

# Sexuality—part 1

## Grace and Truth—part 13

July 16, 2023

### **DAY 1: The secular and the spiritual “war”**

1. Some background:

- a. In our series on Grace and Truth, we begin getting into particular issues.
- b. We have spent twelve weeks dealing with the issue of absolute truth and why secular mankind turns away from any notion of absolute truth.
- c. There are “natural,” innate reasons which we have studied. No one is honestly unbiased when it comes to truth. We all come to the table of truth with our mind firmly made up. Philosophers call these pre-beliefs or presuppositions. Everybody has them.
- d. If you relate to that statement, I would lovingly challenge you to explore why your mind is already made up. Have you honestly studied what the bible really says about sexuality, or do you tend to jump to exaggerated conclusions that sound biblical but are not biblical? (The straw man argument creates a caricature of the real things and throws darts at the caricature). We are all “open-minded” to new ideas with which we already agree, but to consider new ideas outside our present frame of thinking is the true test of an open-mind.

2. Today’s culture war revolves around sexuality, a “hotbed” of contention (pun intended).

3. A secular coed put it this way. “A God who makes moral prohibitions against what I consider my gender, sexual freedom, sexual expression, and enjoyment cannot be a good God.”

4. God’s moral law is meant to protect us and provide for us. Instead, secular young people consider God’s law regarding sexuality as either archaic, wrong, and/or oppressive.

5. One of the barriers to young secularists sometimes are members of the Christian community. Sometimes we have come across as mean-spirited and judgmental. If that’s your experience, I am profoundly sorry for that. We will look at why that often happens later this week.

6. Here is how we Christians are supposed to relate to those outside the faith.

*Colossians 4:4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

a. There is the speaking the **truth** side. What do you notice?

b. There is **how** we speak the truth—our words and attitudes. What do you notice?

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## DAY 2: How are Christians to deal with the “spiritual” side?

1. Christians have been like a pendulum on how we communicate God’s truth regarding sexual morality.
2. On one hand, as we said, we come across as mean-spirited and “holier than thou.” That is not loving. That is obviously wrong and needs to change.
3. But on the other hand, because we fear the backlash of secular culture, we are cowardly, and then waffle on the clear teachings of scripture, hoping to make them more palatable to the current culture. That, too, is wrong. When we do that, we are not being honest with you, and that is wrong. That is also not loving.

4. Here is the standard to which we aim.

*Ephesians 4:15 ... speaking the truth in love...*

5. We are attempting to do both of these. It takes a great deal of wisdom to do this. During some seasons of life all you can do is the “love” part. If your friend is closed to God’s truth, that’s all you can do. But we also hope to share God’s truth, since it is meant to both protect and provide for our friend or loved one.

6. The clear teaching of scripture have been clearly understood for over two thousand years. It is only recently that some have watered down the clear teachings and make them more obscure, and even changing the clear meaning to something else. This is intellectually dishonest.

*1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,<sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

7. Peter tells us to be honest about the truths of our faith. We are to give honest answers. It is our responsibility to try to answer a skeptic’s questions. A skeptic may not like the answers we give, but we must try. Most people appreciate when we are honest with them.

8. Grace and truth are to go together.

*John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.***

<sup>15</sup> *(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ”)* <sup>16</sup> *Out of his fullness we have all received **grace in place of grace already given.*** <sup>17</sup> *For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.***

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

### Day 3: Jesus rebukes the religious conservatives. A case study...

1. Jesus is confronted with the issue of sexual immorality. He will speak to both sides of the cultural debate. He will speak to the sexually immoral and to the religious conservatives of His day who pride themselves on obeying God's sexual ethic.

2. As we'll see, Jesus is going to rebuke the conservatives. If you have run into Christians who have demeaned you as less than human, I'm very sorry for that. Our relational style should be gracious. Unfortunately, what we have done is approach this subject and someone the way the Pharisees did with the woman in our story.

*John 8:2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

3. The religious conservatives saw themselves as the guardians of God's moral law. Ironically, these men hated Jesus, while the "outcasts" of life loved Jesus!

*...But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

4. Jesus rebukes the religious conservatives in this story. What was the essence of His rebuke?

5. The Pharisees needed to be rebuked for several reasons.

a. They wrongly defined as adultery as just the act, thereby taking themselves off the hook.

*Matt. 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>j</sup> <sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

b. They used the wrong metric when thinking about their own morality. Instead of comparing themselves to God's standard, they compared themselves to others whom they considered less moral.

6. This begs two questions for us Christians:

a. Do we redefine Jesus' moral law to suit ourselves?

b. Do we compare our morality to others or to God's standards?

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

#### DAY 4: Jesus addresses the woman

1. The Pharisees had set what they considered an ironclad trap for Jesus. Instead, like a martial arts expert, Jesus turned the trap back on them!

*John 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.*

2. To their credit, the Pharisees saw their hypocrisy. Though they could have done better, at least they walked away.

3. Overemphasizing someone else's moral failures and underestimating one's own moral failures is not just a conservative problem. It is a human problem. People on the other side of the sexual culture war often do the exact same thing, claiming to be taking the higher moral road of authenticity over self-righteousness, little seeing that they are doing the same thing.

4. And now we conclude the story. Jesus addresses the woman.

*John 8:10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"*

<sup>11</sup> *"No one, sir," she said.*

***"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."***

5. If we are honest about Jesus, we must hear both of His concluding statements that fit together.

a. He has sensed her genuine repentance: "Neither do I condemn you."

b. He encourages her toward a better life: "Go now and leave your life of sin."

6. Jesus has confronted both self-righteousness and secular sexuality.

7. As His follower, Jesus gets to disagree with me and tell me what is right and wrong with my sexuality. If you decide to follow Him, it will be incumbent on you to allow Him to disagree with you and tell you what is right and wrong in sexuality. He gets to say to us, "Go and sin no more."

8. If my secular friends cannot stand Jesus' words, "Go and sin no more," I understand that internal battle. Jesus used the imagery of carrying a cross, meaning, dying to the life *without* God at the center, in order to find real life *with* God at the center!

*Luke 14:27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

9. That happened to me as a college junior. My dating life needed a major overhaul. I had to say "no" to the "get her in bed as quickly as you can" culture in which I lived.

10. What I discovered is resurrection on the other side of death to immorality. It was a struggle to change, and there were some moral failures along the way, but I found real life, through redeemed sexuality!

11. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## DAY 5: Two roads, and an honest assessment

1. The real question of life is simply this. Which road will lead me to the best destination? If the destination is what Jesus called real “life,” or what we call fulfillment, satisfaction, or that missing “it” we are all chasing, we must evaluate the road we are travelling. Just because the *immediate* road *seems* to be taking me where I want to go, or it *feels* like the right road, doesn’t mean that the same road will *actually* get me there!

2. Jesus gave us this mini-parable.

*Matthew 7:13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

3. To my secular friends, these verses should give you several important observations about life and human nature.

a. Just because the “crowd” or “everybody” is going the way I want to go doesn’t mean that is the right road (verse 13).

b. Just because a road is narrow or difficult doesn’t mean it’s the wrong road (verse 14).

c. Immediate pleasure is fools’ gold. It tricks you into believing you’re on the right road.

d. What may seem like the right road may actually take me to a place that leads to “destruction,” or ruin, emptiness, loneliness, depression or addiction.

*Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self**, which is being **corrupted by its deceitful desires**; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

4. What do you learn from Ephesians 4:22-24?

*John 10:10 The thief comes to steal, and kill, and destroy, **but I came that they may have life, life abundantly.***

5. What I discovered is the “life” everyone is searching for is found on Jesus’ terms, not on my terms, where life is defined by Jesus, not by me.

6. If you will not accept a God that disagrees with you, then you are essentially saying that you are sufficient to be your own god.

7. It takes real humility to honestly assess how our plan is working out. How is your life going with you in charge of your sexuality?

8. Eventually, often the greatest shame, the greatest regrets, the greatest pain is associated with our sexuality, because it is so close to the heart of who we are.

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?