



Just Sex? Is it ever just sex?

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Summary of Just Sex? Is it ever just sex?

'Just Sex' seeks to explain the positive nature of the Christian worldview of sex, taking into account not only theological arguments but sociological and economic ones too. It addresses the inconsistency and inadequacy of the prevailing idea that consent is enough to legitimate a sexual relationship, and argues that if we have truly accepted the concern for justice inherent in the gospel, we have to question the assumption that 'just sex' is really just.

The past fifty years have seen a shift of cultural attitudes with the 'the sexual' revolution, which has resulted in family breakdown, dysfunctional families and trends such as a devaluation of marriage, widespread cohabitation, adultery. But as the book outlines these are just symptoms, the disease is 'the me-culture' which we see in the West today, whereby one can live one's life on one's own terms, without reference to other people. The cure is to be found in relational order where relationships matter more than individual rights, personal choice and materialism.

Christianity is a relational religion. This overarching theme is expanded on, throughout the book, building on the central tenet of Matthew 22 '*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind...Love your neighbour as yourself*' and results in the real 'shalom' of peace and wholeness. These principles are seen to embrace all our relationships, whether with God, family, neighbour; or in business, justice, health, education or finance. Sex must be included in the big relational framework.

Sex is a gift from God, but it is neither consequence-free nor responsibility-free. Furthermore, consent alone between two adults is never a sufficient basis for justifying sexual intercourse.

There are others involved, there are third parties. Promiscuity has a rippling effect that is corrosive to a whole pool of current and future relationships. The case for marriage as the expression of family or community consent and support is explored; families provide relational order by fostering wholesome personal development and social stability. The 'ideal' is for good marriages, with the relational support that the complementary roles of the men and women provide, for both the couple and for children.

The economic cost of family breakdown is examined. The knock-on effects for society of divorce, lone-parenthood and mobility are incalculable whether in payment of benefits or in the health, crime or educational impact of relational breakdown.

The Church can provide a Christian approach to building community that is counter-cultural. Ways of 'loving ones neighbour', of encouraging good friendships and of building relationship can be modelled. The relational proximity model is a helpful paradigm as it examines the five domains to relationships: communication and the importance of directness, time and the importance of continuity, knowledge and the importance of multiplexity, power and the importance of parity and shared purpose and values and the importance of commonality.

Public policy needs to tackle the underlying causes of individualism and rootlessness and various examples are given of ways that changes in legislation can shift our values from promoting harmful relationships to promoting wellbeing through healthy relationships.



Further Resources

Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (IVP, 2003)

Jonathan Burnside, *Consent vs Community: What basis for sexual offences?* Jubilee Centre 2006
http://www.jubilee-centre.org/resources/consent_vs_community_what_basis_for_sexual_offences

Patricia Morgan, *Marriage-Lite: The rise of Cohabitation and its consequences* (Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2000)

The Family Pressure Gauge, Relationships Foundation, Cambridge, May 2011. David Wong, John Ashcroft and Sam Barker

The Jubilee Manifesto, John Ashcroft and Michael Schluter (eds), IVP 2005