

Healthy Sexuality – The Gift of Relationship – Dan Hitz

This article is a part of the Escaping the Dungeon of Porn conference and newsletter series. It is much easier to walk out of sexual sin when one has a clear goal for healthy sexuality in sight. It is our prayer that this series will help you begin or continue your walk into sexual and relational integrity. More newsletters about recovery issues are available on the Reconciliation Ministries website at www.recmin.org. If you would like more information about hosting a conference at your church, call Dan Hitz at 586.739.5114.



The most important ingredient of healthy sexuality is also one of the most difficult for addicts and many others to exercise. It is relationship. This applies to those who are married as well as to those who are single. Relationship is learning to know and be known by others while we express and experience the good of the masculine and the good of the feminine.

Relationship is worked into the very foundation of marriage and healthy sexuality. The Hebrew word for “knew”, *yâda’*, has many uses. Gen 4:1 reads, “...Adam **knew** Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain...”. Here the word refers to the act of sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve. Gen 3:7 reads, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they **knew** that they [were] naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. In this use, the word refers to a revelation of something they had not formerly known. Deut 34:10 reads, “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord **knew** face to face.” Here the word refers to a deep interpersonal relationship of trust and deep emotional intimacy – not a physical act. It is in godly relationships that we learn to know and be known by safe others. We learn to be appropriately vulnerable in the sharing of our deepest desires, our hurts, our hopes, and our victories. Deut 33:11 reads that “...the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” It is a perfect example of the relationship that God wants to have with all of us, and us with each other.

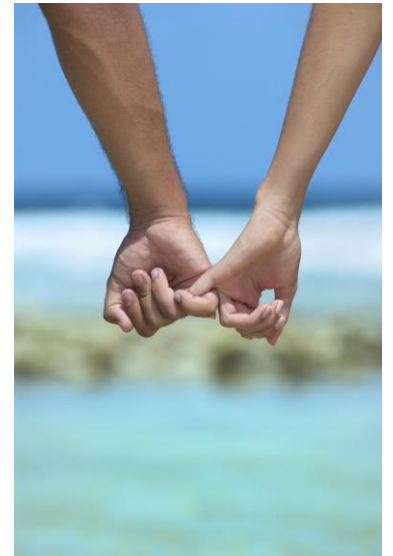
True masculinity and femininity is not becoming a reflection of Jason Borne or Pamela Anderson. (Rambo or Bo Derrick for those of us in the older generation.) Popular culture has distorted God’s intent for the good of our gender to symbolize illicit sexuality or the tough guy who destroys all who get in his way. This is far different from the masculinity and femininity that God designed and modeled in the person of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, we are all intended to live our lives with a godly blend of both the masculine and the feminine while primarily exhibiting the traits of our birth gender. In healthy relationships we are able to receive the blessings of the other which we, ourselves, do not possess.

True masculinity is comprised of multiple elements. 1) *The power to do*. This includes the power to lead others along the path that God has designed for them. It is the power to initiate the plans that one has received from God, and to give shape to others. 2) *The power to prevail in the face of adversity*. True masculinity is the power to stand strong on God’s truth without compromise and to walk in radical obedience to that which is just and true – even when others attack us for doing what is right. 3) *The masculine father calls the children into their gifts and purposes in their lives*. Each child in a family has different gifts and callings. It is the job of the father to recognize those gifts and assist the children as they learn to exercise them. 4) *Rational/analytical thinking*. Most men tend to think analytically. They are usually action oriented and are not usually led by their emotions. The traits of the masculine are seen as the man comes home from work and finds his wife at home frazzled. He immediately wants to “fix” the problems for her and starts to give her his “priceless” unsolicited advice. In reality, she simply wanted him to listen to her heart rather than to fix her problems.



True femininity is also comprised of multiple elements. 1) *The power to be*. Femininity possesses a greater ability to quiet the spirit and to hear the heart of God. 2) *The power to respond*. Mary was able to quiet her heart, hear the instructions from the angel, Gabriel. She was able to accept God's plan for the virgin birth of the Savior even though she knew that she would bear the reproach of being an unwed mother. 3) *The good of the feminine nourishes relationships and values emotional interaction*. Women tend to enjoy conversations that go well below the surface and touch the heart of the issue. They are usually more comfortable with emotions and vulnerability than men and spend time reinforcing heart connections. 4) *Intuitive thinking skills*. Godly women are gifted at perceiving hidden struggles in the lives of others. They are able to recognize deeper issues which are hidden from that which is readily observable. The traits of the feminine are seen when the man comes home from a long, hard day at work and wants to crawl into his mancave and hide. The intuitive wife senses that he is upset and wants to hear all about his struggles. She feels rejected as the best he can offer is a brief mumble.

God designed males and females to be interdependent – mutually beneficial – to each other. It is in relationship that men and women walk in complementarity. Complementarity is both genders assisting and completing each other as they interact in relationship. It is necessary for healthy heterosexuality. Gen 2:18 reads, “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him.’” In this verse, the phrase “helper suitable” means one corresponding to him. One is not better than the other. They are both strengthened and blessed by the relationship. The good of complementarity is seen as the infant learns that he is cared for and protected by the mother. As the child grows, he learns to crawl and walk away from the mother, to explore the world and return to the mother for comfort. The father then calls the child away from the mother to initiate the giftings in his heart and the good of his gender. As the father announces that he is going to build some skateboard ramps, the mother demands that he be wrapped from head to toe in bubble wrap. The father perseveres and builds the ramps. When the kid wipes out, the mother comes running with the antibiotic ointment and the bandages while the father exclaims how “awesome” the crash looked. Kids need the complementarity of the parents. The feminine keeps them from self-destructing, and the masculine encourages them to boldly go forth.



There are times when men and women must demonstrate both masculinity and femininity. Jesus modeled both aspects for us throughout His life. In John 11:35 He demonstrated the feminine as He wept for His friends lamenting Lazarus' death. In Matt 21:12 he demonstrated the masculine as he overturned the money changers' tables and demanded that His Father's house be a house of prayer. Both traits were woven together in Mark 6:34 which reads, “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.” He demonstrated the feminine as he had compassion on a lost group of people. He demonstrated the masculine as he began to lead them and empower them to do His Father's will. Healthy sexuality expressed in godly relationships empowers us to stand in the good of our masculinity or femininity and to exhibit the traits of the other when necessary.

There are Biblical parameters for physical sexual expression in marriage. Sexuality was given to us as a gift from God. Gen 1:28 says that God “blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number.’” The very design of our bodies indicates that God intended physical sexual expression to be extremely pleasurable. The angles, bumps, and ridges were put in just the right places. Physical sexual expression is also a type, or shadow, of the spiritual intimacy that God wants to have with us. It is the only means that two human beings can come together and create an eternal being. It is no wonder that the enemy attacks sexuality so fiercely.



God ordains physical sexual expression only within the context of the marriage covenant between one biologically born male and one biologically born female. (Mark 10:6-9) In Gen 3:7, when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.” This verse provides an insight into God’s idea of modesty. At this point, Adam and Eve were alone in the garden and they still sewed fig leaves together as a covering. The problem is that fig leaves secrete oil that causes a nasty skin irritation on contact. Man’s best efforts to cover his sin always produce more irritation and suffering – in this case where Adam and Eve would want it the least.

Physical sexual expression includes visual, hand/genital contact, hand/buttocks/breast contact, oral sex, anal sex, and sexual intercourse. Unfortunately many in the church today accept any and all sexual activity outside the marriage covenant except for sexual intercourse itself. In 2003, WWJ radio reported that the rates for sexual activity is only 5% less for church teens than it is for unchurched teens. My guess is that those numbers are even closer together in 2009. In my years of pastoral care, I have heard of a “Christian” nudist colony and a “Christian” website that promotes love between adult males who are sexually attracted to underage males. Others were told by counselors to use pornography in their marriage bed to enhance their sex lives. These things should have no place in the lives of Christians. Heb 13:4 has been used to justify sin in the marriage bed. In the NKJV it reads, “Marriage [is] honorable among all, **and the bed undefiled**; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” However, in the NIV it reads, “Marriage should be honored by all, **and the marriage bed kept pure**”. Here we see that God calls us to preserve the sanctity of marriage and to avoid any activities which would corrupt his design for sexual activity. Godly sexual activities are not sinful, and do not shame, cause physical hurt, or cause infection.

In writing about healthy sexuality for single people, I sought the advice of a friend and ministry team member in his 40’s who has never married. He stated that many churches don’t know how to minister to older singles and that most church singles’ groups lack spiritual depth. He shared his frustrations over the challenges of trying to relate to his married friends and to fit fellowship time into their busy schedules. It is critical for single men and women to cultivate healthy social relationships with the same and opposite sex. In healthy relationships, there is a balance of meeting the needs of the other and being blessed by the other, as well as a balance of working on mutual projects and recreational interaction. There also needs to be a healthy balance of spirituality and relaxation. Sometimes we need to pray, and sometimes we need to go out to eat.

I asked my friend how he would suggest handling his physical sexual urges as a Christian. He acknowledged the reality that we are created as sexual beings with sexual energies and desires. “If I were angry, I would be told to enroll in anger management classes where they would teach me to handle my angry energy in a socially acceptable manner.” In regards to our sexuality, it is important to engage in challenging mental and physical activities to channel our sexual energy in an appropriate manner. As we begin to walk in holiness and learn to bounce our eyes and thoughts, our sexual stimulation and temptation level will actually decrease. The book *Every Man’s Battle* notes that God has designed our bodies to



get physical sexual relief through periodic nocturnal emissions. We don't need to engage in sinful sexual activities to "get a release". Walking in accountability relationships provides support, encouragement, and strength as we seek to live sexually pure lives.



Many of the concepts for single people also apply to those who are married. Men and women find out quickly that marriage doesn't cure sexual sin or take away the temptations. Neither do married people have sex as often as they would like, especially once the kids arrive on the scene. The sexual desires and energy must be submitted to the Lord.

It is important for both the husband and wife to have healthy same-sex friendships outside the family. Opposite sex friendships should be limited to couples interaction to guard against fueling improper emotional connections which may lead to emotional dependency or crossed boundaries. Although the husband and wife should be each other's best friends, interaction with others of their gender strengthens him/her as a person and increases their ability to be a blessing to the family.

Understanding how the male and female brains work will enhance relationships and the marriage. Remember how men are more logically and action oriented while women are more intuitive and relational? We must learn to step outside of our personal method of operation to court our spouses and help them to feel understood. Men tend to operate out of a physical perspective and feel loved when they have sex. Women tend to operate out of an emotional framework and want to be engaged in physical intimacy when they feel loved and valued by their husbands. My wife has told me many times that "sex begins in the kitchen". Although I sometimes think she just says this to get me to do the dishes, it underscores her desire for relationship and feeling valued by receiving my help with her chores. A husband will do well to reach out to his wife if he desires physical intimacy and provide an atmosphere of emotional intimacy first. My wife gave me permission to quote her when she said, "Don't think you can ignore me all day, then plop into bed, put your arm around me and say, 'Honey, are you tired?'" That's when I realized that she actually was serious about helping her with the dishes. She wasn't kidding or being manipulative, she desired relationship. A word to the wives; there may be times when a wife may need to minister to her husband's need for physical intimacy prior to the emotional intimacy. He may desire intimacy with you, but be under so much stress on occasion that he is having a difficult time reaching out prior to the physical intimacy. The relationship is strengthened as each spouse ministers to the needs of the other.

These are just the basic ideas for sexual and relational integrity. Illicit sexuality whether it is through pornography or physical sexual encounters destroys healthy intimacy, relationships, and integrity. You can find practical advice in the *Escaping the Dungeon of Porn* series on the Reconciliation Ministries website at www.recmin.org, or through a conference or small group brought to your church. If you or someone you love is struggling with sexual sin, get help. Don't keep digging yourself deeper into the pit. Speak to your spiritual authority, and call Reconciliation Ministries today at 586.739.5114. Many men, women, and adolescents have found freedom through the power of Jesus Christ. You can start walking in sexual and relational integrity today.



If you would like more information about Reconciliation Ministries, or any of the ministries we offer, visit us on the Web at www.recmin.org, or call (586) 739-5114. You may also e-mail us at info@recmin.org. All correspondence will be kept strictly confidential.

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