Listening

Listening: A Lost Art?

“Listen to me!”
“Don’t you ever listen?”
“Listen up!”
“Are you listening?”
“Listen carefully to what I have to say.”
“Listen and learn.”

Do such phrases sound familiar to you? Maybe you have heard them from your parents, a teacher, a preacher, or maybe you use them with your children or other family members. They are commands or questions that emphasize the importance of listening. We all want to be heard; we believe what we have to say is significant. It is disheartening and humiliating when we are ignored.

Many years ago I witnessed a scene that has been written indelibly in my memory. It was not an event of earth-shaking importance. It was a simple exchange of time and attention between two people. One of those people was a very prominent, world-renowned pastor of one of the largest churches in the world. The other person was a church member who simply was seeking to spend a few minutes in conversation with the pastor. I don’t know what the member wanted to discuss; it didn’t seem to matter to the pastor. The thing that made their conversation so memorable was that many people just like the one with whom he was talking surrounded the pastor. They all wanted a few minutes of his time and attention. But instead of being distracted by many different voices, the pastor gave his full attention to one person at a time. He focused his eyes on each individual and appeared to have a genuine interest in each of them. This scene has proven to be a model for me. I have thought of it many times as I have attempted to give my

attention to anyone who seeks to be heard.

On the other hand, we have seen and experienced the opposite of this scene. Too often we are oblivious to the importance of listening. Either the one to whom we are speaking is not listening, or we are not concentrating enough on what someone else has to say to us. Have we lost the art of listening? If so, it is important that we consider how meaningful it can be to be good listeners. Within a Christian worldview, this is an essential art.

The words *listen* or *hear* and their cognates are used in the New American Standard Bible over 1,500 times. Obviously this implies that the terms are important for one who takes the Bible seriously. If we are to build a worldview that honors God, we should learn to listen.

To whom or what should we listen? Surely many answers to this question could be suggested. The art of listening is worthy of thorough discussion. But, in this discussion, I will concentrate on four facets of listening. First, we should listen to God. Second, we should listen in order to understand. Third, we should listen to the world around us. And fourth, we should listen to the non- Christian. Each of these will be offered with the hope that the development of good listening skills will lead to good communication of God's truth. If we are listening carefully, we will in turn have a hearing among those who need the message we can share.

Listening to God

What would your parents, or children, or family, or friends, or coworkers say if they were asked if you listen to them? In most cases, we would like to think that such people deserve to be heard. But if you are a Christian, God should be added to such a list. Surely a Christian wants to listen to God above all others.

A Christian worldview includes the belief that God is a supernatural but personal being who communicates with us. His transcendent character does not mean that He is bound to be isolated from those He loves. That love includes the fact that He has infinite wisdom to share with His loved ones. And the wise person is one who is worthy of that description because he has learned to listen to God's wisdom.

In addition, the Christian worldview includes the glorious truth that God listens to us. As a book title states, *He is The God Who Hears.*{1} The creator and sustainer of the universe actually chooses to hear us. The Bible is clear about this. "Idols are deaf (Deut 4:28; Rev 9:20), but God is personified as having ears (1 Sam 8:21) and hearing his people (2 Sam 22:7)."{2}

Such thoughts are part of a common thread among most Christians. But those of us who have been taught the central tenets of biblical content may tend to be too comfortable with such concepts. We may have ignored the startling nature of communication with God. It can be helpful for us to realize that these beliefs are distinguishing marks of both biblical Judaism and Christianity. "Unlike ancient religions that sought revelation through the eye and through visions, biblical people primarily sought revelation through the ear and hearing. Hearing symbolizes the proper response to God in the Bible."{3} From the central proclamation of Judaism, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deut. 6:4), to the familiar declaration of the Lord Jesus, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15), the Bible affirms the importance of listening to the God of the Bible.

At this point we should stop and consider at least one segment of what is entailed in listening to God. That is, we are to listen to God through His Word, the Bible. "Just as human beings address God by means of language through prayer, God addresses human beings by means of language in the pages of Scripture."{4} Before we succumb to the temptation of letting

such truths pass by us, consider the dynamic implication of God addressing us in the pages of Scripture. The apostle Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13:

> *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

Obviously Paul believed that what He wrote was from God through the Holy Spirit. Paul was listening to God in such a way that "we might know the things freely given to us by God." Thus, when the Christian reads or hears the Bible, he is listening to God.

Listening In Order to Understand

Have you ever had a frustrating conversation? That's a ridiculous question, right? You can probably bring many such conversations to mind! You just were not able to "get through" to the person, or the opposite was true. Maybe one of the two of you was listening, but you just did not understand one another.

As Christians, such frustration may be the result of not cultivating the art of listening. This begins with listening to God. If we have learned to hear God through His Word, we have come to realize important elements of listening in order to understand. If we can listen to God, we are able to listen to our fellow men.

First, we realize that understanding is often the result of focus. Whether we are studying the Bible, praying, hearing a sermon, listening to family or friends, viewing a movie, or a list of other things, our attention needs to be focused. Admittedly, this can be difficult to achieve. Distractions seem to flood our lives at the most inopportune times. But how

often are such distractions a result of unnecessary additions to our lives? Have we put rugged mountains in our paths? Do we find ourselves struggling to climb those mountains before we can focus on what we truly are seeking on the other side? Perhaps we are in need of a refocusing on what is truly important, along with the discarding of what is not truly important. When this happens we will begin to walk a path that will provide more opportunities to listen in order to understand. I believe our relationships with God and those we love will deepen as a result.

The second element of understanding is patient contemplation. Some may call this meditation, which is a thoroughly biblical practice when we are meditating on Scripture. But whether we are contemplating Scripture, or what our children may have just said, our objective is to understand. Again, this also can be difficult to achieve. Because of the ways in which pop culture has permeated our lives, we have grown accustomed to immediate gratification.{5} This isn't surprising in light of the fact that most of what fills our ears and eyes doesn't require much, if any, patient contemplation. In fact, the things we tend to hear and see would be considered failures if we didn't respond immediately. Such pressures are indicative of the struggles of Christians in the world. According to Scripture, this will be true until Jesus returns. As a result, the Christian community is in need of those who are willing to do the hard work of patient contemplation. There is too much at stake to do otherwise.

The third element of listening in order to understand concerns the application of what is heard. When we have listened carefully enough to focus and contemplate we then are ready to use what has been heard. This is a crucial element of a Christian worldview, because in the New Testament ". . . the only marks to distinguish true hearing from purely physical hearing are faith (Matt. 8:10; 9:2; 17:20 etc.) and action (Matt. 7:16, 24, 26; Rom. 2:13 etc.)."{6} As Jesus said, ". .

. everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock" (Matt. 7:24). Let's aspire to be considered among the wise. God will be glorified because He will have something to say through us.

Listening to the World Around Us

You are sitting in your doctor's office waiting to see him about a persistent cough you have had for more than two weeks. As you are thumbing through a magazine you are suddenly startled by an advertisement that proclaims, in very large letters: "YOU ARE THE C.E.O. OF YOUR LIFE!" Then you begin to read the fine print at the bottom of the ad, which states: "Think about it. Your life is like a business. It makes sense that you're the one in charge." You are thinking about it, and you do not agree. Why? Because you have been "listening" to the world around you and you realize that your world view does not fit with what you consider to be a brazen claim. You are not the C.E.O. of your life; God is. Your mental and spiritual sensitivity meter is working properly.

This fictitious scenario illustrates one of the common ways our Christian worldview guides us as we "listen" to the world around us. Many ideas are being shared in that world and many of them are contrary to Christian thought. Stephen Eyre refers to those ideas as "dragons." He believes these are cultural values that ". . . are particularly strong and absolutely deadly for the church."{7} Eyre identifies six of them.

The first dragon is *Materialism.* Matter is all that matters; "I am what I own." Jesus said, ". . . do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?" (Matt. 6:25)

The second dragon is *Activism.* Life is to be filled with action; "I am what I do," or "I am what I produce." God said,

“Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Ps. 46:10).

The third dragon is *Individualism.* We can depend on no one but ourselves; “I am self-sufficient.” The apostle Peter wrote these memorable words to people, not just an individual: “. . . you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession . . .” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The fourth dragon is *Conformism.* Recognition by others is a necessity; “I am who others recognize me to be.” Jesus warned His disciples: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 6:1).

The fifth dragon is *Relativism.* It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you believe something; “I am whatever I choose to believe.” Jesus declared that what we believe about Him is what ultimately matters when He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

The sixth dragon is *Secularism.* Religion is all right in its place; “I am sufficient without God.” Jesus said we are not sufficient unless we have Him: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Are we listening to the dragons, or to the Word of God? May the Lord guide us as we listen to the world around us with His ears.

Listening to the Non-Christian

My ministry experiences include the privilege of travelling to the beautiful country of Slovenia. While in this formerly communist state I was invited to speak to older high school students in their classes. (Yes, they spoke and understood

English very well.) After one of these classes I engaged in conversation with several young people who were especially curious about the issues I had raised about the subject of worldviews. As I listened closely to what they were saying I realized they might have been using certain terms without much knowledge of what they mean. One of those terms was the word atheist. Some of them claimed they were atheists. So I gently asked if they understood the implications of the word by using an illustration that got their attention. Then I asked if they knew of the word agnostic. After they indicated they had not heard of the word I explained it to them. Immediately they responded by asserting that the word agnostic described them more accurately than atheist. From that point in our conversation I was able to share the gospel, the answer to their agnosticism.

As you can imagine, that incident is a joyous memory in my life. But what if I had not listened carefully, not only to what the students were saying, but what they did not say? I believe that if I had not focused my attention in order to contemplate their comments and questions, I would not have had their attention as I did.

When we are listening carefully to the non-Christian we are winning an opportunity to be heard by him. There are times when evangelism can be a matter of listening, and then telling. Here are two suggestions that can help in developing the art of listening to the non-Christian.

First, listen for what the person presupposes is true. For example, the actor Brad Pitt is quoted as saying, “I have a hard time with morals. All I know is what feels right. What’s more important to me is being honest about who you are.”{8} If you were listening to him say these things you may have wanted to encourage him to consider the implications of his statements. How would he react if someone “felt like” stealing his car or robbing his house? You also could ask him if Charles Manson was being honest about himself when he

committed murder. Brad Pitt's presuppositions about morality cannot be sustained. He needs something greater than his feelings and a vague sense of honesty.

Second, listen for what is not said. You may hear a lot of assertions, but what are the crucial elements you do not hear? Imagine you are listening to a non-Christian friend as he has a tirade about the hypocrisy of the Christians he knows (you excepted, of course). It suddenly occurs to you to ask what is behind his anger. He then becomes increasingly agitated as he tells you someone in a church rejected him and defamed his family when he was younger. Now you can begin to build up what had been torn down in your friend's life, even though a lot of patience may be required.

People need to be heard. May God grant us the wisdom to listen. In the process may He grant us the privilege of carrying His wondrous message to those who will hear.

Notes

1. W. Bingham Hunter, *The God Who Hears* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986).

2. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, gen. eds., "Ear, Hearing," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998).

3. Ibid.

4. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Reading Between the Lines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 18.

5. See my essays on the subjects of Television and Slogans.

6. Gerhard Kittel, akouw, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. I, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 220.

7. Stephen D. Eyre, *Defeating the Dragons of the World*

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987), 14. Much of the material in this section comes from this book.

8. Brad Pitt, quoted in *Ladies Home Journal* (March 1999), 46.

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Dynamic Sex: Unlocking the Secret to Love

Still searching for the secret of love? Missing the deep satisfaction you both want? To enjoy love and sex to the fullest, consider the total person – physical, psychological and spiritual.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

"A fulfilling love life. How can I have one? How can I get the most out of sex?" University students worldwide ask these questions. Why? Because both pleasure and emotional fulfillment are important facets of sex.

Sex is often on our minds. According to two psychologists at the universities of Vermont and South Carolina, 95% of people think about sex at least once each day.{1} You might wonder, "You mean that 5% of the people don't?"

One way not to have a dynamic sex life is to concentrate solely on technique. There is certainly nothing wrong with learning sexual technique—especially the basics—but technique by itself is not the answer.

A good relationship is important for good sex. Psychiatrist and bestselling author Anthony Pietropinto and coauthor Jacqueline Simenauer write, “When emotional issues involving anger or a need to control are encountered on the road to sexual fulfillment, the journey is interrupted until these conflicts are resolved.”{2}

Many sex therapists agree that great technique does not guarantee great sex. They emphasize that the qualities that contribute to a successful sex life are the same ones that contribute to a successful interpersonal relationship. Qualities like love, commitment and communication.

Consider love. As popular speaker and author Josh McDowell points out, those romantic words, “I love you,” can be interpreted several different ways. One meaning is “I love you if—if you go out with me…if you are lighthearted…if you stay committed to me…if you sleep with me.” This type of love is given on the basis of what the other person does. Another meaning is “I love you because—because you are attractive…strong…intelligent.” This type of love is given on the basis of what the other person is. Both types of love must be earned.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to be loved for what you are, but problems can arise with having “if” or “because of” love as the basis of a relationship. Jealousy can set in when someone who is more attractive or more intelligent appears and the partner’s attention shifts to the newcomer. People who know they are loved only for their strong points may be afraid to admit any weaknesses to their partners. This dishonesty can affect the relationship.

THE BEST LOVE. The best kind of love is unconditional. This love says, “I love you, period. I love you even if someone better looking comes along, even with your faults and even if you change. I place your needs above my own.”

One young couple was engaged to be married. Their popularity, intelligence, good looks and athletic success made their future together seem bright. Then the young woman was in a skiing accident that left her paralyzed for life. Her fianc deserted her.

Portrayed in the popular film, “The Other Side of the Mountain,” this true story was certainly complex. But was his love for her “love, period”? Or was it love “if” or love “because of”? Unconditional love (or “less-conditional,” because none of us is perfect) is an essential building block for a lasting relationship.

You can probably see how unconditional love can help a sexual relationship in a marriage. In order for sex to be most fulfilling, it should be experienced in an atmosphere of caring and acceptance. Sex, viewed in this manner, becomes not a self-centered performance but a significant expression of mutual love.

MUTUAL COMMITMENT. Another quality necessary for a strong relationship and dynamic sex is commitment. If two people are completely committed to each other, their relationship is strengthened. Without mutual commitment, neither will be able to have the maximum confidence that the relationship is secure. The fear may exist that, should they encounter a trial, the other may not be there for support. This can erode their bond.

Total, permanent commitment is important in sex, too. It brings security to each partner. It frees them from feeling they have to strive to keep from losing the other and releases them to enjoy one another. It can be an important result of and expression of unconditional love. Commitment helps to breed satisfaction.

COMMUNICATION. A third quality essential for a strong relationship and dynamic sex is communication. Even if

partners have mutual love and commitment, they need to communicate this to each other by what they say and do. If a problem arises, they need to talk it out and forgive rather than give each other the silent treatment and stew in their juices. As one sociology professor expressed it, “Sexual foreplay involves the ’round-the-clock relationship.” Communication affects your total life; your total life affects sex. Couples need to communicate about their hopes, dreams, fears and hurts as well as the daily details of life in order for the relationship to flourish.

Sex is a form of communication. You can bet that if partners are harboring resentment or not communicating appropriately, it shows in their sex life. Psychologists, sex researchers and textbook authors Albert Richard Allgeier and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier note that “a substantial number of sexual problems could be resolved if people felt free to communicate with their sexual partners…about their sexual feelings….”{3}

So, how can you have a dynamic sex life? By developing the same qualities that contribute to a strong relationship: unconditional love, total and permanent commitment and clear, meaningful communication. These qualities combine to help produce a maximum oneness and bring the greatest pleasure.

To this point we’ve been saying that sex is designed to work best within a happy marriage. “But,” you ask, “what about premarital sex?” This is, of course, a very controversial topic. While wanting to convey respect for those who differ, it’s best that couples wait until marriage before having sexual relations. Why? Consider three reasons.

WHY WAIT? First, there is a practical reason for waiting. Premarital sex can detract from a strong relationship and a dynamic sex life. All too often, premarital sex ends up a self-seeking, self-gratifying experience. After intercourse, one partner might be saying “I love you” while the other is thinking “I love it.”

Very often premarital sex occurs in the absence of total and permanent commitment. This can bring insecurity into the relationship. Both short—and long—range problems can result, especially with the breakdown in trust. For instance, while the couple is unmarried, there can always be the nagging thought, "If s/he's done it with me, whom else have they slept with?" After they marry, one might think, "If that person was willing to break a standard with me before we married, how do I know they won't now that we are married?" Doubt and suspicion can chip away at their relationship.

POOR COMMUNICATION, POOR SEX. Premarital sex can also inhibit communication. Each might wonder, "How do I compare with my lover's other partners? Does s/he tell them how I perform in bed?" Or perhaps they think, "Should I be totally honest and vulnerable and share my heart with this person when I don't know if they'll be around tomorrow? Can I entrust all of me to them if I don't have all of them for me? There will be part of me emotionally that I'll hold back." Each becomes less open; communication dwindles. And poor communication makes for poor sex. Bad feelings result, communication deteriorates and so does the relationship. In short, premarital sex can put people at a disadvantage because it can lessen their chances to experience maximum oneness and pleasure.

One young woman at Arizona State University expressed it like this: "I understand what you're saying about unity or oneness. I've had several premarital sexual experiences with different men. After each one, I've felt like I've left a part of myself with that person emotionally. What you're saying is that it makes sense for a person to save themself so they can give themself completely to their spouse."

There is a second reason for waiting: None of the arguments for premarital sex are strong enough. Of course, it's always easy to rationalize in the heat of passion and say it's right. But that is why it is important to decide beforehand—to think with your brain instead of your glands. Consider several

common arguments.{4}

The Statistical Argument: "Everyone else is doing it." Oh, no, they're not! Some studies have shown high statistics, but never one that says 100%. Besides, even if "everyone else" were doing it, that is a lousy reason for doing anything. Suppose 90% of your friends developed ulcers. Would you try to emulate them? Should you? This is not to equate sex with sickness. The point is that just because "everyone else is doing it" doesn't make it advisable or right. You need a better reason.

The Biological Argument: "Sex is a biological need, like the drive for food, air and water. When I have the impulse, it needs to be satisfied." You can't live without food, air or water. Believe it or not, you can live without sex. (It's been documented.)

The Contraceptive Argument: "Modern contraceptives have removed the fear of pregnancy." Don't kid yourself. There's always a chance of pregnancy. No contraceptive is 100% foolproof. Even many marital pregnancies are unintended. A lot of married couples have had "little surprises."

Even with all the modern contraceptives, there are one million teenage pregnancies in the U.S. each year.{5} And if one chooses abortion as a "solution," there can still be emotional scarring and, for many people, a guilt burden. Incidentally an estimated 55 million people in the U.S.—about one in five—have a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Each year there are twelve million new STD infections in the U.S.{6}—an average of over 20 new cases every minute.

HIV, the deadly virus that causes AIDS, has focused world attention on sexual risks. About 6,000 people around the globe become infected with HIV daily.{7} In the U.S., AIDS is the leading killer of people ages 25 to 44, according to the Centers for Disease Control.{8} So-called "safe sex" is not

really safe at all. Condoms can slip, break and leak.{9} Johns Hopkins University reports research on HIV transmission from infected men to uninfected women in Brazil. The study took pains to exclude women at high risk of contracting HIV from sources other than their own infected sex partners. Of women who said their partners always used condoms during vaginal intercourse, 23% became HIV-positive.{10}

The Hedonistic Argument: "But it feels so good when I do it—and afterward, too!" The question is, "How long after?" What feels good for a few seconds may leave you feeling miserable for years. Self-fulfillment is hard to come by without self-respect. Also, don't forget the other person. Sometimes one partner's pleasure is another partner's misery. How would you like being used as nothing more than someone else's pleasure machine?

Basketball superstar Magic Johnson shocked much of the world when he announced he was HIV-positive. Now married and an advocate for premarital abstinence, Johnson recalls that his former sexploits—a parade of one-night stands—left him empty: "I was the loneliest guy on the face of the earth….I didn't have anybody to share with who loved me for me. For Earvin (his given name, i.e., his real self), not for Magic (the sports legend)."{11}

The Experiential Argument: "Practice makes perfect and I do want to please my partner when I do marry." As previously mentioned, communication and commitment—not just technique—are keys to dynamic sex. Why not learn with your own spouse—together—instead of on someone else's wife or sister or husband or brother? Remember, too, that good sexual adjustment takes time, love and understanding.

The Compatibility Argument: "We need to experiment to see if we're sexually compatible, especially since marriage is such a big step." Some express it like this: "You try on a pair of shoes before you buy them!" The "try-before-you-buy" idea

breaks down because the human plumbing system is very flexible and almost always works. Again, premarital sex can erode trust and communication. It's wiser to test your compatibility as persons. Even happily married couples often need several years to adjust sexually to each other.

Besides, sex can cloud the issue. Sex is not the key to love. Love is the key to sex. Couples who approach marriage thinking that "We're in love so it's OK to have sex" or "We'll use sex to determine if we're in love" may be sorely disappointed. They may discover that what they thought was love is only charged-up sex sensations. Waiting until marriage does not guarantee that you'll be emotionally compatible, but it does help create a less confusing environment in which to find out before you take the step of a marriage commitment.

The Marital Argument: "If we're really in love and plan to get married, why all the fuss over the license and date?" Plans don't always end up in reality. (Chances are you know someone—perhaps yourself—who suffered a broken engagement.) The public declaration at a wedding can be an important evidence of commitment. Why? It takes a certain level of conviction to be able to state a commitment publicly. Affirming marriage vows in public helps give each partner greater assurance that each really means it. It can also act as a deterrent to future departure. The desire not to be publicly perceived as a promise-breaker can help dissuade partners from seeking supposed "greener grass." Of course a wedding is no guarantee one won't leave in the future, but it can be a preventive.

Third, there is a moral reason for waiting. According to biblical perspective, God clearly says to wait.{12} You might be thinking, "See, I told you God didn't want me to have any fun." Many people think this initially, then they realize that the reason God, as a loving parent, gives negative commands is for our own good. He wants us to experience something better!

Waiting until marriage can help you both have the confidence, security, trust and self-respect that a solid relationship needs. “I really like what you said about waiting,” said a recently married young woman after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. “My fianc and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait.” (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) “With all the other tensions and stress of engagement, sex would have been just another worry. Waiting till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made.”

THE GREATEST AID. One final concept that is perhaps the greatest aid to fulfilling sex concerns relating as a total person. Human lives have three dimensions: Physical, mental and spiritual. If communication on any of these levels in a marriage is missing, the relationship is incomplete.

Some are surprised to learn that sex and spirituality can mix well. A highly-acclaimed University of Chicago study of sex in America found that among women, conservative Protestants were those most likely to report they always had an orgasm during intercourse. While that finding does not prove causation, the high correlation between spiritual commitment and sexual pleasure prompted the researchers to note that the image of Christians as sexually repressed may be a myth.{13}

Certainly biblical writers support a healthy view of sexuality. For example the Hebrew Song of Solomon, a beautiful and passionate love story, has been called one of the best sex manuals ever written.

Consider this perspective: Relating on a spiritual level centers around the most unique person of history, Jesus of Nazareth. Evidence backs up His claim to be God{14} and as God what He offers can affect everyone in a personal way, including the area of sex.

One first century follower of Jesus described the quality of

love He offers: “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered…bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails….”{15} What man or woman would not want to love or be loved like that?

THE POWER SOURCE. During His time on earth, Christ explained that everyone is born physically alive but spiritually dead. In order to properly relate on a spiritual level, He said, one must be spiritually reborn.{16} He later rose physically from the dead to make this new life possible. Jesus offers a life that has power. Power for living, power to love others less conditionally, power for self-control in one’s sex life. Even after having experimented with premarital sex, one can find in God the strength to stop, to resist future temptation and to wait for one’s life partner.

Jesus also offers forgiveness from every wrong—no matter what—that we’ve ever done because He died on the cross in our place, bearing the punishment we deserved. Anyone can be completely forgiven if he or she will come to Christ. God can cleanse a person’s mind of all past guilt. He can restore the freedom of mutual love and trust in a relationship.

All you need to do to begin this spiritual journey is simply to believe that Christ died for you, ask for and accept the forgiveness He offers, and invite the living Christ into your life. It’s saying in faith, “Jesus Christ, I need You. Thanks for dying for me. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior. Give me the fulfilling life You promised.”

Christ’s entry into your life will enable you to begin living with an added spiritual dimension and to have eternal life.{17} As you grow in your new relationship with Him, you’ll find your attitudes and actions changing and becoming more fulfilling. Life certainly won’t become perfect. There

will still be struggles and discouragements, but you'll have a new Friend to help you through. The maturing Christian experiences the most challenging and rewarding life possible.

Two marriage partners having growing relationships with God will grow closer to each other: spirit to spirit, mind to mind, body to body. Their love, commitment and communication will become increasingly dynamic, and so will their sex.

Notes

1. Kathleen Kelleher, "Entertaining Fantasies? Don't Worry, Everyone's Doing It," Los Angeles Times, August 15, 1995, E13. She cites Harold Leitenberg of the University of Vermont and Kris Henning, "now at the University of South Carolina Medical School."

2. Anthony Pietropinto, M.D. and Jacqueline Simenauer, *Not Tonight, Dear*, New York: Doubleday, 1990, p. 79.
3. Albert Richard Allgeier, Ph.D. and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier, Ph.D., *Sexual Interactions*, Fourth Edition, Lexington (MA): D.C. Heath and Company, 1995, p.236.

4. Most categories and names for these arguments are taken from Jon Buell, "Why Wait Till Marriage?" (lecture outline) and Jim Williams, "The Case for Premarital Chastity" (cassette tape), both produced by Probe Ministries International, Dallas, TX.

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Pop Psychology Myths vs. A Biblical Point of View

Kerby Anderson compares some current myths with a Christian perspective informed by the timeless teaching of the Bible. These "pop psychology" ideas seem to make sense until one compares them with biblical insights from the creator of us all.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Go into any bookstore and you will see shelves of self-help books, many of which promote a form of "pop psychology." Although these are bestsellers, they are filled with half-truths and myths. In this essay we are going to look at some of these pop psychology myths as exposed by Dr. Chris Thurman in his book *Self-Help or Self-Destruction*. If you would like more information or documentation for the issues we cover in these pages, I would recommend you obtain a copy of his book.

Myth 1: Human beings are basically good.

The first myth I would like to look at is the belief that people are basically good. Melody Beattie, author of the best-seller *Codependent No More*, says that we "suffer from that vague but penetrating affliction, low self-worth." She suggests we stop torturing ourselves and try to raise our view of ourselves. How do we do that? She says: "Right now, we can give ourselves a big emotional and mental hug. We are okay. It's wonderful to be who we are. Our thoughts are okay. Our feelings are appropriate. We're right where we're supposed to be today, this moment. There is nothing wrong with us. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with us."

In other words, Beattie is saying that we are basically good. There is nothing wrong with us. At least there is nothing

fundamentally wrong with us. There isn't any flaw that needs to be corrected.

Peter McWilliams, in his best-seller *Life 101*, actually addresses this issue head on. This is what he says in the brief section entitled, "Are human beings fundamentally good or fundamentally evil?"

> My answer: good. My proof? I could quote philosophers, psychologists, and poets, but then those who believe humans are fundamentally evil can quote just as many philosophers, psychologists, and poets. My proof, such as it is, is a simple one. It returns to the source of human life: an infant. When you look into the eyes of an infant, what do you see? I've looked into a few, and I have yet to see fundamental evil radiating from a baby's eyes. There seems to be purity, joy, brightness, splendor, sparkle, marvel, happiness—you know: good.
>
> Before we see what the Bible says about the human condition, let me make one comment about Peter McWilliams's proof. While an infant may seem innocent to our eyes, any parent would admit that a baby is an example of the ultimate in selfishness. A baby comes into the world totally centered on his own needs and oblivious to any others.

When we look to the Bible, we get a picture radically different from that espoused by pop psychologists. Adam and Eve committed the first sin, and the human race has been born morally corrupt ever since. According to the Bible, even a seemingly innocent infant is born with a sin nature. David says in Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The newborn baby already has a sin nature and begins to demonstrate that sin nature early in life. Romans 3:23 tells us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are not good as the pop psychologists teach, and we are not gods as the new age theologians teach. We are sinful and cut off from God.

Myth 2: We need more self-esteem and self-worth.

The next myth to examine is the one that claims what we really need is more self-esteem and self-worth. In the book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning state, "Self-esteem is essential for psychological survival." They believe that we need to quit judging ourselves and learn to accept ourselves as we are.

They provide a series of affirmations we need to tell ourselves in order to enhance our self-esteem. First, "I am worthwhile because I breathe and feel and am aware." Well, shouldn't that also apply to animals? And do I lose my self-esteem if I stop breathing? In a sense, this affirmation is a take off on Rene Descartes's statement, "I think, therefore I am." They seem to be saying "I am, therefore I am worthwhile."

Second they say, "I am basically all right as I am." But is that true? Is it true for Charles Manson? Don't some of us, in fact all of us, need some changing? A third affirmation is "It's all right to meet my needs as I see fit." Really? What if I meet my needs in a way that harms you? Couldn't I justify all sorts of evil in order to meet my needs?

Well, you can see the problem with pop psychology's discussion of self-esteem. Rarely is it defined, and when it is defined, it can easily lead to evil and all kinds of sin.

It should probably be as no surprise that the Bible doesn't teach anything about self-esteem. In fact, it doesn't even define the word. What about the term *self-worth*? Is it synonymous with self-esteem. No, there is an important distinction between the terms *self-esteem* and *self-worth.*

William James, often considered the father of American psychology, defined *self-esteem* as "the sum of your successes and pretensions." In other words, your self-esteem is a

reflection of how you are actually performing compared to how you think you should be performing. So your self-esteem could actually fluctuate from day to day.

Self-worth, however, is different. Our worth as human beings has to do with the fact that we are created in God's image. Our worth never fluctuates because it is anchored in the fact that the Creator made us. We are spiritual as well as physical beings who have a conscience, emotions, and a will. Psalm 8 says: "You have made him [mankind] a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, you have put all things under his feet."

So the good news is that we bear God's image, but the bad news is that all of these characteristics have been tainted by sin. Our worth should not be tied up in what we do, but in who God made us to be and what He has done for us.

Myth 3: You can't love others until you love yourself.

Now I would like to look at the myth that you can't love others until you love yourself. Remember the Whitney Houston song "The Greatest Love of All?" It says, "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

Peter McWilliams, author of *Life 101*, promotes this idea in his book *Love 101* which carries the subtitle "To Love Oneself Is the Beginning of a Lifelong Romance." He asks, "Who else is more qualified to love you than you? Who else knows what you want, precisely when you want it, and is always around to supply it?" He believes that the answer to those questions is you.

He continues by saying, "If, on the other hand, you have been gradually coming to the seemingly forbidden conclusion that before we can truly love another, or allow another to properly

love us, we must first learn to love ourselves—then this book is for you." Notice that he not only is saying that you cannot love others until you love yourself, but that you can't love you *until you learn* to love yourself.

Melody Beattie, author of *CoDependent No More*, believes the same thing. One of the chapters in her book is entitled, "Have a Love Affair With Yourself." Jackie Schwartz, in her book *Letting Go of Stress*, even suggests that you write a love letter and "tell yourself all the attributes you cherish about yourself, the things that really please, comfort, and excite you."

Does the Bible teach self-love? No, it does not. If anything, the Bible warns us against such a love affair with self. Consider Paul's admonition to Timothy: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The Bible discourages love of self and actually begins with the assumption we already love ourselves too much and must learn to show sacrificial love (agape love) to others. It also teaches that love is an act of the will. We can choose to love someone whether the feelings are there or not.

We read in 1 John 4, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The biblical pattern is this: God loves us, and we receive God's love and are able to love

others.

Myth 4: You shouldn’t judge anyone.

Let’s discuss the myth that you shouldn’t judge anyone. No doubt you have heard people say, “You’re just being judgmental” or “Who are you to judge me?” You may have even said something like this.

Many pop psychologists certainly believe that you shouldn’t judge anyone. In their book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning argue that moral judgments about people are unacceptable. They write: “Hard as it sounds, you must give up moral opinions about the actions of others. Cultivate instead the attitude that they have made the best choice available, given their awareness and needs at the time. Be clear that while their behavior may not feel or be good for you, it is not bad.”

So moral judgments are not allowed. You cannot judge another person’s actions, even if you feel that it is wrong. McKay and Fanning go on to say why: “What does it mean that people choose the highest good? It means that you are doing the best you can at any given time. It means that people always act according to their prevailing awareness, needs, and values. Even the terrorist planting bombs to hurt the innocent is making a decision based on his or her highest good. It means you cannot blame people for what they do. Nor can you blame yourself. No matter how distorted or mistaken a person’s awareness is, he or she is innocent and blameless.”

As with many of these pop psychology myths, there is a kernel of truth. True we should be very careful to avoid a judgmental spirit or quickly criticize an individual’s actions when we do not possess all the facts. But the Bible does allow and even encourages us to make judgments and be discerning. In fact, the Bible should be our ultimate standard of right and wrong. If the Bible says murder is wrong, it is wrong. God’s

objective standards as revealed in the Scriptures are our standard of behavior.

How do we apply these standards? Very humbly. We are warned in the gospels “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Jesus was warning us of a self-righteous attitude that could develop from pride and a hypocritical spirit. Jesus also admonished us to “take the plank out of [our] own eye” so that we would be able to “remove the speck from [our] brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:1-5).

Finally, we should acknowledge that Jesus judged people’s actions all the time, yet He never sinned. He offered moral opinions wherever He went. He said, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30). Judging is not wrong, but we should be careful to do it humbly and from a biblical perspective.

Myth 5: All guilt is bad.

Finally, I would like to look at the myth that all guilt is bad. In his best-seller, *Your Erroneous Zones*, Wayne Dyer tackles what he believes are two useless emotions: guilt and worry. Now it is true that worry is probably a useless emotion, but it is another story with guilt. Let’s begin by understanding why he calls guilt “the most useless of all erroneous zone behaviors.”

Wayne Dyer believes that guilt originates from two sources: childhood memories and current misbehavior. He says, “Thus you can look at all of your guilt either as reactions to leftover imposed standards in which you are still trying to please an absent authority figure, or as the result of trying to live up to self- imposed standards which you really don’t buy, but for some reason pay lip service to. In either case, it is stupid, and more important, useless behavior.”

He goes on to say that “guilt is not natural behavior” and that our “guilt zones” must be “exterminated, spray-cleaned and sterilized forever.” So how do you exterminate your “guilt zones”? He proposed that you “do something you know is bound to result in feelings of guilt” and then fight those feelings off.

Dyer believes that guilt is “a convenient tool for manipulation” and a “futile waste of time.” And while that is often true, he paints with too large of a brush. Some guilt can be helpful and productive. Some kinds of guilt can be a significant agent of change.

The Bible makes a distinction between two kinds of guilt: true guilt and false guilt. Notice in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that the Apostle Paul says, “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Worldly sorrow (often called false guilt) causes us to focus on ourselves, while godly sorrow (true guilt) leads us to focus on the person or persons we have offended. Worldly sorrow (or false guilt) causes us to focus on what we have done in the past, whereas godly sorrow (or true guilt) causes us to focus on what we can do in the present to correct what we’ve done. Corrective actions that come out of worldly sorrow are motivated by the desire to stop feeling bad. Actions that come out of godly sorrow are motivated by the desire to help the offended person or to please God or to promote personal growth. Finally, the results of worldly and godly sorrow differ. Worldly sorrow results in temporary change. Godly sorrow results in true change and growth.

Pop psychology books are half right. False guilt (or worldly sorrow) is not a productive emotion, but true guilt (or godly sorrow) is an emotion God can use to bring about positive change in our lives as we recognize our guilt, ask for forgiveness, and begin to change.

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Safe Sex?

Starlight dances off the sparkling water as the waves gently lap the shore. A cool breeze brushes across your face as you stroll hand in hand along the moonlit beach.

The party was getting crowded and the two of you decided to take a walk on the deserted waterfront. You've only known each other a short while but things seem so right. You laugh together and sense a longing to know this person in a deeper way.

You pause and tenderly gaze into each other's eyes, blood rushing throughout your body as your heart beats faster. Soon you are in each other's arms kissing softly at first, then fervently. You tug at each other's clothes and both kneel to the sand. The condom comes on. You join in passionate lovemaking, then relax, hearing only the gentle waves and each other's breathing, grateful that you are comfortable in mutual care and that all is safe.

Or is it?

Was the condom you used enough to keep you safe? Aside from the emotional and psychological implications of your romantic encounter, realize that the condom is not a 100% guarantee of safety against AIDS for the same reason the condom is not a 100% guarantee of safety against pregnancy. There's always the possibility of human or mechanical error. Condoms can slip and break. They also can leak. Even the experts aren't certain condoms can guarantee against sexual transmission of the HIV virus.

Theresa Crenshaw, M.D., has been a member of the President' s Commission on HIV. She is past president of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists{1} and once asked this question to 500 marriage and family therapists in Chicago: "How many of you recommend condoms for AIDS protection?"

A majority of the hands went up. Then she asked how many in the room would have sex with an AIDS infected partner using a condom. Not one hand went up.

These were marriage and family therapists, the "experts" who advise others. Dr. Crenshaw admonished them that, "It is irresponsible to give students, clients, patients advice that you would not live by yourself because they may die by it."{2} What does this tell you about the confidence experts have in condoms to protect persons against AIDS?

Not too long ago herpes caught the public's attention. Now, of course, the focus is on AIDS. As with herpes, it is very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS and there is no known cure. But, of course, there's a big difference between herpes and AIDS: herpes will make you sick; AIDS will kill you.

Assessing the Risk

After I had made these remarks at a university in California, one young man asked me to explain what I meant when I said that condoms aren't safe. Consider this:

Condoms have an 85% (annual) success rate in protecting against pregnancy. That's 15% a failure rate.{3} But remember, a women can get pregnant only about six days per month.{4} HIV can infect a person 31 days per month.

Latex rubber, from which latex gloves and condoms are made, has tiny, naturally occurring voids or capillaries measuring on the order of one micron in diameter. Pores or holes five

microns in diameter have been detected in cross sections of latex gloves.{5} (A micron is one thousandth of a millimeter.) Latex condoms will generally block the human sperm, which is much larger than the HIV virus. (A human sperm is about 60 microns long and three to five microns in diameter at the head.{6} But the HIV virus is only 0.1 micron in diameter.{7} A five- micron hole is 50 times larger than the HIV virus. A one-micron hole is 10 times larger. The virus can easily fit through. It's kind of like running a football play with no defense on the field to stop you or shooting a soccer ball into an open goal. The hole is huge!

In other words, many of the tiny pores in the latex condom are large enough to pass the HIV virus (that causes AIDS) in its fluid medium.

One study focused on married couples in which one partner was HIV positive. When couples used condoms for protection, after one and one-half years, 17% of the healthy partners had become infected.{8} That' s about one in six, the same odds as Russian roulette.

One U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) study tested condoms in the laboratory for leakage of HIV-sized particles. Almost 33% leaked.{9} One in three.

One analysis of 11 studies on condom effectiveness found that condoms had a 31% estimated failure rate in protecting against HIV transmission. In other words, as the report stated, "These results indicate that exposed condom users will be about a third as likely to become infected as exposed individuals practicing "unprotected" sex…. The public at large may not understand the difference between "condoms may reduce risk of" and "condoms will prevent" HIV transmission. It is a disservice to encourage the belief that condoms will prevent sexual transmission of HIV. Condoms will not eliminate risk of sexual transmission and, in fact, may only lower risk somewhat."{10} Burlington County, New Jersey, banned condom

distribution at its own county AIDS counseling center. Officials feared the legal liabilities if people contracted AIDS or died after using the condoms the county distributed. They were afraid the county would be held legally responsible for the deaths. {11}

Over Easy Please

Latex condoms are sensitive to heat, cold, light, and pressure. The FDA recommends they be stored in "a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight, perhaps in a drawer or closet."{12} Yet they are often shipped in metal truck trailers without climate control. In winter the trailers are like freezers. In summer they're like ovens. Some have reached 185F (85C) inside. A worker once fried eggs in a skillet next to the condoms, using the heat that had accumulated inside the trailer.{13} Are you thinking of entrusting you life to this little piece of rubber?

Is the condom safe? Is it safer? Safer than what?

Look at it this way: If you decide to drive the wrong way down a divided highway, is it safer if you use a seat belt?{14} You wouldn't call the process "safe." To call it "safer" completely misses the point. It' s still a very riskyand a very foolishthing to do.

Remember that a national study found that condoms have a 15% failure rate with pregnancy. Perhaps you have flown in airplanes. Suppose only 15 crashes occurred for every 100 plane flights. Would you say airline travel was safe? Safer?{15} Would you still fly?

AIDS expert Dr. Redfield of the Walter Reed Hospital put it like this at an AIDS briefing in Washington, DC: If my teenage son realizes it's foolish to drink a fifth of bourbon before he drives to the party, do I tell him to go ahead and drink a six pack of beer first, instead? {16} According to Dr.

Redfield, when you're considering AIDS, "Condoms aren't safe; they're dangerous."{17}

The Test

You might say, "We've both been tested for AIDS. Neither of us has it."

The time span between HIV infection and detection of HIV antibodies has been found to be anywhere from three to six months, sometimes longer. {18}In rare cases it can even take years for signs of the virus to appear.{19} Dr. Redfield says that after he was exposed to HIV in his work, he waited 14 months before having sex with his wife.{20} Suppose you meet someone who says, "I had an HIV test a year ago; it was negative. I haven't had sex for a year. I just had another test; it was negative. I'm safe." You see the test results in writing. Is it safe to sleep with that person?

We all know how hormones can influence honesty. It comes down to this: Are they telling the truth about not being sexually active in the interim? Is there even a chance that person might twist the truth even slightly in order to get into bed with you? Even with the tests, it all boils down to trust. That's why I say, "It's very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS."

"Condom sense" is very, very risky. Common sense says, "If you want to be safe, wait."

The Total You

There are many other benefits to waiting (or to stopping until marriage, if you're a sexually active single). By "waiting," I mean reserving sex for marriage.

Sex involves your total personalitybody, mind, and spirit. Besides being physically risky, premarital sex can hurt you

emotionally and relationally. While you are single, sex can breed insecurity ("Am I the only one they've slept with? Have there been, or will there be, others?"). It can generate performance fears that can dampen sexual response. (If you fear even slightly that your acceptance by your partner hinges on your sexual performance, that fear can hamper your performance.) It can cloud the issue, confusing you into mistaking sexually charged sensations for genuine love.

After you marry, you might wonder, "If they slept with me before we married, how do I know that they won't sleep with someone else now that we are married?" (Marital faithfulness in the age of AIDS is, of course, important both emotionally and physically.) When disagreements crop up with your mate, will you be tempted to ask yourself, "Did we just marry on a wave of passion?" Don't forget flashbacks, those mental images of previous sexual encounters that have a nasty way of creeping back into your mind during arousal. Who wants to be thinking of previous sex partners while making love with their spouse? Worse, who wants their spouse to be thinking of previous sex partners?

Waiting until marriage can help you both have the confidence, security, trust, and self respect that a solid, intimate relationship needs. "I really like what you said about waiting," said a recently married young woman after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. "My fianc and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait." (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) "With all the other tensions, decisions, and stress of engagement, sex would have been just another worry. Waiting 'till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made."{21}

Why Is It Hard to Wait?

Apart from the obvious physical power of one's sex drive, there are other equally powerful emotional factors that can make it difficult to wait. A longing to be close to someone or

a yearning to express love can generate intense desires for physical intimacy. Many singles today want to wait but lack the inner strength or self-esteem They want to be lovedas we all do and may fear losing love if they postpone sex. They are frustrated when unable to control their sexual drives or when relationships prove unfulfilling.

Often sex brings an emptiness rather than the wholeness people seek through it. As one TV producer told me, “Frankly, I think the sexual revolution has backfired in our faces. It’s degrading to be treated like a piece of meat.” The previous night her lover had justified his decision to sleep around by telling her, “There’s plenty of me for everyone.” What I suspect he meant was, “There’s plenty of everyone for me.” She felt betrayed and alone.

I explained to her and to her TV audience that sexuality also involves the spiritual. One wise spiritual teacher understood our loneliness and longings for love. He recognized human emotional needs for esteem, acceptance, and wholeness and offered a plan to meet them. His plan has helped people to become whole “new creatures,”{22} that is, “brand new person(s) inside.”{23} He taught that we can be accepted just as we are, even with our faults.{24} We can enjoy the self-esteem that comes from knowing who we are and that our lives can count for something significant.{25} He promised unconditional love to all who ask.{26} Once we know we’re loved and accepted, we can have greater security to be vulnerable in relationships and new inner strength to make wise choices for safe living.{27} This teacher said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”{28} “My peace I give to you,” He explained. “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”{29} Millions attest to the safety and security He can provide in relationships. His name, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth. I placed my faith in Him personally my freshman year at Duke, Two Lambda Chis influenced me in that direction. Though I was skeptical at

first, it “has made all the difference,” as Robert Frost would say.

Sex and spirituality are, of course, quite controversial topics. I realize that our International Fraternity contains a wide spectrum of beliefs on these issues. I offer these perspectives not to preach but to stimulate healthy thinking.

Diversity was one of the things that attracted me to our chapter at Duke. Politically, philosophically, and spiritually we ran the gamut. There were liberals, conservatives, Christians, Jews, atheists, and agnostics. We tried to respect one another and learn from each other even when we differed on issues like these. That is the spirit in which I offer these remarks; may I encourage you to consider them in the same way.

To summarize, the only truly safe sex is the lovemaking that occurs in a faithful monogamous relationship where both partners are HIV negative. Condoms may reduce the risk of HIV transmission somewhat, but they can’t guarantee prevention. Please, don’t entrust your life to something as risky as a condom.

Notes

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19. Ibid. Redfield says that some people with hypogammaglobulinemia do not make antibodies, hence it takes years for them to show signs of HIV infection. (Current HIV tests detect not the virus itself, but rather the antibodies that the human body manufactures to attempt to fight the virus.)
20. Ibid.
21. Space limits extensive development here of the practical, psychological, and emotional advantages of waiting. These have

been more adequately discussed in Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright, *How to Unlock the Secrets of Love, Sex, and Marriage,* Barbour Books, 1981; Rusty Wright, "Dynamic Sex: Beyond Technique and Experience," Campus Crusade for Christ, 1977.
22. 2 Corinthians 5:17, New American Standard Bible.
23. 2 Corinthians, 5:17, Living Bible.
24. Luke 15:10-32.
25. John 1:12; II Corinthians 5:20.
26. John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:20, 23, 26; I John 4:7-21.
27. Acts I :8; Ephesians 5: 18; Galatians 5: 16-24; I Corinthians 6:18-20.
28. John 8:32.
29. John 14:27, NIV.

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