

Helping Troubled Marriages: Sex and Sensuality

Many couples think they know all about sex because they have been educated by movies, magazines, and pornography, but they can be helped towards a better sexual relationship by basic teaching regarding the differences between men and women and the importance of safety and trust in the relationship. There are many challenges to sexual intimacy today – family demands, exhaustion, pornography, lack of desire, differences between men and women, ageing... The Bible has a very high view of sex in the context of a committed and faithful relationship. The Song of Songs gives us a wonderful glimpse of God's good gift of sensuality and sex.

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I. What history do you bring to marriage?

1. Little sex education

2. Abuse:

- A. Don't trust body and longings
- B. Intimacy is dangerous
- C. Shame and guilt
- D. Sex bad
- E. Sex the only way to intimacy

3. Cultural influences

- A. Anything goes! If it feels good do it!
- B. The Hook-Up Culture
Casual sex without relationship, attachment or commitment
- C. Promiscuity
- D. Pornography – powerful, seductive and destructive
 - a. Harmless and educational?
 - b. Sex disconnected from relationship
 - c. Lifelong faithfulness old-fashioned
 - d. Sex always amazing and exciting
 - e. Best sex away from routines of normal domestic life
 - f. Real relationships difficult so...
 - g. Fantasy easier than reality... create "perfect" world
 - h. Release without responsibility
 - i. Channeling emotional tension
 - j. "Making love" to self
 - k. Escalation and demystification
 - l. Bisexual, homosexual, group...
 - m. Demeaning to women
- E. Same Sex Attraction: GLBTQ spectrum
- F. Gender Confusion
- G. Models of marriage – parents
- H. Church: Silence and distortion
- I. Perfect storm

II. Sexuality Redeemed

A. Working against brokenness to reveal beauty and glory
Agony and Ecstasy. Grief and Lament “How long. O Lord?”
The healing and transforming power of the gospel

B. Marriage a major theme from Genesis to Revelation

1. The gift and goodness of sex

- A. “Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 1-2)
- B. Leave... cleave... one flesh. Covenant language
- C. No shame (2:25). Right place, purpose and time
- D. Deepest knowledge (4:1)
- E. “Good” Sex (contrast Porn sex!)

2. The Purpose of Sex:

- A. Unitive
- B. Procreative
- C. Sacramental

3. Channels and Fences – OT & NT prohibitions

III. Song of Songs: Towards Ecstasy

Spiritual Allegory of Christ and the Church?

1. Lessons in Love Making

- A. No shame
- B. Communication – non-physical
 - a. Creativity. Imagination/Fantasy
 - b. Knowledge
- C. Communication – physical
 - a. Kissing. Touching/caressing
 - b. Delight in sensuality and eroticism
 - c. Learning to dance!

IV. Understanding and Enjoying difference:

- 1. Thoughts
- 2. Visual attraction
- 3. Separate sex and relationship
- 4. Speed of arousal
- 5. Mood and distractibility
- 6. But what is
 - a. Created?
 - b. Fallen?
 - c. Cultural?

V. Proverbs: Lessons in Living and Loving (5, 6 & 7) and other OT stories

“Life lived inside the context of God’s law humanizes us and makes us beautiful. It makes us creatures living well within the created order. It gives us the opportunity to become what we are meant to be.” Lauren Winner

VI. Jesus, Paul and Sex

Mutual love and sacrificial service (Eph 5:25-33)

Leave... cleave... one flesh.

1. Marriage (1 Cor 7:1-7)

- A. Mutuality
- B. Faithfulness
- C. Responsibility
- D. Ownership
- E. Consent
- F. Submission (Eph 5:21)
- G. Realism about temptation

2. No more sex in heaven?

Neither marry nor be given in marriage... (Matt 22:23-33)

A. “Profound Mystery”

“The permeation and penetration of what is essentially human with what is divine will then reach its peak” Pope John Paul

“Singleness finally trumps marriage”! Lauren Winner

B. Sex takes us to the heart of God’s purposes for us

Relationship and intimacy

A higher ecstasy?

Suggested Reading:

A Celebration of Sex: A Guide to Enjoying God’s Gift of Sexual Intimacy.

Douglas Rosenau, Thomas Nelson, 2002 (Revised and updated edition)

Sheet Music, Kevin Leman, Tyndale House, 2003. Good, frank and practical

The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment. Clifford and Joyce Penner. Word, 2003

Sex 101: A Guide to Intimacy for Newlywed Couples, Clifford Penner, Thomas Nelson, July 2004

Secrets of Eve, Archibald Hart, Catherine Hart Weber, Debra Taylor, Word 1998

Very helpful for women (and for men) to understand female sexuality.

A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing. Glynn Harrison, IVP, 2017

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