

In the Image of God: The Christian Vision for Love and Marriage

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And Such Were Some of You... Sexual Sin and Pastoral Care

I. Sex and God's Good Creation

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)

II. God's original design for healthy sexuality

1. Sexuality is basic to human identity. (Gen. 1:27)

2. Sexual activity is never casual.

²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:23-25)

3. Sex and babies go together.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:28)

III. The disaster in Eden

1. Temptation to be like God

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5)

2. The rebellion

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

3. The consequences

⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:7-11)

IV. The sexual high road: chastity as gift and choice

1. The Christological focus of sexual chastity

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:23-32)

2. Sins of mind, heart, and body

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:13-15)

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

3. Desire vs. lust

²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:21-25)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever. (1 John 2:15-17)

V. The Ministry of Forgiveness

1. The source of forgiveness

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

2. Holy Absolution: Delegated forgiveness

²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld." (John 20:20-23)

What can you expect when you go to your pastor with your sin?

1. A listening ear. Your pastor is a representative of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He is trained to listen with Jesus' ear: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)
2. A compassionate heart. Your pastor knows that sinners sin. He will not be shocked at your sin, but will lead you to forgiveness and renewal.
3. A confidential setting. Your pastor has vowed never to divulge sins confessed to him; it is his solemn duty before God.
4. A forgiving Word. Your pastor is called by the church and authorized by Jesus to forgive the sins of penitent sinners. His earthly absolution is valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, your dear Lord, dealt with you Himself. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven..." (John 20:23)

The Ministry of Cleansing (The Experiential dimension of forgiveness)

- The Defilement of Sin

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you

teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:1-7)

- The Baptismal Washing

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

- The Cleansing Word

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. (John 15:1-3)

- Christ our Holiness

³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

- The Lord's Supper and Cleansing

²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:27-28)

Pastors as Physicians for the Soul:

toward a pastoral care plan for sinners and those sinned against

1. Listen! Pastoral counsel begins with the sinner
2. Symptoms (mental, physical, spiritual) and diagnosis
3. Naming the sin: in *what way* is this person a sinner?
 - is this a penitent or impenitent sinner?
 - is this person more victim or perpetrator in this instance?
4. Addressing the sin:
 - a. Law or gospel?
 - b. Forgiveness and righteousness
 - c. Cleansing and holiness
5. Ritual Enactment of God's Word:
 - a. Word and Prayer
 - b. Baptism

- c. Confession/Absolution
 - d. Holy Communion
 - e. Blessing
6. Recovering sinner therapy
- a. Divine Service (Colossians 3:15-17)
 - b. Christian community (1 Corinthians 12:26-27)
 - c. Christian example and mentoring (Titus 2:1-5)
 - d. Learning new habits of faith (Romans 6:11-14)

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For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. [Psalm 51:3]

It seemed so clear
 a care free life
 no hassles, no entanglements
 no complicated conversations
 nothing left to do except to be
 just sand and sun and me
 it seemed so clear

the nights were cold
 the daytime lonely
 lots of people everywhere
 but few who knew or cared
 about my loneliness and pain
 it was clear to me
 much too clear for me

one truth grew ever larger:
 feelings set you up for failure
 a helpless pawn in the game called life
 feelings leave you naked and exposed
 vulnerable defenseless victim
 in a power-hungry world
 feelings are a liability

and so I dulled the pain
 covered up the clarity
 found relief and solace
 in capsules and syringes
 my great big wooden numbness
 that passed for peace
 but wore off into pain

I looked for love
 but hid from those who really loved me
 my carefree days of sun and sand
 grew dark and overcast
 my endless search for peace
 of mind and heart and soul
 led as far as body only
 I took comfort where I found it
 in touch of skin
 and bodies wrapped together
 it felt like love to me

nothing seemed clear any longer
 except the pain and hurt

and so I hid myself each place I could
 in laughter
 in drugs
 in men
 they were all the same to me
 anything would do
 any price I'd pay
 in order not to feel
 to cover up and hide
 peace at any cost was all I wanted

I paid in blood
 my baby's blood and mine
 combined inside that tank
 a costly ransom price
 yet still there was no peace

I can cover up my feelings
 but there's no escaping guilt
 one reality stands starkly ever clearer
 though life has changed for better
 my pain will never end

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hush my child and listen now:
 your pain will have its end
 where death shall be no more
 where mourning, sighing, weeping
 cease
 where tears are wiped away
 by my own hand

there joy awaits
 eternal joys at that great feast
 the nuptials of the Lamb
 the marriage bliss of the King of kings
 and His royal bride, the church

from heaven high he stooped down low
 to enter here and rescue her
 with his own body and his blood
 the pricetag of her sin
 his cross-shaped death her ransom price
 his love her life and hope

her kingly groom came with virile love
to cleanse his tarnished bride
and claim her as his own
washed clean by water and the word
unblemished, pure and undefiled

now lift your head my child
from bitter shame and deep remorse
for though your eyes be clouded here
dark memories out of your ugly past
my eyes are clear to see you as you are

the royal table stands prepared
no need to wait for heaven's joy
to taste his love
come dine with him
and feed on him
his body and his blood
your life and hope and purity
and in this feast see clearly now:
he, the royal groom
and
you, his worthy bride

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When the Crying Stops (NPH, 1992), pp. 90-91