

In Pursuit of Sacred Sex: Who Will Define the New Sexual Ethics?



By Don Lattin | [Spirituality & Health](#)

In a world where Judeo-Christian faith no longer writes the rules on intimacy, who will define the new sexual ethics?

John Christensen—born, raised, and married in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—had flown all the way from his Utah home to attend the beginners' workshop in Tantra: The Art of Conscious Loving. He arrived with lots of baggage about love and beauty, sex and spirituality.

For years, his Mormon wife had resisted the idea of attending a tantric sex workshop with him. She thought their sex life was just fine. She'd previously agreed to go with John for a private consultation with two tantra teachers, a male *daka* and a female *dakini*, but it wasn't her thing. She did not share John's enthusiasm for learning how to blend Eastern mysticism and exotic sexual techniques, nor was she tempted by promises of multiple, mind-blowing orgasms. But, as

a gift, she'd agreed to let John go to this workshop by himself.

The weekend gathering was a mix of couples hoping to spice up their sex lives and single men and women looking for a new kind of love. They did breathing exercises, simple yoga postures, and watched as the two workshop leaders—Charles Muir and Leah Alchin—demonstrated various sexual techniques using a penis-shaped dildo to represent the man's *lingam* and a velvety puppet for the woman's *yonis*.

There was no nudity in the group sessions, but lots of hugging, touching, and staring into the eyes of strangers. Single women picked the single men to pair up with for various exercises, including one in which the couples gazed at each other and asked, "What are you afraid I'm going to see?"

The first day of the workshop led up to the big event that night, when the couples—including the newly created ones—returned to their hotel rooms to practice "sacred-spot massage." This is a sexual technique in which the man uses his fingers to lovingly enter the woman's vagina, find her G-spot, and, if all goes well, give her an orgasm like she's never had before.

John, who asked that his real name not be used in this article, thought he was ready for this, but he was not. He was sitting in a circle with the other single men, his eyes closed, waiting for a woman he didn't know to select him for her night of sexual-spiritual bliss.

"There was guilt. There was shame," he recalled. "I'm sitting there thinking, How can I be drawn to this? This is so different than anything I've been taught to understand. Why did I spend all this money to fly here? Emotionally, I went crazy. Fight or flight kicked in, and I fled. I bailed out."

It wasn't just the sexual guilt of his religious upbringing that freaked him out. Looking back on that weekend, John now

sees that Madison Avenue was as much to blame as the Mormon Church.

Most of the single women at the workshop were not his idea of “sexy.” They were either overweight or “defective” in other ways that veered from the *Playboy* playmate of his dreams.

“My idea of love was totally based on physical beauty,” he recalled. “If a woman didn’t have a certain look, I just could not engage.”

John returned to the workshop on Sunday, embarrassed by his behavior the previous night. “It wasn’t pretty,” he says. “I cried for six or seven hours in class. Finally, when the course was over, a young lady came up to me and asked if she could be with me that night. I couldn’t do it. I turned her down three times. Then she said, ‘How about if I come to your room and draw you a bath and just hold you?’”

John reluctantly agreed, and as he recalls this encounter, he once again starts to cry.

“This woman was from Mexico. She’d had breast cancer. She’d lost one of her breasts. Her physical shape did not meet my Madison Avenue beliefs. But I came to see that she was gorgeous. When I was massaging her and got to her breast, her tears began to flow. The intensity of love began to grow. She changed the way I thought. She rewired my brain. Pleasuring a woman for five-plus hours with unconditional love, with orgasm after orgasm radiating from her body—it was so intense. There was no right, no wrong. Just being. It changed me.”

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Beyond Religion

Seven years later, John is still married to his Mormon wife of 29 years and still living with her and their children in

Utah. But he has continued his work with the Source School of Tantra Yoga and has become a teacher of sacred-spot massage. "This is who I am," he says. "This is what keeps me alive."

John's story—from Mormon family man to tantric masseur—may be extreme, but it shows just how far afield Americans will roam in the search for sacred sexuality.

For most Americans, issues of sexual ethics and sexual morality have long been intertwined with the teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition. But today, growing numbers of people who call themselves "spiritual but not religious," along with more liberal members of the nation's churches and synagogues, are looking for a new sexual ethic—one that goes beyond the "thou shalt nots" of organized religion.

Many are searching for a more joyous, sex-positive theology. They are looking to see what their own sexual experiences tell them about spiritual truth—and to connect their spiritual and sexual selves.

This exploration raises as many questions as answers in an era of rapidly changing sexual mores. Today, once-closeted gay couples are living happily ever after in marriage; pornography formerly restricted by obscenity laws is available 24 hours a day for mass consumption online; teens flirt by "sexting"; and online dating sites facilitate everything from quickie hookups to clandestine extramarital activities ("Life is short, have an affair," suggests Ashley Madison.com, a dating website specifically for married people). Without the sexual rules that once governed our relationships, how do we separate right from wrong? What makes sex "sacred"? What makes it "profane"?

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