

Should you read *Fifty Shades of Grey*? A Frank Discussion of Sexual Sin and our Society

Fifty Shades of Grey is a runaway erotic best seller. Within six weeks of publication, the three books in the series occupied the top three spots in *USA Today's* best-selling books list. Sales are more than 10 million. Bookstores have piles of copies. A British hotel announced they are replacing the ubiquitous Gideon Bible in their night stands with *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Why is *Fifty Shades* making such an impact? Because it is all about sex and smut; our culture is obsessed with sex and smut. I have not read *FS* (and I won't) but because so many are discussing it, a synopsis isn't hard to find. A young college graduate, Anastasia Steele, has an affair with a handsome young billionaire, Christopher Grey. He was abused as a child. She wants to help him; so she signs a contract giving him complete control over her. The book details his kinky desires and her submission. The book explicitly details sexual bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism (BDSM), including handcuffing and whipping. What should be disgusting is portrayed as a romantic relationship where the characters fall in love and the girl rescues the boy.

Unfortunately, some argue "It's make-believe. Maybe it'll spark our married life a little!" Is that correct? Should you read *FS*? I want to argue very strongly that you should not. Here are four reasons why Christians will reject *FS* and other similar materials.

First, it does not present the sexual relationship as God created it or intended it. Sex is God's gift within marriage (Gen 2:24-25). It is more than a recreational pursuit. It is designed to bring pleasure *to a husband and wife* in a unique way that makes them one (Prov 5:15-20) and eliminates the desire for relationships outside of marriage. Within the bounds of marriage, there is great freedom for a couple to discover and enjoy each other. Such is good and right (read the Song of Solomon). However, such is always to be done in the context of marriage with mutual love and care for each other. The Bible also shows the sexual relationship is often badly perverted. God's people have been consistently drawn away to such. Exodus 32:6 tells us that as Israel sinned with the golden calf, they "rose up to play," a reference to the perverse sexual activity that was part of idol worship. Such continued in the New Testament World, which included prostitutes serving in idol temples so that immorality was cloaked under the guise of "worship" (see 1 Cor 6:9). The Bible reminds God's people that such is wrong and detrimental to the purity of passion within marriage. That isn't the message of *FS*. Instead, there is fornication. That isn't beautiful, romantic or endearing. It is sinful.

Second, it destroys the beauty of the sexual relationship. What about claims that *FS* could provoke needed spark in one's marriage? Even a moment's thought reveals what a terrible idea this is. The relationship in *FS*, full of BDSM, distorts the sexual relationship. Christopher Grey wants to do these things because he has been damaged by child abuse. Who wants to learn how to spice up their marriage by taking cues from an abused person who doesn't care about what the Bible says, is a serial fornicator and has no intention of treating any woman as God wants him to? How can such a book be a marriage manual for Christians? *FS* depicts sex as something men do to women, that men dominate women and women crave that kind of dominance. That is a dreadful perversion of what the sexual relationship should be. The marriage relationship is a mirror of Christ's relationship with the church (Eph 5:24-25). How does BDSM fit that picture? Christ does not abuse us or force us into submission because He is on some power trip. No one is humiliated as part of their service to the Lord. How can anything like that be part of a Christian marriage where the husband seeks to serve the wife "as the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) and the wife seeks to serve her husband as his helper (Gen 2:18)? While acknowledging there is freedom within the bounds of the marriage, some forms of "play" cannot be part of a "pure and undefiled" marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4). Should a wife dress like a prostitute and demand payment for "services" from her husband in some kind of role-playing fantasy? Absolutely not! A husband shouldn't be fantasizing about

frequenting a prostitute! Just because something is done between a husband and wife doesn't make it right. If it mimics sin and encourages wrong thinking about marriage and the sexual relationship, it doesn't belong in a godly marriage. *FS* must not be looked upon as a "how to" guide for marriage improvement.

Third, *FS* should be avoided because its purpose is to arouse sinful desire. The biblical terms for that are "lust," "licentiousness," "sensuality" and "lewdness." These are works of the flesh thoroughly condemned in the Bible (Gal 5:19; Romans 13:13; 2 Cor 12:21). *FS* is popularly termed "mommy porn;" that ought to tell us something. If a man was leering at a girlie magazine, people would be disgusted. However, a woman can openly read verbal smut and no one thinks anything of it. Somehow lust has become a sin only men commit, but *FS* shows women can sin in this way too. Women need to ask themselves, "Would I be angry to find my husband clicking on Internet porn? Why shouldn't he be angry to find me *reading* porn?" More importantly, "Isn't God displeased with me for reading porn?"

Fourth, *FS* sells the lie wicked men desperately want women to believe: "have uncommitted sex with me and I will fall in love with you and we will live happily ever after." Sadly, many men want sex without commitment. Women want commitment and often trade sex to try to get it. But read the story of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. Tamar was sexually assaulted (that story fits our discussion of *FS* perfectly). Amnon forced illicit and dangerous sex on Tamar *and then was utterly uninterested in her*. Sex with Tamar didn't lead to a beautiful relationship where she rescued Amnon from "the darkness in his soul." He used her and threw her away! Which do you think more accurately portrays real life: a book glamorizing a sick and sinful relationship or God's Word? How much damage will *FS* do to young and impressionable women who will decide they can forsake the teaching of Scripture to "help" some troubled soul, only to end up shattered like Tamar?

More could be added to this discussion. What happens when one can't get their spouse to play the kinky games found in *FS*? What if someone at work indicates they will? Marriages will be undermined; adultery will follow. Further, *FS* can open couples up to more sin. If reading *FS* spices things up, what about watching porn? Where does this end?

FS is more proof of our society's depraved nature. All around us people are being captured by sin. Christians know better. "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" (Hebrews 13:4).

--Mark Roberts

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