A Biblical View of Sexual Intimacy

Part 2 of 2: Ministering to People with Sexual Issues
with Darrell Bock, Gary Barnes, Debby Wade
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So I feel like we’re barely getting started here. We’re in Genesis 1 and 2, but we’re looking at the things that get in the way. Obviously after Genesis 1 and 2, you’ve got the fall of Genesis 3, and what gums up the works, and we’ve been talking about that a little bit, but part of what we’re driving towards is creating an environment. I mean, the responses to sexuality are set up by how you build the relationships before you even get to sexuality, if I can say it that way, and I think that’s part of what we’re talking about here. When we’re talking about how the impact of families and how people are raised help them to form how they’re interacting, and view other people in general, and the other gender in particular, all those things feed into where you end up once the switch is flipped, and you’re there. So I think it’s smart to think about that, because sometimes we just ignore it, which means that we often times are plopped into, if I can say it that way, not a very elegant metaphor, but we’re plopped into situations that have been long time in development.

So what advice let me read the list of the types of things we’re going to cover at the conference? We’re going to deal with, and it literally is a potpourri of stuff, we’ve got human sexual trafficking on one level, which is a whole different way of handling people as commodities when it comes to sexuality. Domestic sexual abuse, which is probably a topic that isn’t sufficiently appreciated for not only its presence, but then prevalence. We’ve put together pornography and marital unfaithfulness in the same track, because we think those are related. Then we’ve got another track that’s going to be same sex attraction and orientation, and gender identity issues. That’s going to have its own particular conversations, because the issue of how to even talk about same sex relationships, the way in which identity takes place, the issue of choice versus nature, all those kinds of questions are going to lay in there. The fourth track is the hookup generation and co-habitation. Just the whole environment that college kids and singles often times actually find themselves in, in our society at large. The fifth track, which we had linked to something else, but we’ve decided to pull it out and make it separate, is sex abuse and the church. How does the church manage or attempt to manage situations that pop up, and what happens should something happen, and how do you cope with those situations. There are two sides to this equation. There’s setting up the way the whole program is structured so you protect kids, but should it not work then what do you do with the fall out on the other end, both of which are important questions.

So that’s the scope of what we’re dealing with.
Dr. Gary Barnes: What an awesome idea Darrell.

Dr. Gary Barnes: This is wonderful that the church is going to be able to be served by these topics.

Dr. Darrell Bock: What’s interesting is as I thought about this in the relationship of the Center, and what the Center has been trying to do. Normally what we do discussions on sexuality, we hold out the ideal, and we’re trying to drive people to what they should be moving towards, kind of like they began, but the reality as I said is that we’ve got people that are plopped down in the middle of real life situations, and if all you do is talk about the positive, and you don’t talk about how to minister to people where they are finding themselves, and where they’ve landed you really haven’t equipped yourself to minister in this area.

Debbie Wade: If we go back years, and years ago when the church hardly talked about sex, you know that it couldn’t even address or approach any of the wounds created by this because we can’t talk about sex so certainly we can’t talk about sexual wounded-ness.

Dr. Darrell Bock: In all honesty, and I may get my hand slapped for saying this, I can’t imagine thinking about doing this conference 40 years ago here. I can’t imagine the topic would even be broached.

Debbie Wade: Kudos for DTS extremeness.

Dr. Gary Barnes: If it was, I’d have a hard time imagining anybody coming.

Debbie Wade: Right.

Dr. Darrell Bock: That’s an interesting idea, and if it was what kind of level of expertise could you gather around the topic.

Dr. Gary Barnes: That’s another factor.
**Dr. Darrell Bock**

I mean we’re not here to beat on the past, but I really do think this is an unusual opportunity for church communities to gather around and see the scope of what we’re dealing with. The temptation here in dealing with this topic was to deal with only one or two of these, and the reason we didn’t go there, even though it would’ve been much more cost effective, etc., was we wanted to actually impact people with the scope of what it is we’re actually talking about here, and the variety of things, because it’s entirely conceivable that when you put the whole thing out here, and you talk about where individual people are they may be following into four or five of these areas at once. So if you only deal with one you’ve actually only dealt with a part of what’s going on.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**

It’s a great way to not only help equip the church, but it’s about validating those who were seeing their issue being addressed, and it’s not just an issue of somebody else, where it’s broadly trying to touch all of the different issues.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

I think that the hard thing here is another aspect that makes this a challenge is I think in ministering to this area, because you’re dealing with so many levels. You know we’ve talked about single people, we’ve talked about parents, we’ve talked about kids, and you’re actually challenging the church on a variety of ministry levels simultaneously. It isn’t a case of this is a senior pastor issue, or this is a youth pastor issue, or this is a college, career minister’s area. If the church is really going to think about this area, their staff as a team needs to think about how to minister, and view this area.

**Debbie Wade**

I’m just thinking about working with families, that I work with several families who somebody in the family struggles with same sex attraction. So in the some of the families that I work with it is the children, or one of the children, but in some of the families I work with it’s one of the parents. So who do you send that to? It’s not just the youth pastor or the marriage pastor. We need to be tending to these issues as family issues, because marital unfaithfulness, it impacts the whole family.
**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
I am very familiar with a situation in which a wife has left a husband having to declare herself to be a lesbian. They’ve been married for over 30 years, and so the debris is everywhere. It’s not just the husband, it’s the kids, and I don’t remember if this particular family has grandkids yet or not, but I mean they were on the edge of it if not. So again, we tend to think about going perhaps in one direction, but it often is quite a mix that we’re dealing with. So the hope has been that by dealing with the scope of what we’re facing here that people get a sense at really how many different areas this deals with, and our hope is that the churches that decide to come to this, or even the leadership that decide to participate in it, elders levels and that kind of thing. People that are interested in it, that it won’t just be one person from a church that shows up, but really a staff thinks about tackling this, and going after, and wrestling with if we were to get intentional about how to think about ministering in these areas. What would that look like?

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
I’m just so glad that you’re stepping up and DTS is behind this, because I know that recently I’ve been in several different churches where there’s been a special topic around sexuality, one or another, maybe multiples, and it’s where the church has kind of risked saying okay we’re going to have this be an open conversation, and it’s like people are finally saying I am so glad this is something we can talk about now. It’s been a need, and now we can talk about it. So it just seems to be so well-received by the congregation members once the church does step up, and gets behind it, and says we know this is where you’re living, and we want to minister to you where you’re living.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
Now we’re not going to be able to obviously do this in the time that is left, because the time is slipping away from us, but I’d like to take a shot at getting the ball rolling here. Let’s assume the best, I’ve got a church. They are planning on coming to the conference, and they are planning on thinking about addressing these areas, and thinking structurally as a church about how to address these areas, what kind of general advice would you give them as they move into an area, and I suspect that there would be a little bit of nervousness about this. You aren’t just going to dive in.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
I would say the first important thing for a church is to really think about this as a process. Don’t think about this as you come to the conference, you get a program in a box, and then you take it back to your church.
The Table Podcast  A Biblical View of Sexual Intimacy

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  Yeah that’s not happening. I can tell you that from the planning standpoint.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  Yeah even if you did try to deliver that, that would be a big problem, but think about it as a process in the first early step in the process is just an opening conversation, and making room for understanding, and to provide a hearing, and to say help us to learn as shepherds the needs of the sheep, but also we do have that theologian word. That’s good through all times, through all decades, and so we want to be faithful with the eternal word of God, to be relevant to where you are today in this. So I think this is really best thought of as this process approach, and this is in the early stage of the process. This is the big goal is just understanding. Let’s grow in understanding on both sides what the needs are, what the eternal truths are in how we can grow these things together.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  So you get the conversation going.

**Debbie Wade**  I think one of the ways of getting the conversation going is to invite questions to help know where the congregation is. Where I attend, and we weren’t members there when the pastor did this, but it’s one of the things I thought this is going to be a really open church. He was going to do a passage on just sexuality, and intimacy, and God’s design, and so they opened up, set it up, that you could go online, and ask any questions about sexuality, and singleness, or marriage. Put whether you were single, female, or male, and around what age, and then everything else anonymous, but that gave them an idea of really where the church was, and what they were curious about, and what questions they had, and what they were needing, and it’s been just really neat to see them as that church has grown, and as the pastor has come back and been willing to touch on topics on weekends, or have special extended trainings in the afternoon over certain topics, and knowing what kind of programs they want to develop. So I think that was a great way of inviting the dialog to take place. Not just we want to talk to you, and teach, but we want to know what you’re interested in talking about.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  We got to do some listening to start off. It’s not very different than evangelism in some ways where I tell people that one of the mistakes Christians make in evangelism is they want to dump the message on the person before they really know who the person is.

**Debbie Wade**  Don’t know their story.
Dr. Darrell Bock: Exactly, they don’t know their story. So there’s a lot of listening that needs to happen in good evangelism so that you can begin to know how to engage with where the person is actually coming from, and face what they’re actually asking about, and those kinds of things. So you start off with you understand it’s a process. What I hear you describing is creating an environment in which questions can be, and I think this is one of the challenges churches face, how in the world can we do this? I’m going to use a word, and it may be not be the best word, but how in the world can we do this safely? How in the world can we do this in a way that the person will come forward, and they will come forward, because they won’t feel that they’re at risk if they come forward?

Dr. Gary Barnes: Well the second step in the process I would say is an education step. So we got the dialog, we’ve got the education. So there’s a lot that we know now that we didn’t used to know just from good research, discovered truths. So it’s taking the eternal word of God along with these new discovered truths, and just raising our awareness by educating, helping us to understanding that these are things that we now can say are predictive of these outcomes. These are things that we can now say are preventative of these negative outcomes. These are our better understandings of the complex and multidimensional nature of this problem now so we can’t have a simplistic approach to this particular kind of problem. So that’s a very next helpful step in the process I would say is the education step, and I think your conference is going to really leap us ahead in that part.

Dr. Darrell Bock: So we begin a dialog and a conversation. We begin the process of education and it looks like you got a process, I feel like I’m being led down a prim rose path.

Dr. Gary Barnes: I’m glad you asked!

Debbie Wade: It’s coaching.

Dr. Gary Barnes: A coaching step, so the coaching step is actually an equipping step. It’s actually helping to bring to bear information into skilled acquisition. How do I begin to build new patterns in my life that can give me a different outcome rather than you keep doing the same thing, and expecting a different outcome? That’s again informed both by the eternal truths of God as well as the discovered truths of God.
I’ll tell you one of the reasons you’re calling this a process is that it’s really hard to get to the coaching without the conversation, and without the education that builds the foundation for it.

That’s true, but I don’t want to describe it just as a straight line linear process.

No it’s more interactive, it’s a dynamic. I get that, but there are dimensions in play that are all bouncing off of each other as you’re flowing along through the process.

That’s exactly right, and then I would say that fourth step that’s key is realizing there’s also a role for referring.

There comes a point where I’ve hit the limit.

You know I can do this much here, but you’re going to need this much. So it’s about having collaborative working models that are sharing the same kinds of foundations so you don’t have to be concerned about your referring taking a different direction.

I keep approaching this conference, taking that approach, really the referral may come first from those of us recommending to churches to come to this conference, or church staff to come to this conference. So the referral really is we’re going to send you here, and –

From the therapist to the conference.

Right to learn how to dialog. Then in learning how that dialog, you’re going to be introduced to some education, and some equipping. So really that protocol or even this is a great setup for starting that protocol in that it’s not completely linear.
Dr. Darrell Bock: Actually that’s part of the intent of why we’ve structured this, and done this the way we have is to get it out on the table. It is to be the first step, and it’s designed to launch the first step of the process, and then leave it in the interaction that happens between the people that we bring, and the people who attend, them to think through alright how do I localize this for my particular community, and how does our staff do this together, and how can we make it work, and what mistakes should we avoid in going there? There’s no doubt that when you walk into this area, you risk walking into a powder keg, I mean if it’s poorly managed. So all that is a part of what we’re trying to pull off as we work with this, but you can see that the intent is to walk into the middle of where things are, and if I can say it, the mess that people often times have gotten themselves into, and to see how can we stretch out a hand, and reach in and seek to minister in those kinds of situations.

Dr. Gary Barnes: You know we as a church of all people should be fully aware of our brokenness, and I mean we should not be surprised by this array of needs.

Dr. Darrell Bock: It was what our credentials upon entry.

Dr. Gary Barnes: It reminds me of Ed Bloom’s quote that even marriage itself is two depraved people struggling together for oneness.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Yes because Ed was such a positive person.

Dr. Gary Barnes: I mean if we’re really honest and real about our true nature, we know that there is really not one of us that’s got a higher moral ground over anybody else. We know it’s all about grace.

Dr. Darrell Bock: We all have the same need.

Dr. Gary Barnes: We all have equal need of grace, and we all have brokenness. It’s going to show itself in different ways between us. My brokenness might not show quite as much on the outward view as somebody else’s brokenness, but I don’t have less brokenness. So I think we as the church can just receive that truth, and just say okay that’s where we are. Let’s work with where we are. Let’s move forward with this.
The Table Podcast  |  A Biblical View of Sexual Intimacy

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  |  So I’m going to close off, because our time is up, which is frightening, and ask one more question; if you were to give one piece of advice to a pastor or someone on a staff in this area as we’re kind of summing this up, and I’m going to let you each have a shot at one thing? What would you say to the pastors as we wrap up, and I’m from the South, so ladies get to go first.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  |  I was hoping you’d say that.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  |  It’ll give you more time to think about it.

**Debbie Wade**  |  You know because I’m aware of how much wounded-ness is out there and how much shame, my message would be encouraging churches how to come alongside in love those on a journey instead of, I think we know how to invite the lost in well, but we don’t know how to journey very well with those who fall in their Christian walk, or those who are really already wounded. So I think we’ve got to learn to do that with truth and grace, but not shaming them.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  |  You know as I’ve asked you this question, a question has popped in my head, and it’s bugging me so much I’m going to follow it up, and that’s this; I suspect when you walk into this area, and you open the door that it’s far more likely, and I may be wrong, but I think it’s far more likely that a woman would initially come forward and raise the issue, and step into the pastoral care than it would be that a man would, which from a staff standpoint of a church is already going to introduce a problem, because most of your staff is going to be predominately male. So how do you bridge that, okay we’re going to launch in, and here we go, and boom, that’s the reality you’re likely to face?

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  |  I would say that parallels the same with the secular counseling office as well. It’s not the guy who calls up asking for marriage counseling. So it’s not the guy who walks in first to the office.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  |  Right it’s often the women.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  |  Right so thank God women have sensitivity for what they’re true needs are, and guys need to learn from that and be responsive.
The Table Podcast  
**A Biblical View of Sexual Intimacy**

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
The question that I’m asking through is from the standpoint of the staff that is male. Right and the likelihood is if you do this, your influx is primarily going to come from the female population of your church. What kind of advice or wisdom would you give to the pastor about that expectation and that likelihood?

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
Increase your female staff ratio.

**Debbie Wade**  
Hire female staff, whether it’s counselors on staff, or females who are trained in knowing how to mentor, and come alongside, but absolutely.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
Or have female therapist, who is also serving in their local church to take that serving role in their church.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
I think that one of the things that become staff sensitive, and this depends obviously how people view with this, but some churches are nervous about male staff counseling female members.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
Right that’s another whole session we can talk about. We can fit that into one of your workshops.

**Debbie Wade**  
That would fit into that sexual abuse in the church that we can do a whole hour on that.

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  
Healthy boundaries are all a part of that. We can work with that.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
Exactly right and I think getting that out on the table. I mean if you’re going to walk into this area, this is one of the things you’ve got to be ready to think about it it seems to me. We’ve already established the principle that we raise topics in the midst of our podcast, and you’re coming back, and here’s what we’re going to talk about. Okay, Debbie you’ve given us something on the table, and then I rudely interrupted you with that question that popped in my mind, but I thought man that’s pretty basic. I don't think I can let that one go. Gary what would you say?
Dr. Gary Barnes: So the first thing that pops into my mind to your question is it makes me think of there are several different pastors in town that I’ve had the great opportunity to be with, and learn from, and what’s really striking to me about them is there spirit of teachable-ness, and their sensing a need in their church that they didn’t feel adequately trained and equipped for in their seminary preparation, and they’re not thinking of themselves as I have to be the answer man for everything that our church does, but I can be the lead shepherd.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Right I can facilitate –

Dr. Gary Barnes: I can facilitate, and we can meet this need with people besides me. That spirit, that collaborative cooperative spirit is so great for the church when a pastor brings that to a church, and I’ve just seen such wonderful models of it, and if you’re a pastor, and you’re wondering which model you’re going to grow and build, I really encourage you to grow and build this teachable cooperative collaborative model.

Debbie Wade: Team work.

Dr. Darrell Bock: The last 90 seconds was brought to you by the society for the teachable-ness pastor Gary Barnes, chairmen, treasure, president, and.

Dr. Gary Barnes: There are some great examples out there.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Well I want to thank y’all for taking the time to come in and kind of introducing this topic, and kind of getting us started. I know we’ve kind of moved around, and there isn’t any rhyme or reason to the conversation that we’ve had, but I suspect that the kind of, how can I say it, the kind of dynamic nature of what we’re talking about is actually part of the dynamics of what this kind of a conversation actually is and becomes. You don’t get your hands in control. So we thank you for teaching us words like dialogue, and education, and coaching, and referral.

Dr. Gary Barnes: Yes, wow you’re a quick learner!

Dr. Darrell Bock: Yeah I’m going to sleep tonight with those four words ringing in my head.
The Table Podcast  A Biblical View of Sexual Intimacy

**Dr. Gary Barnes**  We call it the deck R model.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  The deck R model, well I don't know if I’ll remember that or not, but I do want to thank y'all for coming in. We thank you for joining us on The Table. We do hope that you’ll consider coming to the conference that we’re holding where Jerusalem meets Vegas, and it’s an opportunity for you, your church staff, and your leaders to think through how do we minister to this very key segment of what goes on in life, and our society around us, and how will it help us to be more effective as a church community.