

Sexuality

by John A. Byers

Human sexuality pervades almost every area of one's life. Sexuality implies more than the physical differences between male and female and goes beyond the physical act of marriage. It is the expression of the entire person living out the symphony of human existence.

Christians need a biblical comprehension of sexuality. Understanding their sexuality is essential for determining relations with other people and coping with God-given physical urges. Such insight enables them to both understand the true meaning of sexuality and reject the ideologies coming from the culture. Society has become permissive because it has redefined the basis and meaning of sexuality. It has made sexuality a casual relationship expressed in a physical act without regard for the whole person or the consequences beyond the enjoyment of the moment. Thus, respect for personhood has been diminished, while selfishness has been elevated to a level not intended by God.

Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Phrase two of this verse is an explanation of the first phrase. Genesis 1:26 suggests that God is not a solitary Being but one of relationships. Since men and women are created to fellowship with God, they are not to function as isolated beings. Created in God's image, they are social beings. Because they are essentially like one another, they have the potential of close fellowship. She and he are personalities in God's image. But because

they are unlike each other as well, there is another dynamic to consider, namely, human sexuality.

In considering the biological aspects of sexuality, one is reckoning with only one part of humanity. To consider the relational aspect of sexuality is to see male-female from another and higher perspective, i.e., their being made in God's image. Because of being created in God's image (personality) and being created female and male (sexuality), their relational potential lies beyond the experience of physical intimacy.

The male-female relationship has two primary dynamics. One is to understand affirm one's sexual identity-being male or female. It is important, if one is to experience sexuality as God intended, for a person to be thankful for being male or female.

A second dynamic carries one beyond sexual identity and involves the opposite sex. Recognition of maleness and femaleness does not necessarily involve sexual intimacy. Male and female are created not only for procreation but also for relational value. There is interdependency between the two that can enrich both individuals.

Human sexuality has ramifications that transcend both non-married and married relationships. The relation of male/female helps individuals to experience the image of God. God is a being-in-relation - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is best understood through the relationships of his various

personages. So it is with men/women, their sexual nature is best experienced as it stands in relationship to their being male/female.

The acceptance of one's male/female nature is important in the marriage relationship also. It places love as more than a sexual desire. There is recognition of a mutuality of fulfillment by each reaching out to the other person, each assuming responsibility for the other's wholeness. This acceptance also has significance for the physical sex act itself. God's mandate for marital sex does not deny natural desire. Rather, placed within marriage, where emotional bonding is occurring, sexual expression is freeing and fulfilling. The becoming one flesh suggests an exchange that cannot be retracted or denied.

Genesis 4:1 (KJV) calls it "knowing" when it says, "Adam knew his wife Eve." The word "knowing" implies a deep, inexpressible exchange of communication, an experience of mutual identity. It is the becoming of "one flesh" in Genesis 2:24. Marriage provides the right relationship at the appropriate times and with the right person for the physical sexual union.

The oneness that results from the sexual experience gives reason for abstinence before marriage. Dwight Small says the physical act "involves and affects the whole man and the whole woman in the very center and depth of their being so that afterwards neither can ever be as if they had never come together." Paul suggests that sex out of wedlock is to become a member of the community of evil (I Corinthians 6:16-17).

Infidelity in marriage is the failure to maintain responsibility for each other's wholeness. Sexual relations with one other than the spouse damage the personality of the marriage. Unity of relationships is broken.

Infidelity also occurs when it is felt no longer necessary to keep the covenant of the relationship. Gone is the belief that the

spouse is really human. Instead of viewing the spouse as the image of God and lifelong partner, he or she is seen as a physical object or worse. Thus the attractive attributes of the other are lost because they are detached from the faithful commitment between people. Consequently, there is the temptation to break the marriage covenant and seek intimacy elsewhere. The results are dehumanizing of all persons involved and they destroy the bonds of marriage.

God gives human sexuality for fulfillment, enjoyment, and procreation. To truly experience humanity is to find what it means to be created in God's image. Therefore, Christians should celebrate their individual sexuality, recognizing their power to be wholesomely sexual in relationship with one other person.

I - Dwight Harvey Small, Christian Celebrate Your Sexuality.