

16. "Sex & Christianity" Rev Bev ID 11:03 AD 02:07

Okay. Hello everybody. And thank you so much for joining me for today's very important discussion, which I think is going to not, I think I know is going to touch so many people.

Um, I am joined today by Rev Bev as she typically goes. And let me tell you a little bit about our guest. So Dr. Beverly Dale, which is her actual name is an ordained clergy in the Christian church, Disciples of Christ.

I'm just going to start that little bit over again and edit that out. If that's okay. Okay.

So Dr. Rev Bev. I'm sorry. I have it on here twice.

Okay. Take it from the top. Dr. Beverly Dale is an ordained clergy in the Christian church, Disciples of Christ.

The focus of her academic and professional life has been to explore the intersection of spirituality and sexuality. She is the chair and founder of the nonprofit incarnation Institute for sex and faith, where she trains professional leadership in an inclusive science friendly and sex positive Christianity besides training sexual health and theologically trained professionals. She has focused on providing resources for those trapped in the purity culture.

She recently coauthored advancing sexual health for the Christian client with sexologist, Rachel Keller, that combines the insights of science with a sex positive Christian theology. She also has a four-part webinar series titled reading the Bible with sex positive eyes. And finally, she has a discussion guide for her YouTube series titled Sex is Good.

So you have so much to share today and you have done so much and contributed so much to the field. So thank you so much for joining me. You're very welcome.

So as I mentioned in your bio, you are part of the Christian church, but I really want everybody listening to know that I think no matter what religion you were brought up in or what your belief system is that I think a lot of what we're going to talk about will apply. Would you agree with that? Absolutely. It's a cultural thing.

Yeah. Yeah. It's in the air that we breathe, the water that we drink.

So you can say I have no faith, or maybe you were not raised in any kind of a religious tradition and you are still impacted by the guilt and fear and shame, that's in the culture. I totally believe that I live in practice in Houston, which is I think technically the most diverse city in the United States. And so I work with people from all different cultures, all different religious and spiritual backgrounds.

And I would say that despite little nuances in what they were taught, the issues that I see that stem from some of the shame that they still carry because of their religious upbringing is the same. Yeah. So I want to hear your backstory a little bit.

How did you get into the area of sexuality as it relates to the Christian faith? Well, it comes out of my own story. I didn't get a lot of the purity culture and sex negativity as it's being expressed now, because I'm of another generation. But in my era, it was sexual ignorance and sexual silence.

And so in that context, there's sexual abuse and there's date rape and there's just unplanned pregnancy that's caused forced marriage. I mean, it was just my sexual history is awful and painful and wound. And I was a lot of, I carried a lot of wounds.

So and my church was not helpful with that. I can imagine. Being a sexual woman was just not not expected of Christian women. So for me to be whole, I had to get some good therapy and deal with what had happened to me that was wounding.

And then I had to go back to the church and say, well, why didn't I hear any good news from you? I wasn't really sure that I could find any good news, frankly, because the church had been so silent. Now, so much of the church is not silent, but aggressively, intentionally patriarchal and and shame filled. And that's how we control people's sexual lives, instill guilt and shame.

And so my work is much more important now. So what happened was I got I got myself to a point of wellness and thought, you know what, there's a whole bunch of people on this journey behind me who are dealing with the same things or worse things. And so let me turn around and see what I can do to help.

And so what I'm doing is I'm leaving breadcrumbs for the next generation to to think critically about Christianity and what is culture and what's Christianity? That's a key question. My background is sociology as well as theology. So I put those two things together.

You bring such an. Yeah, I mean, you bring such an interesting perspective to this. I'm curious, despite the negative experience you had in your own church, what made you eventually join the church? And I know that you are obviously on a mission, on a crusade to bring sex positivity into it.

But how how has that been for you? What's the journey been like? What has have people accepted you? What's what is it like for you today in the role that you have? Well, mostly women, particularly 20s and 30s and 40 year olds are really wanting this message. So that's my that tends to be my audience. You fit into that and perhaps your audience.

But I knew when I was 11 years old, I want to be a minister. And I also knew that girls weren't allowed to do that. So I pretty much kept it a secret, trying to figure out, well, I

think God told me to be a minister, but I don't know how to do it.

And it wasn't until I was 30 that the women's movement said it's OK to be a woman and it's OK to be a sexual woman. And then I thought, well, OK, well, I'm going to go back to that. What I thought was the voice of God, go to seminary to decide whether or not I could stay in the church because I knew I was called to the ministry.

And I discovered all kinds of feminist research out there and theologians who were saying, no, what you got was patriarchal BS. And that's not in the stories of Jesus. So I'm very I come from a biblically oriented church denomination.

And so I'm I'm thinking that all of this stuff that we're getting that's negative about pleasure and women and the body is it's that culture. It's not about Jesus. And I can give you some Bible verses and talk about that if you want to.

Yeah, I think I do. And I'm sure people would love to hear it because I I know that the narrative these days is a really far departure from what's written in the Bible. And maybe before we get into that, I think it could be kind of fun and interesting for you to cite a couple of things maybe that actually are written in the Bible that we would never even consider taking seriously today because so much of this is about cherry picking.

Right. Oh, my goodness. Well, the one that I think people just simply overlook is that if you if your brother happens to die, then you have to have sex with his widow and make babies.

That's your religious responsibility. It's a lover, right? Law. And it's in the same books that condemn homosexuality, supposedly, although the Bible doesn't say anything about orientation, but anyway, so not wearing blended fabrics is one of the Levitical codes.

And of course, people wear polyester, cotton, you know, not a problem at all. So we're very much cherry picking certain ones. And then the ones that we do cherry pick, if you look at the scholarship underneath it, you say, well, that's not what they were talking about.

So the word abomination, for example, doesn't mean what we think it means. It simply means this is not something that good Israelites do. It's not naturally to us.

This is that's them over there. It's not, you know, you're going to hell and burning to a crisp kind of thing. Right.

Which is where I think a lot of people go with. Yeah. Yeah.

So to begin by talking a little bit about what actually is written in the Bible about sex and pleasure versus what is often taught today, especially through the very damaging purity movement that I believe began back in the 80s. Yeah. Well, I think we have to

understand that the Bible is very procreation oriented.

One ethicist called procreationist. And it's also not particularly interested in women. They're just kind of an accessory to make babies, boy babies.

So we have that baby maker thing going and, and then that, and then there's some traumatic things that happen sexually. Some of those stories with Tamar, for example, and, and rapes and so forth. And the biblical writers just kind of gloss over it.

Like it's not a big deal. Well, it wasn't a big deal because the women were not particularly valued then. So, and neither in the Greco Roman world, which is really where some of that purity stuff and the mind-body split will come out later.

But that's where I start. The Bible doesn't, the Bible has a lot to say about pleasure and most of it's negative. And that's because if you look at it, the context of it, it's not talking about pleasure.

It's not talking about sensual pleasure or sexual pleasure. It's talking about irresponsible hedonism. It's talking about forgetting you are a follower of your God and doing things for your own ego purposes or greed or whatever.

So when the Bible talks about pleasure, it's mostly, it's, it's poorly translated. It should be irresponsible hedonism. Yeah.

Cause it sounds like people take it as like, it's a very binary model. Either you abstain for pleasure or any pleasure is hedonistic. And that really is a poor interpretation is what you're saying.

Yeah. Yeah. So that's kind of where we start until we get to the Christian scriptures.

And then when you get to the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we see, we read of a Jewish man who was a rule breaker. And he broke rules when it prevented relationships, when it prevented healing and when they impeded physical needs. If you're hungry, you can violate that religious rule and go out there and get some grain in the field.

If you're, if you're hungry, you don't have to go through the ritual purification of the hand you can just eat because your body wants it. So so the relationship and the healing stuff, that that's good ethics. It seems to me that he was not an anarchist.

He was not out to build a new religion. He was a good Jew. He went to the synagogue, did the things that he was supposed to do, except when the religious rules impacted his relationships and his ability to connect with other people, heal people.

So, so then what we have in the new Testament is we have a Jewish man who is critiquing his own religion and doing it in a way that says, you know, you've forgotten the

purpose of all these rules, which is to love, love God, love yourself and your neighbor, you know, with your mind, body, spirit, love, love, love. That's what it's all about. Right? Right.

So what we have today in purity culture is people who are focused on vaginas and penises to a lesser extent and hymens and you know, who's touching who and which gender and how many times and all that stuff. And excuse me, Jesus critique is what's that got to do with love. Right? So I say that Jesus came along and the early followers got the message and his early church got the message because there were women leadership, they were violating gender roles, you just look at the Corinthians, you know, they were really having all kinds of sexual issues they had to deal with.

So Jesus was a blip on the screen. There was a time period there where things were in turmoil and people were being liberated because of Jesus's teachings that it's all about love. If there's some deconstructing, if you will, of the religious rituals of the day, a religious teachings of the day through that lens of what is loving.

And that's a good ethical lens. And it makes people nervous because what that means is what's loving for you to do may not be loving for me to do. And so it's a not a one size fits all sexual ethic.

Um, so yeah, if you follow the rules, you got kind of a dichotomy here's right, here's wrong. We know exactly which lane we're in. Um, it makes things, um, simple and it also hurts a lot of people and creates a lot of problems.

So, so how did the purity culture come about? Because this is a relatively new thing. Well, it was started, I guess, like we said, in the 80s. Um, but how did that come about? What was happening at the time? And for those of the people who are listening, who might not know what that is, if maybe you could explain it, because I definitely have a lot of clients who are victims of the purity culture, who I then have to treat, but what's your understanding? Well, we're talking about 40 years of this brainwashing that's happening.

And for context, um, during the 60s, there was a lot, 50s and 60s, there's a lot of ferment where young people particularly, uh, were saying, you know, we're tired of, of the father knows best, you know, the 2.5 kids in the suburbs, kind of a lifestyle that we want to be sexually liberated. We want, we don't want to fight wars that we didn't start. We don't want part of that.

Um, so there was this ferment happening and sexual liberation was a part of that in the 60s and 70s. And then, um, what happened was a backlash with the Reagan years, the backlash comes in and that's documented in a book by Susan Flutie called "Backlash". Um, and so people began to clamp down on that freedom, um, that people were experiencing and women were being liberated.

Well, we can't have that. So there was this. Yeah.

So long comes the late 80s, excuse me, 80s. And, uh, what we have is, uh, Reagan in the white house and the, um, Southern Baptist, I won't name names, um, get on board with abstinence only sex education and they make deals with, get the government in on that. And so millions and millions start getting poured into our, uh, school systems telling kids, just say, no, that's the Nancy Reagan thing about drugs and just say, no, not realizing that that doesn't solve anything.

It just creates more problems. Um, and so, um, then the Southern Baptist get, and to get a whole bunch of other conservative folks who get on board with protecting the little girls, particularly, um, they didn't hand out chastity belts, but there were chastity rings and making pledges. And you would go to little parties at the church with your daddy as your date and make pledges that you would not ever open your legs to any exploration until you get married less emphasis on the boys, of course, but some, some.

Um, and so what that does when the hormones begin to rage is that, uh, it, my goodness, now I feel really conflicted because these feelings feel good. And now I'm told they're bad and I really want to do this and allow this kind of touch, but I really can't because then God will be whatever you insert your script. So, um, so sex, the abstinence, I call it the abstinence only or the non-sex education that we've had now for about 30, 40 years, um, did a real number on people.

Um, so that sex got associated with, uh, spit out, uh, chewing gum, you know, here's some gum now here. Now you have chewing you chew it. Well, I went to, well, that's what you do when you have sex or spit on this Oreo cookie and then pass it around and say, okay, who wants to eat the Oreo cookie? Well, that's because you've had sex.

That's what it's like. It's just horrible. So that gets ingrained in people's heads.

Um, so that when something good happens to your body or you begin to have wonderfully natural, biologically driven needs, um, you have this triggering thing happening. And so what happens when you, if you do hold out and most people don't hold out, they just live with guilt. Um, you hold out to the wedding night.

Uh, then you have two sexually ignorant people who are already deeply sexually conflicted, um, deeply guilt-ridden and shame, shamed. And, and now they're supposed to have sexual bliss. And the reality is it doesn't happen like that.

Nope. And they come to people like you to say, what happened? What happened? Right. Why can't I relax? Why am I having anxiety? It's like, I mean, it's like emotional whiplash.

It's like the one thing you're told your whole life don't do it's wrong. It's bad. It's dirty.

Okay. Now you're married. Have fun.

Right. Right. And it's like, wait, what? Okay.

But what's interesting here is that in the Hebrew scriptures that the Christians also read, there's a book that celebrates the erotic of two unmarried people. Song of Solomon. Song of Solomon.

Yeah. If anyone hasn't read it, pick it up. It's incredible.

I'm used several different, uh, versions too, because the translation is something a little bit different. Um, but there like verse five, I think the first chapter, there's a verse that's repeated throughout and it's your, your love is sweeter than wine. And that gets in a lot of weddings.

So forth. Well, that's the, that's a mistranslation. That's, um, uh, it's not correct.

It, the word it's used there means love making your love making is sweeter than wine. And so, you know, he wants to climb up her breasts and hold them like grapes and it's just very erotic. It's about lust.

It's about masturbation. It's about all the good and smells and sounds. And yeah, yeah.

They describe all of that for one another. And it, some of the versions will say bride and bride groom, but that is something that they put in there. All right.

Maybe that was a poem used at wedding ceremonies. We don't know, but we know they weren't married because she is sneaking out and her fan, her brothers are already, uh, angry with her for seeing this guy. So she's violating the rules.

She's being a typical teenager, probably sneaking out of the house. So, so what do you teach people about sex before marriage as a clergy member? Um, well, I want to look at the relationship. I mean, you know, okay.

Tell me about your relationship. What's happening? Um, how honest are you being? Um, and, and mostly how honest are you being about your own needs and your own body and how well do you know your own body? And do you know what your own boundaries are and what you really want? And if you don't learn your body before you get in somebody else, you know, way. Um, so that's the first thing.

Um, and secondly is, is the relationship ready for it? And what does it mean to you? And have you talked about what it means for your part? So it's really, it's a couple of conversation, um, that we should be teaching teenagers how to have, because when teenagers learn how to talk about sex and aren't ashamed of their body, and then they're less likely to, um, to make ill-informed decisions and they're far more likely to, um, to be prepared when they do decide to do that. So, um, it's really a relationship thing. It's not a body part thing.

Yeah. So you're not propagating the belief that you personally, anyway, that people should wait until they're married to have sex. Otherwise they've committed a sin.

Why would they wait? I don't, I don't see a good reason for that. You wait. It, when the time is right, you know, it's right.

Um, you talk about it, you already know, and you plan for it, you do it. I mean, it, and, and it's an exploring learning activity because every partner is going to be different. So you have to learn what your partner likes and doesn't like, and what, you know, what the chemistry is between you.

Um, since, since most people go into this exclusive monogamy, uh, expectation, then it doesn't make any sense at all to take that, which is most vulnerable to you, um, your body and to withhold it until you have made a lifelong promise. That is, that's idiocy. I'm sorry, but in my book, it's an idiocy.

No, no. You've got to make sure that you're ready for intimacy and to make sure the relationship is ready for intimacy. Um, and then you take the step and then you talk about what worked and didn't work and so forth.

And then you talk about where's this relationship going and how long do we want to keep this up? And as we shipped it. Right. So I first saw you when I attended a, the ASEC virtual conference that we had over the summer, and you talked a lot about the four-part discernment model, which I had never seen quite laid out before.

And I found so useful in helping people guide their decision making when it comes to interpreting the Bible or whatever scripture it is that they're reading and choices that they're making about how they want to live their lives. And I imagine that comes into play when we're talking about like sex for merit before marriage, for example, because at the time the Bible was written, people were living on average, what 40 years, probably less. And you know, we're probably coupling up and having babies as teenagers, which doesn't happen so much anymore.

So can you explain that to people, what the four-part discernment model is and how we can use it to guide decision-making? Right. So the purity culture is based on a lot of lies. And I don't know, I've got, I haven't listed them all, but, but one of the lies is that we're just going to obey what the Bible says, right? Well, we've already kind of talked about that.

The Bible is not so clear on non-marital sex or on pleasure. So, so that's a lot. So what the purity culture is, is about obedience.

Just obey whatever the preacher says, whatever the Pope says, whatever priest says, okay. Or whatever you hear in your abstinence non-sex education classes. So what we want to do is teach people that that's not what living a Christian life is about, obeying.

It's about, instead, discerning the will of God. So discerning what is right for you, discernment process then. So prayer is a discernment process.

So I'm really struggling with X and Y. So I'm going to pray about it. And in my prayers, I'm going to prayerfully read some devotionals. I'm prayerfully going to read the Bible and I'm prayerfully going to ask my preacher or whatever.

So I'm going to discern what God is telling me my answer should be. That's a discernment. So what I'm suggesting is we simply take the discernment process to the sexuality issues.

And the Bible is one place we might look for discernment about what would be the most loving thing in this situation, for example. The second thing would be, what does the church say about this? What does the tradition say? Well, if you look at the church down through history, you will find that the church has been all over the place about sexuality. For example, early on, the church said, oh, please don't have sex.

And one guy says, well, if you have sex, make sure it's an ugly woman, because then you won't enjoy it so much. Another one said, have sex, but just don't enjoy it. Just make babies.

That's the only reason to have it. The only reason to have women, in fact. So there's that.

And there's also the church at one point in history, in the, I think it's the 16th century, might be the 15th. They have rituals for gay people. They were called, they were same, they were attracted to same gender people, and they had blessings in the church on that.

Now, you wouldn't know that now, right? That's new to me. All right. John Boswell is the name of the guy who wrote the book.

So look him up. It's a classic. So the church is all over the place historically about sexuality.

Plus, your churches in your own town are going to have different views about sex. So if you go to a Unitarian church, they're going to be teaching kids about sexuality. And they're cool with whatever, any kind of sexuality of any kind, just about, as long as it's ethical.

And you will find the Metropolitan Community Church, they have ordained gay people, United Church of Christ has gay people. Women are allowed to teach and preach and all kinds of pulpits. So they give different messages about gender and sexuality and orientation in various different ways.

So what does the church say through history and through locally? All right. That's the second discernment piece. The third one is, what does science say? Or historically, we would say, what does reason say? So what is your intellect telling you? What is science telling us about sexual diversity? Well, if you can think about some kind of a sexual act, somebody's already done it, because we're hugely diverse when it comes to sexual activities.

And we're also diverse in terms of genders and in terms of orientations and through time. So science is not going to help us find a strict one size fits all, because science can help us see that diversity is the norm. Throughout history and culture.

So that's our third discernment. And then our fourth discernment is, what does God say to you personally? What is, and the church calls out the spirit, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What does your conscience say to you? You will know in this inner part of yourself, what is right for you, if you really get your ego out of the way, and be open to listening. So what happens is we put all four of these things in dialogue with each other.

And you're going to get different answers, right? Because they're all going to conflict. And that's that. Welcome to the spiritual life.

It is an ongoing process to uncover the ways in which I am not meeting the mark. I'm not living as righteously as I could. But how do I open myself up to discern what God's will is for me in my life, in my relationships, and how I live out my sexual life? Which really, I think, is the human condition and sounded like is what Jesus was doing.

Right? Yeah. Yeah. We don't get condemnation from Jesus.

We get anger at hypocrisy from Jesus. But no, we have acceptance of sexual diversity. He had an opportunity to speak about eunuchs, who would be the sexually diverse folks in his crowd, and he didn't do it.

He had the opportunity to abide by the gender rules of the day, violated them. Never got too upset about the gender role issue. So and said, there's not going to be any marriage in heaven.

Somebody said there's going to be holy promiscuity in heaven. So that's an interesting thing to look forward to. Yeah.

Ketanism in heaven. There you go. There you go.

Title of your next book. You can thank me later. There you go.

My next book, I have a title. It's called Sin Boldly. Oh, I like that.

Special liberation. So I'm still working on it. So don't Google it or anything, but Sin Boldly comes from the theologian, Martin Luther, who, when he realized the grace of God

covers everything, then what we should do is live confident lives, live in freedom and sin boldly because God's got our back as the kids say.

So at the end of the day, why do you think that so many faiths have such a problem with pleasure? It's a way of controlling people. All right. So monotheistic religions have a male God judge with the power to punish eternally.

And that keeps people in line. And that will make people be productive and work 80 hours a week because they're being productive. That's Protestant work ethic that it's a way of controlling women.

We can't have women know that they have the potential to be multi orgasmic. We can't let the men know that the women don't need a penis at all to have orgasm. So it's a way of keeping people into a capitalistic container.

So we all buy our refrigerators and lawnmowers and we can't live in community, can't share spouses. So it's a way of keeping this system going. And so people benefit people.

Corporations benefit on our low self-esteem. And really, I mean, if we're exercising the discernment model here and we look at what science says about the importance of pleasure and sexual pleasure, I think we can see that that's another lie because what the literature says is that when people feel sexually satisfied, they tend to produce more at work and have healthier, more meaningful relationships and tend to be happier overall. So I think it's super important.

So how are you going to make people work 60 hours a week if they're blissed out on pleasure? They won't do it. How will they pick up guns and go march off to Afghanistan? They won't do it. So it serves a purpose to keep people controlled, a much wider purpose.

And so what we have to understand, your clients and the folks I work with, is that pleasure is good. The body was designed for pleasure. Each gender, if you will, or everybody has two places on it that are for, they serve no purpose except pleasure.

No purpose. And if that's not a sign that the creator has pleasure in mind, I think we need to look at that. And it really does, we become more creative when we are pleasure satisfied.

And we're better people. We're much better people. If we look at what's happening in our culture today, with all of the anger and all of the rage that's happening and is being reported on our headlines, you can't tell me those people are sexually satisfied.

Nope. Those people are not blissed out because they've had lots of pleasure and lots of sexual freedom to explore what they really want to do. That's not the case.

So it's not coincidental that the Oath Keepers and the, oh, what's the other one? The Purity, and there's this too, the incels, the incels of Oath Keepers who are both hate groups and very violently oriented men, also have rules, no masturbation. And coincidentally, or not so coincidentally, many of them live with their mothers. So there's something going on with the sexuality of members of this group that turns them into violence, because at least they're getting some kind of surge of adrenaline, right? They're not getting it from pleasure.

So I think that's the clear end of the continuum. I don't think we have to worry about any of your clients going and joined up to those kinds of things. But the idea that pleasure is good is unfortunately a revolutionary idea in the church, because the church wants to say, well, it's good, but it's only within, only if you're binary, only if you're in a legal marriage of enduring duration, that kind of thing.

So, right. And I think pleasure is the antidote to violence. And at the end of the day, I think people, I hate the word control, but go along with things better if they experience pleasure and they feel good.

Right. So another one of the lies. Now you sent me a list of things that we could talk about today.

And before we started recording, there was one item on there that I was like, I just want to make sure that's not a typo. And so I'm going to read it. And then you said no, and you explained what it was.

So let's talk about that bullet point, which is you said you could talk about what white women must learn about their sexual bodies and how this can save the world. I'll hand it over to you. Oh, I so believe in this.

First of all, I have a lot of faith in women saving the world. And we can talk about what happened before there was monotheism and the male gods too, because women did rule the world at one point. But that's another story.

We can talk about that another time. But okay, so white women are privileged because of our white skin. That means doors open for us, literally, figuratively, doors open, because we're white women.

We have a certain status, right? That's kind of goes without saying now I can be a poor white woman that's understood. Okay, yeah, they are. We all have different statuses.

But something about being white opens doors for us. And we know that at some level. Because given a choice, most of us would probably not want to be a woman of color.

So that so that means we know we're privileged in this. But we have made a deal with the devil. And the deal specifically with patriarchy, and it's this.

If you just follow the script of being a good Christian white woman, then we won't treat you like we treat the slave women. We won't treat you like we treat the women of color. We'll give you a little higher salary than the Hispanic woman down the street.

Not as high as the man, of course. So the patriarchy says there are benefits to you to kowtow to the patriarchy. And we do.

And look how many white women voted against their own best interest in so many elections, but particularly the one in 2016. Now, white women have to learn a couple of things. Number one, the patriarchy has your back only as long as you serve the status quo.

Because if you get out of that lane, you will be labeled a slut, or a nasty woman. Right? Or bitch or whatever. All right.

And you'll be kept get back in place because you're not acting like a nice white Christian woman. So we have to learn the patriarch is full lies to us too. But we bought into it.

We made a deal. And we get some payoff. All right, we got the servants, we got the slaves in the South, for example.

All right. Now, here's the other piece. Our salvation is going to happen when we realize some women get it.

Some women know it's all a lie. And they've been pushing against it all along. And that's women of color.

The patriarchy has never made any kinds of alluring promises to women of color. They know it's a bill of goods. So what white women have to do is understand number one, we've been blind.

And we sold our soul. Right? And we have help. There's a sisterhood out there who's smarter than we are, because they can see the underbelly of the beast.

They know the deal is bullshit. They know the deal. They know the deal.

And so what that means is we have to join them. And separate sexual liberation is the goal, or liberation of all people. I mean, there's a whole justice piece to this.

It's much bigger than sex, but it includes sexual justice, body justice is the language that I use. So we can't lead the movement because we're too blind. We still have that privilege piece thing happening with the white skin, but we can certainly source the women of color and we can say, okay, tell us what to do.

Tell us how to use our privilege. And we want to liberate all of us, particularly the children, particularly children. It makes me so sad to hear.

I have a three-year-old daughter. And with all this legislation happening in Texas, there are conversations I have with my husband, like, do we want to raise her here? How can women convince men to join us? You have to withhold the sex. That's the Lissa Strada story.

You have to say, come on, come on. I know there are some good guys out there. I met them.

I was working at the University of Pennsylvania. There were college guys who expected to be house husbands and support their wives careers. They were raised by good feminist women.

So they're out there. They get it. They understand that a lot of the men in their circles or in the neighborhood are on the wrong side, have the wrong idea.

And so what they do, if the men in my life know or any clue, they hang out with women. The answer is no. What you have to do is start talking back to those guys who are doing the catcalls.

Talk back to those guys who are talking about snatching pussies. You've got to speak up for us. Just like the white women have got to start speaking up for the women of color.

When we start doing that, we start undermining the patriarchy. And I don't like to use the word patriarchy, although I've done it consistently, but it's really a domination paradigm. Some bodies are more important than other bodies.

And that mindset that we have to undermine. No, none of us are free as long as some people are in jail. We have to unchain people.

And that means we have to get rid of that domination paradigm and move into this. We're in this together. We save this planet together or we all go under.

Yeah. Can we talk about the fact that the human race would cease to exist if it wasn't for us women and how everyone should really be worshipping us? Yeah. Yeah.

How can we convince men that there is benefit to them in joining this movement? Well, I think it's found in sexual freedom, frankly. It's sexual freedom. So if women were in charge, and this is true in matriarchal societies, I don't go into that.

I'm not anthropologist, but I do know that when women are in charge, the sexual norms get softer and you don't have the strict restrictions happening that you have in a patriarchy. Because the patriarchy, you have to control those babies and you have to control those women to make the babies to do the inheritance, to pass on the wealth, et cetera. All right.

But when women are in charge, it's my body, my baby, I know where it came from. And I

don't care which man it was, because we're all in this together. And so the men have more sexual freedom in that kind of culture, if you will.

There's not a lot of those left because Western culture is permeated the world so much. But if we can get women to relax into our own pleasurable, beautiful bodies, and everybody is beautiful and understand that we have freedom to be who God made us to be, then we can stop being so possessive of the men. Yeah.

And I think really, that's what men want. I mean, they come into my office every single day talking about how they want their wives to enjoy sex more and talk to a man who is with a woman who feels sexually liberated and free to express herself about his satisfaction versus a man who's with a woman who feels sexually inhibited and how dissatisfied he feels. I mean, it's like kind of a no brainer.

It's the way men, it seems to me that males are geared, it's in their head. I think it's biology that there is no greater turn on for a heterosexual male than to have a heterosexual female be terribly turned on. I mean, that does something for them.

Right. So, and women don't know that because we're busy trying to play by the rules. Right.

And what so many of my male clients say is they want to feel desired by their female partner. They want to feel wanted by them that when they feel that way, that it's a turn on for both of them. And it's obviously, it's an expression of love.

It's not just about body parts and getting off. It's so much more than that, but I don't think they realize how much they're doing to it's like a whack-a-mole. As soon as we try to pop up, they do things to pop women back down.

So I think a lot of women potentially could hear this and think, gosh, if I start to subscribe to some of these beliefs, does that mean I'm like giving up my faith? And you make a really important distinction between faith and beliefs. So can you explain that to people? Yes. I'm so glad you asked that because it's so important that a therapist or counselor or an educator makes the distinction.

The faith experience as I describe it is that which puts us in a place of awe or gratitude or humility or wow, life is a gift. It's that kind of a response. So sometimes it happens sometimes for people when they're outside and there's some nature thing that triggers it, or maybe giving birth.

It's like, wow, there's something beyond this experience. And some of us call it God. Some of us call it love and mystery and awe.

I think that is what drives people to churches, that there's a sense and that something is beyond the human experience, beyond materialism. And so we move into church

settings looking for that or to affirm that, yes, there's something beyond here. In fact, long before Christianity, the so-called prehistoric peoples were doing those kinds of drawings on caves and stuff.

So you know they had the rituals and some of the things that happened there. They too were worshipping something beyond themselves, maybe the equinox and this whatever. So that's faith.

That's faith. And so belief, however, is, you may say that's your faith, but no, belief is what you have learned in your head. And it's in, it's up here.

I think faith happens down here in our solar plexus, in our heart, in our gut. Sometimes it chokes us. In fact, it's so powerful and so beautiful.

But belief is always up here in the left brain. I have been told this, I will believe this. Even though it violates science and it's nonsensical and maybe stupid, but I will believe it because I have been told that is what God wants.

That is what the preacher wants. That's what I have to, if I want to fit in. So the next thing would be, all right, where can you go to fit in to a community of faith that's not going to have that kind of an obedience jail, prison? Because there's all kinds of churches that do not have that restrictive idea about the bodies or gender or sexuality.

They're out there. They're just not making the headlines. They're just not the ones supporting abstinence only in the schools.

And so it's finding different communities of faith that can affirm that we're all growing hopefully towards a wiser, kinder, more compassionate people to take care of our neighbors. That's what Jesus taught, loving your neighbors. And so you can keep your faith experience, absolutely.

But what we're going to do is we're going to look at the rules we have just swallowed whole and begin to ask questions about, is this scientific? Is this what my conscience or my heart wants? Is this what God is saying to me? Is this what the church down the street is teaching? Is this what the Bible teaches? Because all of this, let me just give you a wordplay. The word that's used in these restrictive environments in the churches, if you will, is fornication. Fornication is really bad.

It's really, really bad. So don't fornicate. And it's a catch-all phrase that's used for adultery.

That's fornication too. But fornication. And fornication does not mean non-marital sex.

It's bigger than that. The word fornication comes from, it's the same root word from which we get porneia, or is porneia, which get pornography. It means sexual immorality.

Okay? Sexual immorality is not about which body part goes where and when. It's much bigger than that. I have known couples that were fornicating legally, right? Had the piece of paper, had the wedding rings, did the wedding, ate the cake.

And you know what? There was sexual immorality in that couple. Why? Because she was saying yes when she wanted to say no. Because he was being dishonest about his love, because he just really wanted the sex.

I mean, there's all kinds of, when you get into dishonesty now around your sexuality, that is fornicating. That is sexual immorality. You're not being kind and loving as you're supposed to be.

You're not being righteous. All right? So if we look at that kind of an idea of sexual immorality, that kind of blows the whole purity culture to smithereens. Well, wait a minute.

Sexual immorality is much bigger than body parts. Yeah. I feel like we could have an entire series on this.

Yes, we probably could. There's just so much to talk about, but unfortunately we're running out of time. This was such a great conversation.

I learned a lot. I know my listeners are going to learn a lot. What would be your sendoff to those listening? What's your takeaway message? I know I'm putting you on the spot.

So when Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden, they are told to go out and be caretakers of the environment. And they're told to go out and make babies, propagate, right? And so I think what the creator was really saying was, go out there to this wonderful world. It's all yours to take care of, not abuse, not pollute, right? Go out into the world, take care of this world, and go out there and make love.

It's not about babies. It's about making love. Making love.

Yeah. And I think there's a lot of ways to make love. There certainly is.

And it's not by keeping rules. It's by following your heart. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, you heard it here. God wants you to experience pleasure.

And when you experience pleasure, you lead a happier, more fulfilling life. And I think you could absolutely do that and retain your faith if that's important to you. Certainly can.

Thank you so much. So guys, Rev Bev is a Disciple of Christ pastor. She currently serves as clergy in residence at United Christian Church and is a professor at Lancaster Theological Seminary, teaching courses on sexuality and religion.

Besides pastoring in the local parish setting, she serves as an... How do you say that word? I'm going to have to reshoot this. Assum... How do you say this word? I don't know what the word is. Acumenical.

Acumenical. Acumenical. I'm sorry.

I've never read that word before. Acumenical. Okay.

You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to read this and just edit it into the podcast later. Okay. Okay.

We'll cut there and then tell people where they can find you and get your book and take your webinar and find you on YouTube. My YouTube channel is Rev Beverly Dale. And it's free.

I've got about eight little short segments. I did those to get people to talk to one another. And then I have a little study guide to go with it that people can purchase from the website incarnationinstitute.org. But if they really want to get into this, I have this four part webinar series called Reading the Bible with Sex Positive Lives.

And that's also on the same website. So that's probably the best place. Awesome.

Well, I'll be sure to link everything in the show notes and tag you wherever I can. So thank you again for joining me today. Sure thing.

Thanks, Emily. Okay. I'm going to go ahead and end recording.