

ISSUES

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THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION:

How Can the Church Respond?

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The Sexual Revolution: How Can the Church Respond?

3 Reflections

Rev. Dr. Brian L. Friedrich, President

4 Editorials

7 The High Cost of the Sexual Revolution

Dr. Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

13 Theological Reflections toward Christian Sexual Ethics

Rev. Dirk Reek

19 Sexuality: What Congregations, Parents, Pastors and Teachers Need to Teach

Roger Sonnenberg

24 Book Reviews

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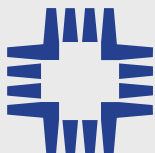
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reflections

“... and they realized they were naked ... and they hid from the Lord God ...” (Genesis 3:7a, 8b).

Should we be surprised by the havoc that sin, original and actual, has wrought on the crown of God’s creation in our sexuality? In the beginning, our sexuality was perfect. Our identity was so unfettered that Adam and Eve were perpetually unclothed. They were, each day, “just as they were,” and there was no need either to cover or conceal any part of their bodies. Then the fall into sin led to the need always to cover, conceal, and control every part and piece of the human body. But no amount of cover up, concealment, regulations or rules could restore the perfection that was lost. The sexual revolution was on, with an acceleration of its speed driving it.

This edition of *Issues in Christian Education* pulls no punches: the “sexual revolution” continues to wreak havoc in our families and in our congregations, communities, country and world. And it is not going away. Its expressions become more visible and dramatic by the day. It appears to many that we are losing both the battle and the war against the sexual revolution! What are God’s people, the leaders and saints of His church, to do? Give in and give up? Wave the white flag of surrender? I think not!

Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit who is always renewing, recreating and restoring us through the gift of faith in the forgiving water of our Baptism, we are to “put off the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteous and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-23). In His power and with His spirit we live in hope and confidence as we go about the task of speaking to the whole world and the neighbor next door the truth of God’s Word—Jesus—in love. Thus, by His grace we will be “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave [us]” (Ephesians 4:32).

It is my hope and prayer that this edition of *Issues* will be a positive encouragement and a rich resource for you and your ministry as you serve the congregation and community in which God has placed you.

BRIAN L. FRIEDRICH, PRESIDENT



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Sexuality as a Witness of God's Love

The sexual revolution and the women's liberation movement are inexorably linked. Both pushed the roles of women in new, and not always positive, directions. Gender roles and views on sex and marriage are radically different from what they were in the 19th century. The perceptions that were common by the late-20th century remind me of the old Peggy Lee song that appeared in an Enjoli perfume commercial in 1980: "I can bring home the bacon! Fry it up in a pan! And never, never, never let you forget you're a man! 'Cause I'm a woman!" This liberated woman could do everything. She was an executive in the workplace—a business woman extraordinaire. She was a homemaker and mother whose children were perfectly behaved and whose home was immaculate. Suddenly some women were trying to fulfill both of the traditional gender roles. After putting in eight-plus hours in the workforce, they came home to children and spouse, cooking and cleaning. Some might argue that, rather than gaining freedom from inequality, women were enslaved with double-duty.

The sexual revolution also changed the way the Western world thinks about sex and marriage. Sex outside of marriage has become commonplace. Many engage in "casual" or "recreational" sex. Rather than commit to a marriage, couples often choose to live together. People just play house to see if it will work out. For many, alternative lifestyles have become normalized. Being gay, bi-sexual, lesbian, or transsexual is no longer condemned in the public square as deviant behavior. Sex has become selfish, casual, and trivialized. It is increasingly rare for individuals to view sex as a sacred bond

between husband and wife, something to be reserved for the holy estate of marriage.

Inherent in these post-sexual revolution views on gender, sex, and marriage is the idea that there is no difference between male and female. This concept has opened the door to the common acceptance of a variety of forms of "marriage" and approval of an assortment of sexual persuasions and activities. In today's world it seems almost an anathema, but the fact is men and women are different! A common humanity is shared, but gender makes a difference. Before the fall into sin, God had a specific design for the male-female relationship. God created the world and all that was in it, and it was good, but wait ... God made man from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him, and it was not good that he was alone. He needed a suitable helper. So God made woman—bone of man's bones and flesh of his flesh, and they were one flesh. God put them in the garden and gave them dominion over it. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:30, emphasis added).

There is a design and a purpose to God's creation. Marriage, the roles of male and female, has something to tell us about God himself. In the gender of our physical bodies there is something being said about God. Gender is not arbitrary. It means something; it represents something. Saint Paul tells us that the relationship between husband and wife is a profound mystery, which "refers to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). Marriage and gender reveal a mystery about Christ and his church. This is an amazing privilege that we carry in our bodies, and the sexual revolution tells us that it doesn't

matter. It says, "We're all the same. Being male or female is just a chance occurrence dependent upon a random assembly of chromosomes." No! Scripture tells us a very different story. Women represent the church which is the bride of Christ. The wife is the one for whom Christ gave his life. He did this to make her a beautiful and spotless bride. Men represent Christ. He is the one who loves the bride so much that he would sacrifice everything for her. A husband is one flesh with his wife. When he loves her, he loves himself. This is the church! She is loved by Christ, her groom. He has made her presentable to himself with his own blood, and she is now one flesh with him—whole, complete, and sanctified.

Does gender matter? Do gender roles matter? God's design of male and female reveals a mystery. It tells a story. The sexual revolution has attempted to rewrite the story. We can call upon sociological arguments that support traditional marriage and cite scriptural prohibitions which condemn sex outside of marriage, adultery, and homosexuality. While these are good reasons for the Church to encourage traditional marriage and gender roles, those who embrace the Christian faith believe that the mystery of Christ and his Church offers the strongest support for insisting that gender matters, and that the one flesh union of one woman and one man is the only proper definition of marriage. These roles and this union were designed by God to represent in a very tangible way Christ's union with his Church. The way in which Christians live as sexual beings is intended to give witness to God's great love for us.

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What Being “Pro Life” Truly Means

Abortion was supposed to solve many of the social problems that have now become endemic. If pregnancies could be planned and women had ready access both to contraception and abortion, then rates of illegitimacy should go down. Likewise, if every child was a wanted child, then of course child abuse should become a thing of the past, or at least it should become a rarity. Logically, safe, legal abortion makes perfect sense.

Neither abortion nor ready access to contraception, however, has solved the growing problem of illegitimate births in the United States. CDC statistics document that the percentage of illegitimate births has gone up from 10.7 percent in 1970 to 40.8 percent in 2010.¹ While it seems offensive today to use terms like illegitimacy and to describe it as a “problem,” the statistical correlation between children raised in single parent families and their poverty level and poor educational outcomes has been thoroughly documented since Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan first controversially raised the issue of Black illegitimacy rates during the Lyndon Johnson administration.²

While child abuse statistics tend to be unreliable from the early 1970s, the introduction of legal abortion has done nothing to reduce the rate of child abuse which has actually gone up in the 40 years since *Roe v. Wade*.³ While correlation and causation are difficult to prove, and while there are a number of corroborating factors, including greater awareness and reporting of child abuse, statistically speaking at the very least, abortion has proven to be no more a solution to child abuse than it has to illegitimacy rates.

While access to legal abortion and contraception⁴ has done little to positively impact illegitimacy and child abuse rates, it has succeeded in fundamentally altering the way that society thinks about the birthing of children. Children have become a “choice” that can be “planned.” Prenatal screenings can ensure that “healthy” children are born and fetuses with disabilities can be aborted in the name of “quality of life.” The very language that is used to discuss childbirth betrays how fundamental the shift has been. Children are now seen as the end result of a planning process, where even good Christian families are waiting until they “are ready” and can “afford to start a family.” There is a sense that the whole process can and should be controlled by the parent or parents.

In such a functionalist system, where children are the product of a choice, it should not be surprising that many now see nothing wrong with choosing to raise a child without the benefit of a second parent. Nor should it be surprising when parents, who have chosen their children, overinvest themselves in the lives of their children as “helicopter parents,” or grow frustrated and abusive toward children who, by exhibiting their human flaws, don’t fully appreciate the sacrifice that the parent made in choosing to bring that child to birth, and thereby shatter the myth of a perfectly controllable childbirth system.

All of this is to say that 40 years after *Roe v. Wade*, society has changed too much to believe that it can be changed again by simply outlawing abortion. Abortion has never been the stand-alone solution, nor is it the stand-alone problem. Any attempt

at societal reform in matters related to childbirth must be expansive and truly pro-life. It must emphasize the dignity of all human life by refusing to embrace a culture that places “quality of life” over God-given human dignity, even in developmentally disabled children. Concurrently, that means that societal reform must push for approaches that provide the parents and caregivers of developmentally disabled children the resources necessary to take care of them. It also means that economic dignity and educational opportunity, which are fundamental to basic human dignity, must be part of any pro-life solution.

In other words, it is no longer simply enough for the church to speak out against abortion. It must also speak in favor of caring for the poor, the orphan, the disabled, and the marginalized. Only then can we begin to change the fundamental way in which our society thinks about children. No longer will they be mere utilitarian products whose value is judged by their station in life; instead, they will be seen as the creation of a God who imbues them with a dignity regardless of the circumstances of their birth. Ultimately, our society will only be as pro-life as we care for and welcome those who are least in our midst. To bring about real change, the church must be at the forefront of this witness through our acts of mercy and charity.

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1. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61_01.pdf
2. The 23 percent illegitimacy rate in the Black community that concerned Moynihan in 1965 surpassed 70 percent in 2010.
3. See National Incidence Study results disambiguated at http://www.abort73.com/abortion/child_abuse
4. The 1965 Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut* is at least as significant in this regard as 1973’s *Roe v. Wade*.

Behavioral Safeguards and the Christian University: My Personal Observations about Human Sexuality

During my lifetime, I have seen dramatic changes in the way society perceived sexuality and marriage. For example, I can remember watching television shows in my childhood, such as *Bewitched* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, during the early and mid-1960s, which did not ever dare show married couples sleeping in the same bed. In those days, TV couples had twin beds in their bedrooms. The sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s changed the reticence of Hollywood to portray overt sexuality on the small and big screens. Then *unmarried* couples were seen sharing the same beds, engaging in explicit sexual activities. Today we see homosexual relationships in movies and television shows. For example, the hit British television series *Downton Abbey* has a character who is gay and is sometimes shown kissing and caressing other young male characters. Things certainly have changed since the halcyon days of Milton Berle, Bob Hope, and Carol Burnett!

When I began attending college at a large state university in the 1970s, I was not fully prepared for the “anything goes” mentality that pervaded society during that time. Alcohol, drugs, and sex were readily accessible, with very few checks on their use. I realize those temptations have been around a long time; I am not totally naïve about that. However, I believe that there were few periods of time in human history when we saw a smaller number of checks and balances on fornication as we saw in those days.

In my opinion, four factors serve as behavioral safeguards to prevent casual sex: our natural predisposition for long-term relationships; the threat of sexually transmitted diseases; the real possibility of an unintended pregnancy; and normative religious beliefs about the proper place for sex.

By the time of the sexual revolution, three of those important safeguards on human behavior had been eroded. Beginning with the “greatest generation,” attitudes about long-term sexual relationships began to change. Dating and sex were seen as

releases from the stresses of day-to-day living. For example, many GIs had short-term relationships with British women during World War II. Then in the late 1960s, sexuality began to be glorified in movies and popular music. It seems that from that time forward, one-night stands became acceptable behavior even for some Christian women, and in some ways, even preferable to long-term emotional entanglements. The first safeguard had begun to wear away.

During the 1940s, penicillin and other antibiotics diminished the threat of syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis, therefore eroding the second safeguard. Now for the first time, the threat of debilitating disease was not a significant factor preventing short-term sexual relationships. I personally saw the renewed restraints that the threat of disease can impose on sexual behaviors. As I completed my last few years in a graduate professional program, HIV/AIDS came into the national consciousness. During the early 1980s, I clearly perceived a “braking effect” on casual sex as news about the hazards of contracting AIDS began to filter down to America’s youth. Unfortunately, today’s young people forget that modern medicine still cannot cure viral STDs, such as HIV/AIDS, genital herpes, genital warts, and hepatitis B. This important safeguard has again been weakened with the current emphasis on “safe sex” practices.

Even more important, I believe that many people fail to appreciate the association of oral contraceptives with the sexual revolution. On May 11, 1960, the oral contraceptive pill was approved by the FDA. I believe this was a watershed moment for the sexual revolution because the third significant safeguard preventing the abuse of sexuality was removed. Now for the first time, women could experience the same perceived sexual freedom as men. I am not sure we will ever be able to demonstrate a causal relationship between the Pill and the sexual revolution, but the two certainly seemed to be closely connected. Beginning with the late 1960s, three of the four safeguards preventing unrestricted sexual activity were eroded;

consequently, it is almost inevitable that the sexual revolution took place, and it continues to impact our youth to this day.

How about the last safeguard, restraints put on human behavior by religion? This factor too seemed to have eroded during the last few decades. For example, I have seen attitudes change about sexuality even during my ten years here at Concordia University. In my view, conservative, Christian college students have become more accepting of homosexuality as compared to five years ago. The vast majority of our students would never choose that kind of lifestyle for themselves, but a greater percentage of them see homosexuality as a fact of life, a predisposition that some people cannot control. Many students do not think it is appropriate for them to criticize others for their moral choices, even detrimental ones.

Christian institutions of higher education need to reinforce this fourth safeguard. They should not shy away from discussing human sexuality and biblical ethical principles with their students. Perhaps marriage and sexuality need to be required in the curriculum as topics that must be covered in required religion or ethics courses. In contrast to messages received from the world and our own sinful human natures, students should be told that God instituted marriage as being between one man and one woman and that sex outside of marriage violates fundamental tenets of natural and revealed laws. Students should be informed about appropriate and illicit uses for contraceptives; they should be warned about birth control methods that work by causing abortions. Students need to be reminded that “you are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20, ESV). Students need to appreciate that our Lord did not put these four safeguards in place to “take the fun out of life.” They are there for our good so that our lives can be long, meaningful, and productive. Above all, God’s laws governing sexual conduct show us our sin and our dire need for a Savior!

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The High Cost of the Sexual Revolution

Sexual immorality is nothing new. The Bible records the incest of Lot, the fornication of Judah, the adultery of David, and many other sexual transgressions. Homosexual relationships were rampant among the ancient Greeks. Prostitution was rampant from the Middle Ages through the allegedly prim and proper Victorian era. But something new broke out in the 20th century: the sexual revolution. This represented a new way of thinking about sex and acting out those thoughts that were unprecedented in human culture.

Sex, in fact, is foundational to human culture. This is because the family is the basic unit of all cultures. Sexual desire brings men and women together into marriage. Sex results in the conception of babies. Husbands and wives thus become fathers and mothers, who have children together, care for them, and raise them to adulthood, whereupon they enter marriage, start families of their own, and human history continues. By God's design and by simple biology, sex is a family value.

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But after the sexual revolution, sex began to be thought of quite apart from having children, with no necessary tie to marriage or to family. In fact, sex was often set against the family.

Factors in the Sexual Revolution

What caused the sexual revolution? Intellectual and cultural factors played a role. The Enlightenment of the 1700s sought to replace religious and moral authority with "reason" and utilitarian ethics. The Romanticism of the early 1800s stressed self-fulfillment and reacted against social constraints. The Naturalism of the late 1800s, inspired by Darwin, saw man as another animal whose highest purpose is breeding. The various radical movements of the 19th century—from Marxism to the early feminists—tended to see marriage and the family as reactionary, oppressive "bourgeois institutions." All of these ideologies and movements, though for different reasons, often were accompanied with calls for "sexual freedom."

Then came Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who interpreted the human psyche and much of culture itself in terms of the superego's repression of the sexual drive. Though Freud himself taught that controlling and channeling the sexual drive was necessary in order for society to function, the popular version of Freudianism was that denying oneself sex is unhealthy. Meanwhile, anthropologist Margaret Mead published *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), which claimed to have found a society that had no problem with casual sex, implying that sexual morality is nothing more than a cultural

construction. (Later research has shown that Mead had it all wrong, that Samoan society is filled with sexual taboos and moral restraints.) Then came Alfred Kinsey's sex research. *The Kinsey Reports* of 1948 and 1953 presented a whole array of extra-marital sexual practices as "normal." (This research too has since been found bogus, with Kinsey's research subjects being over-represented with prisoners, prostitutes, and even pedophiles.)

But these ideological and cultural movements and trends were not enough to set off a sexual revolution. The advocates of ethical utilitarianism for the most part agreed with traditionalists in teaching that sex should be reserved for marriage. After all, sex engenders children. Even setting aside moral absolutes, it is not practical or useful for a society to have large numbers of children born out of wedlock. Few people seemed to doubt that marriage is the best context for parenthood, with fathers and mothers taking care of their own children. The Romantic emphasis on self-fulfillment led to passionate love affairs, but these mostly led to marriage. The loosening of sexual mores led to more pre-marital sex, but it usually wasn't justified or rationalized as something good. When pre-marital sex led to pregnancy, the "honorable course of action" for a man was still to marry the woman.

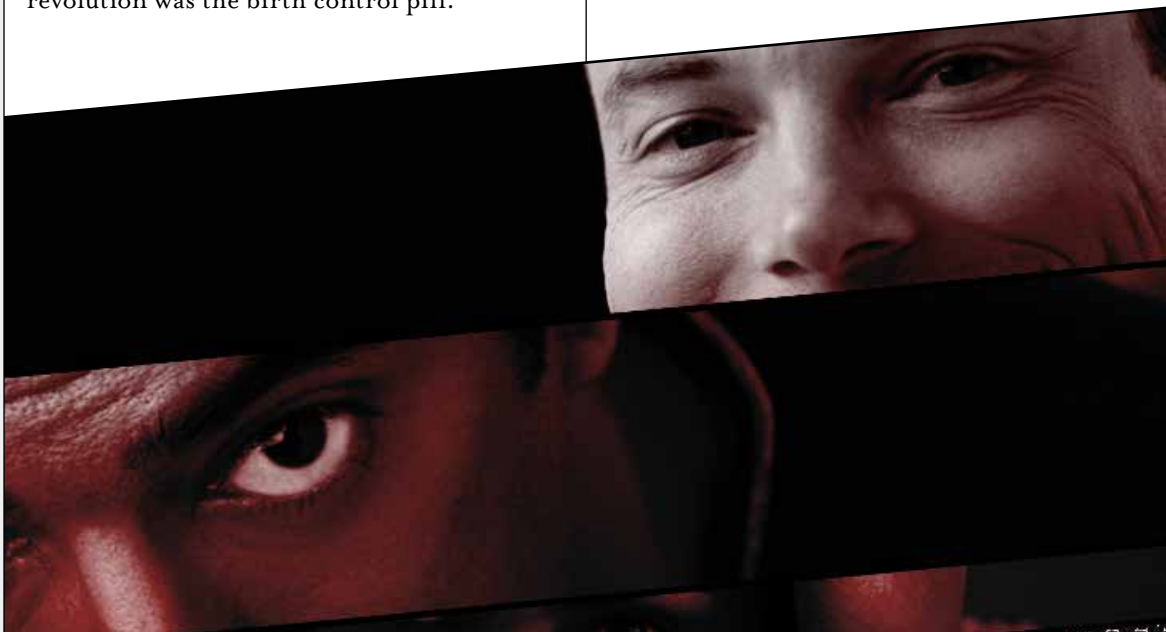
Revolutions are generally a function of long periods of tensions and growing pressures, but it usually takes a specific event—such as the storming of the Bastille—to ignite them and set off the social explosion. What ignited the sexual revolution was the birth control pill.

Impact of the Pill

The pill came onto the market in 1960. It was thus part of that larger cultural revolution—involving a reaction against traditional values, the pursuit of higher consciousness through drugs and hedonism, the mainstreaming of what was once a bohemian lifestyle, the ethos of "sex, drugs, & rock 'n' roll"—that is associated with "the Sixties." But the birth control pill was especially important.

Again, even those who rejected transcendent moral absolutes—such as the Bible's teachings against adultery and fornication—had, for the most part, agreed that sex should be reserved for marriage. Sex creates children, and children need to be taken care of by their parents. But the pill offered a technological solution to the moral problem. Now, sex does not need to lead to children. It is possible to pursue sexual pleasure for its own sake. The prospect of having babies needs not enter into the equation. The utilitarian argument against sex outside of marriage fell apart. As long as no children are being conceived, there is no longer a pragmatic reason why sex should be reserved for marriage.

The birth control pill separated sex from procreation. One does not have to agree fully with the Roman Catholic position that insists, on the basis of natural law, that sex to be licit must be intended for procreation and that all attempts at birth control are wrong. That is another subject. But the fact and the effect are clear: Sex has been disconnected from having children. This is not just a medical truism when certain medicine is applied. The very way



people think about sex and the very way our culture approaches sex leaves having babies out of the picture. An alien watching our television shows, studying our movies, listening to our pop music, tuning in to our pornography, and observing our mating rituals would probably never realize that this behavior so obsessively pursued has anything to do with reproduction. The aliens would probably wonder how this species reproduces itself, perhaps concluding that it has something to do with test tubes. To be sure, sex after 1960 continued to engender babies. Every biological detail of the sexual act works towards that purpose. But getting pregnant was often seen as an unfortunate byproduct, a mistake, a failure of the technology. But then abortion was legalized in 1973, taking care of that little problem.

More Sexual Possibilities

Once sex became a separate pursuit from having children, the sexual possibilities exploded in many directions. It is no longer necessary to simply have sex with the person you are married to in the context of a family. Premarital sex (having sexual relations before getting married) became acceptable, as did non-marital sex (having sexual relations with no thought whatsoever of marriage). There was nothing wrong with a man and a woman having sex, if both consented and as long as they practiced “safe sex” (that is, as long as they “protected” themselves from having children and, which was thought of as much the same, from disease). And if sex is not connected to having children, why shouldn’t men have sex with men, and women have sex with women? It became literally impossible for people to see why there should be anything wrong with that. And if sex is just a jolt of pleasure, why shouldn’t people have sex with themselves, aided by pornography?

Technology broke down the taboos about pornography and made it commonplace throughout the culture. This further affected the sexual ethos of the culture.

In 1968, the film industry jettisoned the Motion Picture Production Code, a voluntary agreement in the film industry not to depict explicit sex, nudity, or other morally

problematic material. The Sixties film industry decried such “censorship” and interference with “artistic freedom”—never mind that the “Golden Age of Cinema,” which produced what all agree are some of the greatest achievements in that genre, were made under the Production Code. This was replaced with a rating system—G, PG, R, X—that, in effect, freed up filmmakers to popularize the sexual revolution. Ironically, the X rating retained a stigma, being reserved for pornographic movies played in seedy theaters in bad neighborhoods. Most respectable people were ashamed to go into one.

But then another technological innovation solved this little problem as well. The Internet allowed every computer to tap into vast stores of pornography, all in complete privacy. Pornography has become ubiquitous in the lives of young people, singles, and even married people. This means a further dehumanization of sexuality. Instead of sex with a human being, licit or illicit, sex is with a visual image.

In the meantime, the culture itself became sexualized in this dehumanized way. Sex is used to sell products. Young people have nearly stopped dating—a remnant of the old courtship customs—in favor of “hook-ups,” brief, impersonal one-night stands that often do not even include the exchange of names.

Current Attitudes and Practices

How does the sexual revolution manifest itself in the culture today?¹ According to recent polls, 62 percent of Americans see nothing wrong with premarital sex. More than half of Americans see nothing wrong with homosexuality.

Among Christians, a recent study has found that 44 percent of unmarried evangelicals, aged 18–29, are sexually active; 54 percent of unmarried evangelicals aged 24–29 are sexually active. Ironically, the church with the strictest teachings about sexual morality and the greatest emphasis on the role of good works in salvation may have the most permissive members. According to a recent study, 66 percent of single Roman Catholics are sexually active. American Catholics may be even more permissive than secular Americans. The study claims that while 67 percent of Americans accept premarital sex, 83 percent of Catholics

do, in complete opposition to the teaching of their church. (I have not found numbers for Lutherans!)

This shows how deeply the sexual revolution has taken hold. But what are the consequences for the family? Marriage is no longer seen as a prerequisite for sex (61 percent of Americans believe it is morally acceptable to have sex outside of marriage); or for living together (51 percent of married couples 18-49 lived together first); or for having a baby (55 percent of Americans believe that having a child out of wedlock is morally acceptable). There is no longer a cultural consensus that marriage should be permanent (70 percent of American adults believe that it is morally acceptable to get a divorce).

Whereas sex used to be a “family value,” so to speak, today sex is often set against marriage and family. Getting married is sometimes dismissed as “settling down” as opposed to the pleasures of a promiscuous lifestyle. Dissatisfaction with one’s spouse as a sexual partner and the prospect of “getting someone better” has led to many divorces. And divorce itself, of course, has become commonplace. According to Barna’s 2008 study, 33 percent of American adults who have been married have gotten a divorce. The rate for “born again Christians” is 33 percent; conservative evangelicals are somewhat lower at 26 percent; Roman Catholics, whose church does not permit divorce at all, have a rate of 28 percent. (Again, I don’t have rates for Lutherans!) Though there is evidence that the more seriously a person takes his or her faith, the less likelihood there is for divorce, the church obviously has a major problem, as does the institution of marriage, the nature of which is to be permanent.

Even though marriage is no longer necessary for sex, cohabitation, or parenting, and is no longer a permanent relationship, people still want to get married. In fact, there remains a moral principle, despite the logic of the sexual revolution, against adultery. An impressive 92 percent of Americans believe that it is morally wrong for married couples to have an affair. But what is left for marriage? There is romance. Companionship. But romance and companionship can come in many different

forms. If marriage is just a matter of romance and companionship—with nothing intrinsically to do with having children—why shouldn’t same sex couples who are romantically attached to each other be able to get married? Following this reasoning, various states and nations have changed their laws to allow men to marry men and women to marry women.

People also, at some point, want to have children. But because marriage is not thought to be necessary, more and more children are being born to single mothers. Some 40 percent of the children born in America were to unmarried mothers. This is not due to a failure of the burgeoning birth control industry. Most of these pregnancies are *intentional*. That is, women are *choosing* to have children without the father being in the picture. Factor in divorce, and nearly half of the children in the country spend at least part of their childhood living with only their mothers.

The High Cost

The economic and emotional toll of these arrangements—on the children and on the single mother—is enormous. Over half (51 percent) of the children born outside of marriage live in poverty. Mary Eberstadt studied the darkness, rage, and despair that characterizes much of the popular music that young people listen to. She found that a pervasive theme is the torment of being abandoned by one’s parents, especially the father. She writes,

If yesterday’s rock was the music of abandon, today’s is that of abandonment. The odd truth about contemporary teenage music—the characteristic that most separates it from what has gone before—is its compulsive insistence on the damage wrought by broken homes, family dysfunction, checked-out parents, and (especially) absent fathers. (“Eminem is Right,” *Policy Review*, 128 [2009])

The impact of the sexual revolution on the church is obvious. Pastors have to deal with the fact that the majority of the couples who seek marriage are already living together. Sexual sin plagues youth groups, singles ministries,



and even senior citizens' groups. Pastors must counsel with couples seeking divorce and must decide how to handle members who have taken this step. Pornography is a problem for nearly everyone, including—tragically—pastors themselves.

These transgressions are not just violations of arbitrary, outdated, and unnecessary rules. They strike at our very nature, our humanness. We are created male and female so as to make it possible to enter into the one flesh union, established in sexual relations, thereby creating a family (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). Sex makes us one flesh with our spouse—or with whomever we have sex (1 Corinthians 6:16). Out of this union can come children, who share the couple's DNA, and are thus one flesh with their parents. All of this mirrors the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church, with whom, by virtue of Baptism and Holy Communion, He is one body (Ephesians 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 12:27).

No wonder sex is such a deep-rooted part of our desires and our lives, that it has such high psychological stakes, that in its potential for both shame and ecstasy, it points to both our sinful nature and to our redemption. To violate God's design and His meaning for sexuality is to do ourselves horrible harm. "Every other sin a person commits is outside the body," observes St. Paul, "but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). We are starting to recognize, I think, the high cost of the sexual revolution. A few taboos remain—adultery, sexual harassment, sex with children, rape—and the revulsion that people

still feel for those transgressions proves that sex is more than a pleasurable spasm that is "no big deal," that illicit sex is a violation of another human being.

The sexual utopia of "free love" promised in the Sixties has not been realized. As the casualties of the sexual revolution are mounting, at least some veterans of the revolution are admitting its failure. The British author A. N. Wilson recently published an article in a popular London newspaper titled "I've lived through the greatest revolution in sexual mores in our history, [and] the damage it's done appalls me." Here is an excerpt, with my emphases:

I have been divorced. Although I was labeled a Young Fogey in my youth, I imbibed all the liberationist sexual mores of the Sixties as far as sexual morality was concerned.

I made myself and dozens of people extremely unhappy—including, of course, my children and other people's children.
...

Back in the Fifties, GfK National Opinion Poll conducted a survey asking how happy people felt on a sliding scale—from very happy to very unhappy. In 1957, 52 percent said they were 'very happy.' By 2005, the same set of questions found only 36 percent were 'very happy,' and the figures are falling.

More than half of those questioned in the GfK's most recent survey said that it was a stable relationship which made them

happy. Half those who were married said they were 'very happy,' compared with only a quarter of singles.

The truth is that the Sexual Revolution had the power to alter our way of life, but it could not alter our essential nature; it could not alter the reality of who and what we are as human beings.

It made nearly everyone feel that they were free, or free-er, than their parents had been—free to smoke pot, free to sleep around, free to pursue the passing dream of what felt, at the time, like overwhelming love—an emotion which very seldom lasts, and a word which is meaningless unless its definition includes commitment.

How easy it was to dismiss old-fashioned sexual morality as 'suburban,' as a prison for the human soul. How easy it was to laugh at the 'prudes' who questioned the wisdom of what was happening in the Sexual Revolution.

About one-third of marriages in Britain end in divorce.

Yet, as the opinion poll shows, **most of us feel at a very deep level that what will make us very happy is not romping with a succession of lovers.**

In fact, it is having a long-lasting, stable relationship, having children, and maintaining, if possible, lifelong marriage.²

Perhaps the times are ripe for a counter-revolution, or, rather, a movement like the one that overthrew the botched Communist regimes that started in revolution but ended in dehumanizing oppression. Perhaps the times are ripe for genuine sexual liberation in the recovery of marriage and family as God designed them.



1. The statistics cited here are sourced in my book with Mary Moerbe, *Family Vocation: God's Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012). Some are taken from a forthcoming update of my book, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

2. A. N. Wilson, "I've lived through the greatest revolution in sexual mores in our history, [and] the damage it's done appalls me," *The London Daily Mail* (4 January 2013).



Theological Reflections toward Christian Sexual Ethics

No brief article can presume to be a comprehensive examination of or case for a Christian sexual ethic. The literature available is formidable; the cultural issues are numerous and complex. Perhaps with good reason! There are likely few subjects in our human experience that engender more wonder and fascination, more delight and dread, than our sexuality and our sexual desires and experiences. Attitudes about sex and discussions of the topic through our history reflect remarkable extremes among Christians. On one end of the spectrum, some have argued that the discovery and expression of sexuality were the central issues of the Fall into sin, while at the other end some would ascribe a near sacramental nature to it. Some dismiss it as so entirely the stuff of merely sustaining the existence of the species, so entirely tied to matters of this world that it's almost unworthy of discussion in the larger conversation of matters theological. Others endeavor to wrap the topic in such sanctimonious and emotional idealism

that one is left wondering whether it's the same experience the rest of us are involved in, or whether we could ever attain such entirely pristine attitudes which seem to be required of what passes for a true Christian by these rubrics.

The Voice of the Lord among the Din of the Demonic

Serious discussion of human sexuality by Christians is further exacerbated by a culture that has seized this good gift from the hand of the Father, grasped it as its own possession, and geared it to its own purposes. That's not new; but two important cultural voices have become so loud that they virtually drown out a wholesome approach to human sexuality. Naturalism, embodied in everything from Masters and Johnson to Larry Flint, focuses on life as mere biology, life as a sheer materialism. It's a powerful influence in our modern culture that robs sexuality of its core spiritual element and has rendered it as merely that which can be experienced. The second voice is secularism's mad veneration of the individual and the fascination with rights and privileges. Secularism has had two dreadful impacts on the mutuality of human loving in legal and social thinking. It has twisted the "knowing of another" in the giving that is sexuality to idolization of the self and ignorance of the other. In its cry for the protection of the individual, it has succeeded in

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isolating persons behind partitions of political correctness and walls of personal demand. As a result, trust disintegrates, and persons are left alone, persons of whom it was first said, "It is not good to be alone." The selfishness of human nature engendered by sin is problem enough for wholesome sexual attitudes. When culture's attitudes justify the disconnection of sexuality from spiritual roots, from the mystery of two becoming one, encouraging healthy sexuality becomes far more difficult.

In the face of this, it is important for Christians to continue to assert a positive word about a holy and wholly healthy sexuality. It was suggested a long time ago that if we were more winsome in affirming, "Husbands, love your wives," it might impinge on us less to have to hammer, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Let us make an effort. Shouldn't that begin with anchoring our line of thinking about the subject in more than just one mere commandment?

The Gift of Giving from a Giving God

A biblical and theological ethic of sexuality seeks to address three impinging zones of thought and discourse: How are we invited to see/experience/

treat ourselves as sexual persons? How are we invited to see/experience/treat others as sexual persons? How are we invited and authorized to speak the Lord's Word of life and love to a broken and dying world?

Human sexuality is a key element of the relatedness for which we were made, an expression of the image of God. That's straightforward in Genesis 1:26-28, the text that introduces the theme of "image of God" of which humans are a reflection and expression, an expression immediately cast in terms of male and female. Humans were made for relatedness with the Lord and with one another.¹ At the dawn of the human experience, the distinctiveness and compatibility of the sexes were introduced in their inter-gender expressions as reflective of the meaning of the "image of God" which is expressive of relationship, of giving and receiving at its deepest and most intimate level. The "image of God" is not merely an internally held righteousness and innocence held in and by isolated individuals. It is precisely that unashamed relating, gifting and loving that expresses the internal conversations of God and the act of his creative gifting.² Isn't that the deeper sense of being right with God ... to be gift and giver to another? As icons and reflections of the gifting king of all creation, humans were created and summoned to be self-giving in love and care. All other aspects of the giving and receiving, the care, the protection, the humor, the tears, the service that happen between a man and a woman, flow out of and foster that foundational gift of self.³

The same notion of giver and gifting is repeated when redeemed sinner/saints are challenged as they live in marriage. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ..." (Ephesians 5:20 ff). All other relationships that persons share on a social, economic, or political level are reflections and echoes of this most core relatedness between a man and woman. When the power of sin divides from the Lord and from one another, what is lost is the capacity to relate in giving, for the power of self, the *incurvatus*, now rules in isolation



and death. The created yearning for relating remains, but it is now turned to possession of the other as object and all the games of power that go with it. What remains is my quest for my rights instead of my giving of my self in sacrifice for you.

Human sexuality is an expression of the doctrine of the Trinity. The notion of the Trinity is at the heart of Christianity, and human sexuality echoes that. The last fifty years have seen a vitally renewed interest in and expression of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as foundational to the Christian faith. The direction various authors have taken with their thinking lies well beyond the scope of our focus. Common to them all, however, is an emphasis on the unity of the persons of the godhead that is based on the inter-dependence of the persons more than a unity that is assured by metaphysics. In theological discussion these days, the emphasis is referred to as the social Trinity. Far too briefly it can be characterized in this way: the Father begets and gives to the Son. The Son in filial love gives back to the Father in devotion and obedience. Neither can lay claim to their essential being and name without the other. The deeds, the honor, the glory, the Name of the Trinity flow out of this relatedness of Father and Son. Out of this inter-relatedness of gift and love flows the Spirit, the giver of life, who catches up humanity in the announcing of the relationship between Father and Son and bears humanity back into the nexus of all the deeds that flow out of that relationship.⁴

One finds regular mention in discussions of the social Trinity on the ancient theological term *perichoresis*, a term devised to describe the relation between not only the two natures of Christ, but also the persons of the Trinity. The source-meaning of the term is debated, especially since it's not a biblical term. Alternately it is understood to mean either "a giving way" for the other, or to be based on the notion of *choreo*, the image of chorus and dance, a responsive harmony. Either understanding yields an image of gifting harmony. It recognizes the distinct aspect of each person of the Trinity in their necessary inter-relatedness and yields a description of the Lord that ties all of his deeds to his nature itself. All the deeds of creation



(Psalm 8) and redemption (John 17) are to be expressions of the nature of the Trinity.

Is it possible to read Genesis 1:26-28 fruitfully with that in mind? Arguably so! The interpersonal plurality of the godhead expresses itself in the inter-relatedness of man and woman. Each is uniquely different from the other in composition, and together they find their unity in the gift of uniqueness to the other. New life in a child that flows out of that relating is the constant witness that points back to the relatedness between parents. Dennis O'Brien offers this perspective:

... the human spirit can expand as it moves toward the different. It can; it may not. Certainly some homosexual (or celibate) life choices arise from a fear of the different in women (or men). On the other hand, in a society that devalues heterosexuality and marriage through a mix of sentimentality and sexual titillation, the choice of homosexuality may be the choice of the different which is

revelatory ... the final fact is that the bodily, biological difference between men and women is the urtext of the heterosexual narrative. Writing that sexual script is inherently difficult—that is the reason that sentimentality and fantasy are so popular; they conceal the pain of difference and the lessons of loving across that pain.⁵

The Trinitarian stamp is all over creation. All relationships echo and reflect it.

The Mystery of Yearning

Human sexuality senses the stamp of life in the mystery of encounter. Our sexual nature detects this stamp that is the footprint of God in the entirety of our world. In Genesis 2, the man's appreciation of the woman given to him recognizes her likeness and also her difference from him. "This at last is of my substance, my essence." The entire creation teems with life as gift from the Lord; yet it is in the woman that the man senses life is experienced as the Other that is a trace of both God and himself. This one is from me, like me, and in the gifting for me; yet I am for her. The innocence of entire trust and gift is reflected in their nakedness that knows no shame, no hiding, no covering, no manipulation.

Existentialist and post-modern philosophers wrestle with the yearning that longs for this encounter. Martin Heidegger's dissection of the meaning of existence in *Being and Time* affirms that we are thrown into the exercise of care as part of the essential core of an existing, longing for the Other to care about. In a far more cynical approach, Jean Paul Sartre despairs because our regard of another helplessly poses one as an object, a thing, instead of the Other for whom we long. Paul Ricoeur's examination of the functioning of language cries for the Other for the sake of community. Philosophers recognize our desire to know another, the Other, and they struggle to find rational assurance that it happens.⁶

St. Paul is able to speak very positively of this desire, calling it "a great mystery" which ultimately alludes to Christ and his Church, always hinted at in the meeting between a man and a woman (Ephesians 5). It would seem to be found in every encounter with another person.

It echoes in the vitality that fills the creation. This seems common to humanity; it is known no less in the homosexual community. David Richards in making his case for gay rights writes:

"Moreover, the experience of one's sexuality is, from its inception, a mysterious, even awful force fraught with a sense of ultimate concern with the other, a longing for communion and transcendence in relation with a beloved though alien other."⁷

Human sexuality is a representation of the faith relationship. When the Scriptures describe faith and trust in the Lord, it uses the same language as is used of human intimacy. In Genesis 4 "Adam 'knew' his wife Eve." Jeremiah 31:30-34 and Galatians 4:8-9 are typical of passages which refer to faith as "knowing God," or, as St. Paul prefers, "being known by him." Sexual encounter happens at a deep level of daring and trust, just as faith does. The very act of daring to trust in turn engenders both trust and fear at the same time. Faith functions in the same naked abandonment in the hands of God's promises. Only a God like ours could come up with an idea like human sexuality and then use it to describe his relationship with us. We are the daughters of Zion, the bride of Christ. We are the wives of the king's son. We are Gomer and have too often played the harlot; nevertheless, the passion of the lover of Canticles pursues us to claim us as his own. To seek sexual expression with another is to yearn for the closeness of Eden; it is the embedded human predisposition that longs for the voice of the Father echoing in the voice of one given to us. It is to receive from Him and to give to another.⁸ Here, there are clues of why humanly devised religions often involved sexual experience. There are clues here how spiritual care is fraught with temptations of a sexual nature.

Human sexuality in wholesome expression finds in the actions of another toward us an affirmation of our identity and our value. We are called by name, we are singled out, we are sought, we are desired, and we are treasured. This affirms what the social sciences have observed that we "know who we are" out of our encounters with others, which poses an important challenge to the existentialist and/or secularist agenda

of a self-created identity. It is the voice of our Father calling to us through the office of husband or wife. There is a biblical parallel in two, contrasting passages. The assault on God's position at the tower of Babel reaches its apogee when humanity proposes to "make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4). That's the self-creation of self-identity. The rebellion of Babel finds its counterpart in Ephesians 3:15 where a gracious Father "names every family in heaven and earth." Identity is a gift that comes from the voice of the Father through His offices. Apart from that voice and those offices, it is idolatry of self.⁹ Cut loose from faith that is enjoined and celebrated in the First Commandment, every gift from the Lord becomes our own twisted revision to find the Lord on our own. As J.R.R. Tolkien writes in *The Lord of the Rings*, "An orc is an elf devised by the enemy." In that understanding, Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1 reflects the progression of mankind's desperate flight and the Lord's judgment in confirming humanity to its own futility. But even our idolatrous, futile human chasing would suggest that the mystery of encounter with the Lord and others still lies there ... just out of our reach.

So How Do We Speak and Listen?

Since our ethical thinking and behavior grow out of our values, with the foundational values flowing from the person and deeds of the living God, what might these theological affirmations suggest for our sexual ethics? It has already been suggested that such thinking ought to consider three related concerns: our treatment of self, our treatment of others, and our word to the world. In order to prompt individual and group consideration of the foundations, we have suggested questions rather than direction for our ethical engagement are offered.

With regard to self:

- Does false modesty about my own sexuality honor God as much as I think? Could this be my own insecurity or an effort to shape my own righteousness apart from the Lord's gift in Christ's righteousness?
- When I grow angry, impatient, or discouraged in times of sexual isolation, when I am tempted to find a sexual partner apart from



one given by the Lord in his office of husband or wife, when the language about my "rights" rather than the "image of God" begins to become loud noise in my head, how much am I trusting the Father's decisions to give as Luther describes in the First Article?

With regard to others:

- What does my humor about the other gender say about my own selfish fears and insecurities? Do my prejudices about same-sex orientation wall me off from another person struggling with sin's power?
- Does my service to Christ entail becoming a student of my spouse's feelings and needs? Would that make the marriage bed church work and worship?

With regard to our speaking to the world:

- Does political correctness impinge on our summons to speak a word of death and resurrection to our world? How much am I willing to suffer for the sake of that call? When I do speak that word, is it a matter of my own power and self-aggrandizement, my own angry control, or is it the voice of the Lord?
- Is it in my power to guarantee how the world should be, or am I called to speak and leave the process to the Lord?
- Am I tempted to take the easier path by adopting the "enlightened" views of my culture that are clearly opposed to the Lord's intentions?
- How do we live as members of both the kingdom of the right and left as we face profoundly trying civil questions about same-gender marriage and economic rights? About cohabitation and its negative impact in the lives of children born in such circumstances and in economic difficulties that impact an entire society?

1. The notion of inter-personal relationship with the Lord and with one another permeates the language of the Old Testament.
2. The manner in which Luther explains the commandments argues that the individual's righteousness is always a matter of love to the Lord and to the neighbor. This would suggest that righteousness might be meaningless apart from relatedness.
3. I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Mark Meehl for this conceptualization of the phrase "image of God." In the same manner that despots remind their people of their presence and power through highly public representations, so the gracious relatedness of the Lord encounters us in every human image.
4. For further understanding, the reader is encouraged to investigate the attached bibliographic material that gives but an initial awareness of the important discussions in this area.
5. Dennis O'Brien, "A More Perfect Union," *The Christian Century*, vol. 121, January 27, 2004, 27-31, cited in *Homosexuality: Opposing Viewpoints*, Cynthia A. Bily, editor, Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2009, p. 131.
6. Historically it could be argued that this struggle of isolation stems from the modern quest to assert the individual as "knower," which reflects the views of Descartes and Locke.
7. David A. J. Richards, *Identity and the Case for Gay Rights: Race, Gender, Religion as Analogy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 96.
8. Highly instructive is a Bible study drafted years ago by Dr. Paul Bretscher, *The Mystery of Oneness*, Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, 1980.
9. A very similar process happens in the Apocrypha in I Maccabees 5:57 where the same phrase appears, "We will make a name for ourselves." The results are disaster.

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Sexuality: What Congregations, Parents, Pastors and Teachers Need to Teach

The title of the brochure was *LoveFest 7*. It introduced the seventh conference at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arcadia, California, a conference dedicated to the teaching of abstinence and a God-given perspective on sexuality. Each year the conference attracts more and more youth and adults from throughout the United States and Canada.

All the churches in the Pacific Southwest District received a mailing in December inviting their youth and adults. A Director of Christian Education announced the event to the parents of his youth. After the announcement, one of the mothers took the brochures and dumped them into the garbage can declaring, "This stuff should not be talked about in the church." Though she and her daughter decided not to attend, others from the church did. They came back excited and thankful for the conference.

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The next year when the same announcement was made, the once-irate mother responded very differently. She didn't say much. She didn't need to. She simply took some brochures and said, "I'm going to try to get some people to go." Her 16-year-old daughter several months before had announced that she was pregnant.

We are living in a culture where the stories are being told by the media, and as Dr. David Walsh said, "He who tells the story dictates the culture." Why is it that the church is so silent on the subject of sexuality and God's Word on it? Perhaps a better question might be, "What does God want from His church and its leaders?"

Gods' Word and the Teaching of Sexuality

God gave to the church the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20a. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you." Though the church carries out the directive to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...," unfortunately we often miss out on the second directive of the Great Commission, "teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you." The "teaching" all things includes the very thing he created within each of us—the gift of sexuality.

God created male and female, sexual human beings. Sex is not something dirty, but was originally created as something wonderful. Upon creating man and all the world, He observed, "It is good" and it was good, including the gift of sex. He created mankind with the ability to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28). This would not happen if God had not created man and woman as sexual human beings. He created a woman for companionship with the man: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Through the very act of coming together physically, they reflect the "divine mystery" between a man and woman and experience a grand but minuscule glimpse of the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27). The Hebrew word for man and woman coming together is "yada," a word meaning to be made known, to be or to become known, to be revealed. Through the very act of sexual intercourse, a Christian husband and wife reflect God's image in a sinful world. "Yada" sex, as God intended, is to be fully sensuous, fully receiving, fully entering, fully knowing, fully being known, becoming one in "the quiet."

"He who tells the stories dictates the culture." Contrary to the story told by the world via its media and leaders within the public square, the Christian church needs to tell the real story about the gifts of sex and sexuality and what God wants for His people. The Bible warns, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3). Even liberal magazines such as *Newsweek* asked the haunting question, "Why has the church suddenly become so silent (on matters that involve life and death)?" Hosea's words shame us, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6), as we think of the many people who have died spiritually and physically due to sexual misinformation or lack of information. We are ashamed as we think of the small amount of time we spend telling the story of God's perspective on sex and sexuality. The few times most congregations

hear about sex includes only condemnation and warning about the consequences of disobeying the 6th Commandment ("You shall not commit adultery"). How sad, especially considering the beauty of the gifts, the gifts of sex and being sexual.

In the early years of *LoveFest* in Arcadia, evaluations came to us asking us to do workshops on the gift of sexuality. What an opportunity for affirming the words of the Psalmist, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful" (139:14). The evaluations were correct! We are wonderfully created and we should talk about it. Even the very existence of God and His purposeful design are illustrated in the reproductive cycle. One only needs to understand a small part of how God created man and woman in making reproduction happen to exclaim, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1).



If we fault anyone about the mistruths so prevalent today regarding the gift of sex, perhaps we ought to blame ourselves first. When we do not share the real truth about God's design, we farm it out to others (i.e., the media) to teach them. Their lessons are often only harmful and given for one reason—for profit. As someone once said, "The media is willing to sell out even their children for the sake of profit." In a study done of all the sexual messages given in the media (and over the years it has become plentiful), only four percent of it speaks of abstinence, STI's, and "safe sex." To show how the media has skewed our thinking on sex, studies show that the average person believes that 35 to 40 percent of the people in our world are homosexual or "gay." Why? Because the media has convinced them, subtly, that there is such a high percentage with this sexual orientation.



They have done it by having a disproportional number of gays represented on television programs and in the area of entertainment. In actuality, we know research shows that only four to six percent of the American population is homosexual.

"It's The Parents' Responsibility"

Certainly Scripture mandates that parents teach their children all things, including God's perspective on sex. However, unfortunately, too many parents are uncomfortable talking about something they themselves never discussed with their parents. The church should and can help in making their task easier and more comfortable.

At Our Savior in Arcadia, two to three months are set aside immediately after confirmation to teach confirmands about their sexuality. At the end of the teaching, the teenagers are given the opportunity to pledge their sexual abstinence until marriage. This pledge includes intercourse as well as outercourse. Parents or guardians are required to be in every class so that the teaching of sex continues in the home after the class. Without exception, the many hundreds of parents who have gone through the class with their children say, "We learned as much as our children did, if not more."

A study done by "Search Institute" indicated that there are 30 assets needed to keep children from risk behaviors. Two necessary conditions are: 1) the need for children to hear that adults other than their parents are teaching a certain truth; 2) the need for children to be with peers who are being taught the same truth. A class where parents and peers meet together serves to keep children from entering into risk behavior.

Components of a God-Given Sex Education Program

There are those who believe it is totally inappropriate to teach sex education in the church. They quote people such as Freud (of all people!) when in his early writings he suggested that the teaching of young children about sex inflames them into thinking about matters which they were too young to understand. Freud later refuted such thinking. Any sex

education must be age appropriate and given from God's perspective or otherwise it can be harmful. Sex education is more than teaching anatomy, or the process of reproduction, or about birth control. Such teaching misses God's perspective. It misses what "yada" sex is all about. Our gift of sexuality and sex is much more than body parts.

Some believe that sex education is best done in classes with only the same sex present—boys with boys, girls with girls. The one advantage could be that young people of the same sex might be more open to ask questions. However, we live in a world where sex education is taking place daily with the same sexes being together at movie theaters and in classrooms. The disadvantage, which I believe outweighs any advantage, is that when we divide boys from girls, we are subconsciously saying that sex is a dirty subject and should never be talked about openly in mixed company! Needless to say, there should never be a time when anything sexual should be talked about in a way that offends or lightens the gravity of the subject. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

Professor John Money of Hopkins University coined a phrase, "Lovemap." He referred to it as a type of "Rorschach love blot." It is a template formed in a person between the ages of five and eight, deciding whether a specific situation is arousing or not. His research discovered that this "Lovemap" can be distorted in different ways. One significant distortion takes place when a family or parent(s) do not talk about sex or cast a negative judgment about anything sexual. What better place to correctly mold someone's thinking about love and sex than to study God's Word? Is there any better description of what real love looks like than in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8? We can honor God no more than to teach our children how precious they are in God's eyes: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Sex education must be honest and God-pleasing. The wrong sex education has proven repeatedly to be harmful. One sex education program available suggests that sex education can actually be a form of "child abuse," and that when we make children comfortable with their sexuality we put them at greater risk. It suggests that it is a form of idolatry to say that people are "sexual." Such teaching diminishes the God-given gift of sexuality. Such teaching contradicts not only Scripture but even the teachings of the great Reformer Martin Luther. He repeatedly asserted that sexual desire is God-given. "God drives man to marriage by means of sensual desire. Otherwise, if it were not for love, who would get married?" "The longing of a man for a woman is God's creation." "Rather, the act which attracts sex to sex is a divine ordinance."

Research shows that a value-driven sex education does work. *The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* has shown that young people who make abstinence pledges substantially delay the initiation of sexual activity, have fewer sexual partners, are more likely to marry, and have lower rates of out of wedlock births. The research also shows that the most effective abstinence teaching takes place when two conditions are met: 1) a continuous sex education from cradle to grave (not just a one-time-shot); 2) education that is value-based. The February 2010 *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine* reported that an extensive federal study found that students who take classes emphasizing abstinence are less likely to have sex than those who take classes teaching safe sex.

Though efforts on the part of the church, its leaders, or parents may not always be fruitful, nevertheless, it does not take away our God-given responsibility to do what He asks of us—"to teach all things." Our children eventually have to make their own decisions. We pray that they will subscribe to the same truths and values that we do. However, that will not always be the case. Though our children may not be faithful, that does not take away our responsibility of being faithful in teaching God's truths and sharing the healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ when transgressions occur.

Suggested Resources

Any teaching begins with the Word of God. One of our most popular workshops at *LoveFest* last year was titled “What is Marriage? Is it Obsolete as Some Would Have Us Believe?” Could it be that 33 percent of all people believe it’s obsolete because no one has taught them what marriage is, especially from God’s perspective?

When it comes to feelings and love, our world has convinced us that feelings are what are most important in love. God’s Word doesn’t confirm such thinking. In Revelation, the inspired writer tells those who have fallen out of love to “remember ... repent ... do again,” so that love might return (1:4-5). He doesn’t say one has to feel a certain way and then do. He says do the things that are loving and you will fall back in love, maybe even with feeling!

If your teenager is dating someone who is obsessively jealous, warn her of the dangers. God’s Word is clear: “Love is not jealous” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Talk to women who are abused. They will all say their spouses were obsessively jealous. Scripture is always right. God doesn’t leave us in the world to fend for ourselves. He instructs us and expects us to share His truths with those who have been placed before us in ministry.

One of the finest Christian presenters in sex education is Pam Stenzel, founder of *Enlighten Communications*. With humor and candor, she addresses young and old about the importance of abstinence and lays out very succinctly the consequences of the new sexual revolution taking place in our country. Her DVD series, *Sex, Love, Relationships*, has four powerful presentations: 1) the physical consequences; 2) the emotional consequences; 3) the spiritual consequences; 4) the character issue. In her presentation at the National Youth Gathering of the LCMS, she gave a riveting presentation in a way that helped every teen present think through one’s sexual choices and their potential consequences.

We have used many different speakers for our *LoveFest* events. They are experts in the field of sexual matters: people such as Doug Herman, The Chaos Theory (Clint Thomas & Aaron Davis), Sarah Hill (SoulSurfer), Bristol Palin, Karen & Jim Kropf, Joe Castillo (“America’s Got Talent” finalist who did a special sand animation

using our theme verse), Chad Eastham, Kay Meyer, the Barlow Girls. Workshops are also conducted on subjects such as: “Sexuality and the Single Person”; “So You Think Bullying is Funny?”; “Raging Hormones: What to Do About Them”; “Sexting and Other Techie Adventures.” Throughout the years we used many of the materials written by these experts in our preaching and teaching.

In our own abstinence teaching we use a book I authored titled *Twelve Twitter Truths About Sex for Tweens and Teens*. It is a manual that either parents or a classroom teacher can use to help prepare tweens and teens for making an abstinence promise. It not only helps every teenager talk openly about important truths regarding sex and sexuality, but it also provides suggestions on expanding each lesson through visuals, exercises, and DVDs. At the back of the manual there are steps to take for making an abstinence promise as well as a suggested worship service for such promises.

We are aware that not all programs will fit what a church, its leaders, or parents may be looking for. During the years, our church has carefully examined materials from many publishing houses and found helpful segments from not only the Catholic community but also the Baptist denomination. We carefully choose materials we believe are biblical and in accordance with our doctrinal stance. We look for materials that are Gospel focused. (I would be happy to share with anyone the materials we have found helpful over the years and that I recommend in my Human Sexuality class at Concordia, University Nebraska.)

Sex education? Where does it fit in the church? First and primary, it is the mission of the church to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...” What a privilege to share that Jesus, He alone, is our salvation. However, secondly, what a privilege to teach everything (He) has commanded so “we may have life ... to the full” (John 10:10). This includes teaching God’s perspective on sex and sexuality, remembering, “He who tells the story dictates the culture.” What a wonderful story we have to tell!



book reviews

On the Meaning of Sex.
J. Budziszewski. Wilmington,
Delaware: ISI Books, 2012.

As this edition of *Issues* demonstrates, we are still reeling from the cultural atom-bomb that was/is the sexual revolution. There are so many facets and nuances to the sexual revolution that make it a very difficult topic to cover. But somewhere at the heart of the discussion has to be the *Meaning of Sex*. Thorough exegetical work has been done for years outlining a clear biblical stance on the meaning of sex, which is a vital piece of our response to the sexual revolution. However, the biblical argument for sexual integrity and purity is often dismissed out of hand by opponents because of what appears to be a lack of shared presuppositions. That is where Budziszewski and *On the Meaning of Sex* can be profoundly helpful.

The author goes to significant lengths to make an argument not reliant on proof-texts from Scripture or church-fathers, although both are present. Instead, he winsomely and powerfully argues from natural law. Arguments from natural law make some among us nervous because the power of the Gospel is often lost or forgotten in the focused attention on philosophical or scientific material. The author navigates these waters very well throughout the book, and the culminating chapter is a beautifully composed appeal for seeing human love only in light of the divine love that lies at the core of the Creator's nature.

The book is based on the premise that nature "has a face, and it looks up." The author argues that nature testifies to a design, and the current sexual zeitgeist is in direct contradiction with the design. The first topic is a question: "Does sex have to mean something?" While Budziszewski's argument is quite complex, and at times difficult to follow, the conclusion he reaches is powerful. Yes, sex does always mean something. It never

doesn't mean something. He takes issue with the prevailing wisdom that sex "only means what I want it to mean at the moment."

He calls the current times a dystopia and "a tangled skein of dismay and discontent that the weavers of the sexual revolution did not foresee." The author's response is not only deconstruction; he also proposes that the dual meaning and purpose for human sexuality are procreative and unitive. From this basic understanding, he tackles issues related to sexual differences, love, beauty, and purity. In each of these chapters he makes the case for seeing traditional sexual values and behaviors not as old-fashioned or unenlightened, but as congruent with the intentions of the creator and the design of the creature. As mentioned previously, the final chapter is an appeal to see human love in light of divine love. You won't find much theological jargon in this chapter, and that seems to be on purpose. A Gospel message is present, but not labored upon.

If you are looking for some heavy lifting on the topic of human sexuality and ready to encounter some new arguments for traditional sexual values, you will enjoy this book. The arguments are thick and his vocabulary is dense, but he regularly provides the reader with analogies, similes, and images that drive home his points. The conversational tone also helps with the density of the material, yet it doesn't take long to become acutely aware that you are having a conversation with a seasoned philosopher.

Finally, this book should be viewed as an asset to the church. It provides the church with an anthropological and philosophical defense for its soundly biblical stance on marriage, sex, and procreation. If the question is how to respond to the sexual revolution, *On the Meaning of Sex* ought to be in the toolbox.

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The New Testament on Sexuality.
William Loader. Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 2012.

This scholarly and thorough study is the fifth and final in Loader's series treating attitudes toward sexuality in Judaism and Christianity in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman era. Although this volume deals with the New Testament writings, Loader includes two helpful introductory chapters sketching attitudes toward sexuality in the general culture of the New Testament readers (both Judaism and Greco-Roman culture).

In detailing the New Testament teaching about sexuality, the author begins with discussions of sexual wrongdoing in the broad sense (e.g., adultery, incest, and prostitution). He then devotes specific chapters to divorce and remarriage, same-sex intercourse, men and women roles in community and leadership, and celibacy.

Overall, Loader's goal is not to support or critique the teachings of the New Testament writers, but to set them forth as clearly and fairly as possible, understanding them within the teachings on and practice of sexuality at the time. Loader shows himself to be thoroughly conversant with the relevant research and writing on his subject. The book includes 50 pages of bibliography, largely of current scholarly sources. In addition, an index gives a very helpful 16-page list of the ancient biblical and classical sources referenced, with the largest proportion being from the New Testament.

The author is professor emeritus of New Testament at Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. His lifetime of scholarship and teaching the New Testament and related texts is well demonstrated in the book. Loader is highly qualified to interpret the New Testament writers in their original language and culture. His exegesis of individual passages is often insightful. His thinking is clear, well-reasoned and objective.

Perhaps the following extensive quote of the conclusions of the author on the highly controversial subject of the apostle Paul's teaching on same sex intercourse in Romans 1 will provide the reader with a sample of what to generally expect in this volume:

The exegetical discussion has shown that Paul employs same-sex passion and its fulfillment in same-sex intercourse, among both women and men, as his first item of evidence for

**Adam and Eve After the Pill:
Paradoxes of the Sexual
Revolution.**

**Mary Eberstadt. San Francisco:
Ignatius Press, 2012.**

human depravity. He does so in a way that deplores perverted minds which fail to acknowledge God, but turn instead to idols, and shows that God inflicted a matching perversity on these people, both at the level of the mind and its passions and at the level of resultant behavior. Paul uses many terms and concepts which bring the two perversities into parallel. Both relate to appropriate honoring. Both depict a depraved mind. Both are about its misdirection. Both are about consequent acts of depravity. Both display this in substituting what is true for what is false; idols for God; same-sex partners for partners of the opposite sex. Both depict the attitudes and the actions as inexcusable.

For many, to identify what Paul was saying is to identify a set of values which they must continue to espouse. That can lead to a struggle to produce a reading of Paul that fits in with what they see as informed contemporary perspectives or to an attempt to defy contemporary perspectives by asserting Paul's authority on the issues. My concern in seeking to elucidate as clearly as possible what Paul was saying comes not from a belief in Paul's abiding authority nor a desire to depict his views as resembling or matching my own. My hermeneutical perspective is to bring to his writing the respect it warrants as one of the earliest documents of the Christian movement, a respect I believe is due, at the very least, to all human beings.

It is just this goal to be as faithful as possible to portraying the teaching of the New Testament, irrespective of whether one adopts it or not, along with Loader's exceptional scholarship, that makes this volume so helpful. The effort to plow through the challenging argumentation, wealth of factual material and copious footnotes will pay huge dividends for the reader who is serious about listening to the New Testament documents themselves.

Readers will have to look elsewhere for applications of Loader's work to contemporary issues. But, *The New Testament on Sexuality* will give them an excellent resource for doing so from a biblically informed perspective.

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With immense research and cerebral insight, Mary Eberstadt brings a perspective of the Sexual Revolution that is intensely focused. "What specific sort of happiness has been given to a culture that has not only revolted but redefined sex today?" She pushes through her research and pokes holes in what she believes are fallacies in a culture which not only swallows the Pill, but the lies that accompany the "freedom" that is now given in society. She is incredibly well-read, and some of her words are caustic but justified by her well-reasoned book.

Eberstadt sees that sex, because of the Sexual Revolution, has become a pattern of bodily behavior rather than a gift from the Creator. She explicates this quite well in the last chapter of the book. She illuminates a culture that has turned sex into an indiscriminate action which then has led people on a way of apathy and lethargy in their relationships with one another. People are sexually obsessed, yet numb to purity.

Quoting from dozens of sociologists and psychologists, the author comments on the ramifications of family, marriage, and relationships which bring a fresh perspective on the normal talk that is paraded in the media. In particular, the chapter on "Is food the new sex?" was especially enlightening when thinking about what this culture values and the morals ascribed to a people after the sexual revolution. She believes that the Pill and all that accompanies it has profoundly affected the most fundamental aspects of human relationships. Life is fragmented and shattered when men and women have lost the sense of "sexual north" on the humanity compass.

Eberstadt does not pull punches talking about marriage. Marriage used to be a "dance," but now it seems like two bears circling one another. She blames this on the sexual revolution that devalues men and

turns them into everlasting adolescents. It has caused an "atrophy of the protective instinct" in men. Sex is no longer a protective instinct but a carnivorous one. She argues that men flee to pornography and other outlets which makes marriage much like a sexual desert.

Women, in Eberstadt's mind, have become not beneficiaries of the freedom of the revolution, but witting or unwitting victims of the chaos that has ensued. Marriage has become obsolete, and women have lost a sense of themselves and relationships for which they so desperately long. Because sex is no longer akin to life-long love, the action of sex becomes merely that, an action, and romance and unity are but a shadow. Regrettably, women are not freed but trapped in a sinister way of thinking that began in the Garden of Eden. The choice is theirs, and they have eaten the fruit to its core.

Eberstadt, with marvelous research, portrays vividly what happens on many college campuses this day. The world should be frightened, but instead turns a blind eye to the desperate nature of the sexual revolution on the campus. She demonstrates this by using a word such as "werewolf," which describes what life can be like because of the feeling of the immensity of consequences that students have today.

Adam and Eve After the Pill is a marvelously well-researched book. Eberstadt is a master of laying out the facts. She brings out all the negative attributes of the Sexual Revolution and calls out not necessarily for a counter-revolution, but common sense. One would like for her to portray what this might look like. What examples has she seen of people who have lived "outside" of the sexual revolution? There would not have been sufficient space to do this in this book, though. This book is a poignant reminder to a dim culture.

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**Clean: A Proven Plan for Men
Committed to Sexual Integrity.**

**Douglas Weiss. Nashville:
Thomas Nelson, 2013.**

“Joshua, standing before the angel, was dressed in dirty clothes. The angel spoke to his attendants, ‘Get him out of those filthy clothes,’ and then said to Joshua, ‘Look, I’ve stripped you of your sin and dressed you in clean clothes.’” (Zechariah 3:3-4)

This is what the book *Clean* is about, being stripped of our sin and dressed in the clean clothes of God’s righteousness and righteous living. It’s about getting out of the “dirty clothes” of sexual addiction and putting on the “clean clothes” of sexual integrity and freedom. This book is about how to transform a life trapped in sexual sinning, and how to live a clean, honest, and open life under God’s grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the counter-sexual revolution for individuals and families in our culture and our churches. Whereas the sexual revolution has created an epidemic of sexual sickness and brokenness, *Clean* is about creating redeemed warriors to fight for sexual purity according to God’s Word and His plan and will. “*Clean* is a solution manual for all of you engaged in this great war” that the enemy has declared against us, our families, our churches, and our nation. This book provides people with the weapons to get and stay clean.

Dr. Douglas Weiss, a Christian psychologist, knows all about this warfare. As a teen and young adult, he experienced sexual abuse, drug addiction, pornography, and promiscuous sex. He was sexually addicted. He tells his own story of how God delivered him, and how he has been clean for over 25 years. He is now a compassionate and recovering “wounded healer,” and an expert in the field of recovery from sexual addiction.

Sexual addiction has invaded and corrupted our culture, our families, our churches, males and females, church workers and laypersons. Sexual addiction involves compulsive behaviors in such things as Internet pornography, masturbation practices and fantasies, adultery and fornication. It is the devil’s seduction and reduction of human beings. And

the consequences are well-known: STDs, pregnancies out of wedlock, lawsuits, job loss, removal from ministry, divorces, shame and the like. All of this is so very contrary to God’s creating and saving plan, will and work. Dr. Weiss works for sexual recovery, the truth of God’s healing power, and God’s call to sexual purity. He describes in detail how God gives us weapons to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our churches. He helps us to understand how to commit our sexuality to Christ, and how to be honest and accountable. He helps us to understand how the Holy Spirit calls us and equips us for warfare. The Spirit, he writes, has called us to be “the protector of those you love, not a perpetrator of pain.” He leads us to understand how and why “men are the solution God has chosen” for leading and winning this war. He clearly shows throughout his book how the Word of God addresses all of this, and how the Spirit empowers us to be clean and live clean.

Chapters in this book include such titles as “A Dirty War Declared,” “Your Destiny is Waiting,” “Carry Your Weapons,” “Clean Brain,” “Really Under Authority,” and “Staying on Offensive.” *Clean* is a powerful, straight-forward, honest, open, clearly written, biblically based message for all men whether sexually addicted or not. However, this is also a very valuable book for women. This book needs to be read, discussed and lived by our youth and our adults, our church workers and our lay people, those married and those single.

There is a lot of relevant and contemporary sermon and Bible class material here. There are clear assessment criteria. And there are some bold and poignant guidelines for “Call” and church worker interviews and hiring. Indeed, we all need to have a plan for commitment to sexual integrity, and we all need a support system for our journey toward freedom from sexual sinning. Even if we are not sexually addicted, in Christ we are all given clean clothes. We are all called to be clean and to be God’s warriors who are drafted for the counter-sexual revolution.

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**Surfing for God:
Discovering the Divine Desire
Beneath Sexual Struggle.**

**Michael John Cusick. Nashville:
Thomas Nelson, 2012.**

In his opening disclosure to his disciples about his ministry, his death, and why his death is necessary, Jesus declares that whoever would save his life will lose it (Mark 8:35). In this brief, piercing anthropology, Jesus notes our efforts to remedy our fallen condition, pursuits which in themselves may be good, bad, or neutral, yet always yield the same result. Pornography is surely among the saddest ways we desperate sinners seek to improve, enhance, extend—that is, save—our lives.

Yet Jesus’ observation also includes an element of hope: the desperate sinner is looking to save his life. We may be looking in the wrong places, but at least we’re looking. In *Surfing for God*, Michael John Cusick (an ordained minister, spiritual director, and licensed professional counselor) uses G. K. Chesterton’s discordant claim, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God,” to make the same point:

If [Chesterton] were writing today, he might say that the man who surfs the web for porn is surfing for God. If nothing else, this truth means that sex is a signpost to God. It also points to the way he designed us as sexual beings (p. 15).

Cusick is writing for today, and he has written an extension to or, perhaps better, an alternative to the “Every Man’s Battle” strategy of combating slavery to pornography by means of purity, piety, and trying harder.

Nevertheless a disappointed Amazon reader-reviewer filed this on-line criticism:

What this book lacks is a clear and concise pathway for people struggling with sexual addiction. There are good insights into the process and some helpful suggestions, but no to-the-point step program for those struggling. If one is serious enough, a program may be constructed from the pages of this book, but that would take considerable patience and time, both commodities in the world of the addict.

But Cusick is not prescribing another twelve-step program. His opening epigraph

is from Bonhoeffer: "The pursuit of purity is not about the suppression of lust, but about the reorientation of one's life to a larger goal." He agrees with Bonhoeffer that this reorientation comes not from our self-improvement projects but from the grace of God—only then will change occur. But neither does Cusick propose a Gospel reductionism. He specifies plenty of behavioral change as that reorientation takes place and indicates how behavioral change assists reorientation.

What, then, sets *Surfing for God* apart as a help (rather than self-help) for the struggling sinner and a resource for the counselor, pastor, or caring friend? While he addresses captivity to pornography from several perspectives, Cusick largely avoids attempts to solve sin with the Law and genuinely seeks to express and apply the Gospel to the broken emptiness of sin.

His thesis is that our desires and appetites, though curved inward by sin, were initially created in us by God and can be used by God to return us to God's genuine goodness rather than the counterfeits and substitutes we come to crave. If this notion prompts you to pause, recall your C.S. Lewis from *The Weight of Glory*:

It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

Cusick's point is that if we understood this, we would set aside trying harder to deny or suppress our desires and instead notice that our pursuits are decoys and distractions from an authentic, abundant life in God's love. And only the embrace of the Gospel will draw us from these distractions.

The quick and casual reader may mistake *Surfing for God* as a how-to book. It is, instead, a how-can book. How can God possibly

still love the serial porn addict? How can the habitual consumer of porn learn to recognize the exhausting cycle of shame, self-atonement, and relapse? How can the broken sinner detect whether some earlier life event such as abuse has propelled him toward the distraction and idolatry of porn? How can prayer assist with removing self as the center of our pursuits and identity and making Christ our center? Cusick devotes some pages to the use of traditional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, ritual, silence, and solitude. The reader can consider his behavioral recommendations as one considers best. Cusick is not prescriptive. He is therapeutic. He offers guidance on dealing with pornography, but the thoughtful reader will understand this content as practical theology rather than self-help literature.

Cusick's central expression of the Gospel is Chapter 8, "Your Good Heart," with an insightful discussion of Isaiah and Jeremiah. He uses other chapters to examine the snare of pornography in several ways, including the sinkhole of shame (Chapter 6, "Shame and Core Beliefs"), spiritual warfare (Chapter 9, "The Invisible Battle") and a simplified but credible neurology of porn (Chapter 10, "Your Brain on Porn"). Cusick makes a compelling case for the dangers of Internet porn. He argues that the Web has amplified porn to a qualitatively new level of alarm because, unlike other sources, the Internet presents without restraints a constant stream of variety, quantity, and availability which combine to generate addictive tolerance and escalation. (He uses but does not insist on the concept and terms of addiction for pornography.)

The book is clinical rather than sociological and is not intended to address how society props up pornography. But Cusick does offer some interesting exegetical treatments. On temptation, he echoes Dostoyevsky's insights about Satan prompting Jesus to doubt His identity: "If you are the Son of God ... " and what this means for our identity. He examines Isaiah's texts on the oaks of shame and the oaks of righteousness, confirming

that lasciviousness has long been a stumbling block for God's people. He discusses the significance of circumcision (always a puzzler for the student of Scripture) and links it to adolescent egocentrism, growing up, and Paul's language of circumcision of the heart.

In a future edition, Cusick could improve his guidance by revising his language about hearing God speak to us, an expression he uses from time to time. While common in Christian vernacular, the phrase is confusing to many folks. Cusick encourages the despondent porn surfer to listen past his preoccupation and instead hear what God through the Gospel says about all us sinners. Early in the book he notes briefly that as a young man he studied and became well-versed in Scripture. Later in the book he is not explicit that this is the word he is hearing, and some readers with little biblical literacy may be hoping for special revelations or some inner voice. A few sections come off rather more *Christus in nobis* than *Christus pro nobis*.

But all in all, Cusick would have his readers finally hear the rest of Mark 8:35, "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it." Recommended.

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**Premarital Sex in America:
How Young Americans Meet,
Mate, and Think about Marrying.
Mark Regnerus and Jeremy
Uecker. New York: Oxford
University Press, 2011.**

Premarital sex in America is not something new, but in the past it was done with the specific person you then married. While most premarital sex today is done within relationships, it can be done with anyone before you get married. Marriage is no longer viewed as essential for sex, but instead marriage is for settling down and having children. While our media present American society as highly sexualized, sex still is often not discussed nor reflected in healthy ways. This can press adolescents into adulthood too early and too quickly. When youth do not talk about sex, they do not have to acknowledge what they are doing.

Premarital Sex in America offers extensive information about emerging adults' differing views and behaviors regarding premarital sex. The authors address premarital sex for different groups, including males and females, college students, the very religious and different political classifications. This is a well-researched book based on multiple national surveys with over 10,000 respondents and 340 interviews over a period of several years.

The interviews add insight into youth's complex views on sex. For example, one of the topics addressed is what it means to be a virgin and how it is defined. Being a virgin means not having vaginal intercourse, so youth may engage in oral sex and still define themselves as a virgin. While this may be viewed as contradictory on the surface, the interviews bring out the conflicting views of emerging adults on sex. Being a virgin gets bad press, especially for males, although the very religious make up the largest group of virgins along with those who are more marriage-oriented, risk averse and those with high expectations. Encouragement from a support group (churchgoing) and social pressure to conform (religiosity) help those who affirm the value of remaining virgins into their twenties.

This study addresses double standards, timing, partnerships and the value of sex. Regnerus and Uecker look inside sexual relationships, sex on college campuses, hooking up and the overestimation of campus sex. They examine premarital sex and its effect on emotional health and how it differs for men and women. Despite the emphasis on freedom, most emerging adults

wish to fall in love, commit to someone and marry eventually. They just do not want to get married too early, and some believe that marriage is a sexual let-down. The book also addresses how political views, which they classify as reds or blues, influence sexual behavior, and finally in the last chapter, the authors discuss sexual myths and scripts. The authors conclude that sexual decision-making does not occur in a simple arena of conscious choice, but multiple contingent circumstances, market dynamics, competing desires, motivations and wishes all intersect to enable or discourage emerging adults to achieve what they are seeking. In summary, sex is complicated, but this book offers a good understanding of that complexity.

While the amount of data can be overwhelming, I found this book to be quite readable with a lot of good insights about what young adults think and do. Gaining understanding of emerging adults and their views on premarital sex is what makes this book worth reading.

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