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GREEN



WHY WAIT?

FANTASY BY BETTY CHURCHILL • CHAPTER EXCERPT

Fantasy is a collection of insights from several contributing writers, about all the stuff women talk about and some they don't, but should. Sex, dating, relationships, the "m" word (not marriage, the other one), but, of course, we talk about marriage, too, as well as the beautiful people, the need to be in control and how God, Jesus and the Spirit fit into it all.

Like its male counterpart, Flesh, Fantasy is divided into three sections: small group discussion material, topical articles, and a month of daily devotionals.

Partial List of Topics: Masturbation, How Far is Too Far, The Role of Fathers, Confession-Forgiveness, Community, Filling of the Spirit, Cosmetic Surgery, Worship, Singleness, Faith, Homosexuality, Why Wait?, Body/Self Image, and Pornography.

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FANTASY

Why Should You?

Because it's a natural part of being human.
Because it's part of who I am, and I need to explore and express my sexuality.
Because it's unhealthy to not do it.
Because how else will I know if I'm compatible with my partner before I marry him?
Because it's fun.
Because everyone else is doing it.
Because I need to connect more intimately with my boyfriend.
Because I need to show him I love him.
Because I really want to.
Because I can't help myself.
Because we're going to get married anyway.
Because I'm a freak if I don't.
Because I've already done it.
Did I say because it's fun?

At least that's what everyone says.

I just flipped through the channels and had the opportunity to watch the *Sunday Night Sex Show* (though it's not Sunday) with Sue Johanson, a grandma recommending sex toys—explaining some contraption that I chose to not let my imagination try to figure out. Somewhere between *Fear Factor* and *Law & Order* reruns, I saw actual sex in progress on *Nip/Tuck* and a bed full of topless women with the appropriately regulated blurs on the *Howard Stern* show. On *WE* there was a show about lesbian women who like to dress as men and do a little dirty dancing with other women. So I turned to the main network channels thinking they might be more tame. On *Inside Edition* they showed the controversial Carl's Jr. Paris Hilton ad several times over while discussing just how controversial it is. And then, of course, there was the obligatory and ubiquitous Victoria's Secret ad. Just another night of relaxing TV, and just what I need in my head before I go to bed—like I need a fungal disease. Frankly, it was tempting to watch most of it.

Between the ages of thirteen and twenty-three, the average person sees about a hundred thousand sex acts or implied sex acts on TV. Only 19 percent of those acts are within the context of marriage. We're saturated with images and ideas of sex, and

little of it has anything to do with real sex—sex as God intended it. If it's true that our values and desires are shaped by what we're exposed to (and who needs to spend millions of dollars on a study to prove that, though it's been done), it's no wonder that statistics also say that 52 percent of women have sex by age eighteen and 75 percent before they get married.

For women, there is something in us that wants to be Paris Hilton (okay, maybe not her, exactly, but at least Jennifer Aniston, Lindsay Lohan, or the like), something that wants to be that sexy and desirable, to be that sought after, to be that ideal beauty. I think one of the best ways to explain the difference between men and women and our sexual desires is to say that when men look at a steamy sex scene in a movie they want the woman; when women see such a scene, it's not so much that we want the guy as much as we want to be that woman. We want to be wanted and known, physically and emotionally. Not to mention the time-honored truth that girls do just want to have fun. And if that means we have to look like that or act like that to get what we want, then all right. That seems to be the ticket, according to the wisdom of the world.

The World Health Organization estimates that there are 100 million sex acts performed worldwide every day. That seems like a whole lot of somethin' goin' on. I know you're thinking it, so let me do the math for you. There are 6.2 billion people in the world. Divide that by ... that's actually only about 2 percent of people having sex every day. So, really, not so much is goin' on as one might think. (Though I'm sure a good part of that 2 percent is goin' on on your college campus.)

Regardless of participation, sex seems to consume a lot of people's brain energy—apparently guys think about sex every seven seconds or some preposterous statistic like that. (If that's actually true, how does anything ever get done in this world? I mean, really ... seven seconds?!) People are driven by it, pay for it, sacrifice for it, are controlled by it, even kill for it. Wars have even been started over it. (Granted, not your major world wars, more like tribal disputes and such—but wars nonetheless.)

Is it really just those few seconds of pleasure that are so powerful? What is the power of sex? I'm going to wager that it's more about the emotions and meaning connected to the act—the intimacy, the passion, the sense of being as close to a person as you can possibly be for just a few moments. It's the feeling of trust and

control because it involves exposing the most vulnerable part of one's soul. It's about the power it communicates and holds over a person's heart and mind.

Sex can make you feel more alive than ever before, and it can suck the life right out of you. It can literally create life and literally destroy it. It's beautiful and dangerous and powerful and risky. It's kind of like a wild animal that we treat like a big stuffed toy (very cute until you get mauled).

ARE WE ANY DIFFERENT?

I do not live in a vacuum, as has just been made evident by my cable TV viewing. Given the statistics listed earlier, I can only assume that there is a good chance you have already had sex and are currently doing so. (I mean, not right this minute. ... You know what I mean.) You've thought and maybe even believe the reasons to have sex listed above. I know that everything you are about to read is contrary to what you hear, see, and read—on TV, in movies, on the radio, on the Web, in magazines, from your friends, from your professors, maybe even from your doctors, your therapist, and your parents. It could all easily be turned into a *Saturday Night Live* skit or be mocked on *The Daily Show*.

It is not my intent to rant about the downfall of our society. Really, why would we expect it to be any different? There is a place to speak out in an effort to turn the tide, but this is not it. My desire, rather, is to point you to the biblical challenge to live an alternative lifestyle, a life that goes against the mainstream, against your peers, against your sex ed teacher, and against your flesh—and it may even feel, at some level, like it's against your own heart. But I'm asking you to enter into the conversation. Consider the gravity of your choices before you allow yourself to be swept up in the current zeitgeist.

I'm also not naive enough to believe that, just because the Bible says we should or shouldn't do something, that is motivation enough for most people. Sadly, that's true even among many who claim to be Christ followers. Statistics show that those junior-high and high-school students who made a commitment to abstinence through the popular program True Love Waits waited on average only eighteen months longer than other students to have sex, according to Lauren Winner in her book *Real Sex*. Winner also referenced a study done in the 1990s showing that among Christian singles surveyed one-third were virgins. That means two-third weren't. Apparently we (the religious types) have not done a good job of

motivating people to live differently than the rest of the world.

People who do make a commitment to abstain from sex before marriage are considered freakish and/or geekish. It did not take more than one episode for the Christian guy on *The Bachelorette* to get booted once he “came out” with his virginity and commitment to abstinence. (interestingly, I work with hundreds of people who would have been booted off that show—shoot, maybe even thousands.) You know the producers were giddy with delight to discover a virgin in their midst. Now, that’s some good TV, my friend.

WHY SHOULDN'T YOU?

So, why in the world would you want to read a book like this or, much less, make such a choice for chastity? What is going to motivate you to say no when he’s looking at you with those big, beautiful “bedroom eyes,” as my friend’s mother used to call them? You had better come up with some good reasons now, in the light of day, that will hold up under the pressures of hormones, the desires of the flesh, and the heat of the moment.

Here’s a truism: In order to deny yourself a desire, you have to replace that desire with a stronger desire, something you want more. For example, in order to deny myself a big spoonful of the chocolate frosting that’s in my fridge right this moment—frosting that’s calling my name—I have to desire to fit into those smaller-size jeans more than I desire that rich ... fudgy ... creamy ... frosting ...

I’m back. (Oops—a little bit of chocolate on the spacebar.) Back to the topic at hand.

So, really, why shouldn’t you?

Because you could get pregnant?

Because you could get a disease?

Because you don’t want to get hurt?

Because maybe sex isn’t even *really* what you want?

Because you want to hold out for sex as God intended it to be?

Because you want to give your husband the gift of your virginity?

Because you don’t want to lie in bed with your husband and have flashbacks of all the men you’ve been with and live with the guilt and comparison?

All good thoughts and valid motivations. Hopefully, the desires and consequences, both good and bad, will help you choose wisely. But in the passion of the moment you might be surprised by how your mind can weasel its way around just about any line of defense. In the long haul you’ve got to have some strong oars of truth to row upstream against the cultural current. You’re going to have to have some serious resolve that comes from heart conviction. Motivations are good and helpful, but conviction—a certain and assured belief—is even better.

Sailing—now, there’s an overused metaphor. But let’s go with it, for lack of anything else coming to mind at the moment. If motivation is the wind in your sails, the power to make you move, then conviction is the rudder. Conviction determines the direction you’re headed in. As long as you’re headed in the right direction, motivations will keep you moving forward. In this case your convictions need to be about the character and nature of God and who you are in relation to Him.

Could you say no ...

Because you love God?

Because you know God loves you and that's enough?

Because you value your relationship with Him above everything else?

Because you trust that He can meet your needs and desires in a deeper way?

Because you believe that He really does have your best interests at heart?

Because you believe He knows more than you do?

Because you want to pursue holiness and be more like Christ?

Because you value His glory above your own pleasure?

Those are some hard questions. For most of you, I'm guessing some days you may be close to answering yes to a few of those questions, or at least admitting that's where you want to be. I'm certainly not always there myself. It's a process. Hopefully, this book is going to start you down the road to getting there.

Peter writes that we have all we need to live a life of godliness.¹ I take that to mean that there is sufficient wisdom, encouragement, warning, and power in the Scriptures—if unearthed, if explained and applied—to accomplish the goal of motivation and conviction by the power of the Spirit that dwells within us. If that's true, and yet people who claim to be Christ-followers continue to make poor choices, that implies one of three things—either they honestly couldn't care less (which raises all sorts of other questions) or they do not have a clear understanding of God's love for them or they've just never had a clear explanation of how these principles apply to their life. I'm going to assume one of the latter and move ahead with great anticipation and expectation of the scripture's and the Spirit's work in your life.

¹ 2 Peter 1:3