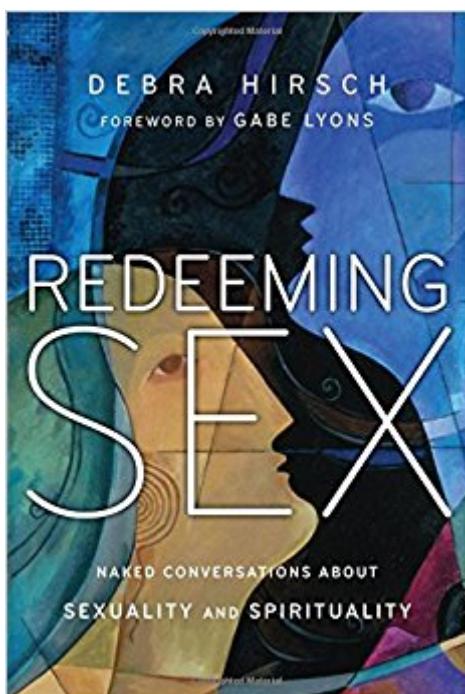


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# Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality And Spirituality (Forge Partnership Books)



## Synopsis

Missio Alliance Essential Reading List of 2015 2015 Readers' Choice Award Winner One of Seedbed's 10 Notable Books from 2015 Nothing has exposed the gap between the church and the broader society quite like the cultural argument over sexuality. Relationships, identities, orientations and even seemingly straightforward concepts such as gender have cut battle lines between the church and the world. In the fog of war and the cloud of conflict, it's increasingly hard to see our way clearly. There is hope, however. Debra Hirsch has seen it firsthand—â¢in meaningful lifelong relationships with LGBT friends and neighbors, in Christian fellowships and in movements that have held a concern for people created in God's image and a high view of the Bible's teaching on sexuality in constructive tension. When you consider the world from the perspective of God's kingdom mission, it turns out the smoke clears and a redemptive imagination takes root. Discover a holistic, biblical vision of sex and gender that honors God and offers good news to the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book demonstrates an unwavering Christ-like love for all humanity, and carves out a space for open conversation about sexuality. It flies in the face of the escalating culture wars of our day and invites us to imagine a Church of the future that is shaped by the Gospel virtues of love and unity." (C. Christopher Smith, Relevant Magazine, May/June 2015)"Deb Hirsch has given us a real gift in this book. She has brought biblical clarity to one of the most misunderstood and controversial topics of the day. Many have either sensationalized or minimized our sexuality, leaving us confused,

embarrassed or ashamed about the sexual nature of our humanity. But Deb has taken in this beautiful gift of God and woven it together with a Jesus-centered vision of how sexuality can glorify God and lead us to flourish. A much-needed and redemptive book." (Jon Tyson, author, Sacred Roots, founding pastor, Trinity Grace Church, New York)"If you are willing to invest the time to listen—really listen—to what Deb Hirsch is saying about the vexing and complex nature of human sexuality, you won't fail to be moved by her allegiance to radical grace, her trust in the potency of genuine hospitality and her unyielding confidence in the power of God to reconcile, repair and renew us all." (Michael Frost, author of Incarnate and Exiles)"With lived experience, direct frankness and a pastoral heart, Deb Hirsch addresses the church on sexuality. In so doing, *Redeeming Sex* prepares the way for the places the church must go to be 'among' today's confused and strife-ridden world of sexuality. It is a vulnerable gift that moves us beyond faulty stereotypes and pre-set notions. I cannot think of a better book to start the conversation." (David Fitch, Northern Seminary, author of *Prodigal Christianity*)"Finally. A thoughtful, biblical, yet paradigm-busting discussion on the hottest topic in the church and culture today. *Redeeming Sex* pulls no punches yet graciously guides us toward the heart of God in our human sexuality." (Hugh Halter, author of *Flesh*)"I can't think of a person I'd rather listen to give us biblical, Jesus-lens insight—out of the mixture of opinions, confusion, joy, difficulties, grittiness, honesty, hurts, healing, reality, questions, wonder and beauty of this topic—than my friend Deb Hirsch. I believe this is going to totally connect with the hearts of so many needing to move beyond the usual explanations or ways this discussion normally happens as we rethink, rediscover and redeem sexuality." (Dan Kimball, pastor, Vintage Faith Church, author, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*)"Join the conversation about *Redeeming Sex*. Deb takes a challenging conversation and brings humility, authenticity and truth to help us all talk more openly and honestly about this important topic. Thank you, Deb Hirsch!" (Dave Ferguson, lead pastor, Community Christian Church, lead visionary, *NewThing*)"Debra Hirsch's own story—and what she learned about sex before and after meeting Jesus—is both convincing and convicting. But the book is more than testimony. Debra makes intelligent, faithful use of Scripture and of authors who have engaged with this topic. She also untangles key differences between sexuality and cultural roles. Noting the Bible's extensive 'sexual language and imagery,' Debra affirms that 'our sexuality lies close to our spirituality.' Her book can lead Christians to an integration of sex and sanctity that enriches both—and makes us more faithful and redemptive disciples of Jesus Christ." (Howard A. Snyder, author of *Homosexuality and the Church*)"The beautiful heart of *Redeeming Sex* is an exploration of the claim that Jesus is the embodiment of sexuality and spirituality, and in him, we

find our model for right living and right loving. With powerful personal narrative, witty and earthy language, and sincere scriptural study, Debra Hirsch encourages readers to connect all of their lives— even the sexual dimension of life—with the life of Christ. The book provides a clear and thoughtful example of how to maintain a traditional Christian sexual ethic and at the same time treat both gay and straight persons equally. Traditionalists seeking this balance will learn much from her stories and advice." (Jenell Paris, Messiah College, author of *The End of Sexual Identity*) "Debra Hirsch's wise pastoral perspective places Jesus firmly in the center of our sexuality and our relationships." (Craig Detweiler, Outreach Magazine's Resources of the Year, March/April 2016) "This book challenges us to love God and people through the lens of our sexuality. Deb pushes us to see sexuality not as something to be done secretly in closets and dark rooms but as the beauty of God. This book challenges—for sure—but it's a must read." (Leroy Barber, global executive director, Word Made Flesh) "The value of this work is found in Hirsch's unique way of forcing the reader to think through and question long-held assumptions—some which may well need to be abandoned, while there are others that should be maintained but worked out in a more loving way." (Michael G. Muñoz, *Ethics & Medicine*, Vol. 33:1, Spring 2017) "I'm so grateful to Deb Hirsch for writing the best book on this conversation I have read. It speaks to the heart of our identity in Christ. It addresses complex and sensitive realities and tensions with grace, love, compassion, truth, justice and mercy. It is prophetic, profound, candid, transparent and should be read by every Christian. It will challenge you to the core, but we can no longer stick our heads in the sand and ignore the fact that people are hurting and need real answers to real issues. I am giving a copy of this book to everyone I know. It's that important." (Christine Caine, director, Equip & Empower Ministries) "Discover a holistic, biblical vision of sex and gender that honours God and offers good news to the world." (The Light Canada, May 2015) "[Hirsch] is a delightful storyteller who addresses the touchy subject of sexuality from a variety of perspectives; however, she stays completely on track biblically even when it would be tempting to want to go to more comfortable places. . . . With lots of personal stories and real-life conversations from folks at every walk of life, her words demand attention not only because she writes compellingly but also because Christians need to be re-educated on all things sexual." (Michele Howe, CBA Retailers + Resources, May 2015) "Hirsch blends research, Scripture, theology and her own varied experience of sexuality and ministry into what she calls 'a testimony and a challenge to the church.' She brings admirable honesty and vulnerability to this mix, and the way she tells her own story models the humility and dignity to which she calls others. Hirsch speaks from within the evangelical community and primarily to the evangelical community—defined in the

broadest possible sense. . . . [T]his book is important for the whole church." (Donna Marsh, The Presbyterian Outlook, July 16, 2015)"This book hails from a leading missional church leader who has lived it, redeemed it, and is now burdened by the challenge to help the church understand that at our core, we are all sexual beings, and our sexuality is nothing to blush about. In a post-Obergefell era, the church can no longer approach this issue haphazardly or without the insight of LGBT Christians." (Andrew Dragos, The Seedbed Blog, December 8, 2015)"Redeeming Sex is a book that will transform the conversations in the evangelical world and beyond about sexuality and how we can embrace and love one another wherever we are on our journey toward redemption. Seriously. . . . This book is a game changer, and I love it." (Michelle Wegner, MichelleWegner.com, April 20, 2015)"Rarely have I anticipated the publication of a book as much as I have with Deb Hirsch's *Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality and Spirituality*. After waiting for more than two years, I can say without hesitation that it was well worth the wait. In *Redeeming Sex*, Deb provides a thoughtful, holistic, biblical vision of sex and gender issues that not only honors the ways of Jesus, but also offers a much-needed and helpful approach to thinking well about one of the most misunderstood and controversial topics of the day. . . . I believe this is going to be one of the most important books for the church to grapple with for years to come. It really is one of those books that every Christian should read." (Brad Brisco, Missional Church Network, April 20, 2015)"In *Redeeming Sex*, Deb Hirsch helps the church catch a vision of relationship that can lead to love and life where now there is often confusion and pain. She tears down the barriers and fears that have long been in place to protect us from the 'dangers' of true intimacy. I appreciate her openness and honesty as hard questions around gender and sexuality are explored from a place of love and a desire for holy intimacy." (Bruxy Cavey, teaching pastor at the Meeting House and author of *The End of Religion*)

Deb Hirsch is a speaker, church leader and writer who has led churches in both Australia and Los Angeles. She is one of the founders of Forge Mission Training Network and is a member of the Forge America national team. She also serves as a board member for Missio Alliance and was part of the leadership team of Christian Associates, a church planting movement in Europe, North & South America. She is the co-author (with Alan Hirsch) of *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship*, and her new book *Redeeming Sex* reflects her own journey and attempts to bring new conversations about sexuality into the context of the church. Deb has been involved in social work, community development and as a trained counselor has worked in the field of sexuality for over twenty-five years. She and her husband live in community with others in Los Angeles.

Deb Hirsch's book is precisely what its title suggests, a redemptive response in the ongoing conversation about human sexuality. It is no easy task to enter a conversation when all the participants are already experienced and highly opinionated, perhaps only showing up in order to pick sides. It starts to seem as if there are only two sides, both increasingly unable to hear each other. In such a conversation, new voices are rarely sought or even imagined, even when sorely needed. Such voices often start softly after listening long, hesitant to add to the deafening noise. But when they do speak up, it is to suggest a third way of some radical re-framing of the issue that would permit new words seeking fresh understanding. So Deb begins by reminding us that human sexuality is more than what we do with our genitals. This is a startling reminder because it is obvious and yet we have missed it. If human sexuality is actually as Deb insists about the good and beautiful longing for human relationship, of which genital expression is only one part, then how much have we missed? How much do we really know? And are we quite the adequate judges we thought we were? I know that this truth forced me to begin reading Deb's book as I should read all books. As a subject. As a listener. As a sexual being who cannot say that I have mastered my own sexuality, and therefore am permanently released from stone-throwing duties. So far, the Church's part in the conversation has been mostly a lot of stone-throwing from broken sexual beings in the direction of differently-broken sexual beings. Whether we did this in order to feel better about our own sins, or because of the fear they might be closer to home than we wish, it has to stop. From here, Deb writes prophetically. By this, I mean that her message puts her at great risk of alienating both sides of the conversation she is seeking to enter. I mean that she speaks bravely, personally, and provocatively. I mean that I am both grateful to her (as a reader), proud of her (as a friend), and sorry for her (as someone afraid of criticism). I mean that I am still struggling to know how to receive her message, with how much of it is true, and what to do as a result of it. And most of all, I mean that her words have the potential to change the Church for the better, making us mercy-filled lovers capable of speaking about sex as redemptively as Deb. In the end, I do not always know what Jesus would say about the myriad complex sexual issues we face today. But I do know that he would not speak in the way the Church has spoken. I know he was a friend of sinners, and that I am one. He was the kind of man at home with broken sexual beings, open and kind to us in a way that make us want to listen more. I have rarely heard the Church speak like this until I read Deb's book. I hope you will read it as I have, hearing the heart behind it.

I appreciate the author's treatment of homosexual practice, exposing how Christians have responded entirely too harshly, making homosexuality a separate case of sin. There is much we need to learn from that, and I sincerely hope the body of Christ will extend greater Grace to LGBT people both inside and outside the church. However, I find that the author swings the pendulum too far to the point that she does not see the moral issue of sexual practice as essential to the gospel (in the same way that the Trinity or the deity of Christ are essential). She seems to make room for those who practice monogamous gay sex and challenges believers to not get so uptight about what people do in the bedroom and to care more for the marginalized in society. While we absolutely should treat the marginalized as fellow human beings made in the image God, we must also hold fast to the fact that our sexuality as male and female are essential to what it means to be made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), which is therefore essential to the gospel message that God created us in His image to be reconciled into relationship with Him. Earthly marriage & sexuality points to the penultimate reality of Christ in union with His Bride, the Church. That's essential to the Gospel. While we must not make a separate class of sin for homosexuality, we must at the same time realize the depth of brokenness inherent in homosexual practice and acknowledge the work of the enemy who desires to malign the image of God in all of us. Destroying sexuality and our concept of gender is at the heart of the enemy's tactic to destroy the image of God in us. I believe that's why homosexual practice sets off an alarm in the deepest sense of our being. It's not just because we are not used to that kind of sin, but because as believers, the Spirit inside us alerts us to the gravity of such sin that cuts to the heart of what it means to be made in the image of God male and female. I commend Hirsch for challenging our orthopraxy with regard to how we treat LGBT people. We must change, or we are grossly misrepresenting the love of Christ. However, we must not give into the fear of man (loving the praise of the gay community more than we love the truth of God's Word and His genius design for sex), and we must discern the subtle tactic of the enemy to normalize what the Bible calls an abomination that has the end goal of destroying the image of God. The image of God in us is a reflection of the very gospel message itself. It is possible to hold fast to those fundamental and essential truths yet still respond to LGBT people with compassion. Finally, as one who used to be exclusively same-sex attracted and transgender, I disagree with the author's conclusion that transformation on this side of heaven isn't possible. Her comparison between physical healing and healing of the soul are like comparing apples and oranges. I have experienced a dramatic transformation, but it didn't happen as some kind of mysterious, miraculous healing that only happens on rare occasions. It was actually a measured process of discipleship that unfolded over time, just like happens in any other area where we battle with sin. Homosexual temptation is not in a

class by itself, unable to be touched by the good news of the Gospel. The key to transformation was inviting the Holy Spirit into the process to reveal root wounds, lies, and unforgiveness that affected my perception of my own sexuality and resulted in believing the lie that one gender is superior to the other (Eph.4:26-27). God does the same thing in other areas of sin, exposing lies we believe about ourselves, about God, and about our situation that make us think the gospel cannot set us free in that particular area. The journey toward transformation was long and arduous, much like the journey of sanctification in any other area of sin. God used redemptive relationships and inner healing to set me free. To say that such transformation doesn't happen is inaccurate. It does; I have experienced it. However, it is not as simple as "praying away the gay" or casting out a demon of homosexuality. Homosexual temptation is rooted in emotional and relational brokenness, and it will take redemptive relationships and emotional healing for the Holy Spirit to bring resolve to the root wounds that fuel such desires. That doesn't necessarily mean one will ever be free from temptation in that area, but it does mean such temptation will not have to rule their life like it did before. (Romans 6 - we are no longer slaves to sin.) The transformation process is messy and it takes time. But that's what discipleship is all about. The way of the cross is not pleasant, but the resurrection power that results is what makes the gospel such great news. Let's not believe the subtle lie that the homosexual temptation is somehow immune to the good news of the Gospel. The Scripture says precisely the opposite: such were some of you (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

I highly recommend this book for those of the Christian faith. It has been an excellent read. Hirsch, while holding an orthodox position on sexuality, helps us to see deeper into the issues at hand in our culture - issues that the church has so poorly responded to. She brings a much needed voice into the conversation encouraging understanding, compassion and love for our fellow man. The first two thirds of the book will likely be very uncomfortable for many in the church, but stick with it as the first part of the book is necessary to get to the heart of the message - without grappling with this uncomfortable stuff, many won't be able to hear the real message. Give it a read if you can....

I've followed the work of Deb and Alan Hirsch for a few years now as a result of their association with the Exponential church planting conferences. They are truly a unique (in a great sense) and wonderful voice for Jesus and His church. Last week I attended Deb's workshop at the Exponential conference in Tampa eager to hear her speak in person about the topic discussed in *Redeeming Sex*. I'm so glad I did. But I must say the 1 hour workshop was not able to scratch the surface of the material covered in her book. All the reviews written to date praising this book are right on target.

This book, more than any other than the Bible itself, spoke to my soul and put words to my innermost, Holy Spirit driven I believe, thoughts on the way the church should function in following Jesus and being His disciples.

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