

# Marred in His Hands – Introduction

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**Theme: A Series on Biblical Sexuality and Gender**

**Texts: Jeremiah 18:1-6; John 8:3-11**

- Lent is a forty-day journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. It is time of spiritual renewal, reflection, repentance, and surrender to God. The Cross of Christ is the central focus in our journey through Lent. “Once for all time and One man for all people”, Jesus freely gave his life to atone for sin, reconcile broken relationship, and demonstrate the great love of God. The cross is the place where wounds are healed, freedom is found, and new beginnings start. **From the inside out.**
- And so for the bulk of this Lenten Season I’ve entitled a series of messages: “**Marred in His Hands**” – a series on Biblical sexuality and gender – through this series we want to address some of the confusion and redefining taking place in our culture – around **sexuality** – a topic that for many is difficult or awkward to talk about.
- One of the reasons for this series is I want GSCC to be a safe place to have these conversations. I don’t want us as a church to be silent about some of these cultural issues around us – especially when they impact the **FOUNDATIONS** - our understanding of how God created us as human beings – made in His image. I also know that some of you (myself included) are journeying with loved ones and friends through questions, confusion and decisions around sexual identity. So this isn’t just theory. These issues, even if they affect a relatively small percentage of our population, impact real people and real families.
- Above all I want us to be a gracious and loving congregation – a congregation who deeply listens to the burdens and struggles of others. (Trust me, these issues are rarely simple and easy). And I also want us to be a truth filled congregation. That we would be courageous to stand for what is true, and healthy and right. We want to glorify God! And so we’re going to also have to be ok with the tension that exists between being gracious and being truthful – not one or the other but both - a tension that Jesus always got right – because He came with “grace and truth” (Jn. 1).
- **A quick word about tolerance.** Tolerance has become the word for us as Canadians. But be careful folks because the meaning of that word has changed. Tolerance used to mean.....**respecting the right of other beliefs and worldviews to exist.** Under the old definition you could respect an opposing idea or belief – or even another religion - but you didn’t have to agree with it. But now tolerance means something different– it has come to mean both acceptance **and agreement.** Not only must you accept my view – you must also agree with it - and be even be excited about it! And if you don’t, you will

not be tolerated! Under this new definition of tolerance – the expected tolerance seems to only go one way. In a crazy, upside down way, it seems all view points are tolerated – expect the Christian one! Well we may need to insist the tolerance go both ways.

- And yet a better word for us today isn't tolerance - **it is LOVE!** We don't have to agree with another's viewpoint – especially if that viewpoint is not Godly or Biblical – but we must love! Yes, a person has the right to believe and see the world and see their sexuality the way they want to. I may not agree or condone it for reasons my faith provides me, but I must love. So yes - you can disagree with someone and still love them! It is possible to accept, love and respect an individual without agreeing with their beliefs or lifestyle.
- (Series graphic)
- The inspiration for this slide design came from this from **Jeremiah 18:1–6** - **“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup>“Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” <sup>3</sup>So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. <sup>4</sup>But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. <sup>5</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>6</sup>“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.**
- **Why this text?** Yes, I know the immediate context of Jeremiah 18 has nothing to do with sexuality or gender issues. I chose this text because the image of a pile of clay being marred in the hands of the potter is for me, an image of **the brokenness of our sexuality** - this intensely personal and private part of our lives.
- Notice the two parts of this series title: **Marred**. I think we need to approach the sphere of our sexuality with the understanding that it is fundamentally broken – because of our fallen condition as human beings. We are on this side of Genesis 3. Of course in the beginning and in chapters 1 & 2 of Genesis, God created us and every aspect of our lives as good/very good. That means God created us sexual beings and He called it very good! In His beauty, creativity, and love, he created us sexual. He didn't have to do that but He did! At the same time we should not minimize the effects of sin on our sexuality (Gen. 3ff). It's messed up now.

- So we're marred, BUT – we are “In His hands”. We are loved, and held by a gracious and compassionate God! The cross of Christ ministers and brings healing to the deepest parts of us. He is the Potter. We are the clay. He can remold us and restore and heal.
- So as I like to do with any topic that is sensitive – I want to start by affirming some things. Lots to affirm...
  1. **Human sexuality** as it was originally designed and given to us by God is **good/very good**. He created it for good purposes. For pleasure and the proliferation of the human race. These are good purposes!
  2. **We need to affirm gender.** Two in fact. God created us male and female. In the image of God! This is foundational in Genesis (Gen. 1:27) for Jesus himself repeats it in Mk. 10:6. The apostle Paul alludes to it as well in 1 Cor. 11. Foundational because it leads to a 3<sup>rd</sup> affirmation...
  3. **We need to affirm marriage.** For those called to marriage it is the union of one man to one woman before God - to the exclusion of all others. This is our church's definition and statement on marriage. Because of our culture and shifting definitions on marriage and gender we need to be very clear about what we believe and that we have the freedom in Canada to believe this and to practice our beliefs. But please realize that this is not a new definition in the slightest! Marriage has been defined like this for thousands of years and in many cultures and in many religions. This is the most ancient of definitions.
- So these are affirmations - and not only do we have the right to believe and the freedom to believe them in this Country (at least for now anyway), but we also have the compulsion to affirm these things as followers of Jesus – because the Scriptures guide us.
- But how has sin marred God's original design and purpose of our sexuality? The Bible recognizes that our sexuality is one area of our lives that has been radically broken, confused and abused as a result of our fallen condition. And this fallenness brings with it a host of issues with which we must wrestle. A host of issues, because sex isn't just a physical thing. As Christians we believe we are physical (body), but we are also emotional and spiritual. As such we believe you can't touch the body without touching

the spirit. That's why sexual sin, sexual abuse and sexual harassment are so serious – they harm a person's entire being – body, soul, and spirit. This is also why I believe the Bible has a lot to say about sexual sin.

- **Pathology.** According to Merriam Webster it is “the study of the essential nature of diseases.” If you have surgery for example to remove a tumor – it is sent away and you wait for the “pathology report” – a report on the nature and the extent of the problem – the abnormality, the cancer in the body. Why? Because something has deviated in the body. Something that shouldn't be there is there and now it must be dealt with.
- The Bible uses a variety of words to both describe and define various sexual pathologies in human nature since the Fall of humanity. These pathologies are both heterosexual and homosexual. Please don't elevate homosexual sin above heterosexual sin. It's all sin and it all damages. I will try to mention them all as I understand them. (I'm grateful for some of Y.W.A.M's Dean Sherman's notes on some of these words).
- **1.Lasciviousness** - Extreme indulgence in sensual pleasures. You have no “off” switch. No limits. Modern Bible translations commonly use the words “licentiousness,” “debauchery,” or “sensuality” instead. Lasciviousness occurs when the pursuit of pleasure is carried to the extreme of complete disregard for the integrity of others and those around them.<sup>1</sup> **Mark 7:22,12:21; 1Peter 4:3; Jude 4; 2Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19.**
- **2.Sensuality** – the planned appeal to the physical senses for selfish gratification. God made us sensual beings but when we live for the physical senses selfishly – that is sensuality. Again, God wants us to have feelings but he doesn't want us to HAVE TO HAVE the feelings (I can't live without it).
- **3.Concupiscence – (Lust)**
  - a.Strong, abnormal sexual desire or appetite.
  - b.Someone hung up on/preoccupied with sex or romance
  - c. For example, if we are **driven** by the idea that we **MUST** have a girlfriend or boyfriend, and, or if we think by the hour about sex, we are concupiscent. **Romans 7:8; 1Thes.4:35**
- **4.Fornication (Porneia) Often translated “sexual immorality”**
  - a.To indulge sexually outside of God's limits for sex – which is marriage. If you are sleeping around for example. Having sex outside of marriage. According to the scriptures that is fornication. Other sins related here are:

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<sup>1</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In *Tyndale Bible dictionary* (p. 800). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

## b. Harlotry / Prostitution

c. "pornography" -- The word pornography is composed of two Greek words. The first is *porne*, meaning "harlot". The second word is *graphein*, meaning "to write." In other words, pornography is literally "the writing of harlots." Pornography has invaded almost every area of our lives through TV, movies, sports, music, the arts, video gaming, marketing, magazines, and the Internet. Differing degrees and aspects of pornography are everywhere. What once was considered unacceptable has become commonplace in our culture. God created the beauty and power of the sexual act to be enjoyed between a husband and a wife – it is intimate. When sexual activity is being viewed alone, it is beyond God's loving intention for that kind of knowledge - and it destroys intimacy itself– not to mention that it is highly addictive and often involves all the other sexual sins just mentioned. **1 Cor. 6:13, 18; Gal. 5:19; 1Thes. 4:5; Eph 5:3**

- **5. Adultery**- Not just the act of cheating on your spouse – it is the setting our affections or romantic desires on that which is not ours or on towards someone to whom we do not belong. It is used in regards to married people, because they belong to someone. **Exodus 20:14; Matt 5:27; Jer. 3:1; James 4:4.** Often God, especially in the OT uses this word – "adultery" to encompass all unlawful sexual activity. Figuratively it is often used to refer to people's unfaithfulness to God.
- Also, because the Bible itself does so, I need to define....
- **6. Homosexual acts** – Every time homosexuality is mentioned in the bible it is in the context of pathology – as deviation from God's will for our sexual activity and expression. It is not God's intent for sex to be between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. **Gen. 19:1-29.** Lev. 18 – there are verses here about unlawful sexual relations and verse 22 includes, **"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."** Lev. 20:13 - **"If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable..."**
- In the NT you have clear passages like: **Romans 1:23-27; 1Corinthians 6:10-11; 1Timothy 1:8-11.** Every single mention and every single context – homosexuality is pathological - it is not God's will for us. Check them out and get back to me if you disagree. The LGBT community calls these our "clobber verses". These are not clobber verses. It is not "us" against "them" – these are texts in the Scriptures.
- What is my point with all of this???? All of these fall short of God's design, intent, and will for our lives. By listing it all like this I want us to see that we all come to this conversation with **a broken sexuality.** None of us is pure sexually and we bring our baggage to the table together.

- Now –where is the hope in all this? Is there a way out? I offer to you that the answer isn't redefinitions. It isn't tolerance the way it is being used to day. The answer isn't legislation or picket lines, or sign boards. **The answer to sin is JESUS!** Regardless of your level of entrapment in sin – no matter how messy the mess is.
- Correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't the Bible record that God sent us a Saviour! From what? Our sin! Jesus came to deal with our sin. He came for sin sick people – to seek and to save lost people, broken people, messed up people. Jesus didn't come to oppose or condemn sin sick people, he came to save them! When you read the gospels (and I encourage you to do so) you will find Jesus- God incarnate – our Saviour – eating and drinking and loving and listening and hanging out with sinners!
- So heterosexual, homosexual, whatever the brokenness – whatever the sexual pathology - the answer is Jesus. Our ministry and very existence as a church is to introduce people to Jesus. It is Jesus Himself who takes the broken and makes them whole! He is the Potter – we are the clay. **And so our spiritual identity in Jesus is primary. Any other orientation is secondary.** For example, the whole question today of whether or not those who identify themselves as homosexual, or transsexual, or bi-sexual, or whatever – the question of are they born that way or do they choose that way, isn't even the most important question we should be focusing on. I think the question we as a church should be focused on is whether or not a person (regardless of how they identify their gender or sexuality) – whether a person – **has a living relationship with Jesus or not?**
- Why is this NOT an over-simplification? Because the only one I know skilled and powerful enough to deal with human sexual brokenness is Jesus Christ! Who can tame a heart out of control? - enflamed with lust? – addicted to sex? – so confused about what gender they feel they are? Only Jesus.
- What is our part? We are the clay. We offer Him our brokenness, our sinfulness, our hardness of heart and he says, "Thank you. I'll take that and begin to make you whole! I'll take the marred piece of clay up into my hands and make you a new creation!" Maybe it may not be overnight, and maybe it might not be until Glory – but he will make all things new and whole again! And yes, He will probably use a loving brother or sister in Christ to come alongside of you and help you in the journey because addictive and deep behaviours are rarely dealt with alone.

- But let's focus on a person's spiritual orientation over and above any other orientation. We get too caught up in the sexual orientation debate and miss the importance of whether or not a person is moving towards Jesus or away from him. We're called to invite all people to move toward Jesus, as he calls all people to himself.
- Listen to **1 Timothy 2:1–6** - **"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—<sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.<sup>3</sup> This is good, and pleases God our Savior,<sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.<sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.**
- So let's talk more about how we can be more receptive to Jesus' Lordship in our lives. In the midst of a sexually broken and gender confused culture, let's act like Jesus, speak like Jesus, and possess the compassion of Jesus who looked out over the crowds of people in his day and...."had compassion on them". He saw them as "sheep without a shepherd".
- Quickly just as an example for us as to how to minister to a sexually broken and confused culture. Look at Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. (It should be couple caught in adultery but how convenient – they only dragged out the woman!)
- John 8:3–11 - <sup>3</sup>The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup>and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.<sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup>When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, **"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."** <sup>8</sup>Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup>Jesus straightened up and asked her, **"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** <sup>11</sup>"No one, sir," she said. **"Then neither do I condemn you,"** Jesus declared. **"Go now and leave your life of sin."**

- There is so much here to guide us! The grace and the truth of Jesus! Grace gives us compassion, understanding, listening ears, and a deep love for all people. Truth causes us to call sinners to repentance. Heterosexual sinners – repent and find grace in Jesus! To homosexual sinners – repent – find grace in Jesus. To all of us sinners – repent – find grace in Jesus!
- Back to the cross!