



## The Two F-Words

*By David Englehardt*

Have you ever sat by a campfire at night and just stared at the flames? The waves of heat and the dance of the flame tend to capture your eyes. It's absolutely a beautiful thing to watch. But when fire gets out of control, it continues to consume. Uncontained, it can set a whole forest ablaze.

There's a parallel to this dynamic in Scripture. Scripture teaches that sexuality is like a fire. It is an incredible gift of God. Sex between a man and a woman within the context of marriage is like a zenith experience that speaks of the beauty of life that God gives us. But if that fire isn't contained within the proper boundaries of a fireplace, watch out. It can run wild and devastate lives.

This intimate act of sexuality that God gave men and women actually speaks to the beauty of life itself and the beauty of God's gift of life and family and blessing. If God didn't like children, He would have made sex like eating tree bark. But God loves family and children. He created it all and wants to see His creation experience more and more life as He intended. He wants the beautiful life He created on earth to multiply! That's one of His desires for us as humans. That's why sex within marriage between a man and a woman is so beautiful and deeply satisfying.

Interestingly enough, if you look at secular cultures, the more secular the culture, the less they want children. Instead, they want the experience of sexuality minus family, children, and the life God intended. As this view takes hold of a culture, it precipitates the weakening of that culture. How could it not? God gave us family as the primary building block of society itself, and sex as the vehicle for that stability, but we get tricked because of the beauty of the gift. It's an intoxicating flame, remember? But used in the wrong way, it breaks outside of the bounds of the fireplace and starts consuming everything in its path.

That's why God has created boundaries, order, division. He cuts things off in order that we would have a fireplace that rightly contains the flames, this intoxicating beauty that gives warmth and joy within a marriage and ultimately produces the blessings of family, life, and thriving culture.

Jesus says in Matthew 10:3, "*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*"

Isn't Jesus the prince of peace though? How can Jesus be the prince of peace if he didn't come to bring peace? It's because the sword must be exercised in order for peace to come.

You see, division and boundaries and order must be established for peace to flourish. Without boundaries and order and structure, peace cannot exist because the enemy of peace will come in and create chaos.

Jesus says in Matthew 10:35–36,



*I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'*

Christ is describing the distinction that must result from those who are alive in Christ and those who have been corrupted and are being corrupted by the world. This division cannot be avoided and should not be diminished. We need a border and a boundary in order for the people of God to flourish and for the darkness not to corrupt the people of God. And as Jesus points out, this division gets so personal that it even divides families by their response to the gospel.

There are times in our life when a person is so antagonistic against the kingdom of heaven that it actually separates us from them, and we cannot spend time with them. But we can honor and pray for and love from a distance. It's safe to be away if those people are stomping on the seed of the kingdom of heaven in your heart.

Jesus continues in Matthew 10:37—...

*"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*

Anybody who loves the intimate relationships that sexuality and family bring more than God is not worthy of God.

Too often we think "Okay, God, You have to take me and all of the stuff that I think is most important." Jesus says, "No, it's the other way around. You leave all that behind and you follow Me. You leave your ideas and you pick up my ideas. You leave your relationships and you pick up my relationships."

God's distinctions and the boundaries He established to guard them are for the flourishing of His kingdom. It's for the flourishing of the life of the believer.

So, Hebrews 4:12 says...

*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

The Word of God divides the most intimate places inside of our heart and tells us what's right and wrong. It's not about how I feel or what the world tells me I should believe. It doesn't matter how we feel. God's Word actually divides the intentions of your heart to show you God's way. It divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart to remove the darkness so we can live in the light and flourish in the kingdom of heaven.

I recently read a book by Rod Dreher called *The Benedict Option*, and it's stuck with me. *The Benedict Option* was a reference to the Benedictine monks from the fifth century who basically said, "Rome is so crazy. We are going to escape it and build our own communities." So they did. It's like Jesus saying, "When the city doesn't respond, wipe the dust of that city off your feet and leave" (see Matthew 10:14).



The Benedictines took that principle, went away, and started their own communities. Those communities began to flourish and were the seeds of the Middle Ages and the thought and philosophy that would lead into the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and ultimately, the greatest expanse of the kingdom of God that the world had ever seen. There are times and seasons when we as believers need to take a Benedict option. There are times when you must say, “God, I’m following you with everything inside of me. I’m going to cut off the relationships, voices, and influences of the world, and I’m going to follow you with my whole heart, my whole life, all of my relationships.”

When we emerge from the water of baptism, we’re saying, “All of my old life is dead, and I’m following You now, Jesus, with an entire new life.” But instead what we often think is, “I’m going to stick with my whole way of thinking and living within the world but cover it with a bit of Jesus and a dash of God’s Word.”

We must do the opposite. The word of God is living and active. It’s a sword that divides and creates boundary, border, and order.

This reminds me of a story.

Chuck Palahniuk, who wrote a book called *Fight Club*, told a story about how he was with a bunch of really smart writers in the Portland area. When he joined the group, they could say whatever they wanted. Total liberation. These are secular people, so they said foul stuff all the time. It wasn’t really a big deal for them. But then one day, they banished a certain word from the vocabulary of the group. They weren’t allowed to use it in writing or in conversation. It was the F word.

But it wasn’t the classic F word that we all think off. It was the derogatory word for homosexual. That was the F word banished from the group. This one restriction struck Chuck as a bit hypocritical. He said, “I didn’t understand why in such liberal circles, you couldn’t just say whatever you wanted to say.”

This story points out an illuminating truth revealed by the human response to cursing. Cursing is a set of words that have significant prohibitive force. What do I mean by that? I mean every curse word that you think of in your head has a reference point to something that we consider wrong or bad in culture.

Now, the classic F word actually meant having sex outside of wedlock in a gross fashion. It was basically saying sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage is really wicked and really bad. So bad, in fact, that they made a word that meant that thing. And it is a curse in the mouth.

You think about the other curse words and their prohibitive force. The different words represent something that’s dirty, something unclean. It has a sense of prohibitive force that says, “Inherently, there’s a dirtiness about this thing.”

Consider words that are not even real curse words anymore in our culture like “hell” and “damn.” These no longer have real prohibitive force because we’ve forgotten that hell exists. As a culture, we don’t believe there’s such a thing as being damned, so the words have lost the weight of their intent. But there was a time in the world where if you used those terms, they carried significant prohibitive force. Nobody wanted to be damned or go to hell. Because it was a real place to be guarded from, to be protected from.



Then there's the other F word, the one Chuck and his friends decided they wouldn't say. At one point, this word carried prohibitive force. It referred to a relationship outside the bounds of sexual union between a man and woman in which either two men or two women engaged in a sexual act together. There's a prohibitive force attached to that word, right? But the group was banning it, so there would no longer be any prohibitive force around that language.

There is an intentionality to say, "We no longer allow there to be guard lines, guardrails, or fences around anything that has to do with sexuality. You are not even allowed to say the word. It needs to disappear from the language and culture of our most prolific influential writers. We do not want humans in this culture anymore to think there is any prohibition related to sexual anarchy.

Every act outside of a husband and a wife in the beauty and the bounds of marriage is sexual anarchy. It's the destruction of God's way, it's the destruction of the fireplace, and the fire has surely escaped in our culture. The definition of anarchy is this:

*Anarchy is the state of disorder due to the absence or non-recognition of authority.*

It's a state of disorder because we have stopped recognizing the authority of God's way and His word. And because of that, we have total disorder. We have a transgender community right now in which 40% have attempted suicide in that community.

You can undergo surgeries. You can allow transgendered athletes to compete in the Olympics. Put it on a pedestal. Have flags that represent it. But they represent a thing that when people do it, there's a 40% chance they'll attempt suicide. What are we doing? COVID has a 99.85% recovery rate, and some experts say it's higher than that. Transgenderism has a 40% suicide attempt rate.

So we shut down the entire world for this one thing that's has a 99.85% recovery rate, and put the other one – the one that has a 40% rate of suicide attempt – on a pedestal. This is sexual anarchy. It's no longer recognizing the boundary and order of God. The fire that's an incredible blessing of God to warm and bring joy gets out of the fireplace and starts to consume the entire culture.

Author Will Durant, who it's worth noting is an atheist, has written 500-page books on every major culture in the history of the world. He also wrote a book with his wife Ariel about the lessons he learned from studying other cultures. In it he says...

*"No man, however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such a fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs and or institutions of his society..."*

He's talking about the institution of family and marriage. He goes on...

*"for these are the wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group.*



Even this couple who do not acknowledge God or His order understand that sexuality needs constraints. Without them, it brings chaos not just to individuals but to societies as a whole.

Sexuality is a fundamental building block of the family, and if there are no borders and boundaries to preserve the structure of this God-given institution, then the result is unbridled sin that becomes world-ending sin.

This is the problem with the church saying for the last 20 years, “All sin is the same sin.” Because it’s not. Some sin actually ends worlds. Fatherlessness is a world-ending sin. The culture cannot continue with fatherlessness. They don’t just function, they fall apart and implode. Sexual anarchy is likewise a world-ending sin.

People will sometimes ask why, if homosexuality is wrong, did Jesus not talk about it. That’s a great question, and there are a couple of ways to answer it. The first way is to explain that Jesus was communicating on earth with the people of Israel. When Jesus was on earth, he almost only spoke to the people of Israel in an attempt to bring them into the fold of salvation.

When they rejected him, it opened up the door for all the Gentiles to come in. Jesus talked to the people of Israel about the sins that the people of Israel were dealing with. Paul talked to the Gentiles about the sins that the Gentiles were dealing with. Jesus did not say to anyone in any of the gospels, “Stop stabbing your friends in the eyeball with a pencil.” Why not? Because it was not a culturally relevant sin for the people of Israel.

The people of Israel were a secluded people group. They were not integrated like our churches today with the Roman world. They were an individual people group living in their own boundaries and borders distinct from Roman culture. They were not integrated in the sexual culture common in Rome. Jesus was dealing with the sins of the people of Israel because his whole mission on earth was to first offer salvation to Israel.

But the word of God is not just Jesus’ words. It’s Genesis through Revelation.

And in Romans chapter 1, the Apostle Paul says to the Gentiles, and I’m paraphrasing “When we start worshiping the created thing rather than the Creator, we descend into the chaos of sexual sin. One man for man, woman for woman, we throw out God’s order, society starts to collapse, chaos reigns. And God came to save you from that. And He wants to restore you and allow you to walk in His blessing.”

Jesus didn’t address those issues because that wasn’t part of His audience’s context or the purview of why He came. He came to sacrifice Himself for the sins of mankind.

Sexuality has clearly gone amiss in our culture. So what do we as Christians need to do about it? First, we need to recognize that for those who are dealing with sexual sin, Jesus loves them and He gave his life for them. The woman who poured oil over Jesus’ feet came out of prostitution. She was living in sexual anarchy, and she was unbelievably loved by Jesus.

Luke 7:39 says,



*"When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."*

Even her touching Jesus was unacceptable for the Pharisee. That's how much their culture hated sexual sin. Even the touch of these sinners was abhorred. Verses 40–42 continue...

*"Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."*

*"Tell me, teacher," he said.*

*"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"*

The Pharisee is caught, and says, "Well, I suppose, Lord, that the one that owed you the great debt." Notice that Jesus did not say to the Pharisee, "All sins are the same. Your sin and her sin are equal." He said, "One owed 50 and the other 500 denarii." Because sexual anarchy is a heavy sin. So Jesus answers him in Luke 7:43–47...

*"Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."*

*"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.*

*Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.."*

The promise is that Jesus greatly loves the man and woman struggling in sexual anarchy. And that when the love of Jesus is released to that person and that's reciprocated, they're overwhelmed with the love of God and their entire life changes. That's the first position that we take. We don't live this life that says all sin is the same. Jesus didn't say that. But He says, "For the one who is forgiven much, loves much and is restored much."

The other thing is that we as believers need to be able to have a sword. We need to be able to say, "Sexual anarchy is really bad."

I understand the pressure. To even say that homosexuality is a sin to some of your friends or coworkers could cost you a lot. You could lose friends, opportunities for advancement, even a job. The church has been so unbelievably quiet about this, and the enemy loves it because when you get rid of all prohibitory force, then sexual anarchy can spread like wildfire across a culture. Believers need to be able to say, "Sexual anarchy is destructive. Sexual anarchy creates chaos in our culture." If we don't use the sword of biblical truth to identify God-given boundaries and borders, the fire of sexual anarchy will consume our world.



So together we must answer the call to be salt and light. Salt is a preservative to rotting meat. Light sheds order in the darkness. Light is not for the church. You're not called to come to the church and be light. We need light in the world where it's dark and confusing and confounding. We need order and structure to be able to save this gift that God's given us for the flourishing of our families and our lives and our future. For a generation the enemy has tried to steal the identity of sons and daughters.

Our identity is found in Christ, and He restores who God originally intended us to be. We're made brand new. And it's this incredible restoration that we as the church are called to say, "There's borders and there's boundary for safety and flourishing to protect us from the chaos that the enemy wants to bring into our churches and our communities and our nation."

I don't know if our nation is already too gone too far over the edge. I pray that it's not. I pray that God brings a revival. But if a revival comes, a revival is not just feeling good. It's about setting ourselves rightly in accordance with God's Word. You have to remember that Christendom is lit ablaze in a time in Rome where this kind of living is proliferated. God is not scared of our brokenness.

He tells us to come and repent of our brokenness. And then Jesus lavishes His love on us. And so what do we do? We love people deeply by saying, "This is right and this is wrong. God has an incredible plan for you that will blow your mind if you could see it, that's so good and so lovely and so complex and so beautiful. If you'll trust God, He can set you free from the chaos and anarchy you've lived in. He'll make you sons and daughters and lead you into life.

### **Take Your Study Further**

*For biblical passages dealing with sexual sin: See Leviticus 18:22, Jeremiah 13:26–27, Matthew 15:19–20, Colossians 3:5–6*

*For guidance to avoid sexual immorality: See 1 Corinthians 6:8, Ephesians 5:3, Thessalonians 4:3*

*For inspiration to be set apart from the world: See John 15:19, John 17:15–18, Romans 12:2, 1 Peter 1:16*

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