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MATURING TOWARD WHOLENESS I THE INNER LIFE

Chapter Nineteen

Sexuality

God's Gift for Physically Expressing "One-of-a-Kind" Intimacy

1 - The human person, in rebellion against his Creator, declares his autonomy: Only I will decide how I will behave, or even who I will be—I alone!

2 - I can assume ultimate authority for my life. But this will have consequences. One area that will be affected is my relationship with my God-given sexuality.

3 - Throughout history men and women have expressed themselves sexually in a variety of ways. The common motivation has been strong desire—emotion.

4 - Choosing to allow emotion and desire to run freely may feel good at first. But such a lifestyle can turn out to be quite damaging in the long run.

5 - Sexuality, expressed in ways for which it was designed, delights and fulfills. Sexuality, expressed in ways for which it was not designed, deeply wounds.

6 - What I do with my body affects my soul. Human souls are wounded by sexual violation. A wounded soul hinders my maturing.

7 - Hanna and I visited an inner city church. The congregation, with love, acceptance and caring, was ministering to women trapped in the sex trade.

8 - Looking into their faces, I saw a profound emptiness. It was as if their souls were being hollowed out, their human dignity drained from them.

9 - One of God's purposes when he created us was to populate the earth. He chose to do this by giving each of us a gender. He created us male or female.

10 - "So God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them.... And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply...'" (Genesis 1:27-28).

11 - I am not God. God is God. I do not decide what gender I will have. God—the One who created me—has decided what gender I have.

12 - God intended for a man and a woman to forge a "one-of-a-kind" intimacy. This relationship was to be characterized by love—agape—the kind of love God has.

13 - Jesus: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Mark 10:7-8a).

14 - This unique intimacy was to be built on mutual and permanent commitment, caring, kindness, respect. God made provision for it to be expressed physically.

15 - God created (designed) us so that the physical, sexual expression of this mutually committed intimacy would result in offspring—new people.

16 - God intended that a child's first experiences outside the womb would be in an environment of mutually committed love between a father and a mother.

17 - But humans, male and female, rebelled against God and the order he designed. Our hearts were filled with folly, arrogance, rebellion, darkness.

18 - "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God ... they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).

19 - These are delicate issues. We don't discuss them to condemn. Jesus did not come to condemn. He came to save—to forgive, to heal, to transform.

20 - Jesus: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

21 - To be "saved" requires that we face what is true. Nothing changes until it becomes what it is. Sexual acts that violate God's design deeply damage.

22 - "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature" (Romans 1:26).

23 - "And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another..." (Romans 1:27a).

24 - "...men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error" (Romans 1:27b).

25 - "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality.... Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19a, 21b).

26 - What I do with my body impacts my soul. Sexual immorality—of all kinds—wounds the soul. Jesus came to heal the soul. It happens in discipleship with him.

27 - **How do I respond to sexual violations...**

- that I may have committed?
- that may have been committed against me?

28 - **I tell myself the truth.** This may require an extended process. It probably will be hard work, and painful. I may need prayer and support from trusted others.

29 - **I tell God the truth.** I cannot tell God the truth until I tell myself the truth. It may not feel like it, but God is by my side—waiting for me, accepting me, loving me.

30 - Jesus is saying: Let me carry the sin that has damaged you. It is too heavy for you. This is why I came—to be the One who bears your guilt, your pain.

31 - **In prayer, I bring each sin to Christ on the cross**—the sin I may have committed, and/or the sin that may have been committed against me.

32 - With the sin I have committed, I tell Jesus the truth. I lift my sin to him on the cross. I ask for his mercy, forgiveness, cleansing, healing. I practice his Presence.

33 - With sin committed against me, I tell Jesus the truth. I lift the sin to him on the cross. I ask for his grace to forgive—to allow God to be the Judge of my abuser.

34 - **Should I speak with one I have wronged?** Do I confess my sin and ask for forgiveness? This can be powerfully healing, but also risky. How might I proceed?

35 - In prayer I seek the Lord's guidance. How does he want to lead me? What circumstances might he want to arrange? What might be his timing?

36 - Am I ready? Have I told myself, and God, the truth? Have I brought my sin to the cross? Am I prepared not to justify myself but rely on God to be my Defender?

37 - Is the one I have wronged ready? This might be traumatic for them. I ask for their permission to speak about this. I respect and honor their response.

38 - I have dishonored the one I have wronged. I now want to go out of my way to treat them with utmost dignity and respect.

39 - I consider asking a mature, mutually trusted person to meet with us for wisdom and protection. The one I have wronged must fully agree and also trust this person.

40 - I acknowledge the wrong I have committed. I am as transparent as I can be. This does not require many words. I speak with gentleness and humility.

41 - I ask for forgiveness. I respect and honor the response. He or she may not be able or ready to forgive. I “request” forgiveness; I do not “demand” it.

42 - If forgiveness is extended, I accept it with tenderness and gratitude. In Christ, healing has begun. The door has been opened for reconciliation.

43 - **Should I speak with the one who has wronged me?** Do I seek to bring what is hidden in darkness into the light and give healing a chance? How might I proceed?

44 - In prayer I seek guidance from the Lord. This will be delicate communication and interaction. I want to be very careful not to cause further pain.

45 - Am I ready? I practice God's Presence. Experiencing his love for me furthers my healing. I test my heart. Am I prepared to leave “pay back” in God's hands?

46 - Words of truth, spoken in love, open the way for healing. This is not about condemnation. Christ did not come to condemn; he came to save.

47 - Is the one who has wronged me ready? Offenders often seek protection behind a wall of denial. Only one who has erected such a wall can choose to remove it.

48 - I consider asking a mature, mutually trusted person to meet with us for wisdom and protection. The one who has wronged me must fully agree and also trust this person.

49 - I ask the one who has wronged me for permission to speak about this. I respect and honor the response.

50 - If the one who has wronged me responds with denial or self-justification, I leave this with God. I don't argue. I am only responsible for my own responses.

51 - If the one who has wronged me responds by owning the truth, then the ball is in my court. I have been given the opportunity to extend forgiveness.

52 - Love beckons me to offer the one who has wronged me the chance to receive God's forgiveness and healing. How he or she responds is his or her responsibility.

53 - **Destructive sexual behavior can become compulsive.** If I am concerned that I am in danger of this being true of me, I can respond by:

- Becoming (or re-committing to live as) a disciple of Jesus—Chapter Two.
- Re-orienting my being before God in humility—Chapter Three.
- Allowing Jesus to teach me how to live in God's kingdom—Chapter Four.
- Practicing God's Presence—Chapter Five.
- Seeking God for healing—Chapter Seven.
- Undertaking spiritual practices—Chapter Eight.
- Asking the Lord to provide others who will walk with me in my deliverance.

"...neither the sexually immoral...nor adulterers...nor men who practice homosexuality...will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9-11).