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“ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” 1Thess 5:5

Chapter Four

What Happened to Chastity?

Insight #4 Free love never was freedom; sex without honor and commitment leaves a bitter aftertaste--feeling less loved and more lonely.

I was visiting my parents and laughing at old family photos. We came across their wedding portrait--sixty years old! They looked so handsome. Oh, Mother! The classic porcelain face and strawberry-blond curly hair. Daddy! A Clark Gable look-alike, with moustache and black wavy hair. There was a moment of silence, then Daddy said, “Those were the days when couples fell in love and got married. That doesn’t seem to happen too often anymore; things are different now.”

Mother added, “Our favorite song was ‘When I Fall In Love It Will Be Forever.’ The song is still popular, but no one believes in it anymore. Things are different now.”

“Things are different now”--these words were haunting. My generation watched as the idea of romantic love and “living happily ever after” was discarded.

I recall one of my college teachers saying, “Romantic love is a myth. It is an illusion of a desperate and irrational mind, and no one lives happily ever after.”

No one lives happily ever after; but romantic love, the type that continues to bloom and grow through the years is not a myth. I watched such love growing up, and I have lived it in my own life, but it is, however, in danger of becoming extinct. Soul-bonding love is fragile; it dies a natural death when the soil is too acid to survive. Without love, honor and cherish--without honesty, integrity and loyalty--it's in soil too acid to survive.

Our society has contributed to its extinction by becoming too acid with the idea that sexual desire is merely an itch to be scratched. Too acid with the idea that life is nothing more than a journey from sea to dust. Too acid with the idea that repressing sexual urges is unhealthy. Too acid with the idea that there are no moral values--only societal conditioning. Too acid with the idea that the highest value is self-fulfillment. Too acid with the lie perpetrated by some therapists that an extra marital relationship could actually help a troubled marriage.

There's been a terrible price--a devastating price--for buying into the lies, especially the one that says, "If it feels good, do it and to hell with the consequences." Unfortunately, *hell* usually is the consequence.

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*Romantic love that continues to bloom and grow can and does exist,
but it's dying a natural death in soil too acid to survive.*

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When I was growing up, romantic love and waiting till marriage

were still in style. The movie industry had strict rules on sexual conduct. The most suggestive scene in the movies those days was Donna Reed losing her bathrobe and hiding in the bushes in “It’s a Wonderful Life.” Couples could only kiss for so many seconds, married couples were not shown in bed together, and the plot of the movie had to have some redeeming social value.

Music glorified love and marriage: I remember walking to school singing, “Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage. Ask the local gentry and they will say, ‘It’s elementary’,” or, “When I fall in love, it will be forever, or I’ll never fall in love. And the moment that I feel that you feel that way too, is when I’ll fall in love with you.”

The Smokescreen of the Sexual Revolution

Then came the Sixties, when ideas such as lasting romantic love and morality were dismantled piece by piece and tossed to the wind. By the time the Seventies were upon us, the raging nonsense of the sexual revolution, as it was called, was in full swing. It reminded me--then and now--of carnivals and I hate carnivals. Barkers yelling at you, gaudy colored lights, cheap prizes, and giant stuffed animals. You spend every cent in your pocket in an attempt to win the grand prize. Then when you do, you find yourself walking through the crowd carrying a giant bright lemon-colored dinosaur, heavy in your hands, and heavy with the thoughts, “Why? What will I ever do with this?” In the morning light---you wake up, look across the room at the yellow monster cluttering up your room and again wonder, “Why?”

The barkers for free love were on every side, luring the youth into casual sex. I watched as friend after friend succumbed and

gave their childhoods for the prize, which was only an illusion that sex was better than chocolate, movies or slumber parties. Only later did they wake up with heavy hearts, and shame and confusion cluttering up their lives. Some said that there was no reason for shame, that it was all a result of false religious and societal traditions, but for some reason the shame was still there all the same.

It was a unique period of American history. Rebellion and resentment were in the air; you could feel it. Some were resentful of everything--they burned the flag, spit upon the cross, and scorned their mothers and their apple pie. All traditions--particularly moral traditions--were challenged. Everything was up for debate.

It was the season for lots of questions, and few answers: Why go to school? Why get married? Why live in houses when a VW bus will do? Why live in single unit families when you can live in communal groups? Why are women supposed to be a certain way and men another--is it because they have been conditioned by society? Why is there a double standard? Why is there any moral standard at all? Whose morals? Whose values? Like being given a problem to solve in a mathematics class and arguing with the teacher: Why this particular problem? Why these numbers? Why numbers at all? Why mathematics at all? Why life?

The flower children of San Francisco emerged in the midst of all of this unresolved contention and confusion. I remember going to the city and watching the young men and women as they stood on corners, handing out flowers to the people as they passed by. They carried placards with a simple message: "Make Love, Not War."

It seemed reasonable--just reduce all of life's problems down to the religion of love. After all, it was noncontroversial at a time when

everything was controversial! Almost overnight, love was enthroned: if it's love, it's right; if it feels good, do it. Anything that even came close to resembling love was accepted.

With the philosophical climate in such a vacuum, and almost everyone grappling for something--anything--to believe in, it was a hit. Magazines, movies and music hailed the message: "All ya gotta have is love. . .It can't be wrong, when it feels so right. . .Let's slip away into the night. . .I'm a woman in love, so I'll do anything. . .You're a woman now; you've learned how to love. . .My virgin child." A middle-age man singing to a young teenager, "Leave the boys behind and come live with me," would have outraged the previous generation, but no longer.

Gradually, the movies that glorified chastity were replaced by movies that portrayed virginity as the plague of the naive and innocent. Young men and women who had not been initiated were considered to be "out of it"--uncool--unsophisticated.

New technology contributed to acceptance of the sexual revolution. Contraceptives were available at the corner market or even distributed free at the local high school. Unwanted pregnancies could be avoided by "the pill." If that failed, after 1973 there was always legalized abortion. The problem of venereal disease had been worked out with condoms and miracle medicines, until AIDS came onto the scene.

We knew the sexual revolution was in full swing when we heard ourselves or others saying, "It's okay because we're really in love. . .It's okay; we plan to get married someday. . .I know he's married, but we're in love. . .He's young enough to be my son, but we're in love. . .We're mature enough to make our own decisions. . . How else can we find out if we're really in love?. . .If you really loved me,

you would. . .I love you so much that I just can't help myself. . .”

Seeing Through the Smokescreen

Some instinctively saw through the hoax of it all, surprisingly I saw it among the youth. Through the years, several youth have told me their sad stories. Some children suffered the heartache of watching their parents immorality. They could have told their parents that marriage needs total and absolute fidelity to survive, but who would have listened to the children?

Charlene was quite a tomboy--always in pants, short haircut, low voice--in fact, we didn't realize until she had been coming around for over a year, that she was a girl. She loved our family, and hated to go home after their playtime together. Sometime later I discovered why.

Her parents lived in different homes with seasonal mates. I recall the first time our son Aaron went to her house to play for the afternoon. She said that their family owned the two homes on the property; her Mom lived in one house with her boyfriend, and her father lived in the other with his girlfriend. As a little girl, she was too young to realize, but later that would all change. Her innocent acceptance turned to bitterness. Listening to her mother moan when once again a lover had deserted her, she said, “What can you expect? Why should anyone marry you when you give yourself so cheaply? Why are you so surprised when they leave when there was no commitment in the first place?”

This daughter's plea to her mother reminded me of the moment in Shakespeare's play when Hamlet pleads with his mother,

“Nay, but to live in the rank sweat of an
enseamed bed, stewed in corruption, honeying and

making love over the nasty sty. . .confess yourself to heaven. Repent of what's past, avoid what is to come, and do not spread the compost on the weeds to make them ranker." (Hamlet, Shakespeare, p. 119.)

I love the expression, "do not spread compost on the weeds to make them ranker." In other words, don't keep feeding a bad relationship that reeks.

"I have seen so much unhappiness," she said, "come from my parents' affairs that I have determined this will never happen to me. I am going to stay virgin until I'm married and if the guy doesn't like it, he can go find someone else. I have hated what my Mom and Dad have done to our family and what they've done to themselves-- it won't happen to me. I don't want my children to go through what I've gone through." True to her word, she now lives happily with her husband and three little daughters. Her mother lives alone; her father has remarried.

Infidelity in marriage can create a cesspool of hurt feelings and bitterness. I have observed fathers cunningly strive to turn the hearts of their children away from their mothers, and mothers turn the hearts of their children away from their fathers. Seeding such hatred always backfires; the children become embittered toward both!

Often Lyn, fourteen, would ask if she could spend the weekend with our family. Her mother was either away with a boyfriend for the weekend, or having one over. So she inevitably told Lyn to "find someplace to stay." There is no child who feels as unwanted as one who is a third wheel in their parents' love affair. Lyn determined that her life would be different, but lessons had been taught and

absorbed; a few years later she became imprisoned in an abusive relationship with a young man.

_Sex outside of a loving, loyal and legal relationship usually has little to do with love and a whole lot to do with selfishness and exploitation.

The Awakening

Those of my generation watched as the idea of waiting until marriage and fidelity afterwards was tossed to the wind. The devastating hurricane force of the sexual revolution has taken its toll and changed the landscape, but the good news is that there's an awakening occurring. We're beginning to realize that sex without honor and commitment leaves an aftertaste that's bitter to the very soul. Loveless sex leaves us feeling less loved and more lonely. Free love never was freedom. It's inflicted society with a disease more deadly than AIDS, more devastating than any natural disaster. It's inflicted diseases of the heart and soul.

Young women who celebrated their freedom from the double standard found themselves mothering all alone. Young men who said the magic word "love" to get sex found that after awhile neither mattered anymore--like the song, "When I was young, I never needed anyone; making love was just for fun. I don't want to be all by myself anymore." They found that the more they surrendered to, "if it feels good, do it," the less they could feel anything at all--like the bulimic who in a mad frenzy for food loses all sense of taste.

Men still hunger and hope for more meaningful relationships, like they had with the girl next door who had a good, kind heart and feminine charm--the sisterly type-- "coloured all through with that golden light of reverence and naturalness." (C.S. Lewis) They realize they need a soul-mate who offers that glorious challenge--the challenge to be at their best. Men without women of virtue are prone to complacency, and women without men of virtue are prone to complacency.

Women still long for the knight in shining armor, the man of virtue and honor who will love and protect them. They want a relationship that is built upon "love, honor and cherish." They want to be able to trust, in order to give their all--emotionally, spiritually, and physically. They want a lover who is also a friend, someone to make a life together. They want someone who is genuinely interested, someone to share the little daily happenings like when they couldn't find a parking space, or how long they waited at the doctor's office. They want someone who will light up when they enter the room.

Men and women still long for a soul-bonding love. They want the best of both the old and the new. They want the kind of love that they saw in the old photos--the kind that grandparents talked about--the kind that lasts, and they also want the glorious freedom to enjoy sexual marital intimacy to its fullest without the unfounded taboos of the Victorian period.

By restoring the forgotten virtue, romantic love and striving to "live happily ever after" just may have a chance.

Recently, my fifteen year old daughter Mary, and I were arranging family photos when I came across a picture of my

husband. He looked extremely attractive. While I was putting it in a frame to set on the mantle, I said, "Oh, Mary, what a lucky woman I am; I've been in love with the same man all these years--your Daddy."

She answered, "Wow, that's great Mom. That doesn't happen anymore; things are different now."