



Intimate Encounters - Part 1

Our culture seems to be in a vicious cycle when it comes to sexuality. Despite their best efforts, parents or religious leaders may cause us to feel ashamed about our bodies and sexuality early on, and then culture responds by encouraging a free-for-all of sexual access without limits. In the end, everybody loses. Rather than leaning into a guilt-ridden approach to sexuality, what if we asked a different question—why is our (collective) bar so low when it comes to intimacy? It's never too late (or too soon) to raise the bar and strive for real intimacy.

Getting Started

1. Thinking about your earliest experiences with the concept of sexuality— did you have an “aha” moment when you suddenly realized there was an element of jokes, life, or entertainment that was going over your head?
2. Do you consider autumn an improvement over summer, or are you disappointed summer is over?

What About You?

3. How do you define intimacy? And where did that definition come from?
4. How did your experiences growing up (church, family, school, pop culture) affect your understanding of the role of sexuality in human experience?
5. Why do you imagine the immediate fulfillment of our sexual desires has failed to make much of a dent in our sense of lasting happiness?
6. What do you think contemporary culture gets right about sexuality? What does it miss?

Look It Up

John 8: 1–11, 1 Corinthians 6: 12-18, 7:1–3,

7. What does this passage say to you about the way Jesus sees us? What stands out about the way he treats this woman?
8. Why do you think Jesus told this person to leave their “life of sin?” What do you imagine motivates this advice?
9. Ultimately, do you see Jesus’s message here as *restrictive* or *encouraging* of personal freedom? Why?

Putting It All Together

10. Do you find it easy or difficult to believe that God wants what’s best for you when it comes to intimacy?
11. Think about the elements Joel mentioned that lead to an erosion of our capacity for intimacy, and those that increase our capacity for intimacy. What can you do this week to run from the first category and lean into the second?
12. Will you commit to thoughtfully and prayerfully examining your boundaries when it comes to intimacy this week? And are you open to potentially reinterpreting these areas of your life?