

**1 Turn in your Bible to the Song of Solomon or the Song of Songs** *Read Song of Solomon 3:1-5:1*

**Three Goals for this 4-Week Series...**

1. Increase oneness & intimacy in marriages *-Decrease anger & frustration over romantic love*  
*\*Exchange 'baseball bats' for 'love letters' (romance)*
2. Give instruction about romantic love *-Avoid perversion (misuse) & prudishness (ignorance)*  
*\*Exchange 'Victoria's secret' for your 'spouse's secret'*
3. Incline your heart's passion towards Jesus *-Weaken wayward desires by seeing Jesus' love for you*  
*\*Exchange the 'mouse' (Harlem Quinn) for the WORD*

**SOS is about the progress of romantic love ... God's picture of His best for love-making in a fallen world.**

1. Love is Cultivated: *Courting Love* 1:1-2:17 *How to approach (get) married?*
2. Love is Consummated: *Love-Making* 3:1-5:1 *How to have purity not prudishness & perversion?*
3. Love is Threatened: *Restoring Love* 5:2-6:13 *How to stay on the same team?*
4. Love Blossomed: *Maturing Love* 7:1-8:14 *How to develop love through the years?*

**Some HELPFUL HINTS to understand and apply the truths in SOS...**

1. Identify the speaker & to whom they speak.
2. Understand the imagery & translate it culturally.
3. See its truth as speaking about romantic (*eros*) love & God's (*agape*) love.
4. Know that the couples' wedding occurred between 3:11 & 4:1& their marriage is consummated in 4:10-16. God's approval is in 5:1.

**Last week we saw in chapters 1-2 that romantic love is cultivated during courting.**

**Courting:** *is intentional friendship to determine if marriage is God's plan; it involves communication, romance (conversation NOT action), boundaries & accountability, PRAYER.*

**Chapters 3-4 God designed romantic love to be mutually enjoyed in marriage for His pleasure & our joy.**

**Love-making (sexual intimacy) is God's good gift to a husband and a wife (in covenant of marriage) for...**

1. Revelation (experience) a means so sinners can 'know' God's love for them in Jesus. *Eph. 5:22-33*
2. Communion (oneness/intimacy) a means of experiencing & expressing oneness. *Gen. 2:18-25,*
3. Sanctification (worship/warfare) a means to become more like Christ & less selfish. *1 Cor. 7:1-5; Heb. 13:4*
4. Pleasure (joy/ecstasy), a means of experiencing God's grace=results in thanksgiving. *Pr. 5:15-23, SOS*
5. Child-bearing (image bearers) sometimes a means of bringing new life in the world. *Gen. 1:27-28*

**SOS reveals what 'eros without shame' looks like.**

**SOS 2:16-17 The couple is ENGAGED:** Shulammitte accepts Solomon's offer—You are mine...I am yours!

**1. Pre-Wedding Jitters... 3:1-5 Shulammitte Dreams Before their Wedding**

- 1 *On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not.*
- 2 *I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves, I sought him, but found him not.*
- 3 *The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"*
- 4 *Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.*
- 5 *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.*

*Verses 1-4 probably recount a dream the Shulammitte had. It may have been a 1-time dream or reoccurring.*

*It probably occurred sometime near their wedding day and was caused by her great love for him (4 times).*

*Verse 5 probably shows her response to this dream—they are in a wonderful & dangerous time.*

- 1: In the dream, the Shulammitte sees herself seeking after Solomon, but not being able to find him.
- 2: She sees herself getting up from sleep and tries to find him because she cannot take it any longer. She is so consumed with love for him that she loses all inhibition and reason, and walks through the streets trying to find him in the middle of the night. She tries but she cannot find him.  
*\*Irrational things we do in dreams: go to school naked; Week before: dreamt of marrying Tory Nichols.*
- 3: In the dream she sees night watchmen finding her, who she asks if they have seen her beloved.
- 4: We are not told what their answer is, only that when she leaves them, she sees herself finding Solomon.

In the dream, she grasps on to him & won't let him go. She brings him home to her mother's house. Experiencing sexual intimacy is probably on her mind.

We are not told any details of her dream concerning what happens between her and Solomon at this point.

It could be that the dream ended there or that it went on. We simply are not told. V. 5 tells us how she.

- 5: When the Shulammitte awakes, she again exhorts herself indirectly by adjuring the daughters of Jerusalem: not to stir up or arouse their love until it pleases—until it can be fully expressed in the context of marriage.

### Engagement Guidelines...

- 1) Their passion & love cannot be contained much longer—marriage is needed. \*Engagement lengths?
- 2) Acting on their passion is not justified just because they will be getting married. \*Purity through-out!

### 2. The Wedding Procession 3:6-11 Shulammitte Describes Solomon's Arrival for their Wedding

6 *What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant?*

7 *Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel,*

8 *all of them wearing swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, against terror by night.*

9 *King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon.*

10 *He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.*

11 *Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.*

*Verses 6-11 describe some of the events of their wedding day—told from the Shulammitte's perspective.*

6: She describes Solomon's arrival—he comes from the wilderness to enter the city. his smell--myrrh, frankincense  
What do they smell like???

7-8: **60 men:** She sees Solomon arriving in his traveling coach with 60 mighty men-warriors-geared up with swords.

Why? 60 mighty men could be---protecting Solomon at night??? Revealing Solomon's greatness???

9-10: She notices Solomon's chair: made from wood from Lebanon??? Has silver, gold, purple fabric

11: She tells the women in the city to come and gaze on King Solomon in his glory & splendor.

She sees that Solomon's mother has placed a crown on him on their wedding—the day of his gladness of heart.

*The Wedding Ceremony probably takes place at this point... Solomon has come into the city and the two of them are joined together in some kind of wedding ceremony.*

### Wedding Ceremony & Marriage...

1. What is the purpose of marriage...the wedding ceremony? Are they needed? If so, why? If not, why?

For many, marriage & wedding ceremonies are a hassle, cause anxiety, & cost a lot of money—so why bother?

What makes a person married? Saying vows? Having sex? Society recognized or God recognized or both?

2. **Wedding vows: mark the start of a new life together that cannot be broken but only by death (leave/cleave) & the start of the life-long process of experiencing intimacy (become one)—Love-making is part of that.**

The wedding day is a day of great joy because they have both waited and longed for this day: CELEBRATION.

### 3. Their Wedding Night 4:1-9 Solomon Verbally Admires His Bride's Beauty

1 *Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful!*

*Your eyes are doves behind your veil.*

*Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.*

2 *Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing,*

*all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young.*

3 *Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.*

*Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.*

4 *Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone;*

*on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.*

5 *Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that graze among the lilies.*

6 *Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.*

7 *You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.*

8 *Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.*

9 You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

4:1-8 Solomon explicitly compliments the sexual features of his beloved.

4:8-9 Solomon invites his new bride to join him—to leave everything else aside and to join him in love-making.

1: Starting at the top of her body, he expresses how much he adores each part as he moves downward.

He begins with a summary statement: YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL TO ME!

1. He compliments her **eyes**: doves: pure, innocent, Veil: sign of purity???

2. He compliments her **hair**: flock of goats: long, flowing, captivating

2: 3. He compliments her **teeth**: shorn ewes: white/shining, paired (none missing) perfect & complete.

3: 4. He compliments her **lips**: scarlet thread: red, delicate, well shaped, mouth: lovely/desirable

5. He compliments her **cheeks**: halves of pomegranate: red: healthy, flushed with excitement

4: 6. He compliments her **neck**: tower of David: great integrity, character... adorned with flattering jewelry.

5: 7. He compliments her **breasts**: two fawns: soft, gentle: long to pet them

6: I want to delight in you and your beauty **until the dawn**: day breathes & shadows flee=daybreak/all night.

His going to the mountain of myrrh & hill of frankincense: expensive, imported spices: referred to her breasts

7: From Solomon's vantage point, he sees his lover as **altogether beautiful**.

He gives her the ultimate romantic words by saying: To me, you are a 10! To me, you have no blemish.

Does this mean she is a "10"? Super-model? Probably not! Yet to Solomon, she was a "10".

He doesn't mention her skin being burned: he either saw through (around) it OR saw darkness as good?

Regardless, he really believed to the depth of his heart that she was the most beautiful woman on earth.

8: **Come with me...**Solomon invites his new wife to come with him & leave everything behind (leave fear!!!)

9: **You have captivated my heart**—sister, bride, He delights in her! She causes his heart to race.

His heart rate is increasing just by looking at her. Just a single glance from her is enough to get him excited.

Even just looking at a part of her necklace is enough to suffice in getting his heart rate up.

### Romantic Words...

1. Romantic speaking is important for wives...love-making 'begins in the kitchen'...

2. Romantic words ONLY have their proper impact in the context of a strong loving relationship.

3. Husbands & wives should never degrade one another physically, but rather build one another up.

4. Wives, encourage every romantic gesture your husband makes: usually not natural/easy

### 4. Their Love -Making 4:10-5:1 They Consummate Their Marriage in the Garden of Love

#1 4:10-16a Solomon expresses his love for his wife as they express their love for each in sexual intimacy...

10 How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

11 **Your lips** drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under **your tongue**;

the fragrance of **your garments** is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

12 A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.

13 **Your shoots** are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,

14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices —

15 a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.

16 Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! **Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.**

10: While they are love-making, Solomon expresses his delight in his new bride.

He delights not only in her physical beauty but the beauty of her love--her love is better than the taste of wine.

The fragrance of her oils is better than the best flavorings and spices.

\*Pleasant smells enhance & supplement intimacy; negative odors detract. Loving thing to smell good!

11: Solomon really enjoys kissing her and enjoying the sweet "taste" of her mouth.

It is a good thing to affirm with your spouse that the physical experience of love-making is enjoyable.

12: Solomon delights in the fact his bride is a virgin, which is symbolized by a locked garden & a well of fresh water.

There was great wonder, pleasure, and beauty to be had in entering her "garden."

\*Having sex before marriage is called fornication & is sin, dishonoring to God & stealing from that person.

13: Solomon viewed her virginity as preserving the fruits of her love which belongs only to him.

14: Spices were rare, luxurious, & of immense value... love making with her was of great value & pleasure.

15: Garden fountain: Well of living water: Flowing streams from Lebanon:

16: Awake... It is clear that Solomon is excited about becoming one with his wife.

**Pr. 5:1/7,15-20** Solomon teaches his sons to stay away from adultery--one safe guard is to delight in your wife.

1 My son, be attentive... 7 O sons, listen ... 15 *Drink water from your own cistern*, flowing water from your own well. 16 Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, 19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. *Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.* 20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

**3 reasons...** 21: God sees all. 22: Enslaving consequences 23: Possibility of both physical & spiritual death

**#2 4:16b Shulammite rejoices in their love-making, entrusting herself to her husband.**

**16: Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.**

**16:** This verse shows that the Shulammite was just as excited. She wanted Solomon as much as he wanted her. She welcomes Solomon to come & eat... She wants to please him & in doing so experience pleasure herself. This is when love pleases—this is what she had meant in 2:7 and 3:5.

Love until it pleases: when it can be fully acted upon with the totality of one's being.

Solomon did all he could to awaken the sexual passions with words, affection, & passionate kisses (v 11).

She did all she could to awaken his desire by attending to her appearance & presentation (pleasant odors, beautiful garments and jewelry, availing herself, etc.).

She had given him a look of desire, & we can assume that her nonverbal communication back to him as he was romancing her indicated delight, love, and pleasure.

**#3 5:1a Solomon expresses his delight in their love-making.**

**1a: I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.'**

**1:a** Solomon says he entered HIS garden---gathered HIS myrrh and spice...at HIS honeycomb...with HIS honey... He describes his pleasure in his wife and their love-making.

### **Love-Making...**

- 1. The way Solomon & Shulammite speak of their love-making doesn't specify the acts of their love-making.**
- 2. Their love-making was mutually enjoyable, pleasurable and appropriate.**
- 3. 1 Cor. 10:31 says that whatever we do, all that we do is to be done to God's glory—His OK & pleasure.**
- 4. Couples must ask the Spirit to direct them concerning what is right, noble, & good in their love-making**

**5. God's Approval 5:1b God expresses His delight in their love-making.**

**1b: Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!**

**1b:** This is likely God speaking here, giving His blessing and approval to what they are doing.

God tells them to indulge in the goodness and wonder of His idea of sexual intimacy & love-making.

The word for "friends"="companions".

One of the ways to stay as 'team-mates', is by viewing your love-making as a work in progress.

God wants us to be overwhelmed & carried away with love, both in giving to and receiving from our spouse.

We are to be consumed with our mutual pleasure, intimacy, love, and affection for each other.

The sights, smells, garments, jewelry & words of romance are part of a healthy marriage relationship.

**1 Corinthians 7:1-5** *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 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. 5 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.*

Verse 4...both husband & wife have mutual rights over each other's body-their bodies are at each other's disposal. Each has the right to lay claim to the other's body for sexual gratification. That could lead to a 'demanding spirit.' To avoid that, verse 4 is sandwiched between verses 3 & 5 which speak of 'GIVING' & 'NOT DEPRIVING.'

1. It is never right to 'take' or 'stake your claim.'

2. Verse 3: Husband, give her her rights! Wife, give him his rights! Verse 4: Do not deprive one another.

The one who wants sexual gratification is NOT to seize it without concern for the other's needs.

Instead a husband and a wife should always be ready to give his or her body when the other wants it.

Happy and fulfilling sexual relations in marriage depend on each partner aiming to give satisfaction to the other.

If it is the joy of each to make the other happy, a hundred problems will be solved.

**Husbands:** To love & respect your wife...honor her, seek her satisfaction & be sensitive to her needs & wants.

Know that preparation for love making at 10 p.m. begins with kind words at 7 a.m. & continues all day long.

If you have little children, it means you will help around the house when you get home.

It means you will take the kids for a time, so she can have a well deserved break, maybe even a nap.

As the kids are put to bed, your goal is not love making, but loving your wife. Move at her pace not yours.

Crock pots VS Microwaves: wives are like crock pots--it takes relational warmth to cook roast not a microwave.

Your desire should be her climax, not your own.

**Husbands:** for your wife to freely & willingly give herself to you, you must...

1) Speak her love language=relate, 2) Be a loving leader for her, 3) Be committed to her alone in every way.

**Wives:** To love & respect your husband, know his love language is SEX—more is better. God wired him that way.

*Martin Luther* said he found twice a week to be ample protection from the tempter. I don't know if Katie was up for it every time or not. But if you're not, give it anyway. I do not say to you husbands, "Take it anyway." In fact, for her sake you may go without. The goal is to outdo one another in giving what the other wants.

Both of you, make it your aim to satisfy each other as fully as possible.

**Wives:** for your husband to keep pursuing you and delighting in you and wanting you, you must...

1) Speak his love language=Love-making, 2) Allow him lead you, 3) Put him before your children

**God's Desire/Plan...**

1. Mutual pleasure & satisfaction in love-making is an important marital glue & key strategy against Satan.

Failure or dissatisfaction by even one spouse can sour, unravel and even destroy a good marriage.

2. Love-making is to be pure: not perverted (misused) or prudish (ignorance).

# Sexual Relations in Marriage

By John Piper [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/45\\_Marriage/282\\_Sexual\\_Relations\\_in\\_Marriage/Applications...](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/45_Marriage/282_Sexual_Relations_in_Marriage/Applications...)

## 1. **Believe That Sex Is a Good Gift of God.**

Believe 1 Timothy 4:4 "everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer".

Believe that God has made your body and its appetites like being tired, hungry and sexual desires as God's good gifts. God does not want a married couple to lie in bed and say to themselves, "What we are doing is dirty; it's what they do in the pornographic movies." Instead, God wants you to say, "God created this act, and it is good."

It is the world which has plundered God's gifts and corrupted them by misuse.

## 2. **Believe that Genuine Repentance from the Guilt of the Past is Yours in Christ.**

Secondly, faith increases the joy of sexual relations in marriage because it frees from the guilt of the past.

***What would you say to a person about to commit a sexual sin because he is confident God will forgive him?***

If you believe that what you are about to do is sin, and you decide to do it because God has promised to forgive sin, then probably your decision will be evidence that you are not born again, you may not be a Christian.

"Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul asks in Romans 6:1, 2, and answers, "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Those who are born of God and love Jesus cannot walk up to Jesus as he hangs on the cross and say, "I know that you are suffering now for my sins and that it is your dying wish that I sin no more. But there's this one need that I have that I can only satisfy by sinning, so I hope you'll understand as I thrust this other sword into your side. There now. I sure am glad that every time I do that your blood forgives me." Those who have been born of God cannot think like that. So all I have to say to a person before he chooses to commit sin is, "Advance at your own peril. There may be no forgiveness, because you may be so decisively hardened by crucifying Christ afresh (Hebrews 6:6) that you will not be able to find genuine repentance anymore (Hebrews 12:16, 17)."

***What about those who are married but back on an act of fornication, or adultery, or incest, or a homosexual fling, or years of masturbation, or preoccupation with pornography, or promiscuous petting, or divorce?***

If it genuinely lies within you, by the grace of God, to throw yourself on the mercy of God for forgiveness, then he will free you from the guilt of the past. "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "To the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin" (Psalm 32:1, 2). "He does not deal with us according to our sins nor requite us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10–12). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). There is no need for a child of God to carry any guilt into the marriage bed. But that takes a solid faith because Satan loves to make us feel unforgiven for the rottenness of our former life. "Resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Peter 5:9). "Quench his flaming darts with the shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16)—faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you (Galatians 2:20), who for your sake was made to be sin that you might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21), who bore your sins in his body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Lay hold on your forgiveness, and take it with you to the marriage bed. Christ died for your sin that in him you might have guilt-free sexual relations in marriage.

Even though the guilt of our sin can be washed away, some of the scars remain. I can imagine a couple just before their engagement sitting together in a park. He turns to her and says, "There is something that I've got to say. Two years ago I had sexual relations with another girl. I was away from the Lord, and it was just one night. I've wept over that one night many times. I believe God has forgiven me and I hope you can." In the weeks that follow, not without tears, she forgives him, and they marry. And on their first honeymoon night they lie together, and as he looks at her, the tears well up in her eyes and he says, "What's the matter?" And she says, "I just can't help but think of that other girl, that she lay right here where I am." And years later, when the novelty of his wife's body has worn off, he finds himself inadvertently drifting back in his imagination to the thrill of that one night fling. That's what I mean by scars. And all of us have such scars. All of us have committed sins which, though forgiven, make life more problematic than if we hadn't committed them. But I do not want to give the impression that Christ is powerless against such scars. He may not remove all the problems that these scars cause us, but he has promised to work even in all these problems for our good if we love him and are called according to his purpose.

Take our imaginary couple I just referred to. I prefer to think that there was a happy ending. They came eventually to a satisfying sexual relationship because they worked at it openly in constant prayer and reliance on the grace of God. They talked about all their feelings. They kept nothing bottled up. They trusted each other and helped each other, and they found their way to peace and sexual harmony and, above all, new dimensions of God's grace. Christ died not only that in him we might have guilt-free sexual relations in marriage, but also that he might then, even through our scars, convey to us some spiritual good.

### **3. Believe that Sex is a Weapon Against Satan.**

The third thing now that we can say about faith and sexual relations in marriage is that faith uses sex against Satan. Look at **1 Corinthians 7:3–5**. “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another, except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.” In Ephesians 6:16 Paul says we should ward off Satan with the shield of faith. Here he says to married people, “Ward off Satan with sufficient sexual intercourse. Don't abstain too long, but come together soon, so that Satan will gain no foothold.” Well, which is it? Do we guard ourselves from Satan with the shield of faith or the shield of sex? The answer for married people is that faith makes use of sexual intercourse as a means of grace. For the people God leads into marriage, sexual relations are a God-ordained means of overcoming temptation to sin (the sin of adultery, the sin of sexual fantasizing, the sin of pornographic reading, etc.). Faith humbly accepts such gifts and offers thanks.

Now notice something else in 1 Corinthians 7:3–5. This is very important. In verse 4 Paul says that the man and the woman have rights over each other's body. When the two become one flesh, their bodies are at each other's disposal. Each has the right to lay claim to the other's body for sexual gratification. But what we really need to see is what Paul commands in verses 3 and 5 in view of these mutual rights. He does not say, “Therefore stake your claim! Take your rights!” He says, “Husband, give her her rights! Wife, give him his rights!” (v. 3). And in verse 4, “Do not refuse one another.” In other words, he does not encourage the husband or wife who wants sexual gratification to seize it without concern for the other's needs. Instead he urges both husband and wife to always be ready to give their body when the other wants it. I infer from this and from Jesus' teaching in general that happy and fulfilling sexual relations in marriage depend on each partner aiming to give satisfaction to the other. If it is the joy of each to make the other happy, a hundred problems will be solved.

Husbands, if it is your joy to bring her satisfaction, you will be sensitive to what she needs and wants. You will learn that the preparation for satisfactory sexual intercourse at 10 p.m. begins with tender words at 7 a.m. and continues through the day as kindness and respect. And when the time comes, you will not come on like a Sherman tank, but will know her pace and bring her skillfully along. Unless she gives you the signal, you will say, “Her climax, not mine, is the goal.” And you will find in the long run that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Wives, it is not always the case, but often, that your husband wants sexual relations more often than you do. Martin Luther said he found twice a week to be ample protection from the tempter. I don't know if Katie was up for it every time or not. But if you're not, give it anyway. I do not say to you husbands, “Take it anyway.” In fact, for her sake you may go without. The goal is to outdo one another in giving what the other wants. Both of you, make it your aim to satisfy each other as fully as possible.

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” That is, do not sin in your sexual relations. And that means, have only those attitudes and do only those acts which come from faith in God's hope-giving promises. We should all regularly ask ourselves: “Does what I am feeling or doing have its roots in the contentment of faith or in the anxious insecurity of unbelief?” That will give you help in hundreds of little and big ethical decisions.

### **I've simply tried to show the impact of faith on three aspects of sexual relations in marriage.**

1. Faith believes God when he says that sexual relations in marriage are good and clean and should be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
2. Faith increases the joy of sexual relations in marriage because it frees from the guilt of the past. Faith believes the promise that Christ died for all our sins, that in him we might have guilt-free sexual relations in marriage.
3. Faith wields the weapon of sexual intercourse against Satan. A married couple gives a severe blow to the head of that ancient serpent when they aim to give as much sexual satisfaction to each other as possible.

It makes me just want to praise the Lord when I think that on top of all the joy that the sexual side of marriage brings, it also proves to be a fearsome weapon against our ancient foe.

## **ANTHEM: Strategies for Fighting Lust**

**By John Piper**

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I have in mind men and women. For men it's obvious. The need for warfare against the bombardment of visual temptation to fixate on sexual images is urgent. For women it is less obvious, but just as great if we broaden the scope of temptation to food or figure or relational fantasies. When I say "lust" I mean the realm of thought, imagination, and desire that leads to sexual misconduct. So here is one set of strategies in the war against wrong desires. I put it in the form of an acronym, **A N T H E M**.

**A – AVOID** as much as is possible and reasonable the sights and situations that arouse unfitting desire. I say "possible and reasonable" because some exposure to temptation is inevitable. And I say "unfitting desire" because not all desires for sex, food, and family are bad. We know when they are unfitting and unhelpful and on their way to becoming enslaving. We know our weaknesses and what triggers them. "Avoiding" is a Biblical strategy. "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness" (2 Timothy 2:22). "Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (Romans 13:14).

**N – Say NO** to every lustful thought within five seconds. And say it with the authority of Jesus Christ. "In the name of Jesus, NO!" You don't have much more than five seconds. Give it more unopposed time than that, and it will lodge itself with such force as to be almost immovable. Say it out loud if you dare. Be tough and warlike. As John Owen said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you." Strike fast and strike hard. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

**T – TURN** the mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction. Saying "no" will not suffice. You must move from defense to offense. Fight fire with fire. Attack the promises of sin with the promises of Christ. The Bible calls lusts "deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). They lie. They promise more than they can deliver. The Bible calls them "passions of your former ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14). Only fools yield. "All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter" (Proverbs 7:22). Deceit is defeated by truth. Ignorance is defeated by knowledge. It must be glorious truth and beautiful knowledge. This is why I wrote Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ. We must stock our minds with the superior promises and pleasures of Jesus. Then we must turn to them immediately after saying, "NO!"

**H – HOLD** the promise and the pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. "Fix your eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Here is where many fail. They give in too soon. They say, "I tried to push it out, and it didn't work." I ask, "How long did you try?" How hard did you exert your mind? The mind is a muscle. You can flex it with vehemence. Take the kingdom violently (Matthew 11:12). Be brutal. Hold the promise of Christ before your eyes. Hold it. Hold it! Don't let it go! Keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight! For Christ's sake, fight till you win! If an electric garage door were about to crush your child you would hold it up with all our might and holler for help, and hold it and hold it and hold it and hold it.

**E – ENJOY** a superior satisfaction. Cultivate the capacities for pleasure in Christ. One reason lust reigns in so many is that Christ has so little appeal. We default to deceit because we have little delight in Christ. Don't say, "That's just not me." What steps have you taken to waken affection for Jesus? Have you fought for joy? Don't be fatalistic. You were created to treasure Christ with all your heart – more than you treasure sex or sugar. If you have little taste for Jesus, competing pleasures will triumph. Plead with God for the satisfaction you don't have: "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14). Then look, look, look at the most magnificent Person in the universe until you see him the way he is.

**M – MOVE** into a useful activity away from idleness and other vulnerable behaviors. Lust grows fast in the garden of leisure. Find a good work to do, and do it with all your might. "Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Romans 12:11). "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Abound in work. Get up and do something. Sweep a room. Hammer a nail. Write a letter. Fix a faucet. And do it for Jesus' sake. You were made to manage and create. Christ died to make you "zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). Displace deceitful lusts with a passion for good deeds.