

CONTENDING FOR PURITY IN A PORNIFIED WORLD – PART 1

I. INTRODUCTION (PERSONAL CONTEXT)

- A. In 2007 I set out on a journey to expose the injustice behind the veil of the global commercial sex industry. Everywhere we travelled there were women and children for sale, and there were men lining up to purchase these women and children. I remember one particular instance in Cambodia when we came across a man trying to buy a child for sex. We chased him down and got in his face. As I pondered that encounter I realized that this guy didn't get up yesterday and decide to fly halfway across the world to go buy a child for sex.

I wondered, *“What kind of society is producing so many men willing to buy a woman or child for sex?”*

- B. That question has catapulted us into production on our second film about sex trafficking. This film examines the forces in our world that are shaping our sexuality. Ultimately we aim to develop an understanding of what is fueling the demand for prostitution, which necessitates sex trafficking.
- C. After an initial filming trip this past January and February I was sitting in an airport waiting for my flight to return home and feeling broken over the traumatic content that we were exposed to. I opened my computer and received an email from a friend who had the following dream:

“I saw you running. You were wearing blue athletic clothes and running hard. Then I saw that you were running through mud and manure. It got deeper and your running slowed down as you struggled through. It became so deep you disappeared in it as it was over your head. You then quickly came through and out of it, still running. But you were wearing clean white clothes and in your hand was the athletic-type jacket you were wearing before. It was covered in mud and manure. Then I saw you standing before a large crowd, holding up the filthy jacket and yelling ‘this is what it really looks like!!! This is what it really looks like!!!’”

- D. This dream helped define the journey I am currently on. We are working to expose the sexual underpinnings of our culture that fosters a sex slave trade. But how do we tell this story? It is such a defiling subject matter. We were wrestling with this dilemma as a team when my friend received a text message from his then-fiancé:

“They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” – Ezekiel 44:23

- E. The goal of my message today is to equip us with a basic understanding of our sexuality in a way that empowers us to live pure lives in the midst of a broken world and brings understanding as to why the existence of a sex slave industry in our modern-day society. In this message I will expose what I refer to as a *“toxic sexuality”* and promote what I refer to as a *“healthy sexuality”*.

- F. Our primary text will be 1 Thess. 4:3-7:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust... 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. – 1 Thess. 4:3-7

- G. This passage highlights three things I want to address:

1. “Abstaining from sexual immorality” (v. 3) – Sexual immorality is all sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. Sexual immorality is rooted in a toxic sexuality.
2. “Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (v. 4) – This means to gain wisdom and understanding of a healthy sexuality.
3. “No one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter” (v. 6) – This means to relate to each other appropriately with regards to our sexuality.

II. AN INTERPRETIVE LENS FOR VIEWING HUMAN SEXUALITY (HEALTHY SEXUALITY VS. TOXIC SEXUALITY)

- A. Sex is more than just an innocuous physical, bodily, experience. We are composed of spirit, soul, and body. Therefore, sex is an experience of oneness between two people that join all three elements of our constitution together in one powerful act.
- B. It is important to acknowledge that not all sex is positive and we must clearly distinguish between a healthy sexuality and a toxic sexuality:
1. A healthy sexuality emphasizes the *entire person*. A healthy sexuality is fueled by love and a desire for intimacy. The result is that it draws two people together, cementing their commitment to one another in mutual pleasure, affection, and edification. A healthy sexuality fulfills God’s original design and purpose.
 2. A toxic sexuality emphasizes the *body* at the exclusion of the person. It is self-centered and fueled by lust. The result is a dehumanizing experience that drives two people apart in mutual shame. A toxic sexuality distorts God’s original design and purpose.
- C. The real world consequences of a toxic sexuality across our culture are: pervasive infidelity, promiscuity, adultery, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual coercion and manipulation, rape, slut shaming, victim-blaming, sex-trafficking, child abuse, abortion, and divorce.

- D. Given the high stakes of a derailed sexuality it is critical that we examine the predominant influences that are shaping our sexuality today. Our ideas of what it means to be a socially acceptable man or women have not been genetically encoded in our biological genes, they come from the stories the culture tell us about what is normal and what is not.
- E. In our generation, we have all grown up in what I call “a great social experiment.” The experiment is along the lines of, “What will happen to a generation whose appetites and behaviors are groomed and conditioned through incessant consumption of mass-media?”
- F. In this message we will examine two aspects of mass media: pop-culture (mainstream media), and porn-culture (graphic hardcore sexual media)

III. POP-CULTURE (MAINSTREAM MEDIA) INFLUENCE ON OUR SEXUALITY

- A. The mass media we are all exposed to in popular culture encompasses: film, television, music, entertainment, and magazines.
- B. Given that pop-culture creates the predominant environment that we live and grow up in, we need to ask three essential questions:
 - 1. What story is pop-culture telling us about sex?
 - 2. What story is pop-culture telling us about women’s sexuality?
 - 3. What story is pop-culture telling us about men’s sexuality?
- C. Sex? Pop-culture tells us that sex is everything. Sex is glorified as the end-all be-all of the human experience. The “*sex sells*” mantra pervades all of mass media. The irony is that while glorifying sex as everything, the culture has actually cheapened sex and stripped it of its meaning and significance.
- D. Women’s sexuality? The message to women is *conform*. Conform to the idealized hyper-sexualized image of femininity. Women and girls are taught this singular message from their youth – your worth is measured by your sexuality. This is the byproduct of a sexist worldview in which women are believed to possess less value than men and the value they do possess is sexual. Therefore, to achieve visibility a woman or girl must objectify her sexuality. There are two specific ways that women and girls are socialized to conform in today’s pop-culture in order to gain visibility:
 - 1. By being hot
 - 2. By being available for sex

- E. Men's sexuality? The message that is directed towards men is *Consume*. Specifically, consume women. Men are socialized to believe that masculinity is defined by ones ability to dominate and control a woman. This has its ultimate expression in sexual conquest. So when a man is promiscuous he is considered a stud, a pimp, or a player. This is the reinforcement of his toxic pseudo-masculine belief system.
- F. The feminine double bind – Unfortunately, when women or girls behave sexually as they are pressured to do, they are shamed as sluts and whores. This is the impossible dilemma that women and girls face in a sexist culture.
- G. Conclusion – The story we're being told through pop-culture is that sex for women is not about achieving pleasure, intimacy, affection, connection and love; it is about being available for a man to consume – and in that equation, you can expect visibility, but also reproach.

IV. PORN-CULTURE'S INFLUENCE ON OUR SEXUALITY

- A. Given that porn occupies such a central position in the sexual education of those growing up in our world today we need to ask three essential questions:
 - 1. What story is porn telling us about sex?
 - 2. What story is porn telling us about women's sexuality?
 - 3. What story is porn telling us about men's sexuality?
- B. Sex? Porn is modeling a dissociated, prostituted sexuality. It pictures the sexual act disconnected from any meaningful relationship.
- C. Women's sexuality?
 - 1. Women are only as valuable as the body parts they possess.
 - 2. Women must always be sexually available for all forms of sex.
 - 3. Women never say "no".
 - 4. Women are all nymphomaniacs that have no sexual discretion or preference, just as long as they can get it.
- D. Men's sexuality?

1. Manhood is measured by ones ability to dominate women.
2. Men are entitled to use and degrade women’s bodies as sexual commodities.
3. Men are unfeeling amoral life-support systems for their state of arousal.

V. EXPOSING OUR VULNERABILITIES

- A. Why is the story we’re being told through pop-culture and porn-culture so effective at hijacking and derailing our sexuality?
- B. External factors – *Pressure*. Images affect behavior, which is why companies spend billions on advertising. We are bombarded over and over and over – “If we will do abc, we will get xyz” or “If we look like abc, we will get xyz”.
- C. Internal factors – Our *vulnerabilities* are exploited.
 1. For a woman, her vulnerability is in her desire to be affirmed in her beauty by gaining the approval of a man.
 2. For a man, his vulnerability is in his desire to be with a beautiful woman as a validation of his manhood.
 3. Notice that the book of Proverbs warns men over and over about the seductive woman, but never warns women about the seductive man. Is the bible sexist? No, Solomon was killing two birds with one stone – both of our weaknesses are exposed in these passages: *The weakness for a woman is to exploit her beauty and the weakness for a man is to consume her beauty.*

VI. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A TOXIC SEXUALITY

- A. **#1: Breakdown of relationships** – Our vision of each other has become obscured by our vision of sex. Men are conditioned to view women in a dissociated, objectified, masturbational way. They are out of touch in real relationships, seeing women as a *thing to conquer and consume* instead of a *person to love and serve*. This pollution of our vision inhibits the natural cultivation of healthy relationships that grow subtly and gradually. The result is that we are being driven apart, not drawn together – resulting in the corruption of intimacy, the destruction of love, the fundamental breakdown of the human relationship, and the implosion of the nuclear family.

- B. **#2: The commodification of sex** – Women are socialized to be sold for sex and men are socialized to buy sex. Consider all the ways men are encouraged to use women’s bodies as sexual entertainment: Cheerleaders, Ring Girls, Hooters, Bikini Baristas, Lingerie Cleaning Services, Bikini Barber Shops, Strippers, Porn Stars, and Prostitutes.
- C. **#3: Perpetration of sexual violence** – Whether against women or children, sexual assault is at an all-time high.
 - 1. A former prostituted women once said, “We are very close to death. All women are. And we are very close to rape and we are very close to beating. And we are inside a system of humiliation from which there is no escape for us. We use statistics not to try to quantify the injuries, but to convince the world that those injuries even exist. Those statistics are not abstractions [to me]...I hear about the rapes one by one by one by one, which is also how they happen... Every three minutes a woman is being raped. Every eighteen seconds a woman is being beaten. There is nothing abstract about it. It is happening right now as I am speaking.”

VII. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- A. **#1: Develop a media literacy**
- B. **#2: Reclaim our sexuality**
- C. **#3: Develop a healthy masculine identity**
- D. **#4: Develop a healthy feminine identity** – Besides the obvious failure of creativity in the presentation of women in mass media, the story that is being told is simply not true. Certainly femininity includes a much broader and more prolific spectrum than just sexuality. Women are intellectual, emotional, spiritual and religious; creative, athletic, familial, political, caring, compassionate, relational, strong, they may desire autonomy and independence, or family and children, they long for commitment and fidelity, they are searching for deeper meaning and purpose; they long to have an impact in the world. Simply put, women are not a sexual buffet for the gratuitous appetites of men; they are image bearers of God and the crown of His creation.
- E. Conclusion – We are in a dark hour of sexual turbulence across the planet, but God Has promised He will have a Bride without spot or blemish.

“He [will] present her (the Bride of Christ) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27)