



# **THE VERTICAL MARRIAGE**

“The Sexual Relationship”

To say that we live in a sex-crazed culture is a massive understatement. You can hardly turn on the TV without some sort of sexual message being sent either in the programming or the advertising. Today's pop-music is filled with sexual imagery if not brash and unashamed lyrics about sexuality. It seems everyone believes strongly in the philosophy that says "Sex sells."

And that has effected many to the core of how they identify themselves. To the LGBT movement, nothing is as important as how you identify yourself on a sexual level. And this, in their mind, drives their agenda and attempts to force others to raise sexuality to the same level of importance.

There is little doubt...we live in a sex-crazed culture. To our world, sex is GOD.

But if you look at the church over the past several decades, how have we dealt with this topic? We have dealt with it largely with SILENCE. And when we do talk about it, it's always in the negative: "Sex before marriage is wrong...it's DIRTY!" or "Homosexuality is sin! Dirty, dirty, dirty!" So although we don't take the world's stance and treat sex as a god...we have communicated a different, but wrong view...sex is GROSS.

So is there a balanced view? **Yes**. And that balanced view is really the BIBLICAL view. The Bible puts sex in its right place. It is certainly NOT to be worshipped, but it's also not a topic that should be avoided. The Bible talks about sex and it talks about it in positive, beautiful ways.

*What has been your experience in church? Have you ever been taught a biblical view of sex?*

*Do you tend to think about sex as a dirty thing?*

*Do you tend to think about sex too much?*

A good summary statement for the biblical view is sex is:

**Sex is a gift to be opened only in confines of a heterosexual marriage.**

Though we will spend a lot of time unpacking Scripture to help you understand this better, here are a few verses to consider.

READ Heb. 13:4

*What does this verse teach about sex?*

READ Rom. 1:26-27

*What are some words that God uses to describe woman with woman and man with man (homosexual) relationships?*

*How would you summarize God's view of homosexuality?*

# **I. PRINCIPLES driving the sexual relationship in marriage.**

One of the most extensive passages on the sexual relationship of a husband and wife is found in 1 Corinthians 7. There are several principles we can gather from this text. But first, let's get an overview.

READ 1 Cor. 7:1-7

*What are the main points of this text?*

*What implications should that have on your sexual relationship in marriage?*

Let's dive in deeper and see some principles we can apply.

## **A. Singleness is an OK option.**

READ 1 Cor. 7:1

Apparently, the church in Corinth had written a letter to Paul asking him some questions and now Paul is going to answer them. We don't know the questions, but one of them must have been about sexual relationships. And Paul's answer in verse 1 can be confusing. Is Paul saying that remaining single and abstaining from sexual relations is good...and by implication that getting married and having sexual relations is bad?

READ Gen. 2:18

*What does this text say about a husband and wife?*

READ Heb. 13:4

*What word is used to describe the marriage bed?*

Considering the Bible as a whole, you cannot come to the conclusion that getting marriage and having sexual relations is bad. In fact it's called "honorable." So what IS Paul saying? Paul is making the point to say that if someone can remain sexually pure, then singleness is an OK option. Paul comes back to this in verses 6 and 7. READ vs. 6-7.

So the point is NOT "sex is bad" but "singleness is OK as well."

But the BIG CAVEOT is you have to remain SEXUALLY PURE in your singleness!

Which leads us to another important principle.

## **B. A proper sexual relationship in marriage will keep you from sexual immorality.**

READ verse 2. Paul here says that there is temptation to sexual immorality...and unless you have a special gift from God (vs. 7), you need some special help so that you will not fail in sexual purity. For that help, God has given a wife to a man and a man to a wife.

Sexual immorality is a very serious sin. In chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, Paul has some strong things to say about sexual immorality there.

READ 1 Cor. 6:18-20

*How are we to handle the temptation to sexual immorality?*

*What, according to Paul, makes this sin unique (vs. 18)?*

*What motivation does Paul use to make this point (vs. 19)?*

*What are we to do with our bodies (vs. 20)?*

*What does that then imply about sexual immorality?*

Any sex outside of heterosexual marriage is sexual immorality. And though all sin is sin, this one is unique in that it is a sin against your own body! God purchased your body with the very high price of His Son on the cross! Therefore, we should want to use our body to GLORIFY GOD!

**C. Sex should be freely given and not withheld.**

READ vs 3-5

Paul uses some strong language here! But the principle is clear. We are to freely give of ourselves to our spouse and we are NOT to hold back.

This is a TOUGH teaching for many and especially many women. Some might say – “I don’t like this topic reduced to this level...I want to talk about romance, I want to talk about problem solving, I want to talk about whatever...I refuse to think about sexual relations from the perspective of duty.”

However, at the end of the day the question isn’t “What do I want to hear?” but “What does the Bible say?” And it’s explicitly clear in this passage. Sex is NOT to be withheld.

*What are some reasons why one might withhold sex from his/her spouse?*

*What does the cross of Jesus Christ model for us in terms of self-focus?*

The reality is that men are more sexual creatures than women. And since we are living in such a sex-crazed society, men are faced with temptations multiple times a day. **His wife is the ONLY RIGHTEOUS outlet for his sexual desire. And this relationship needs to be healthy.**

*What are your thoughts on this?*

**D. If there is a season of abstinence, it should be mutually agreed upon, for limited time and for a good reason.**

Again, this principle simply comes straight from God's Word. READ vs. 5. It's interesting that Paul allows for a time of abstinence...but only under very specific guidelines. Mutually agreed upon, for a limited time...and for a good reason.

In this case, the reason was prayer. But even then, he adds, "but then come together again."

*What are some other legitimate reasons for abstinence?*

*How might a couple work through this issue?*

In addition to the principles from 1 Corinthians 7, there are a couple of other verses to consider.

READ 1 Pet. 3:7

*How is a husband to DWELL WITH his wife?*

*How might that impact the sexual relationship?*

*How is a husband to honor his wife?*

*How might that impact the sexual relationship?*

READ Eph. 5:25

*What does this text say about how a husband should treat his wife?*

*How might that impact the sexual relationship?*

Husbands are to be loving and understanding of their wives. Therefore, sex should be never be demanded and certainly NEVER forced. A husband should not ask his wife to perform any sexual practices she is uncomfortable with as that would not be treating her as the weaker vessel. He should be gentle, compassionate, understanding and, above all, loving.

READ Eph. 5:32

*How is a wife to treat her husband?*

*How might that impact the sexual relationship?*

Wives should be respectful and understanding of their husbands. And since the clear biblical command is to never withhold sex, a wife should be careful about refusing her husband in this manner.

**AN IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Due to past sexual sins...either that you have done or that others have done to you...this area may be very, very difficult for some. You may need to undergo special counseling to help you work through those areas. We are here to love and help you if the need arises.

## **II. PRACTICES guiding the sexual relationship in marriage.**

Based on those principles, here are some practices that should be in place.

### **A. Have conversations about sex.**

This may be uncomfortable for some, but it's an important practice. You need to discuss:

*-frequency-* How often should we have sex. (HINT: Somewhere between the extremes of twice a day and one a month ☺).

*-methods-* There are lots of ways to enjoy this relationship...and lots of options. Nothing in the marriage bed involving a husband and wife (alone) that is biblically off limits. But a husband or wife should not be asked to do something they are uncomfortable with. And waiting until the heat of the moment is a bad idea! So have a discussion before-hand about desires, likes, and dislikes. Create clear boundaries.

Pray about it together! Again, this may feel awkward. But remember...God blesses sex in marriage! This is HIS design! Ask His help if you need to.

### **B . Never withhold sex as a punishment.**

We've already worked through the sin of withholding sex, but this is a temptation that many face. You are angry about something your spouse did and, as a result, you decide, "Well, he ain't getting what he wants tonight!" This distorts the act! Sex was never intended to be a weapon. It's a gift. Be careful of this temptation.

### **C. Don't see sex as 50%/50%, but as 100%/100%**

The reality is, when sex is 100/100, it is a wonderful and beautiful thing. When a husband's main focus is to love this wife and please her sexually, and the wife's goal is the same for her husband, this becomes a wonderful, tender, and pleasurable part of married life.