

SESSION 10

The Fundamentals of Physical Intimacy

Physical Intimacy

Becoming “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) involves much more than sexual relations. It refers to a broad concept involving the totality of life. However, there may be no place where this total sharing is more beautifully pictured or fully experienced than in the sexual relationship between a husband and wife.

Sexual intercourse establishes, expresses, and enhances the relational intimacy between two people who have committed themselves to each other in love and marriage. Physical intimacy is a blessing and gift from the Lord, between one man, and one woman, in the holy bond of marriage. God designed sexual intimacy to be a selfless, sacrificial act of love that is both glorifying to God and a giving up of oneself to one another. Within marriage we are to strive for intimacy for the glory of the Lord.

“It is up to each of us to discover the design for our marriage through a careful searching of the Bible and a willingness to follow the principles, instructions, and examples we find there... it is God's will in every marriage that the couple love each other with an absorbing spiritual, emotional, and physical attraction that continues to grow throughout their lifetime together...It is possible for any Christian couple to develop this love relationship in their marriage because it is in harmony with God's expressed will.”¹

I. SEX IS A PROBLEM AREA IN MANY MARRIAGES

“There is no area over which more marital battles have been fought and more dissatisfaction manifested. Multitudes of couples have sought divorces, complaining of ‘sexual incompatibility.’ There are many couples who never seek a divorce who still have many conflicts over their sexual relations. If God created an ordained sex relations as a promoter and expression of unity in marriage, why is it that many couples have problems in the area of sex?”²

A. Unresolved guilt from the past

- Sexually active before marriage
- Pornography
- Abortion
- Resentment over being sexually abused

Solution: Confess sin, repent, and experience God’s forgiveness.

Sometimes, guilt from our past causes us to doubt the truths of God’s word. We must trust and believe what He says in His word about confession, repentance, and forgiveness. Jesus Christ proved Himself victorious over all sin when He rose from the dead. If we have been born of Christ, we are a new creation in Christ, and we have victory over sin because of His victory.

Psalms 32:3-5

*When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

¹ Ed Wheat, MD. Staying In Love For a Lifetime, p. 13.

² Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p. 121.

1 John 1:7,9 *...the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*

B. Ungodly living in the present

Many times, sexual issues are not really sexual issues. If there are other issues in the marriage (lack of love, trust, selflessness, preference, kindness, gentleness, affection) there will inevitably be sexual issues. It is difficult to be intimate with your spouse when there is a lack of unity and harmony in the marriage. Sexual issues may just be an indicator that there is a lack of biblical love in the marriage relationship.

Solution: Begin practicing 1 Corinthians 13 type love, godly communication and Biblical conflict resolution.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails*

C. Ignorance or misinformation concerning their mate's anatomy

Some couples are unaware, uninformed, and uneducated when it comes to their spouse's anatomy. Simply because of a lack of information and experience, there can be guilt (because sexual intercourse seems one sided or selfish) and a lack of satisfaction.

“Any helpful counsel concerning the physical relationship between husband and wife must include an explanation of the basic facts of human anatomy. A clear understanding of the sex organs with their intricate functions should inspire a sense of wonder that the perfect design God has built into our bodies, so that we might experience the deepest pleasure in love making and so that we might successfully reproduce children in our marriage.”³

Solution: Read sound material and speak openly and honestly with spouse about the issue

Intended for Pleasure, by Ed & Gaye Wheat

- God's Design for Physical Intimacy
- Understanding the Basics of Each Other's Anatomy
- Techniques
- Common Problems and Solutions
- Impotency, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Breast Cancer, Etc.
- Planning for Parenthood
- Sex During Pregnancy
- Sex After 60, 70, 80

³ Ed Wheat, M.D. & Gaye Wheat, Intended for Pleasure, p. 40.

D. Ignorance concerning their mate’s temperament

Men = Easily and quickly aroused, Stimulated by sight

“Wives must realize that their husbands may desire sexual relations more frequently than they do. It is the husband's responsibility to exercise self-control and to think in terms of his wife's condition and desires. But it is also the wife's responsibility to be mindful of her husband's temperament and to seek to be his helper by being sensitive and willing to fulfill his desires. Failure to understand the male temperament has tempted some women to harbor disrespectful and even resentful attitudes towards their husbands. Besides this, through ignorance these women have put an unnecessary burden of temptation upon their husbands.”⁴

Women = Aroused more gradually
Stimulated by inward emotions and affectionate physical contact (touch)

“Soft words, unselfishness, consideration, genuine love, patience, kindness, appreciation, compassion, acceptance, and tenderness are the things that excite a woman and prepare her for satisfying sex relations. The husband must deny himself for her sake and be more interested in fulfilling her needs than his own. He must continuously treat his wife with kindness, and not just when he wants sex. Live with his wife in an understanding way.”

1 Peter 3:7 *You husbands in the same way, **live with your wives in an understanding way**, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered*

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and **gave Himself up for her***

Philippians 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*

Solution: Read sound material on the subject.

Additional Notes

⁴ Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p. 129.

E. Ignorance concerning what the Bible teaches about sex

A lack of understanding of what the Bible says about sex, coupled with a desire for purity and holiness (especially before marriage) can make it difficult for couples to enjoy and express sexual intimacy after marriage. Learning how the Bible describes sexual oneness in marriage and learning how to practice fruits of the Spirit in the context of sex helps Christian couples to view physical intimacy as another avenue for selfless, sacrificial, love of one another for the glory of God and the good of the marriage.

Solution: Dive into the Scriptures and discover God's perspective. After all, He is the author of sex.

1 Corinthians 7:2-4 *...each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. **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.***

Proverbs 5:18-19 *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.***

Song of Solomon 7:6-12 ***How beautiful and how delightful you are, My love, with all your charms! Your stature is like a palm tree, And your breasts are like its clusters. I said, 'I will climb the palm tree, I will take hold of its fruit stalks.'** Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, And the fragrance of your breath like apples, And your mouth like the best wine!" It goes down smoothly for my beloved, Flowing gently through the lips of those who fall asleep. I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country, Let us spend the night in the villages. Let us rise early and go to the vineyards. Let us see whether the vine has budded And its blossoms have opened, And whether the pomegranates have bloomed. **There I will give you my love.***

Additional Notes

II. BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL INTIMACY

A. The Bible does forbid a misuse of sex.

Pre-marital Sex

Sex without intimacy and commitment

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you **abstain from sexual immorality**; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, **not in lustful passion**, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

Masturbation

Self-focused sex (impure fantasies, controlling, & self-centered)

Galatians 5:16-21 *...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, **so that you may not do the things that you please**...Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

“A close examination of the bible's teaching on sexuality uncovers no reason to believe that God ever intended sex to be a private pursuit. Sex is intended to be a means of mutual fulfillment, and expression of love in which a husband thinks foremost of his wife, and the wife thinks foremost of her husband. As they fulfill each other's needs they also have their own needs fulfilled. It is a beautiful picture of intimacy! This mutual giving and receiving, the heart of God's purpose for sexuality, is exactly what masturbation does not and cannot provide masturbation strip sexuality of its divine purpose of mutual fulfillment. Where legitimate sexual expression is meant to produce unity, masturbation produces isolation and division masturbation deeply undermines a man's ability to deny and resist his most self-centered, sinful, isolationist tendencies masturbation simply cannot fulfill God's design for sexuality, and thus has no place in the life of one who calls himself a Christian.”⁵

Homosexuality

Sex that violates God's original design; Evidence of God's judgment

Romans 1:26-27 *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is **unnatural**, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and **burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving** in their own persons **the due penalty** of their error.*

I Corinthians 6:9-10

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals**, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, **will inherit the kingdom of God.***

⁵ Tim Challies, Sexual Detox: A Guide for Guys Who Are Sick of Porn, p. 41-42.

Adultery

Sex that is not exclusive

Ephesians 5:3-5

*“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that **no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**”*

Pornography

Visual adultery

Matthew 5:27-28

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart

John MacArthur writes:

“The world claims to want love, and love is advocated and praised from every corner. Romantic love especially is touted. Songs, novels, movies, and television serials continually exploit emotional, lustful desire as if it were genuine love. Questing for and fantasizing about the ‘perfect love’ is portrayed as the ultimate human experience. It should not be surprising that the misguided quest for that kind of love leads inevitably to immorality and impurity, because that kind of love is selfish and destructive, a deceptive counterfeit of God’s love. It is always conditional and is always self-centered. It is not concerned about commitment but only satisfaction; it is not concerned about giving but only getting. It has no basis for permanence because its purpose is to use and to exploit rather than to serve and to help. It lasts until the one loved no longer satisfies or until he or she disappears for someone else.”

B. The Bible does present sex within the marriage context as something spiritual and holy.

Hebrews 13:4

“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

God encourages sexual relations and actually warns against the temptations that may arise from deprivation and cessation (1 Cor. 7:1-6)

You need to see that sex is just as pure as anything else you do for God. It is as pure as prayer, praise, ministry, Bible study, and evangelism. You need to be sure that your heart and actions at the time of physical intimacy are as pure as they should be when you serve or worship God in other ways.

It is sex with the wrong person, for the wrong purpose, and/or with wrong thinking that makes it unholy.

Additional Notes

C. The Bible gives clear direction about how to glorify God through sexual intimacy

1 Corinthians 7:1-6 *“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 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. 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. But this I say by way of concession, not of command.”*

1. Pleasure in sexual relations is not forbidden, but rather assumed by the Biblical writers.

2. Sexual intimacy in marriage should be kept in perspective.

Sex should not be the basis for any marriage, and if your relationship revolves mostly around the physical, the physical is too important.

3. Sexual intimacy in marriage should not be self-focused.

Sexual pleasure is to be regulated by the key principle that one's sexuality does not exist for himself or for his own pleasure, but for his partner.

A spouse who sincerely has the other spouse in mind will:

- Investigate what the sexual desires of their spouse are.
- Investigate the likes and dislikes of their spouse.
- Be humble enough to learn something new.
- Make personal hygiene a priority.
- Only request or do what is approved by both consciences (husband and wife) and what is not physically harmful.
- Seek to fulfill the desires of their spouse even if they themselves do not have the desire to be satisfied.
- Not use their own bodies to gratify themselves.

4. Sexual relations are to be regular and continuous.

The husband and wife are to provide such adequate satisfaction that both “burning” (unfulfilled sexual desire) and the temptation to find satisfaction elsewhere are avoided.

There is only one reason to abstain from fulfilling the desires of one's spouse. This reason is for a specific time of prayer for a specific reason, and both partners must be in agreement about the abstinence.

5. The principle of mutual satisfaction means that each party is to provide the sexual enjoyment which is “due” his or her spouse whenever needed.

Keep in mind that requests for sexual satisfaction are never to be governed by an idolatrous lust and a spouse should be careful to not make unreasonable demands.

6. In accordance with the principle of “rights,” there is to be no sexual bargaining

Never have the attitude...“I’ll not have sexual relations unless you...”

Also, do not withhold sexual intimacy in order to manipulate or punish your spouse.

7. Sexual relationships are equal and reciprocal

“Mutual initiation of intercourse, stimulation, foreplay, and participation in the sexual act is not only permissible, but enjoined. Marital rights entail mutual responsibility.”⁶

8. Sexual intimacy should be the culmination of a loving relationship

The sex act should be a picture of the love and commitment that is already present in the marriage relationship.

Husbands and wives must seek to maintain a loving relationship with each other and to make physical intimacy more relational by:

- Quickly resolving conflict and working out other marriage problems in a Biblical way.
- Speaking words of appreciation and saying “I love you” often.
- Meeting each other’s needs that may not be related to physical intimacy.
- Spending time, energy and resources to romance their spouse.

III. RESOURCES

- Tim Challies, Sexual Detox: A Guide for Guys Who Are Sick of Porn
- Heath Lambert, Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace
- Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage
- John Owen, The Mortification of Sin: Dealing with Sin in Your Life
- John D. Street, Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins
- Ed Wheat, M.D.
 - Staying in Love for a Lifetime
 - Intended for Pleasure

⁶ Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p. 133.