



October 14, 2021

A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

It had been one of those mornings.

You know the kind. Days where we feel the heaviness of life from the moment we open our eyes. Days where the small things feel extra challenging, where our patience has worn thin for the mouthy teenager in our house, and where we just want to crawl back into bed and hide from the world.



By the time I arrived at my late morning meeting with Beth Palmer and Pastor Jon, I was not in good space. We were meeting together to continue our preparation for our new Deeper Waters cohort retreat. As excited as I was by the work we were doing, I wasn't sure I had much to offer.

It turned out that Beth and Jon had had similar kinds of mornings. By the time we were all sitting around the table, it was evident that we were in no shape to plan and create a space of healing and hope for 15 other people.

In her wisdom, Beth named the reality of where we were.

"Before we do anything," she said, "how about we just sit here together in silence?"

And so we did.

For 3, 5, 10 minutes or so. (I'm not exactly sure how long it was.)

We breathed long, deep breaths. We sat together.

At the end of the silence, we spoke words of prayer out loud.

When we opened our eyes again, things felt different.

The heaviness in the room had lifted.

Something had shifted in each of us.

The challenges of our lives hadn't disappeared, but there was something powerful about this time we had just shared.

We were connected.

The sacred space we had created allowed our bodies to rest in the truth...

We were not alone in our struggles.

In the first two chapters of Genesis, we see both accounts of creation. The language is poetic and grand... recounting the ways that a word was spoken, and life came to be.

In each case, it was GOOD. The creation of humankind in God's image was described as VERY GOOD.

Throughout both stories, there is only one mention of anything that is NOT GOOD.

"It's not good that the human is alone." (Genesis 2:18, CEB)



We've been talking for the last 6 weeks about The Good Gift of our Bodies, the ways in which they are wired to reveal to us wisdom and insights, and the presence of God that lives within us. (<https://hilliardumc.org/current-message-series/>)

Our bodies are also made to be in connection with one another. There is a reason why we feel different when we are in the presence of those who know and love us. We are wired for relationship, intimacy, and sacred community.

For the next few Sundays, we are going to talk about this relational aspect of our bodies... specifically our SEXUALITY.

Wait a second, Pastor April! How did you jump to the topic of sexuality from a shared moment of silence with your co-workers?

It turns out our sexuality includes WAY MORE than the act of sex.

Sexuality involves all the ways in which we seek to be connected to each other and to God, in real, intimate, and often physical ways.

And that includes friendships.

It includes meaningful time with people for whom we care deeply.

It includes moments of deep connection with God.

It includes moments of deep connection with the earth.

And it definitely includes sex and everything that goes with it.

Connection. Intimacy. We're made for it.

This will be our focus for the next three Sundays in October. What does it mean for us to take a look at this part of what it means to live in our bodies?

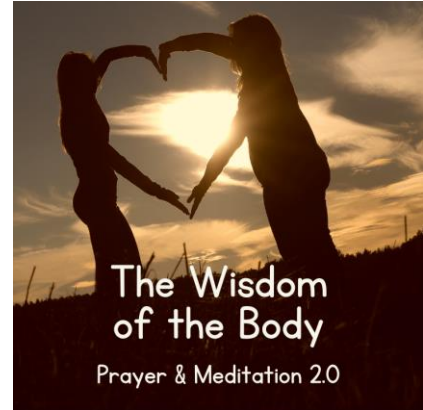
How can we understand this good gift of our sexuality in a way that honors our bodies and the bodies of others?

This Sunday, I'll begin by talking about the importance of intimacy itself. **All of us have experienced a loss of intimacy in the last eighteen months, often finding ourselves separated from some of the people we love and care for most.** We have felt that loss in our bodies.

Throughout the weeks, we will talk about what we believe as Christians about sexuality and how important it is to have these conversations with one another. We'll discuss the harmful effects of purity culture, especially on young men and women, and we'll talk about a biblical model for what sexual ethics might look like. *(It's possible some Marvin Gaye will be sung somewhere along the way.)*

It might surprise you to find the ways that our sacred stories invite us to explore this beautiful part of our shared existence in ways that encourage us to be unashamed.

Speaking of being unashamed of our bodies – **it isn't too late to join in our class, The Wisdom of the Body.** Jenny Pitcher and I just got started last night. We'll be exploring ways that we can learn to listen to our bodies, and simple prayer and meditation practices for all levels that give us a simple entry point into that wisdom, through paying mindful attention to our relationship with food.



Click or tap the image here for more details and a signup link (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>). We'll meet at church for four more consecutive Wednesdays this month and next, and then a few select Wednesdays in December and January. Jenny Pitcher is a registered dietitian and nutritionist, and she brings a wealth of wisdom to this area. We'd love to have you join us!

Looking forward to the continued journey! I know you won't want to miss these next weeks...

Pastor April



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God Loves You  No Matter What

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