

Imbalances of Power

Not so long ago Phillip Schofield was king of sofa television and regarded as a national treasure. When he 'came out', his fellow celebrities, such as his co-host Holly Willoughby, fell over themselves to applaud him for his 'authenticity' and 'courage' and assure him of their unwavering love and support. Now it's a very different story.



Why has Schofield been dragged from his pedestal and vilified left right and centre? Well, I think it has something to do with the shallowness and hypocrisy of celebrity culture and the pitfalls of media fame. People love to worship images, and when these images fail to hide reality, people get upset. Schofield was supposed to be a nice, cuddly, 'safe' guy, a television priest of right-thinking views and opinions. His 'honest vulnerability' regarding his sexuality only served to delight his virtue signalling fans and colleagues.

But now he has been shown to be a flawed, sinful human being like everyone else. Furthermore, he lied about his homosexual relationship with a young man who had a very junior position in relation to him. Being revealed to be not so honest and 'authentic' after all has trashed his image and led to people rushing to distance themselves from him.

Homosexuality is officially regarded in our media culture as something to be celebrated, and yet Schofield tried to hide his homosexual affair. Why? Well the answer is that as a society we have become aware of the abuses that can follow where there is an imbalance of power in relationships. So, whether it's a powerful man taking advantage of a young woman or a young man, this is rightly seen as deeply wrong. Schofield was aware of this, which is why he wanted to keep it all a secret. He knew it wouldn't look good and would completely undermine his 'nice guy' image.

But how do we ensure that sexual relationships are 'equal' so that no-one is bullied, pressured, manipulated, or unfairly tempted? Well, God thought about this a long time ago and invented something called marriage.

Now in a fallen world, even married relationships have of course become corrupted, but nevertheless marriage provides the most effective way of equalising the power in relationships. When a man and woman (whatever their status, wealth, personality, physical strength, attractiveness etc) get married, they commit publicly to faithful, lifelong cherishing of each other. Sex within that context enhances their psychological bonding. The birth of children brings both joy and responsibility, and further bonding, to both. If both are serious about their wedding vows, this gives each considerable power over the other, since in the eyes of their community they have both entered into a solemn covenant. This means that the power is rarely all one way.

On the other hand, sexual relationships outside marriage have little means of mitigating the power imbalances that are inevitable in relationships. Outside of marriage, the power differences that exist, and which may change over time, can give rise to unchecked abuse and cruelty. People may even seem to be passionately 'in love' at first, but when circumstances and feelings change one person may use their power to mistreat the other and there may be little the other person can do about it. If the relationship ends, it will always be the person with the least power who gets most hurt from that breakdown. Outside of marriage, the stronger partner has little to restrain them from bad behaviour, unless they know their image will suffer.

Marriage, as God designed it, is the best context for sexual relationships.

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