
“I will pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human beings, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Henry Drummond

Chapter Twenty

The Freedom of Chastity

Insight #20: Honorable men and women--without hidden motives--are free to be spontaneous, warm and friendly; the mutual trust and respect releases and increases the freedom to love.

You never forget where you are and what you're doing when a great idea strikes you. It was a very hot, summer afternoon. While the children were cooling off, and happily playing in a small plastic pool, I sat reading The Great Divorce by my favorite author, C.S. Lewis. Then it happened. I read a few paragraphs that changed my life. They captured the vision of the wealth of chastity, and the love it can create. I remember feeling as if I had just uncovered one of the most precious and valuable jewels of a lifetime.

The book is a fictional story of a man who is allowed to leave hell and explore heaven for a day--accompanied by an angel who acts as a tour guide. The man sees a procession of people coming toward him. There is a radiance of light surrounding them, but particularly around one woman. There are young boys and girls on either side of her, throwing petals of flowers at her feet.

He asks the guide, “Is it. . .is it?”

“Not at all,” said the guide, “It’s someone ye’ll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green.”

The man asks, “She seems to be. . .well, a person of particular importance?”

“Aye. She is one of the great ones. Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things.”

He asks the guide, “And who are all these young men and

women on each side?”

“They are her sons and daughters,” the angel answers.

“She must have had a large family, Sir,” the man responds.

“Every young man or boy that met her became her son--even if it was only the boy that brought her meat to her door. Every girl that met her was her daughter.”

“Isn’t that a bit hard on their own parents?” he asked.

“No, there are those that steal other people’s children. But her motherhood was a different kind. Those on whom it fell went back to their natural parents loving them more. Few men looked on her without becoming, in a certain fashion, her lovers. But it was the kind of love that made them not less true, but truer to their own wives. Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love. In her they became themselves. And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them. . .It is like when you throw a stone into a pool, and the concentric waves spread out further and further. Who knows where it will end? Redeemed humanity is still young; it has hardly come to its full strength. But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life.” (107-108)

Over and over I thought about the line: “Few men looked on her without becoming, in a certain fashion, her lovers, but it was the kind of love that made them not less true, but truer to their own wives.” This simple story gave me the vision of the wealth of chastity. Before discovering this passage, almost everything I had read on chastity was from the slant of fear, duty or law. This captured the joy that comes from openly and honestly loving others. It was as if I could see the very woman herself planting in others seeds of patience, love, tolerance, faith, hope, and confidence. Filled with the qualities of life, love and joy, she stands out as a beacon of light in this world of despair, indifference and depression. I was filled with the desire to become this kind of woman. A woman that every wife would want for their husband’s secretary--friendly, loving but in a warm, sisterly way--a woman who compliments all women.

We, too can awaken the life within ourselves and then awaken the lives around us by being true to ourselves, virtuous and connected to the Creator. How this dark world would come to light

with such individuals!

Freedom in Men/Women Friendships

Moral virtue does not decrease our ability to show love to the human family; it releases and increases it! It sets us free to love, to be open and friendly. Women who are true to their husbands are able to be true to their men friends and associates--to compliment, encourage, and have a sisterly concern for them. Men who are true to their wives are able to be a true friend to their women friends, to compliment, encourage, and to have a brotherly concern for them. Everyone wins there's mutual integrity; everyone loses when there's dishonesty.

Henry Drummond captured the freedom of such a society when he said, "In an atmosphere of suspicion men (and women) shrivel up; but in an atmosphere (of love and trust) they expand and find encouragement and educative fellowship. . .What a delightful state of mind to live in! What a stimulus and benediction even to meet with it for a day!" (The Greatest Thing In the World, p. 38)

Free from the entanglements of hidden motives, men and women are free to love and share with a warmth and intimacy of feelings that could never take place in a predatory society. The freedom comes from sincerely loving others, trusting motives, and wanting to "add a measure of grace to the world," as Don Quixote called it. Imagine a society in which everyone felt comfortable to be open, spontaneous and friendly.

My husband is a musician; I am an author. He has many women friends who enjoy the love of music with him. I have men friends who complement my writing abilities. We are both comfortable with these relationships because we trust these friends and ourselves. I often think of the extraordinary men friends in my life. Michael, scholar and author, who edited my first book and gave me the encouragement to have it published. Cliff, who is thirty years older than I am. We delight to discuss politics and gardening together. Ed, an inventor who thinks deeply, and cares passionately for the welfare of his two small children. There's a love and respect between us that would be impossible if one wants friendship and the other wants a secret affair, or if one wants to sincerely talk politics, but the other wants a masquerade.

Every so often someone mentions that it is impossible for a man

and a woman to have a friendship without it becoming sexual. Loving with honor naturally inspires friendships, even Jesus Christ did not limit his ministry to men; He was sensitive and loving to brothers and sisters. He had men and women friends.

The Universal Attraction

Let's step back and take a wide-angled perspective on the male/female attraction. There's the desire to be bonded together in total intimacy, to create a circle of love, but outside that center circle, there's another circle, the universal attraction between men and women. Within this outside circle there's still an attraction, a brotherly/sisterly attraction that's a part of being in the family of God. Honorable romantic love creates ambition, this outside circle of love creates ambition as well--the desire to do better and be better to win respect and attention. This creates a tremendous force for good.

Erich Fromm explained it this way,

“(There is) the psycho-biological aspect of sexuality, the masculine-feminine polarity, and the desire to bridge this polarity by union. There is masculinity and femininity in character as well as in sexual function. Sexual attraction between the sexes is only partly motivated by the need for (sexual release); it is mainly the need for union with the other sexual pole. . .” (The Art of Loving, p. 37)

There is a natural and wholesome desire for nonsexual “union” between men and women, to be associated with one another in a friendly/family manner. Such association is possible only with trust, honesty, fidelity in marriage, and chastity before marriage.

In the book, Illusions and Realities, Dr. Brown, a family therapist, explains,

“A man glimpsing a neighbor woman might be aroused by her body and try to seduce her. Encountering an icy refusal, the shock of her children, or the anger of her husband would teach him that his fantasies were an illusion. On the other hand, if he were to share gardening tips, social activities, and mutual love for summer sunsets with this woman, he might well develop a real, though nonsexual, intimacy with a whole

person--a neighbor, a talented human being, a wife, a mother, and a daughter.” (p 5)

Think of a community where such wholesome interaction could flourish. The freedom of friendly non-sexual interaction among the sexes would decrease temptation towards infidelity, because women would receive not only the attention of their husbands, but also of their brothers in the human family. Men would not only have the attention of their wives, but of their sisters. Men and women often slide into an affair to reassure themselves that they still “have what it takes” to impress someone of the opposite sex. If friendly, innocent interaction were a part of daily life this need would be filled. Marriages would be stronger in a community of trust, chastity, and mutual respect.

I could see the single, unmarried woman saying, “Though I am not ‘in love’ with that special someone, I’ll be in love with everyone. I will reach out to fall in love with a new friend every day! I will share a smile, my personality, my hopes. The love I give freely will come back to me freely. Maybe I will never meet the magic man--but I’ll make every day a magic day through the power of my love.”

The wife who feels unappreciated in her marriage might say, “I realize that my marriage needs an overhaul, and it’s slowly happening. But right now, here, today, I can surround myself with the love of friends and family.” Each of us can live with a wealth of love if we’re willing to reach out to others.

Note of warning: Beware thinking that it’s all right to have a romantic encounter if it doesn’t include sex, or if your spouse had one, or if this person is meeting your needs in a way no one else can. These are excuses to shut the conscience down. Signs of married individuals going over the boundaries: investing too much time, too much energy in another relationship, pretending it’s only a friendship when the conversation includes sensual comments, discussing sexuality, and disclosing private aspects of one’s marriage, entering into a romantic fantasy, using the relationship to create jealousy and mistrust for husband or wife, assuming that this relationship is so special that it deserves an exemption to the rule of fidelity in marriage.

Free of Hidden Motives

We naturally find ourselves on guard whenever someone is

trying to get something from us--when there's hidden motives. This same resistance occurs when we suspect the motives of men and women who use their friendliness and charm to gain a new heart, boost vanity, pride, or the worst, merely a warm body for the night. We find ourselves thinking, "Just what are you going to want from me? Is this just a friendly guy, or is he trying to get something?"

For instance, about once a year a bright, energetic young man comes to our door to sell us a miracle cleaner. "Ma'am," he says, "This is your lucky day! I'm here to introduce you to the most fantastic cleaner the world has ever known! It makes carpets look and smell like new. It can...." While giving the sales pitch, he begins spraying the door frame and wiping off dirt smudges. I am usually impressed by the cleaning job, but unimpressed by the cost--thirty-five dollars a pint.

As I begin my "thank-you but no-thank you" speech, he makes a last-ditch effort for a sale, telling me that almost all of our neighbors have purchased it. Then while pulling out the sales tags to prove it, he says, "Nobody else thought it was too expensive."

The more passion he piles on, the more irritated I become. When he realizes that I am not going to purchase his cleaner, he turns and stomps off. I know he feels he wasted time with me, and I feel I wasted time with him. No matter how pleasantly I say "no," the young man walks off feeling rejected.

Now whenever I see a young man walking down the driveway with a spray bottle in his hand and a rag hanging from his pocket, I want to run and hide. He is going to resent me when I won't buy his product, and I'll resent myself if I do. It's a no-win situation.

Salespeople may be friendly, but we find ourselves always suspecting their motives; there's the money factor. When we suspect motives, social interaction is shut down. A predatory society--men conning women for a warm body for the night, or women cunningly trying to win another heart--causes suspicion and resistance to open, friendly conversation. When the predatory spirit prevails, everyone begins to question even innocent acts of kindness:

The boss wonders why the new secretary is so friendly.

The secretary is suspicious of the surprise raise.

The mailman suspects the woman who leaves cookies in the mailbox.

The grocery clerk fears the “look” in the eyes of a customer.

The teacher sneaks out the back door before a certain student needs help again.

A male doctor is afraid to call a woman patient at home to see how she’s doing.

Parents wonder about the motives of a teacher who takes special attention with their daughter.

An attractive woman is afraid to accept a date out of fear that he’ll expect sexual favors.

What a nightmare of distrust! Warmth, personality, smiles, friendliness, and touch cannot flourish in a society of hidden motives.

You’re not the fortress; you’re the assault.

One man I interviewed for this book had an interesting perspective on the idea that a predatory society attacks mutual trust. He was in his late thirties, husband, father, and an African-American who had grown up in an area of a large city known for racial tension and crime.

“I was taught to be a predator from before I can remember,” he said. “I thought that was just the way it was. Men are supposed to stalk and prey upon women. Women expect it. Men fall into it because they want to be normal. They’re trained for the game--to capture as many women as they can. The hunt is thrilling.”

We discussed the effects of the “hunt” upon women. He said, “Women become uneasy in their wait to be attacked. What a dreary outlook on life! They’re afraid to be feminine or to look feminine. Some become masculine and harsh to protect themselves. Then some women have resorted to becoming hunters themselves. The only way to escape being hunted is to hope for the first strike advantage.”

We discussed the harm to social interaction when humans prey upon one another. His insights were powerful! “The sexual game puts everything in question. This predator syndrome creates harshness in men--they’re not allowed to be sensitive. Sometimes men want to nestle into the bosom of someone who can comfort them; they want sometimes to be childlike. They want someone who can give strength, but that’s all lost in the game. You’re not the fortress; you’re the assault. You’re always on the prowl. Your whole

nature begins to go for the target. Not only your actions but your words and thoughts are geared to the conquest.

“In a relationship without trust, you can’t really communicate. It’s just business at hand. Human interaction is based upon trust and fair play. In the sex game, there is no way to really tell what another is thinking; it attacks the whole system of trust and liability.

“I saw the effects of adultery in a military service camp in Texas. The day after a woman’s husband left to go out to duty, another man moved in. There was no trust. And when there’s no trust, everyone begins to suspect everyone else. People are on the verge of killing because of the distrust. No word--no bond. Everything is up for grabs. Everything’s at risk! When we lose the ability to make clear choices, we become like safari hunters. We get a thrill just with the hunt. We become prideful of our displayed trophies or conquests, but even if you’ve just captured someone, you’re still anxious for the next hunt. The hunger continues because there’s no satisfaction. You’re always jealous because someone has a bigger and better trophy than you. So you push for newer and better trophies.

“When you become a hunter you’re willing to do whatever it takes to get what you want. You lie, deceive--anything. The issue comes up, whether to lie and say you love the gal. You do it just to get what you want. At the end of the game, you have to admit that it was a lie all along. You’ve presented a picture of a Shangri-la relationship. Eventually you have to admit that it was all a lie. You come to the realization that it’s podunk (nothing).”

The idea came up in our conversation that moral virtue is a dividing line between people. Husbands who are loyal to their wives are not comfortable with women who do not respect their position of loyalty. Women who are faithful to their husbands are uncomfortable with men who pose a threat to their marriage. The freedom of interaction can happen only when everyone shares the same values.

For instance, while I was taking an evening music appreciation class at the local college, I often enjoyed after-class discussions with the teacher. I appreciated his vast knowledge of classical music, especially since my husband was a master pianist. After awhile I began to realize that while our friendship was totally platonic for me, he had a different perspective. One night he said, “We’ve got to

stop meeting like this. Why don't you come over to my apartment? We can talk there, and be alone."

It was not so much what he said but the way he said it that set off the alarm. That was the last night that I stayed after class to talk. *The freedom of friendship shuts down when one sees it as friendship, but the other sees it as romance.*

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Since most human interactions are based upon trust and truth, a predatory society attacks everyone. In a relationship without trust, you can't really communicate--it's just business at hand.

If only women knew the wondrous power of influence they have when they simply love their brothers with warmth and friendship! If only they knew that when they dress to attract the "upside down" man, they will do just that and suffer the consequences. If only they knew that layer upon layer of makeup says, "I need a mask." If only they knew that honest men will always be attracted to honest women--women who are first a sister, then a friend, and then, if right, a lover.

If only men realized how foolish they look when they repeat the same old lines, "Where have you been all my life? . . . You're the most beautiful woman. . . I've been waiting for you . . . You and I, babe, that's how it's going to. . ." If only they knew that honest, sincere women are attracted to honest, sincere men. If only they knew that women of class are only attracted to men of class, and that the manliest attributes are not muscles or charm, but sincerity and integrity.

"I love you for yourself."

A beautiful story that illustrates the wealth of chastity was written by Kahlil Gibran in his book Jesus, Son of Man. Gibran created fictional stories from actual New Testament persons to give glimpses into the character of The Son Of Man. The woman in this particular story, Miriam, has, like Aldonza, known few men who loved with honor; she herself is without honor. She views from the upside-down sexual slant, and attempts a relationship the only way she knows how--sensuously. He, on the other hand, relates to her as brother and friend, with respect, warmth, and friendliness.

She tells the story: "It was in the month of June when I saw Him for the first time. He was walking in the wheat field. . .The rhythm of His step was different from other men's, and the movement of his body was like naught I had seen before. . .and I gazed at Him, and my soul quivered within me, for He was beautiful. His body was single and each part seemed to love every other part. Then I clothed myself with the raiment of Damascus. I walked to Him with my scented garments and my golden sandals, the sandals the Roman captain had given me, even these sandals. And when I reached him, I said, "Good-morrow to you."

And He said, "Good-morrow to you, Miriam."

And He looked at me, and His night-eyes saw me as no man had seen me. And suddenly I was as if naked, and I was shy.

Yet, He had only said, "Good-morrow to you."

And then I said to Him, "Will you not come to my house?"

And he said, "Am I not already in your house?"

I did not know what He meant then, but I know now. . when (he spoke to me) life spoke to death. . .for mind you, my friend, I was dead. I was a woman who had divorced her soul. I was living apart from this self which you now see. I belonged to all men, and to none. They called me harlot, and a woman possessed of seven devils. . .but when His dawn-eyes looked into my eyes all the stars of my night faded away, and I became Miriam, only Miriam, a woman lost to the earth she had known, and finding herself in new places.

And now again I said to Him, "Come into my house and share bread and wine with me."

And He said, "Why do you bid me to be your guest?"

And I said, "I beg you to come into my house." And it was all that was sod in me, and all that was sky in me calling unto Him.

Then He looked at me, and the noontide of His eyes was upon me, and he said, "You have many lovers, and yet I alone love you. Other men love themselves in your nearness. I love you in your self. Other men see a beauty in you that shall fade away sooner than their own years. But I see in you a beauty that shall not fade away, and in the autumn of your days that beauty shall not be afraid to gaze at itself in the mirror, and it shall not be offended. I alone love the unseen in you."

As He walks away, she cries to him again, "Master, come to my

house. I have incense to burn for you, and a silver basin for your feet. You are a stranger and yet not a stranger. I entreat you, come to my house.”

He turns, smiles, and says again, “All men love you for themselves. I love you for yourself.”

This is the end of the story, but the beginning of her new life. She says, “On that day the sunset of His eyes slew the dragon in me, and I became a woman, I became Miriam, Miriam of Mijdel.” (Jesus, The Son of Man, Kahil Gibran, p. 14, 15)

There is so much to be learned from this story. Notice how Miriam views Jesus. She only observes his form and feature as a man--not a person. Notice how she views herself! She sees only the sensual, and accents the sensual to entice--the perfume, the soft clothing, and the scented sandals. Notice that as she comes to experience the true warmth of friendship, she realizes that she is “divorced from her soul.” She longs for him to come into her house because while they can carry on a friendly conversation outside, she wants to move quickly towards the arena in which she feels most comfortable--physical intimacy.

He, on the other hand--man of honor and virtue--views from an abundance of love, respect, and friendliness. He is already in her house, because he is already in her heart. He sees her first as Miriam, sister, and friend. As a kind friend, he exposes the hidden lie. Men may say that they love you, but they “only love themselves in your nearness.” It is a powerful statement, and shows the masquerade--that such an act is an act of vanity and pride. Instead of an act of love, it is an act of selfishness. The focus is still on oneself--not giving but getting, not loving but using.

We see the vivid contrast between one who loves with honor and one who does not, and how true love can transform lives. The love of the Savior changed her life--just as it can for us.

Summary

Forgetting--even discarding--the virtue of chastity has produced a poverty of social interaction, love and goodwill. A predatory society keeps everyone running scared and suspicious. On the other hand, chastity releases and magnifies the freedom to love, to be spontaneous and open, to have warm and loving friendships. This freedom is a natural outcome when men and women of virtue

sincerely love others, trust their own motives, and want to “add a measure of grace to the world”. The virtue of chastity could create a huge nest of love, where the lonely and unloved are pulled in and cared for.

“The greatest thing,” wrote Henry Drummond, “a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of His other children. I wonder why it is that we are not all kinder than we are. How much the world needs it. How easily it is done. How instantaneously it acts. How infallibly it is remembered. How superabundantly it pays itself back--for there is no debtor in the world so honourable, so superbly honourable, as Love. ‘Love never faileth.’ Love is success, Love is happiness, Love is life. . . Lavish it upon the poor, where it is very easy; especially upon the rich, who often need it the most; most of all upon your equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom we each do least of all. . .Lose no chance of giving pleasure. For that is the ceaseless and anonymous triumph of a truly loving spirit. I will pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” (The Greatest Thing In The World, pages 28-29)

Envision such a community where men and women are free to interact with one another without fear. Think of the good will, the innocent acts of mischievousness. Think of the jesting that could brighten life! Think of the self-esteem and respect that would flourish because everyone would be free to give and receive friendly interaction. It would be the beginning of heaven on earth!

I love to experience this freedom to love. My children tease me from time to time saying, “There she goes again. She’s talking to a woman in the store. I’m sure the woman is telling Mother her life story; they all do.” This *complaint* has been the greatest *compliment*.

“The real treasures of this life aren’t the cars or houses,” I explain to them, “they are the people. There is no human being that does not have a unique personality and captivating story. There are no ordinary people. Each one has so much to share; most people are waiting for someone to care enough to listen.”

There’s a man who works at the local post office. His name is Howard, and he seems to be very shy and insecure. Whenever I see him, I ask, “How are you doing, Howard?” He is almost always

amazed that someone is calling him by name. He responds quietly. Then I ask, "How are your two baby girls doing?" Or, "How's the garden coming this year; are you raising those giant pumpkins again?"

He is usually in such a state of shock that he hesitates to answer. Recently he asked, "How can you remember my name? How do you remember that we had another baby girl last year? How many people do you do this to?"

"Not enough," I answered. "I hope to do better."