

Intimacy in Marriage

I. Introduction

- Sex in the service of God - “Like all mottos, this simplifies my point. I do not mean to suggest that marriage is only about sex. But it is sex that distinguishes marriage from any other friendship or partnership . . . Sex is shorthand for the marriage relationship in all its fullness: in intimacy, friendship partnership, fun, and faithfulness” (Christopher Ash, *Married for God* pg. 33).

II. Common Views of Sex (from Tim Challies article – What is the Purpose of Sex?).

A. _____.

- “It insists that sex is much like food in that it is merely a natural appetite our bodies require. This being the case, we are free to indulge however we please . . . To withhold sex from those who desire it is a moral evil akin to withholding food from a hungry child.”

B. _____.

- “It claims that sex is a merely an expression of mutual affection and, thus, feelings are the most legitimate grounds for having sex (and perhaps the only legitimate grounds). According to this view, fornication, adultery, homosexual expression, or any other forms of sexuality forbidden by God are acceptable as long as they are a genuine expression of feelings.”
- “The affection view aptly captures the fact that love and affection are an essential component of healthy sexuality. But it goes wrong in assuming our desires or feelings are morally good (or at least morally neutral) and that acting on them will lead to human flourishing.”

C. _____.

- “It claims that sex is a way of finding ourselves and expressing who we are. Tim Keller summarizes it in this way: ‘Sex is primarily for an individual’s fulfillment and self-realization; however he or she wishes to pursue it.’ Thus, the morality of any sexual act depends only upon whether it produces happiness and self-realization for those who engage in it. Taken to its end, it makes chastity and monogamy downright immoral, for they are expressions of self-denial instead of self-realization.”
- “The fulfillment view captures the reality that sex is sexually and relationally fulfilling and that it is a form of self-expression. Yet it elevates God’s gifts over God himself and, in that way, actually undermines our fulfillment and leads us away from who we were made to be.”

III. God’s purposes in sex.

A. _____ (1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36).

- Tom Gledhill says rightly that, “The unabashed reveling in creature-likeness must not be cramped by thoughts that it is all somehow beneath our dignity, and that we would be better praying than making love. For this is a false dichotomy that must be banished forever. We do not need to sanctify an entirely natural act by having simultaneous spiritual thoughts about God [while] in our spouse’s arms.”

B. _____ (James 1:17; Proverbs 5:15-19).

C. _____ (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3).

- “The Bible turns us towards children with thanksgiving to God. But western society in some ways seems to consider children a curse. This is strong language, but I think it is true. Some trends in society turn us away from children with anxiety and fear. About one conception in six in the United States is ended by abortion” (Christopher Ash, *Married for God* pg. 49).

D. _____ (1 Samuel 12:24).

E. _____.

F. _____ (Genesis 2:24-25).

- “God gave the gift of sex to strengthen intimacy between a husband and a wife. The goal is intimacy—to be fully known without any fear of rejection” (Mike McGarry, *Discussing Sex and Dating with Teens*).
- “Sex is perhaps the most powerful God-created way to help you give your entire self to another human being. Sex is God’s appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another, ‘I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you’” (Tim Keller).
- “The covenantal union achieved through sex glorifies God because it points beyond itself to God’s joyful union with himself and the church’s union with Christ” (Tim Challies, *What is the Purpose of Sex?*).

IV. Hindrances to intimacy, especially as it pertains to sex.

A. Demanding, pressuring, forcing sex when your spouse is not interested.

B. Selfish or self-focused sex.

- “If her body is his and his body is hers and each has authority over the other’s body, then he has the authority to ask her to do something he would find pleasurable, and she has the authority over his body to ask that he increase her pleasure by not asking that she do that. Stalemate . . . Here’s one way that the paradox is broken. The *leadership* of the husband is defined by Paul not mainly as demanding his rights but as laying down his life for the good of his wife ([Ephesians 5:25](#)). Therefore, the predominant resolution of the sexual paradox is that the husband gently and tenderly takes the lead in seeking to maximize his wife’s pleasure, taking her longings deeply into account, rather than pressuring her to adapt to his” (John Piper, *Sexual Intimacy and the Rights over a Spouse’s Body in Marriage*). <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/sexual-intimacy-and-the-rights-over-a-spouses-body-in-marriage>.

C. Unresolved Conflict (Isaiah 59:2; Isaiah 38:17).

D. Lack of communication

- “Communication and sex are inseparable. It’s not as though sex is one thing and communication is something else. Life doesn’t fit into neat little compartments like that, especially when it comes to the oneness of marriage. It’s all one thing” (C.J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God* pg. 59).

E. Being too busy – work, hobbies, etc.

F. Physical limitations.

E. Past trauma.

F. Evidences of eroding behaviors.

- “What is the sentence that represents the very heart of this book? Repeat after me: *Before you touch her body, touch her heart and mind*” (C.J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance and the Glory of God* pg. 58).

V. Qualities that build intimacy as it pertains to sex.

A. _____.

B. _____.

C. _____ in the home.

D. Serving _____ (John 15:13).

F. Realistic _____.

G. Both spouses initiate sex.

VI. Conclusion – Acts 20:35.

VII. Discussion Questions – discuss these questions in greater detail in private with your spouse/fiancé.

A. What did you find most helpful or encouraging from this message?

B. Which of the common views of sex are you most prone to fall into?

C. Which of the purposes of sex mentioned are you most appreciative of or surprised by?

D. Which of the hindrances to intimacy could use the most work in your relationship?

E. Which of the qualities mentioned that build intimacy is a strength in your relationship?