

Ep_63 Consent_and_Sexual_Coercion

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SPEAKERS

Pam B., Bonny, Lyschel

P Pam B. 00:03
Music. Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace,

L Lyschel 00:06
and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined.

B Bonny 00:08
And I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. Welcome to another episode of hope for wives. The next two episodes, we are tenderly discussing topics around sexual abuse in marriage. So we invite you right now to assess whether you're in a grounded enough state to listen to this conversation. And if you're not, please come back another time and listen. It'll be here. If you choose to stay, go ahead and take some grounding breaths and hold yourself in compassion and love knowing Jesus is sitting with you right now. So today we are talking about consent and sexual coercion. It's hard to consider that sexual abuse can happen in marriage, and yet it does. It is one of the most confusing and distressing things a wife can process, and it's also a double betrayal. Sexual abuse is not uncommon in marriages where the spouse with problematic sexual behavior has not embraced the reality of their damaging behaviors. Sexual abuse can fall on a spectrum from objectification and like coercion on one end to marital rape on the other end. So today, as I mentioned, we're discussing sexual coercion and consent. So ladies, let's explore consent. First. What is consent?

P Pam B. 01:39
I always like to go to the dictionary, and so consent is defined as a noun, as permission for something to happen, or agreement to do something. But I also think we need to define fully informed consent, which is understanding all aspects, all implications, all the data around what

I'm consenting to. As I thought about this, I thought about a metaphor. If somebody comes to me and says, Pam, do you want some chocolate? Yes, I want chocolate. But if somebody comes to me and says, Do you want chocolate, and it's laced with X lax, and you're going to have cramps and bloating or you may even want to throw up, you're going to have migraines. No, thank you. No. Thank you. Yeah, we

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Lyschel 02:45

I have this conversation a lot with my kids now about what is consent? Am I allowed to say no, and then am I allowed to say yes? I definitely grew up in the generation of when you were leaving a family function, you had to go hug, or not you wanted to hug aunt Marge, right? If I did, I wasn't personally scarred from that, but I've certainly heard other people who, when you don't have a full story, that they've been forced to maybe go back and hug an abuser and, you know, show affection towards this person who has hurt them, etc. And so I've always wanted to be very, very open with my kids about consent. The hardest part, probably for me, navigating consent with my children is consent with each within each other. Them right that they violate each other quite often, in a lot of different ways, like busting into bedrooms, taking things, etc. So, but that's that is part of having a ton of siblings as well, is like you're learning to fight for your life. So, but to say, what is the definition? The definition is what I heard Pam say, and then I get to say yes, with the information that I have, when I don't have full information that I also have the ability to say no. Thank you.

B

Bonny 04:03

Yeah, I went, I did some research on this, and found that the National Library of Medicine had two questions for patients to answer around having medical procedures, and one was, what would this patient need to know and understand in order to make a fully informed decision. And the second question was, what would the average patient need to know to be an informed participant in the decision? So if we refrain these questions for marriage, what would a spouse need to know and understand to make a fully informed decision about whether to be sexual or not with our partner, and what would the average spouse need to know to be an informed participant in the decision? So it goes along with what both Michelle and Pam have said, You need all the information and agreeing to be sexual with your husband when his. Behaviors were secret. Means you didn't give fully informed consent. You did not know all the pertinent information. So what are some faulty messages women have received about her right to say no to sex and marriage, and these faulty messages can come from church culture, other women,

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Lyschel 05:24

I think that there's a I honestly I would even step back and talk about consent again, even, what are the faulty messages around women having consent? You know, in this day and age, I'm having conversations with my daughters about being in friends dance videos and doing different things that you know are putting themselves out there. And from a middle schools perspective, it's innocent and we're just dancing and we're making this cool little video, and I am trying to explain to them the dangers of perpetrators, and that regardless of whether or not you gave them consent, they can take this information and do whatever they want with it. And so even just like stepping back broad scale, like I don't talked about, her daughter and several

of her friends over the summer, would work out at a particular gym in our town, and at one point in time, they started noticing that this guy kept watching them. And they're a group of girls working out at a gym, right? And so he's he's lurking, essentially. And her daughter was so upset, rightfully so, that she did not give him permission to do that, like that was such a violation. And so when you think about doing that with strangers, that sense of entitlement that I'm allowed to consume you visually, and then you move into relationships within a marital covenant, it's still there. It doesn't mean that it's not there. And so, of course, I mean, I think we can go straight for the normal, the ones that we've heard so many times, especially when it comes to marriages that have pornography use and the

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Pam B. 07:13

extramarital affairs

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Lyschel 07:16

of well, if you were having more sex, if you were more available, this would have not happened, and I'm just going to blow that up for a second. I know that's not necessarily the part of this question, but I've walked with so many women who talk about that. That is the information or the statement that's given to them by whoever. And the reality is is that she would have sex all the time he does not pursue her, he does not choose to have sex with her. And so what we're what the undertone of all of that is, is that either there's something wrong with her because he doesn't want to pursue her, and she's fully responsible for the condition of their sexual relationship, right? And there's no accountability of saying, are you pursuing your wife? Right? Typically, in these initial conversations, maybe they get there, but oftentimes that's not part of it.

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Pam B. 08:13

I'm just so overwhelmed with emotion about this conversation. I am angry, I'm sad, I'm disgusted. I am this is such a loss and not what God intended. And I just say that in case anybody else listening to this is feeling all of those feelings that seems appropriate, that seems like the appropriate response, and we're we're trying to have, and we will have an intelligent discussion about this. But I also just want to acknowledge all the big, overwhelming emotions and how this is a loss for women and an injustice and an offense to them as humans and God's children, and that we have come Under Fire and we're being held responsible for other people's behavior that are not what God intended, and taking something that we love, I think any woman listening to this has a deep, deep love and Respect for scripture and sometimes some something that she loves, is taken and weaponized against her, held over her head and being told to make a choice that she's not comfortable. With that doesn't make sense to her, that represents a loss, and she may not even have language for it, and I just want to acknowledge the injustice here and the the depth and the breadth of how deep this is and how difficult it is to manage. And I'm grateful at the same time, I have gratitude that more people are having these conversations. I mean, we could probably spend 1224, hours talking about it. And I'm just I'm really grateful that there are other resources for women that will reinforce their value and reinforce their rights within a marriage to not be held responsible for a man's sexuality or sexual gratification, and a right to defend their dignity within the marriage.

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Lyschel 11:06

You know, someone who I think has such a powerful voice in this space is Sheila Gregoire, and she wrote a book called *The Great Sex Rescue*. She has a blog and podcast. It's called *Bear Marriage*, just really speaking into the levels of and I'm going to use the word *injustice* around the way that women are portrayed. And it was interesting, as we were doing getting ready for this, I found a blog on our website. I'm just going to read this really quick. He says, I remember in university, one of my professors talking about something called the *Madonna-whore complex*. The concept is that men only see women in two ways, unapproachably *Pure*, or a *toddy tart* ready for conquest. But more than pointing out that this was a restrictive view of female sexuality, I recall her notice, this is a female professor, her strong overtones that men could only see women in sexual terms like this. At the time, I thought this was completely ridiculous. I mean, I was a young man in my hormonal prime, and I didn't think of women like that. Half my professors were women, and I had no sexual thoughts about them, and not because I thought they were *Madonnas*, but because I thought of them simply as people I needed to listen to and learn from, similarly, half of my for women, and if pressed, I would have said that maybe one day I might hope to meet the right one. But I certainly didn't spend my time categorizing them into whether they were possible sexual targets or too pure to even try. And I wanted to kind of weave that in here, because of talking about even deep rooted belief systems for us as women.

B

Bonny 12:50

Yeah, I get what you're saying, because we have internalized some of these faulty messages ourselves, and we don't even know it. And so I think half of half of the battle is unraveling the faulty messages and actually learning truth.

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Pam B. 13:06

And I think we also have to acknowledge that as humans and the Bible addresses this too, that we have to acknowledge we have a primal animal nature that we are hopefully evolving from, and that as human beings, we're learning and getting better as we go on through the eons, but that we have to acknowledge that there are some of those primal, unhealthy attitudes, And that not everyone, not every man or every woman has those beliefs, but that we may have a biological urge that we need, we need to overcome and manage. We need to respond to those primal urges in a healthy way. And so resources like Sheila are really helpful for women to give language to some of those, those concepts that we're trying to convey to our spouses. And the reality is not every marriage is like this, and not every man is like this and that, listen, we're dealing with the subject of sexual addiction and betrayal trauma. And in sex addiction, there is a reality of an immaturity that we need to we need to acknowledge, and that it is possible to grow from that. And so I don't want anybody listening to this to think that we are saying all men always right, but that we have to acknowledge that this happens. But the possibility is as you can grow out of this, you can learn and grow, and you can expect. It's okay to expect your partner to learn and grow away from these ideas and urges and have a higher understanding of what God intended for the sexual union of married people.

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Bonny 15:22

So the faulty messages that women have received are have been incorporated into our own identities. What you were saying, Michelle, about the Madonna or the whore, I mean, we can subconsciously take that on. And what you were saying, Pam, about, you know, what are you in the kitchen and what are you in the bedroom? So those are messages we we can incorporate into ourselves that are faulty because we are first and foremost daughters of the King, and we are neither perfectly pristine Madonnas nor the whores. We're who we are and embracing that reality is really important. We can say no to a sexual experience when we do not feel safe, when we do not feel seen and loved, and feel that there is no honesty, no you can say no to that. But so what are some other messages that can play into that guilt of saying no, so that's what I hear this in my calls so frequently that she is feeling guilty and so conflicted because she doesn't feel safe, she doesn't feel seen, she doesn't think she knows all the Truth, and yet she's been told her entire life from conservative Christianity that she needs to meet his needs. It's her duty, that she needs to do that to be a good wife, and so she's grappling with this. How can I say no, I'll be sinning in God's eyes. I've been told all these years that I have to do this or I'm sinning, and yet she's grappling with that versus but I can't. I can't I am relationally unsafe. I don't trust him all the things. So I think another faulty message that gets preached to both men and women is that, and here's the quote I remember learning from a marriage class years and years ago, a man needs sex like he needs air. I totally disagree with that, because that goes back to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, because on the very bottom of Maslow's needs is air, food, water and sex. And I disagree with that. Sex is not something you need to stay alive. There's only one mammal in the world that will die without sex, and that's a female ferret.



18:00

So

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Bonny 18:01

sex is not a need. Sex is an outpouring of intimacy and connection. So and Michelle, you've said this earlier on the podcast that that's actually looking having a low view of man. He's not just yanked around by his needs. He has a higher man in him. But that's, that's one of the biggest faulty messages I've come across in in the recent days.

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Pam B. 18:36

First, Corinthians, seven, four. That's the faulty messages that be because that message has been taken and twisted and used as a hammer. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields to your husband in the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife. And so he said, Hey, I'm I'm giving you authority, right? While I'm doing this, then you need to do it too, and it gets cherry packed and twisted into a cuddle to to coerce women's understanding of consent, yeah, into what consent really means. Instead of looking at that scripture and all scripture that references this as a whole sex is something that God designed to be a beautiful union of free will, two people coming together with free will, not something that you do because it's you have contractually agreed to. Do it or you owe it as a debt,

B**Bonny 20:04**

right? Another faulty message is that you only give consent once, and that's on your wedding day. Oh, that's bad. Yeah, no, you get to give consent for each and every sexual encounter. It's not a blanket, yes, just because you have a marriage contract. But

L**Lyschel 20:22**

I was even thinking about a friend who was in a marriage, and I think her faith was somewhat strong, but I don't know that I would say she was living every moment for Jesus, right, like he wasn't her everything, and decided how she was going to do her marriage. But she was most definitely the victim of marital rape on a regular basis. And what it came from was his emotional abuse leading up to the event. And it would be it really was rooted out of, I have needs. Well, if you would have sex with me, I would be nicer. I would not be so grumpy all the time. If you would do this, then I like it was a transactional thing, and so very often, part of the narrative, I think that was driving her, was just make the emotional abuse stop, and so if this is a means to an end, I'll do it as his porn use became more and more aggressive. Sex in the bedroom became more and more aggressive, and she was silent about it, until one day, we happen to be at dinner, and she blurted it out to there was four of us total there, and she just said something because it had happened the night before, and she was just so broken. But then she tried to minimize it like, Oh, I know it's in the context of marriage. I just don't really like it. I mean, this is his favorite. This is what he asks for, and you're supposed to do what he asks for, right? And we're like, but you're being violated. Like, she even used the word it was violating. And we're like, you're feeling violated. That is not appropriate. Like, and I can't even tell you that she was mad about his porn use. She, I mean, it was like she was still in that place of like, boys will be boys. Men have needs. Mine don't matter. I'll give over my body for whatever I gosh, I hope he chooses me. If I reject Him, then I'm being rejected, right? Because there was going to be consequences. If she said no, he would pout and be so aggressive for days on end, like and she would talk about it like, she finally started talking about it, I should say, or he would do other things that were very, very intentional. He would go blow money, because that was his payoff for not having sex. Wouldn't have to do anything with the kids, because he was in too much pain in his areas to be able to function. So much manipulation attached to this, this faulty message to this woman that she was obligated. But part of it was also, I think, her longing for a means to an end. And I can only imagine if she had taken that particular, all of that, to a pastor or a lady, anybody like I don't even know what they would have potentially said to her in in this when we talk about him, she being responsible for meeting his needs. And is that accurate, right? I know that even in you know recovery material like I know that in every man's battle, it talks about in order to overcome more sex with your wife, and they talk about it being the drug of choice. I don't know one woman that wants to be considered a drug of choice, right? I really do believe that we want to be honored and cherished, and that there's a longing for that, but to have material being printed that tells an addict this is how you overcome. It is you go and you force your wife, because if you don't, then you'll fail, but we're missing that other human in the equation. So

B**Bonny 24:28**

absolutely, no, absolutely, and what you've said just describe sexual coercion. It's really the textbook definition of sexual coercion, because it's unreasonable pressure to compel another

person to have sex, and it sexual coercion takes away two things, a person's freedom of will. So she didn't have freedom of will. She was worried about the repercussions if she didn't show up. That's coercion, and that is. Sexual abuse, yeah, the pouting behavior, oh, my goodness, and abandonment and financial abuse, all of those things are ways to sexually coerce and the other thing is to impair the ability of a person to choose to have sex, and that's through drugs and alcohol, like the date date rape drug. I've also heard of a man using sleep aids and his wife's tea to get her to go to sleep so we could have sex with her. So so what I'm hearing you say is that there are things that women have learned have have unconsciously absorbed messages that enable sexual coercion in marriage. So what would you talk to a woman about about those messages and how to have grace with herself?

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Lyschel 25:58

One of the hardest things about marriage is these are things we don't talk about with others. This is a private matter, right? We don't talk about sex in there. And I love Julie Slattery and the work that she has done for us in an effort to start taking some of that taboo out of these conversations. I'm also sad that these conversations didn't take place in the generation sooner, because radical swing for our younger adults, younger younger kids who are their definition of sex is so skewed and so messed up. But I think that the if, if a woman was sitting with me, or I can even just go back to the friend, if a woman said to me that she that this is what was happening for her, and she just doesn't know what to do, I think the first thing that I was able to do for her in that moment was to say, That's Not okay. That's not okay. Now, I didn't fix it. I didn't run in and rescue her out of that home. But I think even us just hearing another person say that's not okay, starts to re establish some sense of empowerment for her. It didn't change overnight. I know that there were multiple more times where she would engage in things that she did not want to participate in, would fall back into what she would call old behaviors of just placating and saying, fine, whatever. But at the end of the day, she knew that she had somebody out there who did not agree with the way she was being treated. Actually, she had three someones because there was a group of us, and there was this opportunity for me to be a really good friend and ask about it. As hard as it was, I asked about it like i know that i There were moments where I was like, oh gosh, I don't want to put her on the spot or make her upset. I was concerned for her. I was concerned for her safety and her her soul. I love her heart like and I know that being taken advantage of like that was just destroying her heart. And so those are the things that I think are important for women, to be able to move into this is to be able to say is to be able to talk to somebody about it, yeah, or, if it feels safer, to go to a therapist and talk to them.

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Pam B. 28:32

Absolutely

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Bonny 28:35

so before we leave hope, which will be, of course, our last topic to discuss, what is the truth about a woman's right to say no to sex and marriage? Well, I would say that you are an individual, and you are like I just I mentioned previously, you are a daughter of the king, first and foremost, and you have rights as an individual. And I think we get that's another faulty

message, is that when, when we get married, we lose our our individuality. So you, you have rights as an individual. You have rights as a Christian. I think we, we also don't realize that we have rights and that truly, we can expect to be treated with love and kindness. So if that's not happening,

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Pam B. 29:37

you can say no,

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Bonny 29:39

if you are not safe emotionally, you can say no, I also don't think we're taught enough from the pulpit how to expect to be treated with love and kindness. A lot of personal responsibility is talked about, which is really good. But I also think we need to be informed that you can. Expect to be treated in a way that you feel cherished and valued, and there's a good tone of voice and no one pouts from not getting sex. And no in a healthy marriage just means not today. And unhealthy marriage is no can be a sex fast for a while. So that's what I would want a woman to know about her rights to say no.

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Pam B. 30:26

I would want a woman to know that the expression of her sexuality to another person is a gift. It's an art. It's a gift. It's something that you give from a very unique, special, intimate, sacred place, and no one can force you to give a gift that that gift comes from the heart. It comes from a pure place, and that if someone is asking you to do otherwise, out of duty, out of contract, to avoid punishment, then it's not then they don't see it as the gift that it is, they don't recognize how beautiful and unique that that gift is, and please, keep that gift to yourself. Keep it to yourself. You have the right to do that

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Bonny 31:42

all right, as we wrap up this tender topic that is not addressed very often, we want to step into some hope. So what hope can we leave our listeners who have dealt with this in the past or are currently dealing with it?

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Pam B. 32:00

You're not alone. If we're doing a podcast on this, we've seen this so much and dealt with this far too often, but you are definitely not alone. Reach out, get support, find a community of support so that you know it's not just you. It's not because of you that you're not the cause and you're not the solution to it, but the solution. You are your own solution for getting support and empowering yourself, taking back your power, taking back your authority and your autonomy and your agency to say no and redefine for yourself. What is a healthy sexuality that you can say yes to?

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Lyschel 32:59

I think the hope is, that there is a possibility of healing, whether that's your husband, begins to recognize the choices and behaviors and makes a decision to find help to readjust his belief systems, or whether and or whether it's you having to draw boundaries, strong boundaries, in the relationship to say, I can't keep doing this. But the healing can be on on the other side of both of those, one of the resources that comes to mind that I want to throw in here is there is a gentleman named Dr Andrew Bowman and he wrote two books that I think are fantastic, but they're actually for men. One is called how not to be an ass, essays on becoming a good and and the other is the sexually healthy man, essays on spirituality, sexuality and restoration. One's from 2020 though is from 2021 and I have read. I've read how not to be an ass, and I've read parts of the sexually healthy man. And I'm telling you, it is, as a woman who was reading it, I was like, Why is this not a required assignment to all boys in high school, right, or going into college, like to be able to break down some of the things that they've picked up, right? That defines definitions about themselves, and then, like being animals and not having self control, and yet it's one of the fruits of the Spirit. So that's not accurate, but also being able to say what is a healthy man now, instead of don't be unhealthy, but explaining what is healthy. So I think that there's hope in the throes of this really hard thing. So.

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Bonny 35:01

Uh, there is hope, because when you know better, you can do better and like you. Those are great resources. Lachelle, I would also, I would also add rethinking sexuality by Julie Slattery, and that's for both the husband and the wife to read because she is pointing to the true meaning of sex. Why did God make sex? God didn't make sex for it to be a weapon. And as Pam was saying, it is a gift. God made sex for deep, intimate, emotional and physical experience. It's not just a physical experience, it's emotional and physical. And Julie Slattery goes on to even make the correlation that the sexual relationship that a man and woman has is the reflection of the type of intimate relationship God wants with us. And that is an invitation that that relationship God wants with us isn't forced on us. It's an invitation, and that's what sexual intimacy should be, each and every time and into invitation into a warm embrace, an invitation into an adult playground, but it's an invitation. It's not demanded, it's not coerced, it's not forced. There's no pressure. So but I will say personally, there can be healing here for him and for you,

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36:39

it's not a

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Bonny 36:41

quick process. As a resource I would offer is my sexuality class, sexual clarity for the Christian woman, we cover this and many other very pertinent issues to help you understand who you want to be as a sexual person. You have choice. You have choice. Well, listeners, thank you for sitting with us during this hard conversation. We hope that if you're in this situation, you know

you're not alone. If you're if you're moving out of this situation, I hope you feel empowered. And our next conversation, we'll be talking about marital rape. So thank you, listeners, and we'll talk with you again soon.



Lyschel 37:29

Bye, bye.