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Interview with Mary Fry on August 8, 2021

Mary Fry

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Mary Fry Interview 8-08-21

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SPEAKERS

Mary Fry, Isabel Bartosh

M Mary Fry 00:02
So my memory is good enough but sometimes, uh, facts get altered when you lift them out and store them again. (laughs)

I Isabel Bartosh 00:12
Yeah (laughs). Okay. So, the recording has started, could you please just state your name and your affiliation with SPU.

M Mary Fry 00:22
Mary Fry. I was a nursing professor from 1969 to 2009.

I Isabel Bartosh 00:34
Okay. So could you tell me a little bit about where you grew up, and what the politics of the area were, was it urban or rural? Stuff like that?

M Mary Fry 00:45
I grew up in rural Oregon about 30 miles out of Portland in a little poke-and-plum town called Dilly. And we went to a little conservative-somewhat conservative church for the

time, that was a-actually a United Methodist Church that the United Methodists had abandoned and the local people kept it going. Um, and went to a conservative Baptist Church in my high school years.

I Isabel Bartosh 01:17

And what did you understand about the LGBTQ community or non cishet identities, uh when you-

M Mary Fry 01:27

Absolutely zero. I think in high school I remember that if boys wore red pants on Thursdays that meant they were homosexual, and I didn't even know what that meant. It was a total non-topic, and it wasn't even until I was out of nursing school that I first comprehended what it meant to be-to have a same sex partner, for example, because no one talked about it (laughs).

I Isabel Bartosh 02:05

So why did you become a nurse, why did you go to nursing school?

M Mary Fry 02:08

(Laughs) I don't know I grew up in a big family and was basically a caregiver at heart, and an acquaintance I knew went there and I read "Cherry Ames: Student Nurse", etc. books- they were these wonderful little books, I don't know, I had no idea what nursing was-what nursing was when I got into it, it was not even anything I imagined, but I absolutely loved it and I've- it's been my calling for sure in my lifetime. And mostly I did maternity/nursing, women's health, reproductive health. And then, of course I taught the Human Sexuality class at SPU from '76 to 2009.

I Isabel Bartosh 03:01

So what brought you to SPU?

M Mary Fry 03:06

When I graduated and had a baby, it was the first part time job that came up and it suited me just fine, and I started working there and loved it, loved teaching.



Isabel Bartosh 03:18

So were are you at SPU-um, was 1976 the first year you were at SPU?



Mary Fry 03:25

No, '69.



Isabel Bartosh 03:27

'69. What, um, inspired you to teach a human sexuality course at a fairly conservative Christian college?



Mary Fry 03:44

As I was teaching, reproductive-or maternity nursing, I realized how little the students knew. I also realized earlier on how little I knew, because I also taught prenatal education. And one of my prenatal class colleagues included, sexuality-uh, sex during pregnancy kind of information, and I remember the first time I taught a group of 50 people, I never once lifted my own eyes for eye contact. And I just got through all my materials, and people came up afterwards so appreciative of somebody finally giving them some information that I realized how important it was. And then as I worked with nursing students, and recognized their true ignorance of anything dealing with sexuality, that it was very, very important. So I got together with a biology professor and a psychology professor and the three of us, developed this course and co-taught it for quite a few years. And it then also became a highly recommended class for nursing students. It wasn't required, it was always recommended, but it was not just for nursing students it was a class we had open to all the campus. And so the theology students took it, because as pastoral counseling they needed to have it, they saw they needed to have it. The Education also saw it as an important class for the teachers to have and everything, so it just-it was seen as valued across a range of disciplines.



Isabel Bartosh 05:35

So you said you grew up with a pretty conservative understanding of religion and sexuality as well. Could you talk a little bit about how your understanding changed enough to inspire you to teach a course on human sexuality?



Mary Fry 05:54

I saw how important it was—I saw how important it was as a nurse when I worked with patients and they had questions that I couldn't answer a lot of times. And as I began to study and read, and incorporate this information into my nursing courses and everything, that—it became very important—I recognized that the church historical has been extremely negative about sexuality to the point that they have horribly suppressed normal healthy sexuality, for centuries. And, um, the church is actually continuing to be pretty non vocal on it. A lot of churches even up to today. And our, you know, the only thing that I can remember in my own thing was that you had to watch out because boys were always out to get it and you had to be sure that you didn't let 'em. And when I—when I started studying and I realized that—how damaging that is to women because, basically, when you have to spend all of your energy keeping boys' sexuality suppressed that you totally deny your own, you stand in front of a minister and get married, and then supposedly it's okay to have sex, but how do you turn that around when you've shoved it to the very bottom of your understanding for all of your years of awareness? And a lot of damage has been done in—for otherwise healthy couples. As I remember, a couple that—I heard them speak at a conference, and I found out at that time that they had both—she and her husband had both graduated from SPU, some 20 years before— and she was...they were like the uh, what do you call it, the king and queen, the prom king and queen type at SPU, at the time. And he was a big jock, they got married and they were on the verge of divorce and went for counseling. And she found out—she hated sex and never enjoyed it and thought it was horrible. And they got in there and found out that they really did need education and information and she, you know, experienced her first orgasm 20 some years into her marriage. When she tried to talk with her mom and sister about it they both had had just fine sex lives, managed to get along and around it, but she realized, you know, how the whole non talking about it, not even being able to talk to her mother or her sister, contributed to her going so many years into her marriage in a very unhappy way. So when you get to hearing these kinds of stories you realize how absolutely central it is that Christians sit at the table right alongside of everyone else and learn healthy sexuality. And that became my, my goal and my mission, that they can appreciate and enjoy—enjoy and delight in what is truly a God-given gift of being able to love and pleasure each other and get kids on the side when you want them. Does that make sense? (laughs)



Isabel Bartosh 09:17

Yeah it does. So it's been a while since you taught the class, but could you give me like a summary of, like, the course material, like what you would talk about?



Mary Fry 09:32

This is a little story on the side, but a student who went to—transferred to Montana was

the-the university there refused to give her credit for the sexuality course because it was taught as a Christian institution. And so she called back to me. I used the book called Crooks and Bours, and it's one of the most popular human sexuality courses across the United States secular. There's nothing particularly Christian about it at all. It's an ordinary, straightforward sexuality text, and so we covered anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system, we covered psychosexual growth and development, we covered variations in human sexuality, which included, uh, you know all the other ways that people think and do around sexuality. We included-and I always, always had a unit on homosexuality, it was a normal part of the textbook, because it's always been a- an uptight taboo topic. And we talked about contraception. We talked about sexual dysfunction. So you can see it just covered the whole gamut. And if you pull any human sexuality text off of the coun- off of the library shelf and look through the range of topics that's literally what we covered. And so, there was always at least a week-a week of classes on homosexuality. Specifically. We didn't talk about trans, and all the other variations because they still weren't too big in those days. They weren't too out, I should say, in being able to discuss and talk about it.



Isabel Bartosh 11:18

Right. So what did you teach about homosexuality in your class?



Mary Fry 11:22

Um, it was interesting because one of the teaching colleagues, sort of had-the psychology professor sort of had a very dry side of-of trying to teach it, and mostly talked about the bad side of it, like what happened in public restrooms and stuff like that. Hold on just a second. (Pause) I accidentally put a pie in the oven without thinking about the time earlier, (laughs). It's out now. So he-I just forgot to turn the timer off is all. There we go, I got it now. And so it was just all the dry bad things about it. And the students were kind of turned off and I was too. And he said something really hysterically funny in class one time, and students finally snickered and then the whole class snickered loudly and burst out laughing, and I was laughing too because it was so funny, because he didn't even realize this little faux pas that he had made. I think it had to do with gay men going into the bathroom and zipping in and out. (Laughs) Zipping in and out just stuck everybody funny. Well, he got so upset that everybody laughed at him, that he didn't come back and teach the class anymore (laughs). And I wasn't unhappy about that. So then, of course, that meant I had to take it on myself and I began getting a speaker, who spoke for gay men-mostly men, of course we didn't talk about lesbians much in those days, either. And then I also had somebody come in-Oh, I know, I got the guy from the Metropolitan Community Church, which was an all-gay church at the time. This was in the '70s. I don't know if you're

aware of it. I think it's probably still going, but I haven't heard about it for a long time. And then the other person was from a conservative side, and basically anti gay you might say, and I, I had these two people come and had the students listen to them, and what I watched is the students just literally polarized to where they were already, and nobody thought or changed or worked at going to-one side just discredited that side and the other side just discredited this side. And-and then I had-I had a couple of speakers on the anti-gay side that were just appalling, and the misinformation that they were saying and the misquoting, I mean an unawareness of any literature or research that had been done. And I basically decided I couldn't have them come anymore. And meanwhile I wanted- and the other thing is I, we had the students keep journals in which they turned in a journal every week in which they reflected on the topic of that week. And they were private nobody saw them but us professors and we only-and they didn't, they got graded for turning it in, not for what they did or didn't say, but it was a place to where they could explore further and I figured out that every single class I had, there was anywhere from one to three or four gay people in the class. Gays and lesbians, men and women both. And they basically were not out of the closet. They shared their feelings, they came, many of them, because I responded comfortably with them, they came and talked with me in my office. And I never, ever tried to discourage them or dissuade them, but appreciated that they didn't go out of their way-I learned in my own studies very very early on, this is not something you choose it's something you are. You know you just become aware of the fact that you prefer girls when you're girl and not boys, and you prefer women when you're a woman and not men, and it-and what are you supposed to do with that? You know, in a world that only sees it the- uh, heterosexually. So many of the students were distressed, a few of them had found places to be comfortable. And they just always were there in the class. And then the thing that I noticed across the years of teaching it, this-uh, teaching on this topic, is that it became less and less and less of an issue for most of them because the public schools were encouraged to be more accepting and open and comfortable and non discriminatory. And I think students who had cousins and sisters and brothers, as well that were- and classmates who were homosexual, it just, they just saw, who-that-who their personhood was, and it became, for the most of them a non-issue. And the last couple of years I taught, the only people that were horribly anti gay were those coming out of the Mars Hills church. Do you remember the Mars Hills church?



Isabel Bartosh 11:23

I've heard about Mars Hill.



Mary Fry 17:25

Yeah, it was pretty bad.



Isabel Bartosh 17:26

Yeah.



Mary Fry 17:26

Um, and he wrote-he wrote a whole book on, kind of on sexuality for Christians and I read a couple-kind of relationship stuff-and I read it and it was just, um, the minister there, and it was, it was not healthy, it didn't have a lot of accurate information. His website didn't have accurate information. You know, like what he was saying about contraceptions, and basically that all of them were bad, and on and on. So anyway, he-he had those few students in his camp. And-and I've had students come and tell me to my face that they didn't like me because I didn't uphold that they- these were sinners. And also admin-an administrator at one time told me that I could put the information out for students, but I had to dish their plate as to what they should believe. (Laughs) I went down to my Dean at the time and I said "Do I have to do this?" and he said no (laughs). He was on my side. So, anyway. Then there was a big hullabaloo in, uh, the early 90s. I can't remember if it was '91 or '92, this might have been where you saw my name come up in the newspaper. The way I understand it, is this woman, a middle aged woman, took my class. And about halfway through the class, she informed me that a Board member had asked her to be in the class to find out what was really going on. And she was reporting back to him from her bias. And she walked out of my room and I was on the phone in 30 seconds to administration saying that it was absolutely unacceptable that a Board member would have somebody register for my class to get information on me when they were not willing to come and sit down and talk with me personally themselves. And we had- we knew it was a Board member and everything, and they agreed with me that that was not acceptable either. But as it was then, somebody decided to scrutinize the class, close-closer. And this one person, the one who said that I should dish up their plates for them after I presented this smorgasbord, pulled me from the class one week before the quarter started, and the class got canceled. And I filed a grievance against them and their rationale was that I wasn't Orthodox enough. I'm sorry but I didn't even know what that meant. (Laughs) And as near as I could figure out is that I didn't count out as some...um, Free Methodist line, that I'm not Free Methodist so I didn't know this line, you know. So anyway, I filed a grievance against them for doing that. And basically I got reinstated to teaching the course, but they-they had a different co-teacher with me that was fairly newly hired out of the theological seminary. I don't remember which one, down south. And this man sat there-you know, I kind of went over the history I'm-I'm excuse me, very candid, everything is out in front, you don't-I don't have a hidden agenda anytime. So I just told him what happened and he laughed at it, and said "You know, I've always been the burr under people's saddle never, never the proof of their, you know, never, never, never did I have to prove anybody else's line of faith", and he and I had a wonderful time

teaching for several years. So, anyway, the class went on, I continued to teach it basically like I always had. I didn't change or pull any punches or do anything different, but somewhere in there anyway they had labeled me as being soft on gays. And then somewhere along the line, trying to figure out what year that was, she was still in school and so within-it was in, too, some of this time that my own daughter came out as lesbian and. And I looked back on that and I thought, man, you know, if I hadn't have had all this studying and understanding myself, how I would have felt so shocked and different than I in fact did in terms of just accepting her and who she was. And my only fear on that was how people would treat her, other people would treat her, and I personally experienced some of that, I observed it you know so I know it's a reality. But anyway, she stayed undercover the whole time she was in school.



Isabel Bartosh 23:01

Did she go to SPU?



Mary Fry 23:03

Yeah, she did. And she met her first partner there. And I told them they had to stay undercover because I couldn't afford the...She had to behave herself there is what I said. And she did. So she graduated with basically no trouble. And I didn't have any trouble from it either. But the students sort of just learned to be quiet and find their way. There was a man, I think his name was White. And he was kind of big in, I think Youth for Christ or something way back in the days. And he might have been the guy or partnered with the guy who wrote the book- I'm blanking on the name of it, something about- it had something to do with being- "The Homosexual is Also My Neighbor", you know, that he said, he was really funny, he said that a lot of homosexual kids migrate to SPU because they need an accepting, caring environment of people that are accepting and caring in general. And the truth is clear, until some of them found out you were gay, they were that way, you know? But that it was an atmosphere where they were kind to people in general, but they still had to stay in the closet in that process. But that a lot of them chose to come. Um, and then in the, I think it was in the 90s, through the 90s, we did have, um, our first- the first time I remember, is a gay and lesbian group that met, and they met off campus for a while but then they also met- because I went to, I went to the class and met with them and spoke with them one time. And we-the meeting was in Demaray Hall. So I know they met on campus, too. And I didn't get- I sort of chose not to get-become an activist on campus, partly because I didn't want the whole class, human sexuality class, to be undermined by them again ripping me off of it and stuff because I so firmly believed that the students needed to hear about healthy sexuality. So I, you know I was there, I met with them and talked with them, many of them could come into my office, but I didn't

become an activist on campus. And it was a hard road to walk. And I had-I felt I had to think of the greater good too, you know, of everyone else being able to have this course that I thought they needed.

I Isabel Bartosh 26:13

Why did you think that it's so important for Christians but also nursing students specifically to have a healthy understanding about human sexuality?

M Mary Fry 26:25

I guess because I realized how much it enriches your life to have a healthy view of sexuality then to have an unhealthy view, in terms of accepting yourself and your own feelings, and your own personhood, and being able to get married and find your life partner, and to enjoy the pleasure that intimacy can bring, because it really does enrich and strengthen a couple's relationship to have this healthy context for it. And when it's unhealthy or you only see it as sin, or you know nothing about it- For example, one couple was having sexual dysfunction, I'll give you an example. And so, when- this was a sexuality nurse practitioner that met with them, and so he had-she had him point out to where, where his wife's clitoris was, and he pointed to a mole over on the side. You know, he didn't even know where or how to pleasure her. And she didn't even know how to tell him where and how to pleasure her. And so, you know it's uncomfortable, and it's unpleasant, and they get into avoidance pattern, and you don't- and they're very confused. And in my work with married couples this just comes out over and over and over again, that, um, that-that it's ignorance about how their body works. And it's a needing to undo the unhealthy teachings, and to restore healthy teachings. And an interesting example is the students could argue full-out for or against abortion, but you mention the word masturbation and you could hear a pin drop in the classroom. I mean, everybody sort of like went into this whole, tight, inner thing. (Laughs) I am not kidding. And I've had-I've talked to other people who observed it in my classroom, that you talk about masturbation and everybody just -EEEEEEK- Masturbation, as if it were some ultimate sin, above and beyond all other sins in the world. And it isn't, it has nothing to do with it, it's not even anything in scripture that says that. They added- it's the misinterpretation of Scripture, you know. And to think that you touch yourself, and know your own body, and explore your own body, as being wrong, and the fact that you pleasure your own body rather than going and finding an inappropriate sexual partner because you think that's what you have to do to be normal. It's a healthier thing to do it. And but the students, you know, I think that shocked them far more than thinking that it was okay to be homosexual (laughs). That's how uptight the Christian community can be.



Isabel Bartosh 29:29

You think that there's a connection between the Christian purity culture that you've talked a little bit about, and like the church's anti gay sentiments?



Mary Fry 29:43

Yeah. But yeah, there is some of it because, again, if you know and understand, for example, the physiologic response to somebody who is being touched by a same sex partner that they really care about, and being touched by a heterosexual partner when they're heterosexual and going to care about it, it's the same physiologic response. So the body responds to sexual touch and intimacy and arousal, exactly the same, whoever you are. And it's more alike for men and women than what we give people credit for, you know. To say that men have a stronger sexual drive than women, it's only because we've had a culture that turns women off to their own sexuality for so long. But if you let women be free, and grow up healthy and learned, and, you know, they're, they're quite similar. So, that kind of a tightness, about sexuality in general is learned, and then, uh, we don't-we always don't understand what's different than us, and I still am that way is that, you know, I look at a woman and I don't understand. I can't even find it in my head to figure out how one could really want that versus a heterosexual partner. But what I read and understood, and talked to gays and lesbians and understood from them is, it's exactly the same for them, only it's lined up with same sex partners. And to think that they would have to deny that, and in order to be a Christian they'd have to live some celibate life because that's the way they are. And if that's the way they are, and they didn't choose to be that way, then you have to say God created them that way. If you want to go to the creation theory on this. So where in there do you find abnormality? Well, I-I'm thinking of a couple of theology professors that came and talked, and it goes back to the old Jewish-Old Testament. There is a natural order and the natural order must be followed. And you have Deuteronomy full of all of this stuff, you know, that has to do with natural orders. And so, somewhere in there, uh, that got interpreted that this is unnatural and that's natural. And even the Roman ones, when Paul calls, um, "They do unnatural things. A man with men, and women with women." Again, the cult-the Roman culture that-that the Hebrew culture came up against, the Jewish culture came up against at that time was very into public kinds of sexual orgies stuff, and stuff like that was happening there. So, if that's what you see- But nowhere in there, is there any talking about my son falling in love with a man, and that's the way it is, and my daughter falling in love with a woman and that's the way it is. And my other daughter falling in love with a man and that's the way it is, and you know you start lining things up like that and seeing it as normal and-and I- through my own studies, and through my own talking to individuals and listening really came to fully realize that it was not a chosen way. I don't understand it. It's just the way some people are. So give them their space. And I also came to realize it absolutely makes no difference

to me personally. You know I'm a big one on problems of overpopulation. So I'm a big person for contraception, and not having babies you can't raise in a healthy way. I thought "Well jeez, you know, you want to talk about preventing overpopulation, you could even go that way." You know, there's all sorts of ways of looking at it. So, anyway, that-that is where I am and then somewhere in all of this process, it again- I know in 1985 was when I started going- I heard Rebecca Parker who's a fantastic, um. She's actually moved on to Berkeley she teaches- she's probably retired now, taught a theology Seminary in Berkeley, but I heard her talk about feminist theology, and I've always been a feminist, given I'm a person of the 60s and 70s. And so I started going to her church, I went to that church five Sundays before I figured out that the church was open to gay and lesbians, and it was one of the first five United Methodist churches that became what we call reconciling. And I've attended that church ever since, and about probably about 20% of our congregation are gay and lesbian. They have children, and families, and single people, and they're all integrated into the congregation with everybody else and their heterosexual families and everything, and it's been a fantastic church over the years. And the minister there helped me at the time I found out about my daughter, helped me to be comfortable and understand and to listen to her, and I know my daughter was able to go to the minister of that church and talk when she figured out-kind of began to understand herself. So, but you know then to see a child in a Christian family figure that out, who they are, and then their own grandmother won't even hug them anymore, which is what happened to my family, and people are making snide-other relatives are making snide remarks, you know, out of the rest of my family, they haven't been as accepting. Some of them have, and I'd say probably about half of them are okay now. But to think that you would choose to do that and face that kind of insult and everything just because you want to sin. (laughs) Where do you find that in the Bible? Anyway, that's my-and I talk freely, fairly freely about that to a lot of students that came and wanted to talk.



Isabel Bartosh 36:28

Thank you for sharing that.



Mary Fry 36:31

I know I have my bandwagon. But I came a long way from Dilly. Before I never even knew what it was (laughs). And when I went back to my 50th high school reunion, two or three of my friends-classmates, at that 50th reunion I found out that they were lesbians, it never came out at the other ones.



Isabel Bartosh 36:58

Did you find-

M

Mary Fry 37:00

So-

I

Isabel Bartosh 37:00

Oh sorry.

M

Mary Fry 37:01

That's it.

I

Isabel Bartosh 37:02

Did you find that a lot of other people, like either other professors at SPU, or other faculty members, were kind of having the same experience that you were? Where they grew up not knowing a whole lot, and then, you know, moved to Seattle and started teaching in Seattle and started learning a little bit more.

M

Mary Fry 37:22

Let me just speak to the nursing faculty. And by and large, most of us came out of pretty much the same conservative environment. And most of us, all of us, at the time, that I became aware and taught, were-saw very much the need for healthy human sexuality-human sexuality context. And we, um, and I can-I know from experience that I can think of at least three, three to four others that had lesbian children. And I know faculty in other departments that had lesbian children-gay and lesbian children, so, um. And I would say, again, that it kind of mirrors maybe 10 -0% of the faculty would be-still say that it's a sin, and you shouldn't be that way. And the rest of them would say, live and let live. I would-I literally think that most of them are that much more comfortable.

I

Isabel Bartosh 38:32

So when you were teaching the human sexuality course, you mentioned the board member who signed up for your class, were there-

- M** Mary Fry 38:41
No, had somebody else sign up for the class. The board member never contacted me personally.
- I** Isabel Bartosh 38:47
Yeah had-
- M** Mary Fry 38:47
And my contention was that if he had an issue, with-thought there was something that he wanted to talk about, he should pick up the phone and call me and make an appointment. And I went and talked with him. See what I mean?
- I** Isabel Bartosh 39:01
Yeah, were there any other instances of either the board or SPU admin-
- M** Mary Fry 39:09
Another faculty person that was very conservative contacted my office manager for the School of Nursing, and wanted a copy of my syllabus. And she checked with me if she should give it and I said, "No, make him ask for it. Ask for it from me personally." And he never did (laughs). So what she said was "If you want it, give Mary Fry a call and ask for it." And he never contacted me. That was interesting.
- I** Isabel Bartosh 39:47
Why do you think so many people in Christian culture are so adverse to learning about human sexuality? Why do you think it's such a roadblock for so many people?
- M** Mary Fry 40:00
Because it's been a roadblock in their church. And you know parents-parents who don't understand healthy psychosexual development, and they don't understand anatomy and physiology, they don't teach their children. And then those children grow up and don't have pretty-very good relationships around sexuality, and they don't teach their children. And the church, then, I don't know, because everything I learned or thought I heard about sexuality, in my high school years, was the negative side of it, you know, that if you had

premarital sex, that was the ultimate sin. And we couldn't go to church, and we couldn't mean, we couldn't go to movies, and we couldn't go to dances. So the pregnancy rate amongst my high school classmates in our church was pretty high. Because when you can't go to public places, and enjoy each other's company, and sit in a dark theater and hold hands and whatever, and you end up in the backseat of a car, you end up getting in trouble. When you're in more public things like dancing, you know. Dancing doesn't lead to sex. Not being able to dance and have nothing to do when you're with your partner but sit in a sit in a dark car, then you get in trouble. I'm not kidding. This is literally three and four out of our—we had like, 25 kids in our youth group in the church, and three or four of them got pregnant, you know, in there before they were out of high school. And then, in those days, abortion was illegal, so they ended up having to get married young. Or, you know, sometimes they supposedly moved out of town. But it was extremely unhealthy. And even then, we didn't talk about—and we were so shocked when it happened. But again, even if girls—we blame the girl, not the guy. Incredible, isn't it? And they get off scot free. She's the one who's belly gets big and everybody knows about it. It's really was horribly sad.



Isabel Bartosh 42:25

So what would you like to see people change in their approach to human sexuality?



Mary Fry 42:33

I would like to see parents be able to matter of factly, calmly, integrate healthy body and sexuality issues throughout all of their child's growing years so that the children are comfortable, they have an appreciation of what's healthy and what's unhealthy. And they have an appreciation that they can choose to not go along with and share their bodies, they have an appreciation for why it's important to wait until they are mature—mature enough to fully understand and handle all the consequences. If parents were able to do that in a healthy—healthy way, and then the schools come alongside of it, and reinforce it and shape it within our culture in healthy ways. I think the incidence of unintended pregnancies would be almost nil. If students chose to be sexually active, they would be far more apt to use contraceptives, so you don't have—have to decide about an abortion. And you don't have to decide about being pushed into an early marriage with someone that you were just trying to figure out if you really cared for him. So that's what I would like. And then I would like married couples, to be able to talk freely and comfortably and openly about what they need and want from each other in terms of intimacy, and to be able to explore and, and delight in and laugh together and love together. And marriages would be healthier, families would stay together and children would have healthier homes, it's all connected, it is all connected. And where adults can start now is to pick up a book

and learn about their own body and learn about psychosexual development and learn about psychosexual issues and study them. You know, for example, if you studied abortion- One of the most incredible studies was...I have to think about it. I think it's called "In Her Own Voice", it came out and she was a woman who worked with that-the guy who studied the levels of moral development, and when she wanted to study it she looked for problems that were unique to women. Because women and men on this scale that this guy-there are six levels of it, you know, from doing it so you won't get spanked as a kid, you know, get punished. And then doing it because you know it's better, and then doing-doing good because you care about other people. Women always leveled out at level three, and women in this guy's study never got to the totally aesthetic levels of moral development. And she couldn't figure it out, and then she used abortion as an issue. And it's one that men don't ex-well, no. There's a couple places where men might in their life come up with-against something that's sort of like abortion. For example, do you-do you save your own life, or do you let your buddy get killed in war? Maybe like that, a man might experience of what it means. Do I destroy this life that's growing in me, or do I mess up the lives of all of these other people around me by having this baby, including my own life? And that was the question she asked. But what came out of this book that was so incredible, was that women often sacrificed themselves and their babies to what their boyfriend or their-or what they thought their family, or their grandparents might want. They never made-they could not make this decision for themselves, or for-and think through it and make it fully for the baby. They-they that-Kohlberg! That was the guy's name. Kohlberg's level three, reached out and tried to keep harm from happening to all these other people. And then there's another one of women- oh, one of my students did a, a masters students, did a study, and she interviewed women who chose to have abortions. And almost without exception, she-she would have the abortion because he said "If you don't I'm going to leave you." That came up over and over and over again in this woman's study, and the irony of it is that the guy almost always leaves anyway. Because the relationship was this horrid thing to happen for them. And the decision she had to make when she'd hoped that life could be different for herself. You know, so abortion, to me is just so centered around unhealthy human sexuality and unhealthy human sexual relationships, and communication and all of the rest. You take care of those, and you don't have to figure out what to do with unintended pregnancy so badly. So, yes, healthy human sexuality controls a lot of problems. A lot of divorce, a lot of abortion, a lot of sexual abuse. You know I looked at, how many of the students-the women's students and my nursing students I got to know-and then the sexuality class too, who were molested by a family members. And these were in "Christian" families, and the one, I remember the one saying to me, "How could I say anything? He's on the Board of Deacons at our church. Who's going to believe me that daddy does this to me?" And she came to me because she was so worried about her sister who now was at home with this father. And, basically- and she had never talked to her sister about what had happened to her. And I said, "The first

thing you do is you go and talk with your sister and make sure she's safe. And then figure out who you can talk to about your dad, because this is immoral." And why is this Christian man using his daughter? Well, he can't have good sex with his wife. She's all cold and turned off and everything. And he doesn't have healthy sexuality, and outlook for himself. Where did he learn it wrong? Just incredible. And the whole thing, you know, date rape. There should never-should never be such a thing as date rape because every guy out there should have it drilled into his head that No means No. Or if she doesn't look him right in the eye and say, "Yes, I absolutely do want to have sex with you right now," that he shouldn't do it. That anything less than that is rape. I said that to the boys in the dorm at SPU. Because we had issues at SPU where they sided with a guy that she changed her mind the next morning, and said she didn't want it. And therefore she wanted to call it rape. And I'm going "I doubt that." And what she did was went along with it, didn't know how to protest, didn't know how to say no, but couldn't deal with it at all the next morning. But you see, her life was totally messed up because of it. And if he got kicked out of school because of it, his life is messed up. If he stays in school, that's even worse to me, because it said that she was-made the whole thing up. I was so furious the two or three times that happened at SPU, where the guy got believed over the girl. Incredible. And yes, we had SPU professors who "disappeared" for inappropriate behavior with students, I'm aware of, too, for sure. So, you know, it's alive and well.



Isabel Bartosh 50:54

Yeah.



Mary Fry 50:57

But I'm also aware of other professors that said, "Well, I've never-I never let a-I never meet a student in my office, a woman student in my office, you know, because they might accuse me." And I'm going, "You know, if you're totally appropriate about the visit, she's not going to accuse you of anything." But they-there-they were running scared, you know, and I thought, man, but what are they doing to make sure that guys- and the guys have to change their behavior to in all of this, you know. Women are- women have gotten a voice, and they're learning to stand up. But like Mario Cuomo (?) -that guy, I think, honestly believes that anything he ever did was not inappropriate, that he was just being a sweet loving guy. And there's so many men out there like him that think it's okay to paw a woman. And why should she object, doesn't she like a little love? (Laughs) It's a good thing-watch Mario Cuomo, it's a classic example of male ignorance. And who knows what else maybe-maybe he is thinking he can bold face lie his way out of it. We saw that with Donald Trump, you know, the same thing. It's his right to handle women. And you can talk to the Christian boys, and they know better. And they, for the most part, do better. But

they also are afraid of and scared of their own sexuality in the process of doing all that too. It's really, it's really integral to our personhood, that we have healthy sexual appreciation. So that was my sermon ad for all those years. And I-I know I changed some students (laughs). I sent one student home, and I said, "I want you to get up in the morning, and I want you to look in the mirror, and I want you to say, 'penis, vagina, penis vagina.'" She was a nursing student, I said, "You have to be able to say those words to patients, when it's a part of the normal conversation, and you can't even say them." And she couldn't- and she came back the next day "I did it! I did it! I said them!" And the thing- it's like me not lifting my eyes the first time I taught in the prenatal class, that once you see people have value, and appreciate it when you are open and appropriate and healthy, that you can continue to be more open, more appropriate, and more healthy. Would you like to take my class?

I Isabel Bartosh 53:46
I'd love to take your class.

M Mary Fry 53:47
(Laughs) And humor, oh my god. We used humor a lot in the class. And it's a wonderful icebreaker. We laughed a lot.

I Isabel Bartosh 54:00
Do you know if the class is still taught at SPU?

M Mary Fry 54:02
On last accounts that I had, it was. The nursing faculty- Vicki Aaberg was teaching it. It's under a Health Sciences class title, but I haven't looked lately, I should go on and look. But she co-taught with me a while. And she didn't nearly have my sense of humor, but I think she, uh, is very comfortable and straight forward in what she was teaching.

I Isabel Bartosh 54:30
So you've talked about how you really want- well, you want to encourage Christians to have like a better understanding and relationship with human sexuality. What else do you think needs to change in Christian culture, or at SPU specifically, whichever one you want to talk about?

M

Mary Fry 54:49

Well, I think SPU needs to acknowledge the fact that gay and lesbian and trans people do come to SPU and they accept their tuition dollars, and they "want tuition dollars." And therefore, they need to give these students the space to be who they are and how they are. And again, the students- gay and lesbian students are not there to recruit, whatever that might mean. They are not- they are to get an education. They ought to be held pretty much in the same circumspect-standards of respectful sexual behavior, such as the handbook states, you know, that you can't have roommates in your dorm. I mean, sleep overs in your dorm, and etc, that are inappropriate. So they need to have respect for-for all of that, as long as they're taking their tuition dollars. And if they want to shut the gate, they have to shut it way back and say, "We think you're so bad, we don't even want your money." But they don't do that. (Laughs) And I think the other students coming to SPU are far more comfortable than they've ever been around gay and lesbian people, because our whole society is changing. We see that. You know, you can look at an ad on TV and see two men cooking supper in the kitchen in the ad. And you wouldn't have seen that five years ago. We have same sex marriage. And even though it can't happen in some churches, it's happening in other churches. So we are making progress. And for those few super conservative churches that see some sort of a liberal interpretation- a conservative interpretation of the Bible, that are continuing to disallow it, um. I don't know. But when you talk to a young person coming out of that church, where the ministers-when he tried to talk to the minister about his own confusion of what he was feeling, and have him the very next Sunday, that preacher get up and shun him in front of the entire congregation for being homosexual. That's what happens in those churches. Un. Real. And I don't know how they're going to change, when they're going to change, or if they can change. We just may have to wait for them to die off. But some of the kids growing up in there are going to look around them and realize the gay and lesbians around them are normal humans, and can profess the same love to Jesus that they do.

I

Isabel Bartosh 57:59

Do you have any other reflections on your time that SPU?

M

Mary Fry 58:02

I guess, when I became aware of the fact that many of the faculty are more open and accepting of scientific information and literature, and talking to people and seeing things beyond narrow boxes, that I was pretty comfortable there. And to me, it came down- even when I was there, it came down to the school maintaining an incredibly conservative Board at the same time the faculty and the students had shifted.

I Isabel Bartosh 58:49
Yeah.

M Mary Fry 58:51

And I don't know how that can, how that can move forward. Because I think, you know, if you're the sole, more open person sitting on a closed board, you get drummed off of it. And then it keeps reproducing itself, you know. And the Free Methodist Church is not fully open yet either, so. That's the other issue. Which is interesting, because the First Free Methodist Church there across from the campus, they had a married couple there in which the man contracted AIDS, and died of AIDS, actually, but it became out- it came out that he of course, had homosexual relationships on the side, and it was still trying to portray this appropriate Christian thing. The church rallied behind him, and was there for him and his wife, during the time he died of AIDS and everything. And I talked with her. I met with her and talked with her. And it was very interesting, because she had a lot of trouble. One of the things that happens is if some-if a gay man marries you, trying to be normal, "normal" himself, and then- he can't follow through with it, and it comes out. You know, you as a woman feel that not only does he want to divorce you, but you're- he's rejecting your womanhood as well as your personhood. Because he prefers men, and but yet he married you and he drug you into all of this mess. And they're really very angry oftentimes. And it's easy to blame them, the gay partners that got into the relationship, but you have to realize that all of the messages that they're told that they have to be normal, and this outfit called "Accidents"- Oh my god, I had a speaker come from there a couple times. And you know, all you had to do is pray your homosexuality away, and you can prove that you are straight by marrying, getting married. I-I just sat there and listened to him with my mouth hanging open, I could not believe that they were- and then, the suicide rate of the-of their people coming out of that program- because they couldn't do it. They couldn't pray it away. And so what if you if you're so weak that you can't pray to God and get God to cure you, and you can't figure out what to do now because it didn't go away when you prayed hard, you have to kill yourself. Suicide rates among gay and lesbians and trans kids is just- go look at that literature. And it's telling you "I'm so unaccepted that I can't live in this world the way it expects me to." And that's immoral. That is immoral, to give that message to somebody who is the way they are not through anything they chose to do.

I Isabel Bartosh 1:02:22
Yeah.

M Mary Fry 1:02:24
Where do you not see that in immorality as you're sitting there by- pounding on your Bible?

I Isabel Bartosh 1:02:34
Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important for me to know?

M Mary Fry 1:02:41
No, I- like I said, I do feel more hopeful than I did in the past. And I think SPU is-the only way to get through to them is to kick them in the pocketbook at this point, because they're not open to changing yet. But when they realize that if they want to survive as a university, they're gonna have to change. Bottom line. Because many, many students who go there do want the education they're offering, but they're fed up with the guff they have to take along with it. So they leave- a lot of them leave that would have stayed had they not felt that there was such a closed mindedness about the university as a whole. But like I said, most of them find faculty and student colleagues that are comfortable so they're okay. They manage to get through. That's it.

I Isabel Bartosh 1:03:45
Okay. Well, I think I'm going to stop the recording now. And then I'll talk to you a little bit and like, tie some things up.

M Mary Fry 1:03:52
Okay.