

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Lesson 15

Sexual Responsibilities between Husbands and Wives

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The unsaved world is obsessed with sex. Because of the media (television, movies, radio, magazines, books and advertisements), the subject of sex is constantly set before people. This sexual bombardment takes its toll on marriages. Unfaithfulness in marriage (inside and outside of church circles), has become an increasingly serious problem. Even Christian husbands and wives often come to feel that in the third millennium it is impossible to take seriously Paul's warning to the Christians at Corinth: "*Shun looseness like the plague*" (1 Cor. 6:18, Philips Translation).
- B. As Christians, we must face up to what is happening and give Biblical and Christian solutions to this perplexing problem. God's solution to sexual immorality is strong marriages with healthy sex lives.

"Sex is good. It is the creation of God and all men are expected to enjoy it. No prudishness or squeamishness is appropriate. Sex is not the occasion for shame or embarrassment. All members of a family must learn to use their sexual drives responsibly, but they do so by facing facts openly, not by hiding behind blinders, pretending that life is asexual, that such matters are never discussed in polite society.

One thing conservatives need to learn; it is not the open treatment of sex in our society that is wrong; it is the context of that treatment. Nothing is to be gained by a conspiracy of silence. Our so-called sex-saturated society needs as its antidote not a return to repression and ignorance, but a discussion of sex in its proper context.

The Hebrews saw all of life as one, as related to and governed by the Lord of the Covenant. There were no watertight compartments sealed off from His sovereign rule. There was, in short, nothing secular anywhere in existence. All of life was hallowed by His presence and His will. What our time requires is what the Old Testament possessed: a full, frank and open facing of the facts of sexuality in human life, but in the context of divine sovereignty. Sex is sacred, as all human existence is sacred. It can be used selfishly or irresponsibly without serious damage to the very structure of one's being, to the whole network of one's interpersonal relationships." (William Cole, Sex and Love in the Bible)

- C. The Bible is the most practical book ever written. It not only deals with deep spiritual truth, but it gets down to the "nitty gritty" of life. On the matters of sex in marriage, it gives practical advice, and if this advice is followed, there will be strong, dynamic and happy marriages among Christians. Today we will be faced with some forthright and blunt passages on sexual responsibilities in marriage. The message is not Jack Arnold's. This is God's word and it is Him we must deal with, not me. People have

hang-ups in these areas—fear, distrust, and hesitancy because of sexual abuse—but it does not change the truth of the Bible.

- D. Hopefully this message will not offend anyone. We must remember; however, this section is inspired scripture, and God has put it into the Bible for a definite purpose. Furthermore, it is truth Christians desperately need to hear and practice. I've been told that 85% of all Christian couples struggle in the area of sex, and nothing will solve the problem but obedience to scripture

II. THE BASIC PURPOSES OF SEX

A. To Produce Mutual Love (Gen. 2:18-25).

1. According to Genesis 2, Adam and Eve were enjoying the sex act long before there were any children or before there was sin. Therefore, sex is not sinful and God intended it for pleasure for His creatures.
2. True pleasure, in the highest sense of the word, is to bring complete satisfaction to the one being loved. The Bible treats the subject of sex with startling realism, and one thing the Bible affirms that sex in itself is good and pure.
3. The sexual drive is God-given in any normal man or woman, and it is certainly nothing to be ashamed of. God put His stamp of approval upon sex in marriage, and He expects His creatures to enjoy it immensely. God placed the Song of Solomon in the holy canon, which is a story about human love and sex. He certainly would not have done that if sex were something of which men should be ashamed.
4. May I suggest the book *Intended For Pleasure* by Ed Wheat to help you appreciate the sex act from God's perspective.
5. God says, "*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*" (Heb. 13: 4). The marriage bed is pure and undefiled. Therefore, there is nothing two married people can do in private, which is sinful, as long as any act does not become morally offensive to one partner or the other.

B. To Reproduce the Human Race "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number' . . .*" (Gen. 1:27-28).

1. God has given the sex drive as the most potent of human drives so that men would reproduce the human race.
2. Roman Catholic theology sees this as the prime purpose of sex; therefore, they oppose birth control.

C. To Provide Parenthood "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number' . . .*" (Gen. 1: 27-28).

With sex, comes children and with children comes the responsibility of parenthood and the establishment of the family unit.

III. ANOTHER PURPOSE OF SEX: TO AVOID MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS 1 Cor. 7:2-5

- A. Background. Corinth was the "Sin City" of the ancient world. It was a seaport and sailors, merchants and traders were everywhere. This was the "good time" city of

ancient Greece. Looking over the city was the famous Temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, and the temple was served by thousands of female and male prostitutes. All the pagan religious people in that city (which was just about everyone) were deeply involved in illicit sex because this was part of their worship to their gods and goddesses. You can be sure foreign sailors on leave in Corinth were quick converts to that heathen religion. It was as difficult to keep one's marriage vows in Corinth as it is in America today. Sexual looseness ran wild in the streets of that wicked city as it does in cities today. In chapter seven, Paul gives practical advice on how Christians can be on guard against sexual looseness in marriage. It is explicit, down to earth advice, and it is needed as much today as it ever was in the first century.

- B. Marriage Prevents Sexual Immorality *“But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband”* 7:2.
1. All kinds of sexual immoralities, both heterosexual and homosexual, existed in Corinth and temptations abounded for Christians. Paul was for maintaining sexual purity, so he suggests the way to prevent premarital and extramarital sex is to get married and have a normal, healthy and stable sex life. To put it in our vernacular, Paul is saying that to keep unmarried people from having affairs and the married from cheating is to marry and have good sex.
 2. Sex just to avoid sexual immorality, seems like a low motive for marriage. However, it is a good one if Christian values are to be maintained.
 3. Some have wondered where Paul received this knowledge about sex because at the time of this writing, he was a single man. There is some evidence that Paul was probably married at one time in his life. It was a stigma for young Jewish men not to marry. Jewish tradition said, “A Jew who has no wife is not a man” (Gen. 5:2, Yebhamoth, f. 63; 1). Furthermore, Paul was a Member of the Sanhedrin at one time. We know this because he tells us he cast his vote against the Christians (Acts 26:10). To be a member of the Sanhedrin required one to be married. We can assume that Paul's wife died. It certainly appears Paul knew from experience what a healthy sex life meant to a marriage.
 4. The way to prevent premarital and extramarital sexual relationships is for a person to have his own wife or husband, not someone else's wife or husband.
 5. This verse teaches indirectly two concepts:
 - a. No polygamy. This is a command and Paul is forbidding the plurality of husbands and wives. In the Roman world, a wife was a chattel, a workhorse. Generally a man had several wives - one had charge of the kitchen, another of the living area and perhaps another in charge of the clothing. Apart from having children with his wives, the man generally went to the Temple of Aphrodite for sex. Paul commands a man and a woman have one wife or husband who is loved. Paul lifted the state of womanhood to that of a partner in love with a man or woman.
 - b. Monogamy. Paul teaches one man for one woman because that is God's ideal as set forth in the life of Adam and Eve. Monogamy produces the highest love between two married people because God has ordained it. Sexual satisfaction is not found with many partners but with one. Many affairs before marriage, wife swapping or adulterous relationships never satisfy. Why? Only

monogamy produces the highest form of sexual love, and only Christians can reach the apex of sexual fulfillment. Why? Sex is a physical and animal act. This is the lowest form of sex. Many people are just one step above an animal in their sex lives. Obviously both saved and unsaved can appreciate the physical act of sex. Sex is an emotional act. This is why some unsaved people can reach high levels of sexual love in a monogamous relationship. Sex is a spiritual act. Therefore, only Christians who are filled with the Spirit can reach the highest forms of sexual satisfaction. This happens because Christians see sex from God's perspective, and this frees men and women to enjoy the act without guilt or fear.

C. Marriage Partners Have a Sexual Duty to One Another 7:3

1. *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife."* Sex is not only a marital pleasure but also a marital duty. The husband owes his wife a debt, not only to love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, but to fulfill his sexual duty to his wife. A husband has an obligation to meet his wife's sexual needs. To do this, he must spend time with her; he must communicate with her; he must listen to her, and he must provide security for her. A woman's sex life is tied up with her psychic, and her needs must first be met on a caring and understanding level before she can respond and find fulfillment in the sex act.
2. *"And likewise the wife to her husband."* The wife owes her husband a debt, not only to submit to him as the Lord has commended her but also to fulfill his sexual needs. A wife has a spiritual duty to meet her husband's sexual needs. To do this she must psychologically prepare herself, set time in her busy schedule for it, not become overly tired and give attention to her husband over her children. When a man does not have his sexual needs met he becomes a "bear" to live with, and when his sex needs are met, it is like a tranquilizer and he becomes a "teddy bear."
3. Sex is not only an exciting experience to be entered into when one feels like it, but it is a moral obligation. Marital infidelity can be overcome when husbands and wives recognize marriage is a contract in which husband and wife owe it to each other to be sexually responsible. Calling marriage a contract may not be very romantic, but that is how the scriptures look at it. Sex is a duty, and it is as much a Christian duty as reading the Bible, praying or witnessing. To fail to pay a sexual debt to our partner is sin.
4. Infidelity takes many forms. Everybody concentrates on the adultery angle of unfaithfulness, but there is also non-adulterous infidelity which undermines a marriage. Men or women who play the game of "freeze out" with their partners are guilty of the worst kind of immorality. They do not realize the meeting of the sex need in their partner is a moral obligation. Those who do not fulfill this responsibility are guilty of non-adulterous unfaithfulness.
5. Christian love is as much a matter of the mind and will as the emotions. For one partner to turn away the other simply complicates the problem. To ignore one another drives a deep wedge between husband and wife.
6. The sexual aspect of marriage is vitally linked up with our spiritual walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. A husband or wife's happiness in his or her sex life has a great affect on the spiritual life. Healthy married love is essential for a happy marriage.

When I pastored in Roanoke, VA, I preached on the subject of marital sexual duty. There was a 41-year-old woman who had grown sexually cold to her husband. She became convicted of her frigidity and began to meet the sexual needs of her husband. Their marriage showed tremendous improvement. However, she became pregnant. She was angry with God because of the pregnancy and angry with me. She and her husband left the church. Please do not blame me for things which I am not responsible and have no control over. My task is to preach the truth. Your task is to be responsible.

D. Marriage Partners Are To Have Mutual Recognition Of Sexual Rights *“The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone, but also to his wife.” 7:4*

1. Before marriage, a person does exercise authority over his body as to how it will be used sexually. The person is to honor the body as the temple of God and keep it sexually pure. Yet, the moment a person says in the marriage ceremony, “I do,” the body belongs to the person he or she marries. At that moment, a person forfeits his rights to exercise authority over his or her own body and has surrendered that authority to his or her marriage partner.
2. Notice carefully it does not say marriage partners are to demand their rights at all costs, but they are to give up their rights to meet the sexual needs of their partner. This is a basic law of life. The only way to get your needs met and yourself fulfilled is to fulfill one another’s needs. In the process of devoting yourself to the enjoyment of your mate and to giving him or her the most exquisite sense of pleasure that you can, you find your own needs met. This is not saying you are slaves to one another, each demanding his or her rights, but that the power to give fulfillment to your mate lies in you, and in so doing, your needs will be met. To have this kind of attitude demands you have an adult kind of love. A child’s concept of love is getting, but an adult’s is giving. There are entirely too many “child marriages” these days when adults behave like children. They value marriage only because of what it does for them, but they do not see it as a means of investing in the one loved. Yet, this difference between getting and giving is actually the major difference between love and lust. Christian love always seeks the highest good of the person loved, not merely its own satisfaction.
3. There are times when it may not be possible to meet your husband or wife’s sexual needs. If your mate is sick, physically dysfunctional, overly tired or fasting and praying, these are reasons not to meet sexual needs.

If you fail to meet your mate’s sexual needs on Monday because you have a toothache, that is one thing. But if on Tuesday it is a backache, and on Wednesday a toe ache and Thursday a finger ache, that is quite another problem and it appears there is a spiritual problem which must be dealt with before God.

4. The breakdown of many marriages can be directly traced to the bedroom. And the reason is Jesus is not Lord of the bedroom. Divorce occurs when we want to get instead of give. We need to understand God has made us with the capacity to meet someone else's need sexually. This is why unresponsiveness and frigidity in marriage causes deep psychological problem and a rift occurs. God has given us the ability to give a gift of love and response to another person, and the joy of doing so is what creates the ecstasy of sexual love in marriage.
- E. Marriage Partners are Not to Rob One Another *"Do not deprive each other" 7:5.a*
1. The word "deprive" actually means "to rob" or "to defraud." Christians have no right to deprive their mates of sexual fulfillment and enjoyment. If sexual rights are withheld, the Christian is actually robbing his or her mate of what is rightfully theirs.
 2. Today many Christians are robbing their mates of sexual enjoyment and doing it in the name of God and under the cloak of spirituality. If the Apostle Paul were here today, he would say, "Stop this nonsense at once!"
- E. Marriage Partners May Agree to Have a Cessation of the Sex Act *"Except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer." 7:5b*
1. A husband and wife may agree to a cessation period for the sex act for a definite spiritual purpose--that they may concentrate on prayer to God. The word "devote" means "to have leisure".
 2. Cessation is done so a couple may give themselves leisurely to prayer and perhaps fasting without distractions. Cessation is all right but it must always be by mutual consent, temporary in nature, and for a spiritual purpose.
- F. Marriage Partners are Not to Continue in the State of Cessation *"Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." 7:5c*
1. Paul puts his finger on what is one of the most frequent causes for disaster in marriage—a unilateral refusal to grant the gift of enjoyment and pleasure to one's mate. If a cessation period is agreed upon, do not refuse each other too long lest Satan gets the advantage, temptations arise and adultery occurs.
 2. This verse tells us who is the power behind the scene in the break up of so many marriages. It is Satan himself, and he is out to destroy Christians and Christian homes. That is why we are told in scripture to beware of the wiles or strategies of the devil.