

Nurture Romance

Video: “Your Way Right Away”

Nothing New – Simple Reminders & Fun
Path of Intimacy vs. Path of Isolation
We tend to drift so let's drift toward intimacy

Questions we'd ask God ... what fun questions would you ask God if you had the chance?

The Corinthians had written God a letter to be answered by the Apostle Paul. One of the questions was ... “can we have sex?”

Imagine waiting for that letter. The guys prayed harder than they had ever prayed before! Now in just a minute we're going to read Paul's answer but before we do I want to ask you to discuss something around your tables ...

How was sex viewed in your household as you were growing up? How did you find out about sex? What implications does this have with regard to how you will parent or how you are parenting? (Grandparents)

Illustration: Joshua & Rusty

This week Amie's parents have been visiting with us from MO and they have a dog named Chewy. Early in the week my father-in-law made mention of the fact that they were waiting to have Chewy's surgery until after we visit them next week. Joshua began to inquire as to what “surgery” Bill was referring to.

A day later my son asked me about Rusty's “surgery” that prevented him from having babies. That was confusing for him and it got him to thinking about how a boy could have a baby. So that led to a conversation about a boy's seeds and a girl's eggs. With a brief explanation he started to walk away and then you could see the dots connecting and he turned and asked me, “Dad, I'm a boy. Will I have to have the surgery?” Once I answered that he asked me if I had it done to me. Then he wanted to know if he had the surgery ... would his “sack” disappear? ☺

The letter finally arrives and they scan page after page looking for his answer and finally in chapter 7 it comes ...

“Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations? ²Certainly—**but** only within a **certain context**. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced (*hot*) and fulfilling (*hotter*) sexual life in a world of sexual disorder (*still the case today – the dark side of sexuality*). ³The marriage bed must be a place of **mutuality**—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. ⁴Marriage is not a place to “stand up for your rights.” Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. ⁵**Abstaining** from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it.” 1 Cor. 7:1-5 (MsgB)

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But ... it has to be boring ... you have to pray while you're doing it ... you can only have it in leap years. Ha!

The answer was yes ... but only in a certain context – marriage – one man & one woman (v. 2). This wasn't a given in their day. Marriage was designed to contain the sex drive – by GOD!

Even in the area of sexuality ... find out what speaks love to your spouse and then do it. Meet your spouse's needs as you would want your spouse to seek to meet yours.

I regularly see couples who are having intimacy issues. But sex is the barometer of the relationship. It's not the problem ... it's a symptom of deeper intimacy problems.

Abstaining from sex should never be used as punishment for our spouse. Note that satan is longing to destroy you and your marriage! And abstaining from sex will help him in that endeavor. When you were married you gave your body away. It's no longer yours ...

“The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.”
1 Corinthians 7:4 (NIV)

What does it look like when we are living all of this out as a couple?
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Illustration: HARMONY – Making Music [1 couple to volunteer to play two instruments]

Both can make noise ... they must work together to make music!! **(WOODEN MUSICAL NOTES)**

Video: “Place of Happiness” (Mark Gungor; Chapter 13 – 10:00 min.)

Some stops along the path to intimacy ... Guys ... you need to be a lover to your wives. This goes against the portrayal we see in Hollywood of how sex-starved women are. They look like ravenous wolves who are ready to be body-slammed against the table or the wall and aggressive sex is the standard. Not the case for most of us!

Instead of being lovers men often expect women to service them sexually. That is not the Biblical picture of intimacy! To unlock the sexual desire within a woman you need to be a lover to your wife.

Women need romance. All men need is oxygen. Romance is more than reaching over to your wife in the middle of the night and saying, “Hey, you awake?” There is more to it than that.

Our culture has lost what it means to be romantic. It used to be that men prided themselves in being romantic – in being lovers to women. Men used to know how to kiss a woman, hold a woman and make her feel special. They used to be **intentional**. But we're not that way now.

Illustration: Diet Coke & Mentos (“Meant To’s”)

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This is where science and physics are going to meet love and romance. How do you pronounce these things (Mentos)? That's not how we're going to pronounce them today. Today we're going to pronounce them as "Meant To's".

For instance, these could represent ...

"I meant to put on the calendar that we were going to put on the calendar a date night every week."

"I meant to put in our schedules that we'd get a baby sitter and go away for a weekend 4 times a year."

"I meant to call him up and ask him what is favorite dinner would be and then prepare it for him."

The drink represents the marriage. And right now the "meant to's" are outside the marriage. But what would happen if we became INTENTIONAL about getting the "meant to's" into our marriages? Let's see! [Experiment] That was only 3 "meant to's". Imagine if we put them all into our marriages!!!

Guys ... what does **romance** mean to a woman? More than anything it means attention. They want to feel special. Above all else ... women want to be **CHOSEN**.

For them, all of life is the Jr. High school dance – standing on the other side of the room hoping that some boy will come and ask her to dance. This is the one thing that she and her girlfriends celebrate on her wedding day – that fact that she has been chosen. They celebrate her and envy her at the same time. This is what makes a girl feel so special.

Every time you choose your wife over other things (TV, the guys, sports, career, etc.) it makes her feel validated.

The whole key to being a good lover is to unlock and awaken the sexual desire in your wife. It's about giving her attention and wooing her. Sometimes it works the other way (25%) where the woman has a stronger drive than the man and that's okay too. It works both ways.

Foreplay ... many women will feel "turned on" when you touch them in non-sexual ways. Just like in baseball when a player is always swinging for the fence ... when we approach our wives trying to hit a home run every time we'll strike out. We need to learn how to hit singles, doubles and even bunt from time to time. We don't always have to be trying to score with our wives.

If you want really great sex turn foreplay into a 24 hour process. "The best meals don't come out of the microwave – they come out of the crock pot." (Mark Gungor)

Physical Intimacy is a Progressive Process ... In the "visual" realm we move from the glance to the meaningful look to the intimate look. In the "verbal" realm we move from information to meaningful talk to intimate talk. In the "touch" realm we move from the greeting to meaningful touch to intimate touch.

Privacy ... the sense of feeling safe (**security/safety**) is HUGE for women. This must be balanced by a man's need for **variety**. Having dinner guests in the next room is not the time to seek sex. This can get complicated when you have children. Don't neglect your husband for 18 years!

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Frequency ... ladies ... don't neglect having intimate relations. Studies have shown that in as few as 3-5 times of being turned down a man will begin to shut down from his wife sexually. Initiating should go *both* ways.

Thoughts from Sheet Music by Dr. Kevin Leman ...

Why women want to make their hubby happy ...

Women – 28 days Men – 72 hours

1. A sexually fulfilled husband will do anything for you.
2. A sexually fulfilled husband is a Scriptural mandate. (Goes both ways!)

“Love does not demand its own way.”
1 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT)

3. A sexually fulfilled husband will feel good about himself.

Your man needs you to be sexually attracted to him. It will impact his entire being one way or the other.

4. A sexually fulfilled husband will take on his life work with a vigor and purpose that is unmatched.
5. A sexually fulfilled husband appreciates the important things in life. (Home-centered vs. outside-the-home centered)

Husbands, it's time to make your wife purr ...

1. Pay attention to what she values and then pursue those things.

Have you approached sex as something you deserve and want, or have you approached sex as a very wonderful way to please your wife like no other man can?

2. Mutually submit to her.

Men must die to themselves. Give up your control. Use your authority to serve protect and pleasure your wife.

“Honor Christ by submitting to each other.”
Ephesians 5:21 (TLB)

3. Sexually pursue your wife outside the bedroom.

Good sex is an all-day affair. Your wife's responsiveness to sex will be determined how willingly you help out with the dishes, the kids' homework, or that leaky faucet that drips throughout the night.

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Exclusivity ... when one man focuses completely and totally on one woman – getting all of his sexual input and needs met from her and her alone. (Compartmentalization vs. Holistic) This is very radical in our culture today that says that the key to great sex is lust.

“Let there be no sex sin, impurity or greed among you.
Let no one be able to accuse you of any such things.”
Ephes. 5:3 (Living)

“Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband.
God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex.”
Hebrews 13:4 (Msg)

One of the reasons why men are so emasculated emotionally and psychologically today is the result of pornography.

Internet Filters/Reporting

1. X3Watch – <http://x3watch.com/>
2. Safe Eyes – <http://www.internetsafety.com/safe-eyes-parental-control-software.php>
3. Covenant Eyes – <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>
4. Open DNS – <http://www.opendns.com/>

Assignment: focus solely on each other for 30 days and see if that changes your sex life!

Suggestions For A Great Sex Life

1. Become Talkers - Be specific and honest about your expectations.
2. Become Explorers - Find out what makes your man move and what makes your woman purr!!
3. Become Readers
4. Become Learners
5. Become Other Centered – “Meet your spouse's needs as you would want your spouse to seek to meet yours.” (Golden Rule)

Follow-Up Reflection Questions

1. What gets me most upset in bed?
2. What, in general, most fulfills me sexually?
3. What makes me lose all interest in sex?
4. What generates the most interest in sex?
5. What sexual request or act creates the most fear in me?

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Resources: “Every Man’s Battle” (Stephen Arterburn & Fred Stoeker)
“Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus” (John Gray)
“Real Life Marriage” (Lucy & Dennis Guernsey)
“The Sex Act” (Tim LaHaye)
“Sheet Music” (Kevin Leman)
“Intended For Pleasure” (Ed Wheat)

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how romantic were you when you started dating your spouse? How romantic are you now?
2. Describe one of your attempts at romance.
3. What keeps you from being romantic more often?
4. How does our culture define romance?
5. Is romance essential to a marriage, or is it extra? Why?
6. On the day you were married, how would you have defined romance?
7. When it comes to romance, why is knowing the uniqueness of your spouse important?
8. Why is it men and women seem to seek intimacy with their spouses in such different ways?
9. What happens to your relationship when you make time for your spouse?
10. What are the obstacles to nurturing romance in your marriage?
11. How has your definition of romance changed over the years?
12. How can I make you feel more loved this week?

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Nurture Romance - Knowing your spouse specifically, so you can love them intimately.

1. How does it make you feel to know that God knows you so specifically?
2. What is the relationship between knowledge and intimacy?
3. When has your spouse made you feel loved because of their specific knowledge of you?
4. What prevents us from knowing our spouse's needs and desires?
5. How can you begin to know your spouse more specifically?

Things I want you to know ...

1. I want you to know the "thing" that first attracted me to you was ...
2. I want you to know the "thing" that attracts me to you now is ...
3. I want you to know I love it when we spend time ...
4. I love it when you affirm me for ...
5. I want you to know the thing I feel we need to work on our marriage is ...
6. I want you to know the thing I feel we do best in our marriage is ...

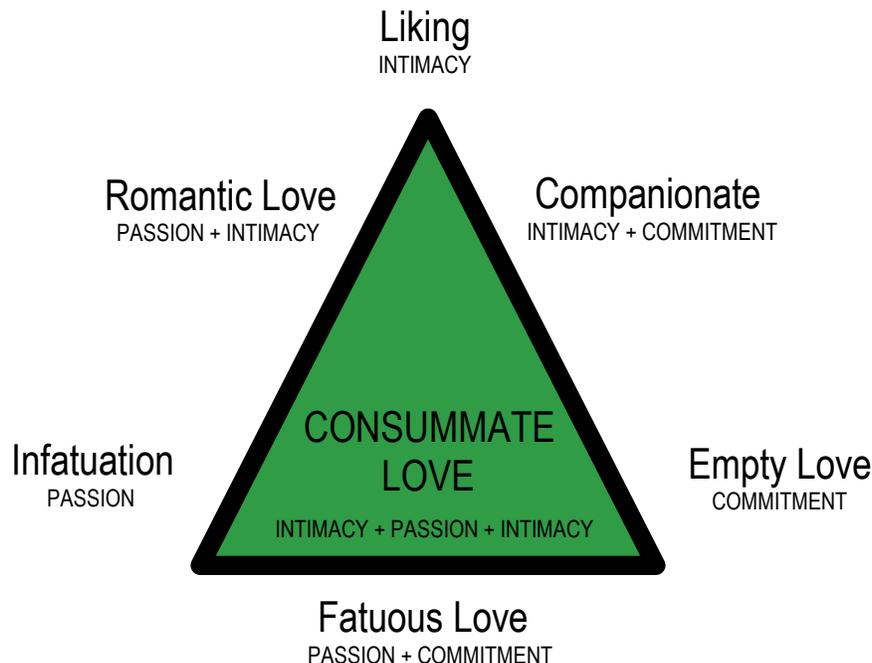
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Triangular Theory of Love Robert Sternberg

Love has three essential components.

1. **Passion** – The biological part of love. Physical attraction. Sexual consummation.
2. **Intimacy** – The emotional part of love. Feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness.
3. **Commitment** – The willful side of love. The decision to remain, and over time, the shared achievements and plans made with each other.

The “amount” of love one experiences depends on the absolute strength of these three components; the “type” of love one experiences depends on their strengths relative to each other. Different stages and types of love can be explained as different combinations of these three elements; for example, the relative emphasis of each component changes over time as an adult romantic relationship develops. A relationship based on a single element is less likely to survive than one based on two or three elements.



The three components, pictorially labeled on the vertices of a triangle, interact with each other and with the actions they produce so as to form seven different kinds of love experiences (non-love is not represented). The size of the triangle functions to represent the “amount” of love – the bigger the triangle the greater the love.

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The shape of the triangle functions to represent the “type” of love, which may vary over the course of the relationship:

- **Non-love** is the absence of all three of Sternberg’s components of love.
- **Liking/friendship** in this case is not used in a trivial sense. Sternberg says that his intimate liking characterizes true friendships, in which a person feels a bond, a warmth, and a closeness with another but not intense passion or long-term commitment.
- **Infatuated love** is pure passion. Romantic relationships often start out as infatuated love and become romantic love as intimacy develops over time. Without developing intimacy or commitment, infatuated love may disappear suddenly.
- **Empty love** is characterized by commitment without intimacy or passion. Sometimes, a stronger love deteriorates into empty love. In cultures in which arranged marriages are common, relationships may begin as empty love and develop into one of the other forms.
- **Romantic love** bonds individuals emotionally through intimacy and physically through passionate arousal, but neither is sustained without commitment.
- **Companionate love** is an intimate, non-passionate type of love that is stronger than friendship because of the element of long-term commitment. Sexual desire is not an element of companionate love. This type of love is often found in marriages in which the passion has gone out of the relationship but a deep affection and commitment remain. The love ideally shared between family members is a form of companionate love, as is the love between close friends who have a platonic but strong friendship.
- **Fatuous love** can be exemplified by a whirlwind courtship and marriage in which a commitment is motivated largely by passion without the stabilizing influence of intimacy.
- **Consummate love** is the complete form of love, representing an ideal relationship toward which people strive. Of the seven varieties of love, consummate love is theorized to be that love associated with the “perfect couple”.

According to Sternberg, such couples will continue to have great sex fifteen years or more into the relationship, they cannot imagine themselves happy over the long-term with anyone else, they overcome their few difficulties gracefully, and each delight in the relationship with one other. However, Sternberg cautions that **maintaining a consummate love may be even harder than achieving it**. He stresses the importance of translating the components of love into action. “Without expression,” he warns, “even the greatest of loves can die” (1987, p. 341). Thus, consummate love may not be permanent. If passion is lost over time, it may change into companionate love.

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EXERCISE: For each of the three components (Passion, Intimacy, Commitment). On a scale of 1 to 10, rate yours and your spouse' levels. Do it on your own, then compare. Number 1 to 10 on vertical axis. Label "Passion" "Intimacy" "Commitment" on the horizontal axis.

EXERCISE: *Handout – Your Changing Love Style*

“IT GETS EASIER.”

- a. Some things get easier – learning their likes and dislikes, our unconscious roles, our unspoken rules, (what else?)
- b. Some things get harder – communication gets easier, then harder.
- c. Marriage Satisfaction/Time – Vertical Axis is “Satisfaction” from 1 to 10. Horizontal Axis is “Time” from 1 to 50 in five-year increments.
 1. At year 1, Satisfaction is high.
 2. Satisfaction dips each 5 year period, highest divorce rate around year 5.
 3. Satisfaction bottoms around year 20, another high divorce time.
 4. Satisfaction rises after that.

EXERCISE: *Handout – Identifying Your Hot Topics*