

Walking with Truth and Love

“Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God’s saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God’s mercy and grace.” –Tim Keller

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What is being believed?

- Identity is forged and self-determined; not given.
- The litmus test for identity is found within one’s own feelings and experiences.
- The highest good is to be true to yourself
- I am perfect just the way I am.
- “I’m on the right track baby, I was born this way” –Lady Gaga
- If I have any weaknesses or bad impulses; I will be the judge of them (what do they know about me?)

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What gave rise to this belief in our culture?

- Western Philosopher Jean Jacques Rosseau-*"The Original impulse of nature is right, but the effect of a depraved culture is that we lose contact with it."*
- Social conditioning and institutions are the culprit that need to be undone; not a dysfunctional inner depravity of the person.
- The separation of culture and human nature

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What gave rise to this belief in our culture?

- The psychological teachings of Sigmund Freud- Sexuality and Self-fulfillment now go hand in hand. To be sexually fulfilled is what it means to be human.
- Freud's Pleasure Principle- The quest for pleasure focused on sexual gratification is central to what it means to be a self.
- The decline of the Meaning of Marriage-Personal pleasure over and above pro-creation.

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The Triumph of the Therapeutic

- Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
- The Tenets of the Therapeutic
- If god exists; god is a means toward your self-actualization
- Religion is a means to cope
- The purposes of life are happiness and self-fulfillment
- You're the hero of the story
- Just be a good person
- There is no transcendent judgement the only judgement you need to escape is from others and from yourself

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Why is this sensible, powerful, and profound?

- It provides relief from a doctrine that feels offensive and interrogates our very core of being/motivations (Original Sin)
- It offers a sense of liberation from social norms that seem to contradict natural inclinations and personal well-being
- It provides a way to cope with inner feelings that seem dysfunctional
- It gives a sense of power to change identity within the individual that is not based on what others say
- It saves me from the idea that I could be a prisoner to irrational impulses and provides human reason to ease feelings of guilt/shame

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What can we learn? Any Common Ground?

- Identity can be complex and uncomfortable
- We are born into situations and have impulses we never asked for
- We all try to make sense of how we feel and who we are
- We all have a struggle and battle with nature and nurture; social norms and self-expression.
- There are feelings of desperation that need to be satisfied somehow or with someone.

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Where could these ideas lead?

- A new definition of sexuality, gender, and marriage. *See Obergefell v Hodges*
- Marriage as a concept is reduced to personal autonomy
- A denial that there is any rational basis for defining marriage as between a man and a woman.
- A culture that becomes sexualized; and yet makes it difficult to have and sustain numerous children
- How we view identity is self-determined by the individual, not by parents or the community.
- Sexuality becomes core to identity; not a developed impulse.

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What are the spiritual issues going on?

- A rejection and false definition of God's gift of marriage for the world.
- An identity that is rooted in personal experience; not on what God says about us
- Idolatry- a refusal to let God be God and conform our lives to His Will.
- A failure to understand how sexual behavior impacts the community and is bigger than personal decisions. Just because it doesn't seem wrong now doesn't mean it won't have long term consequences.
- A confusion of God's design coupled with the reality of original sin
- A redefinition of human flourishing

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What do the Scriptures say?

- *“The question, then, is not whether personal experience matters or not because it does. The question is, how does experience matter? Does personal experience serve as a form of truth? Can you trust your feelings about yourself?” –Rosaria Butterfield (Openness Unhindered)*
- Marriage: Matthew 19:4-9; Genesis 2; Ephesians 5:22-27
- Who we are in sin: Romans 1:18-2:2
- Romans 3:9-19
- What if the doctrine of original sin is offensive, but also unifying?
- Who we are in Christ: Colossians 3:9-17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- What makes the Christian claim of identity and sexuality hopeful?

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Questions

- Read Ephesians 5:21-27; for Paul, what is the mission of marriage?

We confess together in the apostle's creed, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting."

How does this part of our confession offer hope with someone deeply struggling with who they are?

What are some of biggest challenges you feel talking to someone about sexual identity; or any identity issue at all?

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Recommended Resources

- Openness Unhindered by Rosaria Butterfield
- The Meaning of Marriage by Tim Keller
- Holy Sexuality by Christopher Yuan
- Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self by Carl Trueman

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