

Deeply Formed Life

Group Discussion Guide

Ch.7-8

Possible starting point: Go around the group and invite everyone to give 1 minute opening observations on the assigned chapters.

Ch.7 - Sexual Wholeness for a Culture that Splits Bodies from Souls:

Rich begins this section by naming his premise: "our sexuality and spirituality are connected". He quotes Ron Rolheiser who notes that there has been a "divorce in Western culture between religion and eros. Like all divorces it was painful, and as in all divorces, the property got divided up: Religion got to keep God and the secular got to keep sex. The secular got passion and the God got chastity" (p.129). This chapter explores how rejoining spirituality + sexuality can lead to greater wholeness.

1. In an attempt to define sexuality, Rich draws on Debra Hirsch's corresponding definitions - describing "spirituality" as our longing to know and be known by God, and "sexuality" as our longing to know and be known by other people. In a similar way, Marva Dawn distinguishes between "social sexuality" and "genital sexuality". Part of Dawn's concern in this is to invite us to realize that not all of our desire/need for intimacy and deep knowing requires genital sex. (p.130-33)
 - *How do you respond to these distinctions? How are they helpful for making sense of our lives?*
 2. In his discussion of "Sin, Shame, and our Bodies" - Rich names the reality that prior to the fall (the entrance of sin into the world), Adam and Eve were naked and **unashamed**. He writes, "They were exposed but not ashamed, vulnerable but not self-conscious, laid bare without the need for protection" (p.134). Yet, sadly, sin has brought shame into our world and lives. Often, especially, in relation to our sexuality, relationships and bodies.
 - *Where do you first recognize the presence or power of shame in your own story?*
 3. Take some time to reflect together on the three diets of sexual formation, which have shaped us, and how this has impacted us (p.136f)
 - **The Starvation Diet:** *sexual repression - sex/body is evil/dangerous*
 - **The Fast-Food Diet:** *sexual flippancy - sex is just a physical thing*
 - **The Banquet:** *sex is a sacred fire - a gift from God - that is to be embraced, honored, and celebrated in union with God.*
- Were there any other ideas in this chapter we wanted to explore together?

Ch.8 - Deeply Formed Practices of Sexual Wholeness:

Take time to discuss together each formative practice + what was most helpful for us.

1) The Practice of Naming Sexually De-Formed Messages

Rich tells the story of one father having the talk with his son, which concluded with slipping him a Playboy magazine to hide under his bed (p.151). His point in all this is the liberating power of understanding and naming the lies that have formed us.

- How was this helpful for us?

2) The Practice of Sobriety

In this practice, Rich talks about the value of a) Finding a Sobriety Community, b) Reframing Addiction, and c) Confessing through Prayer.

- What was the most helpful idea in this section?

3) The Practice of Social Bonding

On p.157, Rich states, "The irony of our time is that we live in the most connected era in human history, yet we are lonelier than ever".

- Is this disturbing or comforting to read about as a common experience?

4) The Practice of Touch

Rich explores here the detrimental impact of both abusive touch, as well as an absence of touch in many of our lives.

- How would you describe your own experience of touch?

5) The Practice of Love-making

Lastly, Rich explores how "lovemaking" in marriage is about far more than having genital sex.

- Was there an idea in this portion that surprised or helped you?
- Were there any other ideas in this chapter - powerful quotes, provoking idea, liberating perspectives - we wanted to explore together?

Before You Close in Prayer:

- Go around the group and invite everyone to share **one take away** for them.

PRAY: Take a few minutes to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of what's been discussed and shared tonight. If helpful, split off into groups of two or three for prayer.