

WHEN MARRIAGE AND MERCY COLLIDE

The Power of the Gospel in Marriage

Celebrating Oneness

How the Gospel Can Redeem and Restore the Glory of Sex

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Dec. 6, 2009

Four Ways

That the power of the Gospel and God's mercy should collide in the marriage bedroom

I. The Power of the Gospel Can Redeem even the Privacy of Our Bedroom and Can Motivate Us to Please God even in this most Personal and Private Marriage Pleasure

I Corinthians 7:1-5

Sex is rarely the root problem in a marriage, and almost always the first casualty when a marriage begins to erode. The absence of sex is an indicator that things are not right in your marriage relationship.

“A married couple gives a sever blow to the head of that ancient serpent when they aim to give as much sexual satisfaction to each other as possible. Is it not a mark of amazing grace that on top of all the pleasure that the sexual side of marriage brings, it also proves to be a fearsome weapon against our ancient foe?

This should not surprise us. Marriage at its exquisite peak of pleasure speaks powerfully the truth of covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church. And that love is the most powerful force in the world. It is not surprising then that Satan's defeat, Christ's glory, and our pleasure should come together in this undefiled marriage bed.” *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper, p. 135

Proverbs 5:15-19

"Enraptured," It's translated 'captivated' in the NIV... 'ravished' in the OKJV - literally in the Hebrew it means to be drunk... intoxicated... or overwhelmed . . . or swept away with satisfaction.

II. The Power of the Gospel Can Redeem Our Understanding of What Sex is All About

For Christians, sex is a big thing because it's a God thing. He thought of it, and He has a big purpose for it!

Ephesians 5:31-32 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

“Marriages suffer from many wounds: power struggles, abusive situations, emotional distance, selfishness, immaturity, and addictions are some of the more easily identifiable aspects of a wounded relationship. Many marriages, however (even the seemingly healthy ones), often suffer from something far less easily recognized: a profound ignorance of the very nature of marriage itself. That is, couples understand neither what marriage truly is nor what it represents eternally. Without this deeper, intrinsic understanding of the marital union, these relationships labor under low standards and mistaken expectations.” *The Sexual-Spiritual Union of a Man and Woman*, Rob Jackson

Paul shouts that God designed our marriages to be billboards of the sacred union between Christ and the church.

“You don’t have to be an ascetic, and you don’t have to be afraid of the goodness of physical pleasure, to say that sexual intimacy and sexual climax get their final meaning from what they point to. They point to ecstasies that are unattainable and inconceivable in this life. Just as the heavens are telling the glory of God’s power and beauty, so sexual climax is telling the glory of immeasurable delight that we will have with Christ in the age to come. There will be no marriage there (Matt. 22:30). But what marriage meant will be there. And the pleasures of marriage, ten-to-the-millionth power, will be there. The pleasures we will experience there are of such a kind that if God tried to explain them to us now, it would be like trying to explain sexual pleasure to a five-year-old. The child might nod his head. But then he would say, ‘Pass the peanut butter.’” *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper; pp. 127-128

The Christian view of sexuality is actually a very radical one. It's radical because it goes against the culture and holds up human sexuality as nothing less than an icon of the inner life of God.

III. The Power of the Gospel Can Renew and Redeem Our Sinful and Worldly Attitudes about Sex

Ephesians 4:17-24

A. Fear can be Overcome

I John 4:18 “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

B. Laziness can be Confronted

Romans 12:9-11 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

It takes work to have a good marriage... and it takes work to have a good sexual relationship in your marriage.

“When couples observe (as they are very fond of doing) that marriage requires ‘work,’ what they mean primarily is that it takes time. They mean it robs them of precious time. They mean marriage gobbles up unbelievable enormities, scandalous vastnesses, great fantastic globs and scads of pure, priceless, unrecoverable time... You cannot leave a marriage sitting in the driveway even for a day... let it idle, and it begins to rust; neglect it, and it seizes right up. It can be a full job just being a passenger in this thing. But like it or not, you and your spouse are in it together, and in it for life, and the work of traveling in marriage is the most vital work you can do. In the Lord’s plans for the world there is no work more important than the work of relationship, and no relationship more important than that of one’s marriage.” *The Mystery of Marriage*, Mike Mason, pg. 101

Marriage was not designed to be done in a highly efficient way... it was designed to be done in a highly relational way - and that takes time!

C. Unbelief can be Exposed

Unbelief is devastating not only to our sex lives, but to our spiritual lives, because it calls into question the very nature of God our own feeble power and understanding at the center of reality.

Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth, by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You.”

Joel 2:25 “So I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten...”

Ephesians 3:20 “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we ask our think...”

D. Bitterness can be Eliminated

Hebrews 12:15 “Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

“Bitterness differs from unbelief merely in the intensity and depth – in the degree – of its rebellion. As my friend Andy Farmer has pointed out, the two are distinguished simply by the difference between can’t and won’t. Unbelief says, ‘I can’t do this,’ while bitterness says, ‘I won’t do this.’ Unbelief claims, ‘God can’t affect what I like and dislike’; while bitterness says, ‘God won’t affect them.’ Unbelief leans away from

God's promises; bitterness slams the door... Bitterness is one of the most common causes of neglected sex. From the soil of anger and unresolved conflicts, it grows quickly into a virulent weed that chokes out intimacy. Married people turned bitter use their bodies as weapons, a weapon that harms by withholding. A weapon used to punish the other person for sinning against us. This calls for forgiveness." *When Sinners Say "I Do"*, David Harvey, pg. 165

IV. The Power of the Gospel Can Guard You and Set You Free from the Empty Counterfeits that Promise Satisfaction and Freedom but End in Nothing but Bitterness and Bondage

I Corinthians 6:9-20

C. S. Lewis "The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union."

God gave us sex in the context of marriage... in the context of a committed revealing and sharing of heart and soul with one another.

I Corinthians 6:16-18 "There is more to sex than mere skin to skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, 'THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE.' ... We must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever -- the kind of sex that can never 'become one.' There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for 'becoming one' with another. *The Message*

"The 'naked and they felt no shame' part comes last in the story of Adam and Eve. It's a celebration of all of the ways they've bonded. All of the ways their souls have mingled. It's easy to take off your clothes and have sex. People do it all the time. But opening up your soul to someone, letting them into you spirit and thoughts, and fears, and future, and hopes, and dreams... that is being naked.

This is why when people sleep together after they've just met, they're raising the chances significantly that the relationship will not survive. Racing ahead of the progression always cost something. When there is no common mission, no shared task, no sense of bone of bone and flesh of flesh, no bonds that take years to develop, many end up moving from relationship to relationship, having sex but never really being naked. Too much too fast rarely endures." *Sex God*, Rob Bell, pgs. 156-157

For Personal Reflection

- Has your attitude been wrong about sex?
- Have you abused it and used it to your own selfish end?