



The Evangelical Covenant Church



Show Notes for
Embrace Webinar #25

Talking Back
to Purity Culture
with Rachel Joy Welcher

Embrace webinar #25 summary:

Rachel Joy Welcher talks about *Talking Back to Purity Culture* and her journey of holding up purity culture messages to the light of Scripture. She speaks to what modern evangelical purity culture taught and neglected to teach, the legacy of purity culture, and words of wisdom in stewarding sexuality conversations with the next generation. Full webinar and resources available at <https://covchurch.org/embrace/webinars/webinar-25-talking-back-to-purity-culture/>

Key takeaways and timestamps from the webinar:

(5:22-7:15): Modern evangelical purity culture in America was a reaction to the 60s-80s with an increase in sex outside of marriage and STDs. Its core teaching was saving sex for marriage between a man and a woman. Abstinence was promoted in church youth groups and in public schools.

(7:29-10:20): Rachel grew up during the height of purity culture and internalized the messages. She wrote *Talking Back to Purity Culture* as she re-read purity culture books through the lens of Scripture and **discerned what was biblical and extra-biblical.**

(10:34-12:06): Purity culture taught a form of the prosperity gospel. **Marriage, sex, and kids are a reward for chastity.** It also taught the idolization of virginity and marriage, men as lust machines, and women as responsible for the purity of men. It neglected same-sex attraction, female sexuality, perpetual singleness, painful sex, and infertility.



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(12:44-17:29): Within purity culture virginity was the definition of purity. This narrow definition of purity left out God's lifelong call to sexual self-control that extends to our hearts and minds and is motivated by honoring God and one another. It also left out the sexually abused. Virginity was lifted up as the greatest gift one could give their spouse. Those who lost their virginity were portrayed as chewed-up gum and half-eaten chocolate cake. These messages produced shame for the sexually abused and neglected to communicate Jesus' message of forgiveness for those who sinned sexually.

(17:30-20:15): The **prosperity message of purity culture** has caused people to view singleness, infertility, and painful sex as a punishment rather than a part of living in a fallen world.

(21:42-26:25): For Rachel, the **positive legacy** of purity culture is viewing sex as sacred and taking sexual sin seriously.

(33:00-35:56): Purity culture was focused on adolescence. **Faithful sexuality needs to be shaped by the whole of Scripture and includes our whole life, from young child to older adult.**

(37:29-42:19): Parents/caregivers and other loving adults can help children view their bodies as fearfully and wonderfully made (rather than shameful) by using the correct terminology for private parts. **When curious children come to adults with questions about body, gender, and sexuality, parents need to provide an age-appropriate answer so they can frame the conversation rather than the internet.**

(42:42-45:55): **In the face of suffering unwanted singleness, lament.** Remember God does not promise marriage and is not punishing. We can continue to believe we are God's beloved, cry out to God, and trust in God's plans.

(51:15-53:37): The **sex-positive movement** articulated in *Shameless* and *Pure* say we need to talk back to purity culture and view sex outside of marriage as holy. The way to get rid of sexual shame is to have sexual freedom. But this is not what freedom means for the Christian. Rachel demonstrates we can talk back to purity culture and uphold a traditional sexual ethic. We can push back against human wisdom while not pushing back against God's Word.



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Select resource mentioned:

[Talking Back to Purity Culture: Rediscovering Faithful Christian Sexuality](#) By Rachel Joy

Welcher

[Embrace for Kids and Families Resources](#)