

Steph (00:00):

Hi there. Welcome to another episode of the small group show. I'm one of your hosts, Steph Cochrane.

New Speaker (00:15):

And I'm your other host Keesha Sedgwick.

Steph (00:17):

The small group show is committed to honest conversations around topics. Church, small group skipped over church can get weird and we're not here to make any major points or try to change your mind. We just want to model brave and gentle conversations, and we hope that listening to us will spark similar conversations in your own life.

Steph (00:36):

Let's get to the episode purity culture versus sexual ethic. Why are we talking about this today, Keesha?

New Speaker (00:43):

I think we're talking about this because parody culture, um, has had a huge impact on a lot of American Christians and perhaps Christians all over the world. Um, it seems to really be at its height in the nineties and early two thousands. And so for those of us in our generation, if you're, if you're a millennial, especially, um, it has had an impact on us. And I think that there are a few things that have become very confused between purity, culture and Christian sexual ethics. Think some of the motivations, uh, behind the two kind of the driving factors are very different while maybe trying to see the same behaviors. Um, and so they can kind of get tangled up and, and confused. But I really think that one of them is very healthy and good.

New Speaker (01:40):

And the other, maybe not so much, but it's not something that we really talk about a whole lot, like to, to kind of poo poo on purity culture makes you look like you're just some person seeking complete sexual liberation and you want to live the way that the world does. And so we don't tend to, I don't know a whole lot, um, within our Christian circles, but I think it's really important because I personally think that purity culture has been damaging for a lot of people, um, myself included. And I think there's some confusion about what the differences are or that there's even differences at all. And so I think it's important, uh, to talk about. And I think as we kind of have a conversation about it today, hopefully other people will kind of have some of their own aha moments of seeing the ways that the two are different or maybe the ways that they've been impacted or their community or their friends or family than impacted. Um, but yeah. What about, what about for you? Why is this something that you want to talk about today?

Steph (02:44):

Um, I think that I was one of those people for a long time where I was like, well, where I assumed that they were the same thing. And so when I would hear someone speak badly about purity culture, maybe even if I like agreed with the thing that they were saying, I assumed that it also meant they didn't feel like any of the sexual standards set forth in scripture were relevant or good or important or anything. And so I struggled to be like, well, I mean, yeah, that thing that you're talking about is bad, but what about everything else? And anyway, it was confusing for me. And so when I have been confused about a

topic and I'm no longer confused about a topic, I like to talk about those things because I know that, um, I'm, can't be the only one who was ever confused about it.

New Speaker ([03:40](#)):

So, uh, and I also feel like, I don't know if this is true or if I'm just aware of it now, but it does kind of feel like criticizing purity culture is sort of having a heyday. Like I feel like, which is, I'm not saying that that should not be happening, but I feel like criticism of purity culture is coming from a lot of people and a lot of different directions right now. Um, so it seems important that we know what we're talking about and which is which, um, so, oh, and you said like people who hear us talk about, um, who hear criticism of purity culture might think that those people who are saying that are for like total sexual liberation, um, and this is a total side note. And I also know, like, I know that you will agree with what I'm about to say, but I feel like sometimes the word liberation is used when we've been like licensed or unrestrained-ness, oh, that's not a word, but like, I feel like actual freedom is not in just doing whatever you want. It's been in being able to control yourself when you want things and to pursue your desires in a way that is healthy for you and healthy for other people.

Keesha ([05:11](#)):

Um, yeah. Yeah, no, that that's really, that's really good. Actually. I, so one of the things that I've really been mulling over when it comes to the differences between purity culture and Christian sexual ethics is kind of what, what they're motivated by. So I really see purity culture as being motivated by fear. Um, you know, when it, when a lot of the, the books on **p**urity culture and that the purity rings and purity pledges and all of that, or kind of like really being marketed strongly in our Christian communities, it was kind of motivated by this fear of, you know, keeping, keeping the family unit together of having good morals of not to the sexual revolution and the, um, you know, really just the, the cultural, the secular cultural views around sex kind of changing. Um, and so there was this fear that that would seep into Christian culture. And so to me, purity culture feels very reactionary to the fears that a culture of sexual promiscuity what's seep into Christianity and, you know, destroying people, right? And so sexual ethics aren't necessarily reacting to culture, but rather it's practicing sexual ethics proactively, uh, proactively teaching God's best when it comes to sex and sexuality. And so one of those perpetuates fear and one of them perpetuates freedom, but neither one is suggesting just, you know, a sexual free for all where anything goes. Um, I would say that like both of these viewpoints, the sec, the, the purity culture and the sexual ethics, like both of them largely result in a sexual behavior that is more reserved in comparison to culture around us. And both of them largely result in a behavior that's honoring to God, however, behavior alone isn't how we honor God. Um, I would argue that behavior might be one of the worst measuring sticks for determining whether or not God has been honored because the motivations behind behavior are really what God is looking at. That's, that's what, that's what matters to God. And so purity culture tends to kind of control behavior using fear and shame. And while we can't really honor God with shame, cause it's kind of the opposite, but practicing a healthy Christian sexual ethic makes choices from a place of freedom and a willingness to use our bodies to honor God. Um, and so, yeah, kind of what you're saying there, like when we're talking about, you know, um, liberation, you know, sexual liberation kind of in the sexual secular context of just, um, it's funny, cause I don't even like that word secular, but in that context of the world, a non-Christian base, it is more seen as a, I get to do what I want and anything goes and you can't tell me what's good and what's bad and whatever, but a kind of a liberation from a Christian standpoint, living in Christ, we are liberated to live for Christ. We are liberated to use our freedom, um, to make a willing choice, to honor God with our bodies, with our sexuality, with ourselves, with our minds. I don't know. Hopefully that made sense and aligned with what you were talking about.

Steph ([08:47](#)):

No, I think, I think so. Um, I'm reading this book right now called *Delighting In The Trinity* by Matthew Reeves. Um, it's skinny and super practical, even though it does the title does not. The title sounds very theological and it is, but it's very practical, easy to read, get it, read it. It's so good. Um, but he makes the point in the beginning of the book that because God is Trinity, he has a terminally been in loving relationship, the father with the son and both of them with the spirit. And so everything that God, every quote, rule or command that God lays out for us is like you were saying, not in service of good behavior, it's in service of loving relationship as the goal. And I, but because we, we are broken and we're sinners and we like to grow. We like, we like rules. We like to gravitate toward, well, let me go down my list and took off my boxes. And then I can pat myself on the head that I did a great job today. Um, I feel like the Christian sexual ethic is relationship based and is, is in service toward and has loving relationship as the goal. And then are we look at the behaviors that result from that. And we have made purity culture from that as a rules-based response to a relationship-based sexual ethic. Yeah, I think you said it so well that it, one is based in fear and one is based in freedom. I feel like purity culture asks and answers. Well, first of all, weird that it is called "purity" culture because the places in the Bible that use the word purity, there's only one, a couple of them that are even where like sex and sexual relationships are even in the context. Like most of the time it's just talking about like being like living a holy life and living like where your worship of God is pure and unmixed and without ulterior motives and all that good stuff. So it's weird that that's even the name because that's not even, that's not even in the Bible guys anyway. Um, I feel like purity culture, your asks and answers the questions, questions like, oh, what, like, what is wrong? What is sin? What is allowed like who is dangerous? What is dangerous? And how do I stay away from that? How do I keep myself safe? And the Christian sexual ethic asks and answers questions like, Hey, what is best for everybody? What's good for everybody. What, what does love require? What brings freedom and life? And goodness, that's so much better. Um, if, and if you want to hear, if you want to hear a further rants from me on how the word purity is misused, you can go back to our very first episode called Christian buzzwords, that's where we talk, but yeah.

Keesha ([12:07](#)):

Yeah, for sure. And I, yeah, in terms of like, you know, what you were saying about purity culture kind of being very rules-based and, and what is bad and it's a little like, you know, they make lists of, well, these are all the things that are bad for this particular area. Take, for example, um, modesty, I actually, I want to share a story if that's okay. This is, this is a real story that I am. When I look back on this story, I cringe so hard. I really regret, uh, the 14 year old me who just super bought into all of this, but listen, like 14 year old knee was also a horrible train wreck in this area. Oh gosh. Well, so here's the thing like I was, I mean, I was all in, at church and in church, youth group, I mean, I was all in and I do believe my relationship with Jesus was authentic and it was, it was growing and I was, you know, I was in the word, but I was also really eating up everything that was given to me. And one of the things that was given to me was purity, culture and modesty. And so I remember in, in youth group, we did this series where guys and girls split up, um, and a female youth leader taught us about modesty. We went through this like modesty checklist. I wish I could remember the book it was in, but I cannot remember if someone listening remembers a book that had this little checklist of like little tests that you could do on yourself and your modest.

Steph ([13:37](#)):

Yes. Hello. I know the book. I might know it cover to cover.

Keesha ([13:43](#)):

Oh my gosh. Well, okay.

Steph ([13:45](#)):

So the, oh, did you want me to say what it is or yeah. Um, Secret Keeper by Dana Gresh.

Keesha ([13:54](#)):

oh my gosh. That, that is it secret? That, that sentence icky. Oh my gosh. I hate everything about this. Okay. I remember.

Steph ([14:04](#)):

you mean it's maybe bad to tell our young girls, oh my gosh.

Keesha ([14:10](#)):

So this like this will, this will, will, um, confirm that we're talking about the same book. So there were these little like tests you could do. One of them was the quarter test. And so you, you would push a quarter against your shirt in between your boobs and if a quarter bounce, then that meant your shirt was too tight. Um, and there were other ones that were like, if you stand in front of a mirror and bend over and your shirt, um, hangs down enough that you can like see into your shirt and see your cleavage, then like your shirt was either too low or had too loose of the neck line. Um, and so tests like that were in this. Okay. So, okay. So it was the same book, like you're, these are a hundred percent remembering these. Oh, so I bought into all of this so much. Um, and I don't know this was in the book or if this was just taught to us, like by the person leading us or like, this was the example that she gave, but she gave this example whether in the book or not, that was like, um, a woman's body is like meat to a lion. So I want you to a man is like a lion, the lion, and just cannot resist itself. And so we must be modest and cover up, um, to, to protect the boys and the men in our lives. Okay. So I, I took that to heart. I was like, oh my gosh, like, this is so one, it gave me a horrible view of men because I was like, gosh, they're all disgusting. Um, it's my job to keep them from being rapists. Exactly. If we want to support the men in our lives, um, and them being godly, we have like, we have to control their godliness basically like by what we wear. And then, and like, I mean, I, I bought into this so hard. And then as a group, we came up, this is where I really start to cringe at 14 year old me as a group, we came up with a code word that we were going to use. If another girl in the youth group was dressed, quote, unquote in modestly, the code word was sausage. If we saw, oh my gosh, like putting this on a podcast, going out into the world, like, I'm just so embarrassed to 14 year old me, but I just feel like I just feel like a new sheriff. So I feel so bad for this one girl named Amy, because one day I saw Amy in the church kitchen, and I don't remember what part of her outfit was even immodest. I think maybe there was some cleavage showing. And I said to Amy kind of quietly, but not, not quietly enough. I said sausage. And she looked at me with like dagger eyes and I walked away feeling. So self-righteous like, I just helped her. And every man in this church, by making sure she knew that her shirt was inappropriate. Well, she didn't take that very well. And she told her parents and they got really mad and it, you know, of course seemed like I was calling her a sausage, which could be taken so many ways, so many, so many ways I can't get over the innocence. And also incredible appropriateness of the fact that you chose the word sausage for this, you know, you get a group of 14 to 18 year old. Well, there we were a really young youth group. There were like 10 of us who are 14 and a few that were older anyway. Yeah. It's just, uh, so painful, her parents got mad and then, um, they apparently told the, and then I got talked to by the pastor. And so I explained to him the context, I'm like, oh no, in youth group, like when you're going through this group, but with our girls group, we're talking about modesty and this was the code word that we use to hold each other

accountable. And like, all I was doing was what the group had agreed upon and blah, blah, blah. And he was like, well, maybe you should use a different word. And I walked away from that just feeling. So self-righteous that like, I was just doing the good work, the good work of the Lord. And I look back on that and I'm like, oh, the damage, oh, the damage that I did that was done to me, that we all did to each other, like just, oh, and then I went on to be like a counselor at Bible camp and would, would share similar things and perpetuate all of that stuff. But like, I'm just Amy, if you ever listened to this, which she probably doesn't, she probably is still mad at me. And like, that's fine. I mean, you know, happened 16 years ago and she's probably still mad. And I think it's fine if she's still mad, but Amy, if you ever listened to this, I am so sorry. Please forgive me. Yeah. I'm just, I'm really glad that 14 year old Keisha grew up and experienced life and faith in a new way. And you know, God's redemption in our lives is ongoing. Like I can testify to that. Like our sanctification is a process and I'm so thankful that, you know, my grabbing a hold of modesty culture was not the end of my sanctification process, but that's the thing is like, that's, that is what purity culture does. Is it, it gives us checklists and rules to live by, in order to avoid all of the bad, negative, scary things in the world. Um, it didn't actually teach us. I feel like it taught us to be afraid of sex and sexuality. It didn't teach us how to honor and value sex and sexuality.

Steph ([19:58](#)):

Well, I want to take a moment, um, just, uh, for two things, one to have some compassion for our younger stupid ourselves. Um, because I have, I have stories just like truly I have, I have the same cringey moments, um, from that time in my life as well. And I think I was wrong and I'm glad that I have grown past that. And I know that God loved me just as much then as he does now. And I know that I'm probably wrong about some things right now that I'm very adamant on. And then me in 15 years is going to be like, oh my gosh, I can't believe that I thought or did that or said that to those people. Um, and his grace is just gonna still be there and he's gonna thank God, keep loving us and keep including us in his work. And that's okay. And second, just like, uh, criticizing purity culture in terms of sexual relationships does not mean, Hey guys, it doesn't matter what you do with your body or who you do it with. It's, you know, whatever you want, God is up for anything. It also doesn't mean that us sitting here criticizing that intense, uh, like rules based legalistic modesty culture means that we're like, and so ladies or who, or men or whoever wear whatever you want in any context, no matter what I do think like there's a, well, I mean, it's honestly tricky, but I, I feel like there is, there are some things in scripture that talk about the way we dress and how we present ourselves to the world. So it's not like there's, that doesn't matter at all, but it is, again, anything that God lays out that way is for the good of loving relationships, not for us to like go up to each other and be like, Hey girl, um, your middle finger definitely goes past the length of your shorts on your thigh. So you're the reason none of the husbands in this church can focus on the sermon today.

Keesha ([22:27](#)):

Yeah. Well, and I mean, when it comes to, to modesty too, like context is everything. Even if it's written in scripture was written into a context and that context doesn't exist today. That was a long time ago. But even looking at the world today, like what is considered appropriate for women to wear in parts of Africa is different than what is considered appropriate for women to wear in parts of India or even the United States. Like I remember being on my very first mission trip ever as an 18 year old and Uganda going through a village and seeing woman after woman with no top on it all. And just being like so uncomfortable, even though I'm a woman and, and like feeling so bad for the guys on our trip, that they had to avert their eyes and find a way to control themselves. And the appropriateness in that context was that they always kept themselves covered from the waist down, like long skirts is what was considered appropriate. Um, their breasts were not seen as like a, you know, sexual part of their body,

like that was for feeding babies, right. And, and stuff. And so, you know, part of it is our, like what our context is, view it views as appropriate versus not appropriate. Um, but that's also why it's important for each person, male and female, uh, to learn self-control, to learn how to, um, how to humanize a person before they sexualize them. And maybe only sexualize your person and not every person, but like, we need to be teaching people, men, and women, how to humanize other people, how to humanize their bodies, how to humanize, um, their behavior, you know, before sexualizing them. But that's, that's part of the thing within purity culture is that we, we teach such extreme rules-based stuff to avoid things, being sexualized. That, that ends up being the default, right? Like boys, boys hear about how girls are being taught to dressed all the time because boys can't handle themselves. And then boys just start to believe, well, we can't handle ourselves. It's almost like they're conditioned, but that if they see shorts of a certain length or they see a shoulder or they see some savings that it's just their nature, that they have to sexualize that person, but that's not true. And sexual ethics teaches us how to humanize before you sexualize a person that I think is really missing from purity culture. Um, that really is there in, and having a good Christian sexual ethic, um, is actually learning self-control and learning how to reframe our thoughts and our thinking and how to view people appropriately, regardless of what they're wearing. Um, cause how are you going to cross into a new context where modesty looks differently, um,

Steph ([25:44](#)):

which by the way, it's even different, it's different in different parts of this country, like for sure it's different overseas, but even, even in America, different parts of the country, it's acceptable to wear different types of things I had not fully. I, uh, I, I took my, um, sort of extreme modesty ideas all the way to college with me. And I remember my roommate, one of my roommates was from Texas and she had short, I mean she, and she abided by the dress codes or whatever. But like when we were just in our room, like in the dorm, she had shorts that were shorter than what was allowed for the dress code of our school. And, uh, and one day she talked about like this, doesn't it like I get, I get that there has to be a code, you know, there has to be, uh, you know, a standard or whatever for people, but she was like, it's so hot in Texas. Like you, where as in the summer, you wear as little as you can and still being, and still be like a decent person with all your necessary parts covered. Like, and that's what everybody does. So it's not weird. And I remember at the time I was like, Hmm, is it though it like, is that really true though? I'm not sure. And like, listen, I've now, I've now lived in New Orleans and Texas and like, yeah, yeah. We wear as little clothing as possible. Everyone does. And then it's not, you know, nobody's trying to be sexy if people are just trying to survive and not sweat to death.

Speaker 2 ([27:24](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean, you know, think of like beach culture, um, in coastal cities and communities where you could walk into a convenience store in a bathing suit and no one's going to think twice. Right. Um, you know, the bathing suit covers a whole lot less than short shorts, but like, yeah. I mean, context, context really changes things. And so if, if you are not fortifying yourself and teaching yourself, um, and learning how to humanize people, um, before making them into a sexual object, like if, if you're not doing that, you are not going to do well. If you ever have to switch contexts or go on vacation or become a missionary in another country, um, purity culture is not preparing people very well to live outside of their context and community, which in some cases they're not really looking to, and some very conservative, maybe more really fundamental communities. They're actually not as concerned about those things because they don't really plan on living outside their community. But again, that's all very fear-driven and fear-based um, so yeah, yeah.

Steph ([28:46](#)):

It's interesting looking back over the last 18 months, how some of us use the refrain, we're not called to live in fear to do some very unloving things. Um, and then we also say with the same mouth out of love, never wear a tank top that has that the straps are skinnier than three fingers apart. And if you do be afraid, we get things so twisted around again with this book that I'm reading about the Trinity, um, just this morning I was reading it and he made the point that because we were created in the image of God, we are lovers. And what happened when we sinned when Adam and Eve fell was not that we stopped being lovers, but that we started to love the wrong things we are created to have, we were, were intended to be outward lovers where we love God and we love each other. And now because of sin, our love is bent inward toward ourselves and our pleasures and our own things. And that, that is the source of what gets, gets us all messed up.

Keesha ([29:59](#)):

Yeah, no, that's good that, um, it kind of reminds me a little bit of, of, uh, something else that I was kind of thinking through for this. And that is that like sexual ethics are not standalone in Christian life. Like, you know, you're talking about having this really holistic and loving, um, relationship and fellowship that is had within the Trinity. You know, the, within the Trinity exists, this eternal loving fellowship of unity. It is one God who has fellowship within, um, within his triune nature. And, you know, sexual ethics are not necessarily standalone. It's holistic. Um, you know, your, your sexual ethics in choosing to honor God with your sexuality, um, that comes with honoring God and a lot of other areas too, like you are producing the fruits of the spirit when you're living out of that, that place. Um, but on the flip side, if you're just strictly trying to adhere to purity culture, when it comes to sexuality, you know, it's, this, it's a thing where it's like, well, if you're a Virgin, when you get married, like that's, that's the goal, that's it you've arrived. But being a Virgin until you get married, doesn't mean that you have reached a place of spiritual maturity and being a Virgin until you get married. Doesn't mean that like you are a loving person with, with, you know, emotional maturity and the ability to have emotional intimacy. Um, you know, there's, there's just so there's, so it needs to be so much more holistic than that. And I think that that is something that, um, that sexual ethics can provide for us. Like, it's, it's a redemption of the whole person, the whole self, um, in Christ and yeah.

Speaker 2 ([32:10](#)):

Yeah. Well, and I guess too, like, as I, as I said, redemption, there's a lot within purity culture that doesn't really leave room for redemption. A lot of the language that's used things like the language, like damaged goods or an example, an example that was given to me a lot as a kid was like, your purity is like a piece of gum. Like if you, you know, if, if you give it to someone, they chew it up and then you don't get married, they give it back. And then that's what you have to give to the next person is this, and it loses its flavor and it's gross and all this stuff. And like,

Steph ([32:46](#)):

but if you wait until you get married, then your husband is just gonna be stuck too, in that same piece of gum forever. Lucky you.

New Speaker ([32:54](#)):

Um, but they're, you know, all those different metaphors that were used within purity culture to deter teenagers from having sex or young people from having sex, um, like there's absolutely no room for redemption in purity culture where sexual ethics like provide room for ongoing redemption, um, and sanctification. And like, I don't know, I just like that a lot better, so,

Steph ([33:27](#)):

Oh, uh, totally Agree. I, um, I actually went to, uh, I just searched for the word purity when it, because I was, when I was thinking through this, I was like, okay, well, what is the difference? Like, I know I can rattle off tons of things about purity culture off the top of my head, but what are specific things about the Christian sexual ethic in scripture? And so I just searched for the word purity, um, on Bible gateway and looked at the which, by the way, there's tons of passages in the old Testament that used that word that are not talking about anything sexual, um, and some in the new Testament too. But I went to the ones that are, that did have some sort of connection to sexuality that I've, that I've heard used in, in purity culture to things before. And just looking at them, I guess, with fresh eyes, it felt so much better. Like what you were just saying was like that you were like, I just, I want that. That's like, that sounds like a better way. Um, I looked at, I'm pulling up on my phone first Thessalonians four, one through eight, where Paul lists some things that are God's will for our lives. And I summarized from those, from those verses God's will, for me, is to be set apart that my life would look different than like the default setting for human experience, which great. I don't, that sounds good. I don't want to be, I know what my default is. Know that's not great, um, to be in control of my body, to live honorably and set apart and not be driven by my appetites alone to never harm or cheat or violate another person and to live purely in that my worship is undiluted and unmixed, and then he wraps it all up. Verse eight says anyone who fuses, who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching, but is rejecting God who gives his holy spirit to you. So it's like, Hey, this is what I want for you. And if you reject, like, you're you're, this is, this is God's will for you. But also God has given us his spirit to enable us to live this way and to have this, which is better than our own ideas. Anyway, so that was one that was super cool to me. And then another one that's used that I've heard used before was first Timothy five, two, where Paul is talking to Timothy about how to treat different people in the church. And he says, treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters. And I like reading that verse, conflating the word purity with the word sex, or like virginity or whatever will always make me feel kind of weird, like, okay. But what about when you like somebody or like, what about when you want to go on a date? Like we can just all be brothers and sisters forever Paul, what's going on. Right. But if I, if I define the word purity by its definition, which is just like unmixed, then Paul is telling Timothy, Hey, when you, when you, when you interact with women, treat them with no ulterior motives, don't manipulate them. Don't have anything else going on in your interaction, except just be like honesty and no intimidation, no power grabbing, no bullying, no competition. Like, wow, that is the relationship that I want to have with men, particularly my fellow Christians, like, yeah, can we, can we treat each other? I don't know, just upfront and honest and the way we are as the way we are. And we're not like doing a dance or like wrestling with power dynamics or whatever. I don't know. I don't know if you have had some weird, if you have some weird stuff in your background, like we do have how you have interpreted what it means to be pure or what it means to be good sexually or relationships between men and women. It was refreshing to me to look at some of these passages again and think of them and sort of like detach them from the way that purity culture had made me interpret them before.

Keesha ([38:11](#)):

Another thing that I, um, was just kind of thinking about when really considering some of the major differences between, uh, promoting purity culture versus promoting a Christian sexual ethic is the theme of consent. So consent is a major theme in sexual ethics, whether you're talking about Christian sexual ethics or just sexual ethics outside of Christian context. Um, but purity culture really focuses so much on promoting absolutely no sex until marriage, that it sort of skipped over the whole part about consent. I don't remember ever learning about consent as a young person, because it was almost like there's no reason to talk to teenagers or young adults about consent because they're not, they're not

supposed to have sex outside of marriage period. So consent just wasn't talked about. Um, but that actually has kind of led to a lot of women entering into marriage and believing that sex was their absolute duty and they didn't have the choice to say, no, they didn't have the option to consent or not give consent. Therefore, marital rape is not uncommon in many Christian marriages because sexual purity was put on such a high pedestal that young people were not being taught how to have, um, emotionally healthy relationships. What, uh, what healthy, emotional attachment style is, what to be looking out for. Like, what are some of the red flags? Like? It was almost like the red flags were all sexual red flags. Um, we weren't really taught about other red flags in relationships and this really set up a lot of, of young women, um, for entering into abusive marriages. I like, it's, it's really tragic. I have several friends or know of several people that are acquaintances, um, throughout my life that have really latched onto the, the purity culture stuff. And then we're in marriages that were very abusive, that were very emotionally unhealthy marriages, where they were, um, forced to have sex with their partner, even when they were not consenting of it. Um, and so, I mean, that alone is a big danger of purity culture that purity culture was not teaching or is not teaching, um, proper consent and focusing so much on, on just the sexual aspects of relationships that there's, there's really not a lot of emotional intelligence going into some of these, um, some of these relationships that are kind of brought together during purity culture, um, are in a context of purity culture. And, um, yeah, I just think that, that, that is a really big and really important difference between the two, you know, when, when the world outside of Christian context is, is doing, uh, a much better job at teaching consent and healthy, emotional attachment. Um, that's, that's a big deal. Yeah, I agree. I think that, that, that needs to be included more. So I tend to do this too a lot and I apologize, but also don't apologize. So like, sorry, not sorry, I guess. Um, so I'm curious, um, obviously your children are very small, so you are not having very big conversations with them about sexual ethics. Um, but I am curious as you've, um, if you and Trevor have either begun talking about how to approach this topic with your kids, or if on a very like toddler level you have had any, um, any chit chats with them, um, whether about their bodies or consent or whatever. I know my sister is, um, is very proactive with her kids. The oldest is eight about, you know, you it's your body, you are in charge. If someone wants to give you a hug, like you, you don't have to, you get to say no and stuff like she's trying to teach them things like consent from a very young age, which, um, was, was really not something that either of us were wherever really taught when we were kids. But I remember, um, but yeah, so I'm just curious if there are things that you're already teaching or doing with your, with your kids.

Steph ([43:01](#)):

Um, we talk about this pretty regularly actually. Um, our kids are young, but they're also all boys and I feel like purity culture. I mean, we've taught, we're a girls, you and me. So we've talked about the ways that it's, So the way that we ha the way that purity culture kind of screwed us over, but I think that it does, it does that just as much to men. And I think that it makes them be afraid of like their sexuality and, and not know how to control it and, you know, lots of things. So we talk about this, a lot of how we can teach them about like their sexuality and their desires, but not in a way that makes them feel like it's inevitable that they're going to be sexual monsters, you know? Um, and so, yeah, but again, my oldest child is four. So the things that I focus on a lot right now are consent because, um, that's just important. And particularly now they're, um, they, the, the two older ones go to daycare a couple of times a week. We're back in church with people and the oldest one is going to start school pre-K in the fall. And like, I feel great about all of those places. I don't have anything in me that feels weird about any adult that works there, but my kids are now like, they are with other people more than they ever have been. And that's only going to increase as they get older. And so I want them to have firm boundaries about their bodies in place now, so that there'll be there if they need them. Um, so I have a, we have a couple of

books about that are written for kids about consent that we go through with them sometimes. And, um, I'm actually going to go through a book with my oldest before he goes to school that is called, um, What's it called the wonderful way that babies are made. And it has, um, it's got like larger prints and then the large print, that's very like general information and then smaller print with more technical, detailed stuff. So it's intended that you could go through it multiple times with the child depending on their age. Um, so doing that, but also I think the biggest thing that I'm trying to do right now, just lay the foundation for having open conversations about sex and sexuality. So when they asked me, I'm the only woman in my family and they are starting to be old enough to realize there are some differences going on here. Um, and so when they ask me about a part of my body, I try to just tell them in a normal way, without getting freaked out and without sexualizing what they do not yet see as being sexual, you know, they're just like, what's, you know, what's going on. Like, I'm, I'm nursing Knox and they're like, what's going on there, mom, can I make milk for Knox too? Like, how does this work? You know, and having those conversations or the other, the other day, my oldest, how does the blue was like, mom, you were pregnant with Knox. And then he had to get really, really tiny so that he could come out of your mouth. Oh gosh. And I was like, oh, oh no, that's, you know, that's not how it works. Um, mommy's have a special hole. Um, just so like, just things like that, that, I don't know. I mean, they're so little, they might not even remember that, but I it's laying the foundation for this is not a sh these are not shameful subjects, right? This is normal, like regular being a human type stuff. Just like, I'm going to teach you how to brush your teeth and wipe your butt. I'm going to teach you about the parts of the human body and what they're made for, and like how that they can be in relationship with other bodies and that kind of thing. Um, I hope it's good. I hope that that's my desire. I hope it's going good. Yeah. The jury is out.

Keesha ([47:49](#)):

Yeah. You know, you said you don't know if they'll remember these conversations or not, and while they might not remember some of the specifics of the conversations, I think that what you're doing is creating an openness to where their questions are going to be welcomed and not like turned away. You know, you didn't just laugh at him about the baby coming out of your mouth and then walk away from him. Like you gave him the explanation and helped his little tiny brain to understand as much as it could. And I think that, that, I think that that will on some level stick with kids, like the, the feeling of being talked to and given an explanation, I think that, that, that feeling will sit with them even if in their subconscious. And hopefully, again, I don't have kids. I'm not like some child psychologist, maybe I'm off base, but I feel like that will at least create an openness to where hopefully as your kids get older, they don't stop asking you questions. And then that, that will provide opportunity to continue to teach your kids, um, how to have a good, healthy Christian sexual ethic, um, and not shame them or, you know, whatever. So I think there's hope. So that sounds good and healthy. So, yeah, I'm sure I'm sure, like all parents you'll make mistakes and you'll be like, oh, we should rethink that. Or whatever on many different things.

Steph ([49:23](#)):

I think that's part of being a parent there's there have definitely been moments where I'm like in the moment, I'm like, yes, openness teaching you the right words for things and all this stuff. And then 10 minutes later, I'm like, Hey, by the way, all those words we just learned, we don't say them outside the house. Like, don't go to church and talk to your Sunday school teacher about what I just told you. So, yeah, it's definitely tricky sometimes, but, um, just like in every other part of life, whether you're a parent or not a parent God's grace and his love just covers over and fills in all the gaps where we fall.

Steph ([50:14](#)):

Well, thanks for listening to this episode of the small group show. If you enjoyed this conversation, invite some friends to join in and share about it on social media, email, an episode to your mom. If you'd leave a review on apple, that would be great to continue this conversation. You can follow us on Instagram at small group pod and join us for the discussion time later this week.

Keesha ([50:36](#)):

I'm one of your hosts, Keesha, and you can find me on instagram @keeshalil or follow my work as an enneagram coach @atl.enneagram.coach.

Steph ([50:47](#)):

And I'm your other host Steph Cochrane. You can find me on Instagram @stephaniehcocrane and follow my writing. Stephanie H. Cochran dot com. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time. Bye guys.