

The Role of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

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DEDICATION

When We Love by Charles Anthony Sivestri

The towering tree spreads his greening canopy— A veil between the soil and sky.

Not in selfish vanity, But the gentle thrush, to shade and shelter.

So it is with love.

The busy thrush builds her nest below— A fortnight's work to weave and set.

Not for herself alone, But her tender brood, to shield and cherish.

And so it is with love.

For when we love, Simply love. When we love, even as we are loved,

Our weary world can be transformed

Into the Kingdom of God!

PREMISE

Sexual Intimacy is to know and be fully known regarding your sexuality. It is a holy, essential component of marriage. Every aspect, including intercourse, the apex physical expression, is a deeply spiritual expression of loving your spouse, nurturing a mysteriously unique, bonding unity between husband and wife. Sexual intimacy requires an environment of clear understanding, trust, honesty, uninhibited communication, and absence of shame. It is a freedom and gift from God to you, to be you (whom He created you to be)..... but not all about you.

FOUNDATIONAL CORNERSTONES^{1,2}

A. God's Design

(Gen 1:27-28) **God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** ²⁸**God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

(Gen 2:7) Then the **LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**

(Gen 2:18) Then the LORD God said, "**It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.**"

(Gen 2:20-25) The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, **but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.** ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then **He took one of his ribs** and closed up the flesh at that place. ²²The **LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.** ²³The man said, "**This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.**" ²⁴**For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.** ²⁵**And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

¹ Holy Bible, NASB95, The Lockman Foundation (except as noted).

² Much of this document is my adaptation of material sourced from Scott Mehl's book, *Redeeming Sex in Marriage: How the Gospel Rescues Sex, Transforms Marriage, and Reveals the Glory of God*. P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition. Used by permission.

B. God's Purpose

1. A Means of Covenantal Union (*Essential*)

- a. Marriage is a covenantal union. (Not a contract)
 - i. Covenant – a binding agreement between parties to fulfill a specified **promise**. Typically motivated out of love for the other party, looking out for their needs equally or above one's own needs. Terms are typically unconditional (irrevocable) with “perpetuity” or “upon completion” timelines.
 - ii. Contract – a binding agreement between parties to fulfill a specified **transaction**. Typically created in the spirit of advancing and protecting one's own interests. Terms are typically conditional (revokable) with defined termination dates.
- b. Adam and Eve were created from and for unity.
 - i. Created out of the same body.
 - ii. Originally shared the same body.
 - iii. Unified in the same body.

(Gen 1:27) male and female He created them.
(Gen 2:7) God formed man of dust from the ground... man became a living being. (Gen 2:22) God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man. (Gen 2:23) "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."
- c. Adam and Eve were created uniquely.
 - i. Adam is designed to enter intimately into Eve's body.
 - ii. Eve is designed to receive Adam into herself.
 - iii. Together they can fit (rejoin) and be unified. (In body and spirit)
 - iv. Together they have a means of experiencing, affirming, and sustaining His glory of the covenantal union for which they were designed.

(Gen 2:24) For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

2. A Means of Mutual Pleasure (*Essential*)

a. Pleasure

i. Motivation:

- 1) Inherent desire. (Speaks for itself)
- 2) Mysteriously drawn to its pleasure before having ever experienced it.
- 3) Unquenchable (Drawn back repeatedly)
- 4) Losing yourself in your spouse is a depth of pleasure that is indescribable and irreplaceable. (Sng 4, 7:6-9)

ii. Growth:

- 1) Intended to grow.
- 2) Dependent upon growth.
(Eph 4:15) *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...*

b. Mutuality

i. The designed framework for pleasure. (Selfishness is not)

(Phil 2:3-4) *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

ii. A gift to be given. Not a possession to be taken.

(1 Cor 7:3-4) *The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The 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.*

(Gal 5:13-14) *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."*

3. A Means of Marital Love (*Essential*)

- a. Intimacy – the touch, the look, the spiritual caress, the desire. No one else.

(1Cor 13:4-7) **Love** is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- b. Vulnerability – the exposure, nakedness, openness. No one else.

(Gen 2:25) *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

- c. Ecstasy – Again, losing yourself in your spouse is a depth of enjoyment that is irreplaceable. No one else. (Sng 4, 7:6-9)

- d. Exclusivity – No one else.

(Gen 2:24) *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*

4. A Means of New Life - Procreation (*Non-essential*)

- a. God's timing, blessing, and will.

(Gen 1:28) *God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

5. A Reflection of Our Relationship with Christ, as His Church (*Often Missed*)

a. One spirit with the Lord.

(1Cor 6:15-17) *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!* ¹⁶*Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."* ¹⁷*But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

b. Members of Christ's body.

(Eph 5:28-32) *So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;* ²⁹*for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,* ³⁰*because we are members of His body.* ³¹*FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.* ³²*This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*

c. We in Christ. He in us. One in Christ. Unified in Christ.

(Joh 15:4-7) *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.* ⁵*"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.* ⁶*"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.* ⁷*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

(Gal 3:27-28) *For all of you who were baptized into Christ* *have clothed yourselves with Christ.* ²⁸*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

d. A Covenantal Union.

(Joh 10:28-30) *and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.* ²⁹*"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* ³⁰*"I and the Father are one."*

(Jer 31:33) *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

EMBARKING ON THE VOYAGE – NAVIGATION MARKERS

A. Leaving the Harbor

1. Start With Your Heart. Start with Prayer.

- a. God centered, others focused. (Rom 12:2, 3:23-24, 8:1, 9-11, 31-32.)

2. Set Your Affection on Your Spouse. Set Your Affection on Christ.

- a. Christ set his affection on you first. (Deu 7:7-8, 1Joh 4:10-11.)
- b. Your spouse is the most beautiful, transforming soul on earth to you. (Sng 2;2, 1:8, 5:10, Prv 5:19)

B. Piloting the Ship

3. Live a Life of Foreplay

- a. God's tireless, continual efforts to bless you with His love. (1Joh 4:16, Rom 5:8, Psa 31)
- b. "How you relate to your spouse in the hours you spend around each other every day will have the biggest impact on how you relate to each other in the minutes you spend naked under the sheets."³ (1Cor 13:4-7)

4. Learn Your Spouse's Sexual Desires (It is NOT a shortfall.)

- a. You are fully known by the Spirit. Known better than you know yourself. (Psa 139)
- b. Hebrew for sex or "relations" = yada – to know. (Gen 4:1,17,25, 1Sam 1:19)
- c. "To mutually experience sexual pleasure and be united together in sex is to know each other in a way that is unparalleled in human experience."⁴
- d. What makes sexual intimacy arousing? Knowledge!
 - i. Requires self-awareness.
 - ii. Requires communication. (verbal and non-verbal)
 - iii. Requires honesty.

5. Learn Your Spouse's Sexual Anatomy

- a. Personally, and mutually. Not online!

³ Mehl, Scott. Redeeming Sex in Marriage: How the Gospel Rescues Sex, Transforms Marriage, and Reveals the Glory of God (p. 97). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Ibid., (p. 102).

- b. Not a biology course, but a joyful exploration toward special discoveries of pleasuring one another. (Think foot massage.)
- c. “God created men and women as sexual beings with the capacity for both sexual arousal and orgasm.”⁵
- d. How do I caress my spouse’s sexual anatomy to stimulate sexual arousal and orgasm?

6. Learn Your Spouse’s Sexual Struggles

- a. What makes sexual intimacy difficult? (shame, fear, pain, unresolved sin, lies)

C. Avoiding the Shoals

7. Learn the Biblical Guidelines for Sex

a. Two Preliminary Questions:

- i. Is it explicitly required or prohibited in the Bible?
 - 1) Adultery (Ex 20:14; Rom 13:9).
 - 2) Not depriving each other of sex in marriage, except by mutual agreement for a limited time (1 Cor. 7:5).
- ii. Is it prohibited by the conscience of one spouse?
 - 1) Even if Scripture does not explicitly identify a sexual act as sin, if either person involved believes it is sin, the couple should not engage in it.
 - 2) Love rarely encourages another to go against their conscience.
 - 3) Love always respects and honors another’s conscience (Rom 14:21, 23)

b. Three Key Questions:

- i. Does it unite the two of you (physically, emotionally, spiritually)?
 - 1) Sex is a means of covenantal union.
- ii. Is it pleasurable for both of you?
 - 1) Sex is a means of mutual pleasure.
- iii. Does it express love between you?
 - 1) Sex is an expression of marital love.

⁵ Ibid., (p. 110).

D. Magnifying the Voyage

8. Pursue Quality and Frequency

- a. God's unrelenting efforts to draw you close. (Heb 10:19-22)
- b. 1 Cor 7:3-5. See ESV, NLT, MSG. Goal = Mutual fulfillment and satisfaction.
- c. Fulfillment/satisfaction is personal. (Sexual fulfillment usually includes orgasm for each.)
- d. Is there deprivation for either? (Particularly the wife)

9. Serve Your Spouse

- a. The ultimate sacrificial Servant. (Mat 20:26-28)
- b. How can I best serve my spouse intimately (sexually) this week?

10. Make the Bedroom a Place of Grace

- a. Perfect, unending forgiveness that is yours in Christ. (Col 2:13-14, 3:12-14, Gen 3:21)
- b. Spouses sin against one another. The way forward requires grace. (Mat 18:21-22)
- c. "As our clothes come off, these virtues need to simultaneously be put on."⁶ (Col 3:12-14)

11. Enjoy Your Spouse (Explore. Have Fun and Relax!)

- a. The unending pleasures that are yours in Christ forevermore. (Psa 16:11)
- b. Euphoric joy is found not in performance or trying to produce a certain outcome, but in mutually giving yourself to your spouse and experiencing their enjoyment as a result.
- c. Your greatest sexual pleasure lies in the pleasure of your spouse. Seek it and be spiritually bonded together in God's love.
- d. What can I give that pleases my spouse?

12. Pray

- a. Before, during (at times), and after.

CONCLUSION

Sexual intimacy is more than sex. It is exclusive to marriage, but not solely about marriage. It is ultimately about experiencing the transcendent love, beauty, and glory of God. May we keep this in mind and thank Him as we bask in each "afterglow." Amen.

⁶ Ibid., (p. 138).