



We all have "elephants in the room" that we usually don't want to discuss and don't want anyone to know about. But leaving them unaddressed doesn't lead to a life of flourishing. Last Sunday, we addressed the topic of sexuality and how the world's view of God's gift is distorted; today, we'll discuss what sex is supposed to be like in a healthy, God-centered marriage.

### Warm Up:

1. What's something big or small that happened this week that you're thankful for?

**Key Passage:** 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

### Discussion Questions:

2. In their book "Secrets of Sex and Marriage," Shaunti Feldhahn and Dr. Michael Sytsma write, "Every marriage deals with sexual issues and concerns." What are some sexual issues or concerns that married couples face? Why is it helpful to know that issues related to sex in marriage are typical?

Shaunti Feldhahn and Dr. Michael Sytsma (Extended Quote): *"Every marriage deals with sexual issues and concerns. Everyone has ways that our hopes for what sex *would* look like don't measure up to what it *does* look like. People who are able to talk about sex with their spouse have significantly more sex. The reverse is also true: People who find it awkward or difficult to talk about sex – or avoid doing so altogether – have much less sex."*

3. In his book, "On Marriage," Tim Keller writes, "From its very beginning, Christianity brought a revolutionary new understanding of sex into the world. It was seen as just one part – one uniquely joyful, powerful, and inseparable part – of mutual self-giving. To be loved and admired but not truly known is only mildly satisfying. To be known but rejected and not loved is our greatest nightmare. But to become vulnerable and so fully known and yet accepted and fully loved by someone we admire – that is the greatest possible satisfaction." How does the Christian view of sex elevate intimacy and lead to the greatest possible satisfaction within marriage?

God has designed sexual intimacy to be a gift experienced between a husband and wife to be enjoyed within the safe confines of the covenant union of marriage. Within this covenant union, a husband and wife can be free and vulnerable with one another and experience the mutual, self-giving love that is sexual intimacy while being fully known and accepted with no fear of rejection.

4. Consider each of the following statements from the sermon and discuss them as a group:

- a. Sex is a safeguard against sexual immorality for married couples (v2, 8-9).

We live in a sex-saturated culture that will tempt you every moment of the day. As a Christian spouse, you can help your spouse battle these temptations by meeting the God-given needs of your spouse in the God-given way (sex within marriage).

- b. Self-control is still a responsibility, even within marriage (v5).

There are times when you can tell your spouse, “I really could use some time together,” and they can be a “help” to you. Sometimes, this cannot be a reality, and you must exercise self-control and walk with Jesus.

- c. Sex is about what I can give to my spouse, not what I can take from them (v3).

Taking, taking, taking – that is the name of the game of sexual sin. Within marriage, it could even be considered a sin if you’re “taking” from your spouse by reducing your view of them as a sexual object to which you pay no attention outside the bedroom. Here’s a great way for a Christian spouse to read this passage: “I’m going to be a giver to my spouse inside the bedroom, but even more so outside of the bedroom.”

- d. Sex is to be a consistent part of the marriage relationship (v5).

This principle connects to the earlier principle that I’m not to be a taker sexually, but also a giver to my spouse consistently to meet their needs.

- e. Depriving in the bedroom is usually connected to issues outside the bedroom (v5).

Some issues outside of the bedroom that could lead to a lack of physical intimacy in the bedroom:

**Past trauma.** Some may need to sit down with a professional Christian counselor and carefully and intentionally work through some real pain they’ve endured.

**Selfishness.** You don’t consider your spouse’s needs or desires regarding issues outside the bedroom, but you expect them to consider yours inside the bedroom.

**No emotional connection.** You haven’t lovingly cared for your spouse all day, and then you expect physical intimacy. Men often feel emotionally connected with their wives after sex; wives often need to feel emotionally connected before sex.

- f. Sex should never be used as a weapon (v3-4).

Don’t withhold sex to get your way or to manipulate your spouse. Paul says if you want to fast together and decide not to have sex briefly, go for it, but come together soon through sex so you’re not tempted. Sex is a gift, not a weapon. If you use it as a weapon, you are in for some unintended consequences that are never helpful for your marriage.

5. Why are most marital problems helped or solved by growth in your walk with Jesus?

It's not hard to imagine how living a life committed to Jesus and, therefore, being filled with the fruit of the Spirit will help create a flourishing marriage environment and the intimacy God created for the marriage relationship. Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

6. Conclude with prayer for the marriages in our church that need to recommit to their walk with Christ, for those in our church who are single (teenagers, college students, adults) who need to commit or recommit to following God's design for sex, and for others who need healing in this area of their lives.

Need to reach out for help today: [help@crosschurch.com](mailto:help@crosschurch.com)