

Sex In the Forbidden Zone Part 2

By Barrington H. Brennen, June 8, 2003

Question: Dear Sir: Last night I confirmed my suspicion that our pastor is having an affair with our choir director. She is a single woman with three young children for two different men. He spends long hours with his “sweetheart” in the pastor’s study after church service on Sundays. I saw them holding hands and kissing last week while I was on the beach. It was not a friendly, pastoral kiss. How can a spiritual leader, or any decent man do such a thing? How terrible! What can we do about this? Why do men do such terrible things?

Answer: In my last article, I began sharing on this topic. In this article I will be sharing the reasons men and women are caught in the web of sexual exploitation. A painful truth lies at the foundation of this problem. That is, “power” is one of the most effective sexual aphrodisiacs. Many women are attracted to a man in leading positions whether it be in the church, sports, politics, or the community. Let’s look at two positions men hold to explain this point. I will use a few points from Dr. Rutter’s book, “Sex in the Forbidden Zone.”

Pastor-Congregant Relationship. “The power of the pastor over the congregant is tremendously enhanced by his authority, if he wishes to exercise it, to describe to a woman her status with God. A sexually abusive pastor can easily exploit this authority by telling a woman that her sexual involvement is a part of a divinely ordained plan. Even sophisticated women can have difficulty resisting this argument if they are devoted to the religious vision that the pastor represents.”

Mentor-Protegee Relationship. The term protegee means someone who is protected by someone older or more powerful. Hence, I am speaking here about boss and employee relationship. “In the workplace, a woman may find herself developing an important one-to-one relationship with her supervisor or boss. This relationship takes on special meaning, often to the man in power as well as the woman. He is part teacher, part confessor, part guide. They may spend hours, even travel, together. Although the relationship has a nonsexual purpose, fantasies of sexual contact may develop in either mentor or protegee.”

THE DYNAMICS

Many women who engage in forbidden zone sex talk about the “immeasurable nonsexual value they felt that the relationship had attained before any sexual behavior took place. They acceded to sex as a way of maintaining a relationship that had come to have extraordinary importance in their lives and seemed to them to open up new and boundless possibilities for the future. . . . For women, the powerful forces underlying the sexuality of the forbidden zone emerge clearly as feelings of hope-hope that their deepest wounds can be healed and that their true selves can be awakened, recognized, and brought out of hiding into the vitality of everyday life.”

Why do forbidden-zone relationships hold so much inner power and promise? Part of the answer lies in the unique way in which they simultaneously repeat, yet free us from the bond of our relationships with our parents. Dr. Rutter goes on to share: "The forbidden zone implicitly offers the women who enter it a parental quality of trust. This kind of trust invites women to share with men who have previously been strangers the intimacies and injuries of their bodies, their spirits, and their emotions. With this trust men in power encourage women to believe that they will help them toward leading meaningful, productive lives."

It seems clear that women and men who engage in forbidden zone sex are wounded. They are seeking for answers to life. Here are four patterns of feminine woundedness that put women at risk for sexual-boundary violations: (1) Overt sexual psychological invasion in childhood. (2) Profound childhood aloneness. (3) Exploited compassion (4) Devalued outer potential. I will explain these points in Part III next week. Return next week for Part Two. This article is also available on www.soencouragement.org