

Working it Out (Intimacy & Finances)

1 Corinthians 7:1-9 & 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Introduction

Last week we began discussing some of the practical issues that often are the source of conflict in our marriages. We discussed the importance of good communication and how that includes our need to listen and recognize the role of body language. We likewise discussed venting and counsel, and how our communication takes a range of everyday tones as well as needing to take time to explore deeper and more difficult issues.

Good communication provides the greatest tool in our ability to navigate through life's challenges. This communication is of course seen first and most importantly in our relationship with the Lord through having regular time of communion with Him. In a similar way, we also need to maintain good communication with our spouse both in frequency as well as in quality.

Today we will touch on two other issues which often result in or are related to the chief challenges we face in marriage. Good communication is vital in navigating both of these issues. The first that we will look at is regarding physical intimacy, and the second that of finances.

Intimacy

ASK: What are some of our culture's misconceptions about intimacy and sex?

- That it is always easy, when in fact it takes a lot of work.
- That it is always filled with romance, and though it may be, for most normal marriages, this is more of the exception.
- That it is okay (even expected) before marriage
- That it is okay with those of the same gender

As we consider what the world says about intimacy and sex it is helpful to juxtapose it with what the Scripture says about this issue. God reserves this beautiful gift for marriage and marriage only. Culture has twisted this and said it's OK to do things that God says is only reserved for marriage including sex. God has a plan and purpose for this and this is an area that needs to be brought under the authority of God. That said, let's state a couple of important things.

- What we teach today is under the banner of marriage.

- If you have not followed God’s authority and done things His way, you can surrender this to God and begin to do it His way.
- Intimacy is meant for beauty and good in marriage and as we’ll see it has many purposes.
- If you are single, intimacy as sex is not yet meant for you in any form.

We’ll be anchoring much of what we discuss today in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.

READ: 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 – “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. ² Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³ Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. ⁵ Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. ⁷ For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. ⁸ But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; ⁹ but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.”

From this passage we find five helpful biblical principles. Giving, Mutuality, Frequency, Resiliency & Prayer. These are general concepts we can all learn from regardless of being married or single.

The first principle that we see is that of **Giving**: Notice that verse 3 says, “Let the husband *render* (give) to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.” God’s heart for married couples in this is that they are engaged in an act of giving not taking. They should be orienting their thoughts not to what I can get from this experience but what I can give. How can I bless my spouse as I give myself to them.

This reflects the heart of God as He demonstrates His love towards us through a selfless giving of Himself. We reflect this in our attitude and in how we approach this physical union with our spouse, that we are both sacrificing our desires and putting the other persons desires first.

The second principle is that of **Mutuality**: We see this idea of mutuality in the idea of “giving” in verse three, but then it goes on in verse four to expound this to an even greater degree by saying, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.” This speaks to the mutuality of giving not in demanding something you want.

At the time when this was originally written, these words would have been revolutionary. Not so much about the husband having authority over his wife’s body, but that the wife also had equal authority over her husband’s body. But we have to be careful to not misunderstand the meaning of the text here. This does not give the right to either spouse to demand anything of the other. Instead, as John Piper says, “It is a mysterious dance of love in the Christian community as we lay down our rights and our demands, and seek to outdo one another not in what we can get but in what we can give.”¹ In this joint mutuality, the beautiful truth of the “one-flesh” relationship gets born out to the full and we learn a picture of unity and oneness.

The third principle is that of **Frequency**: In verse five we read, “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again” From this passage we see that it is not good for the couple to abstain from being physically together. And if there is a time period where they do abstain, it should be one that is intentionally planned, spiritually motivated and has a definitive end.

These absences should not be because of lack of time, lack of energy, or lack of desire. Though if one of these, or others, is the cause of a prolonged abstinence from being together, it is likely that there are some deep-seated issues at root that need to be discovered, addressed and resolved. In other words, the lack of intimacy is a symptom not a cause.

Unfortunately, when there are challenges in a marriage, it is often the case that one spouse will withhold sex from the other as a way of manipulating things or to be vindictive; And this is not okay, instead this tends to only adds to the conflict and never resolves the conflict. In fact, this speaks into the “taking” instead of the “giving”. The best way forward is to be open, honest and to communicate well.

¹ Sexual Intimacy and the Rights over a Spouse’s Body in Marriage
Thoughts on the Application of 1 Corinthians 7:3– 5 (April 29, 2009) by John Piper www.desiringGod.org

The fourth principle is that of **Resiliency**: We read at the end of verse 5, “and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” As well as in verse 9, “but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” The beauty of intimacy in marriage is that only you and your partner can share in this. It’s something special for just the two of you. As you follow God’s heart for intimacy in marriage, you are not only uniting and becoming one but you help keep (protect) one another from any wandering and other sexual temptations.

This does not mean you won’t have to work hard to keep yourself pure and to avoid distractions from the world’s ploys. But intimacy with your spouse helps you fortify the walls in your marriage to keep the world out and Christ in.

We cannot talk about intimacy and sex without recognizing the battles that we are faced with today. This is for all of us. Single, dating, engaged, and married. Pornography, selfishness, addictions, are just naming a few of the battles. Therefore the foundation of your resistance must start at a deeper and more personal level. Namely, your desire to honor, please, and obey your Savior. Until you have ‘crucified your flesh with its passions and desires’ (Gal 5:24) and truly and continually surrender to Christ who bought you, you will find little victory over these strongholds.

But resistance is possible, and it is God’s plan for you to experience this victory. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor”. If it is God’s will for you, then you know that if you pray for something that is already God’s will for you, then He is sure to answer you according to His will.

On a practical note, if we recall our discussion from Lesson 2 on One Flesh, we discussed different types of intimacy. For example, there is emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy, to name a few.

It is important to recognize that intimacy is not just your physical oneness. In fact, you will find that intimacy in one area often leads to intimacy in other areas. Spiritual intimacy can lead to emotional intimacy which can lead to physical intimacy etc..

Husbands must recognize that for many wives emotional and physical intimacy are connected. This does not mean that wives should not be physically intimate with

their husbands when they don't feel emotionally connected. Intimacy is about being connected and giving not taking. (Crockpot vs. frying pan analogy)

Lastly, as we reflect on all that we discussed so far, there is one more important concept to explore. One of the reasons the world's view of sex is so broken and does not work is that it lacks the primacy of **covenant**. Our physical intimacy is an expression of our one-flesh nature which is a reflection of a relationship that is established on a marriage covenant.

Think of it in the parallel of our relationship with God. Because of God's promises to use, promises to forgive and cleanse, to never leave us nor forsake us, to always love us and be our ever present help in our times of need. Because of the safety of these promises and our confidence in what He has said and His past faithfulness to always fulfill what He has said, we do not have to fear to bring our faults, our confessions, our failings to Him. In other words, we can be absolutely bare before Him. Fully exposed. Fully known. Because we know that He already fully loves us.

In the same way, our covenant with our spouse allows us a similar experience in our marriage. The fact that I have vowed to my wife that I will love her and cherish her, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, till death do us part... this covenant that was made makes it possible for both of us to be more fully known and yet still loved by one another (despite all our imperfections). It is only in the safety of this marriage covenant that our physical oneness can be fully expressed and fully realized. In this way, every time we are together it is a way for us to renew our marital covenant to each other. It is a way of saying, "I still do, I still give myself wholly to you!"

Lastly, **Pray** about your intimacy. For singles, dating and engaged, pray for purity and contentment. For married couples, pray for one another in this area. Pray for communication. Finally, remember that it takes work and takes time to grow healthy intimate lives. It will only get better and better with time, work, and communication. Don't give up. (But if you are stuck, remember that you can also reach out to others for help!)

Finances

It shouldn't be surprising that when we talk about sex or money these are not usually what is really causing a problem in our marriage... rather it is our heart's preference about these things that creates the conflict. One helpful passage that gets the core of our desires regarding money is found in 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

READ: 1 Timothy 6:6-10 – “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

There are three concepts we are going to look at in regards to money: Contentment, Stewardship & Prayer.

In dealing with money we must first address contentment and look at what our contentment is rooted in. In another passage Paul talks about whether he has plenty or is suffering lack, he has learned to be content. (Phil 4:11) We often fall into the “just a little bit more” trap. In other words, we deceive ourselves into thinking that if we could just have a little bit more we’d no longer feel discontent. This is a dangerous and deceptive trap. And it is a lie, straight from the father of lies.

In the book of Hebrews our contentment is tied to our ability to cling to the promise of God to always be with us. (Heb 13:5) In other words, when we feel a sense of financial insecurity it’s possible to conflate our feelings with a sense of abandonment by God and thus like the proverbial storm tossed boat we spend a season being blown to and fro, feeling abandoned. But in all reality all we’ve done is lost sight of His truth. The antidote of those feelings is in recalling this verse, “Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

To combat these feelings we need to anchor ourselves in His truth, as well as in His admonitions. For example, here in 1 Timothy Paul strips down our actual needs to something rather basic. “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” (vs.8) Notice there is no promise of having the latest iPhone or technological gadget. There’s no promise of owning a home or having nice furniture. There’s no promise of having a full fridge and full pantry. All these things may be nice, and may give us a sense of security and temporary pleasure, but none of them are necessary to the contentment that God offers us.

One of the greatest tools that we have to combat discontentment is found in the biblical concept of **Stewardship**. In saying stewardship we are rightly confessing

the truth that all that we “own” does not really belong to us, but rather is all belonging to God, we are merely stewards of those things. As a steward then, we can either be faithful to handle what God gives us with wisdom and discernment or we can handle it with selfishness and be driven by our insecurities.

One of the classes that we offer every few years is called “Financial Peace University” where we do a deeper dive on how to be better stewards of what God has entrusted to us. But for today we’ll just touch on a few of these practical tools that go a long way in helping us discern a healthy mindset towards stewarding God’s resources.

One of the chief tools that you have is **GOOD COMMUNICATION**. If you do not communicate well about the state of your finances, expectations, goals, dreams, etc. you will not be able to make progress together as a couple.

Once that communication line is open and working well, we strongly advise you to set a joint budget. There is wisdom in having one joint checking account which allows you both to see all that is in there as yours together regardless of how much one person adds to the account vs. the other.

If you are currently dating or engage (or early in marriage) you probably need to have some conversations about your backgrounds. Or maybe you’ve been married awhile and see the need to change the way you’ve been doing things. Often there will be one person who leans more on the saving side, and another who is more free with their money. Both of these “traits” are helpful to have and both have drawbacks. But the key is to discuss spending habits, patterns of savings, how you do accounting, etc. to establish the best way forward as co-stewards of God’s resources.

It is helpful to set goals together for your finances. It might be to pay off debt, or to get an emergency fund set up. Or it may be to save up for a down payment for a home or to buy a vehicle. Regardless of the goals, they should be well defined, well discussed, and jointly agreed on.

These goals are also something that you should seek the Lord about. **Pray** for the Lord to both shape your goals as well as to help you discern their level of priority. You must first submit yourself to Him before joining together to make your plans. When your plans are the fruit of God’s leading and you’ve done well in communicating expectations with each other you’ll then be able to share in the joy of seeing those visions, hopes and dreams come to pass over the course of your marriage.

Q & A with Guest Speakers

Tell us a little about yourselves?

How long have you been married?

How many Children and their ages?

What’s something unique about you that you can share with us?

From: Intimacy

- Which of the four principles (Giving, mutuality, frequency, resiliency) has been the most challenging in your marriage? How did you grow through that challenge?
- What have you learned over the years about intimacy in your marriage?
- What tools have you found to keep your marriage pure from the pervading influences of the culture and world around you? (i.e. battling against lust, or false cultural expectations)
- Are there any words of wisdom for our married couples today in how they can invest in this area of their marriage? (Specifically for those couples who may be in a difficult season, such as having younger kids.)
- What advice do you have for our dating and engaged couples? What encouragement would you give our singles?

From: Finances

- What rhythms have you found over the years to help you communicate and talk about finances?
- Do you have a saver and spender in your marriage? If so, how have you learned to navigate the challenges of that?
 - o How have you experienced the gift of those differences working together?
- Any stories that you have regarding “finding contentment in the Lord”?
- Any wisdom on navigating the topic of finances in marriage? (Any communication tips?)

On Your Own:

Discussing Intimacy:

Singles:

- Discuss with a friend ways to remain pure. Pray for one another.
- Discuss how you can grow in your emotional and spiritual intimacy with the Lord. Discuss how you can grow in your contentment in the Lord.

Dating and Engaged:

- Discuss ways to set boundaries for yourselves to remain pure. Consider talking with an older, mature, married couple for advice, tips and prayer.
- Discuss how you can grow in your emotional and spiritual intimacy with the Lord. Discuss how you can grow in your contentment in the Lord.

Married:

- Talk about ways that you feel connected to one another outside of the physical.
- Set aside a time to talk about your physical intimacy. (Use the resource the Miller's gave for questions you can ask.)
- Discuss how you can grow in your emotional and spiritual intimacy with the Lord. Discuss how you can grow in your contentment in the Lord.

Discussing Finances:

- Talk about a budget if you have not already established one
- Talk about financial goals - getting rid of debt, saving for the future
- Discuss if one of you is more of a saver or a spender, how can you work through the natural differences and utilize each other's strengths?
- If you are dating/engage, consider if either one of you is bringing debt into the marriage?
- Discuss your expectations for paying debt off?
- Have you discussed your expectations for starting a family and how job and finances will affect those expectations?
- Talk about ways you can invest in one another.
- Pray for one another in these areas.

Resources

[Passionate Pleasant and Pure](#) by Pastor Jeff Schlenz

[Sexual Intimacy and the Rights over a Spouse's Body in Marriage](#) by John Piper

[Intimate Issues](#) by Linda Dillow & Lorraine Pintus

[Financial Peace University](#) by Dave Ramsey