



URBAN CURRENT

Your sexual integrity in an urbanized world

Even a semi-regular reader of this column, will be able to finish this line: *What's in the city today ... all together now, ... is everywhere tomorrow.*

This is true because the city functions as an amplifier and a distribution engine. Those morals and mores that used to inhabit the “big, bad city” now pervade our culture.

An urbanized culture is a matrix of devilish lies and demonic lures to destructive beliefs and behaviors on a scale and with an intensity that is astounding. Once upon a time, you had to go to the city to obtain pornography, find prostitutes, and locate gay bars. People fled to the city when they wanted to throw off the restraints and restrictions of familiarity and accountability.

This is why 40 years ago much of my congregation was bent pieces and broken parts of family units. Inevitably a suburban divorce landed one of the pair in the city. Singles gravitated to the city to work, to go to school, be free, to explore. What I was experiencing in the heart of the city just shy of a generation ago has become the cultural norm.

Since God designed our sexuality to be powerful, it stands to reason that in view of the above we are especially vulnerable in this realm. An urbanized culture is a sexualized culture.

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul communicates with a local assembly in a city known throughout the Roman world for its sexual abandon. Many in the church came from backgrounds of diverse, perverse sexual practices. All of them were impacted by their city's hyper-sexualized culture.

Across Paul's inspired writings, he expounds God's design for human sexuality. His design provides, in the mystery, beauty, potency, and ecstasy of wedded union, a living, repeating picture and sample of believers' ultimate union with Christ for eternity.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul reminds the sin-soaked, sex-saturated Corinthians of their fresh start in Jesus spiritually and positionally. Integrity references soundness, completeness,

wholeness. It describes something being as it was imagined, designed, and created, in this case, our sexuality.

Sin separates, disintegrates, and destroys. It brings brokenness, disorder, and dysfunction. A lack of sexual integrity means an absence of that which is sexually sound, complete, whole as God intended.

In addressing sexual integrity then, we are speaking of finding and keeping our sexual soundness, completeness, wholeness, footing, balance, order, function as men and women of God.

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 6 that our sexual integrity is inseparably linked to several things.

First, he points to the healthy regard for our sacred stewardship (verses 12 and 13). Sexual integrity can't only be about control, whether we speak of mind, will, or body.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “The essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust but the total orientation of one's life toward a goal. Without such a goal, chastity is bound to become ridiculous.”

The big idea here is that reason and power are at play. The Lord is the master, the owner, the possessor. His authority provides the basis for order, which produces function aimed at reaching an objective. In the power of God's Holy Spirit, (verse 19) we submit to our Lord's, read “Master's, authority.” It's not merely about sin management. Grasping God's purpose in our sexuality and teaching this to our children is urgently necessary. Failure to have a healthy regard for our sacred stewardship can lead to a broken fellowship with God.

Secondly, we need a healthy fear of sexual brinkmanship. Brinkmanship is the art or practice of pushing a dangerous situation or confrontation to the limit of safety, especially to force a desired outcome. This is pretty much where our culture lives sexually. This is why Paul says in verse 18, “flee immorality.” Sin produces the opposite of sexual integrity. We

flee sin because it actively works disintegration. Needless exposure to sexual content, allowing your children to be sexualized in demeanor, dress, by education or entertainment, is playing with fire.

It follows that having a healthy regard for the sacred stewardship of our bodies is balanced with this healthy fear. Flee what is harmful or destructive. Failure here can lead to a squandered discipleship.

Thirdly, there must be a healthy embrace of our body's ownership. Not only does Paul use the term Lord (verses 13 and 14), but he says we are not our own because we've been purchased (verses 19 and 20). Every believer is bought and paid for. God's presence is not an ethereal notion but actual reality in our bodies. His power is available to operate in us. We are enabled to submit to God's authority, realize His order, and experience the function He intended with His glorious objective in view. His plan is that we physically and bodily, glorify His ownership, honoring His role as Master. With our sexual integrity, we give weight to the presence of the One who owns us physically. Failure here will result in a misused body.

We are called to guard our sexual integrity in this intensely urbanized culture. This is not only possible, it's necessary to adequately witness to Christ's love for us, His church, and our trust that this relationship will be consummated in glory.

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