



FALSE MESSAGES

A GUIDE FOR THE GODLY BRIDE

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INTRODUCTION

In late 2009, my husband, Tim, wrote a series of articles titled *Sexual Detox*. The purpose of these articles was to make young men aware of what pornography was doing to their hearts, how it was changing their perceptions of sex and harming their ability to be faithful husbands to their wives. He hoped to show the men that they needed to “detox” from all of that junk so they could recover a pure and biblical view of sex and sexuality.

An unexpected consequence of that series was the many, many emails he received from women—emails he directed to me so I could reply to them. Many of these emails expressed hurt and remorse over sin a husband had committed against his wife. Many others simply asked questions, questions like “Why does my husband want to have sex so much more often than I do?” and “Why do I feel so guilty when I turn down my husband’s sexual advances?”

All of those emails and all the comments and questions they contained were the seed that grew into this little book, one that will direct you, as a woman, to a biblical view of sexuality. I hope it will be useful to you as you seek to be a godly bride to the husband God has given you.

WHAT HE REALLY WANTS

A couple of years ago I read a book by Sharon Jaynes called *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams*. In her research Jaynes surveyed and interviewed hundreds of men as she tried to understand the qualities men desire in a wife. You won't be surprised to hear that sexual fulfillment was at the top of the list (like we didn't see that one coming, right?). This leads her to call sex the superglue that holds a marriage together. Here are a couple of examples of what men said about their sex lives. "What is the one thing I wish my wife understood better about me and what I long for? The need for her to be more sexual. I wish she'd be more creative and enthusiastic about it. I wish sex would be more fun and more of a priority in our marriage." "The woman of my dreams would want sex as much as I do. I don't think women really have a concept of how 'wired' for sex men are. It can't make sense to them, not exactly sure why myself. It seems petty, but it's real." Her research showed what I think we already knew or at least suspected: for your husband, sexual fulfillment is not a want but a need. It's a need that arises from the very core of who he is.

In my discussions with other married women I've seen clearly that sex, for many couples, is the one thing they fight about most (It's not just us!). At least from the wife's perspective, it usually comes down to a pretty simple fact: she simply doesn't understand why sex is so important to her husband. Because she doesn't understand, she continues to see it from her perspective and dismisses sex as unimportant, an annoyance, a chore, perhaps an occasional indulgence.

She gives herself to him every now and again, hoping it will get hubby off her case for a couple of days, but she does so out of obligation or duty, not delight. Can you identify with this? I think most women can, at least at times.

But if Jaynes is right and sex truly is the superglue that holds a marriage together, we, as wives, need to get it right, don't we? We need to make sure that we are not eroding our marriages from within because we can't or won't understand sex.

What Does He Really Want?

Is your husband's sex drive something that is purely physical, his body telling him that he just needs a release and that your body is the way to get it? Or is his sex drive in some way connected to you, a need that can only be filled by the spiritual and physical intimacy of making love to you? The message always seems mixed in the female mind. Does my husband want *me* or does he just want my body? We hear of men who, even though they're married, look at porn and masturbate and we think, "That solves it! It's all about the release." And somehow we really do believe it is that simple. From what I've learned as I've talked to other women, from what I've learned as I've responded to emails my husband has received from people who read his series, I can see that a lot of women struggle with this. Just what does my husband *really* want?

Today's wife has good reason to believe that sex is no deeper than the physical and that her husband wants and needs her only to meet his urgent needs.

All around us society screams this message—that sex within marriage, sex designed as mutual pleasure from husband to wife and wife to husband—is the relic of another age. Instead it tells us that sex is actually nothing too special. It is just the release of pent-up hormones, an enjoyable act that can be shared with just about anyone with little ill effect. Many wives bring to marriage these messages from society, from movies and books, from parents, from previous relationships. The worst part is that your own husband may confirm the bad messages by taking what he can get, settling for your body in those times that you refuse to give him all of you. He rolls over and goes to sleep unfulfilled, convinced that he cannot arouse you or please you. Meanwhile, you roll over feeling used, confirmed in your suspicion that he is a pervert who is just after your body. The vicious circle commences and grows with both husband and wife contributing to it.

It turns out that women need sexual detox, too. You may have never looked at pornography and you may not have a long and extensive sexual history. But still, you have absorbed messages that are causing you to withdraw your heart from your husband. You believe lies and allow these lies to shape your marriage. Thankfully truth trumps error like spades trumps diamonds. So let's bring some truth to the error.

First off, a good sex life takes work; most people are surprised to learn that it takes skill and practice. Sex is something that seems like it should come very naturally, but often it does not. It can take a long time for the act to be mutually pleasurable for both parties. You first have to learn about one another and you have to learn about yourself. If a woman comes into marriage a virgin, she may have many misconceptions about the wedding night. She goes into that

evening expecting fireworks and may come out wondering what on earth is wrong with her. This can continue for weeks, months, years even. During this time, women can begin to believe that all the husband wants is her body. He is being fulfilled and may seem satisfied with the way things are going. Bitterness and discontent grow and sex becomes a battle. Eventually most couples hit their stride, but it is possible that damage has already been done.

All of You

The fact is that your husband wants both the physical release and the relational intimacy he finds in your arms. He wants you, body, soul and spirit and he wants to give you his body, soul and spirit. He needs you to be willing to both give and receive. The physical desire he feels is a kind of trigger to remind him to seek this connection with you. It is a reminder and motivator to him that he needs to pursue you. You must not allow yourself to separate the physical urge from all the rest. God designed your husband to need this physical release. He provided you, the wife, as the one who can and should provide the means for that release. And he provided the act of making love so that it becomes about far more than just the physical act.

And aren't you glad for this, that God made it about so much more than just forcing you to give him some instinctual physical release? We are far more than animals here. In the act of making love you and your husband are knit together, body-to-body, soul-to-soul. The Bible calls it "becoming one"—a perfect word picture. This is why sex as a mere physical act, one divorced from the heart and mind, does not deliver what it may claim to offer. It leaves you feeling used. It leaves your husband feeling incomplete, knowing

that you have not truly given yourself to him. You can fulfill an obligation to bring about the release but he may still not experience the emotional and spiritual engagement that is so important to your marriage. For that to happen, you need to offer him more than your body. You need to offer him your body, your soul, your mind, your acceptance. This is what makes sex so intimate and makes you so vulnerable in it. You need to offer up all you are, all you've got.

This may be hard to believe, but even more than your man wants sexual fulfillment, he wants you to be sexually fulfilled. On an emotional level he wants to see how much you enjoy what only he can give you. If he fails to do so he feels inadequate. If he knows that you are not enjoying sex but are only trying to placate him, he will not be truly fulfilled. He does not want to be a consumer but a lover. That is an important distinction. *Placid participation is not enough.*

And right there, I understand that we have come to a difficult issue. How do you turn something on that seemingly doesn't want to be turned on? And what if your husband is just really bad at pressing the right buttons (and maybe really good at pressing all the wrong ones)? What if you've been nursing a baby all day and tucking kids into bed all evening and then he gives you the look—*that* look? It may be worth picking up a couple of the books listed in the Recommended Resources section at the end of this booklet. Some of them offer very good and practical advice on these issues. One thing I would add to those is this: if we as women are honest with ourselves, we'll have to admit that so often we choose not to participate. We, unlike our male counterparts, have a great deal of mental control over our sexual nature. When we are not in the mood we are not in the mood, right?

End of story. But I wonder, if we let our mental guards down, if we looked beyond ourselves and served our husbands as we know God wants us to...maybe we would find that things would work out a whole lot better.

So what does your husband want? He wants you—all of you. And his body gives him the reminder to keep pursuing you and to keep making love to you. Do not allow yourself to see his sex drive as something that is animalistic or gross or unholy. It is given to him by the God who does not make mistakes. It must be given for our good. It is a blessing to be appreciated, not a curse to be rejected.

Harry Schaumburg, in his book *Undefiled*, says this (this quote is so good—make sure you read it carefully!), “The drive to be sexual is more than simply a desire for pleasure or excitement. The sex drive is really a longing for closeness—in both sexes. Don't be fooled by false messages or even personal experience: men want closeness too. Every man that I have counseled who made his wife a sexual object, therefore giving the impression that all he wanted was sexual pleasure, has admitted—often with tears—that what he really wanted was closeness. This revelation was unbelievable to the wives who heard their husbands say that. In may seem unbelievable to you too—but it's true.”

Conclusion

Think about what you do to show your husband you love him. Maybe you are a stay-at-home mom and you show your love by making his lunch in the morning and making sure you meet him at the door with a kiss when he comes home. Maybe he is the type who loves physical affection so you make sure to rub

his shoulders or back in the evening. You know the things you do to express your love and affection.

Now understand that sex is probably the most meaningful way in which he shows you that he loves you; and it is the most powerful way in which he wants you to show how much you love him. Sex is every man's love language! If you want to be a wife that serves and builds up your husband, regular, joyful sex

will be a part of your relationship to him. So I guess we arrive at the obvious conclusion: have sex, have it often, and serve your husband freely and joyfully in this manner. You will have a stronger marriage to show for it. And, think on this: every marriage counselor is likely to agree that if the sex life is good, the marriage is good. Rarely do you see a bad marriage with a good sex life. It's almost like sex is...superglue.

1. If you were to rank all the common issues you and your husband squabble about, where would sex rank on the list? Why?
2. Do you sometimes wonder whether your husband really desires *you* or if he truly just desires your body?
3. Was sex a struggle for you and your husband in the early days of your marriage? Is it better today? If so, how did you work through the issues?
4. Do you find it difficult to give your husband more than just your body? Do you find it difficult to go beyond mere placid participation?
5. Do you sometimes believe that your husband's sex drive is something unholy or even just plain gross?
6. Harry Schaumburg says that in his counseling practice he has found that even men who sin sexually are really desiring closeness—true intimacy. Do you believe this? Do you believe that the heart of your husband's desire for sex is a desire for closeness?
7. Do you believe that sex is the superglue that binds a marriage together? What differences does this make to you as you think about your sex life?

Q&A

A THEOLOGY OF SEX

Before we continue, I think it will prove valuable for us to understand the purpose of sex—God’s purpose in sex. This chapter, which looks to the Bible to find God’s perspective on sex, is largely drawn from my husband’s book *Sexual Detox*. Because Tim covers this topic in his book, I thought there was little reason to rewrite it!

What did God create first: hunger or food? Did God make man hungry and then invent food to fill the need? Or did God first invent food and then give man an appetite which would motivate him, drive him, to pursue that good gift? Where you or I might invent a need before the ability to meet it, God sees the end before the beginning. He creates good gifts and only then does he create a need for them; he does not create a need for which there is no fulfillment. The topic of this chapter is, simply, sex, and I want to offer a brief theology of sex and of sexual desire. I want to help you see why God created sex, why he created sexual desire, and why he has given sexual desire in unequal measure.

Sex

God gives us sex because it has unique power in drawing a husband to his wife and a wife to her husband. He knows this because he is the one who invented it! He made it so that it is far more than the sum of its parts. We could describe sex in terms of body parts and hormones, but we would not be any closer to understanding it than if we were to describe a cake only in terms of its ingredients—flour and milk and eggs (or if we were to describe the Lord’s Supper making reference only to eating bread and drinking wine). Sex goes far beyond merely the physical and instead

extends to the emotional, the spiritual. It is through sexual union that two are made one, that they are bound together; there is a mystery to it that can only really be compared in impact to the union of God’s people to God as they are grafted into him.

God gave us something remarkably powerful and was wise to place strict boundaries on it. He has every right to do so because he is the one who has created sex and who has given it its function. Sex, then, is to be shared only between a husband and a wife, and cannot be extended to others either before marriage or during marriage (Matthew 5:27,28). Sex must not be stirred up or awakened until the time is right (Song of Solomon 8:4). Sex is to be practiced regularly throughout a marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Such boundaries are not intended to inhibit freedom but to *enhance* freedom. When we use the gift as God intends it, we gain great joy and freedom in it. When we abuse the gift, we ultimately suffer for such abuse.

The purpose of sex, then, is to provide a unique means through which a husband and wife can know one another, serve one another, express vulnerability before one another, give and receive. No other area in marriage offers so much to gain and so much to lose. No other area in marriage so closely grafts the couple together.

Many theologians have attempted to get at the

deepest meaning of sex. “Sex is a picture, a metaphor, to point us to the joys of heaven,” they might say. And perhaps this is so. But I don’t find that the Bible tells us this clearly. Neither am I convinced that we need to find some deeper meaning in sex in order to affirm its goodness. Sex is inherently good because it was created by a good God. We do not need to construct a complex theology around it as if it is only good in some kind of secondary sense. It is perfectly good in and of itself. Even if its ultimate meaning is no deeper than pleasure and mutual fulfillment, it is good because God is good. He could easily have decreed that sex be an integral part of every marriage and then made it inherently unpleasurable. He did not. Instead he made sex almost transcendent in its pleasure. At its best, sex really transcends most of life’s other pleasures in its uniqueness, in its joy, in its freedom and vulnerability. And in these things, sex draws a husband and wife together in a completely unique and unparalleled way.

When you understand this you must also understand why sex is meant to be enjoyed *only* between a husband and wife. You understand why God forbids pre-marital sex (fornication), why he forbids extra-marital sex (adultery) and why he even forbids selfish sex (masturbation). All these things make a mockery of the real thing. All these things abuse his good gift.

Desire

Along with sex, God created sexual desire. There are some who say that sexual desire is meant only to motivate procreation—that the desire to have sex will draw a husband and wife together with the happy and ultimate result of conception. Here C.S. Lewis applies a helpful corrective (in *Mere Christianity*). He affirms that the biological purpose of sex is procreation

(and let’s not lose sight of this important purpose to sex) but draws a helpful parallel to the appetite for food. The biological purpose of eating is to repair the body and though some people are given to overindulgence, we find that the appetite goes only a little way beyond its biological purpose. A man may eat twice as much food as his body needs for its biological purpose, but few will eat even that much. When it comes to sex, though, the appetite far exceeds its biological purpose (even in women!). If the sexual appetite *matched* its biological function either a person would only desire sex a few times in a lifetime or he would have thousands of children. Does this not teach us that God desires that we have sex for reasons beyond procreation? The only other alternative is that this appetite is a product of sin and ought to be suppressed. But no, this cannot be. The Bible is clear that legitimate sexual desire, desire within a marriage and a desire for one’s spouse, is legitimate before God.

God gives us sexual desire, a sexual appetite, because he wants us to have sex; he wants a husband to have sex with his wife and a wife to have sex with her husband. Can’t it be just that simple? And what’s more, he gives us an appetite that surpasses any kind of biological purpose because he wants the couple to have sex a lot. After all, the only admonition in Scripture regarding the frequency of married sex is to permit a brief pause with a defined end and even then only for the specific reason of dedicating time to prayer (see again 1 Corinthians 7) and still even then only if it is mutually agreed upon. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that a wife’s body belongs to her husband—that he has authority over her body—and a husband’s body belongs to his wife—she has authority over his body. The ruling principle is that husbands and wives are to have sex often and not to

refuse one another this special gift.

Sex is such an integral part of the relationship of husband to wife and wife to husband that God has given the desire to participate in it, to enjoy it. This sexual desire motivates a man to pursue a wife and to marry her so together they can enjoy sex. This desire motivates a wife to keep pursuing her husband even after they are married. Without this desire, this appetite, it would be far easier for us to avoid carrying out our God-given duty to have sex (and lots of it) and through it to experience intimacy and unity (and lots of it). So God gives the desire that is meant to be fulfilled in only that way. If we did not experience pangs of hunger we might not eat. If we stopped eating, our bodies would stop repairing themselves and we would die. If we did not experience sexual desire we might not have sex. And if we stopped having sex, our marriages would suffer and die. Sexual desire, then, is a gift of God given not to torment but to motivate obedience. When a woman feels sexual sexual desire it is a nudge toward pursuing her husband; when a man feels that sexual desire, it is to motivate him to pursue his wife.

Unequal Desire

Yet sexual desire, the appetite for sex, is not given in equal measure. It is typically given in greater part to men. Why is this? The answer, I'm convinced, goes right to the heart of the husband-wife relationship. God commands that men, husbands, be leaders. Men are to take the leading role in marriage while women are to follow. God intends that men take leadership even in sex and, therefore, he gives to men a greater desire for it. This way men can lead their wives, taking the initiative, taking care to love their wives in such a way that they wish to have sex with their husbands.

Generally speaking, a man finds intimacy and acceptance through sex while a woman needs to first experience intimacy and acceptance before she can be prepared to enjoy sex. And so God gives the man a sexual appetite so he can in turn provide for his wife's needs *before* she provides for his. His sexual appetite cannot be separated from his leadership. If the wife was to lead in this regard, if she was to always be the sexual instigator, the husband would be far less likely to pursue his wife and seek to meet her unique needs. Do you see the beautiful dance here? The husband has a desire that only his wife can meet, a desire for his wife; therefore, he takes the lead in seeking to fulfill that desire. He does this by meeting the desires of his wife that will, in turn, cause her to see and appreciate and eventually fulfill his desires. And then, in that act of consummation, God grants a grace that surpasses the mere union of flesh and blood.

As the husband leads, the wife is called by God to submit to her husband's leadership even in the marriage bed. As in other areas of life, she is called to defy leadership only if her husband demands of her something that would violate her conscience or God's law. We can see this as a responsibility of the wife but we must also see it as a particular responsibility of the husband. He is to lead in such a way that his wife will have no reason to refuse him. He must seek to be sensitive to her needs, to her desires. He must acknowledge the times where, for one reason or another, she might find it exceedingly difficult to give herself to him and must keep from cajoling her into acts that would make her uncomfortable or leave her feeling violated. He needs to exemplify leadership as a servant even here in the bedroom. His first thoughts must be for her.

If Adam and Eve enjoyed sex before their fall into

sin (I'm under the impression that the Fall happened soon after Creation but that there was some time between the two events; therefore, they must have enjoyed perfect sex for a while.) there must not have been an occasion where Eve refused Adam because there was never a time when he was not thinking first of her. What reason would she have to refuse? But after they sinned, when Adam stopped thinking first of Eve and when she began to rebel against his leadership, this is when sex became a struggle. And it remains a struggle today. I know that most husbands and wives will testify that they have had more fights and arguments about sex than about anything else. The most special means of grace to a husband and wife has become the greatest cause of strife. And this is exactly as Satan intends it. Though Satan hates

any kind of pleasure, he will still use it for his ends. His plan is that people should have as much sex outside of the marriage relationship and as little within the marriage relationship as is possible. His plan is to mask, to hide, the true purpose of sex behind the pleasure it brings simply as a physical act. It is a clever plan and one that has been proven effective time and time again.

We may not understand exactly what sex does within a marriage, but we can trust that God has his reasons for inventing it and commanding it. Sex is a call for a husband to pursue his wife and to lead her, as a servant, into a deeper understanding and appreciation of this gift. It is a call for a wife to serve her husband, trusting him and trusting that God's gifts, when used as he intends them, always bring good.

1. Have you ever considered before that the ultimate purpose of sex is to build unity between a husband and a wife? Do you believe this?
2. Why does God give sexual desire? Why does he often give it unequally in men and women?
3. Do you understand and believe that sex is far more than the sum of its parts? Do you believe that there is a mystery to it and that we need to obey what God says even if we do not fully understand?
4. A man tends to find relational intimacy in sex where a woman tends to want to experience relational intimacy in order to enjoy sex. Have you found this to be true in your marriage?
5. If you and your husband had a perfect sex life, what do you think it would look like? If God described the perfect sex life between you and your husband, would his dream match yours?

Q&A

THE HEART OF REJECTION

When you thought about getting married and when you anticipated having sex with your husband, did you ever think about how often you'd be saying "no" to him? I know of a few women who decided before they married that they would never refuse their husbands and who have, admirably, stuck to their promise. For the rest of us, though, "no" is a word we use far more than we ever would have thought possible (or desirable). Maybe we say "no" with our words, whether kind or gracious; maybe we say "no" with our attitudes or body language; maybe we say it with our wardrobe or simply by going to bed long before he is tired. We grow adept at finding new and creative ways of refusing sex.

We are not completely comfortable with rejecting him but at the same time, he wants so much! Can't he see that I'm too tired? Can't he see that I'm just not in the mood? Can't he back off just for tonight (and maybe tomorrow night...and the night after that...)?

In chapter one we touched on what sex means to your husband and its importance in married life and in chapter two we tried to figure out what sex is all about anyway. In this chapter I want to focus on an area in which many women harm their husbands. I want to talk about how a wife is to respond to her husband's advances. How does the Bible want her to view sex? Is she never to reject him? Is she called always to have sex when he is in the mood? What does God want from us in all of this?

You are probably familiar with these words from 1 Corinthians 7: "Do not deprive one another, except

perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." According to this passage, under what circumstances are you allowed to stop having sex? By mutual agreement, for a limited time and to devote yourselves to prayer. (This is why you always say "no," right? Because you want to pray? "Not tonight, honey, I think we need to pray...") Take out the exception clause and it reads as a straightforward command: "Do not deprive one another...so that Satan may not tempt you."

As I understand it, this command does not necessarily speak to saying "no" to sex tonight; it refers to rejection. Let's draw a line between these two things. The inability to have sex tonight is not the same as actually depriving him (perhaps you are feeling sick or you actually do have a bad headache or you're just absolutely worn out in every way). You can turn him down for noble reasons and he will survive until tomorrow. But what may be sin in your heart and what may tempt him to sin is your rejection. You can say "no" without rejecting him. But do you? Today let's talk about rejection and see what rejection does to you and what it does to your husband.

Rejection and Your Heart

Humans are selfish at heart; wives are selfish at heart. Though we know that God calls us to esteem others higher than ourselves, though we know that he calls us to love our husbands more

than we love ourselves, we naturally tend toward self-love. Often we love ourselves more than our own husbands. Often rejection is not a reflection of our bodies or our lives, but of our hearts.

What happens to our hearts when we continually reject our husbands and do so out of selfishness? I believe the answer is that we grow bitter, increasingly hardened toward our husbands. I recently spoke with several friends about our reactions when we tell our husbands “no.” The overwhelming agreement was that we feel guilty and then, from that guilt comes anger. We grow angry at him for placing us in this situation in which we end up feeling guilty. The conversation in our heads goes something like this. “I should be having sex with him tonight. But I don’t want to have sex with him tonight. He should see that I’m too tired. It is his fault for asking. How dare he!” Instead of putting him first, we look first to ourselves and justify our sin by placing blame on him. If we do not deal properly with this heart sin, it grows and bitterness develops. While there are certainly valid reasons for not wanting to have sex or not being able to have sex on a particular night, like so much sin, it often comes down to attitude and selfishness. You are called to serve your husband as he is called to serve you. That calling extends beyond making sure he has clean underwear and a good meal every night (and, in fact, I’m guessing most men would forgo the clean underwear and the meal if it meant they could have regular joyful sex with you).

Angry rejection is not a sign of a heart that is joyfully engaged with their husband. Neither is mere placid participation. A heart that is engaged and willing to serve will find joy in that service if not the act itself.

One flows into the other. Regular, joyful sex is for you too! It allows you to connect on the most intimate level with your husband, just as God intended. Your marriage need this connection if it is going to stay strong.

Rejection and His Heart

Women are often said to be the more complex sex—we are more difficult to understand, we have more hidden nuances. However, when it comes to sex, the male psyche is far more difficult to understand (though men would probably beg to differ). In a woman’s mind, we don’t feel like having sex simply because we don’t feel like having sex. Therefore, we say “No, not tonight.” And most of us could be happy going weeks or months like this (and especially when we’ve got little kids hanging off us for years at a time). But the rejection that a man feels in such refusals is far deeper and far more significant than we imagine. We have not just rejected sex; we have rejected him.

Sin has deeply marred our perception of sex and, as we’ve seen, we tend to believe that it is the physical release men seek rather than the emotional and spiritual connection they experience when making love to their wives. But the truth is, your husband sees sex as a means to show his love for you and in rejecting that act, you are hampering his ability to express his love for you. In his mind you are rejecting not the act, but him and his love. This, more than any other, is an area in which your husband is vulnerable to being deeply hurt. God has given you a huge amount of power over your husband’s perception of his manhood. You can make him feel like a sexual superstar or a complete loser without ever leaving your bed. By rejecting sex, you are rejecting his manhood. It’s not

that you can never say “No honey, not tonight” to your husband, but that you need to be careful in *how* you respond. As always, the heart is the heart of the matter.

In her book *Becoming the Woman of his Dreams*, Sharon Jaynes says that one thing she learned through all of her interviews and surveys is that men are surprisingly fragile when it comes to their sexuality. They may act all big and macho but they are actually very weak in this way, very vulnerable to rejection. So here is a question for you: how often are you acting from pure motives when you refuse your husband? And even if you are not being sinful in motive, are you perhaps being sinful in the way you refuse? Do you maybe even get a bit of sick joy from spurning his advances? Sex is a wonderful opportunity to give back to your husband, to accept his love, to show your love for him. Why, then, are you sometimes (often? all the time?) so quick to turn it down?

Take a look at two scenarios Jaynes offers in her book. In the first, hubby comes slinking into the bathroom as you are putting the finishing touches on your 15 minute face cleansing and moisturizing regiment. He runs his hand down your back and grins. You know exactly what he has in mind. “Not now!” you snap. “I’ve had a hard day and that is the last thing on my mind!” End of story. In the second, hubby comes slinking into the bathroom as you are putting the finishing touches on that same cleansing and moisturizing regiment. He runs his hand down your back and grins. “Now that’s a nice idea,” you reply. “I’ll tell you what, I’ve had an extremely tiring day today, but if you hold that thought until tomorrow, I’ll make it worth your while.” This story has just begun!

I love these examples. See, in both cases hubby is disappointed, but in only one is he dejected! In one

scenario he is rejected, in the other he is simply asked to wait. A man who feels he is begging or asking his wife for a favor feels humiliated. He knows that begging costs him his masculinity. In one scenario the wife protects her husband’s heart; in the other scenario she abuses it. And there is a great danger in this.

Let’s go back for a second to 1 Corinthians 7 and make it a little bit more personal, seeing what can happen when you reject your husband: “Do not deprive your husband...so that Satan may not tempt him.” Have you ever thought about it this way before? Could you actually be setting up your husband to experience temptation to sin by rejecting him and refusing to have sex with him on a regular basis? Could you in some way be contributing to his sin? In an age of pervasive sexuality where so many men struggle with sexual addiction and pornography, this may sound like a justification for these acts. Of course this is not my intention at all and no man ever has justification to turn to pornography or self-pleasure. However, I think it is wise to remember that when there is sin in one aspect of a relationship, it tends to spill over into other areas of that relationship. A wife’s rejection may actually leave her husband more vulnerable to sexual sin. While the rejection is not the cause of the subsequent sin it may be the catalyst.

Men can end up acting out through pornography or masturbation because of shame, humiliation or rejection. This is not to say that the sin of pornography is always a result of this. But is wise to remember that a denial of God’s commands in marriage can only have negative results. In a perfect world, in a perfect relationship, a woman would never say “no” to her husband and a husband would never ask when his wife is not desirous. Of course in that perfect world a woman

would also never be up all night with a sick baby! In the real world, though, a woman often ends up rejecting her husband, not knowing just how deep this cuts.

Men, when they feel like men, make better men! They lead better, they work better and yes, they serve their wives better. Feeling like a man includes having a joyful, willing wife. If we are to be truly good wives to our husbands, we need to serve them in all areas, building them up as men. Sex is an important part of that—passionate, joyful, willing sex. Our hearts and attitudes need to be pure. We need to regularly have sex with our husbands and always we need to be careful that we are not tearing them down with our rejection.

Conclusion

A pattern of rejection is dangerous to a marriage. It gives the wife a great deal of power over her husband's heart—a power that she may wield wrongly. Rejection by the wife leads to feelings of inadequa-

cy, bitterness and temptation in the husband. This may then lead him to be less loving, to lead him to struggle in his role as a husband. This in turn leads the wife to reject him more as she desires him less as she sees him as not loving her as she wants. Remember, by rejecting sex, she is rejecting him, rejecting his heart. Meanwhile the wife may grow bitter as her rejection causes her to wrestle with guilt and to push the blame for this guilt upon her husband and his desires. The ugly cycle of sin continues.

It is God's design for marriage that sex displays total love love and acceptance. Therefore a wife ought to be eager to accept her husband's advances and a husband ought to be eager to accept the body and soul of his wife as they are united as one. It is Satan's design for marriage that sex, instead of being all about acceptance, should be all about rejection. Whose team are you playing on?

1. Under what circumstances does the Bible tell you that you can stop having sex regularly?
2. How often do you find yourself rejecting your husband's advances and what is the most common reason that you do so?
3. How often is your "no" said for truly good reasons (be honest!)? How often do you say "no" in a way that affirms instead of rejects your husband?
4. What is your most common emotional reaction when your husband indicates that he wants to have sex with you? Is it anger, frustration, joy, anticipation?
5. Do you see a pattern of rejection toward your husband? Ask your husband if he feels that you have established this kind of a pattern.

Q&A

DESIRING HIM

So far we've come to the conclusion that as a wife you need to be willing to constantly examine your heart and your motives when it comes to sex. For some reason this is a real challenge for so many women. Many of us struggle to enjoy and express gratitude for what is meant to be a great gift from God. We express anger about this gift. We resent this gift. If God had left us a gift receipt for it, we'd take it back in an instant and trade it in for something better (like a good night's sleep).

The challenge for you, as a wife, is not just to tolerate sex but to find real joy in it. The challenge is to find joy in the act itself—as a means of grace within your marriage, as a means of blessing your husband, as a means of knitting yourself ever-closer to him, as a means of bringing glory to God. It is not only something you can tolerate, but something you can delight in.

Statistics say that you, as a woman, very likely have less desire for sex than your husband does. Meanwhile your sexual desire is more deeply tied to your mind and emotions than is the case for him; his desire (like you haven't figured this out) tends to be more physical in nature. He has the easy job of having his body speak to his mind; we've got it tough in having to make our minds talk to our bodies. So how then do you work on your mind and your heart so you do not just put up with sex but that you actually desire your husband?

In this final chapter I want to give suggestions on how you can increase your desire for your husband. I'm hoping to offer some practical sugges-

tions that help you enter the bedroom open, willing, joyful and even initiating physical intimacy with your husband. I'm not talking about techniques to help get you in the mood "in the moment," but rather practices for all of life to help you align your heart to do what God wants you to do—to desire your husband and to enjoy his desire for you.

To write this little book I made a bunch of awkward phone calls to my girlfriends to ask them how they deal with this. I asked them what things they do to find delight in their husbands and between the bunch of us we made up a list of practical ideas that may help you. Here they are:

Pray. First, and most importantly, pray. Don't pray just before or during sex (though you may have to do so then, too) but pray as part of your day-to-day walk with the Lord that he would help you desire your husband and that he would help you serve and enjoy him in this way. Do you pray regularly for joy and freedom and fulfillment in sex? Do you pray the same for your husband? If not, you should!

Study. Look to the Bible to learn God's will for sex. Know that he wants you to desire your husband, that he wants your husband to desire you, and that he wants both of you to enjoy sex. Don't believe the lies that good girls can't find great joy and satisfaction in sex. By regularly enjoying sex with your husband, you are doing exactly what God commands and you are bringing glory to him (Read Song of Solomon and see how the woman is not passive, but a woman who

feels strong emotional and physical desire for her lover.). Form a theology of sex; believe it and live by it.

Remember. In the midst of all your responsibilities as a mother, it is sometimes difficult to remember that you married your husband, not your children. Biblically, he is your priority over your children. Obviously you cannot abandon your children—you still have to be a mother to them. But do not lose sight of your marriage amidst the busyness of motherhood.

Stop. Learn how to carve out time for your husband, not just to have sex with him but to find and enjoy common interests (television probably doesn't count). So often with married couples the concerns of life begin to outpace the importance placed on the relationship. Everyday schedules and worries begin to take over until you forget to take time to enjoy your husband. No wonder, then, that you have trouble desiring him! If you are anxious, thinking about the needs of the kids, worrying about what to serve for dinner the next night, thinking about the laundry that needs to be done, or any of the other 10,000 things you need to do every day, all of this will negatively impact your willingness and ability to enjoy physical intimacy. So take time to be with him, to hang out, to cuddle, to just be together.

Tell. Spend time deliberately focusing on what is desirable about your husband. Write and leave notes about what you find desirable about him where he will find them (and where *only* he will find them). Email him during the day and let him know you are thinking about him in that way. Be coy, be fun, be alluring. Stewing about the fact that he didn't put his towel in the hamper or take out the garbage hardly instills feelings of desire. Focus on the posi-

tive. Anticipation is wonderful for you and for him.

Initiate. Most men love it when their wives initiate. Instead of always waiting for him to make the first move, let him know you are interested even hours before bedtime—and remind him a few times. And even if you aren't truly interested, act like you are. Let your mind take the lead and your body will catch up eventually.

Beautify. It's hard to desire intimacy when you feel that you are frumpy or unattractive (or when you are deliberately making yourself frumpy or unattractive). Feeling beautiful helps you feel desirable and helps your husband desire you. Get rid of the sweats and stop hoarding his old t-shirts for your own use. Keep the floor-length flannel nightgowns for only the coldest nights.

Decorate. Make the master bedroom an attractive room in the house. You spend around one third of your life in your bedroom, so why not make it a pleasant place to be? Nice sheets, candles and lack of clutter can go a long way to encouraging a romantic atmosphere.

Delight. Be thankful that your husband desires you. This is good and right before God. Think about it: your husband wants you. Your husband wants *you!* Would you really be happier if he showed no interest at all? Of course not! So be grateful that God has given him a desire for you and be sure to thank God for it.

Schedule. This can be controversial, but it has its place. If you truly struggle to have sex regularly, it may be beneficial, at least for a season, to schedule sex. This may happen when you have young children or maybe when you are struggling in marriage. All I mean is that you may want to set aside certain nights of the week and make sure that you have sex on those

nights. And on those days, do your part! Coming to him with willingness and joy is far better than making him beg and then rejecting him. Remember what we learned in the last chapter about setting up your husband (or yourself) to be tempted by sexual sin.

Here's the rub. God calls you to love and serve and desire your husband. He created sex as a means of cementing (or supergluing!) the marriage relationship. God gives your husband sexual desire as a trigger to remind him to pursue you. God has provided

you, the wife, as the one who can and should and must provide the fulfillment of that desire. And he provided the act of making love so that it becomes about far more than just the physical act. To reject any of this is to reject God's perfect plan for marriage.

In all things remember that God is for you, that he is for godly marriages, that he is for the godly woman who is committed to loving her husband! When you seek Him you can have confidence in his help. Strive in all things, even in this, to bring glory to God.

1. Do you believe that God can and wants to give both you and your husband a satisfying, fulfilling, exciting sex life?
2. Do you thank God for sex? If not, why don't you? When will you start to make this one of your prayers of thanksgiving?
3. Are you willing to work to find joy in sex? Is it worth the effort to you?
4. Have you ever studied what the Bible says about sex? If not, make this a topic for study.
5. What is one specific thing you can (and will!) do this week to improve your sex life? Consider asking your husband what he thinks you could do.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

When writing these articles I read or re-read several books and I thought it might be useful to share these titles with you as additional resources. They are beneficial not just for learning about physical intimacy, but also in helping with other areas of married life and Christian living.

Feminine Appeal by Carolyn Mahaney.

Becoming the Woman of His Dreams by Sharon Jaynes.

Love That Lasts by Gary and Betsy Ricucci.

Intended for Pleasure by Ed and Gaye Wheat.

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