

MAN AND WOMAN IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE PT.7 10-21-12

MEN, WOMEN AND SEX PT.1

GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

(Hebrews 13) I begin today to take a new direction in our series on Man and woman in Biblical Perspective, for today we begin to look at men, women and sex. This is a hard subject to talk about, especially in a mixed group of marrieds and singles, young people and old people, men and women, boys and girls. We are uneasy, self-conscious; we feel exposed to even discuss it; and frankly I have to fight with embarrassment to teach on these things. Jim Keller is a speaker for the Family Life conferences and a dad with two kids. He tells of going on a trip with his nine year old son on which they listened together to James Dobson's six messages on sex, both of them looking straight ahead the whole time. At end of the series Jim's son says, "that's the most disgusting I've ever heard of. At least you & mom only had to do it twice." I remember when my mother first talked with me about the birds and the bees and my initial reaction was, "this is really weird." And after thinking about it for a week forty-five years later I have those same thoughts. Our sexuality is a strange thing but it is a very real thing and a very powerful thing. Maybe that is what puzzles us about it. How can something so odd have such an overpowering influence on me? But it is powerful. Sexual desire is one of the greatest forces on our planet. Some people make too much of it to be sure. Freud certainly did. Our society as a whole certainly does. But some people also make too little of it and underrate its importance for good or ill. Some people make too much of romantic love, some people make too little of romantic love, but almost everyone makes a mess of romantic love. That's right isn't it? Bill Hybels tells the story of one anniversary night in which he took his wife, Lynn, to the honeymoon suite of a luxury hotel. He bought her flowers, took her out to dinner, had a special treat brought up to the room – the works. Of course, Bill was looking forward to his romantic agenda for the evening. When they finally turned off the lights, Lynn noticed a crack in the curtains that was letting in some light. She got up in the dark, crossed the rooms, closed the curtain, and returned across a now darker room. But just as she got to the bed, she stumbled into the bedpost and gashed her forehead. They spent the rest of their night in the ER getting stitches. That lady has a scar on her head to remind her of how she blew it at romance. Many of you have a scar on your soul. I remember when I was involved in youth ministry thinking to myself that if we could just get all these kids neutered youth ministry would be a breeze; we'd be done with 90% of our problems. The group, by the way, voted against the idea. But you know what I've learned? The

pastoral ministry with adults is not all that different. We've made a mess of romance and sexuality. And we have made a mess of it partly because of ignorance. I know when I was growing up I was taught very little about sex by my family. I was taught nothing but a few don'ts by my church and I was told nothing about it in my school. That is an intolerable situation and a bunch of people are out to do something about that. Some want to see that sex education is taught in the public schools. The problem with that is that the public schools have no way of explaining to kids the purpose of sex, or the guidelines for sexual behavior. As Christians we can't look to the schools to educate on this subject; we must do it ourselves. Sex-education is best done in the home but the church must also contribute. When it comes to this subject some will read Reader's Digest to find out what's normal. Others will read the Guinness Book of Records to find out what's possible. We read the Bible to find out what's right and good. And the Bible does tell us. God doesn't seem at all embarrassed to speak on this subject. And so, in spite of my own insecurities I will move ahead to offer some Biblical insight on human sexuality and sexual behavior.

Hebrews 13:4 *Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.* The first of four points for today is this: the purity of sex ®. The writer of Hebrews says the marriage bed is not to be defiled. The implication is that it is pure and should stay that way. What I want you to see is that God invented and created our sexuality. It is His idea and as such is intrinsically pure. There is nothing wrong with sex in and of itself. But, there is very much wrong with people and their sexual practices. Many of you are living broken lives because of what has happened to you sexually. A young lady Beth and I dearly love informed us this week that she had been sexually assaulted a couple of years ago and is still very wounded. Maybe it doesn't seem so pure, so wonderful to you. I get that. We live in a radically fallen world in which those things God made for our good we have twisted into a rope by which we hang ourselves and injure others and sex is certainly one of those things that has been perverted in our day and age? We have perverted eating and drinking. We have perverted the sacraments of the church; but just because these good things are perverted by some does not mean that we should abandon them. Sex has been distorted about as long as men and women have been around, but God still speaks of the act of marriage with approval and commendation. Proverbs 5:15-20 directs a man to find enjoyment in his wife, to be exhilarated with her love. I Corinthians 7 exhorts married couples in this way I Corinthians 7:3-5 *The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own*

body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵*Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* Then there is the entire book of Song of Solomon. Have you read that? What is it about? It is a book celebrating the romantic and physical love of a man and a woman. Would God put those things in the Bible if sex was a dirty thing? Absolutely not. God sees sex as a good thing, a pure thing. But some of us have this problem of thinking of all sexual behavior as revolting. The root cause of that way of thinking may vary. Some understandably struggle because of a background of being abused or being an abuser. Sin can ruin anything. As a result, some find themselves feeling guilty about what they do in the marriage bed and, if you are in that camp, may I assist you in developing the mind of God on this issue? Granted, its not always easy for a Christian to get married and immediately go from having a “NO, NO, NO” attitude about sex to having a “Yes, yes, not now, yes” attitude about it. But as we grow in our understanding of Scripture we will also grow in our appreciation of and our ability to enjoy this gift of God which is so often perverted, but can be redeemed. Tim LaHaye writes in his book, “The Act of Marriage” that a survey done by Redbook magazine and led by Robert Levin the co-author with Masters and Johnson of “The Pleasure Bond” reveals that sexual satisfaction is related significantly to religious belief. The study showed with notable consistency that the greater the intensity of a woman’s religious convictions the likelier she is to be highly satisfied with the sexual pleasures of marriage. Does that surprise you? Did you think that Christians were prudish and Victorian about sex? Well, think again and think Biblically. Yes, the Bible speaks much about the perversions of sex; but the Scriptures also confirm its inherent purity.

John Masefield says: *Love is a flame to burn out human wills. Love is a flame to set the will on fire. Love is a flame to cheat men into mire. One of the three, we make love what we choose.* Poets have often referred to romantic love as a fire and that’s a good metaphor because fire is also a pure and powerful thing that can do great good, but also can do incredible damage. The secret of using a fire rightly is to keep it in its place, right? The fire is wonderful when it is kept on the candle or in the oven or in the fireplace. And sexual love also has its right and proper place. Keep it there and you will be happy. Let it out and you will get burned. What is the God-appointed place to let sexual passions burn? It is a place called marriage. Marriage! In a nutshell God’s word limits sexual union to the relationship of one man and one woman in marriage ®. And please don’t think to yourself,

“Well, that’s just your interpretation of the Bible Mister.” The Scriptures are abundantly and consistently plain about this point. But “ahh” some would say, “why should a piece of paper make such a big difference?” Well, of course it isn’t the written marriage license that makes the difference. What makes a big difference is the mutual commitment, called a covenant, that is involved in a marriage.

The restriction of sex to the covenantal union is commanded by God for at least three reasons. I don’t have to see God’s reasons to keep God’s word but on this point His reasons are pretty obvious. First of all there is the protection of hearts. Where there is physical intimacy between a man and a woman there is a bonding of hearts that is very, very powerful. What happens is sort of like what you get when you put super glue on two sheets of paper and press them together. They become like one. They are bonded; and what happens when you try to pull them apart? You can’t do it can you? I heard Kay Arthur say that you can’t make two out of one, all you get is pieces. And that is what happens time and again in a sexually promiscuous society, broken hearts and broken lives, torn in pieces because there was sex where there was no commitment. Friends, that is not the way of freedom; that is the way of death.

Secondly, God restricts sexual union to marriage in order to protect bodies. Whenever a society becomes sexually sick it also becomes physically sick and you know how this applies to our society. You also know how it applies to other places, like Africa, where AIDS is epidemic. I Corinthians 6 says the immoral person sins against his own body, so that what he sows he will reap in pervasive and devastating consequences.

The third reason God restricts sexual union to marriage is for the protection of the children who are produced by that union. God’s design for families is that children be raised with a Mother and a Father. You remove either of those and the child is going to suffer. And what we are seeing in western society today is the fruit of sexual immorality being lived out in our children. For one thing 20 million a year never see the light of day because they are snuffed out before birth and most of those are conceived outside of marriage. And on top of that, millions more are deprived financially, socially and emotionally because they are raised by only one parent. There was a time in our country when a man who wanted to be intimate with a good woman had to prove himself responsible, had to prove himself productive, and had to commit himself to the woman for life. That day is no more and sociologist George Gilder has said that the greatest sociological disaster of our time is that women are failing to require their men to be responsible and committed. The

problem is just as much the man's but the solution is the same. We have to put the fire back in the fireplace. Sex belongs in marriage and only in marriage. And we must understand that marriage is permanent.

Now what does that say to single people? Pretty obvious isn't it? If you want to be fulfilled sexually in a relationship with a man or woman, marriage is the way to go. If marriage doesn't happen for you, or until it does, God calls you to remain celibate. That doesn't mean that you are sexless. No, no. You have the same longings and drives as others but, as a Christian, you must understand that Jesus is enough. I don't say that flippantly, as if knowing Jesus will make your urges go away. But I am saying that you can be content and joyful as a single person serving Christ if you fill your life with the beauty of your Lord and focus on His sufficiency rather than your lack. And whether you are single or married, young or old, when you turn from seeking satisfaction in Jesus to seeking it anywhere else, you are in for trouble. And young people listen to me, if the fire gets out of its proper place it will burn you badly; and the proper place for sexual fire is marriage.

So now, having seen the purity of sexual intimacy and the place of sexual intimacy let's move to look at the purposes of sexual intimacy. And I do say purposes because there are at least three that I want to mention and I mention them in no particular order. The first purpose is that of pleasure. Sexual intimacy is enjoyable on a physical and emotional level and it is given to us by God to enjoy according to His commands. Proverbs 5:15-19 *Drink water from your own cistern. And fresh water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your springs be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷Let them be yours alone. And not for strangers with you. ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.* The word for exhilarated there is the word *intoxicated*. God has given us, in this life, some harmless highs and sexual intimacy with husband or wife is one of those. I think it's important to remember what C.S. Lewis often said and that is that pleasure was God's invention, not the devil's.

The second purpose of sexual intimacy is to establish and deepen the oneness of the marital relationship. God says a man is to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife so that the two become one flesh. And that oneness is both sealed and signified by sexual union. Oneness of soul between husband and wife will move them together physically and oneness physically will move them together spiritually as well. Because that is true the quality of your sexual relationship is usually an accurate indicator of the health of the relationship in general.® If you and your spouse

are going to have a quality sexual relationship that requires an open, sensitive communication that will serve you well in every dimension of life.

The third purpose of sexual intimacy is to produce offspring. Now, the tendency in our day is to downplay this purpose. The Roman Catholic church for centuries has taught that this was the only legitimate purpose for sex, which it certainly is not. But amazingly you can read many books and articles about sex written by evangelical people that completely ignore the fact that babies are produced by sexual union. And this is just a reflection of our society where you can grow up virtually oblivious to the fact that sex and children are connected. Our movie heroes and TV stars are having sex all the time and rarely do they get pregnant. You don't find any pictures of pregnant women in Playboy. What's the connection? Humorist Dave Barry wrote a book entitled, "Babies and Other Hazards of Sex." But it's the so-called *other hazards* that get most of the press today. We are really concerned now that teenagers use protection because we don't want them getting diseases, never mind they might produce a human being who may end up another victim of the abortion industry. People, come on, nothing is more significant about sexual union than that it often results in kids. That's an incredible thing! Easily the most important thing sex ever did for me was to bring me into existence and then give me four children. But in our sin-sick world we have trivialized the life-giving process and made a game out of God's incredible mystery. Sexual intimacy is serious and sacred. To make a game of it like most people in our society do is to treat life as something very, very cheap. And if you think you can ever guarantee that your little sexual fling won't result in children - think again. I counsel couples that want to be married that it may be okay for them to try to delay giving birth, but if they aren't ready to make the sacrifices demanded by children then they have no business getting married. Having babies is one of the purposes of sexual intimacy.

Now that we have looked at the purity of sexual intimacy, the place of sexual intimacy, and the purposes of sexual intimacy we are ready to get into the practice of sexual intimacy. Here we deal in the how-tos and I'm not going to offer a biology lesson. You'll have to get that elsewhere but I will speak where the Bible speaks, and, in so doing, I offer three ways to make your marital love-life what God intends for it to be. First of all you and your spouse should try to come together with regularity. This is the point of I Corinthians 7:**1-5** *Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.* ² *But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.* ³ *The husband must fulfill his duty*

to his wife, 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 also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.* ⁵ *Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* God is exhorting us here to some consistency and regularity partly because it will keep us from looking elsewhere for sexual fulfillment. I mean, let's face it, when the wood is dry it is more likely to catch fire, and a man or woman who is not enjoying sexual intimacy at home is more likely to be tempted to find it elsewhere. But what I find as I talk with marrieds is that far too many of us are content to go without romance in the marriage. Some of you men can't remember the last time you held your bride in a passionate embrace and felt your heart beat faster at the sight of your bride. But one thing I've learned in my thirty-three years of marriage is that my wife needs that, and so do I. Sure, there are times, due to sickness, due to relational discord or what have you, that sexual union is not advisable but maybe you have grown too content with prolonged lapses due to busy-ness or distance. Think about what you are missing, and get about obeying I Corinthians 7. Enjoy your marital love with regularity.

Secondly, you are to come together with gusto. If the word *gusto* always makes you think of beer then substitute the word *exuberance*. Here I appeal again to Proverbs 5 and to the Song of Solomon. Listen to the language of Proverbs 5:**18-19** *Rejoice in the wife of your youth.* ¹⁹ *As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.* There is excitement here. This is not a bland satisfying of certain drives. This is also not a calculated act of procreation. The writer speaks of something wonderful and delicious. This doesn't mean your marriage has to provide everything your imagination can render but it does mean that there ought to be some real delight in your husband or wife and when that is not there you have some work to do, which hopefully you can do together and possibly in the context of some godly counsel.

Thirdly, come together for sexual intimacy with a sensitive love: --with regularity, with gusto, with a sensitive love. What I mean to say here is that the command to love others and put them first does not go on hold when you are in the bedroom. Indeed, love is the central rule. And the great promise is that you give generously and it will be given back to you. Sometimes love demands that you live with unmet desires; it demands patience in the relationship. Sometimes love demands that you give of yourself even when you are tired, understanding what it means that your body is not

your own. Always, love demands that you study how to please one another. I Corinthians 7:33 says the married man is concerned about how he may please his wife, not just how he can get his needs met, but how he can please and love and serve his wife. And that means you need to talk about your sexual relationship. That may be uncomfortable, I know. We are so insecure about our sexuality, but love wants to understand better and know better in order to serve better. Are you serving your spouse in this dimension of the marriage? One application of this study today may be that you determine to read a book alone or together that will help you understand this dimension of your marriage. I have listed several in the bulletin that you may want to check out. One I haven't read but I like the title for is Kevin Leman's book "Sex Begins In the Kitchen." That's an intriguing concept but do you know what the point of the title is? That how you relate to one another in the kitchen and the living room and the car will affect how you relate in the bedroom. The husband and wife who maintain a sensitive, sympathetic love for each other will do well together in any room of the house.

So, we end where we began in Hebrews 13:4 which says *fornicators and adulterers God will judge*. But remember the first part of that verse, 4a *Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled.*