

Chasing Love with Sean McDowell

(December 12, 2020)

Monday night, December 8, 1980. I was a freshman in college at the University of Rochester. Sitting in my dorm room, Monday Night Football is on, Howard Cosell interrupts the broadcast...he was a broadcaster back then on Monday Night Football, he and Frank Gifford...and Cosell said, a tragedy from New York City. John Lennon shot twice in the back, brought to the hospital, dead on arrival. I was a Beatles fan. I was shocked. The whole campus was shocked. John Lennon, the man who wrote Imagine, the man who wrote All You Need is Love.

In fact, he was all about love, wasn't he? And it shocked the world that a Beatle was murdered, one who preached love all the time. However, in an interview, his son Julian, Julian Lennon, who was the product of Lennon's first marriage to Cynthia which ended in divorce, said this. "Dad would talk about peace and love out loud to the world but he could never show it to the people who, supposedly, meant the most to him, his wife and son. How can you talk about peace and love and have a family in bits and pieces? No communication, adultery, divorce. You can't do it, not if you're being true and honest with yourself." That's what Julian Lennon said of his dad, who preached about love, sung about love, but apparently didn't show it much to him and his mom

Well, what is love? And why is everyone in our culture, and maybe through cultures throughout history, why have we been chasing love? And what is love? Well, my friend Dr. Sean McDowell has just written a brand new book that is excellent. It's short, it's sweet, and it's called, *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture*. And Sean has been on the program many times before. As you know, he's written several great books, he does online courses for us, he teaches at Biola, he also teaches at a Christian High School in San Clemente, CA, he's an international speaker, he helps us with the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, he has co-written a number of books himself and also with his dad, including, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* and, *More Than a Carpenter*.

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Frank:

Sean, how are you?

Sean:

Doing well. And that was a great intro, by the way. Nice job.

Frank:

Well, that night, I still remember that night. It's like an impact event. And you write in this new book, *Chasing Love*, what you were doing on 9/11, right. There are events in your life that you just remember like they were yesterday. They're high impact emotional events. And, you know, I grew up in high school loving the Beatles. And when Lennon was shot, that was just such a shock. The whole campus, the whole country, was just shocked over it. And when you look back at what John Lennon, apparently was for, at least verbally and musically, but then you look from his son, there was a disconnect there. And we think that, apparently, love is just, you know, sex. That's what we think it is.

You know, John Lennon famously had the "bed ins" with his new wife, Yoko Ono, to protest the war, where he would stay in bed for two weeks. You know, it's all about love. It's about love, but really, what does love mean? And it's a confused culture out there, Sean. That's why this new book is so important. I guess the first question is, why did you write it?

Sean:

Well, I think a few reasons. Number one, Broadman Holman, the publisher, and LifeWay, who partners with the True Love Waits campaign, which has been one of the largest sexual abstinence campaigns since 1993, came to me and asked me to be the spokesman for it. And I thought about a little while, prayed about it, talked to my wife and thought, you know, I've been thinking about this issue and speaking for two decades plus, and frankly, I only write a book if I feel like there's something unique I can say. I don't want to write just to write. And as I looked at the books that are out there, I felt there were none that were really practical that answers questions like; how far is too far, gives dating advice, but gives a theology and worldview behind it to help students understand why. There wasn't a book like that, so I felt compelled to, to write it.

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Frank:

Well, it's in three parts. You've got Part One dealing with issues like – Who will you trust? What's the sexual ethic of Jesus? What is true freedom? Understanding love God's plan for sex and your life – and these kind of things. Then in Part Two you're dealing with many myths about sex and singleness and marriage. And then in Part Three you really go after the controversial issues. You've got chapters on pornography, cohabitation, divorce, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, transgenderism, sexual abuse. This is a far reaching book here, Sean, and it's short. It's under 200 pages, which is great, but you get right to the point.

Now you have kids. I mean, your kids are, what, teenagers now? And I know that part of the reason you wrote it was for them, right?

Sean:

I have three teens in the house and then I have an eight year old son. So, okay, one of the biggest motivations was, gosh, I'm a dad and I want my kids to read this. So, my daughter, when the manuscript came out, I mean, I just almost manipulated her with the offer of buying new shoes if she'd read it, give me feedback, and talk to me about it. And she did. She goes, hey, dad, at the outlet I could get two Vans for the price of one. I was like, fine, whatever. But that's really why I wrote it. I'm teaching a class at a private school, and my son is in the class, and we're going chapter by chapter talking through these issues. So, that really is one of the biggest motivations for me. It's my own kids.

Frank:

Did she give you some good feedback?

Sean:

You know what? She did. And honestly, I mean, I wanted her feedback. But she actually said to me, she goes, dad, it's actually a really good book. And I thought, well, what did you expect? Are you surprised that your dad writes a good book? So, I thought that was kind of funny. But she goes, ah, there's stories and you answer the questions. So, that was good. But with her, I was really more interested in, like, asking her questions, and having the conversation, and just making sure she understands some of these ideas as a beautiful 13 year old girl.

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Frank:

All right, well, let's start with this. Why did you name it *Chasing Love*? Where does that title come from? What's the deal with that?

Sean:

You know what? Actually, the publisher had that title. And they came to me, and I think they had in mind what it means to chase after love, how do we help people chase after love? But as I thought about it more, I thought, I'm gonna flip the script here. And rather than saying, what are the things we need to learn to go find that loving relationship that might make us fulfilled, rather, the bigger question should be, how do I love God and how do I love other people? And if young people would think about it in that framework of the larger call that Jesus has in their lives, then a lot of the tougher questions about sexual purity kind of fall in place.

So, I'm basically saying to young people, really what matters in life is, loving God and loving other people. Let's start there. That's where Jesus says, you know, seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you. So, sexuality is one compartment, an important compartment, of a young person's larger discipleship and relationship with the Lord.

Frank:

Well, briefly, you have a chapter on the sexual ethic of Jesus. So briefly, what was his sexual ethic?

Sean:

This is one of my favorite chapters. His sexual ethic was that singleness and marriage are two beautiful ways to honor and know the Lord. I think in the church, sometimes we've elevated marriage at the expense of the goodness and beauty of singleness. But sex, itself, is reserved for a man and a woman who get married who become one flesh for one lifetime. That's the sexual ethic that Jesus taught. And we could unpack this some more. But one of the things I love to ask students is, what would the world be like if everybody actually followed the sexual ethic of Jesus? And the reason I do that, Frank...I know you do the same thing...is, I don't want to just convince a kid, here's what the Bible says. I want them to understand why and that biblical teaching is actually for our objective good, and for society's objective good.

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Frank:

Well, we're gonna unpack that further after the break when we come back with Dr. Sean McDowell. His new book is called, *Chasing Love*, and everybody's chasing it. The question is – What is love? What is the purpose of sex? How does it relate to love? What about these issues like pornography and same sex-marriage and transgenderism? We'll get to all that with my guest, Sean McDowell. I'm Frank Turek. We're back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

Ad:

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Frank:

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio go no further; we're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You're not going to hear this on NPR. The title is, *Chasing Love...which everyone appears to be doing...Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture*. Sean McDowell is the author. This is a book for parents and kids and just anyone who wants to cut through the confusion about sex and love in our culture.

You know, there's a chapter in here, Experiencing True Freedom, Sean. And I love the distinction you make between freedom to and freedom from. Can you unpack that for us?

Sean:

Yeah, and the reason I have this chapter is, to me, when people often ask me, what's the biggest lie this generation is tempted to believe? And I think it's about freedom. And let me explain. So, I was recently with a group of high school students, and there was maybe a dozen, and they had been in Christian schools and homes their whole life. 17 and 18 years old. I just simply asked him, I say, Can you define for me, the person who is truly free? What does it mean to be free, not political freedom, but a life of freedom? And the students talked, they came back to me, and they said, freedom is doing whatever you want without restraint.

I said, okay, paint a picture for me of what that looks like. And they said, well, the most free person would be somebody, alone on an island who can do whatever he or she wants to do

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without anybody restraining them, would be the most free. I said, okay, if God exists, would this change the nature of freedom in any way? And Frank, this is a dozen high school students who've been in Christian homes and schools their entire life. Their answer was, if God exists, freedom is doing whatever you want without restraint. Same definition. But they added, but now there's consequences. All God adds to the question of freedom is consequences, presumably guilt in this life, and maybe judgment in the next. And so, through the next hour, I helped to unpack for them that they understood freedom from, which is lacking restraint, but not freedom for.

So, take my smartphone, for example, that I'm holding right here. My smartphone has been designed by somebody smart to function a certain way. It's not a scuba tank. It's not a basketball, right. And it's not a pump for a ball. It's when we understand its design, and the truth about it and use it accordingly, that it's so-called set free. Well, when we look in the Scriptures, the first thing we learned about God is, in the beginning, God created. Which means, this world is purposeful, like a smartphone. God has made marriage, God has made nations, he's made us with language, and he's made a purpose for sex. Like the phone, when we understand the designer's purpose, and use it accordingly, we're actually set free.

So, two practical examples I use with students. Number one, I said, I don't think freedom is just do whatever you want. I said, because what if a man just says, you know what, I don't want to spend time with my wife and kids. I want to spend three hours a day looking at porn. Is he free if he does that? And they started to realize, gosh, there's something wrong with somebody who wants to do that. He should have different wants. So, freedom is not necessarily doing what you want. It's cultivating the right wants and having the power to live it out.

The second example, I said to these students, I said, take a piano. Who's more free? The person who sits down says, hey, this is my piano, I can bang the keys however I want to; I can destroy the piano. Or somebody who sits down and understands the design and purpose and truth of the piano and uses it accordingly and makes beautiful music? Well, obviously, the latter person is more free. But it takes discipline. It takes time. It takes orienting your life to truth to create beautiful music. So, ironically, freedom is not doing what you want. It's having the right wants. It's not lacking restraint. It's actually embracing the right restraints. Then we're free.

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So, last point. I said to the students, I said, if we're supposed to live according our design, our design and our purpose is to love God and love other people. That means we're made for relationships. So ironically, I said, as students I said, your example of the person on an island is the least free because they're not in the relationship God has designed them to have. And by the way, we've all learned during COVID that were made for relationships and we suffer without them. So, the reason I bring this up, Frank, so early in the book is because, I'm convinced more and more that even our kids and our best Christian schools, our best churches, our best home schools, really have much deeper of a secular worldview than we realize. And so, when we go to biblical teaching, they're funneling it through the secular ideas of love and freedom. So, we've got to strip those faulty ideas away first, and then the biblical teaching, at least, can begin to make more sense to them.

Frank:

Sure, I've also heard it put this way, that true freedom is being able to do what you should do. Being free to do what you should do, not necessarily what you want to do. Because there are many people listening to us right now, Sean, who are viewing pornography regularly. They may be free to view pornography regularly, but right now, they're not free not to. In other words, they're addicted to it. They can't get away from it. They're not free. And it seems to me there's a biblical teaching on here, with regard to slavery to sin, that once you get to a certain point, you become a slave to your sin and you no longer have the freedom to do what's right.

Sean:

Hmm. That is such a good example. And I love that you use the one on pornography. Years ago, I was working at this T-shirt stand with a fellow probably twice my age. I was in college. And I remember, we hadn't even talked about God, somehow he knew I was a Christian. He just said to me, he goes, you know, I'm free to drink if I want to. And this guy drank non-stop all day. And I probably wasn't as gracious as I should have been. I was like, okay, can you go a day without drinking? Because if you can't, why are you telling me that you're free? And I just remember the guy will like looked at me and walked away. And he realized, if you're controlled by drinking, or controlled by pornography, you're not free.

So, I think the way you put it is right. It's not just doing what you want. It's doing what you should, which implies a certain design and purpose for how we're supposed to live.

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Frank:

I had a friend who was addicted to brake fluid. He said he could stop at any time. Sorry.

Sean:

Great dad joke.

Frank:

That's a bad dad joke. Anyway, let me ask you a question about the modern sexual ethic that we have here in the west. What is it and how does it differ from true Christianity?

Sean:

So, I think what's interesting about this is that our culture has a view of love that basically says, I have to affirm however you view and see yourself. If you define yourself a certain way, and you want a certain relationship, kind of like what we saw in, I forget, it was maybe the Casey versus Planned Parenthood ruling...

Frank:

That was it. Yeah.

Sean:

...where Kennedy, former SCOTUS judge, basically said, you define your own existence.

Frank:

Yes. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning and purpose. Like, you knucklehead.

Sean:

Exactly. But you know what goes with that is I have to affirm your concept of existence, right; bigoted, hateful, intolerant. So, there's that side of the culture. And what's so hard for young people is, they've seen this in television shows, they're getting it in educational system, it's coming through music, their friends hear it, so they understand the biblical sexual ethic, but they're also torn going, I don't want to be a hater. I don't want to be a jerk. They don't understand how to live with those in tension.

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Now with that said, on the flip side, I think there is a sense where our culture really does understand true love when it's presented to them. So, for example, you knew this was coming. It's only a matter of time. If you take the Avengers movies, Infinity War and Endgame...and sorry to ruin it for anybody, but you've had plenty of time to see it.

Frank:

That's right. Spoiler alert.

Sean:

Yeah, spoiler alert. At the end of Endgame, Iron Man willingly lays down and sacrifices his life as an act of heroism and love to save others. This 10 year plan of, I don't know how many, 20 some movies, culminates with this Christ-type figure laying down his life. And our hearts resonate with that because we, actually, really know that love isn't just affirming whatever anybody says about themselves. It's actually doing what is in the objective good of somebody else. And even the people putting Jesus to death thought they were doing what was right. So, it shows you can believe you're doing what is right and be absolutely wrong. It's some of these clarifications, our young people need to have a clear definition of love, so they can just have some conviction to know what it means to love somebody who doesn't respond the way that we might think they want to, as long as what we're doing is in their objective best good.

Frank:

Well, a clear definition of love, Jesus gave it. He says, I have a new command for you, love one another as I have loved you. How did Jesus love us, Sean? It seems like He sacrificed for us, right.

Sean:

That's exactly right. I think it's 1 John 4:10 that describes how Jesus, the example of love He gave, is to sacrifice for us. It's other focused, for the objective good of another, even if others reject Him and won't accept that good gift.

Frank:

So, I think a lot of people are confused today, Sean. You cover this in the book. Again, the book is called, *Chasing Love*, by Sean McDowell. Love doesn't require approval, Sean, does it? I mean,

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I don't have to approve of everything you do to love you. In fact, if I truly love you, I'll probably disapprove of some of the things you want to do. Correct?

Sean:

I think that's right. I think it's both. I think it's, not only, a lack of approval, it's positively disapproving when somebody is doing something that's harmful. Now, the difficulty comes in how and when do we communicate that And is there a difference between disapproving of a Christians behavior and a non-Christians behavior? That's where some of the difficulty comes in. But in principle, I'm with you, 100%, that if I actually love you, and I see you doing something harmful, then I am obligated to intervene and disapprove because that's for your objective good.

Frank:

Now, obviously, you can't have right and wrong if there's no purpose to life, if there's no objective purpose to life. And you state out right in the front of the book here, that there's a purpose to life, and that purpose flows into why marriage and sex are important. Can you kind of unpack that for us?

Sean:

Yeah, I think the objective purpose why God created us, is to be in relationship with him, and to be in relationship with other people. We see this in the garden, that Adam walks with God in relationship. But then we see that there's an aloneness, something described as not good before sin enters the world, when Adam is not in relationship with another human being, Eve, Jesus is asked the greatest [command?], and he says, love God and love other people, which is relationship. So, at its heart, why we're here is to be in relationship with people. But we can only be in fulfilling meaningful relationships with people if we understand the designer's intent for how we are to relate to them, with our bodies and with our souls. That's why the intent of the designer is so important, so we can love people the way they're supposed to be loved.

Frank:

Talking to Sean McDowell. His brand new, excellent book is called, *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture*. And we're going to deal with some of the more controversial issues when we come back. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an

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Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is crossexamined.org. Sean's website is SeanMcdowell.org. We're back in two minutes.

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Frank:

Blessings to you as we come up to Christmas. Good Christmas gift, good stocking stuffer for one of your kids, as long as you read it too, is a new book by Sean McDowell called, *Chasing Love*. Because everyone's chasing love. And the subtitle is, *Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture*. Sean does a great job of dealing with the issues directly, head on. In fact, Sean, I was reading the book this morning about the three purposes of sex. You know, too often we don't even talk about, what is the purpose of sex. You know, what are the purposes of sex? Because you list three of them.

Sean:

I think there's three key ones. The first one is obvious; to make babies, procreation. This is Genesis 1:27-28. God makes them male and female and says multiply, fill the earth. That's the obvious one. Although today people have gone to such lengths to separate procreation from sex that we actually have to remind people that sex is a procreative act, even if babies don't result. That's number one.

Number two is unity. Now we're on to Genesis 2:24, where it says, a man leaves his father and mother clings to his wife. So, we know we're talking about marriage, and the two shall become one. They become one flesh. As a kid, I'd read that I thought, oh, there's kind of this spiritual unity that takes place. But now that I'm married, I go, oh, my goodness, you are one financially, there's an emotional unity, there's a spiritual unity. And even science, kind of, has revealed with

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biochemicals in the body like oxytocin, that there's actually a biochemical unity that takes place, when a man and a woman have sex, and it bonds the two of them together.

So, procreation. Second is unity. And the third one, Frank, I don't hear a lot of Protestants talk about this. I think we've missed something. And as I've read, *A Theology of the Body*, by John Paul, obviously former Pope, it's really hit me that sex in this life is one thing that anticipates or foreshadows heaven. And what I mean by that is, in the sexual union between a man and a woman, that shame is gone. Obviously, you're unclothed, so you can know somebody in a deep unity and closeness. In the Old Testament, it would say, you know, Adam knew his wife Eve, or Abraham knew his wife Sarah. And as a kid, I'm like, this is so dumb. They're married. How could he not know her? Because I had no idea.

Now I realize when it's talking about sexuality, it means this deep relational connection that takes place when we get to heaven. I'm not talking about, like, a Muslim view of heaven, in which you die as a martyr, there's 70 virgins. No. That's not the point. In heaven, there's no marriage, and there's no sex. But sex in this life anticipates, in one way, the beauty and goodness of intimacy and closeness with another human being. And you said right at the beginning, Frank, you said, our culture confuses intimacy with sex, and they're not the same things. But sex right now in marriage is meant to anticipate the kind of closeness and unity we'll have with God, and we'll have with other people. So, that means ironically, if Satan can confuse us about sex, he can confuse us about heaven.,

Frank:

So, one of the purposes of sex, I'm surprised to find, Sean is not to sell beer, then. Apparently. That's not in the Bible. Ok. [Laughing] I did not know that. But those three...

Sean:

That's awesome.

Frank:

The third one, you're right, we don't talk about that much; that it's sort of a foreshadowing of something beautiful about heaven. In fact, marriage is an illustration, ultimately, of our union to Christ.

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Sean:

That's right.

Frank:

Yeah.

Sean:

And, you know, one thing I was talking to my high school students this week is, I was trying to ask them, is it ever okay to have sex outside of marriage? And one girl said, well, if you were, like, on your deathbed, and you couldn't get married, it might be okay. And I said, okay, so you have enough energy to have sex, but to not get married, and we laughed about it. But it revealed that, in the minds of the students was, like, if I go to heaven and I didn't have sex, I'm really going to miss out. I was like, the only way you can think that is, if you have a deficient view of what heaven is going to really be like.

Frank:

Hmm. How about singleness? You have a whole chapter in here...well, several chapters on singleness. But in part two that comprises, I don't know, four or five chapters about singleness here. A lot of people will say, well, singleness is just unrealistic in our culture. What do you say to that?

Sean:

Well, let me come kind of through the backdoor, so to speak on this. Singleness also anticipates heaven, but in a different way. So, marriage ends when we get to heaven, at least this kind of marriage. There's the marriage of the Lamb to Christ, etc. But we're not married. It's only for this life for procreation, for unity, etc. But in heaven, we are fully fulfilled relationally in our relationships with other people and with God. Singleness, in this life right now, anticipates the kind of ultimate fulfillment we will have when we get to heaven. I mean, Jesus says, when they say, hey your mother, brother and sister are outside, he goes, who's my mother and brother and sister? He goes, it's those who follow the commandments. He points to the body of Christ, so to speak.

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Now, I shared that with a single person and she was blown away. She's like, why don't we ever hear this in the church? And I said, because I think in the church, we've elevated marriage beyond scripturally where it should be elevated. Now, let me qualify what I mean by that. Marriage is vital to society. I'm all for strong marriages. But what we've done is, we've kind of sent the message to people that, if you just...this is kind of what's called, like, purity culture, so to speak. We've told students the message that if you just don't have sex right now, God will bring that partner into your life if you remain a virgin, and then when you get married you'll be fulfilled, and you'll have endless sexual bliss. Intentionally or not, this is the message we've given many young people. And what happens is some get married and they're, like, this marriage didn't work out the way I thought it would. Things are harder. Or some of them are still single. And they start to go, wait a minute, this doesn't match what I was told.

Well, the problem is, the Bible teaches, you read Matthew 19 and First Corinthians 7, that marriage and singleness are two equal and beautiful good ways, gifts, for the church, and ways of serving the Lord. But what we've done is, we've made marriage the blue ribbon, and singleness gets, kind of, you know, the B, C, D, whatever that third, fourth, fifth place ribbon is. And it's a disastrous message to send to single people, especially today, as less and less people are getting married, and they're getting married later and later. We need a robust theology and practice of singleness within the church. So, I actually, because this bothered me so much, in the book, the middle section you mentioned earlier, it's divided into three parts. The middle section is stripping away a lot of the faulty ideas about love and freedom. The middle section starts with the purpose of sex, and then I talk about singleness, and then I talk about marriage, to try to bring some balance to that within the church.

Frank:

What are some of the benefits of singleness? Paul mentions them, but I think you unpack them, as well.

Sean:

Yeah, I think one of the big benefits Paul mentioned says there's a kind of freedom that you have when you're single. I have single friends who are like, you know, I just packed my bags and went on a trip just spontaneously. I'm like, that has not happened for me for two decades, since I had kids and I'm married. Like, there's a certain freedom that comes there. But there's also not

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the sexual relationship of marriage. And marriage has kids that's a blessing but lacks some of that freedom. So, Paul is just trying to say, whatever gift you have, whether marriage or singleness, use it for the church, you know, and to spread the gospel.

Frank:

Sure, he says, you might be able to serve the Lord better as a single person. You don't have the responsibilities as a married person when you're single. But this flows right into chapter three, or part three of your book, Sean. Again, the book is called, *Chasing Love*, by Dr. Sean McDowell. What's very prevalent, even among Christians now, is cohabitation. And you have a chapter on that. Tell us what you, basically, say in that chapter.

Sean:

Yeah, I knew that cohabitation...I'd seen the studies and read a little bit about how it puts a couple that ends up getting married at a disadvantage. But it actually surprised me how strong the evidence is that, basically...Glenn Stanton, our friend at Focus [on the Family] said, if you are going to invent a way to put a marriage at a disadvantage, it'd be hard to find something more effective than living together. Now, that's kind of counterintuitive, at least to many young people. When I talk to young people, and I'll say, do you think it helps someone to live together first? Like, even a lot of Christians will say, yeah, I think it's wrong, but it's probably going to help them. And then I'll say, the study shows the opposite. Why is that the case? And there's a number of reasons here.

Number one being men and women tend to have different expectations in a cohabitating relationship. Women tend to approach this like this is a step of commitment towards ultimate commitment. A man tends to view it like this is just a step where I get what I want, without bigger commitment. And I can leave tomorrow if I want to. I can leave tonight. So, that disparity is different.

Second, my wife and I differ about something, or we're upset, there's something we have that gives us a freedom that doesn't exist in a living together couple. And that thing we have is called commitment. My wife knows...both of our wives...Stephanie knows...we're not leaving them, and we're committed to them. And as much as she's upset with me, I'm going to here

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and we're going to work it through and we're going to find a way that doesn't exist in a cohabitating relationship.

So, what happens is, people move in together and they think it's simulating a marriage relationship, but it's lacking the very component that makes a marriage relationship work. So, when it's all said and done, my students will say things like, well, you get to see if they put the, you know, the cap back on the toothpaste or how they make their coffee in the morning. I said, can I just tell you from 20 years of marriage, that stuff is so inconsequential to what makes a marriage work. It's commitment, but that's what's lacking in a cohabitating relationship.

Frank:

Yeah, and the problem, I'm wondering if, well, it seems to me that in a cohabitating relationship, what you're saying to somebody is, you're good enough to use for sex, but you're not good enough to commit to. That's basically what that's basically what you're saying. Right? You really don't love the person if you're not ready to sacrifice your freedom and autonomy for that person. Secondly, Sean, I wonder if the cohabitating situation, the causal arrow goes the other way. In other words, Stanton is saying that people who cohabit are more likely to get divorced. But I wonder if the cohabitation is doing that, or it's the fact that people were willing to cohabit in the first place. In other words, they were the kind of people who would say, I just want to get what I want without the commitment, that that is the reason that they don't survive very well in marriage. Because they're the kind of people that wouldn't commit anyway. You know what I'm saying? I don't know if the causal arrow is going the other way.

But let's talk about it after the break because we're coming right up on it. And we're talking to my friend, Sean McDowell, and his new book, which you need to get, is called, *Chasing Love*, which everybody appears to be doing. What is love? How should we chase it? What does it really mean to a Christian to love? What is marriage in the Christian worldview? We're gonna get to more of it right after the break. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. My guest is Sean McDowell. Back in two.

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Frank:

Frank Turek back with you. Talking to my friend, Sean McDowell, about his new book, *Chasing Love*. And Sean, just before the break, we were talking about the idea that people who cohabitate, they get divorced at much higher rates than people that don't. Now what's causing that? Is the cohabitation causing that? Or is it because of the kind of people that would cohabitate, meaning that they really didn't want to commit to one another to begin with, causing them to have less commitment once they become married officially? What do you think the real answer is? I don't know if we know the answer but what do you think?

Sean:

That's a really good question. I don't know that, statistically, we can really decipher exactly what's causing it. What I think I would say, if you're willing to cohabit first, although many people who cohabit, they're actually reacting to brokenness and divorce they've seen from their family, and they want commitment. So, many don't have it, but many are entering into this because they actually want to have a successful relationship and marriage. But they just don't realize that living together puts them at a disadvantage. And it's a false simulation of what marriages can be like. So, they finally get married, and all of a sudden, there's these challenges that are totally different than living together, and they're just not prepared for it.

Frank:

So, if a young person came to you, Sean, and said, really, what's wrong with premarital sex? What's wrong with even cohabitation? From a Christian perspective, from the true perspective, Christianity, what would you say, in a nutshell?

Sean:

I'd say, premarital sex is wrong, because you shouldn't lie to people. And then I'd let it sit. And they'd be, like, what do you mean lie to people? I'd say, look, I had this conversation yesterday with my students, Frank. I wrote up on the board, I said, do bodily actions communicate things? We started talking about how a slap on the cheek, in itself, communicates something. In fact, we talked about how a kiss on the cheek communicates something different than a kiss on the

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forehead does. Rolling your eyes communicates something. Something like the middle finger might be cultural, but other things are transcultural. I said, what does a kiss on the lips mean? And they said, well, it depends. You know, some greeting people. I was in Eastern Europe and men would greet one another with a kiss on the lips. Fine.

I said what does a French kiss communicate? And they're like, that is definitely romantic. And then I said, what does sex communicate? And I pulled out of these students, and they're like, well, it communicates permanency. It communicates trust. It communicates exclusivity because of the kind of act that it is. So, you shouldn't have premarital sex with somebody because you are lying with your intentions, which are different than what you're doing with your body.

Frank:

Good. How about pornography? A whole chapter on this. It does change your brain chemistry. We know that. What are the other problems with it?

Sean:

Well, the biggest problem, of course, for Christians, is that Jesus was very clear about ruling out lust. And it's pretty hard to say, oh, I'm looking at pornography for the arts, as opposed to the lust, that he talks about in the Sermon on the Mount. That's the low hanging fruit, easy response. But the other thing we've seen is that pornography harms people in the industry. I mean, just this week, there was a story about...I'm not even going to mention their name...one of the largest porn producers in the world, one of the most visited websites, how there were tons and tons and tons of videos uploaded, of people, in particular minors, who had been raped. Now, why would they do that? Because there's demand for this from people who look at porn. You need more and more variety, more and more difference. Of course, to save their name, they said, oh, we're going to stop this and end this. Not because they think it's right but because they got caught.

And I actually put in the book a lot of stories of former porn stars, or actors, or actresses, who would say things like, man, once I got out I realized how destructive this was to my mental health, to my body. I was an object that was used. So, when somebody says, porn is not hurting anybody, I say, that is an absolute lie. It's hurting people on so many different levels. The other point that I would say, is John Paul II, he said, the problem with pornography is not that it

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shows too much, it's that it shows too little. And at first you think, wait a minute, it shows too much. People take their clothes off. He goes, no, what pornography does, is it takes a sex act that's meant to be in a committed relationship, where there's emotion, and there's trust, and there's a marriage, and reduces it just to the physical act that somebody views for their own pleasure. And what it does is, it begins to reduce people to objects that you use, rather than beings that you love.

Frank:

Right.

Sean:

I believe it was St. Augustine who said, the problem is that we're supposed to love people and use money, but we love money and we use people. If you look at pornography, it conditions people to start using others as objects for their own pleasure. And frankly, the studies show that the number one area where young people, including Christians, learn about sex, it's not church, it's not their parents, it's pornography.

Frank:

And ladies and gentlemen, if you're using pornography, you are partially contributing to that girl who just got abducted in your neighborhood, into the sex trade industry. And you say it doesn't hurt anyone. It does. How about the transgender issue, Sean? You've got a chapter on that here. You've also got chapters on divorce, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, sexual abuse, we can't cover it all. But the transgender issue is really sort of taking the country by storm. And now there's sort of a soft-totalitarianism going on. If you don't agree with everything the transgender side says, you are going to be canceled. In fact, my friend, Rod Dreher, who was on the program a few weeks ago with, *Live Not by Lies*, points that out. What do you cover in the transgender chapter?

Sean:

Well, one of the things I'm trying to do is help people have clarity on definitions.

Frank:

Oh, there are no definitions in transgenderism, Sean. There's your first mistake right there.

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Sean:

Well, it is interesting, politically, that we're seeing certain women being nominated to certain positions, which I say is great. At the same time, we're told there's really no such thing that is a woman. I mean, it's just full of contradictions. Here's the way I phrase it; transgender is psychological, intersex is biological, transgenderism is ideological.

Frank:

Say that again.

Sean:

Transgender is psychological; it's a mental phenomena. Intersex is biological; it's a physical condition. Transgenderism is ideological; it's a worldview that's being pushed on culture, through education, through the media, through movies and streaming companies like Netflix, pushing this agenda on us. So, I want students to realize, because most of them are not asking, how do I fight transgenderism? They're saying, how do I love or be friends with this person in my school, or my community, or now my sports team, who's transgender? Like, what does that look like practically for them?

And what's amazing about this is, in the past decade, what's called rapid onset gender dysphoria, we've seen a 4,000% increase in the UK. The US, I think it's about half that, about 2,000% increase in adolescent girls with no history of gender dysphoria, coming out at 11, 12, 13 years old, transitioning. And Abigail Shrier has written a book on this called, Irreversible Damage. And this is a new wave, a massive phenomena, that what she says I think is right. In the past, you'd have girls who, maybe, would cut, or they would work out the difficulty of coming to age in a different fashion. Now the way to do this is to, really, switch your genders.

And it's empowering to somebody who feels like they don't fit in, they have broken relationships, trying to make sense of their life. You switch genders, and what happens, everybody celebrates you and you're awesome. Like, there's such a psychological phenomena underneath the surface here going on with students that we, number one, have to pay attention to, and number two, have to be willing to speak truth about.

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Frank:

Let me just say, obviously, with a 4,000% increase, this has been driven, I would think, by social media. Because people are, as you say, being celebrated if they do this. So, they're getting attention that they couldn't get otherwise, where 20 years ago, you wouldn't have this kind of phenomenon. So, it's not driven by some sort of medical condition, or some sort of physiological condition. It's really driven by emotion, it seems. It's driven by people cheering other people on. But let me go to the question that your students are asking. What do you do as a Christian student when you have someone in your class who's a man, or a boy, claiming now he's a girl? How do you deal with that?

Sean:

Well, I would tell any Christian student to do...two things are vital. Number one, you have to know what you believe about this and why. Because one of the ways that some people have their beliefs changed is, they'll meet somebody of a different worldview, different perspective, and go, oh, they're nice, they're normal, this must be fine. Like, that's how the heart works.

Frank:

Right.

Sean:

So, we have to have worldview training. What does scripture say? What does science show so we can have confidence to do the right thing but reach out lovingly in relationship? Clearly, somebody in high school or junior high, who changed their gender, is hurting and they're broken. And again, all of us are. But I think at the heart of so much of the LGBTQ issue is, do I belong? Who am I? Am I loved? And as Christians, that's our biggest task, is to love people. So, just reach out and try to treat this person the way you would anybody. Be that Christian who breaks the stereotype that Christians are bigoted, and harmful, and hateful. And just reach out and get to know this person, and listen to them, and spend time with them. That's what I would suggest Christians do. Those two things are vital.

Frank:

Yeah, I wonder how much of this has been caused, partially, by my generation, and the sexual revolution. When people come from broken homes, their identity is up in the air sometimes.

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And so, I think so much of people who are struggling with their identity, that at least that struggle could have been caused by their parents not living in a sexually committed way. That's probably part of it. Sean, we're running out of time. Tell people where they can get the book. And if they do get the book from you, they're going to get some other free interviews. Explain that quickly.

Sean:

You can go to any place that sells books and find it. But if you go to SeanMcdowell.org, and you just scroll down, you'll see a link to the book. Click on it...I've interviewed Richard Ross, who founded the True Love Waits, James Dobson, and my father, who kicked off the Why Wait campaign. And if somebody orders this before Christmas, and just takes a screenshot, sends it in, we will send you those three interviews for free.

Frank:

SeanMcdowell.org. Sean, thanks for being on the show. Sorry we're out of time. I'll see you guys here next week, Lord willing, God bless. Again, the book is, *Chasing Love*.

Ad:

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