

## **“Sex is important, but not *that* important”**

### **Various texts**

The idea of a parent doing anything for their children is an idea we recognize. But a couple of years ago I read an article where this idea was brought to an extreme.

Kathy Lette is the name of an Australian-British Writer,  
born in Australia and living in the UK,  
she was once married to Geoffrey Robinson, the well-known lawyer,  
together they have a son, Julius.

Julius has autism,  
and has to contend with the extra obstacles this condition brings.  
One obstacle is the social difficulties that Julius has to endure.  
This is what Kathy Lette writes:

*Since puberty, my son had attempted everything to attract girls. Seven years of endless rejection meant that, by age 20, my son's self-esteem was very low. One exasperated mum suggested we frequent a brothel. But who would take them? Not their mothers. When we asked our male friends, all that was left was a cartoon plume of smoke as they ran for the hills. Wracked with anxiety, I was driving home one night when, on an impulse, I suddenly swerved off into the red-light district. It's just as well I panicked and raced homeward, as the next week a father was prosecuted for curb-crawling, while trying to pick up a sex worker for his son with autism. The whole experience got me thinking about sex for the differently abled. How does someone with special needs fulfil their inalienable right to the pursuit of life, liberty and human sexual contact?*

It's a startling paragraph isn't it?

There are so many difficulties with what Kathy Lette has written.  
Once we get over the shock of a parent considering this action for her son,  
we also notice that she isn't the only one;  
she tells us a father was prosecuted for the same thing.

Then there is the selfishness of this line of thinking;  
for the sake of a felt need, Kathy Lette considers supporting an industry that,  
despite the romantic lens we might view it through,  
is implicated in human trafficking and the abuse of women.

And then at the end,  
she speaks of human sexual contact as an *inalienable right*.  
It is very problematic to speak of sexual contact as a right,  
because rights are things we can demand,  
and when sex is demanded rather than received as a consented privilege  
then that's the first step towards normalizing sexual assault.



Now, how are Adam and Eve going to fulfill this command?

God hasn't shared with them the ability to make people out of dust, so how?  
They're going to have sex, that's how! Adam made love to his wife Eve,  
we are told in Ch 4, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.

And Genesis isn't the only place where sex is commanded.

In the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 7,  
Paul instructs husbands and wives to not have a break from sex for too long,  
lest temptation get the better of them and someone has an affair.

So this is one indication that sex is really important to God, he *commands* it.

But note that the sex that's commanded occurs within a certain context.  
Adam and Eve are created as husband and wife,  
that terminology is used from the very beginning,  
they're not simply created as man and woman.  
The sex they have is marital sex.

And another indication that marital sex is important to God  
is that his word *celebrates* it.

We celebrate important things, don't we?  
Your family members are important, and so you celebrate their birthdays.  
Your sporting team is important to you, and so you celebrate a win.  
Married sex is important and so the Bible celebrates it.

When was the last time you read through the Song of Songs?

It's a remarkable piece of writing, which isn't only about sex;  
it's about love, it's about faithfulness, there's a quite a dark section about loss,  
but yes, there are some very erotic passages, especially chapter 4.

Your breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies.  
6 Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill  
of incense.

And then a few verses later

Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.  
I have come into my garden ... I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my  
honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

Now what are they talking about there? Well, I'll give you a hint,  
they're not talking about browsing the buffet at their local RSL!  
This is erotic language, celebrating the sexual intimacy of marriage.  
That the Holy Spirit would speak in such a way

gives us an indication of the importance of sex.

But you also *protect* what's important, don't you?

Important things might be commanded, they may be celebrated,  
but they're also *protected*.

Before Kathy Lette loses the plot in her article she does speak quite openly

about her desire to protect her vulnerable son.

*Aged nine, she writes, he came home with a sticker on his back reading “Kick me, I’m a retard.” You might as well have ripped my heart out of my chest and stomped on it. Consequently, I became ridiculously overprotective. I would never let him out of the house without enough in his backpack to set up a comfortable wilderness homestead. The mother of a kid with special needs has to be his bouncer, legal advocate, medical researcher, full-time executive and – once he hits his teens – possibly even his pimp. And that’s where the article takes its sad turn. But she’s right about the desire to protect, isn’t she?*

And, because sex is so important,

God also seeks to protect it by placing it within boundaries.

In the book of Proverbs this is the advice given to young men:

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.

—using the same kind of metaphor as what we find in Song of Songs—

Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love. Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man’s wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman? For your ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all your paths.

Sex should be kept within the marriage, an approach shared by the NT writers.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, we’re told in Hebrews 13:4 for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

The reason in both testaments for protecting sex

is because God will judge us if we don’t!

God cares about sex, and so if we use it in a cavalier way then he will hold us accountable.

But the positive side of this story is to say that God’s boundaries are there to protect something that’s very valuable.

The Bible is very positive about sex, which may be a surprise to some people, because all they *think* they hear from Christians is ‘don’t’.

But sex is much more important than that,

so it’s spoken of with a bit more sophistication than what people realize.

However ... it’s not *that* important.

And it’s not that important in two senses.

First of all, failure in this area is never final.

We are living in an age where mistakes are never forgotten nor forgiven.

You would have seen news of the latest terrorist incident on London Bridge.

The offender was stopped by local Londoners who were hailed as heroes, that is, until it was revealed that one hero was himself a convicted murderer who was attending the same rehabilitation programme as the terrorist.

*"He's no hero!"* screamed the headlines in the days that followed.

You would have thought that this could've been reported as a redemption story;  
a man who once took a life is now the one who saves lives;  
But no, we don't forget and we don't forgive.

Is it the case that our failures when it comes to sex are in the same category?

Is sex *so important* and failure *so horrendous* that we cannot be forgiven?

Our first Bible reading assures us that this is not the case, 1 Cor 6, from v9

Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

So Paul begins with another statement about God's judgment on these sins, but then he continues, verse 11 And that is what some of you *were*.

Paul recognizes there's been a change;

the old behaviours are no longer part of the Corinthian's identity.

So what's happened?

Is it the case that the Corinthians have just managed to get their act together?

No, rather it's that they've become recipients of God's grace,

But you were washed, you were sanctified,

you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Because of the work of God, sinners have had their impurities washed away, those who were once failures have been declared righteous.

And it's on account of this new identity, gifted by God to us,

that we then go on to flee from sexual immorality, as Paul describes later.

So sex is not so important that our failures in this area need to define us,

But its importance is also diminished when we realize

that there is so much more to being human than having sex.

One of the consequences of removing sex from the boundaries provided by marriage is that it's become much more central to people's identity

than it was ever designed to be.

The question of whether you are gay or straight,

whether you're a virgin or not,

whether you are partnered or remain single,

these are questions that cause much more anxiety these days than previously.

But the Bible isn't that interested in categorizing humans in this way.

Our second reading is a good example. Galatians 3:26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

How is Christian identity described here?

Not in terms of race, not in terms of gender, not in terms of sexuality.  
Rather Paul describes his friends as Children of God.

Some people express their identity through the clothes that they wear,  
but how is the Christian clothed? Paul says we are clothed with Christ.

For others their family heritage is a key identifier,  
but which family does the Christian identify with?  
If you belong to Christ, Paul says, you are Abraham's seed.  
You belong to that spiritual family who've received the promises of God.  
This means Paul can speak of us receiving adoption to sonship, Ch 4:5  
And in our Christian family it's God himself who is our Father, Ch 4:6  
Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,  
the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba*, Father."

And if we do see ourselves as children of God  
then we'll want to please God with how we use sex, that's for certain,  
but it also means that sex is no longer the centre of our being.  
The centre of our being becomes our relationship to God through Christ.

This provides a re-orientation of life's priorities.  
Instead of asking "How will I find my sexual fulfillment?",  
we'll start to ask "What does my role in the family look like?",  
"What task does my Heavenly Father have in store for me?",  
and so it's the answers to those questions that become our focus.

Can you live without sex? Of course you can,  
because it's not the most important thing.  
The most important thing is being God's child.

Speaking of children,  
if Kathy Lette has the wrong approach to thinking about a child's sexuality,  
then what constitutes the right approach?  
The right approach is to teach them the truths we've thought about today.  
It's to take a cue from Deuteronomy 6:7. Speaking about the laws of God,  
Moses says to the Israelites Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you  
sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Teach them that sex is a great gift from God,  
but that precious gifts need to be looked after and protected.  
Don't teach that sex is for adults, teach that sex is for married adults.  
But also teach them that there's so much more to life,  
and help them discover what it means to be God's child,  
let that be the center of their identity.

I'll lead us in prayer.