



HOW TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S MINDS

The goal of The Great Sex Rescue Toolkit is to provide you with the knowledge and tools to share a healthier message about marriage and sex with others. But not everyone will be immediately open to hearing new information, especially when it may contradict what they have believed for a long time.

People believe things for all kinds of reasons. We tend to think their beliefs are logical—they've heard all the arguments, and they've decided which ones make the most sense. If we're going to change their minds, then, the best course of action is to give a logical, airtight argument that cannot be refuted.

Here's what people often do: they go to their pastor or church leader with a really good argument. But the pastor doesn't change his mind. Then they email Bare Marriage saying, "**How can I make the pastor understand?**"

Here's the thing: you can't. You can't *make* someone do anything. But what we can do is present the arguments, and then try to understand where they are coming from and what the roadblocks may be to accepting the information we're presenting. Then we can address those roadblocks.

TYPES OF PEOPLE

When we approach people with this information, we need to **learn to recognize which kind of people we are dealing with**. Many people haven't thought much about these issues, but others may be heavily invested in them in some way. Let's look at the different types of people we may encounter:

- 1 Those who haven't thought about these issues very much** (e.g., church librarians, small group leaders, women's or men's ministry leaders).
- 2 Those who are intellectually invested in the status quo** (e.g., pastors, some women's or men's ministry leaders, heads of Christian organizations).

- 3 Those who are emotionally invested in the status quo** (e.g., women who have put up with abuse for years, pastors who have been teaching the traditional evangelical perspective on marriage and sex for years). With this group, the sunk cost fallacy comes into play. Women who've been in abusive marriages may struggle to admit that what they're dealing with is toxic because then they're also admitting they could have left 30 years ago, and all the blood, sweat, and tears they've invested into their marriage was fruitless. Similarly pastors who've been teaching the status quo message for years may not want to admit they may have led some people astray.

- 4 Those who are practically invested in the status quo** (e.g., pastors and others who get their livelihood from teaching the traditional viewpoint, and whose jobs may be in jeopardy if they challenge it, or people who rely on others within the system for help of some sort).

- 5 Those who are socially invested in the status quo** (e.g., people whose friends and family believe a certain way; changing their beliefs would put those relationship in jeopardy).

Those in group 1 and 2 are easiest to talk to because they're more likely to be open to changing their minds. They're not that deeply invested. The other groups may be harder to convince because their level of commitment to the status quo runs deeper. This list is not exhaustive; there may be other reasons why people won't change. Some pastors or leaders are abusive themselves, and they're motivated to defend harmful teachings because it's how they maintain their power and control over others.



OUR APPROACH

How do we approach people with new information that may challenge their assumptions or long-held beliefs?

PRESENT THE EVIDENCE

The best place to start is by simply presenting the research found in *The Great Sex Rescue*, *She Deserves Better*, and other books with a healthy view of marriage and sex. The handouts in The Great Sex Rescue Toolkit summarize some of these findings and are designed to help you share them with others.

IDENTIFY THEIR INVESTMENT AND BIAS AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO COUNTER IT

When approaching someone who is invested in the status quo, **meet people where they are**, not where you think they should be. Your arguments will be more effective this way. Try to put yourself in their shoes.

Those who are emotionally invested: They've spent years teaching this. It's hard to admit they're wrong. You can mention others who have done this to show them they're not alone. Perhaps you yourself once believed the same way they did. That can be a powerful argument for change. Encourage them to consider that if the things they've taught might be causing harm, they don't want to keep teaching them. They may have done it out of ignorance at first, but once they learn better they have a choice to do things differently.

Those who are practically invested in the status quo: **Remind them why they started this job/ministry in the first place**, and take them back to their values. Also show practical consequences of not changing—they're going to lose people (like you) anyway. Is preserving the status quo worth it when the good people leave?

Those who are socially invested in the status quo: This is a hard one. **Ask them what love is**. Is it really love if someone doesn't let you be yourself? Is it really a healthy relationship when there is coercion, control, or manipulation? How does the Bible define love (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 5:25-30)?

SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR FEET AND MOVE ON

You can't convince everyone. Sometimes you just have to move on and let people remain in their ignorance, even if it's willful. Maybe they're just not ready to hear the truth yet. You may have planted a seed that will grow and bear fruit later. Or maybe they are just unwilling to consider the possibility that they are wrong. In either case, arguing further is unlikely to produce any positive results.

OUR GOAL

Remember that the goal is not to change one particular person. It is to speak up for truth, to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. We must remember the bystanders. Perhaps you didn't change a pastor or leader's mind, but maybe there was someone listening to your conversation who was influenced by what you said.

It's also important to clarify who is safe and who is not. Speaking out is not easy, but it's important when so much harm is being caused. By speaking up, you allow things to become clear. You allow people and institutions and systems to show who they really are. Sometimes that is enough, even if the person or people we are speaking to don't change. Our goal is to shrink the toxic spaces and grow the healthy spaces.



BARE MARRIAGE

HEALTHY, EVIDENCE-BASED, BIBLICAL ADVICE FOR SEX & MARRIAGE

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