



Small Group Discussion Guide – May 14, 2017
“The Talk”

From Pastor Hamilton’s sermon:

Let’s begin with why we need to have “the talk.” Our children will learn about intimacy somewhere. They will likely learn some things without us realizing it. Young children whose friends have older siblings will learn about this from their friends. They’ll pick things up from television, from the movies, from conversations with older siblings. Eventually the schools will help them learn about anatomy and the basics of the mechanics of sexuality as well as some basic ground rules.

But there is more to sexual intimacy than the mechanics. Let me tell you about our tomcat....He’s a male cat hoping to find female cats so that he can make kittens with them. Actually, I don’t think he cares about making kittens, he just has a drive and wants to satisfy it. He doesn’t have any feelings for the she-cats. He just has an uncontrollable urge to mate. But we are not cats. We grow up with the same kind of biological drives. What sets us apart from the animals is our intellect and our soul. God created us in his image, and calls us to be more than animals. That’s part of what we have to learn, as it relates to some of our strongest drives—the reproductive drive.

No parent would give their kids the keys to the car without driver’s ed and communicating the rules, expectations and even warning of the dangers of driving. We don’t want them to hurt themselves or someone else....It is of course awkward to talk about these things with your parents or kids. It’s awkward for me as your pastor to talk about these things. But I care about you, and about our young people....

I think there are three broad elements to the conversation we ought to have:

1. Sex is a good gift from God.
 2. Sex is meant to be an expression of love.
 3. If misused, sex can bring pain.
- Yes—it can be awkward to talk about this in your group, right? Start by talking about your discomfort. How severe is it? Where did it come from? Then try this: do you agree or disagree with each of Pastor Hamilton’s three key elements?

From Pastor Hamilton's sermon:

Physical intimacy is not sinful. It is not evil. It is something beautiful and good that God intended to be a blessing. But if misused, it can bring hurt to ourselves and others....

One of the things we ought to include in our conversation is something about sexually transmitted diseases....Young adults aged 15 to 23 account for 50% of all new sexually transmitted cases reported each year, even though they only represent 25% of the sexually experienced population. The US has the highest rate of STD infection in the industrialized world. 4 of 10 sexually active high school students reported not using condoms during their most recent sexual intercourse.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus. This virus is linked to a variety of forms of cancer. The Center for Disease Control says that 79 million Americans are currently infected. There are 14 million new cases each year. It is so common they suggest that most sexually active men and women will contract some form of the virus at some point in their lives. The CDC recommends vaccination for boys and girls at 11 or 12, before they become sexually active, to help prevent the spread of the virus and lower the risk of cancer....

The ubiquity of smart phones has also led to an increase in two trends that can cause harm related to sexuality, and they are connected. The first is what is called sexting—sending sexual explicit photos, videos or messages to other people from your phone—and the other is the rapid explosion of pornography....

As I spoke with our young single women in their 20's and 30's, more than half had received, unsolicited, photos of men's genitals from men who were interested in them. We used to call that "flashing," but today we call it sexual harassment. I read articles written by women on various websites—*Huffington Post*, *AskMen* and others. Many women felt violated by this. Many felt disrespected. One woman noted that a guy must not have much else to bring to the relationship if this is what he sends a picture of....

More common is the sending of "sexts" between people who are dating. Sometimes among teens this comes as a boy pressures a girl to do this—"If you really loved me you would do this. I'll never share it with anyone. If you don't, you're being a prude. What's so wrong with it?"

I know this sounds old fashioned. I still think we're meant to honor the women we love. It is hard to see how pressuring a girl to send you a photo of herself, or how you sending a photo of yourself, is honoring either of you. In some states transmitting these images of girls under 18 is prosecuted as child pornography. There's also the question of whether these won't be shared with others. Most people know how to take a screen shot of Snapchat photos so they don't disappear. I read a story from Pennsylvania this week of a boy pressuring his girlfriend to send him a photo. After 15 requests, she finally did. Weeks later, when they had broken up, the photo was passed around the school. A study the University of Indiana published last year found that one in four people who received explicit photos of a girlfriend or boyfriend admitted that at some point they shared them with others. This can be devastating to a young person.

- What ways have you found helpful in warning yourself, your children or grandchildren, or others you can influence about some of the dangers inherent in misused sexuality, while also affirming that physical intimacy is not sinful or evil, but a beautiful and good gift God intended to be a blessing?

From Pastor Hamilton's sermon:

The word pornography, comes from two Greek words, *PORNEO* and *GRAPHE*. *Porneo* is often translated as sexual immorality. *Graphe* means writings. In the first century, they didn't have photos—but we know they made drawings and paintings.... Today, our cell phones, iPads and computers can be 24 hour peep shows or adult bookstores at the fingertips of anyone who can figure out how to access this stuff....

The fact that you are drawn to this, particularly if you are a guy, is not sinful; it is how your brain is wired. But what you do about this matters. The fact that your brain might be drawn to heroin if you used it is just how your brain works. The key is to know the danger and to not use it. Numerous studies show that the regular use of porn can negatively impact our brains and leave us enslaved....

Most of the guys over 14 in this room have seen porn. Even those who are most serious about their faith struggle with it....

Jesus told us not to lust after a woman in our hearts. A dozen or more Scriptures deal with the first century equivalent of our struggle with pornography. Paul writes, "God's will is that your lives are dedicated to him. This means that you stay away from sexual immorality and learn how to control your own body in a pure and respectable way. Don't be controlled by your sexual urges like the Gentiles who don't know God." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5) This question of who or what is controlling you is a good one. Does your sexual desire and pornography control you, or are you controlling it?

The New Testament authors addressed sexual immorality again and again. They did because early Christians were not so different from us. And they believed, as I do, that God's best will for us is that we not do things that dishonor others, that dishonor ourselves, and that make us slaves to our desires....

Here's the conversation I think God would have with us: God knows you will struggle at times, and that's what grace is for. He offers you forgiveness, a new beginning and a fresh start. But he doesn't want what he intended to be a good gift to become something that enslaves you or brings pain to you or others, and it doesn't have to. God will help us as we're tempted. He calls us to live lives that are pleasing to him and to honor him in all that we do. And when we fall short, which we sometimes do, He invites us to call upon his grace.

- Have you been tempted to read Jesus' teaching about lust in Matthew 5:27-30, and the teaching of the apostles like the passage quoted above, as old-fashioned, out of touch with the real world in which we live? Have you been aware that the Greco/Roman world was at least as sex-soaked as ours, just in different forms? How do you react when TV and film comedies, and even sports talk radio, give the impression that any normal male views pornography routinely?
- Re-read the final paragraph—read it aloud if you are in group session. Are there any parts of that message that make you uneasy? If so, which ones and why? Which parts of the message do you believe are the most important for you to take to your own heart, and to share with other people (especially younger ones) you care about?