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FIDELITY

How to Be a One-Woman Man



DOUGLAS WILSON

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This book is dedicated to all my grandsons—
Knox, Judah, Rory, Seamus, Titus, and
soon to be announced.



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INTRODUCTION

Not that this is a new development or anything, but we do live in a time when sexual fidelity is under assault. But although sexual immorality is not new in the world, certain aspects of our current situation *are* comparatively new. The novelty of our circumstance is that, driven by the forces of relativism, our culture across the board is assaulting, for the first time in millennia, the very concept of sexual fidelity.

From the very beginning, the believer has had to stand against the various temptations to sexual laxity. Because of the success of the gospel, the nations influenced by it came, over the course of centuries, to acknowledge the essential “rightness” of Christian sexual morality. This did not mean that it was consistently practiced, but it did mean that the biblical standard became a cultural norm. The word was not yet on tablets of human hearts, but at least it was inscribed on tablets of stone.

In this situation, believers have sought to live the complete standard as God teaches us in His Word. But we are rapidly reverting to the *status quo ante*; we are quickly sliding back to

paganism. Our situation is now far closer to that of the first century Corinthians, who had to deal with the sanctified brothel dedicated to Venus, than it is to the immorality of Victorian London. The prostitutes of that city conducted a thriving trade among nominal Christians who knew their hypocrisy. But we are no longer good enough to be hypocrites.

Chastity was a novelty introduced to the Gentile nations as a result of the preaching of the gospel. Other virtues had been acknowledged by the pagans, and the Christian faith provided the grace and strength to live up to the standard that had always been acknowledged and admired. But biblical chastity was a cultural offense and took more than a little getting used to. Because the gospel transforms cultures as well as lives, the power of the gospel brought to our peoples what we might call sexual civilization.

But because of the general doctrinal apostasy of evangelical churches over the last century and a half, we find that our influence as salt and light is no longer what it was. A century ago an immoral man would avoid the Christians with shame in his face. Today, the promiscuous just stare at us blankly. We must return to our prior understanding of the Word of God and rebuild our understanding of sexual morality. But in far too many instances the world is having a much greater influence on the church than vice versa.

This book is not the place to develop the doctrinal issues, which has been capably done by others elsewhere. But with that doctrinal basis assumed, the structure of Christian sexual morality must be restored and reformed.

In the pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul sets down a requirement that each Christian elder be a “one-woman man”—the husband of one woman. This pattern is required of all Christian leaders so that they can exhibit the definition of Christian marriage to all the followers of Christ. The disciples, in turn, are to imitate what they see. The Bible requires the elders of the church to be

devoted to one woman, and it requires the people of God to watch all this closely, among other things, and imitate it—“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7).

So what does it mean to be devoted to one woman? We are surrounded by a world which specializes in the various arts of inflaming lust and encouraging people, if they can't be with the one they love, to love the one they're with. In such circumstances, what are we to do?

The first chapter will provide a brief defense of the straight talk approach taken throughout the book. The world does not hesitate to tempt us with messages that are not hard to understand. Unfortunately, many of the Christian responses are not nearly as clear or intelligible. The following chapters will consider in turn the various allurements which distract Christian men from their sexual responsibilities. Wading in from the shallow end of the pool, we will consider lust and pornography, then fornication, then adultery, then divorce, then prostitution, then rape, then polygamy, then sodomy, masturbation, and celibacy. After this we will consider what the Bible teaches about sex and sexuality in the resurrection, and then will conclude with a description of what Scripture teaches about sexual contentment in marriage. Because sexual temptation in each situation will be, at the root, *sexual*, this means that the various chapters will be somewhat repetitive at some points. But on a subject such as this, to write the same things is not grievous, and to the reader it is safe (Phil. 3:1).

At the same time, in writing on these things, it has been necessary (on some subjects) to go out on a limb. I am certainly aware that there is room for disagreement in what has been argued at certain places, but I have ventured into some controversial areas regardless. This is because too often pastoral advice on certain delicate issues has been developed by pastors in isolation—we

have not been talking about these things with one another, or when we *have* talked about them, we have been simply recycling the work of unbelieving sexual therapists for Christian consumption. We have to do better than this, and so exegetical discussion on practices like masturbation and oral sex should at the very least be initiated.

Having considered the particular temptations which attend the subject matter of each chapter, we will conclude with the antidote to all sexual disease, which is the godly honoring of the marriage bed: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). And we will come to understand that, biblically, the spiritual solution to sexual temptation can be pretty basic and earthy.

CHAPTER I



A BLUNT INSTRUMENT

This book was written for men and their sons. I suggest that wives read this only when their husbands give it to them, and not the other way around. The introduction mentioned the issue of “straight talk”—and this means, in part, a rejection of euphemism. Some of what is said here may be offensive to some Christian women, but the point is certainly not to give offense. The point is to provide biblically specific and pointed help for Christian males.

At the same time, although I want to speak plainly enough so that what is said is a genuine help, I also want to avoid any apparent violation of Paul’s injunction:

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph. 5:3–5)

Clearly Paul does not mean that such sins should not be mentioned or described—*he* mentions them here. He is saying that such things ought not to be named in our presence in any way which tolerates or gives countenance to them. We live at a time when the world does not hesitate to teach on sexual behavior. Broad evangelical churches usually mimic the world's teaching with a thin Christian gloss, and the more conservative churches hesitate to teach on this subject at all. The result is that such things are *done* among us, but in a false application of Paul's words, we still won't *name* them. We laugh at dirty jokes on the television shows we watch, but woe betide the poor idiot who tries to tell the same joke in the church foyer the next morning. His sin is not the joke, which half the church enjoyed in the privacy of their own homes, but rather his unwitting exposure of their dishonesty. And that "sin" is never tolerated, not even in times of spiritual declension.

Paul is telling us that we must not tolerate disobedience, and we must not speak as though we tolerate it. If in our attack on immorality we mention our target, in no way has there been a violation of Paul's requirement.

So in addressing the question bluntly, we are not disregarding scriptural boundaries. The Bible does not give us a list of "bad words." When we sin verbally (in what is generally and inaccurately called "swearing"), the words can be put into four general categories—swearing, cursing, vulgarity, and obscenity. Because we want life to be simple, we want God to give us a list of words which He forbids and be done with it. But we see in Scripture that within *each* of these four categories there are both unlawful and lawful uses. When we take the name of the Lord in vain, we are swearing sinfully (Exod. 20:7). When we take our oaths lawfully, we swear in His name (Deut. 6:13). When we curse maliciously, we rail against the image of God in man (Jas. 3:9). When we think of false teachers as the apostle Paul does, the

curse glorifies God (Gal. 1:8). When we avoid coarse and vulgar jesting (a coarseness which frequently has to do with bodily functions), we are doing nothing other than what Paul instructs (Eph. 5:4). When Isaiah rejects the self-righteousness of sinners as nothing better than a used menstrual cloth (“filthy rags”), he is being vulgar in a most holy way—in the interests of pure truth (Is. 64:6). Sometimes a vulgarity in one era is not a vulgarity in another—“So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall” (1 Sam. 25:22). And in many cases, we do not learn from the example of Scripture in these areas because our translations are cleaned up for us, and sometimes more than just a little.

The subject in this book is sex, and so I will be addressing the obscene. The word “obscene” comes from the Greek and literally means “off stage.” Those things which ought not to be done at all, and those things which should not be done in public are both obscene when done in public. Some things should not be done at all, and so are obscene. Other things should be done, but not in full public view. So whenever it becomes necessary to address such things in a public fashion, it should only be done with great care and caution, and qualified beforehand in every appropriate way. And even then, it should only be done as necessary. Everything that comes out of our mouths and word processors must be useful for *edification* (Eph. 4:29).

In certain contexts, the Scripture tells us that a godly treatment of the obscene is certainly possible. Certain things which are “obscene” are fully lawful. The lovemaking of a married couple is supposed to be “offstage.” But offstage does not mean “secret.” A married couple is publicly known to have a sexual relationship. When Scripture addresses such things it does so with propriety and draws a veil over it. But the veil is not *entirely* opaque. For example, we learn a great deal about the propriety of sexual

exuberance from the Song of Solomon. Within the context of married love, Scripture alludes positively to all kinds of conjugal activities, which we will discuss later.

On the negative side, Ezekiel rails against the adulterous idolatry of the Israelites by using sexual imagery of the most graphic sort. He uses obscenity to reveal the *real* obscenity of doing such things in defiance of God's law. A modern analogy is the practice of pro-life activists using pictures of dismembered children in their literature. Obscene? Yes, but the point is to expose the real obscenity, which is the *practice* of dismembering them.

Ezekiel was more concerned about the obscenity he was exposing than the obscenity he was using: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, *cause* Jerusalem to *know* her *abominations*, and say, Thus says the LORD GOD to Jerusalem" (Ezek. 16:1–3). Ezekiel was not some naughty child behind the barn, tee-heeing over his use of naughty language. He was filled with hatred for the obscenity being *committed*, and he was not so delicate that he refused to name what he was attacking. Phineas certainly observed a man and a woman copulating, but he was not doing so as a voyeur. His interest was ethical; he was *taking aim*. Ezekiel was doing the same kind of thing—

Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet [*lit.*, "spread your legs wide"; the two Hebrew words are *pasaq*, meaning *open wide*, and *regel*, meaning *legs*.] to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh [he is referring here to the size of their genitals]; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. (Ezek. 16:25–27)

But Ezekiel is not content with this. He goes on a few chapters later to explain the problem even more graphically. He is being obscene, but not sinful:

So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth. (Ezek. 23:18–21)

Put into modern English, the Israelites are condemned because they lusted for those who were endowed with a penis like a donkey, who ejaculated like horses, and who squeezed Israel's nipples in the days of her youth. Now, you may well say . . . is all this really necessary? I can imagine some readers saying, "You're not Ezekiel, pal."

My point is simply to show that godly obscenity exists. Certain subjects are not automatically off-limits. Of course, we are not protected by divine inspiration, as the apostles and prophets were, and so we fall short of biblical standards in many ways—and especially in an area like this, where we have so little practice and so few godly examples. However, we must become more puritanical and less Victorian—more ethical and open, and less sanctimonious and hypocritical. I recall one time in the Navy telling some sailors that they could not see past the end of their cocks—my point was an ethical one, but not really a delicate one. The Bible describes such men as unreasoning brutes. They do not understand much, and what they *do* understand, they use to destroy themselves: "But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, *as brute beasts*,

in those things they corrupt themselves” (Jude 10). “Dogs can hump. What else can you do?” Scientific or medical language is not suited for a prophetic rebuke.

The reason we must learn to think this way is that for the sake of our own pious traditions we have removed from circulation certain scriptural passages which are “indelicate.” As a consequence, we have practically denied what God has said when He told us that *all* Scripture is the breath of God and profitable for teaching and correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). Thus we should not be surprised when we find ourselves ill-equipped in this particular area. This book is intended to be read in such a way that men may come to know *exactly* the nature of the temptations which face them, so that they can know exactly what they may do to resist those temptations. Too often Christians create fuzzy word pictures which generally address the problem (i.e., we all know we are talking about sex, but no one is about to raise his hand and ask about *this* or *that*). So specific teaching is still too frequently avoided. And when Christians do get specific, they are more likely to be telling us what secular sexual therapists want us to know about prolonging orgasms than to be telling us what the Bible teaches. We need to know what the Bible teaches *specifically* and apply it specifically to our own situations.

For example, Jesus tells us that to lust after a woman is tantamount to committing adultery with her. But what *is* it to lust after her? What are we talking about? The answer is that lust is in a man who imagines or sees himself to be with a woman in some sexual way and who consequently has a physiological reaction, usually manifested by an erection. He is aroused and is physiologically interested in sexual intercourse of some description. That intercourse may be with his wife (while imagining another woman), or with a woman not his wife, or with himself by means of masturbation. Or it may not lead to any sexual climax, but rather to unfulfilled sexual frustration. Lust does not come into

existence at the point of sexual release. In all such cases, Jesus describes the mental state which led to this activity, or frustrated lack of activity, as “adultery.” This lust is not in view if a man merely notices that a woman is pretty. It *is* in view when he begins mentally undressing her for sexual purposes.

On the subject of divorce, the Westminster Confession notes that sinful men are apt to “study arguments” in order to get away from the teaching of Scripture on divorce. It is the same with all other sexual practices. When lust is not clearly identified at the initial point of arousal, men can draw the line in all kinds of unbiblical places after they are already in the grip of lust. For example, a man might toy with a woman sexually in his mind and yet think he has not lusted because he has not had a sexual climax. Or he might think that as long as he relieves the sexual tension with his wife, it does not matter who or what got him interested. “It doesn’t matter where I get my appetite,” he says, “as long as I eat at home.” This is nothing but grasping at technicalities. And this kind of hair-splitting mind doesn’t stop there. I have known of situations where an unmarried couple thought they were not guilty of fornication because they sought oral gratification and did not technically have sexual intercourse. Oh, good. For a minute there, the pastor was worried.

By the same token, to set the line at the birth of obvious sexual interest or arousal provides relief for men with tender consciences who have thought themselves guilty of lust when all they did was notice that a woman was attractive. But these and all such distinctions, necessary to be made, cannot be explained unless we speak plainly.

CHAPTER 2



LUST AND PORNOGRAPHY

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. (1 Thes. 4:3–8)

The purpose of this chapter is to address Christian men and boys on some of the practical problems resulting from the pervasiveness of pornography in our culture. This pervasiveness reflects an underlying problem with lust, which must consequently be addressed first. What the Bible calls lust creates a considerable demand, and pornography is simply one of the modern market's attempts to produce something which will meet that demand. The problem is not *outside* ourselves in the x-rated videos, or in