

CHRISTIAN FAMILY CHAPEL HOPE CENTER

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR SEX

TONY ANDERSON

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Welcome

I am grateful that you are reading this pamphlet. It is my prayer that it encourages you. God has created and ordained the beautiful gift of sexual intimacy in marriage for a person to physically experience the pleasure of God through, and with, his or her spouse. It truly is a good and perfect gift coming from our Father above (James 1:17). However, like all of God's gifts, since the fall of man, man's sin has brought about challenges and hardships in this area. We live in a culture that celebrates sex before and outside of marriage, where commitment to marriage has severely eroded, where large segments of the population are "entertained" by pornography, and sadly, many men and women are exposed to sex through rape and abuse. The influence of culture and our own sinful thoughts have adversely affected how we think and act in the area of sexual intimacy within our marriage. But, God's Word gives us hope!

Many married couples have differences in the area of physical intimacy. If you and your spouse are struggling with differences in this area, you are not alone. It is a common problem (1 Cor. 10:13). Yet, many couples find the topic difficult or awkward to talk about. Due to up-bringing, modesty, guilt over prior sexual sin or shame arising out of wrong thinking concerning sexual abuse you or your spouse may struggle to discuss the problems you have in the area of sex and physical intimacy. So grace and patience will be necessary. However, it is a topic that God wants you to discuss because as we will see, sex in marriage was designed by God as pure and holy and as a means to glorify and worship Him. . It is my hope that this resource will help you understand God's design for sex in marriage and to make it easier to discuss these issues with your spouse.

IT'S ROOT NOT FRUIT.

It is helpful to understand that intimacy problems in marriage are almost always "fruit" problems and not "root" problems. In the years I have been counseling I have yet to counsel a married couple who states that their "only" problem is in the area of sexual intimacy. In all cases where intimacy was presented as an issue, it became clear that the problems in sexual intimacy were a manifestation (fruit) of other unresolved heart (root) issues. It is common for there to be issues of pride, selfishness, bitterness, idolatry, lack of forgiveness or some other unconfessed sin to be hindering physical intimacy. Think about this. What negative emotions do you experience when you encounter problems with physical intimacy in your marriage? Anger? Fear? Worry? These emotions follow our thinking. Negative emotions such as sinful anger, sinful fear, worry or hopelessness flow from wrong thinking. When you are sinfully angry in response to a situation involving intimacy in marriage what is it that you want so much that you become sinfully angry when you don't get it? Physical pleasure? Control? Peace? Rest?

That “thing” is an idolatrous desire; something that you have wanted more than loving God and loving your spouse. You can know it is an idolatrous desire because you are willing to sin to get it or sin if you don’t get it. Perhaps physical pleasure is an idolatrous desire that you want more than pleasing God. Maybe you experience fear, worry or anxiety when you encounter problems with your spouse concerning sex. Is there something you fear losing? Is there something you worry that you might never have? If so, that “something” is an idol. In your heart you believe that Christ alone is not sufficient for your joy, peace and blessing. You believe you need God PLUS something else. In the book of Jeremiah you see God saying:

“Has a nation changed gods

When they were not gods?

But My people have changed their glory

For that which does not profit.

“Be appalled, O heavens, at this,

And shudder, be very desolate,” declares the Lord.

“For My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me,

The fountain of living waters,

To hew for themselves cisterns,

Broken cisterns

That can hold no water.

Jeremiah 2:11-13

When Israel forsook the Lord and went chasing after other gods and putting its hope in other gods, the Lord chastised Israel to the heavens. The Lord stated that Israel had committed two sins. First, the people had forsaken the one true God who was and is the fountain of living waters who always satisfies. Second, they chose to dig and drink from broken cisterns that hold no water. Water in a cistern can quickly become stagnant and filled with parasites, and a broken cistern can't even hold the stagnant water. What we need to remember is that when we forsake God and His plan for our life, including His plan for sex within marriage, and go to some other "source" to have a desire met, we are forsaking God and doubting His goodness and instead we are pursuing satisfaction from a broken cistern that can't hold water. If, for you, physical pleasure or praise of man or security become more important than pleasing God and glorifying God, the scripture is clear you are an idolater, and scripture is also clear that the idol you worship will never satisfy.

Let me ask you another question. Do you ever fight or quarrel or get sinfully angry at your spouse about some aspect of your physical relationship? Sinful anger can include yelling, name calling and clamming up and giving your spouse the cold shoulder. God tells us in the Bible why this happens; why you fight and quarrel. James 4:1-3 says:

[1]What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? [2] You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

God tells us that you fight because you want something so badly that when you don't get it you will fight and quarrel. Maybe what you want so badly is more frequency of intimacy or less frequency of intimacy. Maybe you have a strong desire

for a particular sexual practice. God also tells us that frequently you don't ask him in prayer for the thing you so strongly desire. Alternatively, you may ask in prayer, but you ask for selfish motives so you may spend it on your own pleasures. God is telling you that when you want something so badly that you will fight and quarrel and you ask Him for it for selfish reasons, you should not expect God to give you that sinful desire. I say it is sinful because the fighting and quarreling and selfishness reveal that you want the lustful desire fulfilled more than you want to please God. If you experience negative emotions concerning your sexual relationship with your spouse, I encourage you to meditate on these scriptures concerning idolatrous lust and desires and work on identifying and putting off those idolatrous desires in your life and replacing them with the truth concerning God's character and sufficiency. You may also ask the person who gave you this pamphlet if he or she has other resources concerning idolatry.

The encouraging thing about the fact that problems in the sexual relations area are fruit issues and not root issues, is once the root is changed, a new fruit is produced. When a Christian has true heart change and seeks to please God in all areas of life, his heart produces good fruit. It is not uncommon for physical intimacy issues to resolve themselves once a husband begins growing in his role as a learner-living with his wife in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7); as a lover-loving his wife like Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25); and as a leader-exercising headship to the glory of God and for the good of the family (Ephesians 5:23); and as a wife begins growing in her role as a follower-submitting to her husband as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22); as a finisher-be a suitable helper and co-laborer with her husband (Genesis 2:18); and as a fan-respecting her husband and encouraging him when he fails (Ephesians 5:33).

Therefore, before we begin to look specifically at what the Bible says about sex in marriage, please understand and remember that as a Christian your primary goal in every area of life (even

sex in marriage) is to please and glorify God (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31) by becoming more like Jesus (Ro. 8:28-29) in growing measure (2 Peter 1:5-8). That truth is really good news because your ability to achieve the primary goal that God has given you is not dependent on the actions, words or attitudes of your spouse or our culture. You have the ability to love God and love your spouse in the area of physical intimacy because God has given you all you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Therefore, through our Lord's supernatural enabling and your obedience, you can live to the glory of God.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13-14 AND ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEMS YOU ARE HAVING IN THE AREA OF SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH YOUR SPOUSE:

1. What does verse 13 say about your problem?

2. What does verse 13 say about God?

3. What is the command in verse 14?

4. When you experience negative emotions (anger, fear, worry, anxiety) surrounding sexual intimacy in your marriage what is typically happening at that time? What are you thinking and wanting at the time?

SEX IN MARRIAGE IS PURE AND HOLY.

It is important to understand that unpervverted sexual desire is a pure, good, holy gift for mankind through which we can glorify God. Remember, sexual intimacy came into being before sin and the fall. The writer of Hebrews tells us: Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4). The Greek word for marriage *Bed-koite-* is where we get the word *coitus*, which means sexual intercourse. So this verse tell us that *coitus* in marriage is undefiled and honorable. Sex in marriage is good, honorable, and undefiled because God made it that way. It has been pointed out by others that many people while growing up were taught by parents and church leaders that good girls and good boys "don't". Meaning they don't have sex outside of marriage. However, many were not taught that good girls and good boys "do" joyfully and with pleasure engage in sexual relations within marriage.

It is also important to understand that obeying God's guidelines for sex is an act of worship. Sexual relations in marriage are just as pure and holy as praying, reading the Bible, giving of your financial resources, preaching etc. This truth can be eye opening to a spouse who is withholding sexual intimacy to see it as an act of obedience and worship.

However, sex is only pure and holy in marriage. The world has tried to steal sex and thinks the delights of sex are available without marriage, but that is not true. A person cannot violate God's principles for sex and avoid consequences. As it says in Hebrews, God will judge the immoral people and adulterers.

Some people struggle to see sex as a holy gift and act of worship. For some, this struggle stems from sinful behavior prior to marriage. A person may have been sexually active prior to marriage; either with his or her spouse or with a prior partner. This could have been driven by a sinful motivation to selfishly

seek physical pleasure or by a sinful motivation to manipulate and control the relationship. Now that this person is married, that person may now think that by simply obtaining a marriage license his or her prior practices and motivations are now pleasing or acceptable. This results in the person continuing to see sex as a means of self-satisfaction or control and manipulation, or both! If you were sexually active prior to marriage, you need to ask forgiveness from God for this sinful behavior. Remember, God said fornicators (sex outside of marriage) and adulterers (sex with someone other than your spouse) will be judged. But you will also need to seek forgiveness from your spouse, even if the person you were sexually active with prior to marriage is now your spouse. That is because it was sinful and unloving to tempt your spouse to sin in that way. God's design for sex is that it be enjoyed exclusively within marriage for His Glory and our good. As we will see below, the oneness experienced in marriage including, but not limited to, the unity a couple experiences during intimacy, is a picture of the unity and permanency of relationship we have with Christ as our Savior. When we participate in sexual relations without commitment or covenant of oneness we dishonor God because we misrepresent the relationship between Jesus and His bride, the Church.

I also encourage you to ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal to you if you are still acting with sinful motivations in the area of physical intimacy even now that you are married. Do you still view sex as means to satisfy self or to control and manipulate a relationship? If so, will you confess such sinful motives to God and your spouse, ask forgiveness and repent of such behavior?

QUESTIONS: PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER AND WRITE OUT ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. What are your thoughts about this statement: "Obeying God's guidelines for sex is an act of worship. Sexual relations in marriage are just as pure and holy as praying, reading the Bible, giving of your financial resources, preaching etc."?
2. Is there any sexual sin prior to your marriage that you need to confess and ask forgiveness for from God and your spouse? Will you do that today?
3. As you read this section, have you been convicted that you currently "use" sex for sinful selfish reasons such as personal pleasure or to control and manipulate your spouse?

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SEX AND MARRIAGE

We have seen from God's Word that God intends sex to be enjoyed only within the marriage relationship. So what is the relationship between sex and marriage? Well the Bible shows us that sex is not the basis for marriage, and marriage is not first and foremost a physical union. Some erroneously say that a marriage is not "consummated" until sex occurs. Take a moment and read about the encounter between Jesus and the

Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:7-30; in particular John 4:16-18:

16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

Jesus points out that that sex does not make you married. The woman had 5 previous husbands, and the man she was currently living with was not her husband. Sexual intercourse, biblical or unbiblical, does not make or break a marriage. Scripture is clear that marriage is a covenant relationship begun by a public ceremony where the couple enters in the covenant with God and the other spouse. It is a covenant where each covenants to God to put the relationship of Christ and His church on display (Ephesians 5:31-32). In this relationship, the husband ought to be to his wife as Jesus is to His Bride, the Church. A husband should be a learner of his wife and live with her in an understanding way, as he seeks to love and lead his wife the way Jesus loves and leads the Church. Likewise, a wife ought to be her husband, the way the church ought to be unto Christ. A wife should submit to her husband, as unto to the Lord. Likewise, a wife should revere her husband and co-labor with her husband, just like the Church is to do with Jesus.

Conversely, sex in marriage is very important. Failure to participate in sexual relations wholeheartedly and zealously for the pleasure of your spouse is sin. A Christ-follower cannot sit in church claiming to be right with Jesus yet sin against their spouse by being passive in this area. By the word passive, I am talking about not initiating sex and/or not enthusiastically participating in sex. Passiveness about sex is no more biblical than passiveness about prayer and other godly disciplines. When one is passive in this area, a person is saying that God's Word and their mate are not important enough to put forth the effort.

QUESTIONS: PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER AND WRITE OUT ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. Husbands, you are to love your wife just like Jesus loves the Church. Read each of the verses below, and write out what this says about Jesus' love. Also, write out what each verse tells you about how you should love your wife.
 - a. 1 John 4:19.
 - b. Ephesians 5:25.
 - c. Romans 5:8.
 - d. Ephesians 5:28-29.
2. Husbands, as you review your answers to the previous question, where do you need to grow in Christ-likeness in order to love your wife like Christ loved the church? Please identify one behavior you can begin this week in order to grow in this area. Is there something you can start doing, stop doing or do less of in order to put your wife's interest above your own interests?

3. Wives, you are to respond to your husbands the way the Church should respond to Jesus. Read each of the verses below, and write out what the passage says about the role of a wife.

- a. Ephesians 5:22-24:

- b. Genesis 2:18 (note, the term used for "helper" is the same word used in the Old Testament 14 times in referring to God as our "help"):

- c. Ephesians 5:33:

4. Wives, as you review your answers to the previous question, where do you need to grow in your role as a wife? Please identify one behavior you can begin this week in order to grow in this area Is there something you can start doing or stop doing?
5. How might a failure to be obedient to your role as a husband or wife affect your sexual relationship with your spouse?
6. What is your response to the statement: "Failure to participate in sexual relations wholeheartedly and zealously for the pleasure of your spouse is sin"?

THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP IS GIVING SATISFACTION TO YOUR SPOUSE.

I Corinthians 6:19-7:5 speaks about sex in marriage. Please take a moment now to read this very instructive passage of scripture.

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. 3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 But this I say by way of concession, not of command. 7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. 8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion

In this passage, Paul discusses the oneness that occurs sexually within marriage as well as the misuse of the sexual relationship outside of marriage. Paul reminds us that the believer's body was bought and is owned by Jesus (1 Cor. 6:19-20); and in the area of sexual intimacy your spouse has authority over it (1 Cor. 7:4). In effect, Jesus says, "Christian, I own your body. I bought it

with my life. And in the area of physical intimacy I am delegating authority over your body to your spouse”.

This may be hard teaching for some, especially for a person who may have experienced rape or sexual abuse. The thought that God has granted authority over “my body” to someone else can be a stumbling block to obedience in this area. However, we need to remember that God’s plan including His plan for sexual intimacy in marriage is perfect, and that God always works His plan for His Glory and our good. The two are always consistent. So the belief that it is “my body”, and I can do what I want with it is not Biblically accurate.

God wants a husband and wife to each realize that he or she has a responsibility in the matter of sexual relationships, and it is a command not an encouragement. Note, that the same command is given to both husband and wife. 1 Cor. 7:3 speaks of rendering what is good to the other spouse. The primary goal of sexual relationships is meeting the sexual desires of one’s spouse. The husband and the wife is each given the responsibility of keeping the other sexually satisfied. Sexual relations in marriage are more than permitted. They are mandated by God.

If you stop and think about it, the responsibility to keep a spouse sexually satisfied models the concept of biblical love. We see from the Bible that biblical love is primarily an action, not primarily a feeling, and that action is giving and sacrificial. (John 3:16; Philippians 2:3-8; Romans 5:8). The following definition of biblical love sums up these passages and Jesus’ love for us.

Biblical love is choosing to do what is in the best interest of the other person, according to God’s Word, no matter the cost and with no strings attached.

The focus of love is giving. And, since love is the basis for sex, the goal of sexual relationships is to give (not get). We must also remember that giving in order to get is just as wrong. It reflects a wrong motive that is self-focused. If you are giving to get, that is an evidence of lust and selfishness, because lust seeks its own satisfaction. Lust and selfishness violate the principle of 2 Cor. 5:15: and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

When your primary goal is your pleasure, the pleasure you receive will be less satisfying and less intense than the pleasure that is the by-product of giving according to biblical standards. We need to be clear here. Pleasure and climax are not bad. They are good. They just can't be a person's primary goal. If the goal is to satisfy your spouse, then that might not mean climax for you and/or your spouse in every instance. It is up to your spouse to determine what satisfies him/her. It is "ok" for a spouse to have a climax without the other so long as the one who did climax is seeking to please the other spouse. The key principal for all sexual relationships is the same principle that God's Word teaches for all of life. Satisfaction is not based on what we get but on how we please and love God and love others.

We should pause here, and address the fact that certain practices are in opposition to the biblical principles of giving sacrificially.

- a. **Masturbation:** While theologians and youth pastors have long debated if masturbation is per se sinful pursuant to the Bible, satisfying self through masturbation is "self-focused". Masturbation requires no effort to please your spouse. As a result it can build selfish habits that are hard to break. Additionally, in my counseling experience, a person who engages in masturbation frequently develops a fantasy life that is

sinful (lust for someone not his/her spouse) and harmful in that it establishes expectations that may be difficult for the spouse to satisfy.

B. Pornography: Sadly, pornography is growing rampantly, and so are the number of men and women enslaved to it. Pornography promotes sinful lust for one not your spouse for the purpose of self-satisfaction. This self-satisfaction requires no consideration for the interest of others and in fact creates unrealistic expectations for a spouse. Not only that, the practice supports an industry that enslaves its workers. Viewers of pornography are “entertained” by behavior for which Christ died, performed by people in desperate need for a Savior. The practice and the industry are diametrically at odds with the sacrificial love that is to be displayed in marriage.

C. Homosexuality: There is a growing wave to try to legitimize homosexual behavior as being permitted by the Bible especially if it is in a “monogamous” relationship. Many other wise Christian men and women have written excellent resources refuting such lies. However, I will simply point out that God’s word says:

1. God ordained marriage and He alone establishes the “rules” for marriage.
2. Sexual relationships are permitted only within marriage.

3. God tells us that marriage is between a man and a wife. Again, the Bible speaks of husbands and wives and that each have roles to play. Of most significance is that a husband is to display Jesus to his wife (and the world), and the wife is to display the behavior of the church to her husband (and the world).

Some argue that being homosexual is "how I was made". But the issue for Christ followers is "I must obey God".

As we study this I Corinthians passage, we must be aware that a husband does not have the authority to demand that his wife satisfy his desire, and vice versa. Only God can demand obedience. At times when counseling married couples, one spouse may hear me teach the other what the Bible says is his/her responsibility and interpret it as something God has promised him or her, and become demanding in this area. Nor does a person have the right to use sex to manipulate his or her spouse (using sex as a reward or withholding as punishment). This self-centered demanding/manipulation can tempt the other to also act selfishly.

Sometimes the demanding approach spoken of above may be rationalized by a spouse who argues he (or she) has sexual "needs" that must be met. The fact is, there are no true sexual needs because there is no eternal harm if they (i.e. sexual desires) are not met. Every Christian's primary goal in life is please and glorify God by becoming more and more like Jesus. Fulfillment of one's sexual desires is not needed in order to accomplish this goal. It is true that a husband and a wife may have significantly different sex drives and desires. But a strong desire for sex does not elevate it to a "need". It is simply a strong desire, and the individual will need to rely on the grace of God to control it.

However, and conversely, in marriage you should view your spouse's sexual desires as an opportunity to display your love for God through obedience to God's loving commands. Inaction on your part will not result in spiritual damage to your spouse but will result in spiritual loss to you. But if you seek to satisfy them biblically, it aids your spiritual growth as you grow in sacrificial love.

There is a biblical caveat however. A spouse cannot ask his or her spouse to participate in any type of sexual practice that is sinful. Nor can he or she ask the other spouse to participate in a practice that the other spouse thinks is sinful. Romans 14:23 tell us that "whatever is not from faith is sin". Therefore, if your spouse cannot participate in a particular practice in good conscience before God, then you are asking your spouse to sin if you pressure your spouse to participate in such practice. It may be an issue of lack of biblical understanding on your spouse's part. In which case, you must seek to teach not demand. And, remember your instruction from the Lord is to seek to love your spouse and consider his or her interest as more important than your own. (Phil. 2:3-4).

GOD HAS CREATED BOTH HUSBAND AND WIFE WITH EQUAL ABILITY TO SATISFY EACH OTHER.

In 1 Cor. 7:4 the use of the word authority reveals neither spouse has the right to use his/her body as the standard for the success of their sexual relationship. Each spouse is to be a leader in the sexual relationship and is not to wait passively. In other areas of life, husbands and wives regularly go about carrying out responsibilities without waiting for the other spouse to bring it up. Husbands and wives regularly get up and go to work, wash clothes, prepare meals and

maintain the house and cars. In the same way, each spouse should proactively seek to fulfill their responsibility within the sexual relationship. If each spouse is seeking to fulfill their responsibility there should be few times when the other spouse will ask for sex. A spouse who is not proactive in sex to the extent desired by his or her spouse is guilty of sinful selfishness. When a spouse refuses to initiate intimacy due to a lack of interest, that spouse is using his or her body to satisfy self by not having sex. On the other hand, a spouse must be more enthusiastic about satisfying his/her spouse than being satisfied. A spouse is to initiate for the purpose of satisfying the other spouse. Therefore, good and frequent communication about desires concerning frequency can help you love each other for God's glory.

A CLASH WITH THE WORLD.

Teaching that the primary goal of sexual relationships is giving satisfaction to your spouse clashes with today's worldly culture. Popular television shows and movies try to communicate that "normal" and preferred sexual relationships consist of men and women (sadly marriage is not important) who no matter how tired they are, no matter what is going on in their lives, can't wait to jump in bed together where they both experience mountain top climactic experiences on almost a daily basis. So, when in real life a loving wife offers to participate in sex with her husband not necessarily because it is her first preference that night but because she wants to love and bless her husband, it is not uncommon for a husband to get his "feelings hurt" because his mere presence doesn't arouse his wife. This can lead to pouting and statements such as "Well, I don't want it if I don't arouse you" or "I don't want it if you are not excited about it".

This type of thinking should be addressed biblically. First of all, the Lord commands us to pursue sexual relationships

with our spouses for the benefit and pleasure of our spouses. The Lord does not command us to have a certain physiological response (i.e. arousal). So a husband should not try to make a wife feel guilty because she is not aroused but yet is willing to enthusiastically engage in intimacy for his pleasure. Likewise, a husband should not wallow in self-pity (which is a form of pride) if there are times his wife participates in sex without climax.

Second, as an encouragement ask yourself this: Is it a more loving act for your spouse to participate in an activity with you that he or she likes as much if not more than you, or is it more loving for your spouse to participate with you in an activity that you like but requires sacrifice on his or her part? Based upon Jesus' example of sacrificial love, it is clearly more loving when your spouse sacrifices to bring you pleasure. So your spouse is loving you "more" when it is a sacrifice on his or her part. That should be encouraging. The problem is we don't like to think that being intimate with us is a "sacrifice". Again, that is our pride speaking. Paradoxically, as mentioned above, we typically do not have a problem with our spouse loving us by washing our clothes, or mowing the grass or going to a hard job even though it might not be their "preference".

PLEASURE IN SEX IS ASSURED AND ENCOURAGED.

Proverbs 5:18-19 teaches that the most delightful sexual satisfaction will come only from one's spouse. All attempts outside of marriage will be unsuccessful. There is a delight that can come from sexual pleasure but also a spiritual delight in knowing that you have glorified God and loved your spouse in a way God intended and in a way no one else can.

Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.

Solomon's words state we should delight in the person. Solomon's words portray a pleasantness of a wife (and the principle applies to a husband as well). The verses speak of a desire for her as a companion and best friend, not just physically. If a husband treats his wife as he should (as a learner of his wife, a lover of his wife and a spiritual leader of his wife), then there will be much delight in her as a person and the sexual delight experienced will be greater than when the husband selfishly seeks his own fulfillment sexually. Similarly, if a wife, is seeking to be a co-laborer with her husband, and to be his "completer" while also being his biggest fan, then her delight in the sexual relationship will be greater. Simply put, delight in companionship leads to delight in the sexual relationship.

You should have a greater desire for your spouse's companionship as a person than as a sexual partner. Your spouse is, or should be, your best friend, and you should be striving to be your spouse's companion (seeking to be a giver of companionship). Sadly, many adulterous relationships have started when a spouse "simply seeks companionship" from someone other than his/her spouse (seeking to be a taker of companionship). Such seeking of companionship out-

side of marriage is a self-focused pursuit. A person should rather seek to please God and become more like Christ in the marriage. Seeking satisfaction with someone other than your spouse is criticism of God for not giving you the kind of spouse you want.

THE PATTERN OF SEXUAL RELATIONS

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The command in 1 Corinthians 7:5 is to “stop depriving one another”. Paul instructs us that abstinence must be by mutual consent, for a specific period of time and must be for a specific godly goal in mind. The abstinence is then to be terminated by reestablishing the sexual relationship at the agreed upon time. The “godly goal” for abstinence does not have to be limited to prayer. There will be times when abstinence is the loving thing to do for your spouse; such as when your spouse is sick or tired. In such a situation, the spouse desiring intimacy should lovingly defer, but the couple should reschedule a time for intimacy, perhaps the next night or on the weekend. In such a case, a wife who is perhaps sick or very tired after a hectic day with the kids is loved by her husband, and husband is comforted because a time is set for them to be intimate. Many conflicts would be avoided if husbands and wives practiced these principles. Some may have the belief that intimacy must be “spontaneous” to be fulfilling. But, that is a worldly thought. There is nothing wrong with being spontaneous when our motivation is to please our spouse. However, couples frequently make plans for activities such as vacations and anniversary celebrations. Planning intimacy can be fun and gives a cou-

ple something to look forward to, rather than one or both of the spouses left wondering “when will we be intimate?”

The passage also has a warning that can't be ignored. Paul tells us that when a married couple is not being obedient in the area of sexual intimacy, Satan has an opportunity he would not otherwise have to tempt one or both of the spouses to pursue sexual pleasure in a way that is sinful. Satan is a liar and an accuser and we must not give him any additional opportunities for temptation. Nevertheless, when we are tempted, God is faithful and will provide us what we need in order to withstand the temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). In other words, you will never be in a situation where sin is your only option. Therefore, you will never be able to blame your sexual sin on your spouse.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

There is no doubt that the busyness of family and life can create challenges to intimacy for a couple. But these challenges are also opportunities to love well. Below are some practical suggestions for improving communication regarding intimacy and over-coming some of life's obstacles.

Probably first and foremost, a couple should solve problems in a way pleasing to the Lord. When you have sinned against your spouse, you should humbly confess it and ask for forgiveness from your spouse and God. Unconfessed sin hinders the focus on giving sacrificially. This goes back to the point made earlier, that rarely is a problem with sex a root issue. The root issue is usually pride, unconfessed sin, bitterness or the like.

A husband and a wife can each make detailed lists of what would provide him or her pleasure and satisfaction and give that list to the other spouse for the purpose of helping the

other spouse fulfill her/his responsibility of pleasing God by giving pleasure. The goal of your list is to love your spouse well. Once your list is communicated, you should give up any sense of "right" or "entitlement" to the things on the list.

A couple should seek to avoid, or at least minimize, distractions. Intimacy can be enhanced by providing for the right kind of atmosphere. A couple can lock their bedroom door. It is also wise to explain to children that they can't enter a bedroom without permission. It is good to train your children to do something while you have private time. Also, don't be embarrassed to let your children know that you enjoy intimacy together. We want our children to learn that intimacy in marriage is God's gift, and it is very good.

Typically a husband must be very patient with his wife. A woman prefers gentleness to roughness. Allow adequate time for foreplay. When you consider foreplay keep in mind pleasant things like a nice dinner, playing her favorite music, talking about pleasant topics, etc. Foreplay is part of the biblical process of satisfying the other. It is part of God's plan. It fits the biblical view of giving.

This may seem obvious, but you should make sure each of you have clean bodies and breath. I have heard stories of men who like to shower in the morning to start their day. They then work full days and desire to be intimate at night while wearing the smells of the day. In such cases, it is wise and loving to either shower again at night or change the time of your daily shower to the evening.

REAL LIFE SITUATIONS.

Let's review what we have covered in the context of some very common situations.

SCENARIO #1:

Let's assume a husband desires physical intimacy and can tell through his wife's actions or words that she does not desire intimacy that night. In such a case the husband must show his wife that he loves her by his actions and words in spite of the fact that sexual intimacy did not occur. This can be difficult when the desire for intimacy is strong. But it will be easier if the husband, out of his love for Jesus and his wife, understands that his biblical goal is to "satisfy" his wife and demonstrate love to her and to please God. He must not become bitter and resentful. Some husbands may argue that such a response is too difficult and not "my nature". Our nature is not to guide our sexual relationships. Natural often means being comfortable with sinful habits. Instead we are to have the supernatural attitude of Christ and consider the interest of others more important than our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

SCENARIO #2:

A husband thinks that the only thing that satisfies his wife is for her to have a climax (because maybe that is true for him) or a husband may think that his wife being physically aroused makes the intimacy more enjoyable for him so he works and works to make that happen but that may cause the wife frustration or even to dislike the sexual relationship. We should understand that a wife may be satisfied with intimacy without climax because it provides closeness. Again, the husband should focus on his wife's interest. Our culture which has promoted extra-marital sex and seen the proliferation of pornography and graphic sex scenes in TV and movies has created many false ideas about sexual intimacy. Many men have interpreted a wife's lack of climax as an indictment of them, resulting in disappointment, hurt (stemming from pride) and false ideas about sex leading to selfish behavior.

SCENARIO #3:

What should a wife do, if a husband expresses a desire for sexual intimacy, but the wife states that tonight is not the best night (due to illness, long day etc.), but the husband states the desire is very strong, and he still wants to be intimate? In this case, a wife can still participate, enthusiastically, knowing that this is an opportunity to please God and love her spouse well. Just like the situation before the husband in Scenario #1, this may be difficult but God tells us His grace is sufficient to provide us the supernatural strength needed to please God and love her husband sacrificially.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has your attitude about sex in marriage been impacted by the culture?
2. How has reading this pamphlet been an encouragement to you? A challenge to you?
3. If you are married, what specific actions or attitudes do you need to “put off” in order to be in obedience to God’s command in the area of physical intimacy? What specific attitudes or actions do you need to “put on”?

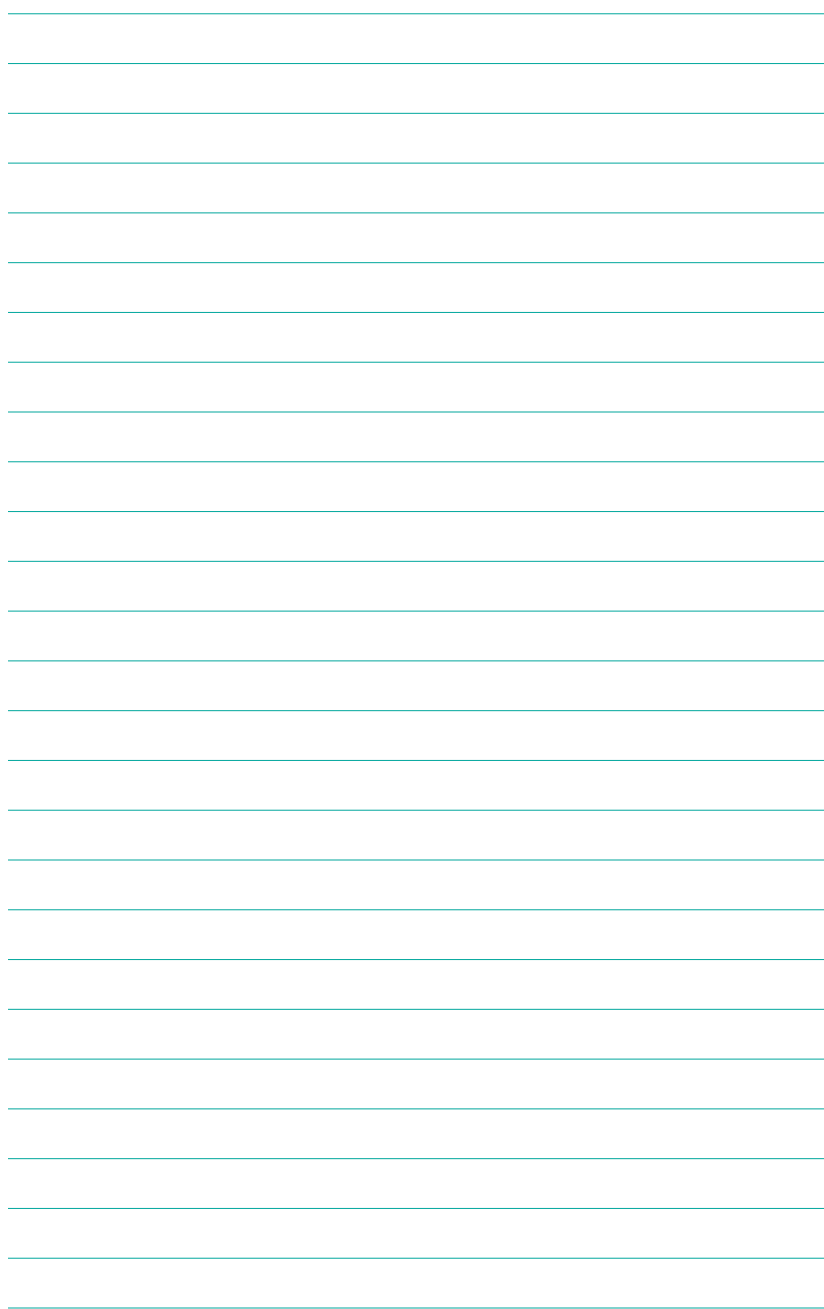
I encourage you to prayerfully discuss these questions with your spouse. Ask the Lord to bless you both with grace and mercy as you discuss this sensitive but very important subject.

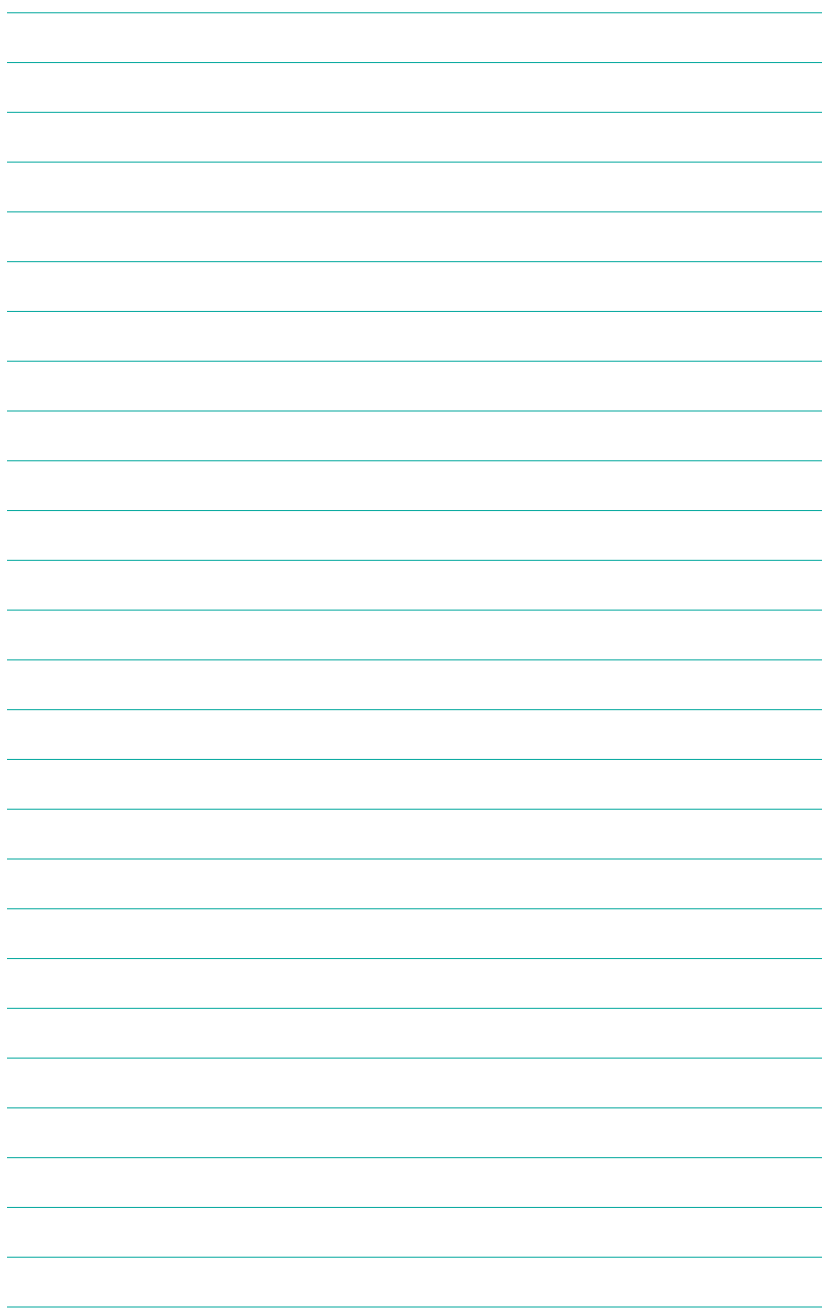
SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL READING:

Smith, Bob ***Biblical Principles of Sex***

Wheat, Ed ***Intended for Pleasure***

Scott, Stuart. ***The Exemplary Husband***





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