

I'll Have My Cake and Eat It Too, Please!

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When I was younger, I wanted to impress girls and speak Spanish. I also wanted to impress girls and play the piano—at least as well as a friend of mine could. I was convinced that playing the piano while singing to girls in Spanish was going to be like a super power! Don't waste any time wondering if I was shallow and hyper-focused on impressing girls. It's true, and I have no defense to offer. So shortly thereafter I began a training program. I followed it rigorously. I never varied from the plan which resulted in the only outcome this kind of training can deliver. I can neither speak Spanish, nor can I play anything more than chopsticks and the first few bars of *Nadia's Theme*. What happened? Well the training program I committed to was perfectly designed so that I would NOT be able to do these things. Though I wanted to learn these skills, I actually trained in a spectacular way to end up NOT being able to do them. I started with piano lessons, but in a couple of months they stopped. I never practiced again. I took Spanish in elementary school and never pursued it after that. "Escucha y repite" is all I have now. Although I have no possible way to be surprised about the results of this training program, I'm still sad about how it turned out. Every day that I did not practice these skills I chose to not play the piano and to not speak Spanish. It didn't really feel like I was making those decisions. But by never doing the thing necessary to become bilingual, I automatically ended up frustrated—and monolingual. We do this all the time. We actually desire to become something, but we do nothing or even do the opposite of what it would take to become that kind of person.

I believe it is in our very DNA to want to have deep, safe, and intimate relationships. We write songs about it, we make romantic comedy films about it, and every year they make about a kabillion dollars. Disney has an entire lineup of princes and princesses who symbolize the pursuit, the struggle, and the fulfillment of finding true love. As a species, we long for deep, safe, and intimate relationships, but as a culture, we actively train to be unable to obtain this.

I know a bunch of teens and young adults who have been deeply influenced by our secular culture. And despite the fact that they are Bible-believing Christians, they are being sexually active—some to the point of recklessness. Many are determined to be this way until

they finish sowing their wild oats and/or until they find their soulmate. The plan goes something like this: Once they decide to settle down, they plan to ask God for forgiveness, get married, and live happily ever after. The problem is this reckless sexual activity is a very profound and soul-altering training program.

Young men often study pornography many more hours per week than they study any subject in school. They are not just goofing around and having fun; they are training like an Olympic athlete to become the kind of person who can only see females as a thing to have sex with. It cannot be any other way. Having trained intensely for years, this frustrated young man has become emotionally and spiritually unable to have a healthy relationship with a sweet girl. He has become a highly trained sex-seeker. There is muscle memory. There are new and insatiable sexual instincts in place. Through constant training and repetition, new neural pathways have been created in his brain, confirming for him that “women are only here for sex”. This young man, who should be listening to his sweet girlfriend as she tells him of her dreams and fears, can only fantasize about having sex with her. While she is talking to him in a very nonlinear fashion that requires days and months and even years of interested and active listening, he cannot engage. He has no patience for this. He has trained himself to have absolutely no capacity for this kind of relationship. He has almost no experience with pleasant conversation and the give and take of extended times together. He only wants to have sex. Though he wants a deep, safe, and intimate relationship, he cannot participate in this kind of interaction, and it makes him feel empty and broken. In addition, he KNOWS that if this sweet girl really knew who he was, she would reject him out of hand for being a shallow sex addict. “Deep, safe, and intimate” has been displaced by shallowness, fear, and self-protection. It is a very dark existence, and the number of males who experience this problem is growing at an alarming rate.

Girls in our culture were once the guardians of morality and propriety. Today, it is acceptable and rather common for them to be sexual predators. It is not uncommon for these girls to have sex on the first date. It is in fact a sign of “some kind of crazy” to date one person for months and not be sexually active. Many girls sexually pursue boys because they feel this is

their power. They can move males like a magnet moves metal. They WANT to be like this, and you cannot convince them to stop. It is their strength, their identity. So, one day when they find their soulmate, they will have had NO training in a relationship that is *not* manipulative and based on an economy of power. Neither the boy nor the girl in these examples has ever trained to tell their glands and instincts NO. For those who want to bond and enjoy deep and intimate relationships, this reckless sexuality is ruinous.

To be a whole and healthy person you must become an expert in many things. Chief among them, you must be able to tell yourself no. You must become expert at refusing one thing in order to choose the better thing. Healthy people say no to a box of Little Debbie Swiss Rolls (which is NOT easy, and if you freeze them, it's even more difficult). Instead, healthy people choose real, nutritious, and perhaps even organic food because they want a better outcome than the one Swiss Rolls will deliver. Physically fit people choose exercise over video games. College students who plan to graduate choose studying instead of frisbee golf. Learning to say NO to yourself is a mark of maturity, and it is central to the shaping of your soul. In times past, it was well understood that the very act of maturing was marked by the ability to tame your passions. Today, our culture celebrates following no rules. In fact, indulging our passions and being fearless of the consequences is equated with living life to the full. We have been terribly deceived.

Neither the porn-trained boy or the sexually aggressive girl is prepared to be emotionally exclusive or sexually monogamous. To have a healthy relationship, they will need to protect their hearts from all others and sacrifice their own desires for the good of their future spouse. Because of the way they have trained, however, they simply have no experience doing these kinds of things. They are instead well trained to pursue new and exciting sexual encounters.

One of the collateral consequences of casual sex is emotional isolation. Intimacy is a precious and fragile thing. It can be starved or damaged easily. Sex was given to us by God so that we can be intimate, safe, and bonded soul-to-soul to another. It was meant to be considered precious and exclusive because it is so precious. Precious things are cared for carefully. They are protected and used only under the right conditions as opposed to – for

example “throwing pearls to pigs”. That would be a total waste and mockery of the pearls. The world tells us sex is so great you should have a bunch of it with a whole lot of people. Scripture tells us that sex is so great it needs to be used carefully so that intimacy can occur. Those who have casual or reckless sex are in fact training to not be emotionally intimate as they have sex. These poor kids have been fooled into exchanging intimacy for stimulation. It is a sad deception. When eventually presented with the possibility of actual soul-to-soul intimacy, it will be too demanding. They may well panic and instinctively begin to manipulate and lie in an effort to self-protect the way one does while engaging in casual sex. They simply follow the impulses they have given themselves over to, which are all in direct opposition to the things that deep, safe, intimate and soul-satisfying relationships are supposed to provide. They have been deceived into thinking that they are free to “have their cake and eat it, too”. Instead, they have chosen to have only brief sexual encounters and live without the very things their hearts were created to thrive in.

As to the forgiveness issue... Yes, of course God forgives us of our sins and even of our stupidity. Forgiveness, however, is not transactional, it is relational. You cannot ask for forgiveness for something you plan to do again tomorrow and receive forgiveness. In this instance, you are not even asking for forgiveness; you are asking for immunity so that you don't suffer the consequences. You ask for forgiveness when you come to realize that you have distanced yourself from God and you are shocked by your actions. Afraid that you are so distant from God and wanting more than anything else to be back in His arms, you beg for forgiveness. Having asked for forgiveness, you then do all you can to not do this “relationship-damaging sin” again. You are not trying to be exonerated from punishment; you are trying to repair your relationship with God. In human terms, to ask your husband for forgiveness for sleeping with that stranger last night (while you are applying lipstick to go out and sleep with another stranger tonight) is a mockery of the marriage relationship. You are NOT asking for forgiveness. You are hell bent on doing what you want. Forgiveness is not given under these conditions, not from the husband and not from God.

Even kids who were raised in church may have come to believe that God is really out to keep them from the best things. It is the oldest of old lies. In Genesis chapter 3, the Serpent

(Satan) told Eve she was missing out, that God was keeping the very best stuff away from her. But if she rebelled, then she could get the best stuff. She collapsed under the weight of that lie and it altered everything going forward. What if, just what if, God wanted such good things for us like safe relationships, freedom to be fearlessly authentic, sheer joy in deep relationships, and no threat of unfaithfulness that he made some very strong laws and commandments? What if these laws and commandments were there to *save* us from becoming toxic, self-harming, and relationally destructive? What if the laws were there to ensure that we enjoy and even thrive in deep, safe, intimate, healthy, fun, and soul-satisfying relationships? Maybe those verses about sexual purity, living for others and abiding in God are there to save us from ruin and bless us beyond our imagination. If these things are true, and they are, why would anyone then be so stubborn and foolish to believe the lie that God is holding out on us?

The good news is that all this bad and self-destructive training can be reversed. It can be undone. And it can be healed. In fact, the sooner it begins, the better. There is still a future ahead where you can be blessed by God, loved by others, and free from the lies and experiences of the past so that you can love others deeply and sacrificially like you were created to. It will not be easy, and you cannot do this on your own. You will need to actually train to do things you've not done before like Bible study and spending many hours honestly talking with wise believers who know the road out of this mess. It will also require a passionate pursuit to know and love God more than you do right now. The Holy Spirit is just waiting for you to engage in this new training, and He will work with you and protect you and guide you as you train.

Be sexually pure. Not because it's the moral thing to do, but because it is one of the elements in your training program that will help you to be intimate with both God and others. That is what you were beautifully and lovingly created for.

If you're ready to begin, we are ready to help. Reach out to any leader or staff member here at Stonebriar and we will come around to help you. This is what the church is for. Simply contact christinec@stonebriar.org, and we will reach out to you shortly. You are not alone in this. Training can begin now.