

A Sexual Resolution for the New Year

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Sex is wonderful! In fact, sex is a gloriously good gift of God. Christian dad, do your adolescent sons and daughters know this truth? Have you directly and unapologetically taught your sons this truth and have you led your wife to do so with your daughters? If you fear having an open and honest conversation about sex would increase the chance of your adolescent child being involved in sexual promiscuity, then you have an insufficiently Christian understanding of sexuality. The opposite is true.

Taking every thought captive to obey Jesus (2 Cor. 10:5) includes sexual thoughts. The sexual liberationist abstracts sex from God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sex, for them, is about personal self-expression and self-fulfillment. Consequently, their pursuit of sexual satisfaction is a never-ending treadmill of vain experimentation. Within this impoverished worldview, pornography makes perfect sense. The Christian father who refuses to teach his children a biblical view of sex joins the sexual liberationists in abstracting sex from God, albeit from the opposite direction. Perhaps this abstraction of sex from family Christian discipleship provides some explanation for the relative impotence of the church in effectively responding to the contemporary porn epidemic as it spreads within our own walls.

Our ubiquitous sex culture has not produced greater a fascination with sex, as Russell D. Moore has noted, it has produced a culture bored with sex ("The Spiritual Danger of Boring Sex," Southern Seminary Magazine, 6-9). I saw this boredom on full display in a young man sitting next to me in a barber's chair as he responded to a question of whether or not he went to a strip club on his 21st birthday, "Yes, I did, but it was boring. Who needs strip clubs when you have porn." It is not uncommon in our present culture to counsel a recently married couple trying to figure out what to do because they have been unable to consummate the marriage since his sexual senses have been dulled through almost constant exposure to pornography from his early adolescence. When sex is abstracted from Jesus, it is corrupted. This is true whether it is liberal atheistic progressives, or evangelical conservatives abstracting it.

After 20 years of counseling young adults who have grown up in evangelical churches, I know the message they have been hearing from the church and their parents: "Sex is wrong, do not do it." Now, I know that those churches and parents are actually intending to emphasize that sex outside of marriage is wrong, but too often that is the only thing we have told them about sex. In fact, evangelical programs to promote sexual abstinence have often grounded their appeal for abstinence in narcissism rather than the gospel. I can remember one Sunday school teacher saying, "You don't want to have sex before marriage because you won't be able to live out your dreams. After all, how will you be able to go to college with a baby? You are too special to ruin your life." Living out ones narcissistic dreams is at odds with Christianity whether it expresses itself in sexual libertinism or sexual abstinence.

Just say, “no” to sex, so that you can say, “yes” to college is not a Christian sexual ethic. Could it be we avoid talking to our adolescents about sex because we are not really sure what to say since we do not think about sex in the context of Christian discipleship? A biblical approach to sex begins with its goodness and then warns about ways God’s good gift can be corrupted. Christian parents must tell adolescents that sexual feelings and desires are good and meant to be satisfied and enjoyed in marriage. In other words, sexual desire is God-given, and should be directed toward finding a spouse. Within the context of marriage, the physical one-flesh union of a husband with his wife in sexual intimacy is to be enjoyed and celebrated as a vital way of exulting in Gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:32, Rev. 19:9). This poses a problem if we want our children to live out our dream of their individual success. Focusing on marriage could get in the way of our plan for their lives. It is good and right to say true love waits for marriage. However, it is wholly different to suggest that true love waits for college, career, and a fantastic house in the suburbs—and then marriage.

Christian fathers, your adolescent sons and daughters will have thoughts about sex. The only question for you to answer is who will shape those thoughts? Christian parents often excuse their sexual silence by saying it would be too awkward to talk to them about sex. That attitude is tantamount to saying, “I do not have the courage to talk to my children about something so weighty and intimate, I will just let the movies, television, and kids in the locker room take care of it and hope for the best.” Parental silence about sex and sexual desire is a cowardly failure to love. Your adolescent children desperately need you to help shape their thoughts and desires about sex in a cruciform way and to help them develop convictions about how they will respond to inevitable sexual temptation (Prov. 5:1-5, 20-21; 7:1-5; 23:26-28; 31:3). Some Christian parents naively assume that if they shelter their adolescents from sex altogether, then their kids will not face sexual temptation. They forget that lust does not originate in Hollywood, but in the hearts of sinful men.

Adolescent children desperately need Christian fathers and mothers to look them directly in the eyes, and with wide-eyed wonder, communicate to them that sex is wonderful; after all, God designed sex. They need to hear Christian parents say the reason to remain sexually pure is that the monogamous sexual union of a husband and wife is honorable and uniquely transcends daily life by pointing to the glorious cosmic mystery of the love relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-33). Christian marital sex is not getting away with something naughty, it is an act of worship. Immoral sexual behavior constitutes lying to the world about the absolute self-sacrificial commitment of Christ to his bride, the church.

Sex education in a Christian home is a key component of gospel education. Christian dad, you are accountable to lead your family and to lead your children into Christ-centered, biblical manhood and womanhood. Will you make a sexual resolution for the new year? Will you commit to teach your adolescent sons a Christian view of sex and lead your wife to do the same with your daughters? Sex is a wonderful and gloriously good gift from God. Your adolescent children desperately need you to not only believe it, but to also unapologetically say it to them.