

Sexual Integrity: What Is It? And Why Do We Want It?

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In recent years, we have seen startling falls from grace by major personalities – Bill Cosby, Matt Lauer, and Harvey Weinstein, to name a few. Decades of productive public life were all dead-ended in an instant, due to credible allegations of sexual misbehavior.

The drama of these stories goes to the deep core of personal integrity. It also goes to something of central importance, but not well understood: sexual integrity.

What is sexual integrity?

Most of us generally understand the concept of integrity as when a person's words and actions align. You can even go to a deeper level to say, "when a person's thoughts and actions align."

If you apply this understanding to sex, you can say that practicing sexual integrity means living your sexual life in alignment with your sexual values.

Striving to live in alignment with your sexual values -- that's a worthwhile commitment, and a central component of overall personal integrity. The demands of sexual integrity are likely to include many noble commitments, such as treating the opposite sex with respect and dignity, remaining faithful in marriage, and abstaining from pornography and masturbation. We respect people who stand by such commitments.

However, most people would say that our values are relative. We develop our personal values through our life experiences, environment, and even by convenience. If we want to live a certain kind of sexual life, we may opportunistically shape our values to fit our preferences.

So, with sexual integrity, we need a more concrete, more reliable, more absolute reference point.

Integrity and purpose

Let's start by looking at the word integrity.

My favorite understanding of integrity is that it is "a state of being whole." When you say an object has integrity, you imply that it is an integrated, fully functioning whole. However, a four-legged chair with only three legs would be unstable or lacking integrity.

Why would we say a chair missing a leg is without integrity? It comes down to purpose: If a chair is intended to be sat on, it needs its four legs. But if you glue a three-legged chair to the wall in a fancy gallery, you could call it art because its purpose has changed.

Purpose. That's what it boils down to. A thing has integrity when it is able to fulfill its intended purpose. And sex, my friend, has a rockin' purpose.

The purpose of sex among animals is easy -- reproduction and the perpetuation of the species. The same biological instincts are strong in people too, but we believe the purpose of sex runs much deeper for human beings.

Sex as completed oneness

Human beings are unique within God's creation. We are "created in God's image," with the potential to fully manifest God's creativity and love. The catch is that an individual is only one-half of this equation. Rev. Sun Myung Moon taught that, "Man is created for woman, and woman is created for man." The sexual act allows masculine (yang) and feminine (yin) to come together in oneness, embodying the complete oneness of God.

Sex is meant to be the culmination of all existence, where a man and women come together in total emotional and physical oneness. In doing so, they become the full image of God, generating love, creating life, and perpetuating lineage. This is exactly why the topic of sex is so interesting, so exciting, and so centrally important.

And, engaging in sex, or completed oneness, happens to be a lot of fun.

Thus, we've come to understand sexual integrity as: "Living out one's sexuality in a way that is consistent with God's intention for sex."

Actions that enhance or promote total oneness have integrity. Actions that disrupt or reduce the possibility of total oneness do not have integrity.

Becoming 'majestic lovers' to our spouses

Within this understanding of sex, it makes sense why:

Men and women want to appear physically attractive

The opposite sex seeks to be -- and should be -- treated with dignity and respect

Marriage is so significant

Pornography isn't helpful

Marital fidelity is important

Monogamy is important

Masturbation may not be a good idea

Hopefully, this gives us a starting glimpse into how deep the topic of sexual integrity can go.

Living a life of sexual integrity goes way beyond "abstaining from negative behaviors." There's a creative side to sexuality that calls us to be [majestic lovers](#) of our spouses. There is also a celebratory side to sexuality, calling us to be proud, joyful, and excited in our shared adventure of marital intimacy.

We touched on some topics that warrant their own conversations, such as God's intention for sex, the relationship between purpose and happiness, the demands of total oneness, the meaning of marriage, and how to be a majestic lover. We look forward to those conversations in the future.