

The Act of Marital Union

I. Learning to talk about a crucial issue

- The Bible is not squeamish about sexual intercourse, but it does speak of it in a modest and veiled way.
- Song of Solomon: highly poetic language celebrates God's good gift of sex while casting a shroud of privacy around the couple.
- In contrast to:
 - The world, with its highly explicit approach.
 - The tendency of the church not to speak of sex at all.
- Conclusion: we must learn to speak of this, but we must do so in a way that is guarded, honoring especially those who are young and/or unmarried.

II. Sexual intercourse in its proper context

- God is the maker and designer of sex, and he made it very good!
 - We should not be ashamed of our sexuality (Gen 2:25; 1 Tim 4:3).
 - As the designer of sex, God alone gets to tell us how we should use this marvelous gift.
- God has always had a plan for sex:
 1. To be a way for a marriage to be consummated and renewed.
 - Sex as covenant renewal (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14).
 - Sex is only permitted in marriage (1 Thess 4:3–7; Heb 13:4); it is the sign of the marriage covenant, a celebration of vows (cf. Exod 40:34: God does not have union with his people until they are in covenant together!).
 - Pre-marital and extra-marital sex: a terrible profaning of a sacred gift, treating casually something that is extremely precious.
 2. To be an expression of love between husband and wife:
 - It is a duty (1 Cor 7:3–5), but it should not be extorted from your spouse on that account.
 - It is meant to be relational! Sex should be a beautiful, delightful, joyful part of a holistic love between husband and wife. The context of godly sex is a shared life of love which includes mutual service, words of kindness, non-sexual touching, and affection.
 - If you are not in fellowship, you should refrain.
 - The way you go about the act of union should be loving (Matt 22:39)! You should consider the needs of your spouse as more important than your own! (Phil 2:3–4) Sex should communicate with your body the love that you have for your spouse.
 - The purpose of love-making is to love and honor and bring pleasure to your spouse, not to gratify yourself. It will involve self-sacrifice.
 - Remember, the male and female experience of sex differs! Just like it takes time to get to know someone, it will take time to get to know what pleases the other person. Give each other grace; communicate with each other.

- Sometimes *not* making love is the best way husband and wife can love each other. (Self-control is required *in* marriage as well as before!)
- 3. To be the means of procreation:
 - Mal 2:15: God is seeking godly offspring.
 - In a child, we see a marvelous incarnation of the two becoming one!
 - This is one purpose among several. We should not forego sex when childbearing is no longer possible.
- 4. To give mutual joy to husband and wife:
 - It's meant to be pleasurable! (Song 1:2; 5:1; 5:19)
 - The highest pleasures in sex are spiritual: the more a couple genuinely loves each other, the more beautiful their sexuality is, regardless of how the world defines "glorious sex." Sex is meant to be a glorious act of mutual self-*giving*.
- 5. To point to something more glorious still.
 - Sex will pass away when our earthly, temporary marriages pass away (Matt 22:30).
 - Then the union between husbands and wives will give way to the great union between *the* husband (Christ) and *the* bride (the church).
- The act of sex is private, but the public has a vested interest in your sexuality.
 - "What I do in the bedroom is my business": false!
 - As a community, we need to join with the couple in "holding marriage in honor among all" (Heb 13:4), setting a protective hedge around the couple's privacy.
 - It's vital to get help (medical or spiritual) if you are struggling in this area.

III. Some conclusions

- Sexual intercourse is a garden that must be protected.
 - Against adultery: adultery is *never* an expression of love.
 - Against fornication: not awakening it before the time (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4), guarding your curiosity.
 - Be extremely careful what you expose yourself to in movies, TV, internet.
 - Guarding your sexuality begins with guarding your thoughts (Matt 5:28).
- Do you worship sex? You do not *need* it to survive.
 - It is not the be-all and end-all of our existence! Do not be obsessed with it! You are a whole person and can live a full life without ever experiencing it.
 - You can know joy and peace and contentment in every circumstance, even when you are not feeling satisfied in this area (Phil 4:12-13).
- Your worth is not in your sexuality. Your worth is in Jesus Christ.
 - Things can go wrong. Sex is affected by fall, just like everything else.
 - Eventually as couples age, it passes away. Are you afraid? (Job 1:21)
- Jesus Christ has come to renew you as a whole person. He has come to heal all your sexual wounds and to give you the power to obey him in this area.
- Above all: 1 Cor 6:20: glorify God in your body.
 - God cares about what you do with your body and your thoughts.