

“I am very happy for this book and for its moral conviction.”

– POPE BENEDICT XVI

JOHANN CHRISTOPH ARNOLD



Sex, God & Marriage

With a foreword by Mother Teresa

Acclaim

Peter Kreeft, Boston College

Clear, compassionate, uncompromisingly Christian, and straight from (and to) the heart. . . . Pretty close, I think, to what Jesus would say if he were to write a book about sex today – and probably as socially acceptable as he was.

Joan Brown Campbell

A cogent, well-reasoned approach to today's troubling questions. Some may disagree with this or that conclusion, but all will acknowledge Arnold's sincerity and his contribution to these debates.

William H. Willimon, Duke Divinity School

Arnold writes simply, eloquently, and faithfully. His *Sex, God, and Marriage* is a relentless, biblical call for renewed Christian commitment. Advocates of accommodated, acculturated Christianity will find little comfort in these pages; struggling disciples, however, will be much encouraged.

William A. Dyrness, Fuller Theological Seminary

Striking for its clear and penetrating presentation of simple (and yet immensely profound) biblical truths about human sexuality. I wish everyone could read this call to cut through the complications of modern life by a holy and Christ-like life.

Molly Kelly, author, *Saved Sex*

I strongly recommend this book. . . . A wonderful resource for the promotion of chastity, health, and holiness.

Paul C. Vitz, New York University

To advocate an ideal of sexual purity is perhaps the last American taboo. . . . This book provides a wise spiritual guide on how, and why, to lead such a life.

Richard John Neuhaus, *First Things*

Human sexuality is here drawn fully into the life of discipleship. The result is both demanding and exhilarating, which is what disciples of Jesus should expect.

Bob Fryling, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

Does a wonderful job of putting sex into the larger contexts of creation, the church, and marriage. Not everyone will agree with all of Arnold's conclusions, but every mature believer will benefit from the convictions reflected in this book.

Paul Brand, M.D., author, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants*

A clear message for those who have seen the so-called freedom of sexual pleasure become a source of loneliness or pain. . . . This book will help young people to hold on to purity.

Charles E. Blake, Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ

Arnold's bold statement on the meaning of marriage clarifies for the sometimes confused church a concept central to Christian teaching. In so doing Arnold provides help and guidance that extends beyond the church to the world at large and provides a rich resource for working with young people. We thank God for his life, witness, and work.

Alice von Hildebrand, Hunter College

Arnold's beautiful presentation of the great virtue of purity should be in the hands of every educator and every teenager. It is a message that is desperately needed today, and I cannot recommend it strongly enough.

J. I. Packer, author, *Knowing God*

A clear vision of God's ideal for marriage and family. Simple and short, but deep, this is one of the best books available to help us handle our sexuality in a way that honors God.

Francis Cardinal Arinze

Clear, incisive, and uplifting . . . this book should be very helpful in living the virtue of chastity, which is God's will for all men and women.

Sex, God, & Marriage

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Johann Christoph Arnold

 Plough Publishing House

This is a preview. Get entire book here.

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*To my faithful wife, Verena, without whose help
this book would not have been possible.*

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The author and his wife with Mother Teresa

Foreword

by Mother Teresa

IN THIS BOOK we find a message needed today in every part of the world. To be pure, to remain pure, can only come at a price, the price of knowing God and of loving him enough to do his will. He will always give us the strength we need to keep purity as something beautiful for God. Purity is the fruit of prayer. If families pray together they will remain in unity and purity, and love each other as God loves each one of them.

*A pure heart is a carrier
of God's love and where
there is love, there is unity,
joy and Peace
Let us pray. God bless you.
M Teresa MC*

Introduction

EVERYWHERE TODAY, people are searching for lasting and meaningful relationships. The myth of free love continues to be taken for granted by millions, and a new generation of young men and women has accepted the belief that sexual freedom is the key to fulfillment. But as desperately as people want to believe in the sexual revolution of the last few decades, it is clear to many of them that something has gone terribly wrong. Instead of bringing freedom, “sexual liberation” has left countless wounded and isolated souls. As we face the great anguish around us, it is more important than ever for all of us, young and old, to consider the direction of our lives and ask ourselves where we are headed.

The twenty-first century heralds the loss of the clear teachings of the New Testament on marriage and the relationship of the sexes. We have turned against God and rebelled against his order of creation, and we have justified our rebellion with human arguments. We have ignored the words of Jesus and scorned the voice of the Spirit. But we have found neither freedom nor fulfillment.

As a pastor I have counseled many people over the years, both single and married. For many of them, the sexual sphere is not an area of joy but one of frustration, confusion, and even despair. People look for unity of

heart and soul with one another, but they are so blinded by the notion of romantic love that their deepest longings remain obscured. They may know that sexual union in marriage is a gift from God; that it should be the most intimate and rewarding relationship a man and a woman can share. But they wonder why it has become the source of such loneliness and pain for them and for so many others.

I am no social scientist. But if the findings of recent studies have made anything clear it is this: the fallout caused by our culture's acceptance of casual sex is socially devastating. More than half of all marriages in the United States fail. Almost forty percent of America's children live in different houses than their biological fathers. Poverty, violent crime, delinquency, promiscuity, pornography, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness, and suicide are all rooted in the breakdown of the family and the erosion of the marriage bond.

At the same time, those who save sexual activity until marriage (though their numbers are dwindling) are far less likely to have an affair or divorce, and those who commit themselves to one lifelong partner lead happier lives.¹

While current trends point to continuing decay, there are encouraging signs that people are willing to call into question the thrills of cheap sex and the seeming ease of uncommitted love. There is an increased yearning among young people to find genuine relationships and to build secure homes, giving renewed hope that a two-parent family is still possible.

Introduction

Again and again I have seen that when people are willing to surrender their lives to Jesus, they are able to find a way out of their unhappiness. Once people have the courage and humility to heed his call to repent – to turn completely around – he can bring them lasting freedom and happiness.

Jesus brings true revolution. He is the original source of love, because he is Love itself. His teaching is neither a matter of prudishness nor of permissiveness: he offers his followers an entirely different way. He brings a purity that liberates us from sin and leads to the possibility of a completely new life.

There is very little in today's culture that nurtures or protects the new life that Jesus wants to give us. People talk about the importance of meaningful relationships, of committed marriages and wholesome family life, but how many of us know what to do to make these values a concrete reality? Many of us are tempted to blame society for the influences that corrupt us. But what about us so-called Christians? How many of us are ready to stop watching television and take a hard look at our own marriages and relationships and our personal lives? How many of us actually support those around us in the daily struggle for purity? How many of us stick out our necks to confront the sin in each other's lives? How many of us are really accountable?

There is tremendous pain among those who claim to be followers of Christ: broken families, battered wives, neglected and abused children, and sinful relationships. Yet instead of an outcry, there is indifference. When will we wake up and realize that our apathy is destroying us?

More than ever, we need to come back to an understanding of the church as a living body of committed members who share life in practical deeds of love. But we must start with ourselves first and then see where we can encourage those around us. We need to know our youth well enough to be able to guide them as they seek relationships and lifetime commitments; we need to provide ongoing support for the marriages around us; we need to work for healing when our brothers or sisters stumble or fall – and accept their help when we ourselves have fallen.

Most of all, we must show the world that the unique teachings of Jesus and his apostles are the only answer to the spirit of our time. That is why I have written this book. I am neither a biblical scholar nor a professional therapist, and I am fully aware that most of what I have written is completely contrary to popular wisdom. But I do feel the urgent need to share my certainty that Jesus' call to a life of love, purity, honesty, and commitment is our only hope.

This is not only a personal book – it comes out of the life of the church community I serve, and everything in it reflects the concerns and experiences of its members. My hope is that all of us – all men and women of our time – might stop to reconsider God's purpose for sex and marriage.

Sadly, too many people today have simply given up on the possibility of a pure life. They have bought into the myth of sexual “liberation” and tried to live with its disappointments, and when their relationships fall apart, they explain away their failures. They fail to see what a tremendous gift purity is.

Introduction

All the same, I believe that deep in every heart there is a yearning for unclouded relationships and for a love that lasts. It takes courage and self-discipline to really *live* a different way, but it is possible. Wherever there is a faithful church – a community of people who are committed to living in genuine and honest relationships – there is help and hope for every person and every marriage. May this book give each reader that faith.

Johann Christoph Arnold

In the Beginning

I

In the Image of God

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:26–28

IN THE OPENING CHAPTER of the story of creation we read that God created humankind—both male and female—in his own image, and that he blessed them and commanded them to be fruitful and to care for the earth. Right from the start, God shows himself as the creator who “saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” Here, right at the beginning of the Bible, God reveals his heart to us. Here we discover God’s plan for our lives.

Many, if not most, modern Christians dismiss the story of creation as a myth. Others insist that only the strictest, most literal interpretation of Genesis is valid.

I simply have reverence for the word of the Bible as it stands. On the one hand, I would not think of arguing away anything in it; on the other, I believe that scientific discoveries should caution us not to take the biblical account of creation too literally. As Peter says, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Pet. 3:8).

God’s image sets us apart.

Exactly how human beings were created remains a mystery for the creator alone to unveil. Yet I am sure of one thing: no person can find meaning or purpose without God. Rather than dismiss the creation story simply because we do not understand it, we need to find its inner, true meaning and rediscover its significance for us today.

In our depraved age, reverence for God’s plan as described in Genesis has been almost completely lost. We do not treasure the meaning of creation enough – the significance of both man and woman as creatures formed in the image and likeness of God. This likeness sets us apart in a special way from the rest of creation and makes each human life sacred (Gen. 9:6). To view life in any other way – for instance, to view others only in the light of their usefulness, and not as God sees them – is to disregard their worth and dignity.

What does creation “in God’s image” mean? It means that we are to be a living picture of who God is. It means that we are to be coworkers who further his work of creating and nurturing life. It means that we belong to him, and that our being, our very existence, should always

remain related to him and bound to his authority. The moment we separate ourselves from God we lose sight of our purpose here on earth.

In Genesis we read that we have the living spirit of God: “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). In giving us his spirit, God made us responsible beings who possess the freedom to think and act, and to do so in love.

But even if we possess a living spirit, we remain only images of the creator. And when we look at creation in a God-centered, not human-centered, way we will understand our true place in his divine order of things. The person who denies that God is his origin, who denies that God is a living reality in his life, will soon be lost in a terrible emptiness. Ultimately, he will find himself trapped in the self-idolatry that brings with it self-contempt and a contempt for the worth of others.

All of us long for what is imperishable.

What would we be if God had not breathed his breath into us? Darwin’s whole theory of evolution, by itself, is dangerous and futile because it is not God-centered. Something inside each of us cries out against the idea that we have been hatched by a purposeless universe. Deep within the human spirit is a thirst for what is lasting and imperishable.

Since we are made in God’s image, and God is eternal, we cannot, at the end of life, merely vanish again like smoke. Our life is rooted in eternity. Christoph Blumhardt

