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“One of the most striking characteristics of a man who is really in love is that his conversation is chaste. He is willing to analyze sentiment, not sensation.” Ernest Dimnet, French Priest

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Chapter Three

The Power of Enlightened Chastity

Insight #3: Enlightened chastity protects the fragile but powerful capacity to love and to bond until it fulfills its destiny--a wholesome, loving, loyal and legal relationship.

Looking out the bedroom window, when I was little, I was fascinated that I couldn't see the screen and the view of the backyard at the same time. If I looked at the screen, my eyes focused on the screen and the landscape was blurred; if I looked at the landscape, the screen disappeared. There's a short-range and long-range perspective on human sexuality--immediate gratification versus soul bonding. The secular view focuses on the short-range perspective: simply a biological urge, while the traditional view focuses on the long-range perspective; that intimacy is a desire of heart, mind, soul and body to be bonded together in a “one flesh” relationship. Focusing on the short-range perspective can obscure the vision of the bigger picture. The human spirit longs for more, and deserves more.

The long-range view sees making love, not simply as a physical act, but the purpose and meaning of life--to build a circle of love together, a circle of beauty, a circle of children, a circle of happy memories, a circle of growing and learning together. Going for my evening walk, I'm always impressed by the way in which our neighbors show love and care for their yards. There seems to be a natural spilling-over of love into the gardens. Husbands, wanting to make love to their wives, mow lawns, plant trees, paint fences. Wives, wanting to make love to their husbands, create beautiful

flower gardens, and decorated homes. Adam and Eve were given the Garden of Eden, but we must sweat for it.

Circles of Love

Let's stand back and scan the need for love. Babies are born with the need to be loved and nurtured, but within just a few months they show the need to give love as well. Watch a baby cuddle a doll and clothe and feed it. Watch their tender hearts break when their ripped-up and worn teddy bear is lost. Watch a mother cuddling her baby--while her baby cuddles a teddy bear. Children--and grown-ups--need to give love, and to receive it. The Creator planned for every baby to be born into a circle of love where they can bloom and grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And just as night follows the day, as children pass through puberty and then mature, a new longing takes place--the longing to create their own circle of love. The longing is not simply sexual; it's a whole-souled longing to become one--one in heart, one in mind, one in spirit, and one in body with another person.

Enlightened chastity protects the fragile but powerful capacity to love and to bond until it fulfills its destiny--a wholesome, loving, loyal and legal relationship. Casual sex, on the other hand, based upon a short-range perspective detours this natural process away from its destination, and creates circles of distrust, alienation, separation, even hatred.

Circles of wholesome love cannot be mandated by the state, enforced by the justice system, or manipulated by false and contrived motives. They are built only upon sincere love, loyalty, and commitment. Just as houses built on shaky foundations eventually collapse, relationships built without honor and commitment are likely to collapse as well. The living-together-to-see-if-it-works-out approach is like building with tacky materials in preparation for the tear down.

The heart seems to have a delicate compass that guides us to our soul mates, and tampering with this delicate mechanism can be damaging. Insincere "I love you's" can prevent us from ever knowing what is sincere and what is not. Using the feelings of the heart as a tool for seduction can eventually seduce the heart into feeling nothing at all. (More on this in the chapter titled, Betrayal Against the Heart).

Like all virtues, enlightened chastity is a manifestation of love for oneself and others. All virtues are love in action: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, honesty and loyalty. The virtuous envision in their minds and feel in their hearts that all human life, including their own, is worthy of love, respect, and protection. Our society is currently scrambling for these virtues, but many have forgotten chastity. Maybe chastity has been overlooked because no one wants to go back to the old version that shrouded sexual intimacy with shame even in marriage. No one wants to lose the free social interaction between men and women that used to be *inappropriate*. Certainly, no one wants the chastity that created less love for everyone.

A New Look at an Old Idea: Enlightened Chastity

Enlightened chastity is “for such a time as this” when we’re ready for a new look at an old idea. “Enlightened” is added because it’s lived by love and goodwill rather than as a restrictive law, with the focus on the rewards rather than the restrictions. The rewards are great: self-respect and other-respect, spiritual strength, peace of conscience, confidence, free social interaction without the suspicion of hidden motives, wholesome brother-sister friendships, equality of the sexes, interdependence rather than crippling dependence, enhancing personal growth rather than stagnation.

Enlightened chastity calls into play every other virtue: self-discipline, integrity, honesty, responsibility, compassion, friendship, courage, loyalty. It’s the immortal virtue because it affects our children’s lives and their children’s lives forever. It’s the most important virtue because honorable love is the main source of human happiness, and dishonorable love the main source of human misery.

Living chastity by law might have a tendency to keep us distant from others, but living enlightened chastity never will. It comes from a vision of the sacredness of human life and sincere feelings of love that inspire compassion, sympathy, friendliness, goodwill and a sense of humor. On the other hand, living the letter of the law without the feelings of love and respect defeats the whole purpose.

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Chastity by Love, not by Law

One of the themes of the New Testament is the contrasting perspectives on living the counsels of God. There were those who exalted the law as the highest virtue, but Jesus taught that love was the highest virtue.

When asked by a lawyer, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22: 36-39)

We often hear of loving our fellow man, but only through loving God first can we have the ability to love His children, and know how best to help them. Jesus Christ emphasized that genuine goodness, or virtue, must come from the inside out, not the outside in. He criticized those who looked to the law, but were without life and love when he said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres (burial tombs) which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matthew 23:27,28)

The idea of sepulchres--burial tombs-- suggests that there was no *life* in them. The glorious power of chastity to change hearts and lives does not come from a law. It comes from staying connected to the God who gives life and the ability to love "more abundantly".

Remember the story of the Prodigal son? He leaves his home, spends his inheritance on riotous living, then having spent all returns home to his family. His father realizes his son's folly, but welcomes him back home with open arms and a grand welcome home dinner. The elder son, who has been dutiful his whole life, is bitter, resentful and jealous. He will not attend the dinner, sulks, and complains to his father that having been good and righteous all his life he has

never received such attention. Christian philosopher, Henry Drummond, used this story to illustrate that there are two kinds of sins--the sins of the body and the sins of the disposition. The Prodigal son was guilty of the first--the sins of the body--while the elder brother was guilty of the second--the sins of disposition.

The elder son had been obedient, but he erred in his feelings of jealousy, bitterness and resentment. Those who use their obedience to the principle of chastity to love their fellow men less, are like the elder brother--looking good to themselves, but contributing to the cold indifference of this world. They may be true in body to the law, but not in disposition. "If you love," said Henry Drummond, "you will unconsciously fulfill the whole law."

"I hope to add a measure of grace to the world."

The power of enlightened chastity is beautifully portrayed in the screenplay, Man of La Mancha by Dale Wasserman, based upon the classic novel, Don Quixote, by Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra. There are two main characters in the play: Don Quixote, a man of honor and virtue, and Aldonza, a prostitute. Quixote, after reading and despairing over man's inhumanity to man, resolves to go forth and begin a quest to right wrongs and bring justice into the world. Believing himself to be a gallant knight, he seeks out a virtuous lady to whom he can dedicate his good deeds.

He travels to a distant inn and discovers the "lady" he is seeking, Aldonza. She is only a lady in his eyes, to others she is nothing more than a common whore. She has long ago surrendered to the forces of vulgarity and vice, and having known only men without honor, she distrusts them all. She spends her days serving and fighting off the dirty-minded men who are constantly pawing and taunting her.

Quixote sees her with a mind that captures her true worth, and a heart overflowing with tenderness and respect. He says to her, "Sweet lady. . .fair virgin. . .I dare not gaze full upon thy countenance lest I be blinded by beauty. I see heaven when I see thee. . .thy name is like a prayer an angel whispers. . .Now I've found thee, and the world shall know thy glory."

She is skeptical and cynical, "What do you want of me?" she says.

"Nothing," he replies.

“Liar!” she shouts.

“I deserved the rebuke,” He responds. “I ask of my lady. . .”

“Now we get to it,” she accuses.

“That I may be allowed to serve her,” he answers. “That I may hold her in my heart. That I may dedicate each victory and call upon her in defeat. And if at last I give my life I give it in her sacred name.”

“Why do you do these things?” she shouts.

“I hope to add some measure of grace to the world.”

He then sings, “The Impossible Dream.”

To dream the impossible dream

To fight the unbeatable foe,

To bear with unbearable sorrow,

To run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong,

To love, pure and chaste, from afar,

To try, when your arms are too weary,

To reach the unreachable star!

Eventually the power of his love and respect transforms her life and her vision of herself. After his untimely death, she continues his quest to “add a measure of grace to the world.” The relationship between Quixote and Aldonza is totally platonic; there are no signs of romantic inclination. This is an example of one of the rewards of chaste love. It allows the freedom to love as brother or sister in this world that is starving for love.

This topic is explored in depth in the chapter titled, “The Wealth of Chastity.” We can be confident that all virtues counseled by God are to help us to love, not to hinder us.

One who lives *chastity by law* would be inclined to say to an attractive person of the opposite sex, “I must ignore you to be chaste--stay away. If we must interact, then we must do so in a businesslike way without personality or charm.” One who lives *chastity by love*-- a wellspring of warmth and goodwill--would be inclined to say, “I delight in you and I would love to become friends. I love you too much to use you in any way. I will treasure your mind, heart and soul as I do my own. I would not, I could not, take advantage of you for my own pride, vanity or gratification. I want to watch you bloom in my presence, not wither and die.”

Loving More

It was a hot, summer afternoon so a friend and I went for a walk and an ice cream. The young man at the ice cream counter seemed stressed, so I was friendly with him. As we walked away, my friend chided, "You are always so flirtatious."

"What do you mean by flirtatious?" I asked.

"As if you don't know." She responded. "It means coming on to someone."

"Actually, I was just being playful and friendly. I would have acted the same whether it was a man or a woman. That's how I know it's being friendly, not flirting."

"I've always considered it being flirtatious," she said.

"I just wanted to be friendly and help his day go a little better. Life would get pretty dull if people weren't friendly with one another, don't you think?"

"I think you're just rationalizing. That young man might misinterpret your motives and think you want something more than ice cream," she warned.

"I can't control what he thinks, but I *can* control what I think. Besides, I trust myself well enough to know my motives."

She looked confused. "But you have to admit that you let your feminine charm play a part in your friendliness."

"I guess you're right," I said. "It's a part of my nature though; I wouldn't want to leave it out."

"Well, you should," she said. "After all, do I need to remind you that you're a married woman?"

"That's true, but I *am* still a woman," I said. "And my love for my husband inspires me to love others more not less."

Some think that friendly interaction is being flirtatious and unchaste. Again, living chastity by law might have a tendency to keep us distant from others, but living enlightened chastity never will. It comes from sincere feelings of love that inspire friendliness, goodwill and a sense of humor.

The topic of chastity is laden with misunderstandings; there are others.

Enlightened Chastity is NOT:

1. Simply a legal issue

Chastity means to show such respect for human intimacy that it is reserved only for a loving, loyal and legal relationship. All three are necessary. Loving (in the intimate sense) without also being loyal and legal, is usually a masquerade--to be discussed later. Merely being legal without love and loyalty is a farce. Even marriage relationships can be legally right, but morally wrong, specifically in cases of spousal abuse.

Like young colts in a pasture, teenagers are full of life, adventure, and curiosity. They constantly test the limits of their enclosure by leaning against the fence. Teens go to their clergy and ask, "How far can I go?" They want to explore their sexuality without violating the letter of the law. Some couples, in their cunning to get around the law, travel over a state line, get married, have sex for a weekend, then have the marriage annulled before they go home. Legally right, morally wrong--a loophole. There is always a way to slip through a loophole when chastity is lived by the "law"; but there is never a way when it's lived by love.

2. Denying masculinity and femininity

The physical, mental, emotional, and sexual differences are an endowment of God, to deny them is to deny a part of God's creation. Children are naturally feminine or masculine. There are outside and inside differences between men and women; they complement one another physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If we have to deny a part of ourselves in order to live a virtuous life, something's wrong! It stands to reason that the Creator never intended to eliminate the differences between men and women in personality and mannerisms, but to liberate them to flourish in a community of trust and goodwill.

3. Merely consent

There is the idea floating around that if two people consent to indulge in sex without commitment it is somehow morally right, or at least according to the Popular Opinion. The term "consenting adults" is one of many expressions that translate down to sex without honor and commitment. It is used to suspend conscience for an experiment--to see if it works out. The reality is, if I consent to let the man of the night steal from me, I am still left robbed!

The "consenters" plan to jump ship when the honeymoon is

over or when problems arise, but even in healthy bonding, there will always be problems. Deeper, more resistant-to-disease love comes by working out the problems, not running from them. Real love inspires commitment, not merely consent. The smoke screen of passions has been known to cloud clear thinking. Being willing to wait for the right time to ignite sexual bonding is a sign that it's the real thing; true love inspires restraint--not recklessness.

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“This is it. This is the real thing,” a young man said. “You know, before her, I would have just gone to bed without even thinking it over. But with her I am so afraid of losing what we have that I am willing to wait until it's totally right. I don't want any regrets--it's too important to me. She's too important.” This attitude shows the key element in all healthy relationships: the willingness to sacrifice! Dimnet wrote, “One of the most striking characteristics of a man who is really in love is that his conversation is chaste. He is willing to analyze sentiment, not sensation.”

4. Celibacy

“I was surprised to find the scriptures so candid about sex,” said a friend who read the Bible for the first time.

“Surprised?” I said, “Why would you be surprised? The Bible is about life--and sex is life.”

“I know, but sex. It just doesn't seem right to have such a Holy Book mentioning such an earthy thing. It just doesn't fit.”

“Maybe sex is holy,” I said.

“Holy?” she said with a raised eyebrow.

“It's the most holy--sacred--act of all. Two humans locked together as one in an act of love. That's holy. Giving birth to a sweet baby that is created in their image. That's holy. Growing and becoming more than they could apart--that's holy, too.”

I was surprised that she was surprised--scriptural references to sex show a candidness, a wholesomeness, a sure evidence it is not

dark, sinful, and evil. The Bible places restrictions on sexual practices; it does not condemn sexual pleasures. Let's look at a few scriptural passages: "And they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24 "And Adam knew Eve, his wife; and she conceived. . ." Genesis 4:1 "Neither is the man without the woman. . .in the Lord." I Cor 11:11 "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." Proverbs 5:18-19. This is my favorite: "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four. . .the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." Proverbs 30:18-19.

Taste buds were created to celebrate eating, eyes were given to celebrate the beauties of the earth, and the delights of sexual passion were created to celebrate marital intimacy.

Popular evangelist, Billy Graham, said the Bible "...celebrates sex and its proper use, presenting it as God-created, God-ordained, God-blessed. It makes plain that God himself implanted the physical magnetism between the sexes for two reasons: for the propagation of the human race, and for the expression of that kind of love between man and wife that makes for true oneness. His command to the first man and woman to be 'one flesh' was as important as his command to 'be fruitful and multiply.'

"The Bible makes plain that evil, when related to sex, means not the use of something inherently corrupt but the misuse of something pure and good.

"The Bible teaches clearly that sex can be a wonderful servant but a terrible master: that it can be a creative force more powerful than any other in the fostering of love, companionship, and happiness or can be the most destructive of all of life's forces." (Billy Graham, "What The Bible Says About Sex," Reader's Digest, May 1970 p.118)

Despite the clear message of the Bible, there have been those who have advocated celibacy--no sex at all, that anything that has to do with the body was sinful. Some have isolated themselves from the opposite sex, living lives of extreme deprivation of the flesh--

eating only enough to stave off starvation, sleeping on hard bunks, laboring in the heat of the day in chores designed to keep the body exhausted and spent.

Pope Gregory said, "Sexual pleasure can never be without sins." St. Augustine taught that sexual intercourse is the way that original sin is transmitted from one generation to another. Then there's the "if-you-can't-hack-it" interpretation of Apostle Paul's writings.

It is recorded that he said, "If they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." (1 Corinthians 7:9) However he also taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 11:11) Some have apologized for Paul, saying that he was speaking specifically to missionaries while they are in missionary service. After all, Paul was married himself. In any case, since the interpretation of some of Paul's writings on sexual relations seem to conflict with the overall message of the Bible, we can conclude that the final word on the matter must be left to the overall theme, and to God himself, who summed it up simply, "It is not good for man to be alone." (Genesis 2:18)

Make no mistake. Chastity does not mean celibacy. I visited what had been a flourishing Quaker community in Pennsylvania. They believed in absolute celibacy. The buildings were vacant, empty. There were empty dorms for the men and empty dorms for the women. For a while, they attempted to keep their congregation replenished by adopting children, but most of these children grew up and left. Men and women were separated and alone in order to better serve a God who said, "It is not good to be alone." Celibacy is not progress; it is not growth; it is not life.

Summary

Our family just watched a Disney movie titled, "Hunchback of Notre Dame," based on the novel by Victor Hugo. Quasimoto sings, "So many times out there I've watched a happy pair of lovers walking in the night. They had a kind of glow around them. It almost looked like heaven's light." Quasimoto's longing to love, and be loved, is a part of being human. Again, enlightened chastity protects the fragile but powerful capacity to love and to bond until it fulfills its destiny--a wholesome, loving, loyal and legal relationship. It

also allows social interaction without hidden motives. Each one of us has the ability to add a measure of grace to this dreary, depressing world when we reach for the power of loving “pure and chaste from afar!”