

# Awkward Bedfellows

## (The Church and Sex)

The Church is still really queasy about sex. This is a strange thing since the Church claims the Holy Scriptures as its foundation of faith. The Bible tells us the story of humanity's origin, which includes human sexuality. So why would the church and sex seem so awkward?

The initial reason would have to be that the Church still has some vestiges of archaic thinking that still influences the way we see and understand sex today. In the early days of the Church, there was a great influence by Greek philosophy and ideas, one of which was the idea that all matter was inherently evil. Flesh was considered something to be abhorred. This translated to anything that brought pleasure.

This idea permeated from the Church's theology to its practices. Sex was viewed as a necessary evil in order to produce children. The Church has long since officially abandoned this kind of view.

We have come to understand that this view is false. We understand that God created flesh. He called everything He made, "good" and when He made human beings, He called His creation, "very good."

The entrance of evil into this world did not change the very nature of flesh. Flesh is not evil because there is evil in the world. Neither is sex evil because it has been corrupted. However, there still remain a few reasons that hinder the Church's ability to communicate about sex.

### **Nothing Like The Real Thing, Baby**

I think one of the reasons why the Church doesn't like talking about sex is because sex is too human. It is too real. It is too earthy and natural. While the Christian faith talks a lot about helping people, human relationships, and communal responsibility, it also places a great deal of emphasis on the spiritual and supernatural.

One of the reasons why Christians struggle to fully embrace the beauty and duty of sex is that we are oriented in transcendent thinking when sex is rooted in the here and now. Sex reminds us that we are indeed, at the end of the day, human. Sex reminds us that while we live looking forward to eternity, we live in a natural world that requires attention to our natural needs.

This is hard to grasp for so many Christians who believe that a true pursuit of the transcendent is to minimize the duty of the present. Our inability to be real and transparent about our struggles reinforces an idea that we are not supposed to be human. But let's be clear. Spiritual transformation is not the eradication of humanity. It is the perfection of all that it is to be human. In other words, to be spiritually transformed is to be the best human you can be. This includes your sexuality.

# THE TRUTH IS

that honesty and transparency never make you look worse.

## **Failures and Flaws Impede Discussion**

Another reason for the Church's inability to talk about sex is the idea that due to the human failures of its leaders and membership, the Church is not able to speak with any authority about sexuality. This is an extension of the idea that Christians are superheroes.

Somehow we think that our sexual sins and struggles disqualify us because people will think we are "hypocrites."

Christians need to be honest about our sex lives. The truth is that honesty and transparency never make you look worse. It always reveals the truth of who you are, and the truth of who you are is what helps people to be set free.

The Church has a confession to make. We sin in every way that others do. That's the truth. So maybe the Church should stop saying "you sinners" and start saying, "we sinners" need God's grace.

Some people don't like to remember their past. The past reminds them of terrible decisions they made. One-night stands that led to months of pain. Hook-ups that led to break ups. Sexual passion turned into heartbreak. The Church struggles with the conversation of sexuality today because church people don't always like to recall their own sexual histories.

The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory". None of us are perfect. Neither our past mistakes nor our present struggles should silence us about the truth of our human pursuit of spiritual redemption.

## **The Church Must Speak About Sex**

You might wonder why we need the Church to speak up about sex. Don't we hear enough about sex in the media, music, and every kind of communication format? We need the church's voice because we need to hear a different perspective. No society is healthy by simply hearing one perspective on a subject.

The Church needs to share why monogamy is an achievable and viable option. The Church needs to share why sexuality should be viewed as sacred and not hedonistic.

Society may not always know it, but we need the Church's voice. The problem is not that the Church does not have anything meaningful to add to the conversation on sex. The problem is the church's tone as it relates to sex. The Christian Church has had a lot to say about sex and sexuality in the last decade. The Church has led campaigns against alternative sexual lifestyles. The Church has been vocal on issues of abortion and the choice of a woman. The Church has spoken out against marriage equality efforts.

# THE REALITY IS

THAT EMPATHY SHOULD BE OUR DEFAULT.

## **Use Your Inside Voice**

The problem I have with the Church is our tone. We can sound so hateful. We seem so angry. Where is all the rage coming from? Why can't the Church share its views without being so condescending and judgmental? We are told to "speak the truth in love".

The truth is that the Church has not always been "loving" about its views on sexuality. This negative tone has caused the message to be lost in translation. While I believe that the Church's biblical message of sexuality will never be popular, we cannot blame its lack of acceptance solely on cultural hedonism.

**What Good Love Looks Like**

Finally, the Church must begin to talk about sexuality not only changing the tone but by speaking in a different way. The Church has talked too much without truly communicating its message. Let me explain. Most people don't want to hear another sermon about some Biblical ideal. They want to see it lived out in practical ways.

One of the greatest enemies to the message of monogamy is the rate of infidelity in the Church. Why would I want to listen to a group of people who espouse one thing and practice the opposite? The Church talks about marriage between a man and a woman, and yet the rate of divorce among heterosexual Christian couples is the same as those outside the Church. The Christian Church does not necessarily need to speak out more on these crucial issues. The Church does need to communicate more effectively, however.

**Through Example:** Jesus said, "Let them see your good works and they will glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Our good works are God's best marketing tool to share His message with the world. People will not believe us if they cannot see that monogamy works. There is no validity to the Church's biblical message if we don't stop covering up sexual abuse in the Church.

**Through Empathy:** We all deal with sexual temptations and sin. Therefore, Christians need to be more empathetic. The reality is that empathy should be our default. Arrogance or delusion blinds so many Christians to the fact that they are guilty of the same sins they point out in other people's lives. If the Church would stop seeking to be understood and seek to understand then we would be in a position to partner with people to deal with their issues because their issues are our issues.

Our common recognition of our humanity is what builds bridges of trust. The Church is made of flawed, finite people. The Church has to look in the mirror and recognize that we are just as human as everyone else.

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