

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MBC:

1. The Farewell Banquet for the Elliffs is This Sunday, August 17th, from 5-8pm.
2. To prepare for the preaching of the word on this coming Lord's Day, we would encourage you to meditate on the passage ahead of time. The worship service's sermon will be from 1 Corinthians 7:8-16.

WHAT WE BELIEVE: We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer. 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4; Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16; 1 John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 4:30.

WISDOM: ““This word which God speaks, ‘Be fruitful and multiply,’ is not a command. It is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore. Rather, it is just as necessary as the fact that I am a man, and more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking...Therefore, just as God does not command anyone to be a man or a woman but creates them the way they have to be, so he does not command them to multiply but creates them so that they have to multiply. And wherever men try to resist this, it remains irresistible nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins.” – Martin Luther

WORD: *“The Distinctives of Christian Marriage”*, 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.

Suggested questions:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. Was there anything that particularly challenged, impacted, or confused you from this Sunday's message?
2. What fruit of the Spirit is displayed when a husband and wife prioritize regular relations?
3. Why do the command and principles in these verses not lead to abuse? How do they support a healthy marriage?

DIGGING DEEPER: A Few Practical Pointers on Sexual Intimacy

<https://www.challies.com/articles/a-few-practical-pointers-on-sexual-intimacy/>

A Few Practical Pointers on Sexual Intimacy

Tim Challies

A little while ago I offered a few practical pointers on marriage and these were drawn from a day I spent leading an event for young married couples. I had been asked to be the voice of experience that, after teaching Scripture truths, would offer some practical pointers. That first batch of tips focused on the relationship between a husband and wife, but I was also asked to offer some tips on intimacy. So, thinking about those early years of marriage, here are the tips I thought might prove helpful in the early years and the many years to follow.

Learn to talk about your sexual relationship. While the sexual relationship is physical, it is far more than physical. A successful sexual relationship depends upon communication. And yet sex is one of the most difficult things to talk about—at least to talk about productively. A husband and wife need to learn to communicate, to speak often and well, about intimacy. You need to learn to communicate on the level of what you enjoy and what you don't enjoy. You need to be able to talk about what has gone well and what has gone wrong. You need to be able to talk about why one person was feeling great desire and the other really just wanted to be left alone. If you find this too difficult—if it feels too shameful or if your conversations quickly break down—you may want to talk about it in the presence of a counselor or an older, more experienced couple (in appropriate ways, of course). This can be awkward, but feeling awkward is far better than letting an issue fester. Maybe those outsiders will see something or observe something that would be helpful. Maybe they will be able to offer some advice that will lead to a breakthrough. However you go about it, learn to communicate, to speak candidly, honestly, and lovingly, about the intimacy you share.

Learn to dance. Dance is a metaphor a friend uses that is meant to help couples understand that your life circumstances are constantly changing, and you need to change with them. Your sexual relationship will need to change accordingly. Imagine you are attending an old-fashioned dance in a small-town dance hall. The band takes its place on stage and strikes up the music, a simple waltz. You don't know how to waltz, but you're eager to learn. You find your partner and together you begin. You learn the positioning for your feet, you take hesitant first steps. For a while you stumble, you trip over each other's feet, you make silly mistakes. But after a few minutes you realize that you are beginning to get it. A few minutes later and you're moving, you and your partner gliding around the floor as one. This is fun! But no sooner have you figured it out then the music fades and stops. There is a moment of silence before the band leader strikes up a new number, this time a polka. And you're thinking "Wait!" "I only just figured out the waltz! It was just beginning to go well!" But the band is already well into their next number. You and your partner turn to one another, shrug and smile, and begin to learn this new dance. You discover the tempo. You learn where and how to position your feet, you learn to move them in unison, and after a while you are once again gliding across the floor. It becomes easy, it becomes smooth and fun. You're dancing! And then the music changes again. Just like that, there are times you will find sex easy and fun, but then some external factor will change, and instead of being discouraged and lamenting what was, it will be time to learn the "new dance."

Surrender the ownership of your body. You don't own your body. The Bible makes it clear that as Creator, God owns the body of every human being. This means you are responsible before God to learn how a body is to be used, and then to only ever use it in those ways. The Bible makes it clear that if you are a Christian, God owns your body a second time—it has been saved by the work of Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Your body has been aside as a kind of living sacrifice to be used for God's purposes. And after these divine claims, comes the claims of your spouse. Here's how Paul says it: "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" (1 Corinthians 7:4). Therefore, "the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband" (7:3). In marriage, you have willingly given your body to your spouse, acknowledging that you do so on their terms, not your own. At some point you need to think seriously about what it means to be owned twice by God and once by your spouse before you even get to your own rights of ownership. You need to talk this over with your spouse, then live it out in your marriage. Consider this as one application: Whatever else it means, it means that you have no right to do anything sexual, either by yourself or with someone else, that is not sanctioned by your spouse. Why? Because it's his or her body, not your own. You have no right to a secret sex life, whether that involves another person or whether that involves just you.

Acknowledge God's design in unequal sexual desire. It's quite rare for a husband and wife to have equal levels of sexual desire (as most couples learn around day two of their honeymoon). In the majority of marriages it's the husband whose desire is greater, though that's certainly not a universal law. In a great many marriages, this unequal desire is a prominent cause, or even the most prominent cause, of squabbles. We tend to see this as a kind of bug in our programming, a problem that came around entirely through sin. But what if God actually designed it this way? What if in even a perfect world a husband and wife would have different levels of sexual desire? If that's the case, what might be God's intention in creating us like this? It should become clear that it gives us an ideal setting to learn to grow in love for one another. It teaches us how to be patient, to learn how to respond positively when another person's desires contradict our own, to learn how to put the interests of another person ahead of our own. That unequal desire calls both spouses to move toward the other—for one to request less from the other than he or she would otherwise want, and for one to give more to the other than he or she would otherwise want. That sounds like love!

Acknowledge sexuality as something that is both transcendent and earthy. If there is a problem with sexuality outside the Christian world, it's that sex is reduced to nothing but desire—it's all about following your urges wherever they lead you. But I believe Christians can fall into the opposite extreme of making sexuality something that's so spiritual and so transcendent that the earthy or bodily component becomes almost irrelevant or, worse, it becomes borderline sinful. We may want someone to desire us with their minds, but get hurt when they desire us with their bodies. Yet elsewhere in life we take bodily clues as part of God's good design, and we follow our desires to satisfaction. While granting that sex is not a need like food and sleep, it's still a bodily desire or appetite—some combination of the physical, emotional, and spiritual. And it seems clear that marriage is designed in such a way that it satisfies that desire. The Apostle Paul is known to say decidedly unromantic things like, "Better to marry than to burn with passion," and "the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband." I think it benefits couples to talk about

sexuality as something that involves bodily desires and appetites, and to consider how they are each the God-given means for satisfying the other in these ways. You'll have to reach your own conclusions about what that means and how you work it out in your own marriage. But do at least discuss it.

Don't compare or try to beat statistics. Whether you want to or not, whether you're interested or not, at some point you will hear statistics about what constitutes "normal" sexual intimacy within marriage. You will read a story or skim a headline that says, "The average married couple has sex X times per week" or "X times per month." In all likelihood you'll also meet someone who brags about happily having sex pretty much every night and someone else who brags about happily having sex once a month or once a year. And immediately you will be tempted to compare, to hold your own marriage up against a false standard. You'll feel miserable that you're having it too little or being expected to have it too much, or you'll feel proud that you're having it more than the other person or dismayed that you're having it less. It's a no-win. The only standard that matters is the one agreed upon between a husband and wife. The Bible demands only some kind of undefined regularity (see 1 Corinthians 7:5) as well as the fulfillment of those conjugal rights (verses 3-4). But what that looks like can vary dramatically from couple-to-couple depending on a host of factors like age, pregnancy, children, health, and simply levels of desire.

So there are a few tips that I hope will serve you well in the early years and the years beyond...