

Pastor Stef's Book Review – February 2016

“When loving God and enjoying him forever begins to be dull, we are ripe for temptation.”

That wonderful quote by Madeleine L' Engle, which I have hanging in my office, is a good summary of the big idea of Jonathan Grant's book *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age* (2015).¹

Sex is everywhere and is immediately accessible by a click of a mouse. Sex is used to sell everything from shampoo to hamburgers. And it seems that another thirty-three sexual positions are “discovered” every month. But most of this sexual openness has reduced sex to bodies, biology and mechanics devoid of mystery, relationships and story. This has left most of us relationally and sexually unfulfilled.

In the first half of *Divine Sex*, Grant presents an excellent study of our current cultural situation around sex and how it has affected our churches and our intimate relationships. In the second half of his book Grant addresses what to do about our situation by steeping us in Biblical theology.

Divine Sex isn't so much about sex as it's a primer on discipleship. According to Grant, the reason many are buying the cultural scripts around sex is not because we struggle with too much desire, but because we don't have enough desire. We are stressed out and stumbling through life without any narrative or overarching purpose and thus, we've become unable to imagine desire beyond a momentary fix which gives us a few moments of feeling alive. Sexually this has resulted in extra-material affairs, pornography, college frat-parties and serial monogamy. But our inability to desire beyond the moment has affected all our aesthetic values, from appreciating artistic depth, engaging with a church community, and faithfulness in our marriages and careers. Everything has become pop culture. Everyone is now the same age – our kids are little adults and our adults are big kids. (Neil Postman). The problem is that this produces the opposite of making us feel more alive and connected. Instead, we are increasingly lonely, disillusioned, disengaged and self-absorbed.

We need to increase our hunger for something beyond ourselves and longer lasting than “now”. We need to see ourselves in a script where faithfulness, sacrifice and living for the protection and betterment of others ignites our passion. Only then do we become truly good lovers! It is in this story that we become motivated to live responsible sexual lives that bring back the mystery and spirituality of marital sex. As well, we rediscover the high calling and God-honoring life of remaining single and celibate. (Grant has much to say about reclaiming this calling in evangelicalism). A life can only be lived this way when people move beyond lip service to Christ and become regularly engaged in a relationship with Jesus by serving others and moving beyond the areas of service in which we are comfortable. When we are part of God's mission, and see ourselves playing a role on God's stage, sex becomes much more meaningful because it is kept in its proper context. It is really all about keeping the first commandment.

¹ 2016 *Christianity Today* book of the year award in the category of “Christian Living/Discipleship”.