

# The mystery of sex and marriage:

## A conversation with Chris Legg

### TRANSCRIPT

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**NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.**

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Welcome back to the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, executive director of Denison Forum and host for today's conversation. Want to remind you here as we begin that what we want to do at Denison Forum is just to equip you and others to think biblically, to live beautifully and to serve redemptively in any and every place that God gives you the opportunity so that you and others can flourish until Jesus comes back again.

That's the heart and passion of what we're doing. And kind of the feel of our podcast, if you're new to this, is that I like to refer to these as clarity conversations. And just imagine that you walked into your favorite coffee shop and you just overheard two people talking about something that really matters and that it became helpful to you.

So we want to invite you into a conversation today. With a friend of ours, pastor Chris Legg. Let me tell you a little bit about him. He's been on our podcast before and is a friend of our ministry, but he and his wife, Ginger have been living out what he calls the parable of God's love for his people since they married in 1993.

They are the parents of five children. He is also not only a licensed professional counselor, but is the pastor of South Spring Baptist church in East Texas, my hometown of Tyler, and he is also, as I said, the founding owner and clinical director of Aletheia family counseling center. And we're going to draw out of all of these areas in pastor Chris's life.

To understand what he's written about in his new book that is actually co authored by Chris and his son, Mark, full disclosure here, Chris is not only a friend of our ministry, but his son, Mark has been on our staff up until recently when he went to not only get married, but also to continue his education, but you'll find some of Mark's writings even recently on our website, [www.denisonforum.org](http://www.denisonforum.org). And Mark continues to be a contributor to our ministry, a really, really sharp young man and is coauthor of this book. But today we're going to talk about one of those lightweight topics. We're going to talk about a book that Mark and Chris have written called sex

and marriage, unlocking and restoring the power of sex through biblical and psychological insight.

Now that is a mouthful, Chris. And we just want to say welcome to the coffee shop and let's have some clarity conversation about some stuff that our world really needs some help with. Welcome back. We're glad to have you.

[00:02:41] **Chris Legg:** Oh, it's so good. It's so good to be back with you. And, and I loved, I started listening to you and Jim talk just the other day about some of the similar to like sexuality and the culture and that kind of stuff and another podcast and Y'all referenced the Inklings and, and I was, I was identifying, I was like, that's, I love that imagery of, of I don't know if either one of us gets to be Tolkien or Lewis in this conversation, but what a great what a great picture is the thought of sitting in the, the, the, what is it?

The eagle and the child or whatever. And overhearing those guys have a conversation you can sell tickets for any price for that. So, we live in such a great era.

[00:03:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** you know, and I don't know that I'm sure somewhere there is a list of who the inklings were that were gathered around C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. We don't ever hear about those other names. And I'm just

[00:03:30] **Chris Legg:** I used to know him, but now I'm blanking.

[00:03:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah, you know, I, I, I wouldn't even pretend to get close, you know, Dr.

Dennison, you know, he can certainly be in that category of CS Lewis as

[00:03:41] **Chris Legg:** That's right. That's right.

[00:03:41] **Dr. Mark Turman:** but if, if I could just be in the circle of, of the inklings around them I could

[00:03:47] **Chris Legg:** Yes, exactly.

[00:03:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** you know, absolutely. So, but

[00:03:51] **Chris Legg:** so appreciate when Mark, Mark, when he first, when we first talked, Mark wanted to be the kind of a ghost writer with me on this. At the time that he's writing helping me write a book on sex and marriage, he was neither married nor had had sex. And so he was, he was like, you get, you'll have to be the expert.

I'll be the writer. And, but man, he really, he's always been a gifted writer. But after his time with you guys, I feel like he came away not only gifted, but well trained. And so, I've already been the recipient of that as well with Mark. And as we got done, I was like, you son, you're, you're a coauthor, not a ghostwriter.

I mean, his, he did great research and he's, he just has a real talent that I don't have of creating linear, a linear way of thinking through something. My writing is, All over the, I can do okay with a little, a little article, but much past that I got turned into some kind of bohemian weirdo. And so, I need someone with the ability to put it together like he does.

So that was really great.

[00:04:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And I would just affirm that as well. He yeah, he and I worked on several projects and, and showed that ability not only to do really high quality research, which people will find in this book but also to be able to put it together in a progressive, linear, understandable, accessible kind of way.

Which is a unique amount of giftedness. And, and part of the reason that we continue to grieve since. He left us to continue his education. Well, you know, we're like, we need, we need that guy to come back. We're fortunate to have Dr. Ryan Denison, who is one of the leaders at your church, who's also on our staff.

Obviously, Dr. Jim Denison's son, Ryan has many of those same similar skills. And we're, we're grateful for that, but we've, we've put a whole lot more work onto Ryan ever since Mark stepped away. And so we're, we're trying to work through that and not not burn Ryan out too fast.

[00:05:43] **Chris Legg:** That's right.

[00:05:44] **Dr. Mark Turman:** let's, let's talk a little bit.

What, what was it? Tell us the backstory. Chris about why did you just decide, okay, I need to write, I need to get these things on paper. I need to talk about this in a way that people can access it. Why this book and why now? Yeah.

[00:06:03] **Chris Legg:** Well, you know, there were several kinds of starting points that hit near the same time as I did years ago, just starting in the counseling world. And that was really confusing to me. And, I thought I had the same kind of I guess general knowledge that everybody thinks they have that Billy Crystal, I think it's Billy Crystal who once said, women need a reason to have sex and men just need a place.

And, and there's something, you know, humorous about that. But I remember thinking when I would read things like that or see things like that, that I would think like, huh, I guess I'm kind of

the weirdo outlier. Because I don't know much about this yet. And as a newlywed, but like, it's not the sex that seems so important.

It's the connection to sex creates. It's what sex means to me. That seems so important. Not the sex itself. I guess I'm the weirdo. Well then, so take that and, and what's, so, you know, kind of set that in a little box and then you know, the S the, the kind of secular mindset of marriage and you guys referenced this, I think is may 9th was when this podcast, y'all's podcast came out you and Jim's about some of these topics is that, is that there's kind of the sociological, the secular mindset that sex is really, transactional contract between y'all didn't say it this way, but a cave man who wants sex and a cave woman who wants protection.

And so they're like, Hey, we, we can kind of have this exchange and negotiate an exchange rate and, and I can get protection and you can get sex. And, and and so that's one way of looking at that. And what was weird was as an early counselor, a young counselor, who's a Christian, I would read Christian marriage books and not all of them, but many of them really presented marriage as just an exchange of, Needs and desires.

Like he's got certain needs and she's got certain needs and he's got certain wants and she's got certain wants. And the way that you make a great marriage is you just make sure your exchange rate is sound and, and we're all good. And that just felt very wrong to me, but I didn't have any way to argue with it.

I just assumed, well, I guess I'm the weirdo. Then the Feldens came out with some research, a couple of decades ago now Jeff and Shanti Felden and, and their research indicated. I wasn't the weirdo. It's that something like 97 percent of men interpret sex through what sex means. I'm summarizing a bunch of stuff here from their research, not sex itself.

And so they asked a key question. If you could have, of men, if you could have sex with your wife anytime you wanted, but she wouldn't be into it, would you consider that a satisfying sex life? And again, I'm paraphrasing and summarizing, but the numbers were tiny 3%, 4 percent of men. Who would say, yeah, that would be a satisfying sex life.

Well, that flies in the face of not only what the secular world was teaching, but what so many people in even, even sadly in the church world or the Christian world we're teaching. And I thought this is, this is a real problem. Add to that, this, the sexual revolution again, that you guys talked about in that podcast, the Christianity, I feel like Christians, we had really reduced or silenced yourself, our voice by having bad marriages.

And so there's a whole generation of kids who are so uninspired. By faith, because just like the apostle Paul says, our marriages are a living parable. They are a picture of God's Christ's

relationship to his church. And in the old Testament, God's relationship to his people is often defined in terms of marriage and adultery.

And well, so if, if our marriages aren't very good, there's a whole generation that is going, yeah, we don't trust your input on marriage. It's not like you're some kind of expert. And I think that's part of why we lost this generation when it comes to sex and marriages. Not only was the world offering up something that was bad, but the, the, what Christianity was offering wasn't a ton better and, and just uninspiring.

And so I feel like when I went back to scripture and started really digging into scripture and saying like, I don't, I don't think this is the answer God has for us as this transactional relationship instead. It's a parable. It's a creation. That's, it's a living parable. It's like baptism is this living parable of the death, burial, and resurrection of a new life.

Marriage and sex is a living parable of God's relationship to his people. It's an intentional designed, created thing, not just a transaction between two people who have certain, what they call needs. They're really not needs, but needs and wants. And, and I think, I think we needed to somehow figure out how to reverse that.

And so, anyway, so we, we, I've been working on it for a long, some of my friends would tell you for 20 years, I've been working on this book, but

I know, you know how that

[00:10:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** I definitely had that sense that, that this had emerged over not just a few months or even a few years, but over a couple of decades of both of both a personal journey of, of faith and relationships and love, but also, this kind of dual track ministry path that you've been on, that has both been counseling as well as pastoring, and I, as I was reading through the book and having pastored churches for a long time, like you have but, but without the counseling side of it, it's like, I'm never quite sure which part of my life I'm speaking out of, out of, is it, there, there are autobiographical elements in this work that you have.

But there are also counseling elements and their pastor elements that had come out in this, but let's love, love what you say. Even if you, even if you baptize your transactional relationship, it's still not lining up with what scripture says, right? Is even if you are two people who have committed themselves to Christ, but if you buy into this shallow explanation of marriage and sex, and you quote unquote, Are trying to build a Christian marriage, but you still have a transactional mindset.

You still lose the opportunity of the majesty and what the Bible describes as oneness, right? This mystery of oneness. It makes me think Chris of a book that I read about two years ago, written

from a secular perspective by a Washington post reporter named Christine Imbus. She wrote a book called rethinking sex.

In which she basically described how the world and in many cases, the church has followed the world in this to the point where we have so trivialized marriage and sex that there is no enchantment to it. Unpack that a little bit further for us, this idea of parable, this idea of, of a beautiful enchantment, which I want to come around this.

Let me tell you where I want us to go in a moment, which is. When Paul walks into the city of Corinth with this, which with this message of Jesus, the message of Jesus ultimately leads them to a conversation about sexuality that I want us to get to but to kind of get the foundation of that, unpack this idea of marriage and particularly sex in marriage as something that should be enchanted something that should have the sense of mystery and wonder to it,

[00:13:24] **Chris Legg:** So here's what, one of the things that struck me and I was raised during what is often called the purity movement. And so I, I was a teenager during those years and, and what had happened is, you know, in the fifties and then late fifties, early sixties, The sexual revolution was really cranking up in America.

And this, the message being presented by the world was sex is common. It's nothing special. Birds do it. Bees do it. Humans do it. Everyone does it. And everything your parents told you that, you know, well, no sex is safe for marriage. None of them actually did either. They were all having sex too. And this kind of revisionist history was being told and there's nothing pure.

There's nothing innocent. Sex is just sex. And of course, all of that grows from Freud's. horrific misinformation and miss teaching based on zero research, that genital sex is the ultimate expression of human happiness. And that any restriction of that is, is horrible and, and evil and oppressive.

And, and just, I mean, the man was just making stuff up. And I assume we, we, from his reads, from his writings, we can learn more about his hang ups than probably anything else. But, but I think, I think what happened is then you get that culture being presented like that. And unfortunately in many circles, the church's response was to say, no, sex isn't common.

Sex is dirty. Sex is trash. Sex is. And, and you just need to say no and stay away and we don't talk about it. And this is not something we do here. And, and we don't trust anybody else to teach him about it. And I'm like, that was this response in the church. And I remember, so the one, except for when I put my faith in Christ, Mark, the only thing I remember from all those years at camp, the Wednesday night, sex and dating talk growing up in the evangelical church was a guy saying.

Hey girls, watch out for the guys because the guys are playing at love, which they don't understand in order to get sex, which is what they really want. And, and girls, you're playing at sex, which you don't understand in order to get love, which is what you really want. And I hope I said that right. Men, guys playing at love to get sex and girls playing at sex to get love.

And immediately it's as if it's as if they said, Hey, how could we strategically drive a wedge between men and women for the rest of their lives. That all men care about is sex. And so when a man is pursuing you sexually, what he's pursuing is a thing, not you. And so, I mean, fast forward 10, 20 years, every one of those marriages, you know, when the husband is, is trying to seduce his wife, she's saying, and this is one of the main questions in the book, she's going, is this about me or is this about sex?

And I mean, Mark, every, almost every woman I talked to who came out of that era has that intuition. And so what the church should have done, because what the Bible teaches, is to say sex isn't common or trash, it's sacred. It's, it's sacred. It is sacred in the same way that the, you know, the items in the tabernacle are sacred.

You don't, you don't take the incense altar out into the field and, and cook hamburgers over it. That's an abuse of it. That's treating it as common, but you also don't, you also don't throw it away or make it disposable or call it evil or wicked or filthy. No, it's because it's not, it's solid gold and it's sacred and it has a special purpose.

And I believe that special purpose is to, is to integrate us with one another as a picture of how we integrate with him in our lives. And that's why in the old Testament, when the people of Israel and the Hebrew scriptures, excuse me, when the Hebrew scriptures, when the. People of Israel leave God. He calls it adultery.

And, and, and woos them back. And how many images, I mean, gosh, the story of Hosea and Gomer is not subtle. Of that he is, he has chosen us and married us. There's passages in Ezekiel that are, I mean, rated R and they're almost their description of. Him choosing us as we are reaching puberty and, and choosing his people as they're reaching puberty and like a broad, like a young bride and he's covering her and engaging with her in a pure way.

And anyway, it's, it's a, it's a powerful picture. And then you get a new Testament and Paul and Jesus aren't even vaguely subtle about it as they talk about the bride of Christ and, and they teach through that. And so realizing there's, there's something about the divine mystery of God's relationship to his people.

That pre existed marriage and just like I believe he created the tabernacle to be a living A physical embodiment of the spiritual truth like what the writer of hebrews calls a shadow version

is that our marriage and the sexuality of that marriage is meant to be an embodiment of The reality of, of God's relationship to us.

And that's not transactional at all. It is, it is a constant overflowing of gifts being given, even sacrificially stuffed down, overflowing, you know, all of that. And it's a powerful, beautiful thing. So to cheapen it and make it common is of course wrong, but to call it trash was a massive misunderstanding and a mistake, a reaction to the world.

I think that was a huge mistake. And so we have to begin to see it as reclaiming the garden. The mystery of the garden again.

[00:18:42] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And you even from a biblical perspective, you even see this, this mystery in this, this idea played out, even in the very last pages of scripture, where. The new heaven and the new earth and the, and this new world that God has promised to bring about is pictured as that of a wedding. And, and that image is carried through.

So I love that this idea that you unpack in the book about marriage as a parable. Reflecting our relationship with Christ. And and sometimes, you know, I get to sit down and do premarital counseling. Got to have a conversation around that even yesterday. And I'd go back to being at a wedding where a friend of ours was officiating some 25, 30 years ago.

And he said, you need to understand this relationship is at the end of the day, not really about you. It is about you and our relationship with God. And if you will learn to live this relationship both in its covenantal and in its sexual expressions, it will become a window of revelation through which you can know God.

The two of you can know God, your children. If God gives you children will know God and every person that really comes into the experience of your relationship will have a window by which they can see Christ love for all of us. I love sharing that with young couples as they approach a wedding to say, you know what?

Remember that this is a worship celebration and the worship is toward God who loves us. It's not worshipping you. It's really an opportunity for you to let people worship through the relationship that you're beginning, that you've been called to. Yeah, just that, just that idea of revelation. Chris, do you think that that's

[00:20:23] **Chris Legg:** And by the way, if I may mark that also in addition to that, the negative also works. And this is something I think that maybe we miss in Paul's pair of Paul's teaching in Ephesians. Is that if, if the way I sacrifice and lead and love my wife and give up my life for her is a parable of Christ's love for his church.



And if the way my wife devotes herself to, to my cause and, and submits her, it makes her my mission. Her mission is a, is a parable or a, or a example of Christ's love. The church's love for Christ. That works both ways. And so if my marriage is a not a good marriage, if I don't love, if I'm impatient and unloving and, and, and not sacrificial and demanding of my wife or my children and my neighbors and my church, they see that and I diminish the message of the gospel.

It's no wonder that if in marriages like that, and many of us, I mean, we've seen that all over where kids. I don't, I don't think we mainly lose kids when they go off to college because of, you know, sex, drugs, rock and roll, and liberal professors or whatever. I think we mainly lose them because our marriages were not inspiring.

[00:21:29] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:21:29] **Chris Legg:** so we, we did not inspire them with an example of the marriage. I, I was, I was honestly one of the highlights of my life, Mark was when my son, Mark read all my material, listened to all my teaching on this. And sat down with me and said, dad, before we start this, I want you to know, I've, I've seen this my whole life.

I've seen, this is how you treat mom my whole life. And so I'm excited to be a part of something because this is, you, you live this and may not, you, you know, it's like, okay, we're done. I'm retired. Like, I don't have to do anything else.

[00:22:03] **Dr. Mark Turman:** I can call it

[00:22:04] **Chris Legg:** Right there. I feel like I've accomplished my main mission. Yeah.

[00:22:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah,

[00:22:08] **Chris Legg:** it's, it's powerful and imperfect.

I never mean to imply like. Man, we've nailed this. Like we get this perfectly every time in my marriage. Like, Oh no, no, we're flawed and messed up like everybody else is. But there's this, this, my wife even showed this to me first. Like this is. The garden is the goal, recreating Eden, naked and unashamed not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually and, and in every way.

Like, no, no, this is, this is us here in this place with as few barriers as any humans can create between us. And sex is a powerful bonding agent for that. It's not, it's not an, a commodity she has that she exchanges with me. Like that's just, it makes me cringe. And the messages she's heard over the years of.

You know, hey ladies sometimes just got to take one for the team type of messaging at women's retreats like that is not Respectful of the man or the woman or of what God has created here.

[00:23:09] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah. And it's so, you know, when you really understand it, it, when you, when you bring it down to a transactional level, it becomes so unsacred at that moment. Chris, do you think that this idea. You know, nothing new under the sun, and that's the reason the Bible can be relevant in so many ways. Do you think this idea of, of re envisioning and, or even learning for the first time that there is something much more beautiful, much more sacred involved here.

Is that the thing that Paul. Was really trying to teach to the Corinthian church. You and I've know from the things that we've been taught about new Testament times that, you know, if you were, if you were alive 2000 years ago in that part of the world, you would have to take everything that you know, good, bad, and ugly about Los Angeles and Las Vegas and New York and New Orleans.

You have to roll it all together and you might get kind of down the road to how bad it was in the city of Corinth. Right. And, and so the way I interpret it, you may see it a little bit differently, but when, when they write to Paul, because he's, he's left them for a time and they say, Hey, we've got some questions.

We need some, some help here. And they, what I see them saying in first Corinthians seven, one is they're like, Hey, this thing, sex, it's just really gross. It's just really common. It's just really corrupt and dirty in the worst ways. Wouldn't it be better if we just all put sex aside? And, and avoided it altogether because remember they have a temple in the middle of their town where you can go do any kind of sexual thing you might want.

Right. But Paul says no timeout. Yeah. Paul says no timeout. You're missing it. It's not God. It's not the ultimate expression and experience of what it means to be a human being, and it's not gross. It's not, it's not ugly, dirty, and vile. And he begins to lay out this sacred mystery. Is that what's going on in Corinthians?

And is that the message of sacred mystery that the world needs to hear?

[00:25:19] **Chris Legg:** I think I, one, how much better would the purity culture? And listen, I know many people taught correctly in the purity culture during that era, I heard them myself. But so often, what if, what if we had created instead of a vision of, you know, Hey kids, you're going to manufacture your own purity somehow.

By your behavior or misbehavior and instead said Christ has bestowed purity upon you as a gift of his sacrifice You've been washed and made pure now Live according to that purity because

you get to you get to experience this as god intended where novelty for all of its greatness, I, this is my favorite thing.

I teach a group of students every year through Pine Cove camps and, and this idea that intimacy trumps novelty and the world cannot get that. Like they, they just have no concept for that. And that's why we're watching young people now, younger and younger with medical ed disorders, women getting Early and earlier plastic surgeries and stuff like that, because this madness created by that, that they, my only value is here.

And if instead we'd said, no, there is something intrinsically treasured in you and your sexuality. And the way we treat one another, we answer to God for how we treat one another, including one another's sexuality, including the gift of that. So that, so that I am. I am always in pursuit of this one of, of mastering this one woman intimately that I know every inch of her body and her soul and her mind.

And, and it's like an Island that she's guiding me around and I'm discovering more and more and eventually our lives look more and more like one. And I, I, in the, in the book, I introduced my grandparents, my father's parents who were married 62 years. And, and, and I think if you'd have gone to my grandfather after, after 60 years, he said, Hey, we'll trade you a.

You know, a young something supermodel for the old 80 year old woman. I think he would have, well, he'd have been probably deeply insulted, offended, and you know, he's an old world war two vet. He might've taken you out, but, but I think, I think he had part of his thinking would have been like, start over.

Like this woman knows everything about me and chooses me anyway. And I know everything about her. I mean, it's, it's better to be chosen by someone who knows you than to be chosen by someone who doesn't. And so every sexual encounter is supposed to, I think, be a free choosing of this person. And men experience that, I think at a very deep identity level.

Sadly, I think because of the lack of safety for women, sexually, women often disintegrate those two identities. Their own identity from that. What a different vision if we told, if we had told those, those students had been told, like me had been told, Hey, you guys come at this from a different direction.

You've got to learn to see the world through her eyes and she's got to learn to see the world through your eyes so that you can love each other extraordinarily well, and 10 years from now, that won't be boring. If you come at this for novelty or just for eroticism, it'll be boring in two years. Which is when many marriages fail or seven years or 20 years.

But if you come at this as, Hey, I've, I've got to create new experiences. I've got to, I mean, create a new depth of experience with this person where I know them better and better and better. Well, that's, that's just mastery and that doesn't get boring 60 years later. And that actually the research backs and that all of this, Mark, I was so shocked to dig into the research and discovered the research actually exists that backs.

God's way of doing this. And I, I thank God regularly for the Felden's for starting that.

[00:29:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** let's go down that road. Cause I loved reading some of this research, some, some of this, I knew intuitively from my own marriage. Some of, I knew it as, as you've talked about through both counseling and pastoring and being with people it was really challenging to hear you talk about how.

Oftentimes when you're counseling a couple either before or after they've gotten married and they're having trouble that many of them could not name a marriage that they looked up to that inspired them that that motivated them that they could say, I want to, I want a relationship that looks like that.

Fortunately, my wife and I had that. We had both our parents and we had other godly couples in our church that we could say, well, we, we want to have something like that. We know it's not perfect. It's not perfect for anybody, but we can see living examples of what this is supposed to be. But I, I loved what you talked about when I could imagine my, my wife or some other woman.

Of any age reading your book and reading that, that data that says he is not simply a sexual animal, that really what's going on inside of him is that he would want sex anywhere, anytime with any person. And, and that's what he really wants when in fact, he really wants the connection, this sense of.

Sacred, special, unique and exclusive relationship. I can see a woman going, really? Is it really true? And then I would, I would wonder Chris, if there would be a similar reaction to men when they start reading the research. No wait, she really does enjoy this. And is open to this at a much greater level than I've ever been taught is just unpack, unpack those two revelations because they are profound in this book.

[00:31:02] **Chris Legg:** I, I thought so too. And, and it gave such hope to this idea. So I do think, and I don't know why, I don't know why the research backs though. I think that at some level men, we so integrate sexuality into our identity. That we don't intuitively see the difference. And I think in the book, I tell the kind of funny story in counseling one day that I had a client, a woman who was telling me, I wish my husband touched me more non sexually and.

And you know, I'm, I'm a pretty, I'm pretty quick on the ball in those moments, but my intuition at the intuition level, I had no idea what she was talking about. And so very quickly I realized she meant the parts of her body covered by her underwear. She, that's what she meant when he touches me on the parts of my body covered by my underwear.

And I was like, okay, why? Like, I don't, cause I haven't, I don't divide out touch that way. I don't think of touch in terms of what is sexual and non sexual. I, I, I touched my wife as intimately sexually as the situation allows, And I feel no burden or barrier to that intuitively. And so like, I, I'm like, I think that's, that's really strange.

Well, I discovered my wife had the exact same intuition as this client did. And, and so did several other women. I wish my, and I was like, well, why? I mean, he's the only one who gets to touch you sexually. Wouldn't you want more of that? I mean, anybody can. You know, touch your back or pat your head, I guess.

Like what is it that you're, but the problem was her intuition was when I touched my wife sexually, when a woman is touched sexually, she thinks that's about sex, not about her. That's her intuition. Now, again, why is that? I don't know that anybody's done the research to know for sure why I, again, I suspect it's generations of women being unsafe sexually, they've learned to divide out their identity from their sexuality because so many of them face sexual assault.

That if their identity was integrated into their sexuality. When they face that, they would be destroyed kind of forever. And, and so, but what happens is when a man is, therefore this one misunderstanding, which unpack in two different ways in the book, I think of a man who's pursuing his wife sexually, she interprets that as he wants sex.

Not he wants me. Whereas if a woman pursues one, a man sexually, he doesn't divide that out that way. He doesn't go, is this about me or is this about sex? Because if a woman is pursuing a man sexually, he assumes it's about him. It's not, it's not natural for him to go like, does she just want to have sex or does she actually want me?

And I just think that's an intuition. And you can see how broken that gets all the times. And we even unpacked the brokenness of this. Like we talk about how does this play into prostitution and sexual professionals and that kind of stuff and how this still plays out that way. And the research still backs this conclusion. Then if you have a couple that gets to know each other like this, what, one of the things that was wild was this up and down effect that most marriages have. And we learned that that's about energy levels. And we spent a lot of time helping couples recognize in the book, The seven year itch and the 20 year itch actually have to do with the amount of stress the children in our lives are creating.

And so to kind of put the pieces together real quick, Mark, what happens is when something's not part of our identity, it takes psychological energy to engage in it. And so early on in a marriage, the wife's got tons of psychological energy. He wants to mess around. Sure. Why not? It costs her some mental psychological energy to bring those together, but why not?

But then you have young kids and they demand so much of you. And that's usually when this difference begins to show where he's like, I, I want to mess around. And she's like, I just can't. And that makes no sense to him. What do you mean you can? And so what most of these transaction books then say, well, the solution is to sit down and make sure she understands just how important it is.

It's my number one need. It's my number one. It's and the problem is that's solving the wrong problem. If, if, if you offer to give me 40,000 in exchange for 20,000, well, that's a good deal. Anyone would do that. But if I don't have 20,000, you offering me more money doesn't fix the problem. You offering me a hundred thousand for my 20 or a million for my 20.

All you're now you're doing is frustrating me and making me feel like a bigger loser that I'm not able to take advantage of this opportunity. And I don't know how many conversations my wife and I had early on that essentially came down to that of me going, but this is so important to me. And her saying, I still don't have 20.

We, we didn't know those terms then. And so, anyway, so I, it was eye opening and has really been a rescue for a lot of couples

[00:35:51] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah, yeah.

[00:35:52] **Chris Legg:** other's through each other's lens.

[00:35:53] **Dr. Mark Turman:** so, yeah, that's what's really so helpful about the book is, is it gives people language. It gives them some handles. That's the, the great utilization of language. And, and healthy biblical definitions is it gives people handles by which they can understand themselves and then also understand their spouse or their spouse to be.

And you're able to have conversations that really move into the deeper water of truly knowing each other in, in the sight of God. And with that kind of. Vulnerability, because that's what we're wired for. That's, that's why Jesus said the most important thing was relationship, relationship with God, relationship with other people, because that's what we're wired for and we really long for at the deepest level, we long to be known.

And that's why Jesus. Talks about marriage as being oneness from the very beginning. And he talks about his prayer before the cross is that we would be one with him in this mysterious sense of connection. So Chris, did you,

[00:37:01] **Chris Legg:** me real quick go back to the, if I

[00:37:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah, go ahead, go

[00:37:04] **Chris Legg:** catch me the Corinthian thing. And I think what the Corinthian church, exactly what you're talking about is what they had was the perfect example of the world throwing every possible counterfeit at them. Every possible counterfeit. Everything but the real thing.

And they were saying, shouldn't we reject all these counterfeits? And in doing so, Paul was like, yeah, be careful not to reject the real thing that the husband belongs to the wife and the wife belongs to the husband. And that is the real thing. Yes. Rejects all the counterfeits don't throw out the sacred.

So anyway, I think that's exactly what's going on there.

[00:37:44] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And if you, you know, the more, so I've done some of my own work in this area, but the more you think about it, the more it makes sense why the devil would try To really cause so much havoc in this area, because the thing that God loves most is people. And the thing that, that a holy sacred marriage and, and sacred sexuality is intended to create at least not in, it's not only for this, but in significant ways, it is, it is in the sexual union that new human beings are created.

Now you just think about that. God could have God could have populated the earth at any level to any population all by himself. He could have done that. Okay. He didn't need us to populate the earth, but he created the first human beings. And then he said, okay, I want you guys to go and become the mother and the father of all the other living human beings, and he allowed us to be in that process of creating new eternal human beings.

That would have the opportunity of eternal relationship with him, which is the real point of the whole earth, human experience. And you can understand why the devil would be set against that to try to destroy that with counterfeits and with deception and with all kinds of things. And, and that's, that's why this is so powerful.

So Chris, I'm just wondering, did you set out at first? That you wanted to write a book about sex and a proper understanding of sex. And then you said, well, wait a minute. I got to back up and talk about marriage. Or did you say, okay, I got to talk about marriage and then I'll talk about sex inside of marriage.

How did that, how did that come about?

[00:39:34] **Chris Legg:** Okay. Great. The, this began again, two or three things happened at the beginning of doing marriage counseling and, and finding no good answers at the beginning of whether it was a woman coming in with her husband and saying, okay, we just read this Christian marriage book and apparently he wants a prostitute who cleans his house. And me going, I

[00:39:57] **Dr. Mark Turman:** That's a pretty powerful way of, yeah.

[00:40:00] **Chris Legg:** Okay. Or, or reading the story of Esther and seeing I mean, a borderline madman who thinks he's God on earth, Xerxes, walking, essentially seeming to walk away or let her walk away from a sexual encounter because he's intrigued by the thought of her coming back the next night and explain that through the Billy Crystal lens.

Like, and so these questions are being created as I'm doing merit. So another great one. Cohabitation, early on in counseling, I saw a lot of couples who were living together, not married, and the very same principles that rescued marriages ended cohabitation relationships. It's like the healthier they got, the more likely they were to break up, versus marriages, the healthier they got, the more likely they were to stay together.

Why? What is that? Well, I began to piece together, like looking at scripture and realizing, Okay. So merit marriage is really fundamentally about, I, I choose you at the intimate level and you choose me at the intimate level. despite the fact that we're both messed up people. And so, and so this picture of like, you know, how, like Adam and Eve, being given the opportunity by God to truly choose each other freely without these issues.

And, and instead of saying you know, well, I need to, you know, you wouldn't drive a, I remember having a couple early on when I asked him like, do you want to be treated as married or dating? And they're like, well treat us as married. And, and being, you know, maybe it's probably 26, 27 going, well, then why aren't you married?

I mean, if you want to be treated as married, why aren't you married? Well, and the, the quick answer was, well, you don't test drive a car without, I mean, you don't buy a car without test driving at first. And he's like, yeah, right. You don't buy a pair of shoes without trying them on. And I'm like, well, that makes total sense.

Okay. That makes sense. Well, then I do the research and discover. Cohabitation marriages fail so much more often. Why? Well, I took a while before I realized, what do you, what do you do with a pair of shoes when it stops performing the way you want? What do you, what do you do with a car when it, when it gets too old or too clunky?



Well, you trade it in for a younger model, right? I mean, a newer model. And so, and so that the marriage is not about performance. It's not about transaction. It's about the agape love of being freely chosen Because of yourself, or as Victor Hugo said, in spite of yourself. And so, that's a powerful picture.

And God gave sec. So as I'm working my way through this as a young counselor, long before I was even thought about being a pastor, and working through this as a young counselor going, I've got to have a new paradigm. And there were very few authors even hinting at it. Smalley and Trent were hinting at it back in the day, but very few others were really hinting at it.

Theirs tended to be more transactional and, and like, well, you gotta, you know, you, you, you negotiate a deal. And I mean, just, just my wife called me the day, said you, you would be screaming at the phone. At the radio right now, she was listening to a pastor who was saying, man, when I do premarital counseling, the most important thing is to unpack expectations is to make sure you tell her, here's what my expectations are.

And you tell him, here's what my expectations are. And she knows my, my model is like, yeah, acknowledge your expectations and then take them up on a hill and put them on a stack of stone and drive a knife through them and set them on fire.

[00:43:11] **Dr. Mark Turman:** That's right. Yeah.

[00:43:13] **Chris Legg:** It's not going to work out well for you. Marriage is not about expectations or entitlements.

It's about how do I die to myself? In the name of my savior for your benefit and and it's a that and and that includes And and sexuality so often what we learn is that if you want a living parable of god's relationship to his people You go to marriage if you want a living parable an active parable of marriage Then you look at sex and it's amazing how often the principles of marriage played out in the bedroom really refine it.

And, and it's, you're able to go like, Oh, okay. And more and more often when I get to teach on something and I'll ask a group of women or a group of men, how do you interpret this? You know, there's the story that runs through the whole book about the young couple who, you know, she seduces him when he comes home.

And, and like men, how do you interpret that? Women, how do you interpret that? And. And then the next time he comes home, she's in flannels, head to toe flannels and 95 percent of sleep, and she just kisses him goodnight, like, so glad you're home and goes to sleep and, and men have two very, very different emotional experiences there.

I've been chosen and I've not been chosen. And then I thought one day to ask women, like, how are those different for you? And the women go like, they're not, those are the same experience for me. I, I'm just as happy to have him home both times.

[00:44:37] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:44:37] **Chris Legg:** Well, that clearly shows a disconnect. Like there's a, and so how do, how do we learn to see it through the other person's lens, which is what intimacy really is.

Anyway, I've rambled a bunch.

[00:44:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and on, and on both sides, right. And, and just on both sides of that equation. Right. And

[00:44:54] **Chris Legg:** Yes.

[00:44:56] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Chris, Chris, who do you How do you envision it? When you sat down and tried to put this into print and had your son working with you as co author and that type of thing where where would you where would you hope?

That this book would take a couple either about to get married or even the couple that's cohabitating or the, the couple that is at that seven year mark or that 20 year mark, where would you hope that it would cause them to pivot?

[00:45:26] **Chris Legg:** That's a great, thank you. That's a perfect question.

[00:45:28] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah.

[00:45:29] **Chris Legg:** So this is why the subtitle.

[00:45:31] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:45:32] **Chris Legg:** Yeah, the subtitle has two action verbs in it and, and that's why it has two is it can we can't Mark and I kept going back and forth debating over this and, and we ended up with two unlocking. So that's for the people who don't know.

Those are the couples. Those are the pre married couples and they can read this book and hopefully avoid years. Of pain and disconnection and, and that so many marriages that are probably more like at our age had at least a phase that they went through just purely out of misunderstanding each other, or by listening to someone teach on this, who had no business teaching on it or a book that, that portrayed this transactional vision and, and, and, and they've avoided all that.

And for them, it unlocks the power of sex. for in their marriage for many. And these are the tragic ones is when I, sometimes when I've taught on this before, I've had single men and women come up and say, I wish I'd known this before my divorce because this is fundamentally why I'm divorced and, or the couples who are living, they're married.

They're not just cohabitating, but they're really just cohabitating. How many people do we know who are living in, in these marriages that They're really just roommates and, and they don't work at it and they don't try hard and they're, they have a non existent or very poor or very transactional sex life.

There's nothing inspiring about their marriage and, and yet they're stuck there. And so that's the, what's why restoring is the other one there is that is that couples will sometimes what, what I knew, what I knew I had hit on something as a concept was actually when I taught mops, mothers of preschoolers, this material, the first time.

And instead of the women saying, Oh gosh, we've got another male pastor counselor coming and lecturing us on sex. I had the women saying, can, will you come back and teach this to our husbands?

[00:47:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Hmm.

[00:47:34] **Chris Legg:** Which let me know. They didn't see me as creating just another transactional process. And so many women in the church have been so burdened by this Hey, basically sex is a commodity that you hold the key to and your job is to give it up whenever he demands it or to at least have sex often enough to avoid the negative emotional consequences of not having sex.

And the first time I heard that phrase from a woman, it almost made me cry. It certainly made me repent. To recognize that. And we unpacked, I unpacked, we unpacked that quite a bit in the book is this brokenness that's entered so many of our marriages about sexuality. I recommend couples read this together if they're married.

that they read it out loud to each other so that they can ask. The Feldens recommend the same thing. Read, read for men only, for women only of those surprising secrets or their recent book about sex that we actually were almost done with this book when their book came out. And I was like, Oh, Mark, real quick, we've got to read this and see how they do research.

And, and and then and of all things, a God, a miracle, God put me in contact with the Feldens and they wrote the, introduction of the forward for the book, which was purely a miracle. But and so to, to be able to, to re engage at a level to almost all, almost every married couple I work

with through this, they have to go through a stage of repentance where they both have to forgive each other for the way they've interpreted each other because they just didn't know.

I didn't know. And, and so, and then they can move forward saying, okay, we have a new marriage goal, which is. We're going to spend the rest of our marriage, however long that is, seeking to reclaim the garden. Seeking that. And I think probably the next thing that I write, if I ever work up the energy to do it again, will be intimacy and identity as the, as the companion book to this one.

Because I think that's another area where it's just, it's just not communicated super well. And, and maybe my, the weird amphibian that I am of pastor and counselor will allow me to be able to talk about those,

[00:49:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Let me, let me, let me get you just, we have just a couple more minutes and I, and we'll wrap up, but let me get you to chase that out because that conversation is somewhat brief in this book, as you talk about that. That's a whole topic for a whole other thing because. So many in our culture right now, if you talk at all about sexuality and sex, they immediately run to identity.

And there are people even writing entire books that the whole sum total of the idea is that your identity is simply your sexuality.

[00:50:10] **Chris Legg:** Yeah.

[00:50:11] **Dr. Mark Turman:** talk about that Chris, particularly from the standpoint of men, from the standpoint of males and how too much they have listened to the lie of the culture. That their identity is totally about their sexuality.

Unpack that for just a minute and, and we'll

[00:50:30] **Chris Legg:** Oh man. So, so this is one of the, one of the most important phrases that I was ever taught years ago is that is that you can spot bad teaching even in the church, much less in the world when behavior dictates identity and then identity dictates theology, because that's exactly the reverse is that our theology has dictate our identity and our identity has dictate our activity or our behavior.

Okay.

[00:50:59] **Dr. Mark Turman:** All right. Let me stop you right there. Let me stop you right there and get you to repeat what you just said. Because when I read that in the book, you put into words what I had been trying to get clear in my mind, but sensing intuitively in my spirit. So I want you to just repeat what you just said.

[00:51:15] **Chris Legg:** Yeah, okay. So, the idea is, you can always spot teaching it's going to somehow lead you, it's going to be a counterfeit, it's going to lead you somewhere bad when it starts with activity, activity or behavior, which then leads to identity. Identity then leads to theology. That's, that's always the wrong direction.

The correct direction is our theology must always dictate our identity and our identity must dictate our activity or our behavior. And so sexuality, the, whether we're talking about more innate aspects of sexuality, like how we interpret it or our attractions or those types of things, those are still, even if they're part of our identity, they still, the expression of them is still an activity.

And so the fact that I find other people that I might find other women attractive that doesn't dictate any identity to me That's just an attraction. It's a it's an interest. It's a desire. It's and even if there's an innate aspect to that That's irrelevant to my behavior. My behavior has to come from who I am and who I am has to come from who God is.

And so, so if God says a certain thing about me, I have to learn to accept that, integrate that into my identity. And it's fascinating that you talk to some people and they get weirded out like, Oh, so I have to accept what God says about me. Yeah, like that you're treasure, that, that you are, he treasures you, that, that he wants you, that the creator of the universe who never makes a mistake chooses to create you in his image and wants you to live a fulfilled, abundant life like that.

Yeah, sorry, you're gonna have to learn to live with that. Like, I, I, I'm like, I And, and, and the good news is No matter how ugly I see myself or that other people see me, no matter how delusional I can be And and man social media has proved it's proving nothing else about human being It's that confidence and accuracy have nothing to do with each other that no matter how sure someone is they're right It has no bearing on whether they're right now My math teacher could have told me that at any point in my life, but it is a I need someone who's not wrong to tell me things about me, and that person literally is more trustworthy than me about me.

The good news is the mental health world is not. There is a crisis coming in the mental health world, but it's not the one people think it is. It's because The counseling and psychological world is becoming I don't even know what to call it. It's becoming borderline personality, meaning that, Hey, we just, we just affirm whatever delusion you claim about yourself and that is not helpful.

And that's not what we need. We need people to be able to walk, walk us along a path in a healthy, positive way. So anyway, for men, We say my sexuality, who I am is treasured by God, is prized by God, but it's also a powerful tool. Therefore, I need to submit it to someone who's able to wield it better than I can.

And so I, I'm like, I'm like a child with a samurai sword. I really need a samurai to help me wield that. And so I look to the, to him to tell me, How and when to wield this weapon. It's like, I mean, when my kid, when my boys turned seven, actually when boys and girls turned seven, they get their first pocket knife in our family.

It's one of our rites of passages and, but they have to put it in a drawer and I tell them when to go get it. And, and it's kind of the same. I'm not doing that because I hate knives or I hate them or I don't want them to have fun. I'm doing that because the knife is sacred. It's special. It's for a certain thing.

And I don't want them slicing their own nostril off. Right. And so. So, so that's, that's, so I create this safety boundary to protect them. That doesn't help me any to do like, this is to protect them because I get blades and they don't. God has said, this is my, this is who I am. Therefore, this is who you are and what I've done to create you.

Therefore, this is how you should behave. And trust me when I say behaving this way will pay off. And I'm sure Mark, you would say the same thing. The more, the better I understand God's vision for marriage and sex. And the more I'm willing to submit to his picture of it. In fact, I had the other day I had a huge realization.

I know you'll, you'll get, and you'll be like, Oh, this would take us on a total other path. But I realized my appreciation of my wife is approximately 100 percent dependent on my maturity and essentially has nothing to do with her. And, and I looked back at 20 year old me and I'm like, you're an idiot. And even 30 and 30 year old me look back at 20 year old me.

I suspect 60 year old me will look back at 50 year old me and go, yeah, you were still an idiot. Like, how did you not appreciate this thing? God had this wonderful person God had placed in your life. And yet, well because I'm an immature child, that's why. So anyway,

[00:56:14] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:56:14] **Chris Legg:** I hope that unpacks it.

[00:56:16] **Dr. Mark Turman:** a good word, you know, and, and so helpful and Just so many things like that in this book and just really, really accessible, helpful, and would encourage folks to go and just find this book. It is by Chris Legg, sex and marriage, unlocking and restoring the power of sex through biblical and psychological insight.

It is such, such a helpful tool. Chris, just, just as a way of saying, thanks again. Just that, just that insight that God had really just been bringing me toward you gave even better language to, which is the idea of creating our own identity in any pathway is such a crushing responsibility especially from a standpoint of sexuality and sexual activity and marriage and relationship.

We are not capable of creating our own identity. And God says, Hey, you don't have to. I did. I create your identity. And if you'll listen to me, if you'll let your identity come from what I say about you, you're going to be so much happier and so much more free. Because there is no such thing as understanding who we are without him.

There just isn't, there's just no way of doing

[00:57:32] **Chris Legg:** And I know there are religious leaders and in error, maybe in good heartedly, but religious leaders in many of the lists of your listeners lives, Who have placed burdens on them that Christ did not intend. And for us to learn to walk away from some of those lies, like I was too, raised with certain things that were just not right.

Sometimes those messages came from the church. Those were some man's or woman's burdens. Those weren't God's burdens for me. They aren't the same. So just to clarify, I know you've got people who are going like, what do you mean I get to be more free? Have you never been to my church? Like, no. And maybe God hasn't either.

Like, I, I, I think that's just to be set free. If you're not being set free in his grace. You've probably not been given His grace.

[00:58:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So much to think about. And just want to, again, thank you. Thank Mark. Tell him hello for us, but

[00:58:21] **Chris Legg:** I will. I will.

[00:58:22] **Dr. Mark Turman:** For putting this great resource together and just want to thank our audience today. Hope you walked into the coffee shop, called this podcast and that you were able to overhear something that really will bless your life and help you to walk in that grace that Christ makes available to all of us.

And if you like what you heard today, please rate, review us so that other people can find our conversations. I want to thank you again for praying and supporting our ministry that helps us to provide relevant and free resources to people who are trying to follow after Christ, and we'll look forward to seeing you next time on the Denison forum podcast.