

The Role of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

Series: Making Relationships Work: Love, Sex & Marriage
October 29, 2017 – Brad Bailey

I. Our Sexuality Is Rooted In the Divine Nature of God

Genesis 1:26-28 (GW)

Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, in our likeness. Let them rule the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the domestic animals all over the earth, and all the animals that crawl on the earth."²⁷ So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.²⁸ God blessed them and said, "Be fertile, increase in number, fill the earth, and be its master."

Genesis 2:24-25 (GW)

That is why a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh.²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, but they weren't ashamed of it.

Our sexuality is rooted in God.... and reflected in...

- C _____ Nature ('male and female')
- C _____ Potential... ('multiply')
- C _____ Partnerships ('leave and become united')

"Sexual passion is the stimulating of a God-given longing within us for oneness; through the pleasure of releasing both personal and physical boundaries, leading to the uniting of one's body and being, designed as a part of a lifelong partnership."

II. God's Desire for Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-7 (MSG)

Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?² Certainly—but

only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder.³ The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband.⁴ Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out.⁵ Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it.⁶ I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.⁷ Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

1. Experience sex only with _____

Proverbs 5:15-19

2. _____ your spouse's sexual needs

As God's gift to the intimacy between husband and wife, physical intimacy should be VALUED and ENJOYED on a REGULAR basis.

1. Confront our sense of autonomy
2. Explore our issues of fear and trust
3. Seek to know the other's needs... which involves talking
4. Be intentional about the sexual relationship

3. Guard your relationship from the tensions and temptations which will seek to threaten it.

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INTRO

Today...we are **continuing** our **Fall focus** on relationships...entitled “**Making Relationships Work: Love, Sex, and Marriage.**” *Making relationships work involves how we relate as male and female... that involves as sexual beings. So we are going to consider God’s design and desire for sexual intimacy.*

I know that sex is a topic that can often **awaken plenty of interest.** (I just saw three guys sit up.)

But I also know this **can tend to be a sensitive subject.** It’s about something very personal and intimate. In a **culture that wants to turn sexuality** into a source of **public commodity and consumption...** **something still feels very personal and intimate.** I certainly **want to respect and protect** that personal nature and sensitivity. (Next week... deep hurts and hang-ups.)

We live in a time that prides itself on being sexually free. Yet the reality is that **we are sexually conflicted.** It’s been said that what a **culture tries to laugh at is what is most unresolved within it.** Our comedy is obsessed with sex because there is so much tension unresolved within us. our feelings about being sexual can elicit a mix of goodness and guilt...beauty and shame. Sexuality is such a **deep part** of our **identity** and a deep part of our **insecurity.** We live in a **tension marked by both repression and obsession... inhibition and indulgence.**

The only one NOT hung up in sexual confusion... is God.

God surrounds us ... to speak of a gift that needs to be restored.... to speak of a gift **often negated or neglected.** He says “I made the stars... the seas... but lastly I made you as male and female... as sexual beings.”

It’s God who created us as bodily beings. So I’d like to stop and ask you to join me in a moment of prayer...and opening our hearts to God’s heart for us.

PRAYER

Lets hear again the words from the first book of the Bible... as God gives poetic summary of who we are...

I. Our Sexuality Is Rooted In the Divine Nature of God

Genesis 1:26-28 (GW)

Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, in our likeness. Let them rule the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the domestic animals all over the earth, and all the animals that crawl on

the earth.”²⁷ So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.²⁸ God blessed them and said, “Be fertile, increase in number, fill the earth, and be its master.”

Genesis 2:24-25 (GW)

That is why a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh.²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, but they weren't ashamed of it.

Here we are reminded of that God created sexuality... and the potential for sexual intimacy. It's not like God created the first humans, went on lunch break and then came back and was like, “what are they doing? Who taught them that?!” The original state was His idea. And how different it is from what we often feel.

Last verse (25) – “The man and his wife were both naked, but they weren't ashamed of it.”

Can you imagine that? A nakedness of body that was in had nothing to hide from God or anyone...no shame. No shame from their past. No shame that comes from falling short of some expectations for performance. The truth is that...

Our sexuality is rooted in God.... and reflected in...

- **Complimentary Nature ('male and female')**

We are uniquely created as male and female... to reflect the complimentary aspects of God's character.[1]

It's helpful to ask what God says about when they become sexual beings. When did they become male and female? Was it when they left and joined partners? No

Was it when they united and created life? NO

*> At the very moment they were created...they were either male or female. And that speaks to a valuable truth: **You will never become more fundamentally a man or woman than you already are.***

(Now I understand how deeply **some find conflict** with being male or female... some **physical** ... some **psychological**... I believe that it is a conflict that is deep because it is with something real... our biological nature as male and female is not something we escape...but we must navigate.)

- **Creative Potential... ('be fruitful and multiply')**

They were told to 'be fruitful and multiply' as their physical union could create new life. God who is creating endows us with creative power...including the ability to create life.

Sexual intimacy is not reduced to the power and purpose of creating life... but neither can it be understood outside of that sacred power. (The command to go and multiply is not simply a matter of following an order... but reflecting the very divine order or nature itself.)

In essence we are "continuing God's creation act" from chaos into order.

It's notable... that when God calls a people of this earth through whom he would make himself known... what is the sign of the covenant... circumcision... a marking out of the life creating male anatomy. A sacred reminder that our sexuality is rooted in the Divine order.

- **Covenant Partnerships ('leave and become united')**

God describes that we were given a purpose... and a means to partner in fulfilling that purpose. We were created as complimentary beings...able to create life... and therefore a man will leave his initial family to create a new union. This partnership is the essence of marriage.

Now I know that some question the nature of marriage today. Some may say that there were many forms of marriage in the Bible... the ancients would practice polygamy in which a man may have had many wives. There were obligations to provide for the lineage of a brother who dies...by taking his wife. The ancient cultures had some patterns that may seem strange in light of what God's original design of an individual man joining an individual woman... but the truth is...that as God began to form a people... the **understanding of marriage turns back to this original design...** of a man leaving his father and mother... cleaving...becoming bound to one woman...and becoming one flesh...uniting in a sacred intimacy only with her.

What is described is how the "becoming one flesh"...the physical union... consummates the commitment. When two become one...they then experience oneness in sexual union. This helps us begin to understand how **sexual oneness is designed for marriage...** where the bonds of oneness have been established.

The very nature of "passion" reflects the desire to give ourselves fully...with abandon. Sexual passion is about giving ourselves physically and personally to another. I believe it can be captured this way...

"Sexual passion is the stimulating of a God-given longing within us for oneness; through the pleasure of releasing both personal and physical boundaries, leading to the uniting of one's body and being, designed as a part of a lifelong partnership."

*I realize that within our **current culture** we have been trying to negate this idea. The so called “sexual revolution” may have rightfully challenged the unhealthy repression of sexual desires...but in trying to ignore that sexual intimacy is that which unites us...it has torn apart what was not designed to be separated.*

***Experiencing oneness without being one violates our personhood.** I understand that may be hard for some to accept... and you may not agree at this point.*

I don't have the time this morning to engage how to consider such a truth today. But I would suggest that the truth of our sexual nature speaks from both within us...and from around us. [2] The physical and personal were not neat to be separated. Freedom is found when body and being are united....when experiencing oneness is bound within the bonds of oneness.

Sexual intimacy is designed to unite us.

As Tim Keller describes... “Sex is a way to say to somebody else, “I belong completely and exclusively to you,” and if you use it to say anything else, it's a lie. It's a nonverbal piece of communication God designed, and it's meant to carry a message...God said sex is a way to give yourself totally to somebody else and to say, “I belong completely and totally and exclusively to you.” - Tim Keller

*The simple truth is that **no little girl dreams of the day** they will find themselves in the **arms of a stranger**. No little boy dreams of the day they will be addicted and consumed by looking at a computer... or engaging in something rough and abusive. At our core, we were not designed for such separation of body and soul.*

Our culture has invested more into the promotion of casual sex than any other idea I can think of. We simply have to decide ... is it really a progressive idea... or a regressive idea? **Do I really believe that becoming like my dog is the fulfillment of my personhood?** I have never met a person who truly believes that in their inner being.

Restoration comes with realigning the longings of being and body... rediscovering what it means that we are human **beings** expressed in **bodies**.

Our current cultural desire to try to separate physical pleasure from personal commitment...is not because we don't feel the connection...it's not because the facts regarding social cost aren't clear [2]... it's **because we have found it hard**.

Self-control is hard... and it's hard when there is such a long period between when sexual desires arise and marriage tends to arise. [3]

And it's this tension which the Apostle Paul addresses. He writes to those who are living in Greece...the city of Corinth. And here is what he says...as captured in a paraphrased translation.

II. God's Desire for Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-7 (MSG)

¹ Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations? ² Certainly—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. ³ The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. ⁴ Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. ⁵ Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. ⁶ I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them. ⁷ Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

The words of the Apostle Paul here **may not sound like the greatest promotion of marriage**. In fact the wording of other translations can sound even more like a “resignation”...as if to say “if you must get married...it’s okay”... as if Paul merely resigns marriage as a necessity for the less self-controlled.

(It doesn't quite have that Valentine's Day card feel.)

But the first verse helps us understand what Paul's intent is.

He begins. “Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?”

While Paul certainly has reasons to see the benefits of celibacy... we need to understand that he is beginning to address particular issues and questions raised by those in Corinth.

Other Translations. – ‘Is it good for a man to touch a woman?’... euphemism for sexual relationship.

To really understand the question, we need to remember the philosophy that was pervading the culture at the time...

Corinth...the city to which he is writing... was part of Greece...and just 40 miles from Athens. The idea can be summed up as **DUALISM = a complete separation of material and spiritual... and that which is of the earthly desires and bodily life being deemed either an enemy of the spiritual or at least irrelevant.**

Out of this false separation, some conclude we can do anything with your body you'd like. Others found in this dualistic thinking a more ascetic approach to life... detach themselves from their sexuality.

> This included those who were married thinking that such physical pleasure may be unfitting of spiritual life.

Such marriages are called "Platonic marriages" after the Greek philosopher Plato.

Many people married, but did not consummate the marriage with a physical joining together; instead they did that kind of physical activity with temple prostitutes and child slaves.

As some may recall...the **city of Corinth** had one of the **most massive temples** of it's day... the **Temple of Aphrodite**...which has been uncovered and can be visited today. It housed **1,000 priestesses** who served as **temple prostitutes**.... A form of sacred prostitution. (That may sound crazy to us... the idea that a culture would invest so much to create non-relational sex...and give it an almost sacred glorified place. I wonder if we haven't invested far more to create our own temples of sex... where we try to find life.) [4]

Satan's great strategy, when it comes to sex, is to do everything he can to **encourage sex outside of marriage**, and to **discourage sex within marriage**. It is an equal victory for Satan if he accomplishes either plan!

So Paul wants to make it clear: Physical intimacy in marriage is GOOD.

That may sound like the most obvious statement ever made... but I actually believe that a part of us may wonder. We need to really know that sexual intimacy in marriage is GOOD and not just a good thing but a God thing.

Whatever feels awkward in connecting God with our sexual pleasure is a reflection of something corrupted. He wants us to stop letting sexuality become defined as something bad in itself.

Paul is not saying sex is the only reason for marriage, or the most important reason for marriage. Paul is simply confronting their negating of sex within marriage. [5]

Our feelings about sex today, including sexual intimacy in marriage, are often still caught between obsession and repression.... And Paul reminds us that neither the indulgent nor the inhibited are really enjoying true sexual freedom.

"When we deny the spiritual dimension to our existence, we end up living like animals. And when we deny the physical, sexual dimensions to our existence we end up living like angels. And both ways are destructive, because God made us human." – Rob Bell [6]

Paul concludes saying he himself embraces his circumstances of being unmarried. He was almost certainly married earlier in his life... but is likely widowed now. And he values the freedom to serve God's work with the freedom this gives him. That affirms that marriage is not an end in itself... there is a larger purpose.

He knows that sexual intimacy is not essential to life...but it is powerful...and cannot be negated or neglected.

So his advice is simple...

1. Experience sex only with your spouse

Paul writes in verse 2: ...But since there is so much immorality...

“It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder..”

So Paul is saying sex only within marriage...

In a world that directs us away from relational intimacy.... God calls the heart back to home.

This is the wisdom we hear in the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 5:15-19 (NIV)

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? ¹⁷ Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer-- may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.

2. Satisfy your spouse's sexual needs

Look at verses 3 and 4:

“The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other...”

The husband and wife have a marital duty to each other. And in this context, that “marital duty” is sex. Paul is saying that you are to satisfy your spouse’s sexual needs.

Paul says that we should not be depriving each other of what our bodies offer each other. He’s referring to the powerful DESIRE he had just described.

*He’s **not speaking about creating children...but of the pleasure itself. As people who really value our spiritual nature, we may be comfortable acknowledging that physical intimacy is good, but perhaps a bit awkward with thinking God really intended such pleasure.***

*Paul not only affirms but even calls for both husbands and wives to ‘satisfy’ one another. Yes... it is a sacred means for being co-creators of life... but there is also a dimension of pleasure... of **satisfying natural sensual desires.***

In the Song of Songs...we hear of very sensual love...a love story shows marital sex to be **erotic** and **personal, romantic** and **fun, passionate** and **patient**. [7]

As God’s gift to the intimacy between husband and wife, physical intimacy should be VALUED and ENJOYED on a REGULAR basis.

All of **these adjectives** will **vary in degree...**

Will our **value** always be the same? > No... but we can still each share in valuing it.

Will the **level of enjoyment** always be the same? > No... but enjoyment can always be a part.

What is **regular**? I’m going to suggest that while all couples may be different on their drives and desires... if both are healthy and there are no unusual circumstances... maintaining a healthy connection will usually be served best by being physically intimate at least weekly... and will suffer if less than monthly.

So how can we develop such a sexually healthy marriage? Next week we will expand...but let me mention four quick points...

- 1. Confront our sense of autonomy**
- 2. Explore our issues of fear and trust**
 - **Sex is never just about sex. It’s about connection.**
- 3. Seek to know the other’s needs... which involves talking**
- 4. Be intentional about the sexual relationship**

Finally....Paul makes one more main point...

3. Guard your relationship from the tensions and temptations which will seek to threaten it.

Paul says...we need to realize there is that which is set against us. He warns us...there is a spiritual force who sees marriage as a sign of God's covenant love on earth... a signpost of God...and wants to tear it up. He will try to draw every married life away from it's center.

Closing prayer.

Notes:

1. In Genesis description, The author uses the Hebrew device of parallelism to elaborate on the statement, "in the image of God created he him (Adam)" with the statement, "male and female created he them." By paralleling "image of God" with "male and female" and by using the word "create" twice (which is not used often in Genesis 1, by the way) the writer exalts human sexuality to a central place in human nature and links it to humanity being in God's image. Thus sexuality unites humans both to the animal world in its reproductive function, but it also points to the uniqueness of humans, since for us, sexuality is tied to our being in God's image (unlike the animals). This declares human sexuality to be sacred territory." – Source lost

2. Cultural trend toward accepting pre-marital sex.

Premarital Sex Is 'Not Wrong at All,' Say 58 Percent of Americans; On the other hand, fewer approve of extramarital sex. By [Ronald Bailey](#) | May 29, 2015 - <http://reason.com/archives/2015/05/29/premarital-sex-is-not-wrong-at-all-say-5>

Five Apologetics Every Student Needs: Premarital Sex by DAVIS LACEY (MARCH 2, 2016) - <https://www.rootedministry.com/blog/five-apologetics-every-student-needs-premarital-sex/>

The fallout associated with the contemporary "sexual revolution" confirms that God's high standards for human sexuality are not just for his glory, but for his people's good and protection as well (c.f. Romans 8:28):

- Though correlation doesn't always equal causation, a [recent study](#) showed that folks who view pornography 3-5 times a week were three times as depressed on average as someone who didn't view pornography.
- Break-ups really hurt, because two people really were becoming "one flesh." A 2010 study observed that, upon seeing images of their exes, people's brains were most active in those areas associated with physical pain.
- [An Albert Einstein College of Medicine study](#) showed that, "people may experience cravings for their ex-partner similarly to the way addicts crave a drug they are withdrawing from. This can lead to intense distress as well as psychological discomfort."

One can only image the proportionality of these feelings in relation to the level of intimacy explored by the couple.

- [A 2013 study](#) from the Dunedin School of Medicine found that, “For both men and women, taking into account prior psychological disorders, the odds of developing substance dependence increased virtually linearly with the number of sex partners.”
- [A study by the National Marriage Project](#) revealed a negative association between both cohabitation and premarital sex and the self-reported quality of a person’s marriage.

In contrast to the notion that God’s glory and our happiness are on “opposite ends of the spectrum,” it seems that we miss out on the best sex and most fulfilling relationships when we pursue those things apart from God’s bidding and design.

We can consider...

- Sex underage is a felony... with consequences similar to murder... rather notable for something that some say is just a physical act. It reflects that we know it is deeper...it is taking what we have no right to take.
 - Sex apart from marriage creates lives ...that are often then aborted or abandoned.
 - Sex outside marriage has continued to negatively affect the future of the lifelong marriage.
- A good article that speaks of Biblical perspective...

Solomon's Line on Premarital Sex

By John C. Thomas

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/preparing-for-marriage/why-wait-for-sex/solomons-line-on-premarital-sex>

Over time, of course, I realized that the relationship described in Solomon's Song, including those face-blushing palm tree and cluster verses, occurred within a specific context. In the midst of beautiful, poetic language about the stages of a relationship that start with a glance and eventually lead to the honeymoon, the author charges us three times, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it pleases," or, as paraphrased by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, "Don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the time is ripe — and you're ready."

I often point to this book when people, usually young singles, ask me about relationships and premarital sex. They want to know, where, exactly, does the Bible talk about pre- or extramarital sex, when neither partner is married. They know about the adultery prohibitions, and they agree — you shouldn't have sex with someone who is someone else's spouse. But where does it talk about not having sex if there is no spouse involved? You have two consenting adults, and neither has made any vow to any other person, so

it's not *technically* adultery. What's wrong with that? Does the Bible speak to those situations?

I like to start with Solomon's Song, because it celebrates the whole package of the relationship — initial attraction, exciting emotions, longing, and sexual intimacy — and it connects all of this to the proper context or timing, when "it pleases," a timing that is marked by public approval of the relationship, highlighted by a wedding (chapter 3). *The whole relationship, including the celebration of the sexual aspects, takes place within the context of community approval — no, more than approval — rejoicing.*

I ask these young, unmarried singles, does the community — your friends, family, church — celebrate your private, sexual liaisons? When it appears that a pregnancy might result, is there rejoicing? No, of course not. Why not? The timing is wrong. The context is wrong. A private affair is being forced out into the public and is clouded by shame. You've "aroused love before its time." There will be pain, disappointment and sadness. Compare that to the tone of Solomon's Song. The couple's sexual life in the Song of Solomon takes place within the context of a lifelong commitment of marriage, and the community rejoices. It will produce grandbabies, nieces, nephews, more members of the little platoon of the family. The couple's sex life is ultimately a social benefit. That, I say to my young single friends, is a picture of sex in the proper context.

Keep in mind, I say, that in biblical times there just wasn't a whole lot of sex taking place *before* marriage, since people married at such young ages, and there just wasn't much time between reaching the age of sexual maturity and marriage. Most of the sex taking place was *after* marriage, either with your spouse, which was good, or not with your spouse, which was prohibited, and that's why there's more talk about adultery than premarital sex. We wrestle with this issue more now because the time span between reaching the age of sexual maturity and marriage has bumped up a decade or two since biblical times.

How your premarital experiences can affect your future marriage By [Lois M Collins @loisco](#),
Published: Aug. 18, 2014

Your prospects for a happy marriage may be tied to people other than your soon-to-be spouse. For example, the more people who come to your wedding, the better it bodes for your marital bliss. But the more serious premarital relationships you had before, the less likely you are to be happily married later.

A new report from the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, "Before 'I Do': What Do Premarital Experiences Have to Do with Marital Quality Among Today's Young Adults," highlights those and other findings on how decisions and experiences before marriage can help or hurt future marriage quality.

Among the report's highlights:

- The researchers noted that past experience — notably sex, romantic ties and children — is linked to future marital quality and can impact it negatively.
- Couples who “slide” rather than “decide” their way through life-changing transitions like having sex, living together and becoming pregnant are less likely to report high-quality marriages.
- The wedding itself is linked to marital quality. Couples who invite a lot of family and friends to their nuptials tend to have happier marriages than those who don't.

3. Self-control is difficult... but NOT impossible.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (GW)

There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans. God, who faithfully keeps his promises, will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist. But when you are tempted, he will also give you the ability to endure the temptation as your way of escape.

Jude 1:24 (GW)

God can guard you so that you don't fall and so that you can be full of joy as you stand in his glorious presence without fault.

Philippians 4:13 (NLT)

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

4. The Temple of Aphrodite (Roman = [Venus](#)) housed the 1000 "priestesses" employed as hierodouloi (from [hieros](#) = consecrated to deity + [doulos](#) = bondservants) who served as temple prostitutes to facilitate idolatrous "worship" (cf "[sacred prostitution](#)").

This can be seen in the way some of the Corinthian Christians thought it was just fine to hire the services of a prostitute (as in [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#)), and other Corinthian Christians thought it was more spiritual for a husband and wife to never have sexual relations.

5. For more on a complete theology of marriage, see [Ephesians 5:21-33](#) and [Colossians 3:18-19](#).

6. From Rob Bell “Sex God”, p 58). Consider also...

“There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." - 1 Corinthians 6:16 (MSG)

7. Consider the very sensual language by which sexual intimacy was celebrated by God's people. ***Song of Solomon... a book within the Bible that celebrates the desires between a couple looking forward to the pleasures of being physically intimate with one another.***

*“Beloved, My lover is radiant and ruddy,
...His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.
His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite.
His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.
His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.
His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely.
This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”
Song of Solomon 5:10, 13 -16*

His response...

*“How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights!
Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit.
I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit."
May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples,
and your mouth like the best wine.
Beloved, May the wine go straight to my lover flowing gently over lips and teeth.”
Song of Solomon 7:6-9*

*Though the **images** may seem **humorously distant** from our culture... **this is a beautiful expression of the sensual pleasure found in the physical intimacy of marriage.***

Nothing prude here.... but **nothing crude or rude**. It's a celebration of sensuality that doesn't reduce the other to an object.... but rather observes the other and **appreciates** the body.

It pierces the inhibited...the fearful... the repressive....but it equally restores the sense of beauty... it is not selfish...exploitive... it is the sexual serving love.

Andrew Shanks addresses the difference between erotica and the Song of Solomon (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/whats-the-difference-between-erotica-and-song-of-solomon>)

The single major difference between the Song of Solomon and erotica is the difference between means and ends. In his Song, Solomon's primary goal is to describe love and beauty. To do so, he employs the most fundamental consummation of those virtues, human sexuality. Love and beauty are the ends, sexuality is the means. Erotica reverses that order. The main goal of erotica is to describe human sexuality, and occasionally it does this by employing descriptions of physical beauty and/or love. In erotica, sexuality is the end, love and beauty are merely means—disposable ones.

Love in Song of Solomon and Love in Erotica

Consider the place of love in Solomon versus erotica. The depictions of physical beauty in the Canticles always leads to an encomium to love itself:

You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; you have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes . . . How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine. . . . ([SOS 4:9-10](#))

And in one of the most evocative descriptions, Solomon asserts that tranquility itself can be found in the embrace of the beloved:

I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace. ([SOS 8:10](#))

Erotica is not interested in love. It will, at times, spread a thin veneer of love over certain stories, but love is never the main point. It is only ever back story. Erotica is written to titillate, the Canticles to celebrate. The one is written to provoke lust, the other to evoke beauty. It is the monumental difference between pornography and nude art, between Ron Jeremy and Michelangelo's *David*.

The Song of Solomon is a monument to love and beauty and to the proper connection between them. The experience of human sexuality is the pedestal upon which the monument securely and audaciously rests. Solomon teaches us that the most ravishing beauty is a consequence of the most desperate love, that the beloved is so beautiful precisely *because* she is so loved.