

# Theologies of Love & Sexuality for the Classroom

Secondary Bible Teachers' In-Service

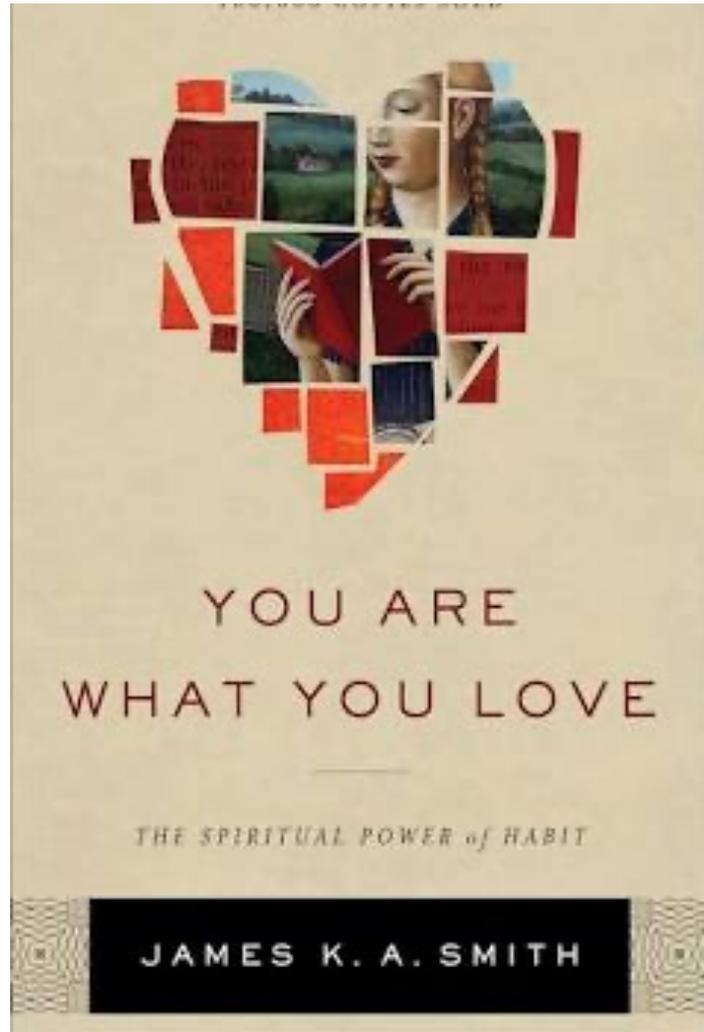
Winter 2022



The Bible declares “God is love”

“Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” 1 John 4:7-12 (NKJV)

What is love? How does love impact our relationships?



# Who are you?

- You are what you think
- You are what you believe/know
- You are what you love

Basic premise: we are defined by our desires, our habits, what we worship shapes who we are

You are what you LOVE



# What is the most fundamental question Jesus asks us?

- Jesus asks, will you follow me?
- Jesus asks, do you love me?
- Jesus asks, **what do you want?**

“What do you want [seek]?” John 1:38

Smith argues: “This is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because *we are* what we want. Our wants and longings are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. Our wants reverberate from our heart, the epicenter of the human person.” Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 1-2

# Two models of discipleship

## Discipleship of the Mind

- You are what you think
- I think therefore I exist
- Brains on a stick
- Intellectualist model
- Learning is about depositing ideas into a bank of knowledge from which you make withdrawals
- Is being students of the Word enough?
- “Take every thought captive to Christ”  
2 Cor 10:5

## Discipleship of Love

- I am what I love
- Recognizes power of habit
- Place to start is by attending to our loves
- I love in order to know. I am not defined by what I know but what I desire/love
- “This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”  
Phil 1:9-11

# Discipleship: Guard your heart

“Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. ...Jesus’s command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his—to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all—a vision encapsulated by the shorthand “the kingdom of God.” Smith, 2

At stake here is your very identity, your fundamental allegiances, your core convictions and passions that center both your self-understanding and your way of life. ...More precisely, **at stake in the formation of your loves is your religious and spiritual identity, which is manifested not only in what you think or what you believe but in what you do—and what those practices do to you.**” Smith, 22

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23

# Activity

What do you love?

Make a list of five things you love. Then rank each in order from the most important to least. What does your list of loves tell you about yourself?

Share your answers with the person next to you, if you feel comfortable





# Augustine (354-430)

Bishop of Hippo, in north Africa

Father of Western theology

Converted later in life

For Augustine, love begins with God

Fall caused dramatic weakening of human will

Humans experience disordered love

Impacts all areas of life including love & sexuality

# Augustine contrasts two types of love

## Love of the world—*cupiditas*

- Transitory
- Seeks to find satisfaction in creation as an end in itself
- Loves the world for its own sake

## Love of God—*caritas*

- Eternal
- Creation is a means to attaining the love of God
- Loves the world for the sake of God

# Love of God & the love of things

When someone loves an object, they seek to enjoy it or to use it

Material objects are either a means to an end, or an end in themselves

- *Fruī*: God is to be enjoyed for His own sake
- *Uti*: all other things are to be used to the end of enjoying God

For Augustine, correct love is to use the things of the world in order to attain the enjoyment of God. God is the end, the world is the means



# Sin reverses the *frui/uti* relation

Due to A & E's fall into sin human love has become disordered

- Fundamentally altered relation of humans to the world & to God
- Instead of the world being a means to enjoying God, the world becomes an end for enjoyment in itself

*Cupiditas* loves the world for its own sake and not God's, seeks to rest in the world & is a perversion of *caritas*, the love of God

# Rightly ordered love

*“But living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things: **to love things, that is to say, in the right order**, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.”*

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*,  
I.27-28

## Augustine's personal struggle

From adolescence to age 32 Augustine of Hippo, also known as the father of Western theology, reported he frequently lost in the battle with his sexual passions. His struggle with sex began at age sixteen, "passion gripped me and I surrendered myself entirely to sex."

Augustine confesses he had some a sex addiction that he struggled with for many years

# Augustine's sex addiction

- At age 17 he took a concubine
- Had a son Adeodatus
- At 30, his mother Monica arranged for him to marry a 10 years old girl (2 years under legal age to marry) but Augustine could not bear thought of not having sex for 2 years and he took a lover
- Concubine sent back to Africa
  
- “I loved the happy life, but I feared to find it in your abode, and fled from it, even as I sought it. I thought that I would be too wretched, if I were kept from a woman's arms.”

# Steps to addiction

1. Gave in to lust
2. Developed into a habit
3. Became a necessity
4. Enslaved to sex (addiction)

“For my will had been perverted and had manufactured lust; the more I gave in to lust, the more it developed into a habit, and when I failed to check the habit, it became a necessity. These were all the links in the chain that had me enslaved.” *Confessions*, Book 8, ch.5

*“But as an adolescent I prayed a pitiful prayer for a clean life saying, ‘Give me chastity and give me control over myself, but not yet.’ I was afraid you might answer me too quickly and straighten me out before I was ready; for what I really wanted was not to be cured but to be fulfilled.” Confessions, Book 8, Chapter 7*

Augustine wrestles  
with desire

Recognizes good  
things are gift  
from God

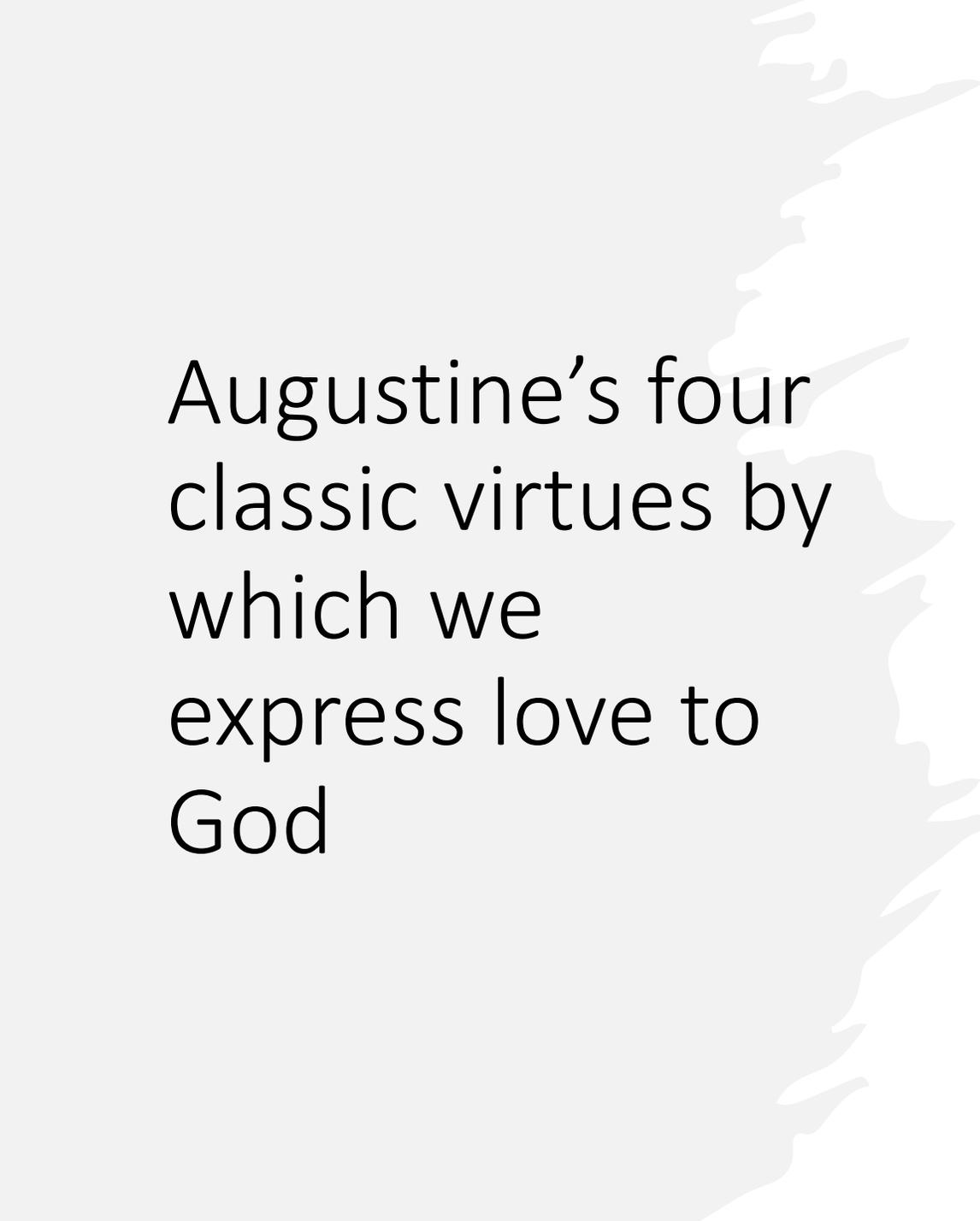
“All these things are the gift of my God: I did not give them to myself. These things are good, and they all made up my being. Therefore, he who made me is good, and he is my good. . . . But in this was my sin, that not in him but in his creatures, in myself and others, did I seek pleasure, honors, and truths.”



# Augustine's conversion

While praying in a garden in Milan (and weeping over his attachment to sin), Augustine heard a faint voice say *tolle, lege* or "Take up and read." He opened the Letters of Paul at random and found Romans 13:13-14, "*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.*"

388, Augustine baptized with Adeodatus



# Augustine's four classic virtues by which we express love to God

Following virtues form our character by which we express our deepest love to God:

*Temperance:* control and still our desires and lusts of material world that draw us away from God and enjoyment of divine goodness

*Fortitude:* overcome fear of loss over love of material things

*Justice:* gives to each its own by serving only God

*Prudence:* guards us against deceit and temptation

To know the love of God with our minds results in our becoming oriented and centered on the eternal love of God which leads to wisdom and the exercise of faith, hope, and love

Augustine believed the *summum bonum*, the highest good, was God himself and that all other goods are lesser goods that flow from his hand, intended to lead us back to Him

- Sex is good but a sex addiction leading to dysfunction in personal (sexual) relationships does not fit into the good that flows to us from God's hand and leads us back to God
- Disordered love leads us away from God; but the rightly ordered love of things leads us back to God, to true love and to full human sexual love in its spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions

## Augustine & *summum bonum*



“Be fruitful and multiply...”  
Genesis 1:28ff

“And God saw everything that He had made, and  
behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:31a

FLAME  
*of*  
YAHWEH

*Sexuality in the  
Old Testament*

Richard M. Davidson

## Sexuality impacts our entire life

“The human being is a sexual creature, and his/her sexuality is manifested in every aspect of human existence.” p.37

“Man is a social being; sexuality is for sociality, for relationships, companionship, partnership.” p.42

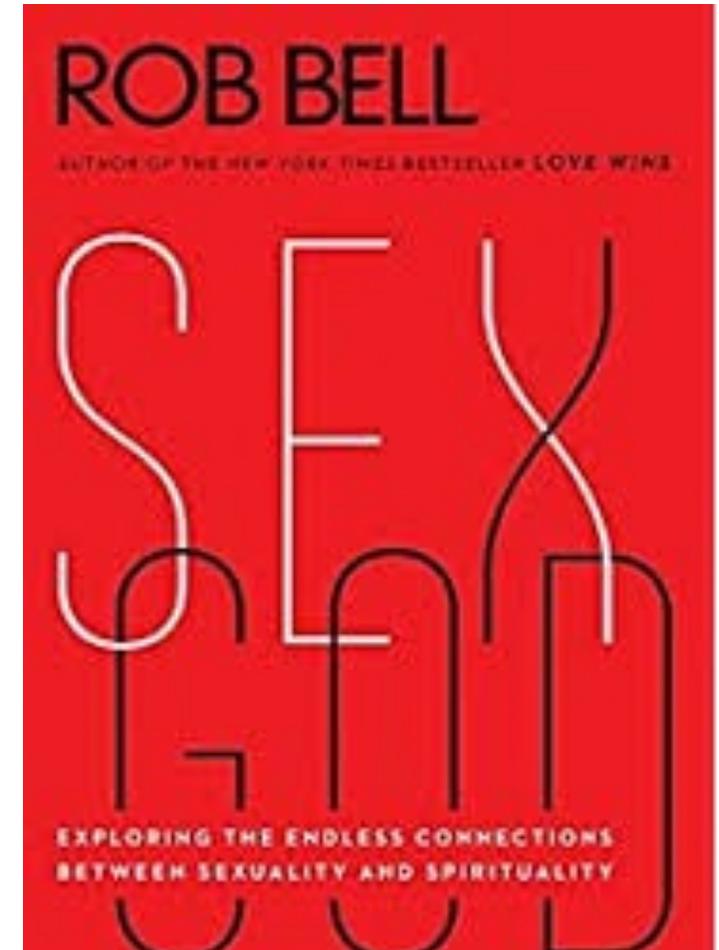
Richard Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*

# Sexuality is how we connect with the world around us

Sexuality is about expressing a deep need to connect with another

“Scholars believe that the word *sex* is related to the Latin word *secare*, which means “to sever, to amputate, or to disconnect from the whole.” This is where we get words like sect, section, dissect, bisect. Our sexuality then, has two dimensions. First, our sexuality is our awareness of how profoundly we’re severed and cut off and disconnected. Second, our sexuality is all of the ways we go about trying to reconnect.” Bell, 27

*“Our sexuality is all of the ways we strive to reconnect with our world, with each other, and with God.”* Bell, 29





Sex education in the USA



Should SDAs talk about love, sex, and sexuality in Bible classes? How?  
(It's all throughout Scripture)

What approaches do other Christians follow?

# Evangelical purity movement (1990s- )

1. Sexual purity most prized possession a girl can have
2. Girls taught boys and men are sexually weak/driven by powerful sex drive
3. Girls taught they are responsible for keeping male sexual desire in check by their clothing, and their actions
4. Girls must wear modest clothing and keep a sexless mind and body
5. Girls take “purity pledge” promise to remain virgins until they get married
6. Young people not to “date” one another, they only enter into a serious courtship when ready for marriage, so they don’t give their heart to any other man but their husband

## Rise in teen pregnancy tied to abstinence-only education...

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We'd like a refund on those purity rings, please.



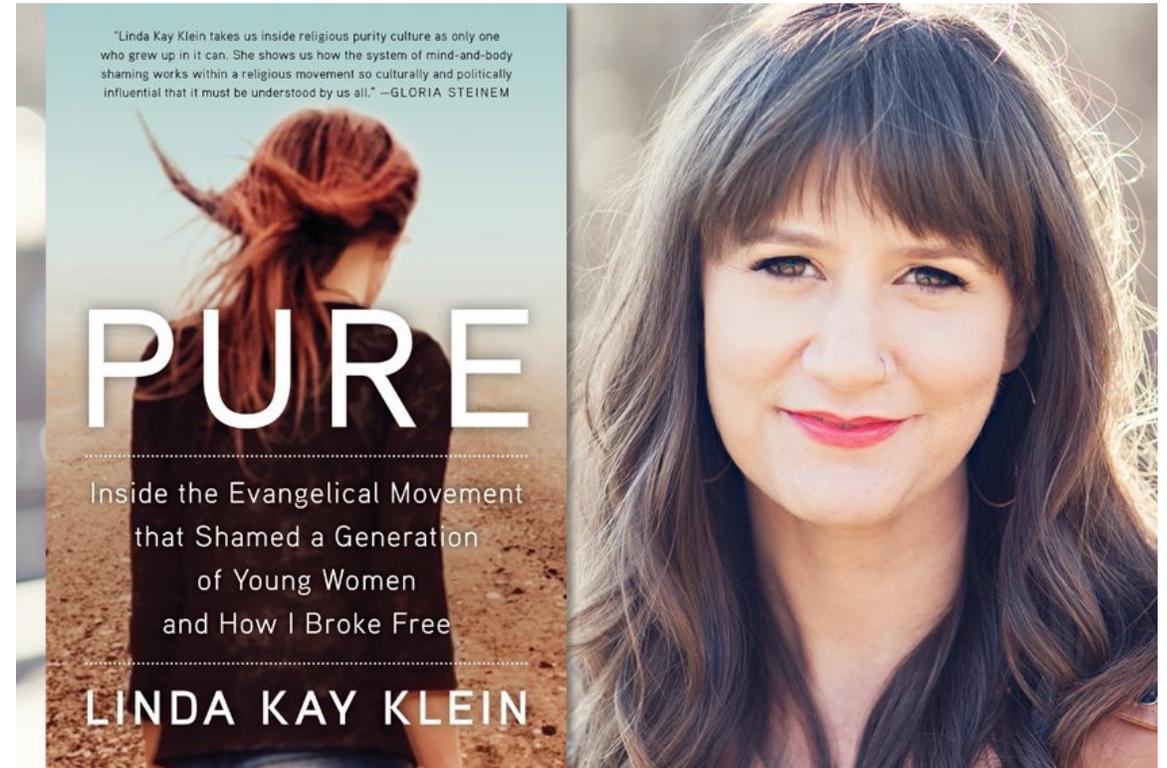
**ABSTINENCE WORKS!**  
Condoms cause cancer!

# Concerns about 'Purity movement'

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## Promoted negative view of sexuality:

"It was all about how [a woman] needed to be a good Christian by protecting them [males] from the threat that is you — the threat that is your body. The threat that is your sexuality."



## Linda Kay Klein's story...

“Because she was a curvy teen, Klein was often chastised for not being modest enough. Even after leaving the church when she was in her 20s, Klein continued to experience anxiety and shame about her body and sexuality.

“When I left, I thought that I was going to be completely free of sexual shame and fear and anxiety,” she says. Instead, she says, “I had so internalized the sexual shaming, that I no longer needed external shamers. ...I was more than capable of shaming myself.”

Linda Kay Klein, *Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free*

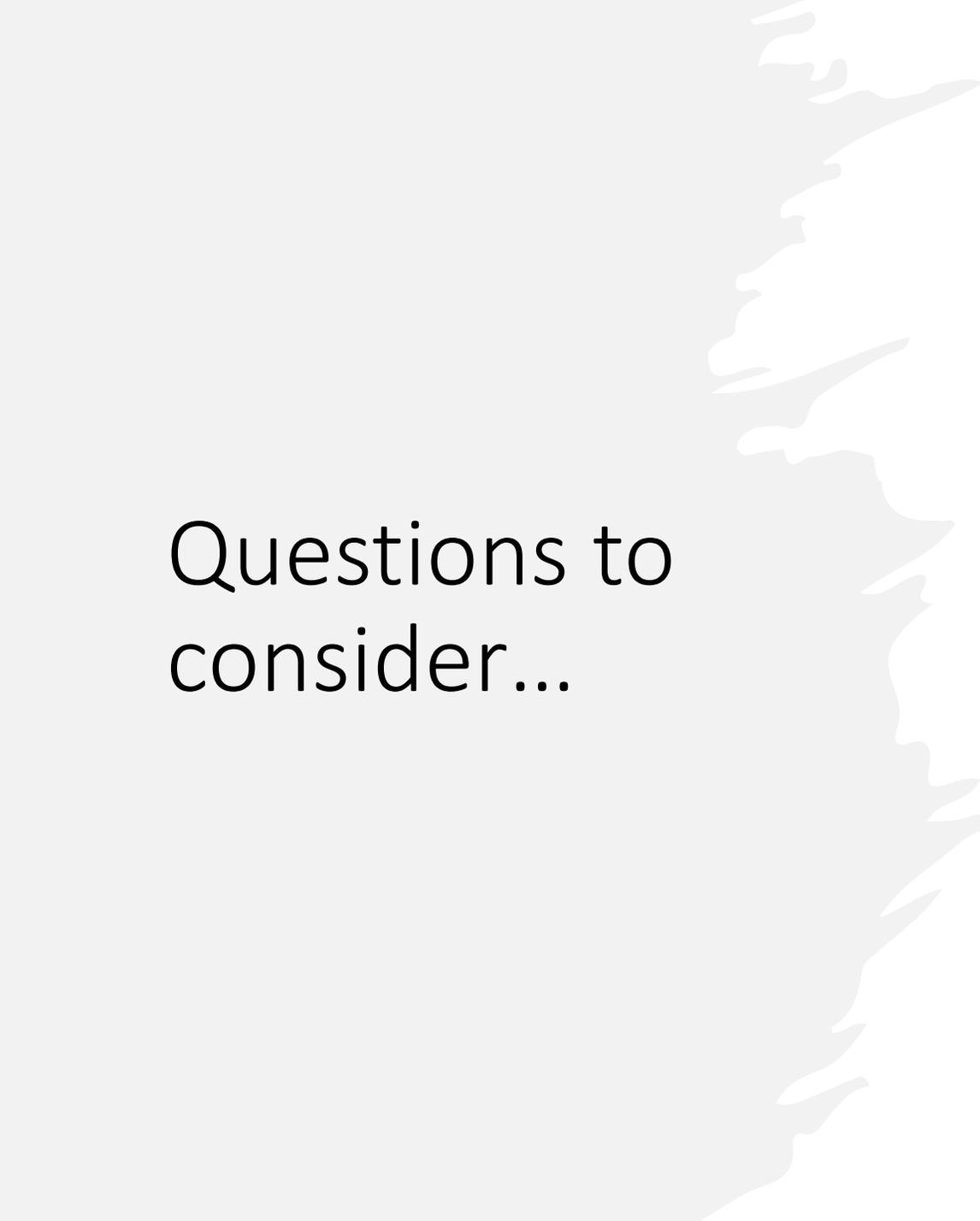
<https://www.npr.org/2018/09/18/648737143/memoirist-evangelical-purity-movement-sees-womens-bodies-as-a-threat>

Growing up, she'd been told by pastors and church teachers that she was a "stumbling block" of temptation for boys and men. This was largely presented as her problem, not theirs: It was made clear that she would be cast as a Jezebel — with her character corrupted — if she had sex before marriage. The message traumatized Klein and many of her peers, sparking fear, anxiety and, in the extreme case of one woman interviewed for the book, the symptoms of anaphylactic shock when she first had sex. (The woman started wheezing and breaking out in welts and wound up in the ER.) ...The cycle came to an end in her mid 20s after she decided to discuss the damage that the purity ethic had done with female friends back in the Midwest, who admitted they struggled with similar issues. "I realized . . . the problem wasn't with me," Klein said.

<https://nypost.com/2018/09/15/how-i-broke-free-of-the-evangelical-purity-movement/>

## Teenagers & young adults negatively impacted by purity movement

- Began to view human sexuality as sinful
- Told not to even speak to/interact with the opposite sex without close supervision
- Pressured into making commitments they were not ready for by parents, teachers, and pastors
- Number of marriages dropped dramatically
- Young girls and boys became afraid of sex and sexuality
- No kissing until wedding day (shame, anxiety, and guilt if broke the “rules”)
- Promoted ideas not biblical



# Questions to consider...

What does “purity” mean for children who have been sexually abused? Or experienced sexual harassment, or violence?

What other language or approach could SDA Bible teachers use? How can we help our youth in the ways we talk about love & sexuality based on the bible’s teachings?

# How to talk about love & sexuality in the classroom, a few ideas...

- Use plain language
- Avoid shaming language or ideas
- Explain biblical teachings
- Discuss sex & sexuality in context of relationships defined by love
- Recognize relationship between sexuality & spirituality
- Employ age-appropriate scenarios to help students think through ethical and moral choices
- Affirm love, sex, & sexuality as a gift from God