

Sex is a taboo topic in the church. If sex has to be talked about, the exact inflexible ideas are said all over again: Except you're married, you have to abstain from sexual activity. If you're not heterosexual, don't follow the standard gender roles, or you identify as transexual or queer – well, you're regarded as a sinner and, due to that, whatever sex you have is sinful.

However, that kind of rigidity is not reflective of the actual world. Nevertheless, teenagers feel the sexual urge, individuals are drawn to partners of the same sex, and a lot refuse traditional concepts of gender identity as well as gender roles.

When individuals find out that their sexuality doesn't fit with what the church demands of them, they start to a sense of inadequacy and shame. Usually, they attempt to subdue the aspects of themselves that they think are sinful, bring them years of suffering.

This book chapter claims that it's time to review the church's tactic to sexuality and embrace an outlook that removes shame and supports care for everybody's sexual well-being.

## Chapter 1 - The teachings of the church regarding sexuality ignore a lot of people and force them to reject vital aspects of themselves.

Imagine this: a school makes a fancy new uniform, and the entire students are informed that they need to wear it.

However, there's an issue. The uniform just has one size – a size the school believes it is good and appropriate. However, for a lot of schoolchildren, it's not a good fit. It's really big for some of the students; for the other students, it's really small. These students need to pick between wearing a uniform that is not comfortable or they get in trouble if they don't wear it. Doesn't look fair, does it?

According to the author's view, something similar happens in the church when we talk about sexuality.

It's not a secret that the church has really specific notions about what is right and what is wrong when they talk about sexuality. It teaches that just heterosexual Christian men and women who are married to one another should engage in sex. However, there are a lot of Christians who can't tick the entire necessary boxes: heterosexual, cisgender, happily married. Perhaps they're not married. Perhaps they're gay or transgender – or don't identify with prescribed gender roles.

Just like the school children and their ill-fitting uniforms, Christians who do not view themselves in the church's instructions about sexuality must force a fit or face the repercussions.

Usually, they abide by the church's plan, which hinders them from having satisfying sex lives. The author who is a Lutheran pastor encountered a lot of illustrations of this in her own church congregation. She came across young couples who, even after their marriage, couldn't shake the notion that sex was sinful and lesbians who covered their sexuality, thinking something was wrong with them.

These individuals, and a lot of people like them, have been harmed by the church's restrictive teachings. The author suggests that the teachings should be reviewed in order to prioritize people rather than bringing them harm. She's definitely not the first person in her church to take this approach. The founder of the Lutheran church, Martin Luther had the same viewpoint. He understood that the stress the church put on individuals to do things –such as fast or go on pilgrimages –caused more harm than good.

Similar to how Martin Luther ignored specific teachings for the sake of his church members, the author thinks that a new tactic to sexuality has the ability to heal individuals from the sexual shame they've gone through in the church.

In the next chapters, we'll look at how the church has, in various manners, made sexuality synonymous with shame.

## Chapter 2 - Sexuality is a gift from God and subduing it has awful repercussions.

This is a situation: a brand-new, state-of-the-art sports car is given to you. However, there's one thing— you're not permitted to drive it. Therefore, rather than driving about in your new ride and experiencing all the things it has to provide, you park the car in the garage and see it get dusty.

Based on the author's perspective, our bodies, just like this hypothetical car, are also gifts that we've been informed we can't utilize.

We've been offered the ability to feel sexual desire and pleasure, and hence we ought to have the liberty to explore this gift. The author sees human anatomy as evidence of this. For instance, think about the clitoris. It's a collection of nerve endings that has no other function except to give the female body pleasure.

Still, although sexual pleasure is natural to us, the church informs us that our sexuality is wrong. The author gives a lot of illustration from her congregants: One person was cautioned as a teenager not to even think of sex. A couple was informed that they had to resist any sexual urges until they become married. Also, another church member grew up being informed that her attraction to women was not acceptable.

What is the case of individuals who grow up listening that something is not right with their sexual desires? They attempt to subdue their sexuality. The author thinks that sexuality is a vital aspect of human identity – and that subduing it usually has terrible consequences.

The teenager who thought that only thinking about sex was bad found it hard to connect with himself and with other people. He watched porn as a replacement for intimate relations and ultimately turned into an addict. The couple that waited until they got married had issues developing a healthy and happy sexual relationship because they had never learned how to sexually express themselves. Also, the woman who hid her sexual orientation harmed herself after her marriage to a man crumbled.

According to the author, nobody should have to experience those kinds of things. Provided that people's sexual desires aren't directed at kids or animals – or damaging in any manner– they ought to be able to explore them without the feeling of fear or shame.

## Chapter 3 - Being pure doesn't make individuals holy; it just disconnects them from one another.

What do you really understand about prohibition, the nineteenth-century campaign to ban alcohol? You most likely understand that it was led by religious groups that think that drinking was bad for the society and for the spirit.

However, what of the prohibitionist campaign? Did you understand that prohibitionists used false information to advance the movement? They conducted classes on abstinence in schools and taught that alcohol caused madness, blindness, as well as spontaneous combustion. They did this whole thing in order to make people stay holy! However, the author claims that their idea of holiness was totally off base.

According to the author, holiness is essentially about being strongly connected with God and with the individuals that surround us. According to her own view, Jesus is a perfect illustration of this since he endeavored to connect with everybody. Jesus touched lepers, men that were possessed, women society considered as unclean, and even dead people.

The holiness that Jesus showed through relating to individuals also occurs in sexual relations. The author teaches that when two individuals, made in God's image, share a sexual experience, their unity at that point is a holy one.

Conversely, the sexual purity movement separates individuals from their natural desires. The author makes use of an illustration of a church member who was brought up to think that she needed to stay pure until marriage. After she left the conservative church and had her first sex, her lack of experience made her feel inadequate, and she felt guilty when she had casual sex.

Aside from making it hard for individuals to connect with their sexuality, the idea of purity divides people as well. It forms a group of outsiders – shamed and regarded as “less-than” since they don't abide by the set rules – and a group of insiders who are regarded “worthy.” According to the author, purity does not mean holiness. Purity is only very easy to define and regulate; therefore, it's been incorrectly used to know the person that is holy and the person that isn't.

## Chapter 4 - The church wrongly supports the concept of male dominance, and this plays a part in the sexual harassment of women.

In the time of #MeToo, individuals are knowing just how frequently women are sexually harassed by men. A lot of women have gone through harassment one way or the other– and, according to the author's view, the teachings of the church are however partly to blame.

For over a long, the church has taught that women brought about the destruction of humankind– and hence they should be controlled by men.

This idea was reinforced by writings from ancient Christian leaders. One of those early Christian leaders, Tertullian – a theologian from the second century – believed that the time Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden, she disgraced the image of God. Also, during the fourth century, the prominent bishop Augustine mentioned that every woman born after Eve acquired her sin, and hence men naturally need to dominate them.

The author suggests that this conviction drives a lot of the sexual delinquency that women go through. Thinking that they naturally have control over women, men do a lot of things such as subjecting women to wrong jokes, perpetrating acts of sexual harassment, or even as far as sexual abuse. The author went through this during her childhood when a man masturbated in front of her as well as her young friends. Based on her view, this type of action from men has its origins in the church teachings.

Because the church made use of the Bible to explain male dominance, it's most likely the last place you'd imagine to see proof against the notion. However, that's precisely where the author checks.

In the book of Genesis, we were told God made men and women in his image. The author understands this as both men and women naturally deserve dignity – and that none has control over the other. Being made in God's image entitles every one of us to reject male dominance, together with the inequality as well as harassment that accompanies it.

## Chapter 5 - The new Christian requires a sexual ethic that is based on consent, mutuality, and a concern for everybody's sexual well-being.

Let's go back the school from the beginning of the chapter. Assuming the students, as well as the teachers, choose to do something about those ill-fitting uniforms. They could totally get rid of the uniforms; however, a uniform can form a sense of community. A better choice would be to endeavor to make the existing uniform more inclusive. For instance, having various sizes would fit various bodies, also having both skirts and pants would fit various preferences.

Similarly, the author thinks that a rethinking of the church's teachings on sexuality should begin with the fundamentals: knowing what inclusive ideas of sexuality ought to be like.

The Christian church requires a new sexual ethic. However, what might this ethic seem like? The author proposes getting hints from the World Health Organization's definition of sexual health and making use of consent as well as mutuality as foundations. This entails admitting that sexual relations should usually have the enthusiastic consent of everybody involved – and it must be enjoyable for everyone involved.

However, obtaining permission as well as having a good time isn't sufficient; a Christian sexual ethic has to show concern as well. The author explains this as both an awareness of how our sexual conduct affects us and the people that surround us and a readiness to support the sexual wellness and growth of other people

For instance, a man may be having consensual and mutually enjoyable sexual intercourse with his wife. But, if he's being unfaithful as well, then that means he's not showing concern for her. Or if a woman is expressing emotionally tough time, she may agree to sex even when it's not essentially the best thing for her. A spouse who decides to disregard this isn't supporting her needs or acting as if he is concerned.

The author's idea of concern was gotten from Martin Luther's teachings about the Ten Commandments. Instead of viewing the commandments as just a list of don'ts, Luther believed that they give chances to do good as well.

This is an illustration. Following the commandment "Thou shall not kill" doesn't only signify that people shouldn't kill; it also signifies they should evade doing anything harmful or risky to someone's else life. Similarly, our sexual behavior and our opinions on sexuality shouldn't harm the people that surround us.

## Chapter 6 - For people to move on, they have to openly accept how the teachings of the church regarding sexuality have hurt them.

Have you ever attempted to handle a negative experience by just pretending it didn't occur? Perhaps, you were in a bad relationship. Or perhaps you lost your job. When such things occur, a lot of individuals decide not to discuss them since they're bothered about what other people might think.

However, being open about what harms us is a vital part of moving forward. The same also goes for individuals who've had their sexuality shamed by the church.

If you've struggled with your sexuality, discussing that pain, as well as the feelings of shame, might be the last thing on your mind. However, it will really assist you develop actual connections with people.

This reason is things that occur to us – the good, the bad, and the apparently shameful – all help shape us. Jesus himself was unashamed of the scars from his crucifixion and openly revealed them to his disciples after his resurrection. He was aware that the scars would make him known to his disciples. Likewise, sharing your emotional scars with individuals will assist you to find your own community.

But, it goes without saying that being like Jesus needs much more strength than the normal person has. Therefore, rather than being open about their sexual shame, a lot of individuals attempt to hide it. This doesn't just hinder actual connections; it also hinders individuals from processing their experiences and can make it very difficult to grieve.

The author thinks that our bodies basically need to process and grieve what they've experienced. She had a direct experience herself one morning on the anniversary of her wedding to her ex-husband. Although she'd wished to get divorced and it had been more than a year, she was still overwhelmed with feelings and cried profusely. This was her body's method of figuring things out.

Everybody should get the opportunity to figure things out. However, they don't need to do it on their own. Individuals who've felt sexual pain, as well as shame, need to have safe spaces where they can talk about and process what they have gone through. These spaces can range from good, strong friendships, discussions with therapists, or inclusive church communities.

When individuals have the chance to share their scars and discuss how they've been hurt, they get closer to recovering from their sexual shame.

## Shameless: A Sexual Reformation by Nadia Bolz-Weber Book Review

Everybody – irrespective of their marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity – need to be able to express their sexuality in a healthy manner. Sexuality is a gift from God; rather than giving dos and don'ts that bring division, shame, and go against people's natural urges, the church ought to use a method that accepts sexuality of all types.

Concentrate on how you're affected by sexual images.

Human bodies were formed with the ability to feel sexual pleasure; therefore, our reactions to the sexual images as well as narratives seen in porn are natural. But, various people are wired in a different way; so what is healthy for someone can be harmful to the next person. This is the reason why some individuals can integrate pornography into their sex lives whereas other

people get addicted. Focus on how sexual images affect you, know where your personal boundary is, and choose how much of it is healthy for you to involve in.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/shameless-by-nadia-bolz-weber-book-summary-review/>