

Chapter 19

The Meaning of Sexuality

*The most important education is instruction in how to
deal with sexual love.
—Sun Myung Moon*

Of all the awesome powers of love, sexual love is perhaps the most formidable. It is inextricably intermingled not only with the impulse to bond for life but also the creation of life, and the passing down of genes and lineage. Indeed, sexuality itself taps into the deepest aspects of being human. It is a power as deep and elemental as the wind or the sea and just as impossible to tame or even fully comprehend. For this reason, educating for true love necessarily involves imparting insights about sexuality and coaching in directing this marvelous force.

Sex within its rightful place of marriage is an expression of deepest trust and affection, bonding the two partners together in deep communion and joy. Spouses' physical communion is the origin of families that in turn are the schools for learning love and what it means to be human. Sex outside of marriage, however, is like a fire outside of its hearth, a threat to all concerned. As both a primal urge and one of the highest possible pleasures, unless well disciplined, it is uniquely prone to compulsiveness that overrides the conscience.¹ For these reasons, religious traditions and societies throughout history have provided strong guidelines for sexual expression. Its importance cannot be overstated. "The moral man,"

reads a Confucianist text, “finds the moral law beginning in the relation between man and woman” (Doctrine of the Mean 12).²

Yet keeping sexuality only in the service of true love represents a formidable challenge. Because sexuality promises great pleasure, it invites every manner of misuse. Because it involves the whole person, distorted sexual attitudes and behaviors are particularly deeply rooted and hard to change. Celebrating sexuality while channeling it away from selfishness has always been a difficult task both to each individual and to society, but never more so than amidst the permissive standards of the present age. What is the true significance of sexuality? What is its meaning within marriage? What responsibilities are inherent in sexual love? What is the original standard for sexual morality? How can this address contemporary beliefs? We will explore these issues in this and the following chapters.

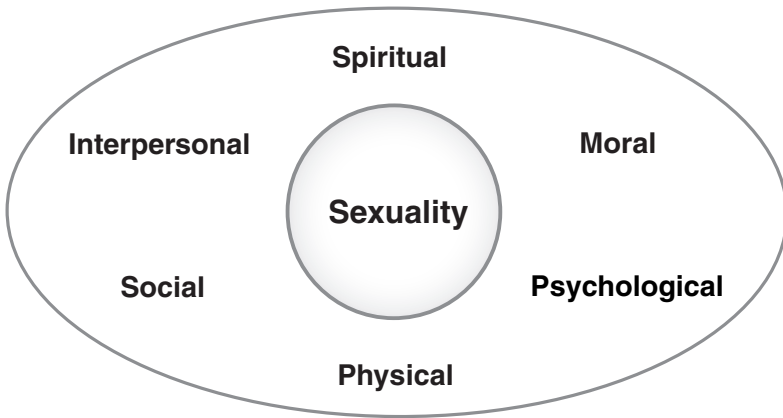
Sexuality and Its Significance

Sexuality of course is more than sex. It includes all that an individual possesses in mind and body that is male or female; it is the “aspect of our being that lies behind, produces and is given expression by our physical sexual characteristics and reproductive capacity,” in the words of Christian ethicist Stephen J. Grenz.³ One’s masculinity or femininity is “not operative in one restricted area of life but is rather at the core and center of our total life response,” as the Catholic Church has put it.⁴ This is why it is also fundamental to one’s sense of identity. We can no more imagine being neither man nor woman than we can comfortably tolerate not knowing the gender of another. Personhood itself is inescapably a sexual matter.

Because sexuality permeates personhood, then sexual relations have all the dimensions of a whole person. An individual has a material body, thoughts, feelings, conscience, connection to higher meaning, interconnections with the family, community and beyond. So it is with sexuality. There are the physical as well as the psychological aspects. There are interpersonal, social and cultural

factors too, as well as certain important moral and spiritual implications. Thus, sexual union is necessarily a person-to-person encounter, even when the intent is only for a body-to-body one. Much of the moral dimension of sexual expression has to do with these whole-person realities. It explains also why it is much more than just a private matter between partners.

Traditional ways of regarding the self and sexuality favor this more holistic view. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh,” Genesis declares (2.24). Since “cleaves” represents intense bonding of the two partners, it suggests there is more than oneness of flesh as a result; some say a better translation is closer to “one person.”



Sexuality Reflects the Dimensions of the Whole Person

Reflects the Heart Impulse

Because male has no meaning apart from female, and vice versa, sexuality also means incompleteness (see Chapter 12). In this sense, the sex instinct is the biological counterpart to the spiritual heart impulse. Ethicist Lewis B. Smedes describes sexuality

as the “human impulse towards intimate communion.”⁵ It impels us towards a close connection with another person, in defiance of contemporary beliefs in individual self-sufficiency as well as our defensive reaction to isolate ourselves after yet another painful encounter.

Not only the sexual urge and act but also the very organs themselves all give obvious testimony to the principle of living for another and with another. This is at the core of what Pope John Paul II called the “nuptial meaning of the body,” that is, its capacity for union and communion through selfless giving.⁶ Rabbi Shmuley Boteach observes that sex is “simply the only human activity that physically necessitates another human being.”⁷ In this sense, the genital organs symbolize the desire of the heart for conjugal oneness. The sexual parts of the body are the only organs that cannot fulfill their fullest function without their counterpart in a member of the opposite sex; they are almost useless otherwise. It is the same with the spiritual heart; it cannot find fulfillment without the beloved either. Indeed, the heart and the sexual parts are connected. One moves the other; there is a mysterious link of reinforcement between the communion of lovers’ hearts and union of their genitals.

Thus, the man must offer his body to the woman for her to experience the meaning of her own physical sexuality, and vice versa. This primal, inescapable need thus draws the two sexes to bridge the divide and lend their strengths and concede their weakness for one another. In this way, the sexual urge embodies the innate push of masculinity and femininity towards oneness, towards greater love and completeness.

Sanctuary of the body

Moreover, it is this correspondence between the spiritual heart and the physical reproductive organs that is the basis for the universal regard for sexual modesty, even among peoples who do not wear clothes. Just as individuals show self-respect by revealing their heart only to special people in their lives, so people honor the sexual parts of the body by hiding them from public view. If the body is the

temple of the spirit, then this area represents the innermost sanctuary, the holiest place, the shrine and palace of love. A sense of the sacredness of the genital organs may have been behind the ancient Roman custom of men making oaths with their hand on their private parts. Certainly it helps to explain why Yahweh asked of Hebrew males to be circumcised and bear the mark of their special covenant with Him there.

Sacredness of Sexuality

The link between the heart and sexuality also implies its spiritual dimension. The way that partners utterly lose themselves during physical union has always suggested its transcendent side. This is one of the reasons people have historically posited sex as a spiritually elevating force in itself, heedless of its moral context, and even worshipped it. This kind of perennial fallacy coupled with the pernicious power of sex in general—not to mention the ease with which even spiritually based personal relationships can become sexualized and destructive—have all contributed to why some of the world religions tend to scrupulously separate sex from matters relating to God.

Thus, sex and spirituality are not commonly discussed together. Yet it is simply a further reflection of the unique and paradoxical position we humans occupy as spiritual yet embodied beings, the microcosm of heaven and earth. Sexuality in many ways reflects this most dramatically. The sex urge is an instinctual drive yet it allows participants to co-create an eternal being with God. It is a spiritual impulse towards oneness, even as it craves bodily expression and sensual play. It is a fount of carnal delight, while at the same time inviting a person into the vast possibilities of moral and spiritual growth present within the spouses' and parents' realms of heart.

God and Human Sexuality

The sexual act has great and unique significance to the Creator. This can best be grasped by considering lovemaking between a fully mature husband and wife. Such individuals would have achieved unity of mind and body, word and deed, each standing as a living mirror of the fullness of the Divine Parent's heart and character. As this resonates with the greater integrity within God, each would also be in communion with Him and attracting His joy and blessing. His interest would be amplified however when they came to the marriage bed. At the moment of conjugal union between them, the spirit and flesh join in their deepest oneness. Thus, the couple would be an even greater reflection of the Divine at this moment than before. This is not to mention the celebration of self-giving that their lovemaking represents. God naturally wants to participate in such a beautiful tribute to His own nature of unselfish love.

At the same time, their sexual intercourse also signifies the unity of the couple's masculinity and femininity. This is yet another facet of resembling the Creator, the origin of all the masculine and feminine natures in the manifest world. God delights in the dramatic interplay of opposites represented in the man and woman's sexual play that echoes the same harmony of extremes within Himself.

Finally, as yet another magnet for the Divine Parent, the marvel of spirit begetting spirit through the flesh is an inherent potential in the couple's intercourse. The union of husband and wife creates the context for God to give rise to a son or daughter, an eternal spiritual being through them—the greatest miracle of all. Thus God is captivated by the multidimensional beauty, fecundity and power of human sexual union, perhaps the most singularly sacred phenomenon in earthly life.

Vertical force of love

If the husband and wife's passionate embrace represents the most complete and potent kind of horizontal love, then divine grace

can be likened to a perfect vertical force of love that interpenetrates the couple at a ninety-degree angle. Through marital coupling, God's vertical love expands horizontally on earth. It also extends into the future through the power of conception and lineage.

Reverend Moon emphasizes that God is the third partner in the marriage bed of a true husband and wife; it is the most sacred place where heaven and earth merge and rejoice. Such a view is echoed in the Jewish writings that declare that the feminine aspect of God is present in marital relations. Islam has couples consecrating their lovemaking by offering a prayer. The Tantric yoga tradition speaks of sexual union as clearing all the body's charkas and opening a person up to higher energies.

The holiness of sexuality is the reason behind many of the religious traditions' prohibitions against fornication, adultery, homosexuality and lesser offenses. This negative emphasis invites charges of sexual repression. Yet one can readily argue that the purpose of these prohibitions is to highlight the sacredness, the unique importance and beauty of sexuality, and therefore it is a tribute to a fundamentally positive view of sex. In the Bible, even the older man is reminded, "Let your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love" (Proverbs 5.18-19). Traditional prohibitions also recognize how readily sexuality is corrupted and misdirected into idolatry and abuse of power. Undisciplined sexual desire reduces people to things to be exploited, consumed and possessed. Sexuality is also highly vulnerable to becoming compulsive. This is why the joys of sexual love are to be bounded by the moral responsibilities of marriage.

Sex in Marriage

Sexual relations are so bound up with the conjugal relationship that until recent centuries it was the defining and irrevocable act of marriage itself. What had begun as a promise between the partners and the families involved was now "consummated"—made

complete. Through physical union, it was believed that a blood bond had been established between the man and woman. Pressuring an unwed couple that had already engaged in sexual relations to marry was simply to formalize what had in some essential way already occurred. In this regard, earlier societies were more in touch with human realities than the contemporary world with its preference for contractual relations and recreational sex.

Just as conjugal love is unique in that it seeks to be shared with only with one partner, so genital sexual relations are its unique physical bonding process, shared only with one's mate. Within the context of the unselfishness, commitment and faithfulness of marriage, sex crowns the relationship with its own special glory. Since sex encompasses the partners in their totality, it is the very language and embodiment of commitment between two people who have pledged to join their lives and create a new family. This is one reason why the sexual relationship reaches its greatest fulfillment in married love. "Marriage is not just for the control of sex," writes Smedes, "it is for the liberation and fulfillment of sex."⁸ Just as the restrictions of the Japanese haiku form yield poetry of striking beauty and depth, so sexual love likewise reaches its zenith of power and beauty within and indeed because of the structure and boundaries of marriage. Let us explore in more detail eight aspects of the special role of sexual union in marriage.

Role of Sex in Marriage

1. Strengthens the bond and sense of exclusivity
2. Helps mend rifts and revitalize the relationship
3. Substantiates love for perpetuity
4. Symbolizes the expansiveness and fruitfulness of love
5. Represents the harmonizing of opposites
6. Encapsulates the moral work of marriage
7. Represents mutual submission to a higher purpose
8. Invites God to participate in the marriage

1. Strengthens the Bond and Sense of Exclusivity

Sex intermingles hearts and minds in a powerful bond. It is both the manifestation and the reinforcement of the couple's covenant with one another. Physical union fortifies the unique oneness of the spouses' lives in all the other aspects—emotionally, financially, as parents and in destiny. When daily life pulls the attention and energy towards children and other people in the home and community, sexual relations can reaffirm the central place the partner occupies in each spouse's life.

Physical intimacy calms and reassures in a way that complements verbal expressions of caring and gestures of thoughtfulness. Because it is an exclusive experience, a secret shared between spouses, it fosters a potent sense of intimacy and emotional security. Sexual relations create a deep-seated, nonrational attachment that grounds the marital commitment. Even at times when there may be little else in common during the shifting seasons of marriage, sex can be a reassuring point of connection until emotional closeness can be reestablished.

2. Helps Mend Rifts and Revitalize the Relationship

Sex is uniquely relaxing. The intoxicating feeling of togetherness and physical release, the all-absorbing sense of time standing still and being at the center of the universe provide a welcome relief from the stresses of daily life and the sadness of inevitable losses. Genesis speaks of Rebecca consoling Isaac after his mother's death by making love in the same way that the Book of Samuel tells of King David comforting Bathsheba after their child's death.

Further, the nonverbal physical communion of sex can help defuse heated arguments and petty divisive issues by reminding the couple of their essential commitment and mutual need. The playfulness of physical intimacy dispels the sense of threat that results from discord and nourishes the sense of friendship. Especially in the beginning of marriage when the spouses are learning to accommodate one another and many conflicts are arising,

the excitement of exploring sex together can be a grounding experience that carries the couple through hard times.

3. Substantiates Love for Perpetuity

Through sexual union, the love that otherwise would remain largely an emotional and spiritual bond between the husband and wife can be made substantial in two senses of the word. On one hand, there is the simple bodily oneness. On the other hand, there is the more important manifestation: through bearing children and perpetuating lineage. Sexuality is the means of participation in the circle of life, the great ongoing creativity and generativity of the universe and the legacy of one generation to another. Lineage is the aspect of sexuality that allows love to endure for more than one generation, notes Reverend Moon, and to have its imprint on eternity. From the viewpoint of a spiritual afterlife, the interdependence of mind and body means that conjugal love is anchored and rendered more complete through physical substantiation into lineage. Speaking from a physical standpoint, posterity represents material immortality.

As this instrument of lineage, sex represents the hope of ancestors for their love and life to have continuing presence on the earth. If a spouse's body represents the culmination of all his or her ancestors' bodies, and the reproductive organs represent the culmination of that individual's material and spiritual existence, then conjugal union is the means by which entire ancestral lines meet and mix in a fundamental way. It is here where hope finds its most potent focus. Through the mystery and miracle of love transmuting into new life, every generation looks to its newborns to represent a fresh beginning for the world, and hopes that somehow the distilled nobility of countless ancestors—and the grace of God—might bring forth one or myriad saviors. Thus, sexual relations always hold this lineal significance and promise.

4. Symbolizes the Expansiveness and Fruitfulness of Love

This same possibility of creating a new life—and perhaps many such lives—means that sexual intercourse represents the public quality of marital love that extends beyond the spouses themselves. Parents celebrate each child as a blessing and opportunity to demonstrate the fruitfulness of their love. In a similar way, a couple's sexual embrace symbolizes this basic receptivity to be used by providence to nurture the potential for goodness in the world and leave a productive legacy. This is not to mention the simple fact that sexual bonding is the very real underpinning of society and the nation, since this coupling is the very substance of marriage, and thus is the foundation of the family and the sustenance of the next generation.

5. Represents Harmonizing of Opposites

The act of sex is the most obvious way that man and woman combine their complementary powers. Plus and minus energies come together in explosive joy, like lightning and thunder that seizes the spouses and ripples through them. In Earnest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the lovers say that they feel the earth move when they make love. Certainly the heart is moved; couples are left as refreshed and revitalized as the earth after a summer storm. The union of opposites is also potently conveyed in the fruit of sex—the offspring. Nothing so dramatizes that two genders have become one as seeing the parents' faces blended into that of the son or daughter.

Moreover, sexual union is the object lesson in how to adapt to and support the opposite sex spouse in daily life. Intercourse is experienced so differently by men and women that it requires both genders to act contrary to their natural inclinations in order to accommodate one another. For example, the husband must learn to resist his urgent and focused arousal to wait until his wife is aroused. He has to learn to expand his focus beyond the genital act. The wife must learn to respond even when emotional connection is

limited or other conditions are less than ideal. Both sexes have to give up the notion that the other is like themselves or should be. A satisfying sexual relationship means they have to learn to understand each other's differences, appreciate the value of these differences and see from the other's perspective.

6. Encapsulates the Moral Work of Marriage

The deeply vulnerable, intimate and personal quality of sexual union brings out all the complexities of learning to love and be loved by one another. Practicing true love in marriage has many mundane manifestations, but sex is a special way. In the words of Grenz:

[The] most expressive symbol of the willingness to give of self freely and totally for the sake of the pleasure and well-being of the spouse, is the sex act. In this act a person gives fully and unashamedly and becomes fully vulnerable and open to the other.⁹

There must be humility and self-forgetfulness to learn how to satisfy the mate, yet there must be self-awareness and assertiveness to express one's desires. Tensions within the larger relationship must be brought out regularly and resolved or they interfere with erotic feelings. Communication must be frank yet sensitive. Differing needs and desires must be negotiated. Shifting moods, health and aging factors and the many seasons of the relationship itself must be taken into account, as do the changing duties of parenthood, work, caregiving and so on. Accommodating each other in lovemaking in all these ways over the years teaches countless lessons and develops character in one another. In this way, sexual relations encapsulate all the moral demands and rewards of the spouse's realm of heart.

7. Represents Mutual Submission to a Higher Purpose

Sexual intercourse is a physical and spiritual experience beyond one's control. Neither the husband nor the wife can fully manage either the sensations or the outcome. In this sense, both partners ultimately surrender to being used by forces greater than themselves, to fortify love, to create life, to perpetuate lineage. This is a metaphor for the Biblical exhortation that partners "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5.21). Further, it represents a certain vulnerability and naturalness with one another, like children before their parents, since both lay aside all facades in the moment of sexual climax. Perhaps this is a sense of the Biblical meaning of to "know" one another through making love.

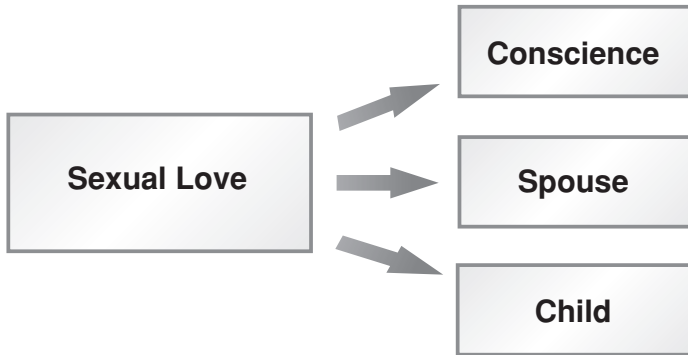
8. Invites God to Participate in the Marriage

Sexual relations hold a special allure to the Creator, as described above, for its unique potential to symbolize so much of His nature at once. The coming together of spirit and flesh, male and female, joy and fecundity magnetizes Him to the marriage bed. God enjoys the love and lovemaking between husband and wife so much that according to the Talmud, when God instructed the Hebrew people to build the temple, He specifically asked for the brass basin for the priests to be made from the metal mirrors that wives used when they groomed themselves for their husbands, because such humble objects that promote intimacy between husband and wife were most precious to Him.¹⁰ Thus, sexual union invites God to participate in the marriage.

Responsibilities of Sexual Love

The uninhibited freedom that spouses may enjoy in conjugal relations and its abundant beauty and goodness are derived from the fulfillment of responsibility that marriage represents. Sexual love like any other aspect of true love means it is dedicated for the sake of others. Who are the "others" to whom lovers are responsible?

There are three principal focuses of responsibility: to one's conscience and Creator, to one's present or future spouse, and to one's existing or future children. Let us explore each briefly.



Three Responsibilities of Sexual Love

Responsibility to the Conscience

The first responsibility is to be true to one's conscience, that which helps direct the expression of our heart's desire to find joy through love. Being responsible to the conscience encompasses several aspects. It of course represents living by the moral truths regarding the larger meaning of sexuality. It is honoring the sacredness of one's heart and body, and the power of sexuality to merge these with another's. It is respecting the gifts of love, life and lineage and the potential of sexuality to enhance or compromise these gifts. Ultimately these represent veneration of God.

In addition, respecting the conscience encompasses responsibility to the individual's parents, grandparents, clan and ancestors and to the larger clan and community. One aspect is upholding the family honor. "I've gone a little farther than I intended to sometimes," Cal, 21, admits. "But my fiancée and I have basically held the line at just holding hands. Partly it would be against what I believe

in, that lovemaking is for marriage. But partly I'd be ashamed in front of my parents. My father's first and only woman was my mother and he was pure and inexperienced when he married my Mom. It was the same with my grandparents. Dad once told me he had been really tempted one time during his marriage, but one reason he didn't give in was because he did not want to set that kind of example for me. Times are a lot different than they were for my father, but I still feel I want to uphold my family's principles."

Another aspect is acting in a way that ensures that one's sexuality is a force that blesses one's community and nation and not the opposite. Clearly there is a public dimension to the private sexual act. The possibility of conceiving children who become partly the responsibility of the community, the legal and other ramifications of the devastations to families wrought by extramarital affairs, the link between sexual morality and all other morality—these and many other reasons mean that, in the words of ethicist Raymond J. Lawrence, "what happens in any bedroom is always potentially the business of the whole human family."¹¹

Furthermore, being responsible to the conscience involves the determination to achieve maturity of heart and character, to become a person of sufficient mind and body unity to be worthy of the privilege of sexual love and able to fulfill its other two responsibilities. It follows that if we compromise our chastity in any way, that we heed our conscience in making amends and rededicating ourselves to the original standard.

Responsibility to the Present or Future Spouse

This second responsibility of sexual love recognizes the obligations of a lasting marriage. The potential for conjugal love is destroyed if shared with anyone besides the spouse. For married couples, this responsibility means a commitment to cherish and care for their husband or wife and dedicate their heart and sexual expression to them alone. This is preserving trust—the bedrock of love—by being faithful to each other. For single people, this means

to be mindful of their future husband or wife and practice fidelity to them in advance. “I imagine it’s my future wife,” explains a high school student about an empty picture frame near his bed. “I’ve had it there since I was 13, and I sometimes write letters to her when I get lonely. When my friends tell stories of fooling around with their girlfriends and I start to feel left out, I think about my future wife and how I want to save the excitement for her.”

Responsibility to Existing or Potential Children

Entering into sexual union implies this third responsibility, the commitment to the possible fruits—a new person, with long-standing material and spiritual needs. The parents have a responsibility to lovingly nurture to maturity the child they have chosen to help create. This is a right that children fervently claim; how many cling to even neglectful or abusive parents rather than come under another’s care? Without the sincere shouldering of this responsibility, parents do their children and their society a grave disservice.

A loving marriage is the most secure foundation for the nurturing of a child. There is little in social science that has been more repeatedly demonstrated.¹² Children not only want and need the attention of both of their parents, but they also naturally long for their parents to love each other and to be together. This is not only for their physical and emotional nurturing but also as an affirmation of their identity and value. Children want to know that they were born of enduring love. Thus, marriage is the most worthy anchor for the lineage being created.

Furthermore, it passes on a sound legacy and a healthy tradition for the descendants to inherit, imitate and build upon. “As a father of four,” says author Daniel Gray, “I am reaping the dividends [of investments made] years earlier when I heard and put into practice the message of abstinence before marriage,” a key dividend being his moral authority in guiding his children.¹³ All children deserve to be proud of the quality of love that conceived and raised them.

These three responsibilities of sexual love encompass the deep

dimensions of sexuality: The first to conscience, the second to love and the third to life and lineage. Only the practice of committed, life-long, mutually faithful monogamy and purity before marriage can fulfill these three inherent responsibilities. This is reflected in the words of one young adult, a male virgin, who gave these common sense conditions for beginning a sexual relationship: “a willingness to spend a lifetime with my partner and/or the children we create.”¹⁴ Such a standard allows the nurturing and cohesive power of love to bind individuals, families, and ultimately a society together in strength and safeguard their futures.

Ownership of the Sexual Organs

These inherent responsibilities translate into the most basic and universal of sexual moral codes: An individual's sexual expression is reserved solely for his or her spouse. The only priest or priestess allowed to enter the Holy of Holies in the temple of the body is the married partner (see chapter 17). “The owner of a husband's sexual organ is his wife, and the owner of a wife's sexual organ is her husband,” teaches Reverend Moon.¹⁵ “Marriage is finding the rightful master of one's most holy place of love.” He is echoing St. Paul, who taught, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (1 Corinthians 7.4). The Qur'an concurs: “The believers are . . . those who guard their private parts except with their spouses” (23.5-11).¹⁶ It is as if each individual is only the caretaker of his or her reproductive organs, attending to them as a treasure for the sake of the true owners, the spouse and the Creator.

It is a peculiar characteristic of conjugal love that lovers have a sense of belonging to their beloved. “You own my heart,” they say to each other. In the Song of Solomon, the young woman says, “My beloved is mine and I am his” (2.16). Thus they make promises of undying commitment and share their fortunes and futures, all they have and ever will have with one another. The most treasured gift

is their exclusive affection and trust, and implicit is exclusive sexual involvement. This is why a husband and wife feel a natural claim on both their beloved's love and his or her sexual expression.

Legal codes have historically recognized this expectation as "conjugal rights." This sense of entitlement or proprietorship, of course, is necessarily in the spirit of respect and care. Again, the Bible goes on to say that, "Even so, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5.28). Indeed, spouses are to love each other even as God loves and sacrifices for them. The duty to satisfy each other sexually is just part of the larger promise to care and deny themselves for each other, to be one in true love.

The world's religious traditions since antiquity have been remarkably consistent and of one accord in affirming this norm. All share the strict prohibition against sex outside of marriage, especially against infidelity within marriage. "You shall not commit adultery," is among the Ten Commandments recognized by Christians and Jews (Exodus 20.14), and affirmed by Muslims (Qur'an 6.151-53).¹⁷ Among the ten precepts recognized by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism is the charge of chastity.¹⁸ This uncompromising norm will never change or become outdated. It is everlasting, having originated in the Creator and conforming to the very design and purpose of human creation. Reverend Moon calls it the absolute sex standard. This is the standard "in the beginning" to which Jesus was referring when he commented about matters of marriage (Matthew 19.8).

The gold standard of sexual morality

This norm is indeed latent within people's consciences and "written on their hearts" (Romans 2:15). Common sense tells us abiding by this simple standard establishes the safety and security necessary for the greatest sexual satisfaction for both partners, and only these conditions will contain all the potential consequences of sexual union for the partners, their families and society. Those

involved with public health policy call it the “gold standard” of sexual morality, because it averts all the myriad negative health, social and other consequences of sexual behavior (see Chapter 20).

Confronting the Permissive Standard

However self-evident this original standard that links sexuality to marriage might be, reaffirming and reinvigorating this is sorely needed in contemporary times. The developed nations remain in—and developing countries continue to fall under the thrall of—the sexual revolution that broke down traditional taboos in the 1960s. Men and women relate in a “low-commitment culture of ‘sex without strings, relationship without rings.’”¹⁹ Popular sexual morality has evolved since the blatant hedonism and promiscuity of the early days of the sexual revolution, but the basic “free sex” ideology still persists among many people of influence. This is an outlook that sees sex apart from marriage as an act of liberation against unfair restrictions and that physical involvement is no one’s business except the partners. Fun is considered justification enough for sexual relations; lovers should expect to be discarded when someone new comes along, and marriage and parenthood are unnecessary constraints on personal freedom.

In the aftermath of rampant unwed pregnancies, divorce, disease and heartbreak, this “free sex” philosophy of sex for pleasure has progressed to what is called the “ethic of intimacy,” the belief in sex for love. Warm feelings are now the acceptable reason for men and women to enter into a physical relationship. “Loveless” or “meaningless” sex is the only kind that might be condemned. Sexual activity itself is still regarded as morally neutral; it is its motivation that determines whether it is good or not.

Such an ethic of intimacy represents a moral advance in the many cases where sexual relations are brutally selfish and exploitative. Yet it is a far cry from the authentic standard and remains just a variation of the older idea. Mutual consent, tolerance and a loose definition of love and intimacy easily legitimate temporary liaisons

based on fickle feelings. “We were crazy about each other,” recalls one young man. “I thought, ‘This is the one.’ We even discussed marriage. I gave my virginity to her. Well, so much for ‘undying love.’ Now I don’t even know where she lives.” Such an ethic does not protect partners from agreeing to use each other and inflict harm on one another and innocent parties beyond themselves, however this might go undetected at the time.

Whether the old free sex perspective or the newer ethic of intimacy, sexuality is regarded as a domain with its own rules, a unique impulse that cannot and must not be overly controlled. Sex is seen as a need to be addressed like that of food and sleep, and thus vital to mental and physical health. More than this, it is an entitlement, a right that cannot be denied.

In popular culture, sex is the universal gateway to joy, love, wisdom, transcendent experience, personal growth and discovery, worthy of endless participation, depiction and discussion. It has taken on mythic dimensions, like the Holy Grail or fountain of youth, and is almost an object of worship, as mentioned above. This is a well-worn detour from the truth. History abounds with examples of societies exalting sex out of all proportion and outside its rightful boundaries. Fertility worship in ancient Israel is a Biblical illustration. History also testifies to the fact that whenever a society allows this to happen, destruction follows. Anthropologist Carl Zimmerman and others have discovered that the acceptance and practice of adultery and other aspects of sexual license are reliable predictors of the disintegration of a civilization.²⁰

Addressing Flawed Premises

The original sexual norm represents the enlightened and responsible standard, because it respects the realities of the heart and conscience as well as the body and harmonizes unselfish love and passion according to the human nature endowed by the Creator. The absolute sex standard confronts the flawed premises of the old “free sex” ethic:

Contrasting the Different Standards of Sex Morality

Absolute Sex Morality

The primary human motive and need is to give and receive love. Sexual love is one dimension of this need and, while conjugal companionship and sexual intimacy are both good and healthy conditions, neither is a necessity, especially genital sexual relations. Sexual restraint is expected of any mature person.

Sexuality has intrinsic moral, spiritual, psychological and social dimensions.

Sexual love is a feature solely of the marital relationship. It is responsible only in the context of this commitment and it is enriching only when accompanied by both love and commitment.

Sexual expression is a responsibility and both a personal and public matter.

“Free Sex” Morality

Sex is the primary human motive and need. As such, regular sexual outlets are a necessity. Too much sexual restraint is unhealthy and destructive.

Sexuality can be simply physical pleasure; it has no necessary moral, spiritual, psychological and social dimensions.

Sexual love can be a feature of any relationship; all sexual behavior is either normal or a variation. Sex can be enriching free of love and commitment, while mutual consent and the use of birth- and disease-control make it responsible.

Sexual expression is an entitlement and a wholly personal matter.

To give credence to the timeless ethic in the present world, the prevailing permissive sex mindset needs to be refuted with arguments based upon sound reasoning and contemporary research. Let us consider and address five major myths of the old “free sex” perspective.

1. Is Sex a Need?

The first myth is: Sex is a need and an entitlement. All the other assumptions of the permissive ethic rest upon this premise. This idea is central because it carries a certain moral imperative: If people need sex to be physically and mentally healthy, then it is unfair and uncaring to deny them. Marital status, age and other concerns are simply not as important. More specifically, if a person claims he needs sex while the other simply does not want it, then there is moral pressure on the second person to yield to the first, since needs have priority over mere desires and having sex is after all always “healthy” and “normal.” The past situation of sexual aggressors having to justify why their partners should give in is reversed. Now those who want to resist sexual advances have to explain themselves. Still, the belief in this need means single people and even children resist less; they pursue earlier sexual involvement and in more insecure situations than they would otherwise be inclined to do.

Yet there obviously is no such sexual “need.” There is not a shred of scientific evidence that sexual inactivity in itself is a threat to well-being. No one has ever received medical treatment because of celibacy. On the contrary, people are treated for sexual excesses and sometimes directed to be abstinent as therapy. The real need being confused with sex is for genuine love. Though the body may desire only another body—any body—the heart needs to connect with another heart, to love and be loved as a unique, irreplaceable person. This is essential for mental and physical health. We know, for example, that infants perish for lack of attention and touch from caregivers, and spouses often die of a broken heart soon after their partner passes away. The specific need of adults is for the experience of marital love. The human spirit craves marriage for its many emotional and spiritual rewards. Sex is only one dimension of what is actually needed and desired.

This belief in sexual need and thus entitlement is a dogmatic notion arising from distortions of Freud’s ideas and the discredited

claims of Alfred Kinsey. Research in the United States, for example, shows three percent—representing hundreds of thousands—have remained celibate throughout their lives and millions worldwide have waited to begin sexual involvement until age thirty and beyond with no proven ill effects. Over 80 percent of Americans under age 60 have had either one or no sex partner in a given year. Among married couples, infidelity is the great exception. When opportunity for sex is not available for long periods of time as in military service, interest in it has been known to drop off to zero. Many married couples find themselves needing to schedule time for lovemaking because they otherwise become so busy they forget. This is hardly on par with the need for food or sleep, which asserts itself within a matter of hours if neglected and becomes stronger, not weaker, the longer it is deferred.

Some experts question if sex is even a drive at all since it is so dependent upon learning and will. “Sex is a natural urge, but the role it plays in your life and the importance you attribute to it . . . is a matter of free choice,” concludes psychologist Peter Koestenbaum.²¹ Sex researchers Masters and Johnson have stated, “In one respect, sex is like no other physical process . . . [it] can be denied indefinitely, even for a lifetime.”²² Sexual abstinence then, rather than signifying a state of unhealthy frustration, can simply represent a redirection of erotic impulses. This is obviously what most people must do most of the time. Even when a partner is available as in marriage, circumstances such as illness, work, pregnancy, menstrual cycle and the demands of parenthood dictate a large measure of self-control.

Sex as a “need” is oppressive

The belief that people need physical gratification more than they do creates its own oppression. Sexual compulsion and exploitation become much easier; it is harder for the immature and the weak to refuse their own or someone else’s sexual “need,” as mentioned above. In addition, single and married people and even chil-

dren begin to doubt themselves if they do not desire sex as much as they hear they should. Thus the vulnerable push themselves into sexual involvement earlier and in more insecure situations than they would otherwise be inclined to do. Teenagers may speak of their virginity as something they are relieved to get rid of, as if it is a burden. How tragic that innocence and the authentic need for quality and committed love are so often sacrificed at the altar of a trumped-up physical “need.”

2. Is One Partner for Life Unnatural?

The second mistaken notion that follows from the first is: Having many sexual partners is only natural. This argument is made on the basis of comparing humanity to animals, particularly nonmonogamous primates, and speaking in evolutionary terms about the need to propagate the species through many sexual liaisons. Thus monogamy and marriage are seen as almost impossibly difficult, even contrary to our genetic makeup.

Yet humans differ from these and other animals in obvious ways. First, sex among animals is a seasonal matter driven solely by instinct for the sake of reproduction. However, men and women enjoy physical union far more frequently than any animal and for far more reasons than reproduction alone. This freedom implies certain important responsibilities, as outlined above, as well as certain higher capacities that animals do not share that allow us to fulfill those responsibilities. Second, animal coupling can be indiscriminate in regard to the partner. In contrast, we are spiritual beings with a compelling need not only for meaningful and lasting love but also to be loved as a specific and whole person and to return love in the same way.

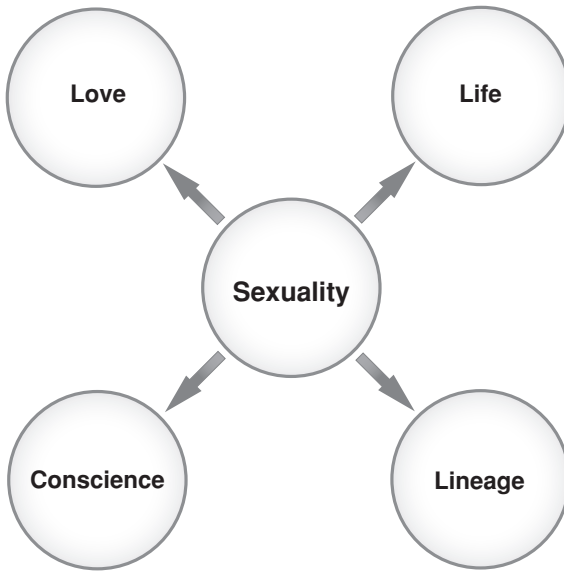
Third, human offspring require many years of parental investment to thrive, unlike primates. Moreover, the quality of the love that spawns and sustains a child affects his resilience and capacity for making a quality contribution to society. Giving birth to children that are not properly cared for does not make sense even from

a materialistic species-survival mentality. Therefore, what is truly natural for men and women to do is bond for life to care for each other and the children they produce. Even many other mammals do that, too. The human tendency to get involved in temporary sexual liaisons is the result of immaturity, bad conditioning and fallen nature—especially the tendency of the body to dominate the mind—not God-given or even evolutionary traits.

3. Is Sex a Natural Expression of Love?

The third flawed premise is: Sex is a natural expression of love. It is indeed instinctive for romantic love to want to express itself sexually. Yet it is also natural for true love to want the best for the beloved and for their relationship, and to avoid jeopardizing either one in any way. People of true love sacrifice themselves to this end. Since marriage is the optimal context for pleasurable sex and bonding that can contain any potential drawbacks, to wait until pledging this type of commitment to one another is the most authentic expression of love.

Speaking of what is natural, when a man or woman anticipates a gift from the one they love, they are repelled by the idea of receiving something used by a prior lover. How many women would rejoice at receiving a ring that had already made the rounds with five other girlfriends before her? Most men who have remarried don't delight in photos of the spouse's ex-husband around the home. These are all expressions of an innate desire for exclusivity. If sex is a natural expression of love, it only makes sense that it should be reserved as an exclusive gift for one beloved special enough to be chosen as a lifetime mate.



Sex within Marriage Honors the Intrinsic Moral Aspects of Sexuality

4. Does Sex Promote Maturity?

The fourth falsehood is: Having sex only in marriage restricts growth and creates sexual inhibitions. People commonly tout a wide range of sexual experiences and partners as evidence of growth and “exploring the farthest reaches of love and the self.” Yet lifelong monogamy is clearly more demanding of self-honesty and maturity and a deeper adventure in loving. To wait for and invest in one person in such a way as to sustain and replenish love over a long time—what one rabbi calls vertical renewal²³—is precisely the context that stretches every faculty and promotes the greatest personal growth. It is only too convenient for individuals to run to another partner instead of facing the deeper issues that real and enduring intimacy demands. “It is easy to associate multiple sexual partners with personal change,” writes human potential philosopher George Leonard, but it is “far more likely to be associated with

the avoidance of change."²⁴

Moreover, physical intimacy within the love and commitment of marriage maintains the fundamental integrity of the body as an expression of the mind. It keeps the outer expression congruent with the deepest heart and conscience. The body has its own symbolic language: a fist means hostility; a smile signifies good will. If a smile conceals malice, it is a deception, a misuse of the language of the body. In this vein, sexual coupling represents the total union of hearts, minds and lives. When physical union is merely for pleasure or as an expression of only warm feelings, this can be considered a false message. Such deceit is incompatible with moral maturity and authenticity in a relationship.

Finally, the issue of inhibitions is ironic. Those who are engaged in nonmarital sex routinely speak of performance anxiety, guilt, feelings of being cheap, fear of being compared to previous partners or embarrassment over making comparisons during sex, fear of pregnancy or disease and other experiences that can only negatively complicate their sexual response. On the other hand, research indicates that highly religious wives report the greatest number of orgasms—a clear sign of freedom from neurotic inhibitions.²⁵ Further, evidence suggests that those women who were virgin brides have the greatest sexual satisfaction.²⁶ This is to be expected, given the great significance of emotional and psychological factors in sexual experience. These married women have security, trust, time to accommodate themselves to their partners, and for those who are religious, the vehicle to find great meaning and freedom from guilt that their faith provides.

5. Is Sex Liberating?

The fifth myth is: Sex only within marriage oppresses women. Some claim that the notions of purity and fidelity are based solely on protecting men's property rights over their women. Though this is an exaggeration, there is some truth to the assertion that traditional morality is linked to male exploitation of women. Certainly

there has been a double standard; chastity has almost universally been enforced for females but not for males. Boys and men have often been free to indulge themselves at the expense of girls and women, who would seldom find sexual satisfaction yet would surely pay the price for any illicit liaisons through stigma and punishments as well as pregnancies and other burdens. Yet it is foolish to abandon an intrinsic and protective moral code because of this injustice; it is far better to correct the injustice.

It is even more foolish for women to claim the “right” to the shallow pleasures of casual sex, as is now taking place, and seek to join men in exploiting their partners and using sex for domination. This amounts to abandoning the double standard in favor of a lower standard for both genders. Instead of passing on feminine strengths to men, this means women are trying to inherit men’s typical weakness—the penchant for separating the body from the heart and sex from responsibility and true love.

Further, the permissive standard has hardly been liberating to women. Females are now expected to want many sexual partners and males are expected to treat them as such. The result is that women also have to deny their natural instincts of self-protection: Females carry the greater burden of the consequences of sex outside of a secure relationship. Sexually transmitted infections ravage girls and women much more than males, and of course unwanted pregnancy, abortion and other liabilities belong only to one gender. Ironically, regarding contraception, the double standard still prevails in the “safer sex” world; females shoulder the greater responsibility.²⁷

The double standard extends in another direction, too. Women are unfairly expected to still be “feminine”—soft, yielding and undemanding—while at the same time being sexually independent and self-sufficient.²⁸ To meet this demand, girls and women have to suppress their more relational and monogamous inclinations. This is frequently unsuccessful; studies confirm that even women who have no qualms about sex outside of marriage desire far fewer part-

ners than comparable men do.²⁹ It is almost universally the women partners who end up in the awkward position of trying to negotiate commitment in the midst of a physically intimate relationship.³⁰ Worse, they are often already pseudo-wives, living together with a man, offering domestic services and ready sex while having none of the emotional and material security of marriage. And time is notoriously crueler to women. Many find out too late that they traded playing “house” with various partners for the ability to experience real marriage and motherhood. Committed partnership becomes a more elusive goal for women after a certain age; male peers often prefer more attractive younger women and can readily marry them. In addition, after age 28 or so, female fertility begins to decline rapidly.³¹ This is not the case for men.

One standard for both genders

The absolute sex standard applies to both men and women equally. Males degrade themselves through misdirected sexuality as much as females do. Obviously, men cannot be rewarded for promiscuity while women are penalized and held solely accountable for controlling them. Nor can female sexual desire or capacity be denied. Christian tradition, for example, insisted on male monogamy, and both the Jewish and Christian scriptures teach that husbands have just as much of a duty to sexually satisfy their wives as vice versa (Exodus 21.10, 1 Corinthians 7.3).

That said, also the pretense cannot be maintained that males and females are the same in sexual response and desires or in bearing the consequences of sexual acts. Intrinsic gender strengths and weaknesses require consideration. This has been reflected in the traditional codes of male and female honor: Men agree not to use their superior physical strength to take advantage of women, nor to exploit the female susceptibility to promises of love and security, while women agree not to use men's vulnerability to visual arousal and emotional manipulation against them. It is also the chief rationale behind the traditions of marriage. In this way, the original stan-

dard protects both men and women from mutual exploitation and use of the opposite sex as an emotional crutch, pawn or object of revenge. As such it creates trust and represents real power, freedom and independence for women as well as men.

Timeless Ethic

The timeless gold standard of sexual ethics—reserving sexual intimacy only for the spouse—recognizes the moral implications of sex and the deeper need for enduring love. It understands that sex in marriage not only heightens the sense of bonding, exclusivity and security between the partners but also it addresses all the responsibilities inherent in the sacred gift of sexuality. It celebrates the freedoms that premarital purity affords young people—reaching personal maturity and preparing for family life and their roles as citizens. It affirms these realities, not only out of tradition, but also out of recognition of the emotional, moral, social and spiritual dimensions of this powerful and far-reaching act.

Fidelity within marriage and purity outside it is a crucial foundation for all ethics, a critical underpinning of civilization itself. Reverend Moon has even suggested that if all humanity were to adopt the original standard of chastity—even without agreeing to other divinely ordained norms—then God's world of goodness, harmony and peace would inevitably be realized. This ethic of sexual love represents the original and unchanging God-given standard. We violate it at our peril.

Educating *for* True Love

*Explaining
Sun Myung Moon's
Thought on Morality,
Family and Society*

International Educational Foundation
New York