

The Two Becoming One

SGC Marriage Seminar

Session 4: The Gift of Romance

I sometimes wonder what is it like for nudists: whether they ever really get used to it. As for me, I still haven't gotten used to seeing my own wife naked. It's almost as if her body is shining with a bright light, too bright to look at for very long. I cannot take my eyes off her--and yet I must. To gaze too long or too curiously is, even with her, a breach of propriety, almost a crime. It is not like watching a flower or creeping up to spy on an animal in the wild. No, my wife's body is brighter and more fascinating than a flower, shier than any animal, and more breathtaking than a thousand sunsets. To me her body is the most awesome thing in creation. Trying to look at her, just trying to take in her wild, glorious beauty, so free and primal, so utterly unchanged since the beginning of time, I catch a small glimpse of what it means that men and women have been made in the image of God. If even the image is this dazzling, what must the Original be like?¹

In order for romance to deepen, you must touch the heart and mind of your wife before you touch her body.²

Introduction

Common and commonly misunderstood

- Few things are as commonly experienced but universally misunderstood as sexual intimacy.
- People make it a god.
 -a sin....
 - ...a necessary evil...
 - ...a tool for manipulation...
- People enjoy it when it is to be forbidden...
- People avoid it when it is commanded...

A. The Clear teaching of Scripture

1. Rarely is it treated as what it truly is—a gift of God, to be enjoyed in the way commanded by God.
2. *Sexual intimacy is saying, "I love you," with our bodies.*

God: the Originator of Good Sex

- B. Sexual intimacy is to be within a monogamous marital relationship

¹ Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage*, 113.

² C.J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*, 28.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:24-25)

- C. Sexual intimacy is to produce offspring.
Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. (Malachi 2:15)
- D. Sexual intimacy is to be a normal part of a marriage; abstinence—intentional, temporary abstinence—is exceptional.
The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Cor. 7:3-5)
- E. Sexual intimacy is part of all that is created by God as good and to be received with gratitude.
For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. (1 Tim. 4:4-5)
- F. Sexual intimacy is to be “intoxicating.”
Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. (Prov. 5:19)
- G. Sexual intimacy is to be mutually satisfying.
*[She] Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.
5:1 [He] I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk. (Song 4:16-5:1)*
- H. Sexual intimacy is part of how we fight external threats to our marriage.
It is better to marry than to burn with passion. (1 Cor. 7:9)
Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. (Prov. 5:15)
- I. Romance is the Dessert of a Good Relationship, not the Meal

1. The emphasis in Scripture is on husbands loving and leading their wives with understanding and honor (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Peter 3:7), and on wives loving their husbands and submitting to them in the fear of the Lord (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6). Romance is part of this expressed love to one another.
2. Thus, covenantal love is the foundation of the home, but romance is part of what makes that home wonderful to live in.
3. Romance reveals relationship and builds relationship, but romance cannot sustain a relationship by itself.

*It is, in effect, the very last step in human relations, and therefore never one to be taken lightly. It is not a step that establishes deep intimacy, but one which presupposes it.*³

*Sexual intercourse can be a joyful affirmation of the life two people share, or it can be a revelation of defects in their relationship. It will either draw a couple together or push them apart. Because your sexual relationship will tend to reflect your emotional relationship, it is important to realize that every meaningful, fully enjoyable sex act really begins with a loving, attentive attitude hours or even days before.*⁴

*Our physical proximity is often a good gauge of our emotional and relational proximity.*⁵

Five Lessons from the Song of Solomon

- A. Romance is to be Holy
 1. Marked by Fidelity
My beloved is mine, and I am his. (2:16)
 2. Accompanied by Self-control
Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. (4:16) - Spoken only after 3:6-11, "the day of his wedding"
 - Pre-marital love speaks generally: "O most beautiful of women....Your cheeks....your neck" (1:8-10)
 - Marital love speaks explicitly: "Eyes....hair....teeth....lips....neck....breasts....a garden fountain, a well of living water" (4:1-5:1)

³ *The Mystery of Marriage*, 117.

⁴ Ed Wheat, cited in Ricucci, *Love that Lasts*, 138-139.

⁵ *Love that Lasts*, 97.

B. Romance is to be with “Carefully Chosen Words”

- Song of Solomon reminds us of the place of words in romance:

*As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among the young women. (2:2)*

They relish their pleasure in each other not only with physical action, but with carefully composed words. Love is, above all, a matter of the mind and heart and should be declared.

The lesson for the reader is that he or she needs to speak often and openly of his or her joy in the beloved, the spouse. This is, for many lovers, a far more embarrassing revelation of the self than anything that is done with the body. But it is precisely here that the biblical ideal of love is present—in the uniting of the bodies and hearts of the husband and wife in a bond that is as strong as death. Many homes would be happier if men and women would simply speak of their love for one another a little more often.⁶

C. Romance Involves a Complete Sensuality

1. Sight

Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves. (1:15)

2. Passion

Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. (2:5)

3. Hearing

Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. (2:14)

4. Taste

Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue. (4:11)

5. Scent and edible lushness

Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices—a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon. (4:13-15)

6. Touch

⁶ Duane Garrett, cited in *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*, 54-55.

*His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!
(2:6)*

7. Total Satisfaction

*I came to my garden, my sister, my bride,
I gathered my myrrh with my spice,
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,
I drank my wine with my milk.
Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love! (5:1)*

D. Romance is to be Passionate—both for Him *and* for Her

1. Hers for Him—she uses vivid and sensual language as he does.

*My beloved put his hand to the latch,
and my heart was thrilled within me. (5:4)*

2. His for Her

*How beautiful and pleasant you are,
O loved one, with all your delights! (7:6)*

- There is in the Bible a leaning toward *initiation* by the man and *response* by the woman.

E. Romance to be with Abandon—as a free delight in the body of your spouse, not as the expression of sexual fantasies.

*Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.
I came to my garden, my sister, my bride,
I gathered my myrrh with my spice,
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,
I drank my wine with my milk. (4:16-5:1)*

II. Sexual Sin and the Gospel

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:9-2:2)

A. Sexual sin is simply sin—we can give and receive forgiveness; we can receive grace from the Lord, we can be “cleansed” of it, we are not under

condemnation from the Lord because of it, all provided that we have repented of the sin.

- B. Sexual sin has long-term consequences, sometimes far surpassing other sins. Yet, many of the consequences of sexual sin have to do with how much we internalize the truth of the gospel. *Do you believe 1 John 1:9-2:2 for this area of your life? Does your spouse?*
- C. Let sexual sin humble you, but not lead you to despair.
1. Let sexual sin remind you of your perpetual need for Jesus, but don't let it make you forget that you have Jesus.
 2. Let sexual sin be a motivation to stay humble, transparent, accountable, guarded, wise with your life.
- D. The key truth is this one: *The death of Christ is great enough to cover ALL your sin...completely...forever.*
- Can add one more: "He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." – True in all things, true in your marriage.

Conclusion

For a date night in the next week or two:

- Read Song of Solomon individually beforehand (morning before, day before).
- Write out 5 things that you appreciate about your spouse.
- Write a 4-line poem to your spouse—humor most allowable, craftsmanship not the point.
- Share them over dessert or dinner.
- See what happens (unless you're engaged—then, it's, "Don't forget about your future father-in-law!")

For the future:

- Make romance a matter of prayer. Romance is a big deal and it is filled with challenges, so pray for God's help.
- Commit to learning what pleases your spouse—both in sexual intimacy and overall preferences (milk or dark chocolate? Coffee or tea? Spontaneous and wild, or planned and prepared? Etc.)
- Find ways to talk about sexual intimacy and romance.
- Remember that loving your spouse—really loving them, accepting them as they are, committing to them in every way, sacrificing for them, working for them—is the most romantic thing you can do.

- Recognize that a mutually happy sexual relationship is critical. If you lack this, talk to a pastor. Dangers abound when this part of our relationship is suffering, and it is almost always (*almost* always) a sign of other weaknesses in the relationship.
- Read Song of Solomon regularly.

E. Extra Resources:

Don't miss the obvious and best:

The Song of Solomon; Proverbs 1-9; 1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:21-33;
1 Peter 3:1-7.

Ed and Gaye Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*

Gary and Betsy Ricucci, *Love that Lasts*

Tom Gledhill, *The Message of the Song of Songs*, The Bible Speaks
Today series, ed. by J.A. Motyer

Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say, 'I Do'*

C.J. Mahaney's book, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*

C.J. and Carolyn's messages from John Piper's conference, "Sex and the
Supremacy of Christ." Their messages are available at:

<http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/ConferenceMessages/ByConference/2/>