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SEX AS GOD INTENDED IT

The December air greeted us with a chilly embrace as we made our way out of the house, down the hill in the backyard, and across the field. Having grown up in urban Baltimore where concrete was far more prevalent than trees, I had definitely stepped into a foreign environment.

Lois and I were in the middle of enjoying a Christmas getaway with some close friends who lived in a rural area. But on this Christmas, we got much more than the normal holiday brunch and shared conversations. On this trip, I got a lesson in skeet shooting as well.

Now, anyone who knows me knows that skeet shooting and Tony Evans aren't exactly best friends. In fact, prior to this event, I can't recall ever even picking up a gun. I'm a sports man. As the chaplain for both the NBA

Mavericks and the NFL Cowboys, I get to regularly witness competitive sports that involve hand-to-hand contact—or at least body to body from time to time. As a former football player myself, I like my recreational activities to include sweat, guts, and sheer force.

The idea of holding a gun, pulling a trigger, and watching a clay target possibly break apart into pieces didn't do much for me. But as the polite and grateful guest that I am, I went along for the supposed adventure. Anyhow, who doesn't love a challenge? Certainly I could knock those clay birds out of the sky like the best of them.

Wrong.

The first clay bird flew. I aimed. Shot. Got nothing.

Then the next one flew, and I aimed again. Still nothing.

And again. Nothing.

Again. Nothing.

Now, even though the years may have matured me, my vision is still 20/20. And my hands are still steady. I had seen the object in the air. I had aimed. I had pulled the trigger. Yet the clay birds just kept flying.

After a few too many flew away and my friend no doubt saw the perplexity come over my face, he walked over to me and said, "Tony." Placing his hand on my shoulder, he proceeded to explain both the art and science of skeet shooting. "Tony," he said my name again. I think he wanted me to make sure and listen closely. "The clay object is like a bird. When it's released, it is flying across the sky just like a bird. It's moving. So if you want to shoot it out of the sky, you can't aim at it. If you aim at it,

by the time your pellets get there, it will be long gone. In order to shoot the skeet out of the sky, you have to get in front of it. You have to be ahead of it. Your aim must always go before it."

I took my friend's advice and decided to apply it. He made sense. So I regrouped and called out, "Pull."

Up flew the clay bird.

This time I squeezed the trigger while aiming out in front of it.

BAM!

That bird was destroyed! Obliterated. Toast. Pieces of it rained down from the sky.

Now you may be wondering whether this is a book on skeet shooting or sacred sex. Or what could skeet shooting have to do with sex at all. But if you picked up this book looking for a heart-to-heart on God's view on sexual purity, you've done the right thing. Because that's exactly what it's about.

But before we begin looking into the sacredness of sex, I want you to realize the power and pull of sex itself. No other activity consumes us as humans more than sexuality—for good or for bad. And, sadly, it is mostly for bad. Sex is a strong force—a force as

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we will see that is often driven by physiological and chemical reactions that have the potential to place it in a position of dictating to you what you will do rather than you dictating to it what you will do.

How you handle yourself, or fail to handle yourself sexually will have everything to do with where you aim. You must get out in front of it. If you think that it is something you can decide on in the heat of the moment, that bird will fly. If you think that you can make up your mind where that so-called "invisible line" is that you won't cross when you reach it, that bird will fly. If you choose to dabble here or dabble there in sexually explicit television shows, music, movies, or even porn—that bird is going to fly. A recent study showed that teens who watched a high level of programming with sexual content were twice as likely to get pregnant over the next three years as those who didn't.¹ What we view affects what we do. Guard your eyes and you will guard your actions.

The only way to successfully handle the power and force of this dynamism called sex is to go out before it. You must draw your boundaries ahead of having to use them. You must choose to outwit it and out aim it. You must understand it, take charge over it. And, most importantly, always be in front of it.

YADA AND YOU

One of the most revealing principles I ever discovered about sexuality from the Bible took place when I was

preparing to preach a few years back on an entirely different subject. In the middle of studying for and getting ready to dive into a twelve-week sermon series on the subject of knowing God, I came across a powerful reality about sex.

In fact, so powerful was this truth that it became the backdrop in the series for illustrating the depth of the relationship that God desires to have with each one of us. Because as we all know, sexual intimacy involves far more than merely two bodies experiencing contact and exchanging fluids. If that were all that was required for intimacy to occur, then prostitutes would be the most intimate people in the world.

But in the Hebrew language, we discover something incredibly powerful about sexuality. When we uncover the intent of the original language, we learn that sex is designed to involve plumbing the depths of another being in such a way as to both *know* and *be known*—much more than mere physical contact, and only attainable in an atmosphere of total and deserved trust.

Anytime you study Scripture and you want to discover either the meaning of a term, phrase, doctrine, or principle you come across, it is always best to approach it according to the hermeneutical *Law of First Mention*. This is important for a number of reasons, but primarily because the concept of origination is significant in Scripture.

For example, the Bible itself begins with the phrase of origin, "In the beginning." Then it proceeds in the book of Genesis to lay out and address the origins of not just

the creation of the heavens and the earth but of every foundational theme throughout the remainder of Scripture: sin, worship, covenants, redemption, and even the type, or foreshadowing, of the Savior to come.

The *Law of First Mention* states that the original meaning or definition of what is being studied is to remain constant throughout one's study unless the text itself tells you to change it at a later point.

Again, what does hermeneutics, skeet shooting, and Genesis have to do with sex? Everything. Because in order to get out in front of your own sexuality where you are dictating to it rather than it dictating to you, you need to understand God's viewpoint and intention in creating it.

So in accordance with the Law of First Mention, we see that the very first time Scripture mentions sexual intimacy is in Genesis 4:1, where we read, "Now the man *had relations* with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth."

The Hebrew term used in the very first account of sexual intimacy for "had relations" is the word *yada*.² It is the same word used a few verses earlier when describing that Adam and Eve's eyes had been opened and they "knew" that they were naked. It is also the same word used when we read, "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, *knowing* good and evil'" (Genesis 3:22).

The word *yada* is not a word referring to body parts or physical activity. In all definitions of the word *yada*, which occurs over one thousand times in the Old Testament, it means:

- to know, learn to know
- to be made known, be revealed
- to make oneself known
- to cause to know
- to reveal oneself
- to know by experience

Each time *yada* is used in connection with relational interaction, it indicates plumbing the depths of the reality of another person—or even plumbing the depths of the reality of God Himself. In fact, it has the capacity to be so intimate a term when applied to relational involvement that God uses it to refer to His own relationship with us when referencing the absolute closest of interactions:

The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them *know* (*yada*) His covenant. (Psalm 25:14)

"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may *know* (*yada*) and believe Me." (Isaiah 43:10)

I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may *know* (*yada*) that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. (Isaiah 45:3)

In each of these descriptions, God speaks of His relationship in a close and intimate manner. We read about "treasures of darkness," being "chosen," and God's self-obligatory relationship He establishes called "His covenant." On top of that, twice we read the specific word "secret"—once in reference to God's secrets, "the secret of the Lord," and also in relation to what God will give—"hidden wealth of secret places."

One thing that is always true about secrets is that you have to be pretty close in order to share them. Of course you have to be close intimately by way of trust, but oftentimes that also includes being close in proximity.

When you were younger and you wanted to tell someone a secret, what would you normally do? If you were like me, you would get next to the other person close enough so that you could lean over and with your hand cupped around your mouth, you would whisper in his or her ear.

That is the typical way of sharing a secret.

And that is what God says He will do with those who know (*yada*) Him. He will be so close that you can hear Him whispering in your ear, telling you the secrets that are reserved for those who have a special relationship of intimacy with Him.

Yet what is essential to realize is that when God chose to *yada* us, He chose to do so with a people who are perishing (John 3:16), have gone astray (Luke 19:10), and are condemned (John 3:18). God gave the perfection of His *yada* to those who knew only imperfection (Romans

3:23). He revealed the purity of Himself to those who are desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). And He was able to do all of this while maintaining His holiness, because Jesus hung on a cross as a sacrifice for the sins of us all. Jesus not only died, but He died to Himself as we read, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Likewise, the very foundation of true *yada* of one another in the security of the marriage union is rooted in a sacrificial dying to yourself in such a way that means laying your will, pride, and needs on the altar while considering the other as more important than yourself. It is in this sacrifice where both partners die to themselves that what is new can grow and flourish in the soil of biblical love.

This is because in sacred sex the two partners share much more than some moments of passion. They share their secrets, their fears, their hopes, their failures, and even so much as their "treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places." They reveal themselves in a way unlike with any other. And within that revelation, if it is truly *yada*, they will find the most authentic form of love possible.

In fact, the secret nature of what they share becomes its own treasure.

Because how do you make a secret no longer a secret?
You tell it to others.

It is the same thing with the sacredness of sex. Sex is no longer able to be a sacred shared experience—it is no longer *yada*—when it is no longer unique between the

two who share it. If and when sexual relations become something common—something shared by those other than the ones bound by a *yada* relationship, it changes from being what God had originally intended into that which Satan corrupted it into—known in Scripture as *porneuō*³ or *shakab*.⁴

Both of these terms refer to the same physical activity as in *yada*, yet both remove the sacred and replace it with the common—thus removing one of the main purposes and intentions of sexuality, the exclusive unveiling of knowing and being known.

And when this is done, as we see repeatedly through Scripture, it brings with it heartbreak, jealousy, regret, and severe emotional, physical, and even spiritual consequences. For example, we do not read *yada* in reference to the following, but rather *shakab*:

- David and Bathsheba
- Tamar's rape by Amnon
- Lot's daughters' sexual activity with him
- Shechem defiling Dinah
- Reuban and his father's concubine
- Even Jacob and the wife he did not choose, Leah

A person can engage in physical relations with another person and not experience *yada*—not share the intimate and sacred realities of the depths of who they are. That is merely sex, and not sacred sex. Yet this is not what God intended when He originally created the sacred act

of sex. This is not how God chose to introduce the concept of sexuality to us in its origin in the garden.

The primary principle to remember and hold on to in guarding your sexual purity and keeping sex sacred is God's original intention for sex—a shared, unveiled revealing involving knowing and being known.

Keep in mind, the very nature of a veil is predicated on keeping something hidden or secret. If not, it becomes a scarf or a head wrap, not a veil. Likewise, *yada* can quickly deteriorate into *shakab* or *porneuō*—carrying with it the inevitable outcomes associated with sex in the absence of a sacredly shared trust.

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COVENANT BOND

Sacred sex includes more than just the body—it includes the deepest parts of the soul and the spirit as well. It includes the covenant. This is because the deepest purpose for sex is to inaugurate, or initiate, a covenant. In order to fully comprehend the sacredness surrounding

sex, we need to look at it from our Creator's perspective rather than our culture's perspective. It would be easy to think today with the sexual emphasis in our music, movies, and magazines that sex was born in Hollywood rather than birthed in heaven.

But sex was never designed to simply be a mechanism for biological fulfillment. It was not simply designed to address the problem of raging testosterone or elevated hormones. Sex was designed to both inaugurate a covenant and to renew it.

The closest thing in the Bible to sex, as a corollary to the covenant, is baptism and communion. Baptism is the initial public act you take before witnesses to validate your desire to be wedded to Jesus Christ in covenant. And communion is the ongoing action you take that, as often as you do it, renews this commitment to the covenant.

Consummation of a marriage on the wedding night is designed to inaugurate a covenant. And basically, from that point on, as often as you do it, you renew the covenant and commitment that was inaugurated on the wedding night.

In Scripture, covenants were frequently established by blood. For example, God made a covenant with Abraham, the sign of which was circumcision (Genesis 17:10–12). All of the males born in Israel were to come as young boys and have the foreskin of their sexual organ removed to signify that they were part of God's covenant people. In this way, they were to be unlike everybody else.

Why was circumcision chosen as the sign of the Abra-

hamic covenant, which would establish Israel as God's special people and through which Abraham would become the father of many nations? Because this covenant was fulfilled and expanded as Abraham and his male descendants produced children.

Therefore, their sexual organs would bear the mark of the covenant as a special sign that they and the children they fathered were set apart to the Lord. The rite of circumcision involved blood, which was part of the covenant.

So it is in marriage. Look at Deuteronomy 22:13–15:

If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her, and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, "I took this woman, but when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin," then the girl's father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

The evidence was the bloodstained sheet or whatever garment was on the bed on which the couple consummated their marriage on the wedding night. Read the following verses and you'll see that if the parents could prove their daughter's virginity, she was acquitted and the husband was fined.

But if there was no blood, meaning the woman was not a virgin prior to her marriage, she could be put to death (Deuteronomy 22:21), because the covenant of marriage was inaugurated by blood. God created a shield

around a woman's sex organ, which is called a hymen, that was to cover her until her wedding night when it would be broken and blood would then be shed over the male sex organ. This was designed to consummate a covenant as an unbreakable bond between two people and God.

CHEMICAL BOND

While a covenant is a spiritual bond between two people and God, the act of sexual intimacy also creates a physiological bond between two people. Sex doesn't necessarily take place in the bedroom. Rather, advances in scientific research have revealed that sex takes place between the ears—in the chemical connections occurring in the limbic portion of the brain.

On a practical level, this involves the diencephalon (which contains both the thalamus and hypothalamus parts of the brain.) The acts of viewing, hearing, smelling, seeing, cuddling, arousal, and orgasm involve a highly complex mixture of chemicals, each designed to regulate an intended response by our Creator.

Within the boundaries of a marital relationship, these chemicals serve the greater purposes of maintaining commitment, either heightening or lessening territorial responses of a male, fostering an environment for procreation and protection, and encouraging the transition from lovers to parents and back to lovers again, as needed.

Yet outside of the boundaries of a marital relationship, the chemical bonds that are created and then broken

when partners change leave lasting scars, cravings, holes, and even symptoms of withdrawal. While science may have only recently come forward with an explanation for why and how sexual relationships create such strong bonds physiologically—and therefore leave such excruciating pain when not cemented in the context of a secure marriage—God’s Word has told us this same truth all along.

When Paul wrote to the citizens of Corinth at the height of moral and spiritual decay in that society, his word choice accurately reflected what happens when sex occurs. He said,

Or do you not know that the one who *joins* himself to a prostitute is one body with her? (1 Corinthians 6:16)

What is most interesting is Paul’s use of the word “join.” The original Greek language uses the word *kollaō*⁵. *Kollaō* literally means, “to glue together, cement.” Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was as scientifically sound as any of the articles or studies in the most recent medical and psychological journals of our day.

Sexual activity, and its subsequent release of brain-changing chemicals, literally *glues* or *cements* people together. When it comes time for those two people to part ways, a painful physiological reality occurs—primarily among women whose limbic system, which houses these chemical stores and grooves, is generally larger than males.

What is often worse is that unlike in the cases of drug addiction, cigarette smoking, porn, or even alcohol—we rarely validate the extreme physiological suffering that a woman, and even men, suffer as a result of illicit sexual relationships gone awry. And because this pain is not addressed, repentance is not called for, and healing is not encouraged. These same women and men often end up right back in the same place they once were, trying again to fill the emptiness or craving with someone new.

This is because a strong physiological reaction occurs in the brain that is very similar to reactions that occur with drugs, alcohol, and other addictive behaviors. And to stop the behavior without going through the steps of forgiveness, healing, empowerment, and freedom from it, will often only lead that person right back to what he or she had tried to stop. It would be similar to taking away the favorite brand of beer from an alcoholic and then sending him back into a bar with countless other brands to choose from. Would he have stopped drinking his favorite brand of beer? Yes. But would he have the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools necessary to turn down the opportunity to try another brand on another day? Probably not.

That is why it is important for you as a Christian to not only understand the *spiritual* reasons for maintaining a lifestyle that guards the sacredness of sex, but that you also understand the *physiological* reactions and interactions you are dealing with if you have engaged in illicit sex in any form, even if it did not include going as far as intercourse.

Because unless you understand what you are seeking to deal with physiologically in overcoming sexual strongholds or temptations in your life, you will be aiming at the clay bird rather than out in front of it. And, as a result, you will miss your target every time.

Before we move on, I want you to be aware of a few of the powerful chemicals and their effects that are involved in sexual activity:

THE PROBLEMS
ARISE WHEN A
CHEMICAL
CONNECTION IS
MADE OUTSIDE
OF A SPIRITUAL
COMMITMENT.

Oxytocin. Oxytocin has gained the reputation of being the “cuddling hormone” because it cements a connection between the two people involved. Studies have shown that oxytocin contributes to attachment and increases trust, and can even be released, once the attachment has formed, by something as simple as looking at a photo of the other person, hearing his or her voice, or intentionally thinking of them.⁶ While the cementing of this connection promotes a healthy and stronger marriage, it also creates a glue—or tie—among two people who are not married if they engage in sexual activity—even sexual activity that does not lead to orgasm. This creates emotional and psychological tears when the source of the oxytocin is no

longer there or another source has been called on to substitute. This can frequently contribute to depression, an inability to function sexually, and anxiety.

Dopamine. Dopamine is often referred to as the "rewards neurotransmitter." Dopamine is frequently associated with addictive behavior such as smoking, chemical addictions, or even risk-taking recreational activity such as high-impact sports or skydiving. It has a chemical structure similar to morphine. Within the process of sexual activity, dopamine supplies feelings of enjoyment, connection, euphoria, and calm that produce activity in the "reward system" of our brains. Because all forms of sexual activity have the potential to increase levels of dopamine, they can become addictive, whether through the physical act of sex, pornography, fondling, or masturbation. Each of these serve to connect the brain's reward system to the activity or person that produced the reward.

Adrenaline. Adrenaline increases the circulatory system while dilating the arteries to increase blood flow. Increased adrenaline can come through sexual activity or even through recreational activities such as bungee jumping. People in search of an "adrenaline rush" often need more in the activity later on to provide the same rush the next time. When coupled with contentment in a monogamous marital relationship, adrenaline is an ongoing benefit to an already enjoyable experience,

keeping the intimacy alive over a lifetime. However, when the desire for adrenaline is not maintained in a stable environment, it can produce a lack of contentment in the existing relationship, resentment over dissatisfaction, and an addiction to seeking more of it through other, possibly illegitimate means.

A number of additional chemicals such as serotonin, testosterone, and estrogen were created by God in connection with the act of sexuality, parenting, and maintaining long-term relationships. The problems arise when a chemical connection is made outside of a spiritual commitment. The chemicals in and of themselves are not bad—in fact, they are good and bring great pleasure to a marital relationship based on the principles of sacred sex.

But when the chemicals are connected to the fluctuating ups and downs of broken relationships, they can produce great pain and deep psychological wounds. It would be similar to getting addicted to heroine and then stopping it cold turkey. The desire, attachment, and craving would remain due to the chemical impression made on the brain. If the decision to stop heroine stayed in place, in order to satiate the craving and numb the pain, another addictive chemical producer would be sought. And a cycle of addictive behaviors, or symptoms related to pulling away from addictive behaviors (such as depression, confusion, irritability) would occur.

In essence, heroine will have made a lasting impression, or groove, in the brain that doesn't go away simply

because the substance is no longer around.

A similar thing happens with the chemical processes involved in sex. Pile up enough pain from the cementing and tearing apart from different partners, and you end up with countless people either turning to sex again to try to alleviate the pain or fill the emptiness, or to other forms of coping such as spending, alcohol, overworking, drugs, and other addictive behaviors.

Keep in mind that oxytocin has been known to be produced through something as simple as engaged eye contact, subtle touching, and hugs. None of these are bad when managed properly. Oxytocin is a positive chemical God gave us to bring happiness and solidify connection in our lives and relationships. It is only when high levels of oxytocin are created through an illegitimate attachment with someone who has not entered into a covenantal relationship of marriage with you that it becomes damaging in the long run. Especially when that relationship either ends or dissipates over time.

Once that chemical is present and does its work on the brain—particularly a woman's brain since women tend to have a larger deep limbic system than men—it is difficult to forget it, dismiss it, or satisfy it legitimately outside of marriage.

God's teaching on the sacredness of sex and keeping the sexual relationship pure between two married people joined by covenantal commitment is nothing to take lightly. Knowing how deeply addictive, gluing, and cementing the sexual relationship is, God gives us His warn-

ing clearly: "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). He or she also sins against their own brain, along with their body, in light of all the potential damage that can be done physically and spiritually.

When sex is kept sacred—when it is a *yada* relationship between two covenanted parties in marriage—it opens up the pathway toward true intimacy and knowing.

But when sex is casually misused, it creates cemented bonds that when broken leave the lingering symptoms of insecurity, pain, abandonment, disrespect for self and others, and increased neediness for another attachment. This causes suffering in the present and also reduces the ability to establish proper boundaries in future relationships.

Paul's warning to the Corinthians to not join (*kollaō*) themselves with another in an immoral relationship is a warning to everyone today as well. In order to protect the sacred act of sex, you must aim for the standard God has given us in His Word. You must aim for *yada*.