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Interview with the Rev. Dr. Beverly Dale

Question: How do other ordained clergy react to your message, the performance you do, and the fact that you have a “body justice” ministry?

Answer: The truth is that only around 10% of your average clergy, whether Jewish or Christian, are prepared to deal with the full range of sexuality issues in any congregation. So, I pretty much get the stage to myself.

Question: Do you get much pushback from conservatives?

Answer: Not as a rule because so many people are afraid of the topic. That is why they rush to “Just say no, no, no!” It is the easy way out but unfortunately, is singularly unhelpful.

Question: So you are not in favor of abstinence until married?

Answer: I have no problem with people choosing to not move into physical expression before marriage as long as that decision is not hinged to negativity, that somehow sex is dirty or shameful or as long as it is not a standard that is imposed on those who may not make the same decision.

Question: How did you come up with the characters for your one woman show?

Answer: Well, some of them are autobiographical and some were written in response to things I have heard women discuss. It is a mix. And, I never disclose which is which!

Question: You have talked a lot about the “hook up culture.” How you define that and what is your problem with it?

Answer: My problem with it is that it is usually simply objectified sex, that is, two bodies using one another’s body parts to “get off.” The spiritual problem is that ethical people do not use other people for our own agenda, ever. Instead I advocate that we bring all of ourselves, minds, bodies and spirits to any physical encounter, not just a body part. This calls for communication and negotiation skills and mutual respect for the other person, and this, of course, is not needed in the hook up culture. All that is needed is for one or both of you to be wasted on alcohol or some drug for some false courage. That might get you to “getting off” but it won’t really be “getting it on.” There is a big difference.

Question: It sounds like you are all about having great sex!

Answer: Absolutely! But that can only happen if both partners refuse to go along with the hook up culture that treats each other as simply vibrators.

Question: How did you get interested in speaking out about sexuality?

Answer: I felt there needed to be a counter voice to the loud religious voices that simply shout “No! No! No!” but never provide any guidance about how to make a faith-informed sexual decision for those who choose not to marry, or who were just widowed or divorced. It’s illogical to apply the same abstinence standard to a 14 year old, a 24 year old and a 54 year old. We need to be able to maneuver through our sexual life journey in ways that enhance our sex lives and our relationships rather than simply rush into ill-advised marriages simply to get “legitimate” sex.

Question: What do you recommend for parents trying to educate their children in a Christian household about sex?

Answer: Find a comprehensive, age-appropriate and medically accurate program for the children and every parent should enroll in one for adults as well. I find parents are mostly clueless as to how to help their young children in this area because as a society we are pretty ignorant. That is born out in research by the way. There is a faith-based curriculum available called “Our Whole Lives.”

Question: You have written a prayer for those healing from having had an abortion. And you are supportive of a women’s right to choose. Can you tell us about that?

Answer: Well, the prayer came about because the newspaper reporter was writing the article about Catholic children being told to pray for disembodied embryos and fetuses, not the mothers you understand, and wanted to have an opposing opinion. But the reality is that there is no teaching of Jesus in the gospels that implies directly or indirectly that women are not moral agents fully capable of making their own difficult decisions for their lives and the lives of their families. To coerce pregnancy or even adoption is to deny women can think for themselves.