

CHRISTIAN

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counseling TODAY

sex and sexuality

**Beyond Chemistry:
Understanding the Neurobiology of Sex**
James Childerston

**Childhood Sexual Development:
What Every Christian Must Know**
Meg Meeker

**Sex and Media in Today's Culture:
Why the Real Problem Isn't What You Think**
Joshua Straub

**Gender, the Gospel, and Recovering a
Biblical Understanding of Marriage**
R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

The Secret Epidemic: STDs and HIV/AIDS
Freda Bush

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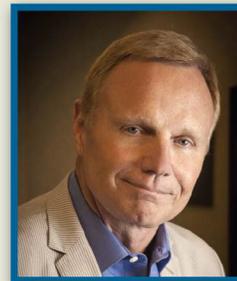
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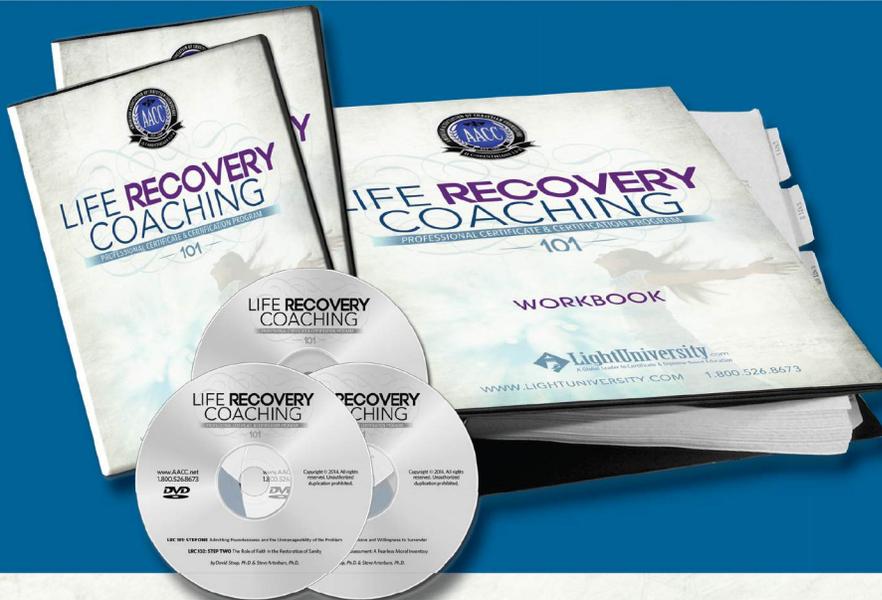
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Executive Director, BCPPC



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- 16 Childhood Sexual Development: What Every Christian Must Know** *by Meg Meeker.* Talking to kids about sex and sexual identity can be one of the most awkward and uncomfortable topics any parent must face. Pediatrician, author and parenting expert, Meg Meeker, reviews the present-day sex culture, sexual development factors among children, and how parents can approach discussions on abstinence.
- 24 Sex and Media in Today's Culture: Why the Real Problem Isn't What You Think** *by Joshua Straub.* In today's media-driven world, sex and sexual themes are used to sell a variety of products and services, as well as shape the emerging Millennial generation. Joshua Straub argues that though this demographic is technologically connected, it is largely void of meaningful and intimate relationships. The difference between feeling better and loving better is also addressed.
- 30 Gender, the Gospel, and Recovering a Biblical Understanding of Marriage** *by R. Albert Mohler, Jr.* Most Christians consider the Bible to be a critically important book regarding the institution of marriage and God's original design as something holy and beautiful. Utilizing a faith-based worldview, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Albert Mohler, lays out a biblical blueprint for a postmodern culture that helps restore the marital relationship to its place of honor.





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46 Adultery: A Marital Gethsemane *by Dave Carder.* The anatomy of an affair is often emotional and complex. Opposite sex relationships, especially those without appropriate boundaries, can significantly increase the risk of adultery. Pastor and counselor, Dave Carder, discusses specific strategies to assist couples in moving through forgiveness, surviving infidelity, and rebuilding trust.

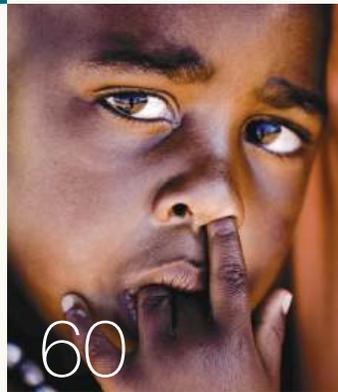
50 Behind Closed Doors: When Sex Therapy is the Next Step *by Clifford and Joyce Penner.* Sometimes, the issues certain couples face within the bedroom require greater expertise and intervention. Whether the problem is low/no desire, differences in desire, issues with arousal or a history of sexual trauma, seasoned sex therapists, Clifford and Joyce Penner, summarize the most common couple-related sexual disorders, as well as proven treatment protocols.

54 Falling in Love, Staying in Love: How to Keep Romance Alive *by David and Claudia Arp.* Maintaining a vibrant romance across the lifespan of any marriage can be both exciting and challenging. Marriage experts, David and Claudia Arp, examine the causes of marital drift and making a love connection, as well as offer practical suggestions for couples on how to have great dates.

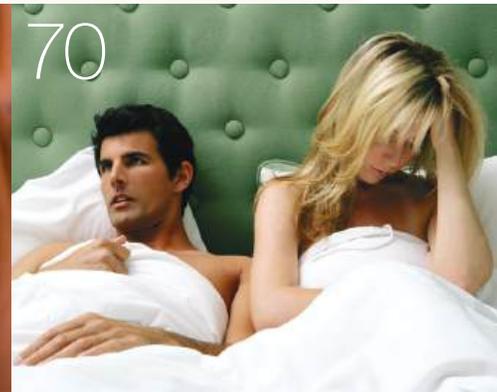
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38 Human Trafficking, Aftercare and Recovery *by Kathy Stout-LaBauve.* Human trafficking is a travesty of epic proportions and has become a \$32 billion annual industry worldwide. Founded on the ashes of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the International Justice Mission was formed to advocate for human rights across the globe by providing resources to help meet the needs of those who have experienced violence, oppression and trauma.

42 The Shattering of Innocence: A Compassionate Response to Sexual Abuse *by Diane Langberg.* Many would argue that sexual assault and abuse are rampant in today's society, leaving a lifetime of potential emotional and psychological scars. Trauma specialist, Diane Langberg, describes several prevailing factors, the cognitive distortions that often result among children, and treatment-related concerns that can help facilitate restoration and healing.



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David Arp, MSW, and Claudia Arp, B.S., are the founders of *Marriage Alive*, best-selling authors, seminar leaders and creators of the popular 10 Great Dates® programs. Their numerous books include the Gold Medallion award-winning *Second Half of Marriage*, and their recently released, *10 Great Dates: Connecting Faith, Love and Marriage*, co-authored with Peter and Heather Larson. Visit them at 10greatdates.org.

Freda McKissic Bush, M.D., is an OB-GYN and Clinical Instructor in the Departments of OB-GYN and Family Medicine at the *University of Mississippi Medical Center*. She is also CEO of the *Medical Institute for Sexual Health* and has co-authored two books, *Hooked* and *Girls Uncovered*, with Joe S. McIlhane, M.D. Dr. Bush served on the Presidential Advisory Council for HIV/AIDS.

Dave Carder, M.A., has served as Pastor of Counseling Ministries at the *First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton* (California) for more than 25 years. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, specializing in adultery prevention and healing, and the best-selling author of *Torn Asunder: Recovering from an Extramarital Affair*.

James K. Childerston, Ph.D., leads a psychological private practice in Hagerstown, Maryland. He is a Christian psychologist who is board certified in medical psychology, psychopharmacology and sex therapy. Dr. Childerston also teaches with the *Institute for Sexual Wholeness*.

Tim Clinton, Ed.D., LPC, LMFT, is President of AACC, Executive Director of the Center for Counseling and Family Studies/Professor of Counseling and Pastoral Care at *Liberty University*, and co-founder of *Light Counseling, Inc.*, a clinical practice serving children, adolescents, and adults. He is the author of several books, including *God Attachment* (Howard Books), *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling* (Harvest House), and *Break Through* (Worthy Publishing).

Henry Cloud, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist, leadership consultant, and the author of *Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being Ridiculously in Charge* (Harper).

Diane M. Langberg, Ph.D., is a practicing psychologist with *Diane Langberg and Associates* in suburban Philadelphia, chairs AACC's Executive Board, and is the author of *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* and *On the Threshold of Hope*.

H.B. London, Jr., D.D., has served 32 years in pastoral ministry—20 as Pastor to Pastors with *Focus on the Family*. H.B. and his wife, Beverley, are now “retired” and live in LaQuinta, California, where he continues his ministry to the clergy through *H.B. London Ministries* (hblondon.org). *Focus on the Family* has conferred on H.B. the title of Pastor to Pastors Emeritus.

Michael R. Lyles, M.D., is a board-certified psychiatrist, an AACC Executive Board Member and has a private practice with *Lyles & Crawford Clinical Consulting* in Roswell, Georgia.

Meg Meeker, M.D., is a pediatrician who has practiced pediatric and adolescent medicine for 25 years. She is a best-selling author and popular speaker on pediatric health issues and child-parent relationships. Dr. Meeker is co-host and physician-in-residence of Dr. James Dobson's *Family Talk Radio*. She is also Assistant Clinical Professor at *Michigan State University College of Human Medicine* and currently teaches medical students and physicians in residency training.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Ph.D., serves as President of *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*—the flagship school of the *Southern Baptist Convention* and one of the largest seminaries in the world. Dr. Mohler has been recognized by such influential publications as *TIME* and *Christianity Today* as a leader among American evangelicals. In addition to his presidential duties, Dr. Mohler hosts two programs: “The Briefing,” a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview; and “Thinking in Public,” a series of conversations with today's leading thinkers.

Gary W. Moon, M.Div., Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Martin Family Institute for Christianity and Culture and the Dallas Willard Center for Christian Spiritual Formation at *Westmont College*. He founded, with David G. Benner and Larry Crabb, *Conversations Journal*; directs the *Renovaré Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation*; and has authored several books.

Clifford Penner, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist, and **Joyce Penner, M.N., R.N.**, is a clinical nurse specialist. They are educators, authors and pioneers in sexual therapy. Together, they work as a team counseling individuals and couples on human sexuality, teaching sex education to pre-teens and parents, leading sexual enhancement weekends for couples, speaking and lecturing at women's and men's groups and universities, and training fellow professionals.

John Sandy, J.D., M.A.B.C., M.S.J., is a licensed attorney in California and Illinois. He maintains a private legal practice in Riverside, California, where he concentrates in church law, business law and legal issues relevant to professional and pastoral counseling. John is also an ordained minister, board certified Christian counselor, and board certified pastoral counselor.

Kathy Stout-LaBauve, LCSW, serves as the Vice President of Aftercare for the *International Justice Mission*. As a licensed clinical social worker, Kathy directs and develops *IJM's* aftercare efforts around the world to ensure the comprehensive needs of survivors of violence are met with expertise and compassion.

Joshua Straub, Ph.D., is the President and Co-founder of *The Connexion Group*. He is the coauthor of *God Attachment* and *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers*. You can find him on Twitter @joshuastraub.

Mark A. Yarhouse, Psy.D., is the Rosemarie Scotti Hughes Chair of Christian Thought in Mental Health Practice and Professor of Psychology at *Regent University*, where he directs the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity (sexualidentityinstitute.org). He is author or co-author of several books, including *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*.

CHRISTIAN counseling TODAY

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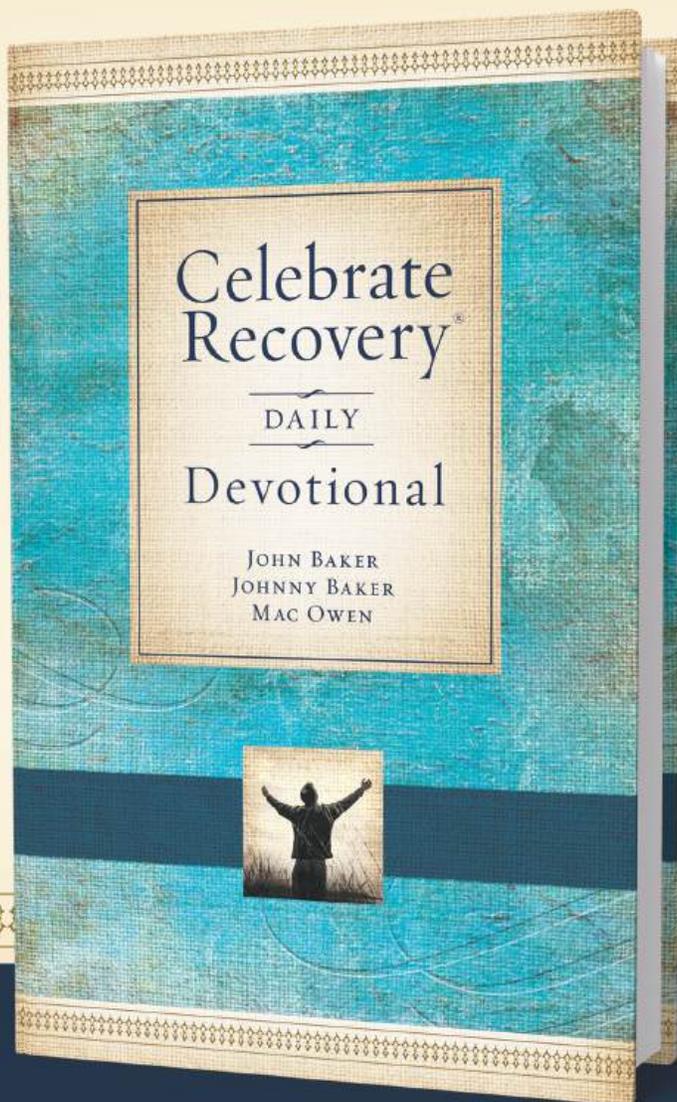
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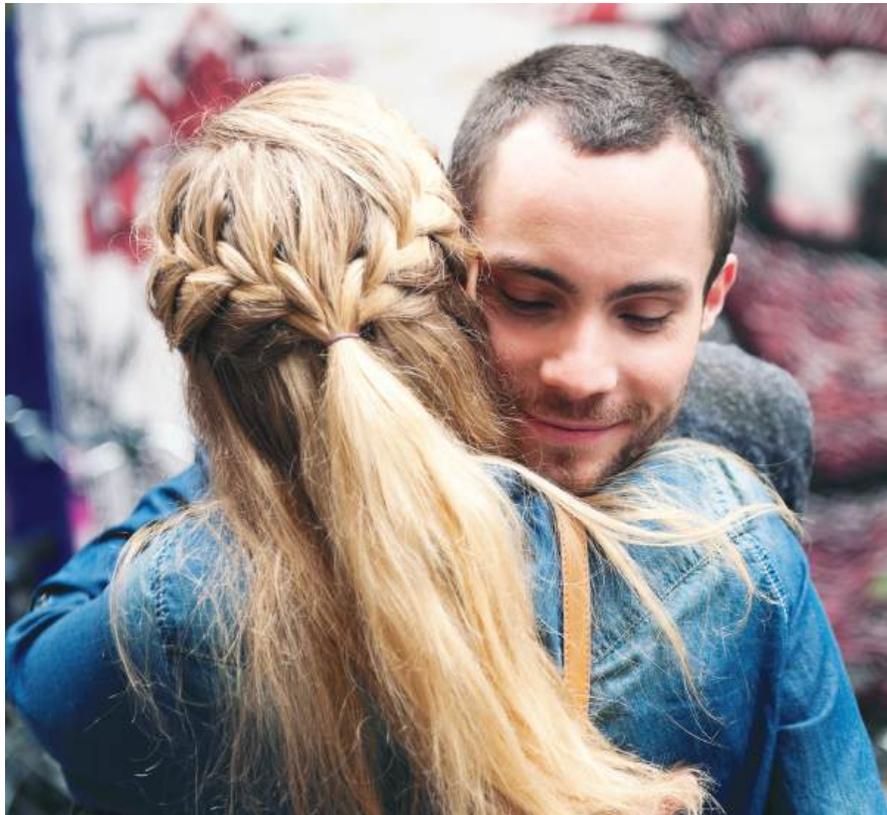
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God, Sex and the Beauty of Holiness

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes, “that which is known about God is evident within [us]; for God made it evident to [us]. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made” (vs. 1:19-20). Upon closer examination, the “mystery” Paul later speaks of in Ephesians 5:32 reveals itself in the holiness of marriage, an institution that represents a tangible metaphor regarding the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church.

The Genesis story opens with a palette of unlimited splendor, a breathtaking expression of the Creator and His nature. Much like an artist, God steps back and takes perspective—His passion and glory emerging on a canvas that was once empty and void. These are words of light and life spoken before the darkness. The design is *good*. The joy is definitive. This is followed by a crowning achievement, His image bearer formed out of the very dust of the earth, and behold, it is *very good*. He, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). Then the determination is made that something is *not good*—man is alone and has no expression for the beauty and intimacy found in the Trinity.

God is not done yet. Woman is fashioned out of Adam, “male and female He created them” (vs. 1:27). Marriage is acknowledged as part of the heavenly blueprint, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (vs. 2:24). The stain of sin has yet to mar the finished work, “and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (vs. 2:25).



One flesh—the physical union between a man and a woman—is symbolic of our capacity for the *koinonia* demonstrated between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is a sacred intimacy at every level—full of unabashed pleasure and joyful celebration, total commitment, mutual sacrifice and devoid of all guilt, shame, self-centeredness, malice, jealousy and unrighteousness. Here, within the sanctity of marriage, we can now see the image bearers expressing the covenantal *agape* that originates in and through the Image Giver. The relationship is to be held in honor and the marriage bed undefiled (Hebrews 13:4).

When God said, “... Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” (Genesis 1:26, NASB), many believe He placed all His attributes into His creation. As He formed

the woman, one could consider this as taking those qualities and characteristics that were essentially female and depositing them into Eve, leaving those traits and characteristics that were essentially male, with Adam. This is why the act of marital intimacy is so profound, and holy, from a Christian context. It can be viewed as the bringing together of all the attributes of God once again, and into a place of perfect unity and love. No wonder Satan hates this imagery and will do anything he can to destroy the beauty of God’s design. Every marriage, especially those that honor the Lord, and every union between a believer and the Savior are visible reminders that God is One.

Lust and fornication (regardless of gender or gender identity), adultery and infidelity, prostitution, sex trafficking,

childhood sexual abuse and pedophilia, sexual addiction, incest, rape, pornography, the degradation of women, sexually transmitted diseases—these are all examples of how fallen mankind, under the influence of the deceiver, attempts to distort and despoil something God gave as one of His greatest examples of intimacy, communion and unity. The Church cannot, and must not, turn a blind eye to such threats. This is why we have devoted an entire issue of *CCT* to the topic of sex and sexuality.

Albert Mohler, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, describes the nature of gender and marriage from a biblical perspective and as God intended, while psychologist, James Childerston, explores the amazing dynamics of the brain, as well as some of the key differences between men and women. Pediatrician,

Meg Meeker, discusses childhood sexual development and how to talk with your kids about sex, and Joshua Straub outlines the overt sexualization of today's generation through media and other cultural influences. There are several articles addressing critical counseling-related topics. These include sexual abuse and trauma by Diane Langberg, human trafficking by Kathy Stout-LaBauve from the International Justice Mission, and growing concerns regarding the near epidemic levels of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as researched by Dr. Freda Bush. Sex experts, Clifford and Joyce Penner, look at therapeutic intervention strategies and protocols for treating sexual disorders. Finally, Dave Carder examines how couples can move beyond infidelity and allow their marriages to survive, and David and Claudia Arp share from a lifetime of marital work

on how to keep romance alive and fresh in the relationship.

The Lord's return hastens and He longs for His bride. We must be intentional in preparing our hearts and spirits for such a wonderful day. The Body of Christ is the salt of the earth and light to a world that seems bent on perverting the truth. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ... Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:7-9, NASB). No wonder the Scriptures say He will descend with a shout. "He has brought [us] to *his* banquet hall, and his banner over [us] is love" (Song of Solomon 2:4, NASB). ✨

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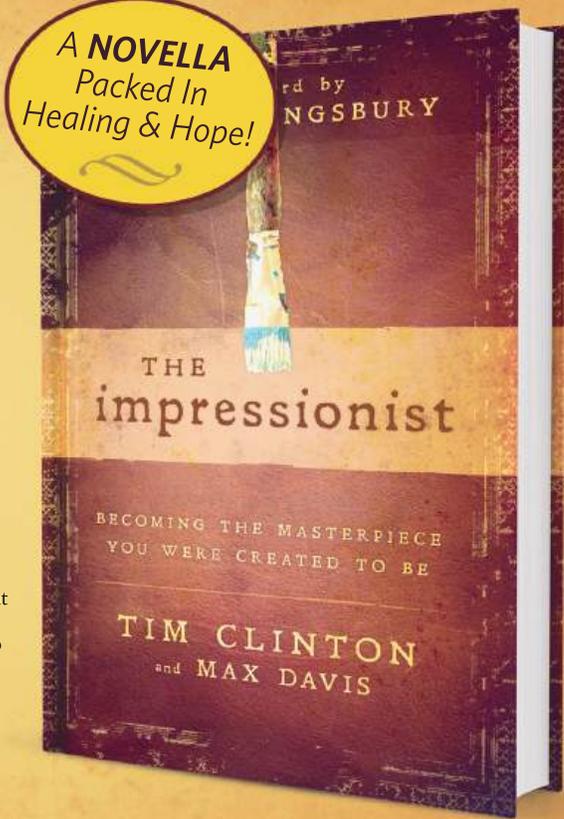
"This book is so compelling that I skipped an NFL playoff game because I could not stop reading. This story will instruct and inspire." —MICHAEL LYLES, M.D., CHRISTIAN PSYCHIATRIST, AUTHOR AND SPEAKER

Middle aged, disappointed and self-loathing, Adam Camp is anything but the picture of a successful man. With his wife threatening to leave him and their son addicted to drugs, Adam teeters on the verge of absolute despair—questioning his own existence and purpose for living.

After an explosive argument with his wife, Adam searches for an escape as he sets out on a journey that will dramatically recolor his world. While walking through the city park, Adam is approached by an old painter. The mysterious artist convinces Adam to let him paint his portrait and what happens next is nothing short of a masterpiece.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Tim Clinton, Ed.D., LMFT, is president of the nearly 50,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors and is Professor of Counseling and Executive Director of the Liberty University Center for Counseling and Family Studies. He is a popular speaker and author of several best-selling books.

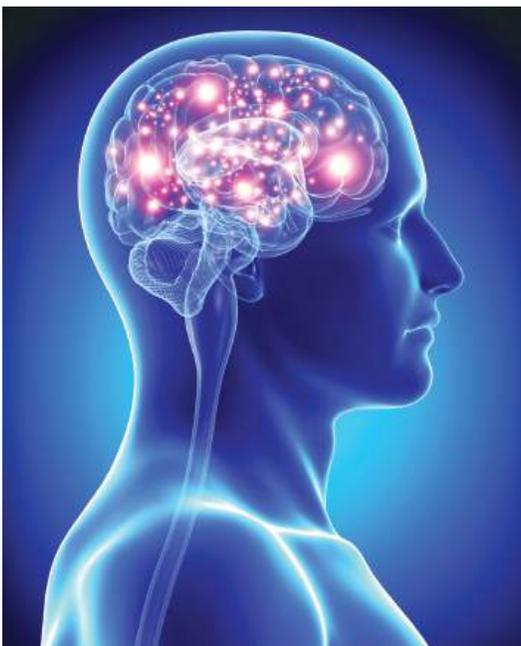


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BEYOND CHEMISTRY

Understanding the Neurobiology of Sex

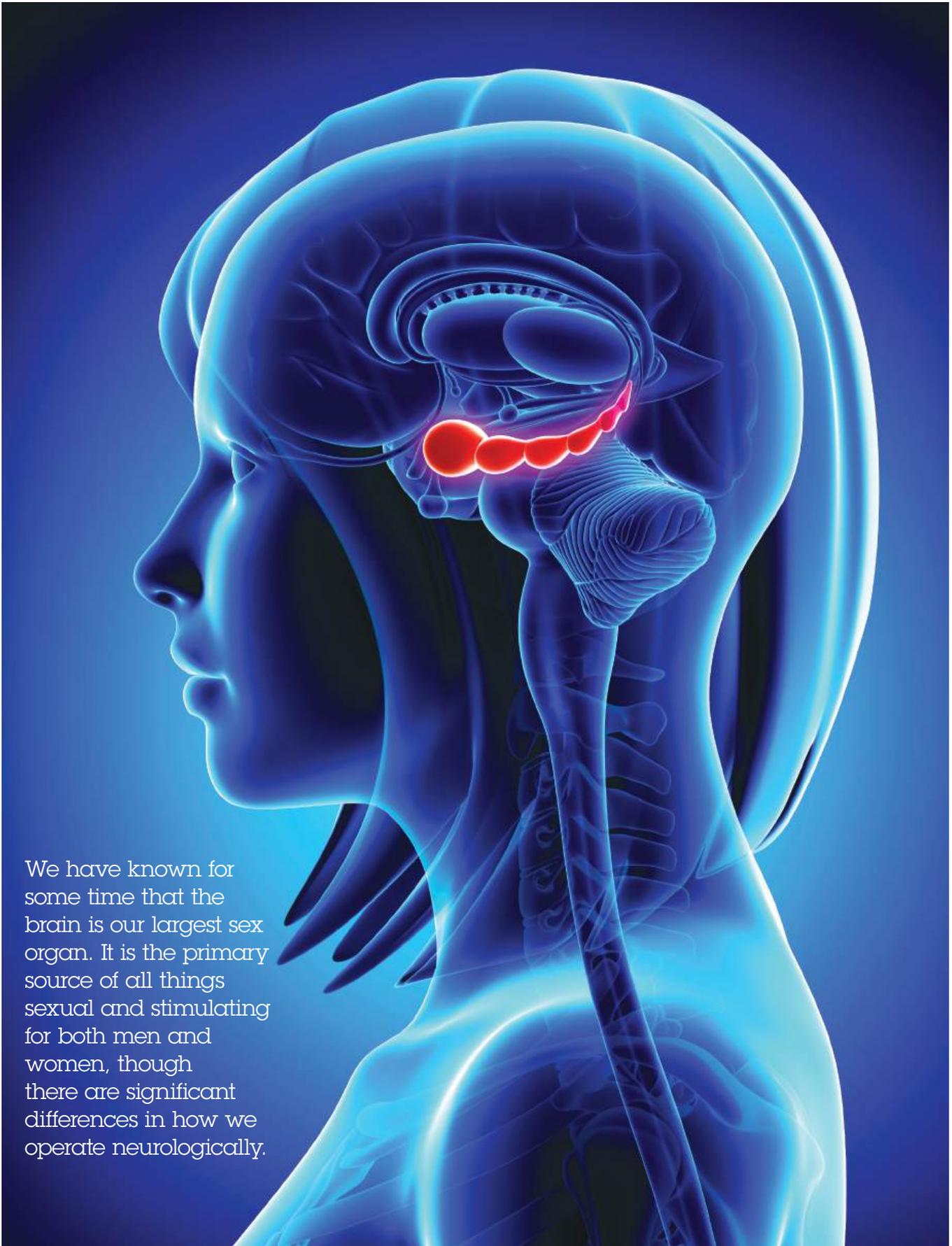
The more I study the neurobiology of sex, the further I understand Psalm 139:14, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” The complexities of the chemical interactions influencing our sexual responses inspire renewed awe in our Creator. Through this article, we will explore some of the gender differences in the brain that impact sexual behavior and the chemicals involved as we search for love, fall in love, and attempt to stay in love.



His and Hers

We have known for some time that the brain is our largest sex organ. It is the primary source of all things sexual and stimulating for both men and women, though there are significant differences in how we operate neurologically. A man's brain may be larger by volume, while a woman's brain contains denser neurons and stronger hemisphere integration, leading to a more highly efficient organ. Male and female brains process stimuli, language, how they sense and gauge what others are feeling, solve problems, and store strong emotion in different ways. Women possess more neurons in the brain centers for language, hearing and memory, and a woman's hippocampus—one of the most estrogen-sensitive parts of the brain and the hub of emotion and memory formation—is larger.¹ The larger hippocampus allows a woman to repeat verbatim what was said to her in the heat of an argument. Men, however, hold two and a half times the brain space devoted to sexual drive and possess a larger amygdala—the brain center for action, aggression, and fear. Interestingly, during an orgasm, the amygdala shuts down temporarily, allowing this sensation to occur.²

JAMES K. CHILDERSTON



We have known for some time that the brain is our largest sex organ. It is the primary source of all things sexual and stimulating for both men and women, though there are significant differences in how we operate neurologically.



The brain-imaging of a woman in love will show greater activity in many more areas, especially gut feelings and memory circuits, while a man in love shows more activity in high-level visual processing areas. Nearly 50% of his brain is devoted to receiving and interpreting visual stimuli. Once attraction begins, he will become singularly focused and disregard long-term consequences, while she will likely maintain the big picture. In fact, women are often slower to confess being in love and more careful than men in the beginning weeks or months of a relationship. Her highly interactive brain is frequently on the verge of overheating, so when it comes to encouraging her sexually, she will need to be soothed, romanced, and courted to be in the mood, and require assistance in calming her very busy brain. On the other hand, a man's brain is often looking for stimulation, so sexual thoughts have a tendency to cause him to become very singularly focused.

Searching for Love

The primary chemicals involved in sexual desire and attraction are the sex hormones testosterone and estrogen, the chemical nitric oxide, and “scent signaling chemicals” called pheromones. These substances work in concert to determine what “turns us on.”³

Although testosterone is the key sexual activator for both sexes, it is not the only “chemical switch” that governs sexuality. Desire and response decrease or increase by a complex interaction of body chemicals, including peptides, neurotransmitters and hormones.⁴ Testosterone beefs up the hypothalamus—the area of the brain interested in sex, which is two times larger in men. Testosterone also appears to influence people to be more self-focused sexually. After puberty, a male has 20 times more testosterone than a female. Not surprisingly, in 80% of couples, the man is the higher desire spouse. In women, the ovaries and the adrenal glands produce small amounts of testosterone. Women will generally experience a surge in testosterone just before ovulation, causing increased desire when she is most fertile. This effect can be diminished by birth control pills, which tend to increase a substance called sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG) that binds to free circulating testosterone, making it less available to influence desire.

There are many who propose testosterone augmentation (like AndroGel) to increase desire in both men and women. However, this can cause men



When we experience the infatuated state of falling in love, the neurotransmitter, dopamine, triggers feelings of pleasure, motivation and reward.

to be more aggressive, less cooperative and more selfish; and while a woman may experience a stronger urge to masturbate and a shortened time to reach orgasm, it may not necessarily increase her desire for sex.

Estrogen is primarily produced in the ovaries, but also made in both the male and female brain. It contributes to sexual desire and responsiveness in women, especially when combined with testosterone to function synergistically in promoting sexual desire. Estrogen also serves to promote vaginal lubrication and health and facilitates the action of other neurotransmitters and hormones such as serotonin, opioids, prolactin, and oxytocin.⁵

Estrogen and the neurotransmitter, serotonin (primarily responsible for mood stability and flexibility), are symbiotic in that they move up and down together. Women only synthesize about half the serotonin (as do men), but estrogen functions as a boosting agent to increase the impact of serotonin. As estrogen fluctuates throughout the menstrual cycle, so do serotonin levels. This may explain some of the increased irritability and mood fluctuations during Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), as well as the postpartum depression some women experience. Estrogen gradually decreases as a woman ages with a large drop that initiates menopause, resulting in many women experiencing changes in their sex drives at that time.⁶

Nitric oxide is a chemical released by the genitals when aroused that causes vasodilation and increased blood flow to the penis (and also to the vaginal area and clitoris). The phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) inhibitor drugs (Viagra, Cialis, and Levitra) work by helping to stimulate the release of nitric oxide.

Pheromones are “scent-signaling chemicals” secreted by the sweat glands primarily in the armpits. They are thought to influence how humans mate, bond, and nurture offspring. There is a direct connection between the olfactory bulb at the top of the nose and the septal nucleus in the brain (“the erection center”). “Driver pheromones” can affect the endocrine systems of others. We see this when women living or working together experience synchronized menstrual cycles, and it is not only women who respond to these olfactory cues. In a study evaluating the perceived attractiveness of exotic dancers, the tips received were significantly greater during ovulation than during any other time of the month.⁷

Finally, pheromones can impact fertility. Your saliva contains a compound referred to as the “major histocompatibility complex” (MHC), so kissing can function as a sort of “taste test” for compatibility. The MHC is a constellation of genes that influences tissue rejection. If you conceive a child with a person whose MHC is too similar to your own, the risk increases that the womb would expel the fetus. When a woman finds a mate with a sufficiently different MHC, she is far likelier to carry a baby to term. However, birth control pills can often mask this pheromone, making it impossible for this “taste test” to work.⁸

Falling in Love

When we experience the infatuated state of falling in love, the neurotransmitter, dopamine, triggers feelings of pleasure, motivation and reward. As the “craving” or “I’ve got to have it” neurotransmitter, dopamine activates your reward circuitry, regardless of the activity with which you are



engaged. The more dopamine you release, the further your reward circuit is activated, giving the sensation of experiencing more “reward.” Consequently, if something really boosts your dopamine, it could potentially become addictive. The feeling of being passionately in love, as a brain state, shares circuitry with states of obsession and mania, intoxication, and thirst and hunger. In the brain, infatuation is similar to cocaine addiction in that it impacts the same pleasure centers and reward circuitry. This is why some people seem “addicted to love” and are constantly looking for their next relational “fix.” Dopamine also functions symbiotically with testosterone, so it should not be surprising that most addictions start during the teen years when we become sexually active and there is such a significant spike in male testosterone production.

Infatuation decreases brain levels of serotonin, which means you can get stuck on an idea or person, becoming obsessed and perpetually distracted. Low serotonin levels also account for the emotional extremes in the early stages of a relationship or when a relationship ends.⁹

Epinephrine and norepinephrine, neurotransmitters which are produced in the adrenal glands, spinal cord, and brain, function like amphetamines, stimulating an “adrenaline rush” and increased blood pressure when we are in the presence of our new love. Phenylethylamine (PEA) is another adrenaline-like substance that functions to speed up the flow of information between nerve cells and is triggered in the process of attraction to help us pay attention to our feelings of love. This flood of chemicals combine to create the feelings of euphoria and infatuation when we are attracted to another.

While all this activity is firing up our limbic system (center of emotions), the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain involved in judgment, impulse control, organization, planning, forethought, and learning from mistakes—begins to check out, leaving us at great risk for impaired judgment and poor choices. While I am not suggesting that a person falling in love or lust cannot help themselves, the chemical cascade formed in our brains certainly increases our risk of acting foolishly and susceptibility to temptation.

This “falling in love” process can last from a few days to around two years. Many couples mistake the fading of this intense passion with

For connected and lasting relationships, couples must transition from the euphoric state of new love to the stability of companionate love that involves a growing sense of trust and commitment.

“falling out of love,” which can often cause problems in their marriages or propel one partner into seeking this passionate buzz with someone else. One cannot maintain the intensity of a passionate craving state indefinitely, so it may actually be necessary to “fall out of love” in order to discover *true* love and a deeper relational intimacy.

Staying in Love

For connected and lasting relationships, couples must transition from the euphoric state of new love to the stability of companionate love that involves a growing sense of trust and commitment. The neuro-chemicals that facilitate commitment are serotonin, oxytocin, and vasopressin.¹⁰

When serotonin levels are healthy (not too high and not too low), one experiences minimal anxiety, depression and aggressiveness. Moods are more even and we are more emotionally flexible. Simply put, serotonin tends to make people nicer.

Vasopressin is a key thermoregulator because it limits the “overheating” of brain areas involved in sexual activity. It also appears to be involved in regulating sexual persistence, assertiveness, dominance, and territorial markings. Recent genetic research suggests that vasopressin may make the difference between stay-at-home dads and one-night-stand artists, as it is shown to assist in the regulation of sexual and social fidelity in men.¹¹ Vasopressin is linked with testosterone, possibly modulating masculine sexual social behavior—although too much testosterone can actually suppress oxytocin and vasopressin.

Oxytocin is a neuropeptide hormone that facilitates attraction, touch sensation, bonding, attachment and trust. It is the “unconditional love” hormone. Oxytocin reduces cravings, calms and soothes, and is associated with nurturance and physical affection. Levels increase when you feel connected, empathic, in love, and touch or are being touched. Interestingly, once a touching pattern is established, levels will increase in anticipation of being touched. Oxytocin also counteracts the effect of the stress hormone cortisol, which means it plays a role in easing depression, anxiety, and secondary weight gain.

Oxytocin spikes during orgasm for both men and women, but men experience a 500% surge.¹² This surge may help explain why men often feel close as a result of making love and many women need to feel close in order to want to make love. Because of its “valium-like” tranquilizing effect, it also may explain why men can go to sleep so quickly after lovemaking.

In order to stay in love, you need an appropriate balance between both oxytocin and dopamine acting on your reward circuitry. There is some evidence that these two chemicals stimulate each other’s release, so if one is low, the other may also be dragged down. A little dopamine keeps the zest in a loving relationship, but too much feeds the highs and lows of relational drama and addiction. If dopamine is the predominant chemical during intercourse, you are probably “having sex.” Alternatively, if oxytocin is more prevalent, you will more likely experience sexual relations as “making love.”

Sexual and relational health depends on a plethora of chemical interactions. However, with a basic understanding of our delicate neurobiology—of what makes us tick as sexually relational beings—we can better help couples weather the “temporary insanity” of new love and encourage them to practice behaviors that foster trust, commitment, stability, and genuine intimacy. By learning more about how we have been created, we can work toward establishing lasting relational chemistry. ✨



JAMES K. CHILDERSTON, PH.D., *leads a psychological private practice in Hagerstown, Maryland. He is a Christian psychologist who is board certified in medical psychology, psychopharmacology and sex therapy. James also teaches with the Institute for Sexual Wholeness.*

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childhood sexual development

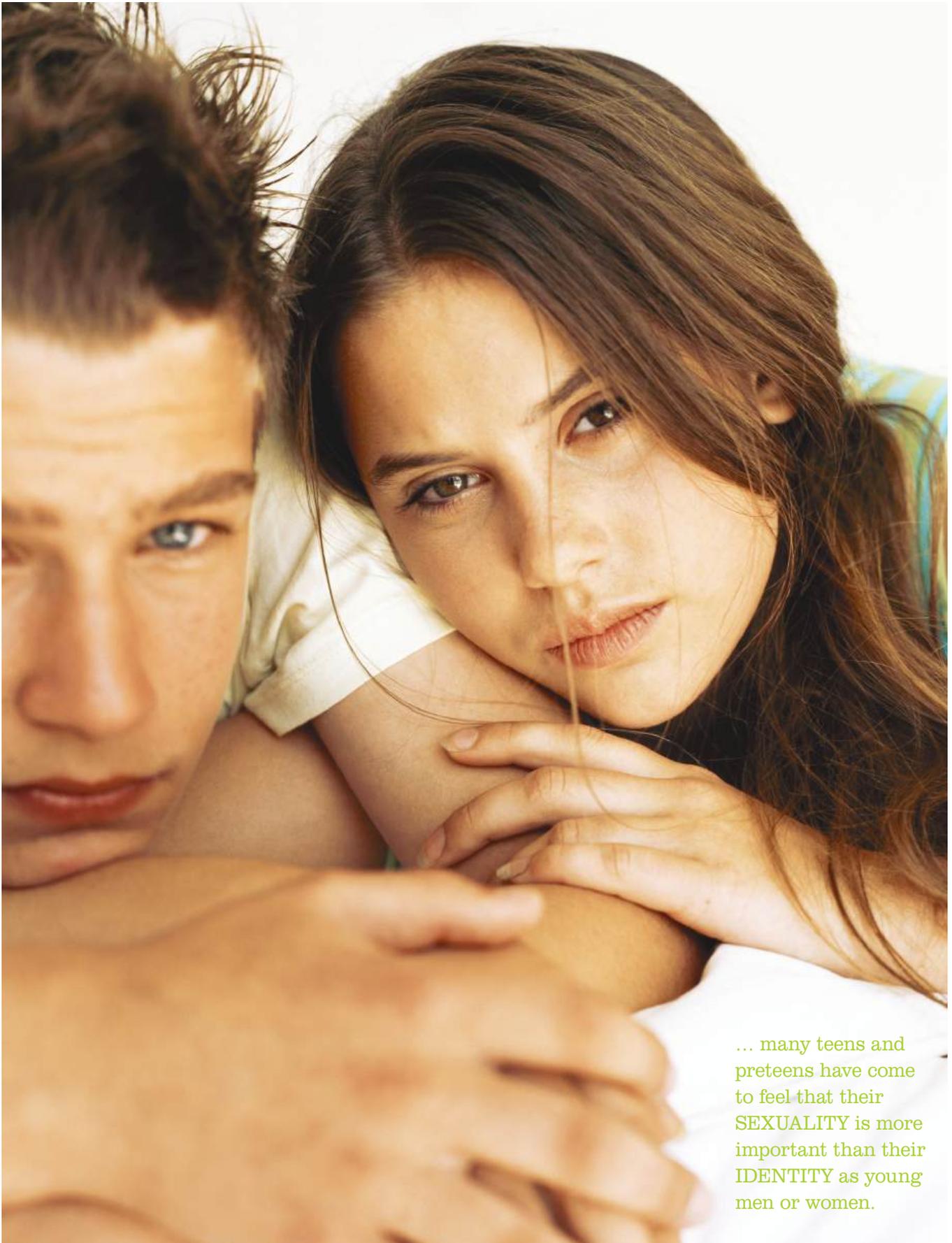
What Every Christian Must Know



THE AGGRESSIVE USE OF SEX IN MARKETING IS SINGLEHANDEDLY DESTROYING THE HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CHILDREN. Yes, this is a bold statement, but herein rests its truth: consider that a person's sexuality connects every dimension of his or her being—intellect, emotions, physicality and spiritual life. Thus, when you harm one's sexuality, you harm the whole person. Since the media markets sex to teens ad nauseam, their views of what healthy sexuality is and the role it plays as part of their overall identity becomes twisted. Ultimately, the harm extends to our children's physical, emotional and spiritual health.

MEG MEEKER

Today, we have a serious problem in the United States. The medical community struggles with treating an *epidemic* of sexually transmitted infections, the likes of which our country has never seen. According to The Medical Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the early 1970s there were two STIs (sexually transmitted infections): syphilis and gonorrhea. When the 1980s arrived, so did an exponential rise in Herpes Type 2 and HIV/AIDS. Some say that perhaps these infections were always around, but physicians simply could not detect them. If only this was true. You and I both know that AIDS was not around in the 60s or 70s. Most physicians know this too, because we were there.



... many teens and preteens have come to feel that their **SEXUALITY** is more important than their **IDENTITY** as young men or women.



By the turn of the century, we no longer had just two STIs; we had more than 30. We need to look no further than the sexual revolution started by my generation for this downward spiral. Our screaming for sexual freedom resulted in “giving” our kids a variety of viral and bacterial infections so rampant that even the silver bullet answer—condoms—no longer provided adequate protection. Unfortunately, by the early 21st century, even though well-intentioned sex-ed teachers swore otherwise, condom use could not contain the epidemic. Why? Because many of the infections—like human papillomavirus (HPV) and herpes (which are transmitted from skin to skin)—simply marched around the supposed barrier.

Here are a few more numbers that every adult in America needs to know. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, one out of five Americans over the age of 12 tests positive for Herpes Type 2. One follow-up study in the journal, *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, showed that if we do not dramatically change course in our sexual behavior (and this includes what we teach our children), by the year 2025 a whopping 35% of all men and 45% of all women in the United States will test positive for HSV 2 (genital herpes). I have disturbing statistics compiled in my book, *Your Kids at Risk*.

More than Their Bodies Hurt

Nevertheless, the epidemic of these diseases is only the beginning of the trouble we see with our children and their sexuality. We are also negatively impacted due to the emotional harm done by our hypersexualized culture. The media bombardment of our kids with sex leads them to feel inordinate sexual pressure. First, many teens and preteens have come to feel that their sexuality is more important than their identity as young men or women. I recently spoke at a private academy for high school students gifted in the arts and music. As is typical for artistic protégés, the students experimented liberally with their sexual identities. The teachers asked me to address homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality because the counselors said many of the students struggled with confusion, anxiety, and even depression related to their sexual issues.

When I speak on this subject, I adamantly teach high school students, regardless of self-proclaimed sexual orientation, NOT to be sexually active. Both the students and counselors

at the school I visited knew that before I arrived, and I was convinced these adolescents would not want to listen to my lecture. However, a surprising event occurred. When I made the statement that they were not “gay, straight or bisexual, but rather José, Rebecca and Josh,” they jumped to their feet and broke out with applause. Why? Because even confused kids know the pressure to rubber stamp their sexuality is too great for them to handle and that their primary focus should be to develop their identity as young men and women first.

Where are Parents?

Teachers complain that parents will not talk to their kids about sex. Parents complain that teachers fail to give the right sex education. Parishioners criticize pastors for not addressing sex with young people and children. Just wanting someone to say something... they end up listening to the media.

The truth is, parents remain the number one influence in a child’s life regarding the decisions he or she makes about sexual activity. Most have a hard time talking to their kids about sex, and there are good reasons: they are frightened and/or feel guilty, awkward and incompetent when it comes to medical knowledge. Many have a healthy dose of modesty. As far as fear is concerned, parents must learn to face it and

march on. If you fit into this category, open your mouth. Say the words and reopen conversations. The irony is that many of the same parents who do not want to talk about sex with their kids will sit next to them in an R rated movie.

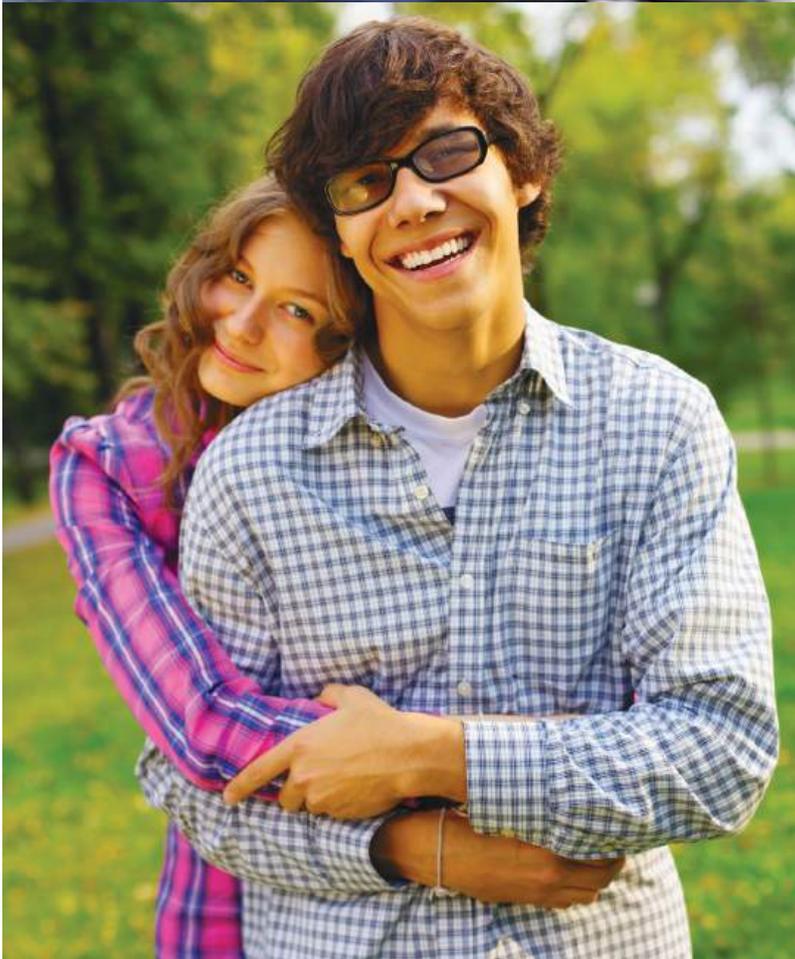
Is Abstinence Realistic?

Will kids wait until they are married to have sex? The answer is simple: yes, *if* we train them to wait. Simply telling kids to be abstinent from sex until they are married is not good enough. They must be told, shown and trained how to avoid temptations. We must teach them how to have self-control in the most important area of their lives, but there is a catch... parents must be convinced of two things: that teens can wait and that they should wait. Many parents tell their children, “Now wait until you are married to have sex,” but then teach them the opposite. Some single parents have sex with boyfriends or girlfriends and some even try to hide it from their kids. Parents cannot have it both ways, because asking your kids to do something that you are not willing to do yourself is ineffective. Period.

Other parents share these principles with their kids, but then do not follow up. Having “the talk” and merely telling kids once or twice to wait, especially in a culture which



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pounds them with the message that they must be sexually engaged to have any sense of sophistication or self, simply will not work. Teens must be told *how* to wait.

If you are a dad, tell your son how to stay faithful to his wife. After all, faithfulness begins before marriage and must continue long after. Your struggle is like his struggle, so teach him how to avoid situations where he will be tempted beyond what he can do. I go so far as to role-play with teens or college students. I might ask, “Say you are in college and your boyfriend comes for a visit. Will he sleep in your room?” Universally, girls say, “Yes.”

Then I go on to ask, “Okay. Are you going to sleep in the same bed?” Again, most give me a nod, yes. Then I push, “Are you going to have sex?” Most shake their heads no. “Seriously?” I query. “You really think that you can sleep in the same bed with someone you love and not have sex?” Many insist they can. Maybe so, but the point is if we teach kids to wait until they are married, we must be willing to teach them how. Almost every teen or young adult who wants to wait until he or she is married has no clue how to accomplish this. My line to them is, “If you go on a diet, don’t bake brownies. Don’t even buy the box of mix.”

Other parents may tell their kids that abstinence is important, but deep down they are not convinced that, in this day and age, it is really necessary. There is an irrefutable truth about every child—he or she seeks to know what parents *believe* rather than what they *say*. If you do not believe your child can or should wait, do not waste your breath. Many parents need convincing because they feel guilty about what they did as teens. The most common question parents ask me when I talk about teaching abstinence to their kids is, “What should we tell our kids when they ask about what we did as teens?” My reply is simple. First, I tell parents that just because mistakes were made when they were teens does not disqualify them from teaching their sons or daughters a better way. Second, I say, “Your kids really do not want to hear about your sex lives because, in their minds, there are two people on the planet who are not sexually active... and you are those two.”

If you do believe that waiting until marriage is important, then tell your kids why. Tell them how great sex is and how much better it will be

without a history of multiple partners. You can tell them about diseases they may get... and you absolutely should. However, in my experience, a few statistics go a long way with young people. They are more interested in their feelings with regard to sex than with their bodies. So, when I talk to kids, I always spend a long time describing how being sexually active with too many partners prematurely can lead to depression. I can honestly say that when I do this, it is the junior and senior high school boys who lean forward in their chairs and run down to me with questions after a lecture. Why? Because they are led to believe that sex should always be a positive experience. However, due to their age, when it is not, they usually blame one person: themselves. Unfortunately, no one ever addressed this with them.

Sexual Identity Formation is a Complex Process

Dr. Armand Nicholi, a psychiatrist and expert on adolescent psychiatry, wrote *The Harvard Guide to Psychiatry*. Several years ago, I was speaking with him about sexual development in teens and he told me that the process is not completed until they are in their late teens or early 20s. He is absolutely right... because healthy sexual development involves so many other dimensions of one's character, it takes many years to complete. We know that abstract thinking is not completed until a person is a young adult and cognition is certainly involved in sexual development. Emotional changes, hormonal maturity, social experiences, life events and psychological health all contribute to sexual development... so is it any wonder that a child of 12 or 13 feels confused about sexuality? At that age, a child should feel confused because he or she has not finished developing. Those who push children to claim their sexual orientation (usually for homosexuality, not heterosexuality) do tremendous harm because this critical developmental stage is incomplete.

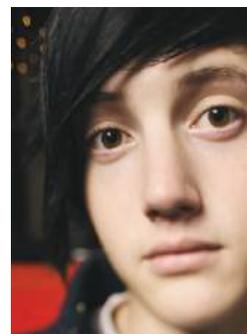
Some push children to define their sexual orientation as early as grade school, perhaps with good intentions, but the effort stems from the viewpoint that sexual orientation develops solely from a genetically determined state. This is not true. Simplifying such a complex process to straightforward genetics is a huge disservice to any child.

Where We Come In

Christian counselors, teachers, physicians and parents must know some facts as they help young people. First, we need to understand that the formation of a child's sexuality is serious business and not to be taken lightly. Regardless of your personal beliefs about homosexuality and its origins, every adult must know that acting out sexually during the teen years is high-risk behavior. Period. Any child who is sexually active with either sex puts himself/herself at risk for infections, and even a higher risk for depression (citations in my book, *Your Kids at Risk*). Females, in particular, bear the greatest burden of infections because of their complex anatomy. Girls contract cervical cancer, not boys... and girls become infertile, not boys. On the other hand, if a male engages in homosexual behavior, he puts himself at a tremendously high risk for infections like gonorrhea, HIV and syphilis. This is because, putting it bluntly, the anus is not made for sex. When involved, it bleeds and spreads infections more readily. From my perspective, sexual activity is not simply a moral or religious decision—it is a very serious medical one.

Second, we who counsel kids, therefore, must teach them to put on the brakes. Teach them how, and why, they are being oversexualized. When we speak to them as smart, thinking, feeling people, they respond. When they know that we speak because we are on their side, they listen. What they do not listen to are words couched in a tone that conveys they are bad kids who are out of control, preparing to do another bad thing. When we first apologize for their situation (the epidemic of infections and obscene amount of sex used in the media, etc. that followed the sexual revolution we started), their ears perk up. When we claim we are the cause of the problems and they are the victims, they really listen because this makes them less defensive. I routinely tell teens and young adults that on behalf of my generation, I am sorry. Nothing gives them a cause to carry like the challenge to reverse our mistakes.

Third, teach how God wants them to enjoy sex. Telling kids they should wait until they are married to have sex because the Bible says so is usually ineffective if you do not elaborate. God designed sex to be enjoyed deeply. He is not waiting to rap a ruler on the heads of all bad kids



Simply telling kids to be abstinent from sex until they are married is not good enough. They must be TOLD, SHOWN and TRAINED how to avoid temptations.



who disobey. Rather, He longs for His sons and daughters to love the goodness that He gave us.

When I speak to an auditorium filled with high schoolers, I begin my lectures by screaming the words, “Sex is amazing!” to the kids. They whoop and holler, and then I tell them that God created their bodies to be able to function sexually for 50 plus years. More applause. Then I ask them how old their parents are. Moans erupt. I wait. Then I ask, “Oh, and do any of you have grandparents who are still alive?” At that point, they slide down behind the seat in front of them. My point, of course, is that God made sex for them to enjoy for many years. Therefore, He knows how they should do it best. Furthermore, they gain needed perspective. If they want to have 50 great years of sex (which they all do) when they are married, I tell them that it is critical to carefully think about the next five or 10 years because the decisions they make in that short time will impact them for the rest of their sexual lives. Many kids respond to this because, as young teens, they perceive the only years they will have great sex are the upcoming few.

The Million Dollar Question: Does Teaching Abstinence Work?

You will be told by well-meaning Christians that teaching abstinence is a good idea, but that you should also be realistic. You can give it a whirl but, in all honesty, teaching abstinence really does not work because kids are going to do what they are going to do. You may feel that way right now.

Let me be clear—teaching your children to wait until they are married to be sexually active is absolutely,

unequivocally possible. Not only is it possible, it is the only way to be a responsible parent. Given the enormous pain that can result from sexual activity before marriage, it would be wholly irresponsible and cruel to naively teach children that they can have multiple sexual partners and then go on to have a disease-free, emotionally-sound and spiritually-intimate sex life. God knows what He is talking about. Men and women have struggled with sexual temptation from the beginning of time. Think about it... we did not have an epidemic of diseases, depression, low self-esteem, and alcohol and drug use among young adults in generations past. What has changed? One thing: increased sexual activity.

We have come to believe that sexual freedom is an American right because many have fought hard for it... but nothing could be further from the truth. It is a privilege given to us by a loving and wise God who knows more about temptation and sexual health than any of us ever will. It is time that we take His teaching seriously. ✕



MEG MEEKER, M.D., is a pediatrician who has practiced pediatric and adolescent medicine for 25 years. She is a best-selling author and popular speaker on pediatric health issues and child-parent relationships. Dr. Meeker is co-host and physician-in-residence of Dr. James Dobson’s Family Talk Radio. She is also Assistant

Clinical Professor at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and currently teaches medical students and physicians in residency training. Dr. Meeker is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics and a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She also serves on the National Advisory Board of the Medical Institute.



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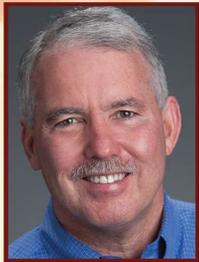
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sex and media in today's culture: why the real problem isn't what you think

At the outset, make no assumptions about what you are going to read in this article. I will not disparage Hollywood, music videos and lyrics, or the pornography industry. There are plenty of books, articles, and blogs already devoted to this task. Are we living in an overly sexualized culture? No question. Has the sexual revolution of the 1960s profoundly impacted the fabric of our society? Indeed. Does it present challenges for people of Christian faith? Undeniably.

We should not be surprised when those who do not know God push the sexual envelope when producing media that sells. We are all severely fallen—sinful to our core. Without Christ, all of us would be engaged in vain pursuits to satisfy our rebellious and idolatrous natures. Instead, I want to paint a picture that will hopefully define the problem in a new light and offer solutions to

help us respond to the ever-changing sexual standards, beliefs, and practices in today's culture.

What in the iWorld Happened?

The sexual revolution of the 1960s has impacted our culture over the past 50 years deeper than one may realize. This cultural shift, bent on restoring society to its version of peace and love, was about much more than sex. It was “about a transformation in the nature of society,” a society Dale Kuehne, a leading researcher who focuses on the relationship between Christianity, politics, and human sexuality, calls the iWorld.¹

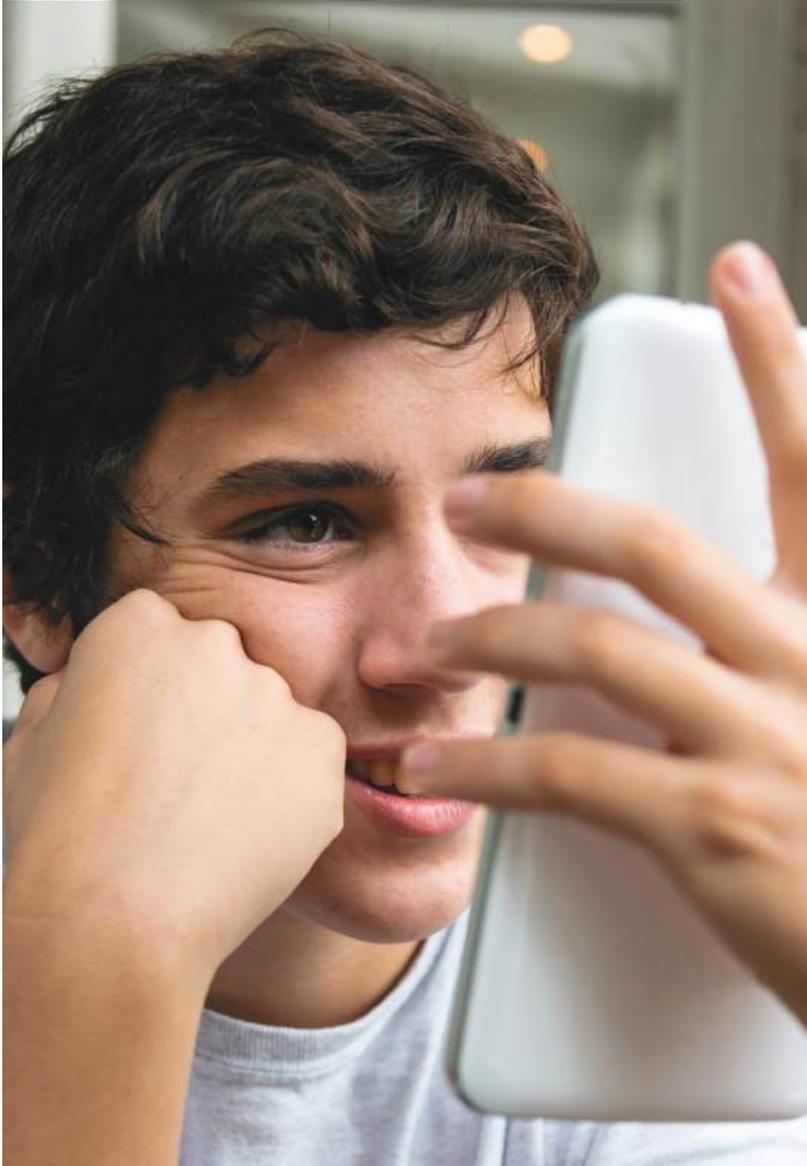
The “i” stands for “individual.” Though philosophically inconsistent within itself, the iWorld has two foundational principles: 1) “To provide space for... individual freedom through the expansion of individual rights, and 2) To make sure that such an expansion does not violate the rights of others.”² Consequently, you and I are now rooted in a society that fundamentally believes true happiness and human fulfillment are found in the growth of individual rights.³

Since we are products of, arguably, the most individualistic culture in the history of the world, everything we do—the books we read, the things we spend our money on, what we give our time to, how we interpret the

JOSHUA STRAUB

The more sexual partners one has, the greater the potential emotional ramifications. "Hooking up" literally inhibits the brain's ability to connect in long-term attachment relationships.





Bible—all of it, is colored by the lens of this individualistic philosophy stemming back to the counter-culture Woodstock music festival in 1969.

Even though it is easy to jump on the bandwagon of critics who stand against the pursuit of sexual freedom, focusing on sex alone only addresses the symptom and fails to recognize our own culpability. The sexual revolution created a society centered not on the value of sexual freedom, but on the value of *feeling better*, and has resulted in two primary problems that threaten the very foundation of our society: 1) We are raising a generation that is relationally bankrupt (taught to feel better, not love better), and 2) We are blind to what is really going on.

What is Really Going On?

For my entire working career, I have been counseling, mentoring, and studying those in the Millennial generation (those born between the early 1980s and early 2000s). The consistent cry for help or advice they seek—whether from their parents, friends, significant others, or employers—is relational in nature. For many, it comes as a result of being raised in a broken, divorced or alcoholic home—growing up without a father, experiencing abuse, dealing with failed teenage or young adult romances, or simply getting entangled within the culture.

Regardless of the reason, there is an unprecedented relational bankruptcy that is becoming increasingly worse in this generation. The consistent message of the culture today is, *“Do whatever you’d like to feel better, so long as it doesn’t harm anybody else.”* To fill the relational emptiness in the soul, our culture—through media and technology—tells us the answer is found in personal gluttony via sexual relationships that are void of intimacy and emotional connection. Consider the following statistics:^{4, 5}

- 30% of teenagers “hook up” sexually with someone they just met today
- 64% have “hooked up” with someone they consider a friend
- 41% of college students expressed sadness, regret and ambivalence the morning after “hooking up” with someone

Humans are not designed for this type of random sexual encounter. Science shows sexual activity stimulates the release of vasopressin

and oxytocin in the human body, hormones involved in the parts of the brain that help pick out the salient features used to identify individuals. Using prairie voles—one of only 3% of mammal species (like humans) to maintain monogamous relationships—researchers describe how we become addicted to one another through a process of sexual imprinting.⁶

However, the problem is these hormones are value neutral... they cannot tell the difference between a one-night stand and lifelong soul mate. Connectedness and bonding, at a certain level, will form no matter the nature of the sexual relationship. When the connection is quickly replaced by another sexual relationship, it often causes damage to the brain's natural bonding system.⁷ The more sexual partners one has, the greater the potential emotional ramifications. "Hooking up" literally inhibits the brain's ability to connect in long-term attachment relationships. The emotional and relational consequences are eye-opening:

- Sexually active boys and girls are three times more likely to be depressed than their virgin counterparts.
- Sexually active girls are three times, and boys seven times, more likely to commit suicide.
- Sexually active boys and girls are more likely to get divorced.

Scientifically speaking, we were not created to just feel better. Philip Yancey, best-selling Christian author, says it well, "I might feel more attraction toward a reductionistic approach to sex if I saw that it addressed... deeper needs if I sensed that the sexual revolution had increased respect between the genders, created a more loving environment for children, relieved the ache of personal loneliness, and fostered intimacy. I have seen no such evidence."⁸ True happiness and human fulfillment must have boundaries.

The Impact of Media and Technology

No wise parents would build a full-service alcohol bar in their kid's bedroom. They want to protect them. Yet, we allow full-service Internet "search bars" on a device in our kids' bedrooms with unprotected access to the most grotesque images one could imagine, all within a matter of seconds.

One pediatrician recently commented, "I guarantee you that if you have a 14-year-old boy and he has an Internet

connection in his bedroom, he is looking at pornography."⁹ Consider the following:^{10, 11, 12}

- 90% of children ages 8-16 have viewed pornography
- The average age of first Internet exposure to porn is 11
- More than 11 million teens regularly view porn online
- The largest consumers of pornography are boys aged 12-17
- 70% of men aged 18-34 visit a pornographic Web site in a given month
- One in six women struggles with pornography addiction

The fastest growing clientele for me over the past few years is parents of 12-15 year-olds. This group of teens has never known a time without technology. Increasingly, parents are expressing concerns about the effects of sex, media, and technology among this demographic, including:

- Catching their kids looking at pornography
- Teenagers becoming physically abusive as parents try to set limits on technology
- Adolescents feeling guilty and anxious because of sexually provocative pictures they sent of themselves to peers
- Kids depressed and threatening suicide because of cyberbullying
- Concerned about their children's sexual experimentation with the same sex

All of these examples are a result of a culture that teaches our kids (and adults) the value of feeling better over loving better. Since the sacrifice, hard work, and responsibility to form deeply meaningful and intimate relationships takes time and *do not always feel good*, we devalue them in an individualistic culture bent on instant gratification.

The Demise of Civilization

With 40% of kids living without their biological fathers (higher for African-American and Hispanic families), more than 40% of children born out-of-wedlock, and the Millennial generation choosing to delay or not marry at all, we are seeing the relational foundation of our society literally falling apart.

As Kuehne stated, "When I've been studying the end of civilizations... there's this common theme. You have sexual bizarreness go on in terms of promiscuity. Then you have great debt, then things tend to implode civilizationally, then things



The fastest growing clientele for me over the past few years is parents of 12-15 year-olds. This group of teens has never known a time without technology. Increasingly, parents are expressing concerns about the effects of sex, media, and technology among this demographic...

fall apart and people wake up and they discover each other. When things rebuild, they rediscover this relational matrix that's part of the very nature of life."¹³

I firmly believe healthy marriages lead to healthy families, healthy families to healthy communities, and healthy communities to healthy societies. To restore order in our culture, it must begin in the home—my home.

Loving Better

Sex is not the pinnacle of human happiness. Feeling better is not life's deepest fulfillment. True happiness and joy are found when we get outside of ourselves enough to love others better. It is why we were created. God, in the family of the Holy Trinity, enjoys being in relationship with Himself so much He wants you and I to experience the same joy and unconditional love He feels within Himself—each person of the Trinity centering their being around the others... enjoying one another... adoring one another.

We were created to center our lives on others and experience the joy found in showing them how much they matter. To honor them. To serve them. To praise them. To give thanks for who they are. However, it starts by knowing Him. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). So how should the Church engage others when it comes to sexual practices/deviance, sex outside of marriage, the redefinition of marriage, and the sex-saturated media? The same as we should any other sin... by first pulling the log out of our own eyes and then showing them the love and relational dance of the Holy Trinity.

The challenge for the Church and people of faith is to awaken to our own tendency of succumbing to a culture teaching us the value of feeling better over loving better. Winning the "war on marriage" does not start by fighting against gay marriage; it begins by battling for our own. We lose the war on marriage when we, as Christians, no longer model joy or put forth the effort in our own relationships.

Once again, Kuehne beautifully illustrates, "[Though] the Bible teaches that marriage is good... [it's] only one of many relational goods and not of the highest order. We are made to love and be loved, we are made for intimacy, we are made for relationship. Family matters, extended family matters, friendship matters, the worshiping community matters, the universal church matters. All of these relationships are made better by observing the sexual and relational boundaries described by Scripture."¹⁴

As counselors, pastors, and those of Christian faith, it all begins with us. When we begin setting appropriate boundaries against a culture of feeling better in our own homes, we model for our clients and parishioners how they can do the same. You can start creating a culture of *loving better* in your home by establishing boundaries like a family constitution, setting limits on media and technology, and serving your community together.¹⁵

The relational dance of the Trinity is contagious. Using Jesus' examples of the woman at the well (John 4) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8) as our own, let us lovingly get to know those who come to us broken, show them how much they are loved, and help them discover the true joy found in loving others better. Why? Because true happiness and human fulfillment are found not in feeling better, but in loving better. ✨



JOSHUA STRAUB, PH.D., is the President and Co-founder of The Connexion Group. He is the coauthor of *God Attachment* and *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers*. Joshua wakes up each day striving to love others better, starting with his wife, Christi, and their son, Landon. You can find him on Twitter @joshuastraub.

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gender, the gospel, and recovering a biblical understanding of marriage

In 1963, Betty Friedan released her book, *The Feminist Mystique*, a work that became a manifesto for the rising movement we now know as feminism. Her thesis was simple: American women were being told that the area of the home, with the traditional role of wife and mother, was just not enough. As she famously posed the question, women were supposed to be asking, “Is this all?”

Just over a half-century has passed since that book’s release, but we now inhabit a much different world. Controversies and debates about gender and gender roles have become a regular part of today’s cultural landscape. Our society is actively engaged in the process of redefining virtually every aspect of its understanding of sexuality and gender, and these changes are taking place at an astounding rate. While these debates have ramifications for all aspects of society, nothing is impacted as directly and profoundly as the institution that stands at the center of human society—marriage.

R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.



A hand is shown holding a large red female symbol (♀) against a blue background. To the left, a large blue male symbol (♂) is partially visible. The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent white circles of varying sizes. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on the gender symbols.

... Is gender an integral component of what it means to be human—a gift from our Creator for our good—or is it a socially constructed reality we can redefine into whatever form best suits us?

Given the prevailing spirit of the age and enormous cultural pressure toward conformity, those who believe the Bible teaches a complementarian understanding of manhood and womanhood are now accused of being woefully out-of-step and hopelessly out-of-date. Yet this is not a matter on which we can simply surrender and go along with the growing cultural consensus. Rather, retaining a biblical understanding of gender as a gift bestowed upon us by our Creator—for His glory and our good—is crucial for building healthy Christian marriages and maintaining our Christian witness within a lost world.

At the root of the controversy is this question: Is gender an integral component of what it means to be human—a gift from our Creator for our good—or is it a socially constructed reality we can redefine into whatever form best suits us? Our nonbelieving friends and neighbors are increasingly committed to the second option, and this understanding has led us into a moment of serious cultural confusion. If you want to see the effects of this confusion, consider that in recent weeks Facebook has made changes so that users are no longer required to simply select between male and female as their gender. Instead, they can now choose from over 50 “custom” options. If recent history has taught us anything, that number will only continue to grow.

Two cultural forces have led to the widespread embrace of this understanding of gender. The first is the influence of a secular worldview that understands gender to be nothing more than the accidental byproduct of a blind evolutionary process. If gender is nothing more than a biological accident, then human beings are, therefore, not morally bound to take gender as meaningful and must be free to make whatever adjustments, alterations, or transformations in gender relationships any generation might desire or demand.

The second force that has contributed to our current confusion on gender is the growth of postmodernism.

Postmodernism argues that our notions of what it means to be male and female are entirely due to what society has constructed as its theories of masculinity and femininity. Any attempt to force every individual to fit into this societally-fabricated mold is then seen as an oppressive and illegitimate use of power. Of course, the social construction of truth is central to the postmodern mind on all matters but, when the issue is gender, the arguments become more volatile.

Given these two influences—one that views gender as a biological accident and the other as a social invention—we should not be surprised at the willingness of our culture to reinterpret gender in ways that allow for unrestricted personal freedom. The utopia envisioned by those who wish to redefine gender and sexuality would be a world free from any concern for gender, a world where masculinity and femininity are erased as antiquated notions, and an age in which the categories of male and female are malleable and negotiable. In the famous words of Karl Marx, author of *The Communist Manifesto*, “All that is solid melts into air.” The modern cult of self-expression and personal autonomy demands that we be able to make ourselves in our own image; and if gender is not grounded in creation and in a Creator, it, too, will simply melt away.

In the face of these forces, evangelical Christians must recapture a biblical understanding of manhood and womanhood. We do not argue for the complementarity of gender based ultimately on tradition or human experience, but rather hold the foundation of our beliefs to be nothing less than the revealed Word of God. In this light, the pattern of history affirms what the Bible unquestionably reveals—that God has made human beings in His image as male and female, and that the Creator has revealed His glory in both the sameness and uniqueness by which He establishes human beings as male and female.

We understand the Bible to present a beautiful portrait of complementarity between the sexes, with both men and women charged to reflect God’s glory in a distinct way. It is crucial to note the complementarian argument is grounded in the goodness of God’s creation, before the effects of the Fall. The Genesis account records that Adam was created first, and

then Eve to be his helper. Thus, there are very real distinctions that mark the difference between masculinity and femininity, male and female. There in the opening pages of the Bible, we find the first man and first woman created equal in worth and dignity, but with differing roles. They were in the Garden, and God pronounced this arrangement as very good (Genesis 1:31).

On this side of Genesis 3, we recognize that sin becomes the explanatory principle for all confusion over gender and sexuality. We also see that sin has unfortunately led to corruptions and abuses of the biblical pattern of complementarianism; but the sins of man do not give us warrant to abandon God’s clearly revealed design. Instead, we must remain committed to the clear teaching of Scripture that gender is a central aspect of God’s design for humanity, and is, therefore, not within our power to redefine as we please.

It is only through a robust understanding of God’s design for gender that we have any hope of maintaining a biblical understanding of marriage as the union between one man and one woman. If gender and gender roles are matters more of personal autonomy than God-ordained design, marriage is open to reinterpretation as well. In a society that recognizes

Our society is actively engaged in the process of redefining virtually every aspect of its understanding of sexuality and gender, and these changes are taking place at an astounding rate.



more than 50 “custom” genders as equally viable alternatives, why should we not expect to see a multitude of “custom” marriages also held out as perfectly legitimate?

Yet, as Christians, we know God ordained marriage to work in a certain way... and He also designed gender to function in a particular manner. This design does not come from a dictatorial deity seeking to limit our joy by restricting our freedom, but instead from a benevolent Creator who has given us gender and marriage as good gifts to increase our joy. We see a beautiful picture of His plan in Ephesians 5 where the Apostle Paul calls wives to submit to their husbands and for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church.

Christian marriage is not an endorsement of patriarchal tyranny, but a call for men to lead as Christ did—by laying down His life for His bride, the Church. It is a call for both genders to embrace how God made them—the wife submitting to her husband as he leads by sacrificially serving and loving her... and trust that doing so will lead to greater joy and human flourishing. Marriage is about two image bearers of God, differing in roles, coming together to live as one and ultimately bringing glory to the One who gave us this gift. It is this very difference that contributes so greatly to the beauty of the marriage covenant.

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, reminds us of this: “How beautiful, then, the marriage of two Christians, two who are one in home, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice.... Nothing divides them either in flesh or in spirit.... They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another. Side by side they visit God’s church and partake God’s banquet, side by side they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations. They have no secrets from one another; they never shun each other’s company; they never bring sorrow to each other’s hearts.... Seeing this Christ rejoices. To such as these He gives His peace. Where there are two together, there also He is present.”

The culture maintains we will find happiness by casting off any external restriction placed upon us, including gender. We are told fulfillment only comes by self-expression and personal autonomy. However, as Christians, we know that gender is not simply an evolutionary accident, nor is it an invention of human society. Rather, it is a gift from our Creator that reflects His goodness and is meant to bring us joy. It is only by embracing a biblical view of gender that we are able to have a marriage that reflects this beautiful picture of the Gospel.

We now find ourselves at irreconcilable odds with our culture on these matters and must stand firm in our convictions. In doing so, we also must remember that our secular neighbors and friends who wish to redefine gender and

marriage are seeking what they honestly believe will lead to the most happiness and human flourishing given their assumptions. The modern feminist movement’s beginnings can be traced directly to a deep dissatisfaction with the area of the home—and to the denial of the roles of wife and mother as truly satisfying, important, and worth the devotion of a woman’s life. Feminism unequivocally believed—and still believes—that women would be better off if all distinction and differentiation between the genders, in the workplace and in the home, were removed. All of the interest groups seeking to further redefine our ideas of gender have followed in this vein. They are not malicious subversives seeking to undermine the fabric of society, but sincerely hope and believe that the changes they propose will make the world a better place.

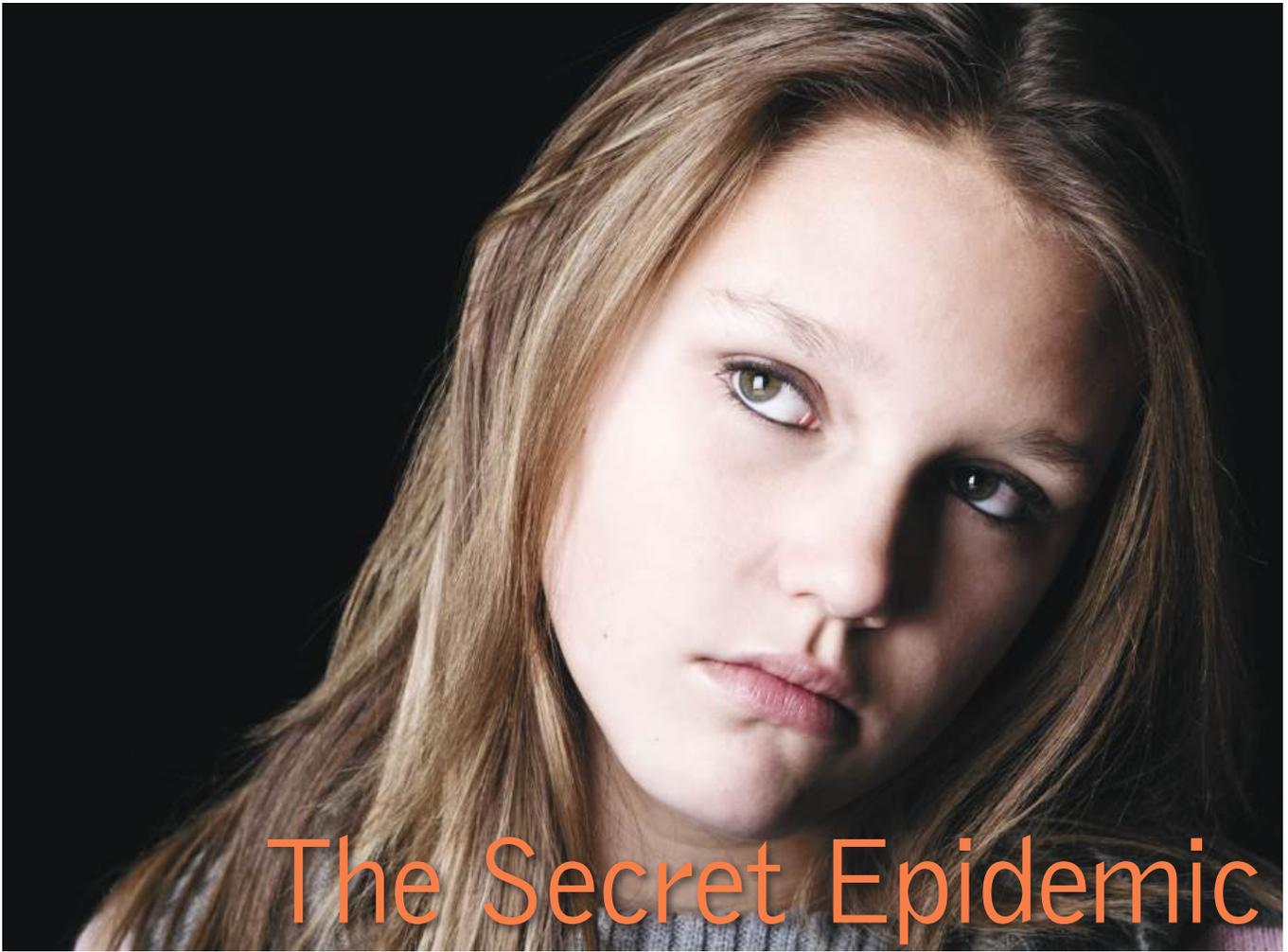
Yet, while we understand their hopes, we also understand that such hopes are false and harmful if based on a secular foundation. As Christians, we know we must acknowledge and embrace God’s design for gender and marriage as being ultimately for our good, even when our culture continually tells us we would be more fulfilled if we rejected these gifts. True fulfillment and human flourishing are to be found only in living in accordance with God’s design for humanity. Gender is not merely incidental to our basic humanity, but a foundational aspect of it. Our task is not only to graciously and firmly defend a biblical understanding of gender and marriage, but also live out that commitment before a skeptical culture.

Restoring a biblical understanding of marriage and family is not merely about what goes on inside Christian homes, but also a testimony about the truth of the Gospel to a watching world. Marriage itself is a witness to the Gospel and the grace and mercy of God in giving humanity these beautiful gifts for His good pleasure. Christian marriage, when lived out in the midst of the chaos and confusion of our age, is a clear and powerful portrait of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that has fewer of these reminders left every day.

Remaining committed to a biblical understanding of gender and marriage, despite the prevailing cultural mood, will not be easy, but our world needs it and faithfulness to God’s revealed Word demands it. ✦



R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR., PH.D., serves as President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention and one of the largest seminaries in the world. Dr. Mohler has been recognized by such influential publications as TIME and Christianity Today as a leader among American evangelicals. In addition to his presidential duties, Dr. Mohler hosts two programs: “The Briefing,” a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview; and “Thinking in Public,” a series of conversations with today’s leading thinkers. He also writes a popular blog and a regular commentary on moral, cultural and theological issues.



The Secret Epidemic

STDs & HIV/AIDS

Several years ago, I was on call when a teenager, age 17, came in to the ER with abdominal pains. The family thought it was appendicitis. Following examination and testing, her diagnosis was pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) as a result of a chlamydia infection. I sat down at her bedside and talked with her about what behaviors led to the clinical results, as well as the short-term and long-term effects. Her parents did not know she was sexually active, as she was raised in a Christian home and expected to wait for sex until marriage. At that time, she and her boyfriend had only experienced two sexual encounters.

Recently, a 21-year-old college student was in the office for contraceptive services. In taking

her sexual history, I inquired as to the number of partners there had been over the past year. She then paused and asked, “Do you want me to include the ‘one nighters?’” When I said, “yes,” the number expanded from 19 to 26 in total. The risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease (STD) did not seem to concern her. These individual cases are not in isolation, as they are only snippets of the larger epidemic that is growing every day in the United States and across the world.

Current Statistics on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

The Institute of Medicine has recognized the tremendous health and economic implications of the hidden epidemics of STDs.¹ According to

FREDA BUSH

20,000,000 According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are almost 20 million new infections in the United States each year.

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are almost 20 million new infections in the United States each year. In addition, an overall estimate of prevalent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) totals more than 110 million among men and women. Prevalence is the total number of new and existing infections at a given time. The CDC's analyses included eight common STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B virus (HBV), herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), human papilloma-virus (HPV), syphilis, and trichomoniasis.²

The 2012 CDC Surveillance Report is the most recent annual update of STD and STI statistics and trends in the U.S. of infection rates for notifiable diseases (i.e., diseases that must be reported to local or state authorities when a diagnosis is made). It is important to note that not all cases may have been reported each year. As a result, the true number of new cases of STIs is more than the number reported. Surveillance information about HIV, which is a notifiable disease, is published in a separate report. Many STIs that are not notifiable, such as HPV, genital herpes and trichomoniasis, are not included. This report highlights two facts: the *increased* transmission of some STIs and young people continue to represent the worst hit demographic. Even though adolescents and young adults make up only a quarter of the population, they account for about half of all new infections each year.

The Medical Institute defines the difference between STIs and STDs as follows: 1) A Sexually Transmitted Infection is the invasion of, and multiplication in, body tissue of a microorganism (bacterium, virus, protozoan) that is usually (more than half the time) passed from one person to another during sexual activity; and 2) A Sexually Transmitted Disease is related to the actual physical/biological damage, with or without symptoms, resulting from infection that is usually (more than half the time) passed from one person to another during sexual activity.

Chlamydia continues to be the most commonly reported bacterial STI in the U.S. with 1.4 million new cases annually. In the last two decades, rates of chlamydia infection have increased significantly. Most of this increase has been attributed to improved screening and diagnostic tests. However, a true increase in infection prevalence is probably responsible for part of the rise as well. It is important to note that chlamydia infection does not cause symptoms in most people, and many infections are never diagnosed or reported. Left untreated, chlamydia can spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes, causing chronic pain, PID, infertility, and the risk of ectopic pregnancy (when the embryo implants outside the

uterus). Like other STDs, chlamydia can make women more vulnerable to HIV if exposed. Young people between the ages of 15-24 continue to have the highest rate of this infection, accounting for 70% of all new cases in 2012. Certain racial/ethnic groups continue to be disproportionately affected by this infection, with rates among blacks and Hispanics being about seven times and two times the rate of chlamydia infection in non-Hispanic whites, respectively.³

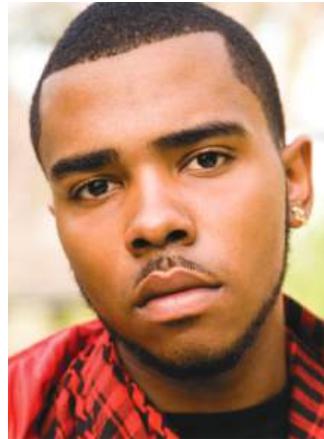
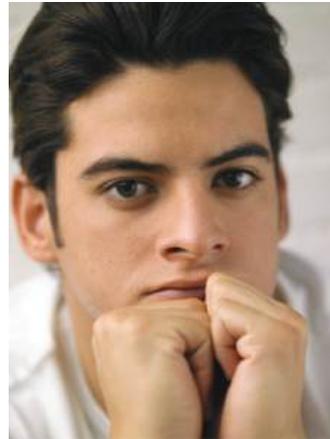
Gonorrhea, the second most commonly reported bacterial STD in the U.S., also recorded more new cases in 2012 (about 820,000), sustaining an increase every year since 2009. Unfortunately, there now seems to be a growing antibiotic resistant strain of *Neisseria gonorrhoea*. Gonorrhea infection rates are 15 times higher in blacks and two times higher in Hispanics than among non-Hispanic whites. Young people between the ages of 15-24 account for about 60% of all new infections.⁴

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the most common STD in the U.S. About 79 million men and women (ages 14-59) are infected with HPV, and 20-24 year-old women have the highest rates of infection.⁵ There are more than 40 HPV types, some of which cause cancers and others that cause genital warts.

Syphilis, a bacterial STD that can cause ulcers and increase one's risk of contracting or transmitting HIV, recorded a rise in 2012. Left untreated, the disease can affect the liver, nervous system, and brain... and it can be transmitted by pregnant women to their babies via the placenta. In 2000, the incidence rate in the U.S. of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis during the contagious stages was 2.1 per 100,000, the lowest since reporting began in 1941. Since then, however, the incidence rate has increased almost yearly, rising to 4.5 per 100,000 in 2011.⁶ Young men between the ages of 20-29 have had the highest rates in the last five years. Racial disparities also persist in reported syphilis cases. Compared to non-Hispanic whites, blacks and Hispanics have about six times and two times the rate of new infections, respectively.^{7, 8}

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) affects more than 1.1 million people living with the infection in the U.S., and almost one in six (15.8%) is unaware of his or her infection. The estimated incidence of HIV has remained stable overall in recent years, at about 50,000 new HIV infections per year.⁹ Men who have sex with men (MSM) continue to bear the greatest burden of HIV infection, and among races/ethnicities, African-Americans continue to be disproportionately affected.¹⁰ Since the epidemic began (around 1981), deaths due to HIV/AIDS are over half a million in the U.S. alone, and more than 30 million worldwide.^{11, 12}

Even though adolescents and young adults make up only a quarter of the population, they account for about half of all new infections each year.



STD Risk Factors

- Concurrent relations: having more than one partner during the same time period.
- Noncoital sexual activities, such as oral sex, are common among teens and young adults. Based on the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) data from 2006-2008, 45% of females and 48% of males aged 15-19 have had oral sex with members of the opposite sex, and among 20-24 year-olds, the percentages were about 81% of females and 80% of males.¹³
- The risk of STIs, including HIV, is lower for oral sex than for vaginal intercourse or anal sex.^{14, 15} However, several studies have documented that oral sex can transmit certain STIs, including Chlamydia, genital herpes, gonorrhea, HPV and syphilis.^{16, 17} Teens and young adults engaging in sexual activity are at an increased risk of STIs or HIV due to a combination of behavioral and physiological factors.^{18, 19, 20}

Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategies

- Abstain from sexual activity until in a committed relationship with an uninfected partner (marriage).
- Decrease or limit the number of partners.
- Annual screening for all sexually active females age 25 and under. Prompt treatment and retesting after treatment.
- Condoms used during every occurrence of vaginal or anal sex will reduce the risk of getting HIV by about 85%.²¹ However, some risk for infection remains. Condom effectiveness is disease specific. They are less effective for other STIs: gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis (approximately 50% reduction);^{22, 23} HSV (approximately 30% reduction);²⁴ and HPV (ranging from 30-70%).^{25, 26}
- Safe, effective vaccines are available for some types of HBV and HPV.
- HIV testing is critical to preventing the spread of HIV. Most people change their behavior to protect their partner(s) if they know they are infected.²⁷
- Testing Resource: **STD WIZARD** (stdwizard.com,

stdwizard.org) is a comprehensive, online personal STI risk-assessment tool developed by the Medical Institute to encourage testing. It guides users through questions focused on past and current sexual behavior and answers lead to a user-specific recommended course of action based on CDC/STD Treatment Guidelines.

Recently, while attending the Mississippi State Medical Association (MSMA) meeting, I was stopped by a vendor who is the mother of the patient I mentioned in the beginning of this article. She wanted me to know how I impacted her daughter's life seven years earlier. That day she said I brought "reality" home to her. The encounter turned her daughter's life around. She is now a nurse and takes every opportunity to talk to other teens... she calls it the "Freda Bush Crusade."

Counseling patients is critical to stem the tide of STI transmission. Even though asymptomatic bacterial or viral infections cause disease, secondary consequences result in the "dis-ease" of one's emotions, social relationships and spiritual well-being. ✖



FREDA MCKISSIC BUSH, M.D., is an OB-GYN and Clinical Instructor in the Departments of OB-GYN and Family Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. She is also CEO of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health and has co-authored two books, *Hooked* and *Girls Uncovered*, with Joe S. McIlhenny, M.D. Dr.

Bush served on the Presidential Advisory Council for HIV/AIDS.

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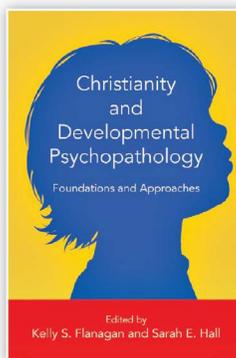
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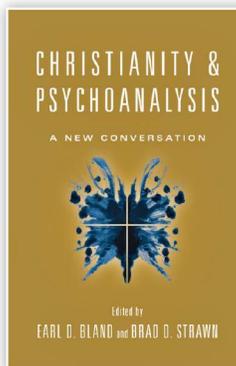


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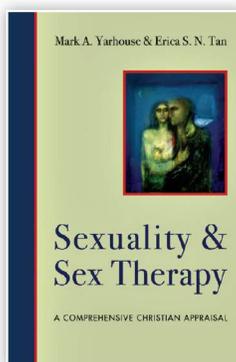


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human trafficking,

AFTERCARE AND RECOVERY

Today, countless lives around the world are in the grip of injustice. More children, women and men are held in slavery right now than over the course of the entire trans-Atlantic slave trade that took place from the mid-1400s to the end of the Civil War—a staggering 27 million lives, their labor, and even their bodies seen as the casual property of an owner. Victims are often forced to toil in destitute conditions by those who sell fellow human beings into slavery and sexual bondage. Human trafficking has become a \$32 billion annual industry—a travesty of epic proportions where nearly two million children are exploited in the commercial sex industry.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice and various United Nations' agencies:

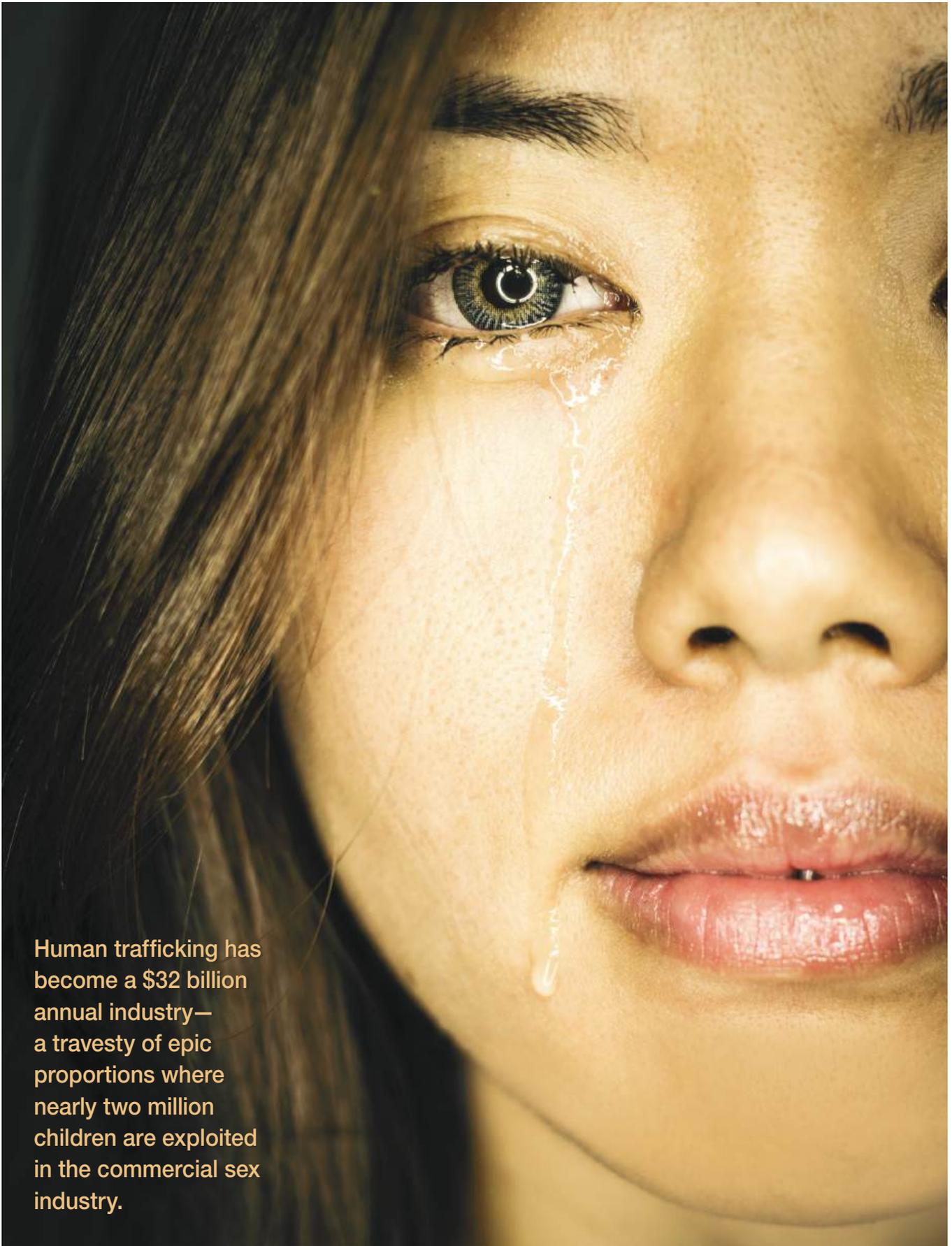
- Approximately 14,500-17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States every year (50% are minors).
- Trafficked victims are subject to prostitution (46%), domestic servitude (27%), agricultural environments (10%), and factories (5%).
- The average age of a trafficked victim is 14.
- Two-thirds of sexual exploitation victims are adult women and 22% are minors (nearly 1.2 million each year).
- In 2006, for every 800 people trafficked, only one perpetrator was successfully prosecuted and convicted.

Around the world, women and children suffer the double trauma of rape combined with seeing their perpetrators face no real consequences. According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women, one in five women is a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. In many

countries, pedophiles find that they can abuse children with impunity. Although police should be protectors, in many nations their presence is actually a source of insecurity. The poor are overwhelmingly the victims of these brutal forms of abuse. They often lack access to their own justice systems and are unable to protect themselves or their families from the more powerful. Something had to be done.

Historically, humanitarian and missions organizations worked faithfully and courageously to bring healthcare, education, food and other vital services to the global poor and others in need. However, little had been done to actually restrain the oppressors who were a source of great harm to the vulnerable. Concerned by this need, a group of lawyers, human rights professionals and public officials launched an extensive study of the injustices witnessed by overseas missionaries and relief and development workers. This study, surveying more than 65 organizations and representing 40,000 overseas workers, uncovered a nearly unanimous awareness of abuses of power by police and other authorities in the communities where they served. Without the resources or expertise to confront the

KATHY STOUT-LABAUVE



Human trafficking has become a \$32 billion annual industry—a travesty of epic proportions where nearly two million children are exploited in the commercial sex industry.



abuse and bring rescue to the victims, these overseas workers required the assistance of trained public justice professionals.

In 1997, Gary Haugen, working as a lawyer at the U.S. Department of Justice and as the United Nations' Investigator in Charge in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, founded International Justice Mission (IJM) as a response to this massive need. The organization is a human rights agency that brings rescue to victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression to help meet the medical, psychosocial, educational, economic and legal needs of people. Lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials to secure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, prosecute perpetrators, secure tangible and sustainable protection, and ensure that public justice systems—police, courts and laws—effectively protect the poor.

IJM currently has ongoing operations in 18 cities located in Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, as well as Casework Alliance Partnerships in Ecuador and Peru. With its headquarters in Washington, D.C., IJM has Partner Offices in Canada, Germany, the

Netherlands, Australia and the United Kingdom, with more than 500 lawyers, investigators, social workers and other staff—approximately 95% of whom are nationals of the various countries who participate. The vision of IJM is to *rescue thousands, protect millions and prove that justice for the poor is possible.*

Violence against the poor is not driven by the devastating power of the perpetrators, but by the vulnerability of the victims. This violence can be stopped when the power of the law is brought to bear on behalf of those who need it, and when people of good will contribute their financial and professional resources to support the cause. Through individual casework, IJM confronts aggressive human violence—violence that strips widows and orphans of their property and livelihoods; violence that steals dignity and health from children trafficked into forced prostitution; and violence that denies freedom and security to families trapped in slavery. The casework model utilized combats victimization and violence on the level of the individual and supports functioning public justice systems where the poor urgently need an advocate. This can be seen as a tangible and

compassionate response regarding the biblical call to, "... seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17).

As such, IJM seeks to restore to victims of oppression the things that God intends for them: their lives, liberty, dignity, and the fruits of their independent and free labor. By defending and protecting individual human rights, IJM seeks to engender hope and transformation for those it serves and restore a witness of courage in places of oppressive violence, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity or gender. Investigators, lawyers and social workers intervene in individual cases of abuse through effective partnerships with state, local and national authorities. By pushing individual cases of abuse through the justice system—from the investigative stage to the prosecutorial stage—IJM determines the specific source of corruption, shortage of resources, and/or lack of good will that denies victims the protection of their legal systems.

These specific points of brokenness are addressed to meet the urgent needs of victims of injustice across four primary domains:

1. **Victim Relief:** the first priority in all casework is immediate relief and protection for the victim of the abuse being committed.
2. **Perpetrator Accountability:** perpetrators are held accountable in their local justice systems for abuse, thereby changing the nature of the typical fear response on the part of victims.
3. **Survivor Aftercare:** aftercare staff and trusted local aftercare partners work to ensure that victims of oppression are equipped to rebuild their lives and respond to the complex emotional and physical needs that are often the result of abuse.
4. **Justice System Transformation:** the risk of further abuse being committed against others is reduced by strengthening community factors and local judicial systems that will deter potential oppressors.

In order to provide competent aftercare services, there is a preliminary need to understand the dynamics of chronic trauma. Contrary to popular sentiment, time does not necessarily heal all wounds. Some of the barriers are invisible and come from the long-term loss of autonomy and bodily control through unremitting deprivation, fear, and intimidation. According to Dr. Judith Herman in her book, *Trauma and Recovery*, people subjected to prolonged, repeated trauma can develop an insidious, progressive form of post-traumatic stress disorder that invades and erodes one's personality. The rupture in continuity between present and past frequently persists even after the victim is free. Though the person may no longer be in literal bondage, the symptoms of the chronic trauma that were experienced act as a wall, often inhibiting full restoration. The victim may give the appearance of returning to ordinary

time, while psychologically remaining bound in the timelessness of his or her captivity. In an attempt to reenter ordinary life, former victims may consciously suppress or avoid the memories of their victimization. As a result, their chronic trauma cannot be integrated into their ongoing life stories. The more the victimization is disavowed, however, the more this disconnected fragment of the past remains fully alive.

Chronic trauma can also produce profound alterations in a victim's identity. All the psychological structures of the self—body image, the internalized images of others, and the values and ideals that lend a person a sense of coherence and purpose—have been invaded and systematically broken down. Even after rescue, a victim normally does not assume his or her former identity. Whatever new identity emerges in freedom must include the memory of the enslaved self. A person's moral ideal must coexist with knowledge of the capacity for evil, both within others and one's self.

While IJM has a strong focus on the actual rescue of victims, a comprehensive and holistic trauma-informed and trauma-focused strategy has been developed. The IJM Global Aftercare Policy outlines specific minimum standards of care for survivors of trafficking. In recent years, an increased emphasis has been placed on ongoing trauma-focused therapy utilizing a cognitive behavioral modality, the initiation of a child protection policy that recognizes a minor's unique needs, and individualized needs assessments and treatment plans—all with an end goal of positive restoration, which is now being tracked by a newly developed metric.

In an effort to partner with local faith-based organizations through the Church Mobilization Justice Initiative, IJM has incorporated an Economic Self-sufficiency Program in Cebu, Philippines. IJM is diligent to build the capacity of national staff workers. The development of reliable, effective and independent intervention on behalf of victims by the public justice system is necessary for the sustainability of aftercare. Making public justice systems work for the poor by building capacity in social service organizations—ensuring they provide appropriate and adequate care—is paramount for survivor restoration. People can, and do, heal from devastating, chronic trauma that occurs as a result of human trafficking, especially when the healing presence of Christ Himself is fully integrated into the process. God is the source of restoration and trusting in His power and sovereignty makes it possible for "the least of these" to experience authentic transformation. For more information, please visit ijm.org. ✨



KATHY STOUT-LABAUVE, LCSW, serves as the Vice President of Aftercare for the International Justice Mission. As a licensed clinical social worker, Kathy directs and develops IJM's aftercare efforts around the world to ensure the comprehensive needs of survivors of violence are met with expertise and compassion.

the SHATTERING of INNOCENCE

a compassionate response to sexual abuse

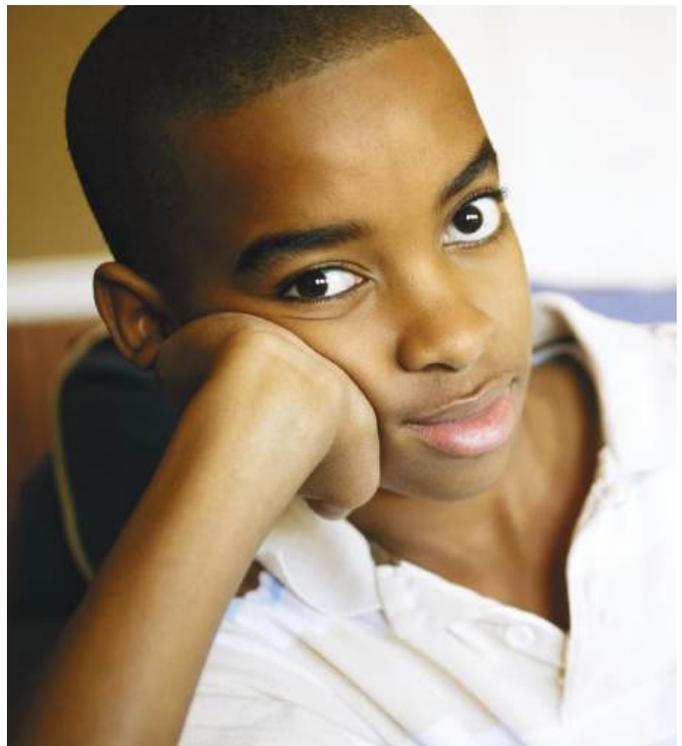
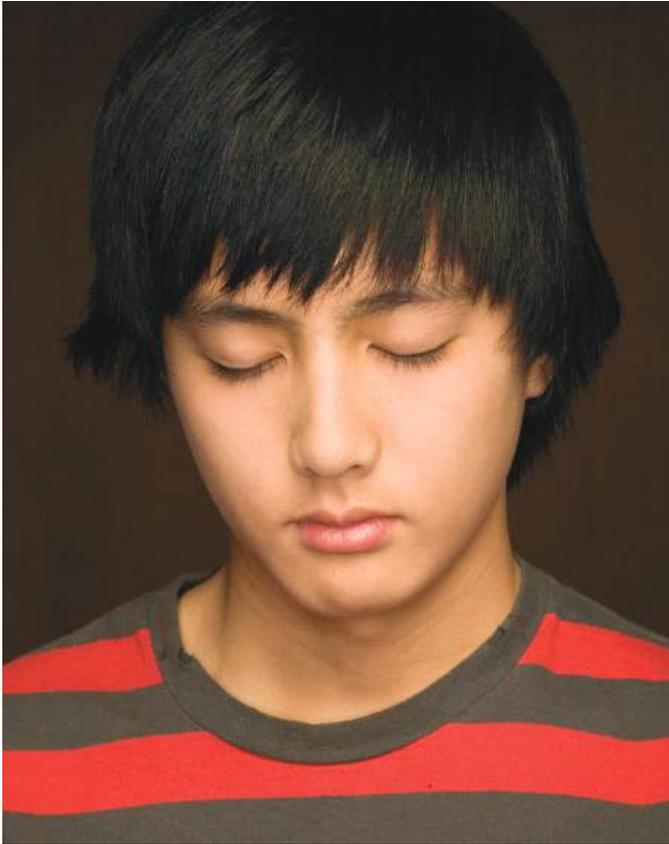
Sexual assault and abuse rob human beings of dignity, safety and relationship. They also shatter aspects of the image of God in a person. Such shattering has lasting and complex effects, sometimes lifelong, if no adequate help is given and received. When the abuse occurs to a developing child and is chronic in nature, the formation of that person is saturated in lies and false beliefs over time. This tragedy occurs much more frequently than any of us would care to believe: One in four females and one in six males in the United States will experience some form of sexual abuse prior to the age of 18.

There is a pervasive myth that leads to wrong conclusions regarding the impact of sexual abuse on a child's life. We hear again and again that children are resilient, meaning they recover quickly from suffering or tragedy. Resilience literally means "capable of returning to an original shape or position." Abused children do *not* bounce back to their state prior to the abuse. Children are *not* unequivocally resilient;

they are malleable. To be malleable is to be adaptable or capable of being shaped. There is a chapter, "Incubated in Terror," in the book, *Children, Youth and Violence: The Search for Solutions* (Guilford Press, 1997), written by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., about this myth. The chapter discusses how violence or abuse alters the developing child. In the context of neurodevelopment, Dr. Perry examines how violence, such as being repeatedly assaulted or sexually abused, influences brain development and the subsequent emotional, behavioral, cognitive, spiritual and social functioning of children and then adults. Learning theory teaches us that significant life events involving the five senses, and repeated over and over, have a much better chance of being permanently imprinted in the brain. Sexual abuse usually involves touch, sound, sight, smell and even taste combined with repeated lies or resounding silence about what is happening. When that experience is repeated multiple times, the devastating lessons are burned in a child's brain and have tentacles that can reach down through adulthood.

In recent years, our understanding of the long-term effects of sexual abuse has increased tremendously. We are seeing that the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder is often not sufficient for the symptoms we are encountering in our clients. We now have a better understanding of the cognitive distortions rooted in abuse, including the use of dissociation and the profound impact of emotional dysregulation... not only on the mind, but also on the body. The medical community is also recognizing the number of autoimmune disorders often prevalent among trauma survivors. Furthermore, problems such as substance abuse and self-injury

DIANE LANGBERG





One in four females and one in six males in the United States will experience some form of sexual abuse prior to the age of 18.



are often desperate attempts to regulate emotions that are frightening and overwhelming, defying the survivor's attempts to control them. This has led to a far greater awareness of the need in therapy to assist clients in learning how to ground themselves and find a sense of safety and stability, not only in the therapy room, but also in their lives outside the office as well. When we reflect back to the 1970s and the focus on interventions promoting abreaction and catharsis, as if somehow having clients continue to re-experience their trauma would be healing, we get an idea of how much greater our knowledge base is—and how significantly sensitive our therapeutic approach has become.

Over the decades, we have also seen many attempts at quick fixes for complex issues. I suspect some of this reflex is due to compassion in the therapists who see clients with a grievous history of chronic abuse and continue to suffer as adults, often finding treatment to be long, hard and painful. It seems unjust, and understandably so. Why should healing be so painful? I do not know. I *do* know it is also true in the physical realm, as anyone who has had surgery can confirm. I also know that healing of any kind in this fallen world of ours defies the odds and is a battle that, if derailed or avoided, will prevent the sufferer from true recovery. Years of lies, abuse, betrayal, shame and crushing cannot be fixed with a quick technique, as much as we might long for that to be the case. When we consider our own struggles with bad habits and thought patterns, which by comparison are small in scope, we know this is so. Techniques can bring wonderful relief; they should be used ethically and well—but quick fixes in the realm of deep suffering are generally not available.

Sitting with our clients who have already suffered deeply over time, and watching them as they work through their histories, requires more than compassion, though that is needed in great supply. It means recognizing and acknowledging the grave impact of evil, its hold, and its tentacles. It means a willingness to stay with the victim as long as it takes to face down the perpetrators who continue to ravage a life. It means hoping for others when they are hopeless, facing truths no one wants to face, reaching out a hand when the crises hit yet again, and trusting there is redemption for each life in front of us no matter the history. It

means tending to ourselves and our own desires to flee—into quick fixes, techniques, silence, numbness and hopelessness. It means for the sake of those we sit with, holding to ethical guidelines no matter the emotional temptation to cross them. It means studying and staying current on the research and available skills that might assist us as we come alongside others. It means having the humility to say we do not know or cannot yet see but are willing to be taught by the broken souls in front of us who have been brought to teach us as much as we have been brought to teach them.

A final area of concern that has become apparent in more recent years is the role of institutions in the occurrence of sexual abuse, the protection of perpetrators, and the defense of systems over human beings. We have seen this in churches, schools, the military community, children's organizations, missions and families. Sadly, institutions and systems are too easily held sacred, while the lives of victims, created in the image of God, are not. As we sit with clients and hear their stories, we realize the threads reach back into so-called Christian systems that abandoned them, blamed them, or ignored them. We are heartbroken, stunned and often angry.

Such realizations can lead to great hopelessness and a twisted anger. On the other hand, they can lead us as counselors to speak, teach and advocate—not just for those who were, and are, being abused, but also for the name of Jesus Christ. It is His name that is trashed along with the victims when such things are either done in that name or ignored to “protect” it. So speak counselors... not in rage, but for love of Christ and His church and children. Study; learn; practice ethically; wait patiently with the suffering; dwell deep in the truths of our Redeemer; and speak to His people with boldness, love and humility so that His church may, indeed, be an instrument of healing in this dark world and a sanctuary like none other as it reflects the God who is our refuge. ✦



DIANE LANGBERG, PH.D., *chairs the AACC's Executive Board and is a licensed psychologist with Diane Langberg & Associates in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. She is also the author of Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse and On the*

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adultery

a marital Gethsemane

adultery is epidemic today. Many online surveys suggest rates of 50-60% with rapidly diminishing differences between men and women. In one survey, 68% of female respondents said they would have an affair if they thought they would not get caught. Forty percent of Christian marriages experience adultery by the time one of the spouses has reached the age of 40.

When a professional association of family law specialists identifies adultery as the single greatest contributor to divorce, and the American Association of Marital and Family Therapists calls adultery the most difficult of spousal issues to treat, the situation appears almost hopeless. Not true. Affairs come in different classes, show up at predictable times, take place in specific age groups, develop in foreseeable ways and are all based on a single substance: infatuation. This is solvable—and answers to the following questions will provide much-needed protection.

Are affairs more frequent today than in the past? If so, why?

Much of the current research focuses on frequency rates, but those numbers have only been around for 20 years or so. Adultery has been an issue since Old Testament times. However, there *are* current cultural practices which will continue to escalate rates of adultery: 1) men and women spend more time together doing a wider variety of activities; 2) the delayed age of marriage and the increasing practice of cohabitation prior to marriage; 3) an injured person's ability

to trust when coming from a family history of divorce; 4) the inability to delay gratification and tolerate unhappiness (as evidenced by the increasing use of alcohol, prescription medications, street drugs, and even extreme sports); 5) the far-reaching effects of childhood sexual abuse; and 6) the Internet (more about that later).

When do affairs happen?

The single most frequent time period for first-time adultery in America occurs within the nine months of a couple's pregnancy and the first year after delivery of the child. Every parent understands this. Pregnancy can create nausea, changes body shape, contributes to extreme fatigue, adds new responsibilities both financially and behaviorally, provokes hormonal variations and changes emotional focus. Oxytocin levels (often called the "bonding hormone" and in the same family as the street drug, "Ecstasy") are never higher in women than when they are nursing a newborn child. Emotionally satisfied and bonding with their newborns, it can be easy for wives to forget their "hobbies."

Most first-time sexual betrayals are all about meeting two distinct needs—comfort and distraction—and pregnancy can add to this vulnerability. In one large study of males, 75% of

DAVE CARDER



FORTY PERCENT OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES EXPERIENCE ADULTERY BY THE TIME ONE OF THE SPOUSES HAS REACHED THE AGE OF 40.





first-time infidelities occurred between the ages of 31 and 40. When reflecting on family life during this decade, it is easy to spot vulnerabilities stemming from transition and recovery after college/graduate school, getting established in a career, paying off student loans, starting a family, moving to a single income, working long hours, children consuming family and marital resources, etc. Life can be difficult at this juncture, especially when compared to adolescence.

What are the differences between affairs and pornography use?

Betrayal of trust comes in three forms: 1) visual betrayal as pornography, 2) sexual betrayal as adultery, and 3) affective betrayal as emotional infidelity, all of which create similar feelings within the betrayed spouse and require a comparable recovery process.

Though some suggest the impact of pornography use is less than that of actual adultery, most would say the emotional effect on marriage is similar in both kind and intensity of pain. Its use creates shame feelings of “not being enough” *for* your spouse or *of* a spouse... or “not being with you” during lovemaking (as they recall pornographic images to enhance their own sexual pleasure).

A primary distinction between the two lies in the recovery processes: sobriety from pornography use must be achieved *prior* to starting couple’s therapy, while in affair recovery, separation from the girlfriend/boyfriend occurs *simultaneously* with the couple’s therapy. This is because the history of a pornography addiction is usually in place prior to the marriage, while affairs can happen as a result of poor marital interactions.

What about opposite sex friendships?

In the one large study referred to earlier, 50% of first-time adulteries by men occurred with a “friend.” Emotional infidelity often starts as a simple, platonic friendship, but moves to betrayal when three criteria are met:

- The relationship becomes a mood-altering experience (i.e., one’s mood changes with a text from the other party; when hearing his/her voice; when anticipating seeing him/her at church, work, the gym, etc.).
- The conversational topics move from professional to personal, from “outside” to “inside.”
- The depth of the relationship, or even the simple attraction, is hidden from the spouse knowing it would cause distress and injury to the marriage.

How do affairs get started, especially in a Christian environment?

Consider some factors already mentioned—the need for comfort and distraction, age risk, cultural factors... then plug in some genuine appreciation for the other party, add more admiration, provide a little attention or accommodation to their needs and desires, change the conversation to what is going on within each of you—and infatuation begins to grow.

When two people share a similar heart’s desire, job, focus, vision or ministry that they might not share with their spouses, they are already in a high-risk category. This does not mean they must leave the shared experience, but should be extra cautious and report this emotional attraction to their spouses.

In this culture where men and women do everything together, it is common to develop an attraction for someone else. These attractions can be quickly disarmed if the marriage has a mutual agreement that allows both spouses to bring up these issues without getting angry at each other, and with a commitment to learn what might be missing in the marriage as illustrated by the attraction.

What about old girlfriends/boyfriends on Facebook, Classmates.com, etc.

Clinically, it appears that the fastest growing threat to marriages occurs when a spouse reconnects, often quite innocently, with an old girlfriend or boyfriend.

Remember infatuation? Those first love experiences are powerful. In marriage, one has to focus on others; in adolescence, you only focused on yourself. However, if you stay in touch with that old girlfriend/boyfriend for 30 days, you might become confused about your marriage. You may wonder if you married the wrong person, simply because that old infatuation gets stirred up (even if the person has gained 50 pounds and looks nothing like the knockout you used to

know). If you stay in touch for an additional 30 days, you may find yourself talking about ways to meet for sex. Zero to 60—and you have committed adultery.

What should a couple do if they find their marriage experiencing an infidelity?

Recovery in any type of infidelity will probably require some assistance. If a spouse is involved in compulsive sexual acting out, he or she will need to become sober first. This kind of behavior is not about the marriage or the spouse; it commonly comes from a wound that one spouse brought with him or her into the marriage. If the wound happened before the marriage (molestation, rape, pornography use, etc.), then that individual is responsible to “fix” it. The spouse did not cause it, cannot change it, and cannot cure it. To attempt couple’s therapy initially for this kind of acting out will typically not work.

What does forgiveness look like and how does one rebuild trust after betrayal?

This healing process must be completed whether or not the marriage survives and should follow a very distinct path. To the degree that a spouse can *forgive*, to that same level he or she can begin to rebuild *respect* for the other... and to the degree that respect can be rebuilt, a renewed sense of *trust* can follow... and when trust is once again present, the choice to rebuild *love* again exists.

Forgiveness is mandated; reconciliation is not. Forgiveness is free; reconciliation is earned. The secret of thorough forgiveness lies first in listing the details of the injury and, secondly, in identifying the emotional injuries at each step. People can only forgive what they know. They cannot forgive that which they are unaware.

Sometimes an individual’s history is so injured that the sexual betrayal, once it is discovered, is just more than the person can live with. So I say to my couples, “Don’t stay with a spouse out of duty or obligation after adultery.” That often creates a terrible marriage, one that your children will hate. We all want our spouses to desire us. Second, “Do not stay married if you feel your spouse can’t forgive you.” That, too, makes your children hate the marriage modeling they received.

Adultery fractures marriages, but with forgiveness, respect, trust and love, a couple can create what they have always wanted. Jesus said, “... the person who is forgiven much, loves much” (Luke 7:36-50). ✨



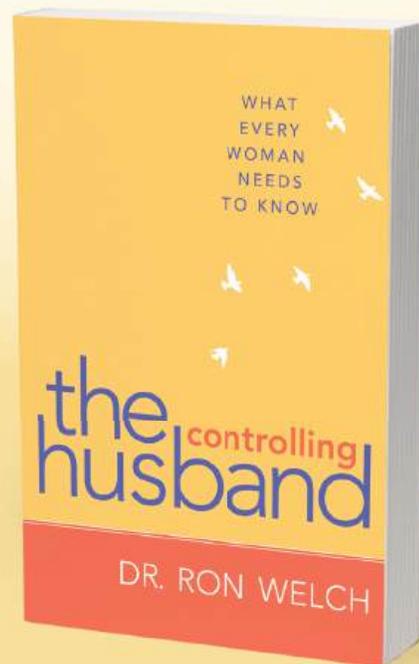
DAVE CARDER, M.A., has served as Pastor of Counseling Ministries at the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton (California) for more than 25 years. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, specializing in adultery prevention and healing, and the best-selling author of *Torn Asunder: Recovering from an Extramarital Affair*.

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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

when sex therapy is the next step

Sexual dilemmas have a way of perpetuating themselves. Tension regarding sex may persist long after the initial cause of the difficulty has passed. Disappointments tend to elicit anxiety, pressure, watching and evaluating, which interfere with the sexual process. Avoidance of sex due to fear of failure may fuel the problem and the sexual tension tends to invade the relationship.

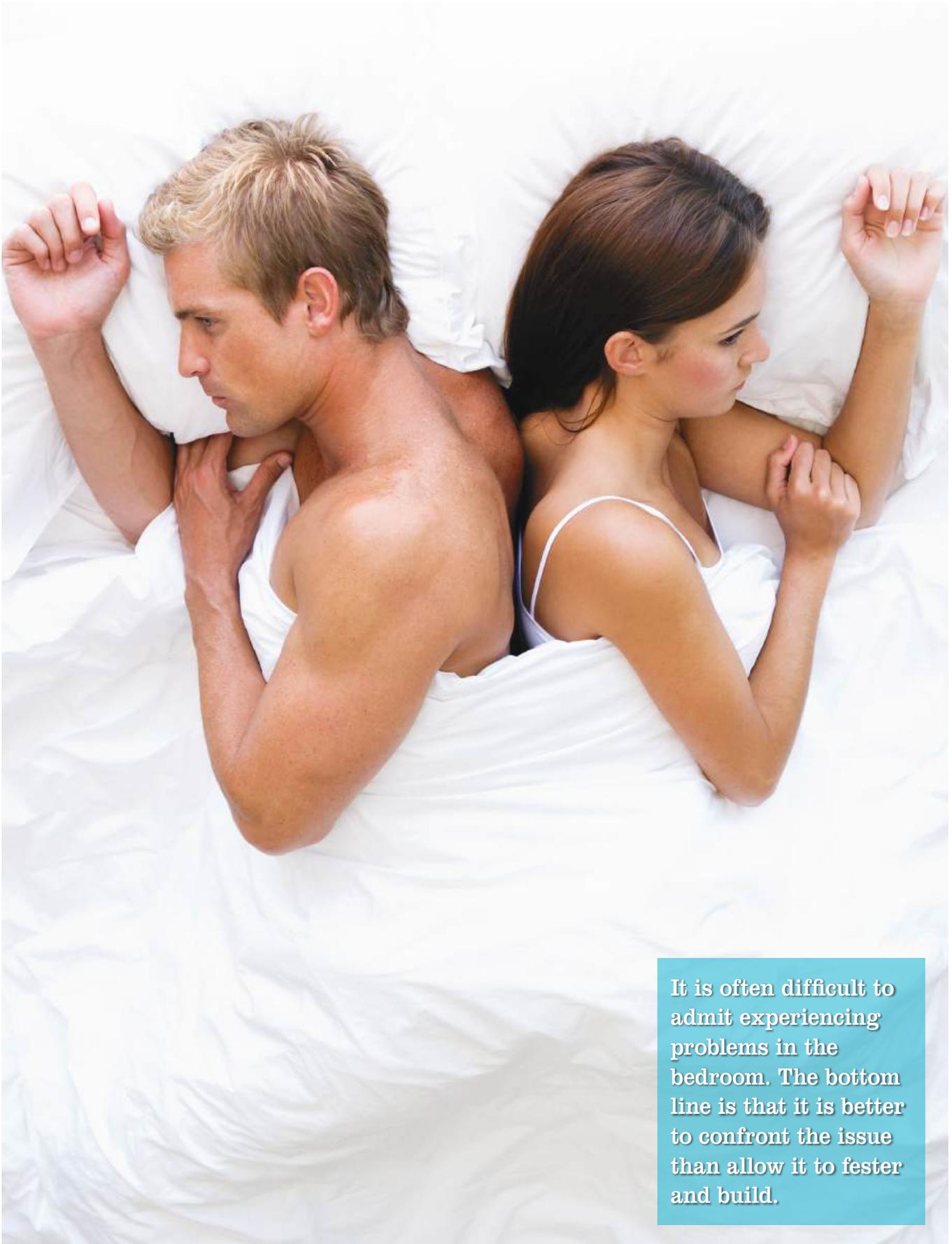
Sexual experiences need to be satisfying for both spouses to attain mutual delight. Sexual issues must be talked about and addressed in order to change patterns that are interfering with intimacy and establish a mutually satisfying sexual relationship. Couples need to find effective ways of communicating about their sex lives and learn to give and receive touch that is pleasurable to both.

For couples struggling sexually, it may be obvious they are having difficulty and need help.

CLIFFORD AND JOYCE PENNER

Nevertheless, for some, it may primarily be one spouse who is not satisfied with his or her sex life. It is often difficult to admit experiencing problems in the bedroom. The bottom line is that it is better to confront the issue than allow it to fester and build. However, a spouse can be helped to bring up the topic in a way that takes responsibility and does not blame the other. Once the reality of needed change is out in the open, the next question should target the best approach to find fulfillment.

Self-help may be effective. Couples might start by reading a book out loud together. It could be a book that addresses their specific sexual difficulty or it may be a general sexual manual, like our book, *The Gift of Sex*. Encourage couples to read a short section and then discuss the various points, taking turns sharing and reflecting on what they just read. What did each of them understand the text to say? How does that information connect with his or her experiences? Are there specific actions that could be suggested? It is important not to read simply to get through the book, but rather use the material as a “third person” to open discussion and application and make necessary changes in the couple’s sexual habits/patterns. The same process can be applied by watching an educational DVD like our *Magic & Mystery of Sex*. The third approach might be to attend a seminar together. Any of these tools might begin the process of needed change or make it clear that sexual therapy is the next step.



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The most common couple-related disorders are low sexual desire, differences in desire, and conflict about initiation and frequency of sex.

Many couples cannot solve sexual issues on their own. Sexual therapy is necessary and effective, but it can be scary. Couples may be fearful of what they might be asked to do. A spouse may be concerned about hurting the other with the information he or she will need to share... or that it will be difficult to talk explicitly about sexual behaviors, thoughts and feelings.

The sexual therapy process typically begins with gathering data about the individual's and couple's past and present situation, as well as defining their goals for outcome. The therapist's comfort with explicit sexuality often helps couples learn to talk with each other more freely. The therapist offers hope and guides couples through a process of sensate focus exercises (techniques to enhance interpersonal awareness) that they do in the privacy of their own homes or a hotel room. Demands are removed and new, positive patterns are acquired.

The most common couple-related disorders are low sexual desire, differences in desire, and conflict about initiation and frequency of sex. However, couples may struggle sexually

when any part of the sexual process is not working for one, or both, of them.

- Men are more likely than women to have problems with arousal—erectile dysfunction (ED)... difficulty getting or keeping erections. Medical evaluation will be the start to treatment since 85% of the time a physical factor is involved. Sexual therapy will be combined with pharmaceutical aids (Viagra, Cialis or Levitra).
- One, or both, may arrive with sexual inhibitions or differences in what he or she enjoys or believes should be enjoyed with each other in marriage. Many times, education relieves these tensions. For example, sharing scriptural teaching may free one, or both, to enjoy sexual pleasure with each other without restriction. Sometimes, the person's spiritual mentor may be a resource.
- Some couples have become so goal-oriented that they need help shifting from watching how they are responding and looking for results to losing themselves in the enjoyment of touching and being touched.

- Women who do not have orgasms and men who ejaculate too quickly often find help through sexual retraining—teaching their bodies to respond, if orgasmic inhibition is the difficulty, or to delay response, if premature ejaculation is the issue. Whether pursuing self-help or sexual therapy, they rule out all past ways of relating sexually and start with simple sensate focus exercises that move them toward release or control of release. Women need to learn to get active and men need to learn to remain passive, slow down, savor the sensations and ride the waves of arousal rather than rush toward the reflex of the orgasm.
- Delayed ejaculation for men (rare) requires a combined approach of behavioral, step-by-step overcoming of the inhibition of letting go (detailed in our books, *Restoring the Pleasure* and *Counseling for Sexual Disorders*) with some psychodynamic understanding of the fear of being out of control with a woman.
- Genital pain, though typically experienced by only one spouse, is also an issue for some couples. The most common cause is female vaginismus—a tightening of the pelvic floor muscles that prevent entry or cause extremely painful entry of the penis into the vagina. Treatment includes sexual therapy accompanied with pelvic floor physical therapy and/or the use of vaginal dilators. Support groups are very helpful.

Individual disorders are those that one spouse brings into the relationship and may need to be addressed before pursuing couple sexual therapy.

- A person who has been abused sexually, physically or emotionally may have intense sexual interest before or outside of marriage, but shuts down sexually shortly after marriage. He or she will need to address the trauma before, or concurrently with, couple sex therapy.
- A person raised in an alcoholic or emotionally out-of-control home often reports intense resistance to getting into a sexual experience in marriage. Once he or she gives in and allows sexual stimulation, arousal and orgasm happen quickly, which are frightening and cause immediate resistance. Understanding this pattern and recognizing the fear of, and resistance to, being out of control is the precursor to the therapy that is necessary for the person to get to the place where he or she can *decide* to be sexual and take charge by scheduling sexual activities and preparing to make sex the best it can be given the situation. Some of the American Counseling Association's literature and approaches may be helpful.
- Sexual addictions—the use of pornography, voyeurism, sadism, masochism and others—are first treated with sexual addiction therapy and then in a couple relationship with sexual therapy. Since sexual addictions are related to an intimacy disorder, the person needs to develop his or

her capacity for intimacy with the spouse once the addiction is under control.

The Sexual Therapy Protocol is detailed for counselors in our book, *Counseling for Sexual Disorders*, and as Sexual Retraining for self-help for couples in our book, *Restoring the Pleasure*.

Sexual therapy begins with a comfortable, qualified therapist who uses a well-defined system of assessment that provides structure for gathering the data, as well as the framework for the feedback of what each spouse brought to the situation and how each participates in keeping it going.

The goals of the therapy or self-help are to: 1) distract from anxiety; 2) remove demand; 3) eliminate negatives; 4) build new patterns that are mutually fulfilling; and 5) insure positive attitudes and anticipation of sexual times together.

The tools for the Sexual Therapy/Retraining Process include *touching* (sensate focus—learning to give and receive pleasure without focus on the results), *teaching* (education about God's affirmation of our individual sexuality and sex in marriage; male-female differences; the process of becoming one emotionally and spiritually; and the physiological sexual response cycle), and *talking* (effective communication and active listening skills) exercises that start simply and move gradually toward more involvement. This progression is detailed further in our training materials. However, the keys to success still include the following core principles when working with couples:

- Treatment guidelines that are clear and specific
- A fully-engaged and proactive approach during counseling sessions
- Effective data gathering regarding homework assignments (creating a detailed feedback loop with insights and observations)
- Recognition and management of personal idiosyncrasies and/or relational issues

Whether couples pursue change in their sexual relationships early on or as a later strategy in addressing sexual disorders, the rewards are well worth the effort. ✦



CLIFFORD PENNER, PH.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist, and JOYCE PENNER, M.N., R.N., is a clinical nurse specialist. They are educators, authors and pioneers in sexual therapy. Together, they work

as a team counseling individuals and couples on human sexuality, teaching sex education to pre-teens and parents, leading sexual enhancement weekends for couples, speaking and lecturing at women's and men's groups and universities, and training fellow professionals.

FALLING IN LOVE, STAYING IN LOVE

how to keep romance alive

One of the most difficult parts of marriage is staying in love and keeping romance alive over the years. Having logged more than five decades together, we can tell you it is hard work, but not impossible—especially if you have the stubborn determination to stay romantically connected throughout the marriage. If you ignore your love life at any stage, your relationship can become stale, boring and anything but romantic. Before you know it, you may be thinking, “What happened? Where did the romance, fun and intimacy go?”

While most couples seeking help come to counselors for other reasons, researchers Scott Stanley and Howard Markman [PREP] found that fun and friendship are key indicators of how couples were doing across the board. If husbands and wives are not friends, their relationships are probably low on romance. Consider some of the common reasons couples lose their romantic connection.

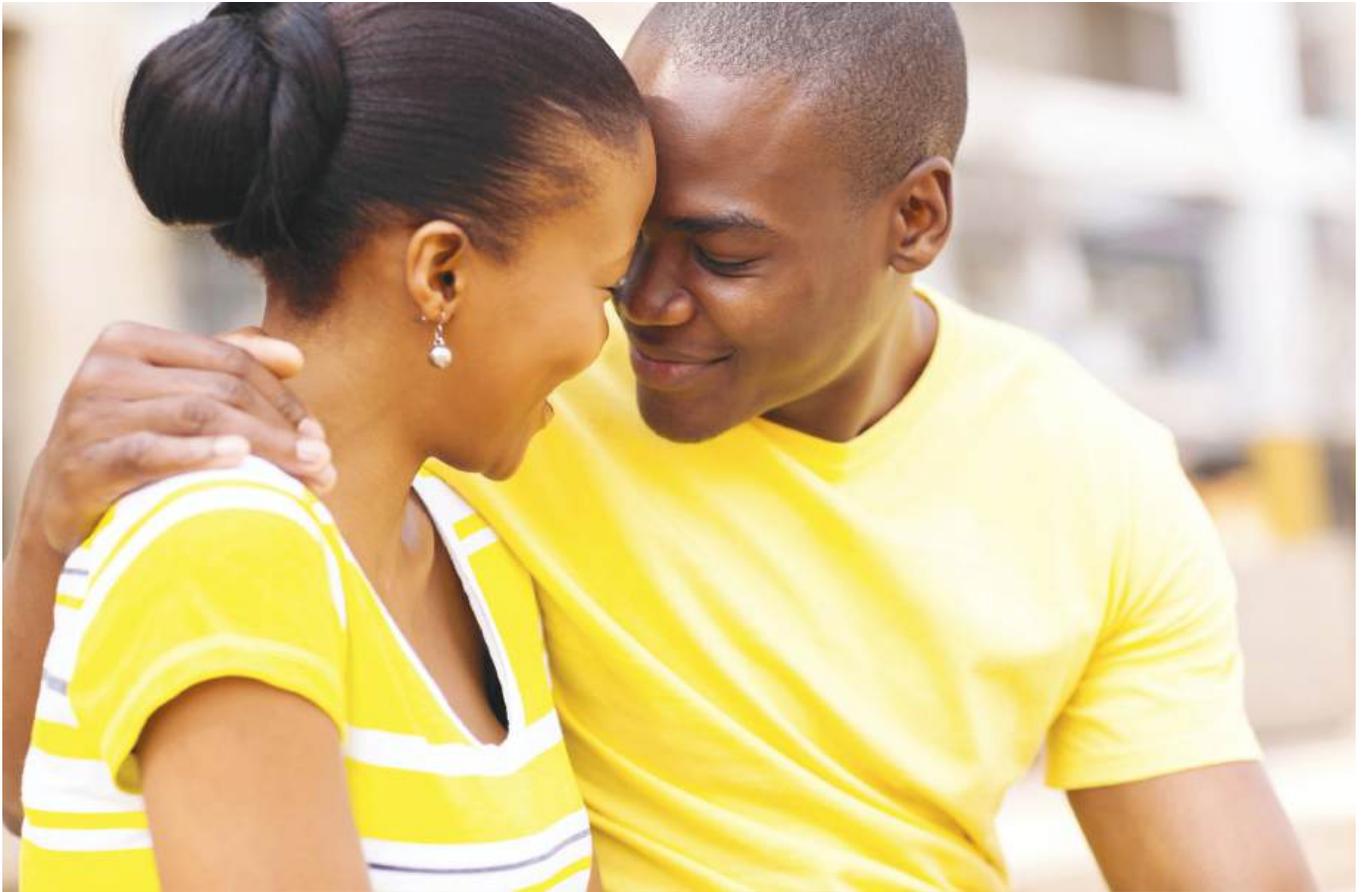
The Marital Drift

We married while in college and knew zilch about marriage or how to build a creative love life. Soon we discovered that “romance, intimacy and great sex” did not come with our marriage license. About the time we were finally getting it all together, the children starting arriving. Like many new parents, we found the early parenting years challenging. Stress, lack of time (and effort), exhaustion, and unresolved conflict can all lead to the loss of emotional connectedness. The parenting role takes center stage. Couples

stop touching. Life happens. Romance and intimacy fade.

The second and third decades of marriage bring even more challenges. In the middle of building careers and parenting kids—who now may be entering the adolescent years—the enemy, called boredom, creeps in. Couples need to guard against “adventure lust.” Affairs usually do not happen overnight, but spouses who are tired, isolated, and romantically starved can become vulnerable. You probably have clients knocking on your door in crisis asking, “Can we repair our marriage?” and, if so, “How can we get back intimacy and romance?” An important starting point as the counselor and/or coach might be to help couples understand what nurtures love and romance.

DAVID AND CLAUDIA ARP





The Love Connection Checkup

Helping couples keep romance alive is about far more than sex. Consider the following necessary components for a long-term romantic love life. We suggest having couples rate themselves in these six areas on a scale of one to five: one being “we’re just hanging on” to five being “doing well here.” (The higher the number, the greater potential for romance.)

1. Trust: Feeling safe with each other.

Trust is essential for the health of any marriage. It is important to feel safe with your spouse. When trust is broken, a quick repair is critical. Keeping short accounts with one’s spouse, as with the Lord, will restore and rebuild trust. 1 Peter 4:8 reminds us to “... love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

2. Mutuality: Freely choosing to love each other. In Genesis 2:24, we are to leave and cleave to each other. Choosing a soul mate above all others involves a mutual willingness to grow together and adapt to one another’s changing needs over the years.

3. Honesty: Communicating your true feelings. Truthfully sharing your feelings, needs, and desires (without attempts to manipulate) will help your love grow and bloom. Remember to “... speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

4. Intimacy: Knowing and being known. It is the intangible quality of unity, understanding, and synergy that moves two people from being acquaintances or friends to lovers and soul mates.

5. Sensuality: Giving pleasure. Sensuality involves touching, holding hands, hugging and caressing in pleasurable ways. Touching is a major avenue of connection and bonding.

6. Sex: Joining together physically. Sex is a wonderful gift from God. Proverbs 5:18-19 encourages spouses to indulge in sexual pleasure: “As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.” One of the most romantic books we have read is the Song of Solomon. This is a great assignment for romantically-challenged couples.

When couples are doing well in these six areas, romance, intimacy and fun should follow. A multi-faceted love life actually adds stability to a marriage. Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee emphasize the importance of sex in



their book, *The Good Marriage*. “In a good marriage, sex and love are inseparable. Sex serves a very serious function in maintaining both the quality and stability of the relationship, replenishing emotional reserves, and strengthening the marital bond” (p. 192).

Jump-start Romance

Here are some suggestions for helping couples jump-start romance:

- **Work at overcoming obstacles.** We asked a friend how she keeps romance alive and she immediately replied, “Live in two countries.” (She and her husband temporarily have jobs in two countries and are forever having to overcome obstacles to be together.) We are not suggesting something so drastic, but all couples—especially parents of young children—need to look for ways to overcome the obstacles life throws at them and spend quality time together. The harder you work at this, the more precious that time together will become.

- **Step out of the comfort zone.** Do the unexpected—be a bit more mysterious and add some intrigue. Do something totally out of character. Esther Perel, writes in her book, *Dating in Captivity*, about “erotic intelligence” and encourages couples to cultivate playfulness, curiosity, and even a bit of drama, which can lead to anticipation and being more erotic and romantic with each other.

- **Work at being more sensual.** Encourage couples to touch, but in ways that are not overtly connected with sex. Non-demand touching stirs up the oxytocin and dopamine, important hormones connected with the sex drive. Try a 10-second kiss and 20-second hug.

- **Have great dates.** Okay, we confess, we saved this for last, as it is our favorite way to jump-start romance. Dating can definitely add to the romance!

Have Great Dates!

For more than 30 years, we have utilized the dating concept to teach marriage skills and strengthen marital bonds (for a variety of dating resources, visit 10greatdates.org). Here is why we stress dating. Couples may be learning skills galore, but to make progress they need some air, fun, and romance. The following are a few of our favorite romance-enhancing dates you can use as assignments.

- **Massage-for-two Date.** Read a book together on how to give a massage and then practice on each other.

- **Pick-up Date.** Meet at a lovely hotel or favorite night spot. Flirt

with each other and introduce yourselves all over again.

- **Kidnap Date.** Plan an overnight getaway, dinner out, or even a one or two-hour surprise date. Consider anything you think your partner would like and then surprise your spouse.

- **Dream Vacation Date.** Go online together and plan your ultimate romantic vacation.

- **Proposal Date.** Go to a public place and ask your mate to marry you all over again.

Romance is for a Lifetime!

When we are proactive, romance and passion can last through the years. Take it from our friends, Dave and Jeanne, who have been married for more than 60 years. “*Romance doesn’t have to die out,*” said Dave. “*It can grow and blossom through all the years. God designed man and woman to enjoy each other in marriage, and we find that enjoyment still growing even after 60 years of marriage.*”

Go Dave and Jeanne, you are our role models! Now, here is our challenge to you: As counselors, coaches and mentors, it is your time to model what a loving, fun and romantic relationship looks like. Ready? Set? Go fun! Go romance! ✨



DAVID ARP, MSW, and CLAUDIA ARP, B.S., are the founders of *Marriage Alive*, best-selling authors, seminar leaders and creators of the popular *10 Great Dates*®

programs. Their numerous books include the Gold Medallion award-winning *Second Half of Marriage*, and their recently released, *10 Great Dates: Connecting Faith, Love and Marriage*, co-authored with Peter and Heather Larson. Visit them at 10greatdates.org.

Sex: So Good... So Harmful

I think it was late in 1999 or early 2000 when I was invited to write a small piece for the *Soul Care Bible*, where Dr. Tim Clinton acted as executive editor, and the AACC published it along with Thomas Nelson. That Bible has been a great help to me through the years, and was particularly helpful in writing this column. What will not come as much of a shock is that you do not have to look very far to see that sex is not only used as an advertising/selling tool, but also as the focus for most television sitcoms, movies, and magazine covers. It has become so much so that we scarcely notice it anymore. That is dangerous because it becomes almost subliminal. In other words, we are influenced by the subtle, and not so subtle, use of sex in nearly every aspect of daily life. Unfortunately, the world has a much different view of the subject than the Word of God. I will attempt to follow the guidance of Scripture as I work through this surprisingly difficult subject.

When Sex is Beautiful

Honestly, I do not read the Song of Solomon very often. It is not that I blush when I do—well maybe—but the wording can be a bit intimidating. I do know that as I read the words of God's anointed one, it makes it very plain that His idea of sexual intimacy is marital love. (Now that becomes a problem because, even in the Church, cohabitation before marriage seems to be very common.) When you eavesdrop on the language of The Song, you view two people very much in love expressing that love unashamedly. Honestly, I almost get embarrassed tuning in to their conversation. As you read the words of the two... you hear commitment, honesty, passion, desire and, yes, sexual attraction. That is the essence of married love. "Set me as a



seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death..." (Song of Solomon 8:6, NKJV).

As we think about marital intimacy, we see a positive kind of jealousy developing. The idea that we have committed to another for a lifetime is a wonderful concept but, unfortunately, that is not the outcome for almost half the marriages consummated. Yet, the union of man and woman is meant to be for a lifetime. "When we seek to meet our spouse's needs with delight, we help deepen sexual intimacy within marriage. Enjoy your spouse [respect] as a great gift from God" (*The Soul Care Bible*, p. 871). To me, this principle becomes the greatest defense for the wandering eye and the advances of the soft shoulder. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4, NKJV). Just as our Lord has said to each of us, "I will never leave you or forsake you..." we must be willing to constantly renew and re-establish that trust in one another.

The marriage bed becomes uncomfortable when we find ourselves discontented, envious and thoughtless where

the other is concerned. I have officiated at hundreds of weddings. In preparation for those events during premarital counseling, I could almost predict whose marriages would be successful and whose would not. How? Just the way they treated one another. The way they looked at one another. The way they considered one another's opinions. How they showed interest in learning more about what they were about to do. The one detail I shared with every couple: having sex is not to be a selfish act. It is to be respectful, patient and loving. It is God's gift to each of them. Sex is not just a physical act; it is an experience of "becoming one flesh" (1 Corinthians 6:16). A holy union. The world does not understand this concept. That is why the idea, and the use of sex for so many, has become perverted and ugly.

When Sex is Sinful

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he warned, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... Flee sexual immorality... he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ... your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who

is in you...” (1 Corinthians 6:15, 18, 19). One of the reasons he wrote those words was because the Church, at that time, did not object to premarital sex. The other reason was his desire for the Church to be pure. He knew an unholy church could never become an effective church... neither can a perverse world ever become a blessing to a loving God.

To the young Thessalonian Church, Paul noted, “... you should abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thessalonians 4:3, NKJV); to the Colossians, he advised, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5, NKJV); and to the Ephesians, he challenged, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity... these are improper for God’s holy people” (Ephesians 5:3, NIV).

Do you remember what Paul proposed for everyone as a defense against those things that would so easily entangle us? “Therefore be imitators of God...” (Ephesians 5:1, NKJV). That is it! Get rid of those things that can destroy the love for your husband or wife, or even God Himself. Seek to be like God. Stay away from unholy influences. If you have a weakness in some area, do what you can to isolate that festering sore and find healing in a stronger relationship with your spouse and your Savior. Get counsel from a trusted source. Whatever you do, please do not become another tragic statistic. When is sex sinful? When it is contrary to God’s holy and beautiful desires for His children. He wants the best for you, not an airbrushed, counterfeit experience of selfish pleasure. “... husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...” (Ephesians 5:28, NIV).

During my teenage years, my dad, who was a very well-respected church leader, had a misadventure with a lady who worked for him. For years he saw no harm in his actions until, one day, his transgression surfaced and he forfeited

everything, including his family. As an only child, I, along with my mom, suffered great loss and heartbreak. That pain for me exists to this day. I was not involved in his sexual sin, but still suffer the consequences. Our sins are never in solitude. Like ripples in a stream, they are far reaching... especially to those who love us most.

“... Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22, NIV). ✠



REV. H.B. LONDON, JR., D.D., has served 32 years in pastoral ministry—20 as Pastor to Pastors with Focus on the Family. H.B. and his wife, Beverley, are now “retired” and live in LaQuinta, California, where he continues his ministry to the clergy through H.B. London Ministries (hblondon.org). Focus on the Family has conferred on H.B. the title of Pastor to Pastors Emeritus.

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A Living Parable: The Message of Rwanda



When our God was here in the flesh, one of the things He did was teach through parables. He used the method of story or verbal pictures to invite humans with hard hearts and blind eyes to look again. Jesus longed for people to answer the invitation in the picture.

I am not certain why it took me so long, but somewhere along the way I realized that parables are God's perpetual method. He has never ceased to use pictures to woo slow, blind sheep. There have been many such images in my work and travels by which I have been lured into the heart of our God. Rwanda is one of those.

I returned to Rwanda for my sixth trip, along with six colleagues—a long-term dream that came to fruition.

We were there to teach trainers at a three-day conference—building on the foundation of previous trainings. You may recall that Rwanda was the place of a 100-day genocide in 1994, where nearly one million people were slaughtered with machetes and nail studded clubs. The killing was done in schools, homes, churches, along the roads, and anywhere else you can imagine. It took place at the hands of neighbors, friends and fellow church members. People ran into churches hoping for sanctuary and were killed inside by the thousands—10 in one, 15,000 in another, and so on.

It has been 20 years since those tragedies occurred while the world watched and did nothing. Needless to say, Rwanda is a traumatized country. It also has very few citizens with any

academic or professional counselor training, and those who have some level of training are genocide victims themselves—some having lost 40, 60, and in one case, 102 family members to the machete. We go to train and bring resources—books, videos and publications—and are privileged to know them, hear their stories and strengthen their good work. These counselors are the frontline caregivers for others who have been profoundly traumatized. So, how is such a country—physically stunning, but carrying the wounds of brutality—a parable?

Many visited Rwanda years ago before the genocide, saw its stunning beauty and thousand green hills, and called it Eden. Eden—all Edens—was destroyed by people... people like us, people who divided the world into “them” and “us.” People who called those who were “them,” names—cockroaches they said in Rwanda. Individuals who nursed resentments about “them”—“those cockroaches; they had more land, more cows, more power.” Resentments were nursed and became hate—killing another in your heart. That hatred was fed politically, economically and ethnically... even by teachers, pastors and priests. It is not a big jump, then, for someone to say, “If we get rid of the cockroaches, we will all be better off. It will be good for us and good for Rwanda.” That is exactly what they did—they exterminated their own citizens who they no longer saw as people created in the image of God but, rather, insects infecting the land. The scope and intimacy of the brutality lead us to think that atrocities, such as killing one's neighbors or students or parishioners, are far removed from us.

Pause now... look at the picture with me—the picture I have seen, studied and heard for the past eight

years. Have we ever divided the world of humans created in the image of God into them and us? Politically, racially, denominationally? I think the answer is, “yes.” We do it to each other... to fellow church members. It occurs between parents and children and between spouses. “They” are wrong, or stupid or bad or less than—cockroaches—then we justify slaughtering them with our thoughts and words. We even use spiritual things to do so—oh, we do not use iron crosses from altars like the Rwandans did—we use Scripture verses or doctrine to chop instead.

I have come to love Rwanda. It is a privilege to teach and train fellow believers and caregivers, and to learn from them as well. It is also a painful place. Genocide, rape and orphan stories are hard to bear. Nevertheless, Rwanda has taught me several precious lessons through many wonderful people—eternal lessons that are changing me. This is one of them—look at the parable and answer its invitation to see:

- Sin is a frightful, deforming, corrupting poison and so-called little resentments, little criticisms, and little acts of impurity carry in them the tsunami of genocide and death. We think they are little or no one is really hurt by them. God says sin leads to death—yet, we do not think the same about our own transgressions. God would have us see the picture and not be deceived. He says the little sins with which we are comfortable carry the same poison that was in the hearts of those who swung machetes and iron crosses in Rwanda.
- God Himself is the ultimate parable—the Word made flesh—made into a living picture. And that parable, like Rwanda, makes clear that His response to a groaning creation, a corrupted Eden—both in our hearts and all around us—is to call us as His body to sit down, dwell among those who groan, and look like Him in that place. You see,

Rwanda has taught me that there is no them, only us—cockroaches every last one of us. However, although we are cockroaches, we are still loved and pursued by our God who perpetually gives us pictures so we might see Him and then be like Him, offering, as He did, a picture in the flesh in this world—His world—that He so loves. ✠



DIANE LANGBERG, PH.D., chairs AACC's Executive Board and is a licensed psychologist with Diane Langberg & Associates in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. She is also the author of *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* and *On the Threshold of Hope*.



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My Grandmother Wouldn't Talk about Sex

I don't think my grandmother believed in sex. She was raised in an ultra-fundamentalist tidal pool of Christianity that seemed to believe if something felt good, it must be "of the devil." Sex, therefore, was his greatest invention. How she and my grandfather had five children remains an unsolved family mystery.

In her church world, a self-respecting person would not even utter the s-word. And when a married lady did happen to find herself in a maternal way, the polite thing was to disappear from sight as soon as there were any signs that might provoke questions from children.

Thankfully, for me, her views on sex were not passed along with the generational torch. In fact, when my wife, Regina, was pregnant with our second child (Jenna), daughter number one (Jesse) was following the whole developmental process—well most of it—through the pages of the beautiful little book, *A Child is Born*.¹

So you can imagine my grandmother's shock when her four-year-old great granddaughter announced the morning after her sister's birth, "I bet mommy is sure glad little Jenna is out of her belly." The shock turned to outrage as she said to my mother in a loud voice that startled poor Jesse, "Are you going to let her talk that way and get away with it?"

By my mom's report, Jesse's jaw dropped open and her eyes flashed bewilderment. She knew that she must have done something horrible, but had no clue as to what it was. Then, a thought occurred to her—an innocent childlike thought that should not have been turned into words. As the color returned to her little face, she said empathetically, "Nana, grandmother must still think that storks bring babies."

Grandmother disappeared into another room with two loud, "Humphs!"



For her, that was a double expletive.

Unfortunately, my grandmother's opinions on propriety were not limited to herself, to sex, or to her particular religious sect. I would guess that a significant percentage of the readers of this periodical (I am guessing 40%, but I know that 84.2% of statistics are just made up on the spot) grew up hearing sermons about the amazing alcohol-free wine that Jesus created from water. The poor pulpитеers not realizing they had just isogeted the deepest meaning out of the text... that Jesus' first miracle contained the theme for what He was about to do—change the content of earthen vessels by adding His spirit.

I would also guess that only a very small percentage (let's say 0.37%) of readers have heard a sermon on the Trinity where it was said the best metaphor to describe this mystery might well be a married couple conceiving a child while

having simultaneous orgasms. There were two who became one and then three, creating new life in the midst of joy. Relax, my grandmother is no longer around and I suspect by now she has been caught up to speed on all she missed.

The point is you do not have to be a flaming fundamentalist to have views of sex that can negatively impact both the reading of Scripture and spiritual lives. In fact, the way the Bible is written might cause a few liberal Episcopalians to blush. It is just sex, sex and more sex.

Jesus was born of a virgin—and that line alone has been creating awkward questions in children's church for almost 2,000 years. His first miracle is at a wedding feast and you barely get the page turned

in John's gospel before Jesus is talking about the salvation experience in terms of a baby pushing its way out of darkness into a whole new bright and shining world. And before He is done with the New Testament, He is describing the Church as a bride, Himself as the groom, and says, even as He is praying His high priestly prayer, that it is His desire for us to move toward union with the Trinity—"that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21, NIV).

Oh my, is there any surprise that through the centuries the devotion masters have described the experience of surrender to the love of God in sexual terms, using words such as *ecstasy*, being *ravished* by God, *merging* with God, and *union*? I found so much repressed material that I was able to write a book

built around describing our relationship with God in romantic terms and moving through phases of *conversation* and *communion* that crescendo in *consummation*.²

Frank Laubach, missionary to the Philippines in the early through mid-20th century, spent the second half of his life attempting to live in constant awareness and conversation with God. Listen to his description of intimacy with the divine that would make my grandmother walk out of a room. “Knowing God better and better is an achievement of friendship. When two persons fall in love, there may be such a strong feeling of fellowship; such a delight in the friend’s presence that one may lose oneself in the deepening discovery of another person. The self, the person and the love become equally real.”³

However, then he goes on to say things that would have gotten him

kicked out of her church. Therefore, there are three questions we may ask: “Do you believe in God?” That is not getting very far... even the demons believe and tremble. Second, “Are you acquainted with God?” We are acquainted with people with whom we have had some business dealings. Third, “Is God your friend?” or putting it another way, “Do you love God?”⁴

Yet, how do you love God? By doing things together. By becoming friends. By becoming inseparable. By developing a relationship in conversation that deepens into communion and, dare I say, consummation or union.

My grandmother did not have much to say about sex... nor intimacy, nor mystery, nor friendship with God. While I am pretty sure she knows better now, it is still quite a pity she missed out on all the romance. ✕



GARY W. MOON, M.DIV., PH.D., is the Executive Director of the Martin Family Institute for Christianity and Culture and the Dallas Willard Center for Christian

Spiritual Formation at Westmont College. He founded, with David G. Benner and Larry Crabb, *Conversations Journal*; directs the Renovaré Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation; and has authored several books. Gary still teaches at Richmond Graduate University when they let him.

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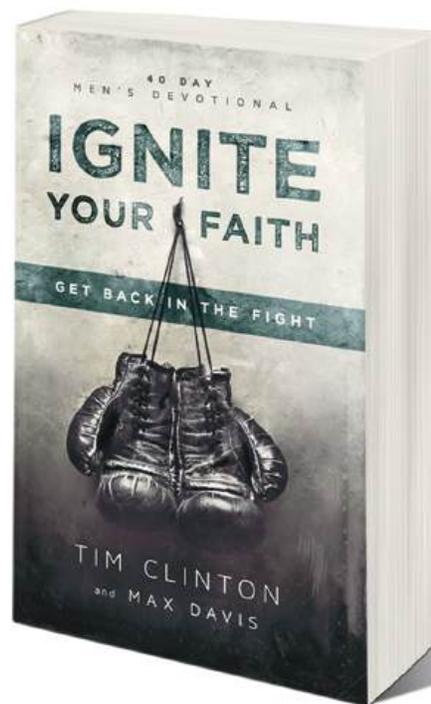
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- If you are in the middle of a battle, you will be **empowered** to keep fighting.
- If you are one punch away from going down, you will be **energized** to get back up.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tim Clinton, Ed.D., LMFT, is president of the nearly 50,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors and is Professor of Counseling and Executive Director of the Liberty University Center for Counseling and Family Studies. He is a popular speaker and author of several best-selling books.



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Genetically Informed Decision Making

The development of a treatment plan has traditionally involved a clinical decision based on data derived from the client's history, clinically-observable behaviors, collateral historians, lab results and psychometric testing. Improving the pool of quality data that can inform our decision making has been a historical challenge for psychiatry. Genetic investigations are now offering new data that may allow for more efficiency in pharmacotherapy decisions.

Genetics 101

DNA molecules are present in the nucleus of all human cells and resemble a spiral ladder with sugar/phosphate railings holding them together. The “steps” consist of DNA bases, or building blocks (thymine, guanine, adenine, and cytosine), that comprise the letters of genetic language. These letters pair off into words (codons) that are then grouped into sentences. These sentences are called genes, which direct the cells to make proteins (neurotransmitters) such as serotonin, dopamine, receptors, and reuptake pumps (transporters). And these genes are sequenced along threadlike strands that are “knitted” into a spiral rope that is tightly wound, packed and stored into chromosomes. The chromosomes exist in pairs so that each gene unit will have a copy (allele) on each chromosome pair. Humans have 22 pairs of chromosomes and one pair of gender specific chromosomes (X and/or Y).¹

Genes require activation in order to “express” their instructions to the cell. A variety of proteins will unravel the tightly bound rope a little so that “transcription factors” can read and “transcribe” the words on the genetic code. Mutations can occur in one, or both, copies (alleles) of a gene and lead



Genetic investigations are now offering new data that may allow for more efficiency in pharmacotherapy decisions.

to insertions, duplications or deletions of the genetic “words.” In addition, epigenetic variables (the study of heritable changes in gene activity) such as toxins, malnutrition, stress and viruses may affect the expression/transcription of the genetic material.²

Pharmacogenomics

This term refers to the study of how genes can affect responsiveness to a

medication by documenting pharmacokinetic and/or pharmacodynamic data. Pharmacokinetics is the study of the status of genes that determine the amount of enzymes that are available to metabolize (break down into usable form) a medication. A duplication mutation in the alleles can lead to increased enzyme activity and an ultra-rapid metabolizer status. A deletion in an allele site can predict slower

metabolism of medication (intermediate or poor metabolism). The faster the metabolism, the higher dosage the patient will require to receive therapeutic benefit. Slower metabolizers would risk more side effects as the medications accumulate in the bloodstream with normal dosing. The enzymes that are usually studied include cytochromes 2D6, 2C19 and 3A4—which are all involved in metabolizing a number of psychotropic medications.³

Pharmacodynamic studies document the status of genes that code for the synthesis of reuptake transporters or receptors. An example is the SLC6A4 serotonin gene. It can have a long arm allele or a short arm allele. The long arm is associated with normal levels of serotonin transporters. Thus, a serotonin stimulating antidepressant would have a better chance of working since the transporter is intact. Examples of

other pharmacodynamics sites are two enzymes: COMT, which may predict response to stimulants, and MTHFR, which may predict whether folic acid metabolism is normal enough for the brain to synthesize neurotransmitters.⁴

Relevance

The relevance of these tests to daily clinical decision making is rapidly evolving.⁵ They have the promise of making care more efficient by matching patients with pharmacological treatments that may work more effectively with fewer side effects.⁶ However, these tests can cost more than \$1,000.00 without insurance and do not directly diagnose what is being treated... yet.^{7,8} Thus, genetics can inform our decision making, but will not substitute for the greatest technology of all time—listening to our patients. ✖



MICHAEL R. LYLES, M.D., is an AACC Executive Board Member and is in private practice with Lyles & Crawford Clinical Consulting in Roswell, Georgia.

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“SOCE” Practice Update for Licensed Counselors

In June 2013, Exodus International, a prominent Christian ministry that helped people overcome homosexual behavior, announced it was closing its doors. Exodus President, Alan Chambers, issued an apology, in part, for promoting sexual orientation change efforts (“SOCE”) and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatized patients.¹

Russell D. Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, told *Baptist Press* that Exodus’ ending “doesn’t mean the folding of an evangelical sexual ethic, though it does mean a move away from a therapeutic model of sexual sanctification. Evangelical Christianity increasingly addresses sexual issues more in line with the older Christian tradition of sin and temptation and triumph than with the language of therapy.”² However, according to the National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), “... many individuals have reported therapy-assisted change in their sexual orientation, across a continuum of change....”³ Christian counselors are encouraged to keep abreast of the ethical and legal guidelines pertaining to SOCE that are relevant to their practices, as well as their state laws and regulations.

Counseling Organization Ethical Guidance

The American Counseling Association (ACA) and many major professional mental health organizations have cautioned their members against the use of therapies that seek to change sexual orientation. The ACA Ethics Committee, in its 2013 guidance titled, “Ethical Issues Related to Conversion or Reparative Therapy,” said, in part, “Research

does not support conversion therapy as an effective treatment modality... There is potential harm when clients participate in conversion therapy....”⁴

According to the American Association of Christian Counselors, “... the research regarding this treatment modality (reparative therapy) remains inconclusive and the AACC is not advocating for or against these protocols.”⁵ However, AACC advocates

for a client’s right to religious freedom and self-determination. The AACC’s revised 2014 Code of Ethics modifies the previous 2004 Code as it pertains to counseling on homosexual, bisexual and transgendered behavior:

Christian counselors refuse to condone or advocate for the pursuit or active involvement in homosexual, bisexual or transgendered behaviors and lifestyles. Counselors may agree



to and support the desire to work through issues of homosexual and transgendered identity and attractions, but will refuse to describe or reduce human identity and nature to sexual orientation or reference, and will encourage sexual celibacy or biblically-proscribed sexual behavior while such issues are being addressed. Counselors acknowledge the client's fundamental right to self-determination and further understand that deeply held religious values and beliefs may conflict with same-sex attraction and/or behavior, resulting in anxiety, depression, stress and inner turmoil.

In addition, the 2014 Code of Ethics requires a detailed discussion with clients regarding specific procedures, risks, and treatment alternatives, and a detailed written consent agreement for a number of stated controversial practices, including “engaging clients who are struggling with same-sex attraction.”

The Current Legal and Legislative Landscape

California: In 2013, California became the first state in the U.S. to prohibit mental health providers from engaging in SOCE with patients under the age of 18. SOCE is defined in California's new law, in part, as “... any practices by mental health providers that seek to change an individual's sexual orientation. This includes efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions, or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same sex.”⁶ SOCE does not include “psychotherapies that (a) provide acceptance, support, and understanding of clients or the facilitation of clients' coping, social support, and identity exploration and development, including sexual orientation-neutral interventions to prevent or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices; and (b) do not seek to change sexual orientation.”⁷

In August 2013, a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the legislation was constitutional as a regulation of professional conduct. The constitutionality of the legislation had been legally challenged in two separate lawsuits (*Pickup v. Brown* and *Welch v. Brown*). The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) is an organizational plaintiff in *Pickup v. Brown*. Liberty Counsel, counsel for plaintiffs in *Pickup v. Brown*, has asked the full Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to rehear the case.

New Jersey: In August 2013, Gov. Chris Christie signed into law a similar bill, A3371, which prohibits professional counselors from engaging in SOCE with persons under the age of 18. AACC joined three other plaintiffs in *King v. Christie* in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. The Court, in November 2013, rejected the constitutional challenge presented by the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs have appealed the decision. In November 2013, Liberty Counsel filed a separate suit in the U.S. District Court of New Jersey, Camden Division, on behalf of New Jersey parents who claim that constitutionally protected parental rights are violated by A3371. That suit, *Doe v. Christie*, is pending in the District Court.

Current Legislative Activity

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) has introduced a bill in the U.S. Congress that encourages states to take action to protect minors from SOCE. Bills prohibiting SOCE with minors by certain licensed professionals are also being reviewed by a number of legislative bodies in the U.S., including Washington, DC, Minnesota, Maryland, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Massachusetts. In the state of Washington, a bill has been introduced that would establish a work group to make recommendations on the practice of SOCE on people under 18 years of age by both

licensed mental health providers, as well as unlicensed practitioners. ✦

The information is current as of the date that it is written. This article is provided solely for general educational purposes and does not constitute legal advice between an attorney and a client. The law varies in different jurisdictions. Consultation with an attorney is recommended if you desire legal advice.



JOHN SANDY, J.D.,

M.A.B.C., M.S.J., is a licensed attorney in California and Illinois. He maintains a private legal practice in Riverside, California, where

he concentrates in church law, business law and legal issues relevant to professional and pastoral counseling. John is also an ordained minister, board certified Christian counselor, and board certified pastoral counselor. As a ministry partner of the California-based Inland Empire Southern Baptist Association, John provides pastoral counseling to individuals, couples and families, spiritual care to ministry leaders and their families, as well as workshops and consulting for churches on pastoral counseling and ministry administrative issues.

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Leader Sex

It is a call that I frequently receive from news organizations, television networks, etc. whenever a leader gets caught in a sexual scandal of some sort. Whether secular or Christian, it always seems to make the news. Why is this so?

There are a number of reasons... mostly having to do with the expectations we all have for our leaders. We want them to be people we can look up to and admire, but sometimes they let us down. However, there are also other reasons it makes the news—we do not think they would be vulnerable to such a fall, especially considering all they have been given in life. Yet, the truth is that leaders are often vulnerable for two major reasons.

First, whether or not leaders succumb to sexual temptation more than others is the subject of debate. Nevertheless, there is some truth that many of the wrong things that can motivate people to positions of leadership can also motivate them to pursue sexual conquests—the desire for power, grandiosity, seeking the idealized self, feelings of omnipotence and being above the rules, and a general sense that other people are only there to serve them. Regardless of their roles at work or in the bedroom, it typically registers the same—others exist primarily to serve their personal needs and wants. Said in another way, a lot of narcissistic people are attracted to leadership.

However, the second reason is the one that interests me the most as a consultant and evokes the most compassion. Not that we never want to show compassion to narcissistic leaders as well, but in my experience there is a more “innocent” group, if you will, that gives in to temptation. Please do not interpret this last statement as an excuse for them, or in condoning bad behavior. I just

happen to believe that when behavior is motivated out of *weakness* and *brokenness*, it is a little easier to feel compassion than when it is motivated out of arrogance and entitlement. I am not quite sure about the theology of all of that, but Jesus did seem to show more compassion to the woman caught in adultery than He did the power-hungry Pharisees.

So, broadly speaking, there are two camps of leaders who act out sexually. The first is the group of pushy, entitled narcissists, as mentioned. For them, since they have long since abandoned vulnerability as a path in life, treatment and help are always secondary to

enforcing strong limits and having them face the consequences through some tough discipline. That is not so much my focus here.

Instead, in this column, I would like to address why some leaders find themselves giving in to temptation out of fear, vulnerability, brokenness, pressure, etc.—*the weak versions*. Again, I am not offering excuses or condoning wrong and sinful choices; but bad behavior has a motive, and sometimes the leader seeks remedy for deficits on the inside that should be met in other ways. To name those deficits and motivators is to give leaders a focus on where they should be growing and attending to the brokenness inside in order to reduce temptation. For those who have fallen into bad behavior, it is important to address the “root causes.”

One comment about root causes before I get a lot of angry e-mails—I

understand the connection between temptation and our fallen sin nature. That is true of all humanity. Jesus is the only One with a divine nature who has perfectly resisted temptation.

Here is an important principle to keep in mind: *temptation is strongest in the areas of deficit, not strength*. The very temptation of Christ (Luke 4) is brought to Him after He has been deprived of everything human. He is in the desert, not eating or drinking, and devoid of human contact. Deprivation is the context where His perfection was proven. For humans, deprivation is the context that gives way to the greatest

Here is an important principle to keep in mind: **temptation is strongest in the areas of deficit, not strength.** ... The areas where they are deprived or needing health and strength are the ones that will motivate them to say “yes” to temptation.

vulnerability and the biggest falls. This is true for leaders, especially the non-narcissistic ones. The areas where they are deprived or needing health and strength are the ones that will motivate them to say “yes” to temptation.

So, what are the “need states” that motivate bad behavior? What are the growth areas that leaders should address? While there are many vulnerabilities that cause leaders to fall, here are four areas where great gains can be made with a little focus:

1. The need for connection.

Leaders often find themselves increasingly isolated and “lonely being at the top.” They feel like they carry burdens alone and, as a result, have no place to get relationally connected and supported. While they have people around, they are usually not transparent or vulnerable with them. As a result, sex is a perceived, but deceptive,

replacement for loneliness. When offered the comfort of physical intimacy, leaders may fall just looking for a sense of connection.

2. The need for freedom and autonomy. Leaders often do not have very good boundaries. Although they are supposed to be “in charge,” they find themselves feeling enslaved to the demands and expectations of others. They feel controlled by stakeholders when it comes to their power and appear anything but “free.” The power felt by sexual conquest often provides a moment’s freedom from all the demands that can dominate their world.

3. The need to be accepted with imperfections. Leaders are frequently idealized and feel the pressure to be perfect and have it “all together.” The margins for failure and forgiveness are small, and they are sometimes accused by someone of not being “good

enough.” Sex gives leaders strong relief from this pain, as well as the other hurts that are carried, and they may view the experience as positive acceptance. In a sexual encounter that is consensual, leaders believe they are desired, wanted, and idealized... “naked and unashamed.”

4. The need to not feel inferior and powerless. It is a paradox when leaders can be at the top of an organization, church, or even a country and still feel like a “little person” inside... inferior to others. They wear the external mask of being the “king,” but inside feel small. At times, sex can give the perception of power and momentarily make the inferiority and powerlessness go away.

Are these excuses? Not at all. God calls us to a life of holiness and obedience to His standards. However, when anyone falls, there is usually something

that makes that particular sin more attractive than others and, in the realm of sexual sin, it can cover a lot of the pain, weakness, and vulnerability leaders carry around. It behooves all leaders, and those working with them, to make sure their basic needs for connection, freedom, acceptance, and competence are being addressed and developed. If they are doing that, they can avoid this trap and also recover from a fall. The bottom line: help leaders get, and stay, healthy. ✕



HENRY CLOUD, PH.D.,

is a clinical psychologist, leadership consultant, and the author of *Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being*

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Sexuality in Relationships, Culture and the Media

Sexual Desire & Sexual Pain

Hinchliff, S., Gott, M. & Wylie, K. (2012). A Qualitative Study of Heterosexual Women's Attempts to Renegotiate Sexual Relationships in the Context of Severe Sexual Problems. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41, 1,253-1,261. Doi: 10.1007/s10508-012-9903-0.

Hinchliff and her colleagues conducted a qualitative study of how heterosexual women in England, with a diagnosis of a sexual problem, interact around sexual contact in relationships. The two kinds of sexual problems were a desire disorder or painful intercourse. The researchers present qualitative data from 23 heterosexual women who report either low sexual desire (N=6) or vulvar pain (N=17). The women ranged in age from 23 to 58 years (M=39.6). Most described themselves as British Caucasians and most were married (N=17), while five had current partners.

The 60-90 minute, semi-structured interview looked at: (1) description of the problem; (2) the effects of the sexual problem on their lives; (3) whether the problem affected their sex lives and their responses; and (4) experiences with treatment.

The qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Two researchers worked independently to read and code the data, which led to broad themes and, eventually, subthemes. Upon reaching consensus here, this thematic framework was used in analyzing the remaining transcripts.

One of the main themes resulting from the data analysis was “ways that participants negotiated sexual contact in their close relationships” (p. 1,256). It had three subthemes. The first was *avoidance of sexual activity*. For example, “I’d say I was too tired, too busy, in too much pain today.... I’d go to bed early

or if he went to bed early, I’d go to bed late” (p. 1,256).

The second subtheme referred to *engaging in sexual intercourse*. For example, one woman shared, “We would have sex even when it was very painful for me because I just felt that it, perhaps, kept everything together” (p. 1,257).

The third and final subtheme addressed *planning and preparation*. For example, one woman shared, “My libido went to the point that I have to mentally schedule my brain and say to myself, ‘Well, now he’s not had sex for two or three days and he’s going to start getting [easily annoyed] because of frustration, so if not Tuesday, I’ll make sure it happens Wednesday’” (p. 1,258).

The researchers conclude that these findings are rich and “have shown that the negotiation of sexual contact in the presence of vulvar pain or sexual desire loss is a complex and dynamic process” (p. 1,259). Participants often avoided sexual contact as long as they were able, which comes as no real surprise, but it was fascinating to read their accounts of that dynamic in their relationships.

Scripts in American Children’s Television

Kirsch, A.C. & Murnen, S.K. (2013). “Hot” Girls and “Cool Dudes”: Examining the Prevalence of the Heterosexual Script in American Children’s Television Media. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 13, 1-13. Doi: 10.1037/ppm0000017.

Alexandra Kirsch and Sarah Murnen conducted an interesting study examining prevalent messages in popular children’s television programming. The coded programs included: Drake and Josh, Wizards of Waverly Place, Hannah Montana, and iCarly. Drawing upon previous research, a “heterosexual





Becoming Somebody

Loos, J., Nostlinger, C., Murungi, I., Adipo, D., Amimo, B., Bakeera-Kitaka, S., Oluoch, D., Mboi, P., Wobudeya, E., Vandenhoudt, H. & Buve, A. (2013). Having Sex, Becoming Somebody: A Qualitative Study of Assessing (Sexual) Identity Development of Adolescents Living with HIV/AIDS. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 8 (2), 149-160. Doi: 10.1080/17450128.2012.738947.

This is a fascinating study by Jasna Loos and colleagues on the effects of HIV and other conditions on adolescent identity formation among teens living with HIV/AIDS. The researchers examined physical, social, cognitive, and sexual development, collecting data from focus group discussions comprised of 119 teenagers in Western Kenya and Greater Kampala, Uganda. Also studied were 54 of their caregivers and 55 service providers for the focus groups. The researchers used an inductive methodology and focus groups to collect and analyze data. Focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for analysis. Sixty-four girls were organized into eight groups, and 55 boys into another eight groups. Boy and girl groups were also organized by age group to facilitate developmentally appropriate experiences.

Many of the adolescents grew up in HIV-infected families of extremely low socioeconomic status (poverty). They shared extensive histories of illness and stigma associated with HIV that took its toll on their sense of self-worth. Interestingly, many teens reported that physical changes at puberty symbolized for them a new beginning, as cognitive changes also led to a more positive outlook, resilience, and improved self-esteem. One girl shared, “I never thought I would grow, but look at me, I look beautiful, now I am somebody” (p. 153). An adolescent boy shared, “People will start respecting us. They will say, ‘so and so’s son has grown...’ and they will start thinking that I will be respectable” (p. 154).

script” had been identified with related messages about gender, sexuality, and relationships.

For example, a sexual *double standard* exists when men “initiate sexual encounters, take great effort to have sex and value women physically,” while women are depicted as “limit-setters, are passive within sexual experiences, and are judged by their sexual conduct (e.g., ‘sluts’)” (p. 5). Other elements like the double standard include power in courtship, attitudes toward commitment, and attitudes toward homosexuality.

A total of 908 interactions were coded over 28 episodes, and 104 of those interactions reflected the script. Messages about masculinity were the most prominent (33% of coded interactions and present 2.5 times per hour of programming). Comments from boys to girls like, “You’re hot,” would capture this, as would objectifying language such as, “Hey, beautiful,” in reference to a girl.

Feminine courtship strategies were the next most common (29% of coded

interactions and present 2.14 times per hour of programming). Language from girls toward boys like, “Oh, big biceps,” were reflected here. Masculine courtship strategies were also common (26% of coded interactions and present 1.93 times per hour of programming). Status and material possessions were often used to attract girls.

The researchers noted this study was, in part, an attempt to respond to a professional taskforce on the sexualization of girls that has been thought to be prominent in the media. Sexualization refers to valuing girls/women for their appearance and objectifying them.

It can be valuable for Christian counselors to understand how stereotypical and sexualizing messages can be conveyed through media that is geared toward a young audience. In particular, the idea that “sexiness and appearance are what should matter most to girls when determining the worth of a girl” is important for the work of counselors who will provide services to children, teens, and family systems in the years to come.

Cognitive changes sometimes reflected an understanding that they could be a resource to others. For example, one teenage boy shared, “Like they say age is wisdom and you start giving advice. I will also start giving my fellow HIV positive young ones advice. I will say, ‘you see, I was also once like you’” (p. 154).

Interestingly, adolescents with HIV/AIDS often viewed sex as a way of becoming “somebody” socially. Sex was also a means of coping for some teens, while the authors noted it provided financial and emotional independence for others. For example, one young teenage boy spoke of having sex this way, “You can’t die without having had sex!” (p. 157). Another older teenage boy said, “Especially those who are HIV-positive, they get pregnant to get an heir” (p. 157).

This is obviously a unique situation, but one that is not that uncommon in certain regions in which HIV/AIDS is more common, particularly among the young and poor. It may be helpful to understand how identity development among adolescents is shaped by “individual and social consequences” (p. 157). The authors note that current clinic-based interventions may have a limited focus and could benefit from a broader response tied to identity development and issues related to “positive living” (p. 158) that may motivate behavior and influence treatment adherence and outcome.

Cognitive Frameworks of Virginity

Humphreys, T.P. (2013). Cognitive Frameworks of Virginity and First Intercourse. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50 (7), pp. 664-675. Doi: 10.1080/00224499.2012.677868.

This was an interesting study of virginity scripts by Terry Humphreys. Humphreys used a quantitative measure of meanings associated with virginity based upon previous qualitative research. Two hundred and fifteen



university students (184 women; 31 men) participated in the study. Each had experienced first consensual sexual intercourse (defined here as penile-vaginal intercourse). Most (N=207) identified as heterosexual, and the average age of participants was 19.7 years.

The virginity framework is reflected in three cognitive contexts: *gift*, *stigma*, and *process*. Gift would be captured in language like, “I saw my virginity as something special, cherished and guarded. I believed it to be a gift that I would give to someone I loved...” (p. 667). The language of virginity as stigma conveyed the following, “I saw my virginity as a label which I was ready to get rid of, something negative and unwanted” (p. 667). Virginity as process (or process-oriented) conveyed that it was a “rite of passage that everyone must go through; the starting of a process of sexuality...” (p. 667).

First intercourse was reported at an average age of 16.30 years (SD=1.57), with men reporting an older age (16.87) of first intercourse than women (16.25). In many cases (44.2%), the partner was also experiencing his or her first sexual intercourse. Participants reported that the relationship lasted an average of 4.10 months after first sexual intercourse. Most (60.5%) reported that they felt they “loved” their partner.

Over half (54%) of participants reported that their experience of first intercourse was process or process-oriented (a rite of passage). A little over one-third (37.7) described their experience of first intercourse as a gift (something given to a person they loved). Only 8.4% reported that first intercourse was stigma oriented (something unwanted to get rid of).

In a remarkably changing cultural context, it may be helpful to understand how teenagers process decisions to be sexually active. In particular, it may be beneficial to understand the cognitive frameworks that might be associated with the decision to engage in fist intercourse, particularly as the Church and Christian counselors consider the messages they wish to impart about sexual decision making. ✦



MARK A. YARHOUSE, PSY.D., is the Rosemarie Scotti Hughes Chair of Christian Thought in Mental Health Practice and Professor of Psychology

at Regent University, where he directs the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity (sexualidentityinstitute.org). He is author or co-author of several books, including *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*.

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Answer the following questions from this issue of *Christian Counseling Today* by marking the appropriate circle. Once completed, you may send in this entire page or a photocopy with your payment to the address below. Please do not send cash. The quiz is open-book and you will need a minimum score of 70% to receive a letter of completion.

Adultery: A Marital Gethsemane – Dave Carder

1. Clinically, one of the fastest growing threats to marriages is
 - a. when a spouse reconnects with an old flame
 - b. the increasing pregnancy rates
 - c. the prevalence and use of pornography
 - d. increasing cohabitation prior to marriage

Behind Closed Doors: When Sex is the Next Step – Clifford and Joyce Penner

2. Sexual addictions are related to
 - a. being raised in an alcoholic home
 - b. being spanked as a child
 - c. an intimacy disorder
 - d. being raised in a single parent home

Childhood Sexual Development: What Every Christian... – Meg Meeker

3. Teens who are sexually active are at high risk for
 - a. infections, cervical cancer and gonorrhea
 - b. infertility, HIV and syphilis
 - c. depression
 - d. all of the above

Falling in Love, Staying in Love: How to Keep... – David and Claudia Arp

4. To jump-start romance, the authors suggest
 - a. stepping out of the comfort zone
 - b. having great dates
 - c. going to Hawaii
 - d. a and b

Gender, the Gospel and Recovering a Biblical... – R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

5. Postmodernism argues that our notions of male and female
 - a. are a by-product the of blind evolution process
 - b. are due to what society has constructed
 - c. are God-given distinctions and gifts
 - d. none of the above

Human Trafficking, Aftercare and Recovery – Kathy Stout-LaBauve

6. The first priority of all IJM casework is
 - a. a medical examination and proper immunization
 - b. immediate relief and protection for victims of abuse
 - c. to begin legal action against the oppressor
 - d. restoration of lost property

My Grandmother Wouldn't Talk about Sex – Gary W. Moon

7. Moon describes the phases of our relationship to God as
 - a. friendship, fellowship and family
 - b. conversation, communion and consummation
 - c. feeling, faith and freedom
 - d. none of the above

Sex and Media in Today's Culture... Joshua Straub

8. Kuehne said common themes at the end of civilizations are
 - a. sexual promiscuity and great debt
 - b. homosexual behavior and earthquakes
 - c. extreme weather and earthquakes
 - d. debt and radical religion

The Secret Epidemic: STDs and HIV/AIDS – Freda Bush

9. Currently there are _____ new infections in the U.S. each year
 - a. 50,000
 - b. 100,000
 - c. 10 million
 - d. 20 million

Beyond Chemistry: Understanding the Neurobiology... – James K. Childerston

10. As estrogen fluctuates throughout the menstrual cycle
 - a. so do the testosterone levels
 - b. nitric oxide is released
 - c. so do serotonin levels
 - d. all of the above

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Increase awareness and content expertise on current trends in mental health practice.
2. Be able to articulate a more comprehensive understanding of this issue's core theme.
3. Be able to integrate spirituality and faith-based constructs into the delivery of care.

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Please rate the following on a scale of 1–5 (1 meaning **Poor** and 5 meaning **Excellent**):

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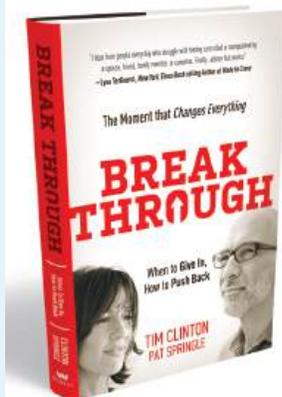
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A Sexuality of Grace and Truth

One flesh. Naked and unashamed. A sacred expression of commitment, intimacy and love between husband and wife.

An ancient Jewish text describes sexual intimacy as “a mystical experience of meeting with God... ‘becom[ing] partners with God in the act of creation. When a man unites with his wife in holiness, the Shekinah is between them...”¹ Shekinah... the very presence and blessings of God.

Within the marital relationship, we catch a unique glimpse of our own relationship with Christ. Theologian and author, John Piper, points out, “God created us with sexual passion so that there would be language to describe what it means to cleave to him in love and what it means to turn away from him to others.”² Research consistently shows that individuals in married, monogamous relationships report “the highest levels of sexual satisfaction.”³ Married couples who connect spiritually rate each other as better lovers, and those who pray together have more “ecstasy” in their sex lives.⁴

Yet anything that has such propensity for beauty also has great potential for pain. When sin entered the world, it affected every area of the human experience... including our sexuality. Corrupt desires and sinful longings marred the beauty God intended. We do not have to read very far in Scripture to see the damage. In the book of Genesis alone, 10 distinct types of sexual sin are mentioned, including polygamy, adultery, fornication, incest, rape, prostitution, and abuse.

After reading this issue of *CCT*, you know the brokenness that abounds in today’s culture. So should it surprise anyone that even pedophilia is quickly being redefined as “adult-child sex,” and a legitimate sexual preference?⁵

Scripture reminds us, “... when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:15). Sexual sin destroys relationships... families... marriages... and, ultimately, lives.

The Front Lines

When clients sit in your office burdened by the weight of guilt or shame, they often carry burning questions: *Will I ever be able to enjoy sex after being abused? Can I break free from pornography? I’ve hooked up with so many people—what’s one more time? Will our marriage survive this affair?*

The good news of the Gospel is that wherever there is brokenness, God longs to heal, redeem and restore. At the same time, He never turns a blind eye to our sin. The Apostle Paul writes, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God...” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). The Song of Solomon portrays a graphic picture of the holy delight God desires, leaving us

with a warning, “... do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time” (2:7).

The Church often falls prey to two extremes—either *legalistic truth* that misses God’s design for sexuality or *cheap tolerance* that endorses sinful behavior in the name of “loving one another.” Erring on the side of legalistic truth, the Church often acts much like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day—pointing fingers, judging those who have failed, adding to Scripture, and denying that we are sexual beings. In this subculture, sexuality is tolerated within marriage for procreation, but rarely seen as a beautiful expression of love. The metaphor between Christ (as the groom) and the Church (as His bride) is crushed. Sexuality is boxed up as something unmanageable—to be avoided at all costs. Yet beneath that veneer of self-made piety, corruption and evil often thrive. This dark, pious sexuality far too often preys on unassuming children or vulnerable parishioners.

On the opposite extreme, many turn a blind eye to sex outside of marriage or they distort the beauty of sex in marriage. “It’s not my place



When sin entered the world, it affected every area of the human experience... including our sexuality. Corrupt desires and sinful longings marred the beauty God intended.

to judge,” they say. “That’s between them and God. Besides, Jesus loves unconditionally.” Priest, author and counselor, Henri Nouwen, points out that “we often confuse unconditional love with unconditional approval” in an attempt to create a safe place for struggling brothers and sisters. “God loves us without conditions, but does not approve of every human behavior.”⁶ Though these believers may seem to look a lot like Jesus at first glance, they miss God’s heart.

Grace and Truth

Jesus Christ came to this earth “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Notice He did not come only “full of grace” or we would wallow in licentiousness and self-gratification. He did not come only “full of truth” or we would live in constant fear and condemnation. Instead, He came full of grace AND truth.

“Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus responded to the woman caught in the act of adultery... and to the condition of all men, especially those who stood with Him in that moment and wanted to stone her. Jesus did not picket, point fingers, or pour on the shame. He saw her—the condition of her heart—and responded with compassion. Yet, He didn’t stop there. He also challenged her: “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11). He did not endorse her

behavior, excuse it, or dance around it. He gave a plain and simple command that was anchored in love—a love that was filled with grace and truth.

When it comes to sexuality, there are boundaries. Sex is best understood as an appetite and a gift that brings beauty, joy and satisfaction. Outside of God’s design, it wreaks havoc in our lives. For the man addicted to pornography; for the couple caught in a web of self-absorbed, dirty sexual expression; for the woman dabbling in a same-sex relationship, the Gospel offers hope, love and redemption. However, will they hear it? Or will they walk away from the Church, disillusioned and jaded? Will they turn to the world for a listening ear?

Will the Church be a safe place for those trying to make sense of their sexual attractions and behaviors in light of Christian values? Will we provide a haven for those who have been sexually abused, helping them find healing? Will we speak into the lives of those who are struggling with pornography or living in adultery? Will we preach, teach and counsel from the foundation of biblical sexuality, raising our children to live with integrity in a sex-obsessed world? Our sexuality is complex, even confusing at times, but it is also vastly important. May our response be full of grace and truth. ✠



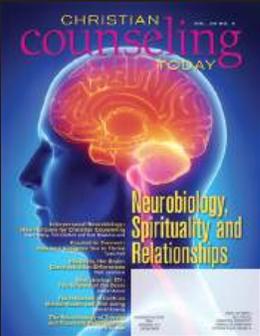
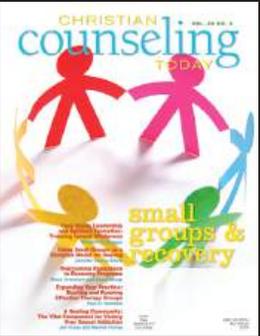
TIM CLINTON, ED.D., LPC, LMFT, is President of AACC, Executive Director of the Center for Counseling and Family Studies/Professor of Counseling and Pastoral

Care at Liberty University, and co-founder of Light Counseling, Inc., a clinical practice serving children, adolescents, and adults. He is the author of several books, including *God Attachment* (Howard Books), *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling* (Harvest House), and *Break Through* (Worthy Publishing).

Endnotes

- ¹ Nahmanides, *The Holy Letter*, 60; Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 206.
- ² John Piper and Justin Taylor, Eds., *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 28.
- ³ Christopher Scott and Susan Sprecher, “Sexuality in Marriage, Dating, and Other Relationships: A Decade Review,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62.4 (November 2000), 999-1,017.
- ⁴ Linda Waite and Evelyn Lehrer, “The Benefits from Marriage and Religion in the United States: A Comparative Analysis,” *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (June 2003), 255-276.
- ⁵ Dr. Susan Berry, “American Psychiatric Association Reclassified Pedophilia, Backtracks,” *Breitbart*, November 2, 2014, <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2013/11/01/American-Psychiatric-Association-Reclassifies-Pedophilia>.
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