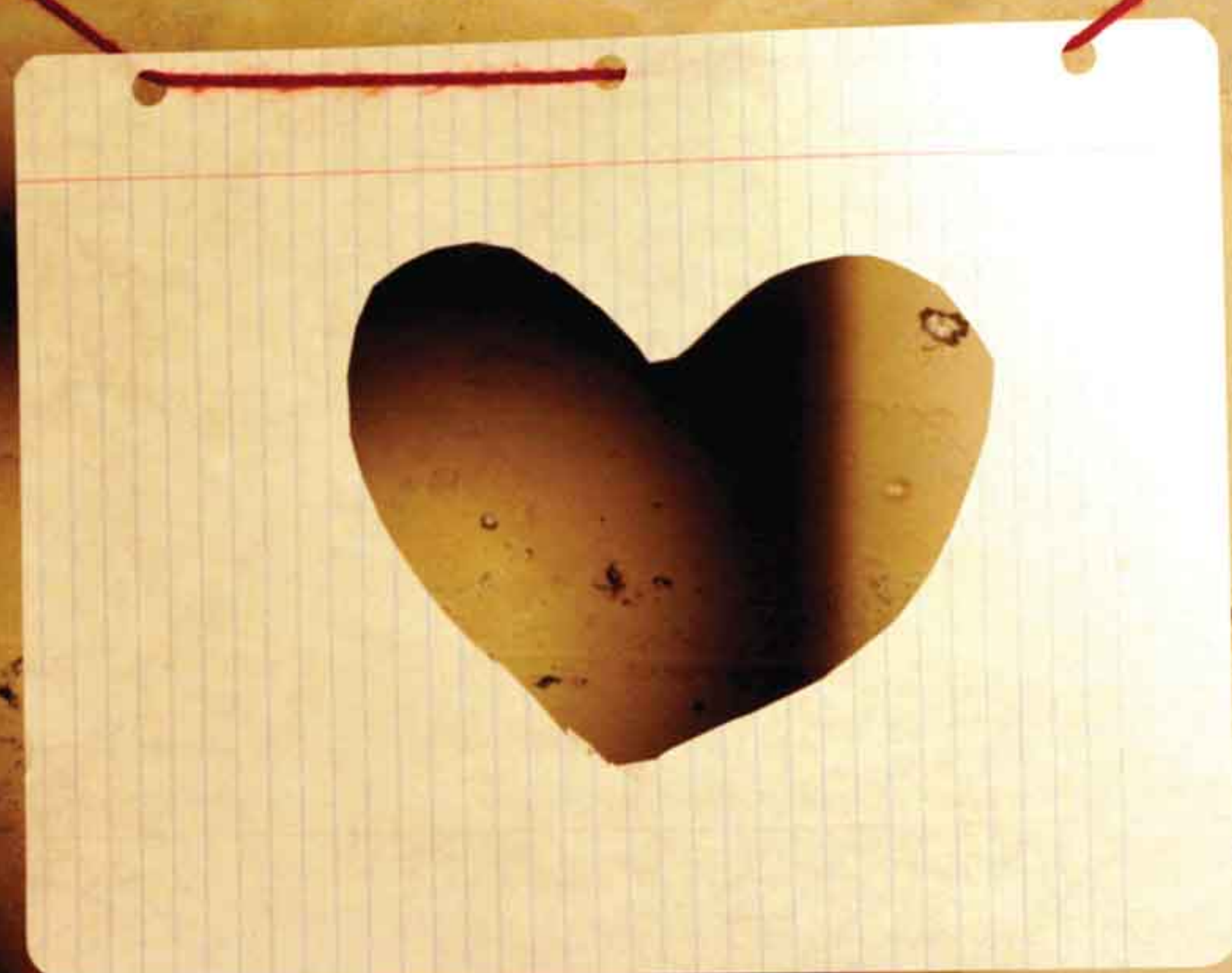


Teens & Sex

How Should We Teach Them?



PAUL DAVID TRIPP

Resources *for* Changing Lives

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A Ministry of
THE CHRISTIAN COUNSELING AND
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
Glenside, Pennsylvania

RCL Ministry Booklets
Susan Lutz, Series Editor

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-87552-680-2

It doesn't take much insight to be concerned about the culture in which our children are growing. Our children are being powerfully influenced by an unbiblical view of life, particularly in the area of sexuality. This lie is being peddled to our children incessantly, from the teen magazines that portray a distorted sexuality to the overtly sexual images of MTV music videos. As Christian parents, we need to be teaching our children the life-transforming truths that expose the counterfeits for what they are. And we must present these truths in a way that is understandable to the average young person. To do that, we must be sure that we as parents are thinking in a genuinely biblical way about teenagers and sexuality. That challenge is the focus of this booklet.

The State of the Culture: Institutionalizing Sexual Idolatry

The overt sexual expression in our culture should not surprise us since it is rooted in a

view of life that has exchanged the worship and service of the Creator for the worship and service of the created thing (see Rom. 1:21–25). This view of life holds these “truths” to be self-evident:

1. People are *ultimate* and *autonomous*. That is, there is nothing more important than the individual. I am free from any authority I do not choose to follow.
2. The highest human value and experience is personal satisfaction and pleasure.
3. I must be constantly vigilant that my “needs” are met.
4. The most important love is the love of self.
5. With pleasure, bigger is better. There is a constant desire for greater stimulation.
6. The here and now is what is important. There is a constant pursuit of instant gratification.
7. The physical person is more important than the spiritual person.

In a culture that looks at people as ultimate, God as absent, and pleasure as the highest experience, it is no wonder that sexuality

becomes such a dominant force. It provides a powerful pathway to instant physical pleasure. It provides false worship (counterfeiting the first great command) and false relationship (counterfeiting the second great command). Every institution in our culture is infected with a distorted view of human sexuality. This being so, our children need us to be radically active in countering it.

The State of the Church: Giving Mixed Messages to Our Teens

Unfortunately, our ability to counter distorted views is hindered by what I see as the church's ambivalence about sex. We need to face the ways this ambivalence has affected our teenagers.

Here is what I mean: As Christians, we say that sex is a wonderful gift from God, yet we are strangely silent on the topic and uncomfortable in the rare instances when it is discussed. This leads to a lack of sexual balance, a lack of sexual openness, and a lack of clear, practical sexual education. Sex tends to get placed outside the boundaries of the normative Christian worldview.

Is it surprising, then, that the typical teenager assumes that Christianity is “sex-negative”? That is, basically *against* sex? The church has been perceived this way for a long time, and it is surely the perception of many teens today.

I can remember taking my nine- and eleven-year-old sons out for pizza to talk to them about sex. After we ordered I opened up the subject, took out a pen and began drawing on a napkin. At first my sons were surprised that I was willing to talk with such openness. Then they figured that if I was not embarrassed to talk with them about sex, they should not be either. My goal was to treat this area in the same way I had treated other areas—as an important piece of the Christian world-and-life view that I was seeking to instill in them. I had every reason to discuss the subject and no reason to be embarrassed or silent.

Why are we as Christians so ambivalent about sex? Why do we tend to give confusing signals to our teens? It seems that this ambivalence is rooted in three biblical misunderstandings:

1. The church has tended to view sexuality as less than good and godly.