreciate their willingness to be vulnerable and talk about it. Say something like: "Thank you for trusting us enough to share that with us."
  - Remember your coach is available to you if you don't know how to love them well. If the event happened very recently, then your coach needs to know.
  - Two resources that are helpful to point the person to:
    1.) Recovery - See if someone in your group would be willing to go with them.
    2.) Rid of My Disgrace - is an incredible resource written by Justin and Lindsay Holcombe. Order it from Amazon right away!

- What sexual desires are "mastering, dominating or enslaving" your life?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:13 and 16-20. How does the Bible describe sex as deeper and more beautiful than what our culture tends to think - that it's just a physical act?

- In your life, what have you thought sex would provide (other than physical pleasure)? What are you chasing after when you find yourself sinfully running toward sex?
  Leader Notes: Possible suggestions if they're confused or stumped. The four deep idols of approval, comfort, control and power are always likely suspects. People also use sexual expression to try to define themselves, to look for a solution to loneliness or insecurity, to relieve stress and tension or run from other pain sources in their life.

- **v. 18, 20** What does it look like for you to flee sexual immorality and glorify God with your body? How can we as a Lifegroup support and encourage you in this?
  Leader Notes: Help your folks get very practical. The more general they are the less likely they are to actually repent.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 and Genesis 2:24-25. While the wording might sound strange to us, Paul is presenting a revolutionary view that men and women have equal rights to each others' bodies in marriage (as opposed to the chauvinistic view that men own their wives). He's encouraging spouses to move back in a general direction toward the beautiful picture of Genesis 2:24-25.

- If you're married, how frequent and healthy is your sex life? How freely do you and your spouse talk about your sex life, frequency and desires?
  Leader Notes: The goal in these two questions isn't voyeuristic, but a healthy and honest discussion of an area of life many married folks never feel the freedom to talk about in blunt and honest ways. The goal is also not to blame our spouses, but to focus on our sin first and foremost.

- What hindrances are most likely to discourage your healthy pursuit of sex?
  Leader Notes: This could be anything from practical excuses to seriously deep rooted guilt and shame issues or trust issues in the marriage. Any and all are fair game and worth talking about.

Pray for God's Spirit to empower us (both married and single) to pursue sexual purity; whether that means we need to stop having sex (singles) or start having more sex (married). Pray for God's Spirit to help all of us deal with and heal from all of our guilt, shame and scars.