

SEVEN SIGNS OF SACRED SEX

Part 2

January 13-14, 2007

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There is a great story of a boy and his friend who were talking one day when his friend asked, “Do you know what ‘sex’ is?” The boy said he had heard about it, but really didn’t know. So he went to his mom and asked, “Mom, what is sex? Is it where I came from?”

His mom then launched into an elaborate story of a very large bird, with white feathers and a big beak, and how that bird had delivered both him and his sister. Not satisfied, he went to his grandmother, who told him that very same bird had brought his mom years ago, and in fact had brought his grandmother to her parents. The boy went back outside to his friend, who asked, “So, did you find out about sex?” To which the boy replied, “No, but I found out there hasn’t been a normal birth in our family for three generations.”

As we continue our series on “Pure Sex,” we’re trying to reclaim one of God’s most precious gifts. To do that today, we’re going to need to speak very candidly about it – even though we’ve never been very good at talking about it in church.

Have you noticed? We can talk about worship, bible study, prayer, our witness, parenting, even marriage seminars, but we can’t talk about sex. We can talk about 5 love languages, 10 habits of successful marriages, 7 principles of good communication, but we can’t talk about sex.

To be honest, we also need to communicate better within our marriages. Have you noticed that couples can talk about all sorts of preferences, but not about sex?

- We can talk about how we like our steak cooked
- We can talk about which school our kids attend
- We can talk about whether we prefer cars, pickups or SUVs
- We can talk about our favorite vacations

But many of us cannot talk about sex.

For some of us, our parents never said anything about it. For others, the only instruction we received was that sex was dirty. And many of us from a Christian home know how hard it is to flip the switch and go from “Bad! Bad!” to “I do” to “Ready, set, GO!” in a matter of a few hours.

Today we want to speak very honestly about sex and intimacy for two reasons. First of all, the Bible does! Sex was God’s idea; there is an entire book of the Bible focused on it; and in fact, there is more sexual imagery in the Bible than you can shake a stick at. The subject of sex should not make us uncomfortable; but if you’re like many Christians, no one ever taught you how to think about it, much less that it is sacred – that it is holy.

Sex was given as a gift to us: God’s children, living in a marriage relationship, trying to honor Him. He gave it to us. Shouldn’t our marriages have more sex and better sex than anyone else?

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But there's a second reason we need to talk about it: It's about time. Our silence has in many ways allowed the world to define what sex should be. To be honest, the church has run from this topic for far too long and in doing so, we have conceded this ground to the enemy. Here's what I mean:

- Every 2 ½ minutes, someone in America is sexually assaulted.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) of the victims knew their assailants.
- In 2005, almost 200,000 rapes occurred; 44% of the victims were under the age of 18.

Satan has been very effective at polluting what God created sex to be. In fact, it has become a double-edged sword. It can be used for the greatest good, or the greatest evil. There is no gift that on the one hand holds more promise, and on the other is more fraught with danger than sex. There is no holy act that is as susceptible to contamination. Sex is the perfect gift from God, and the perfect weapon of the enemy.

We can't afford to tiptoe around the subject any longer. It's time to take ownership of the dialogue. It's time to reclaim God's gift! The problem is, sex has been polluted so much, for so long, sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between what God intended, and what the enemy has twisted it into. The lines get blurred, don't they?

How are we to tell the difference between God's design and Satan's corruption? It's about time we brought some clarity to the situation, don't you think? So, here are some mile markers, some signposts of sacred sex. These are on your outline – you may want to follow along.

1. Sacred sex is relationship-based. You might say “Well of course it is!” but not necessarily. The corruption of sex occurs outside of relationship: a fantasy in your mind about someone at the office, pornography after your spouse goes to sleep, adult movies in your hotel room alone, or sex with a stranger. But sacred sex is always within the context of one specific kind of relationship – married heterosexuals – and we'll talk about why in a minute.

Sacred sex is relationship-based because it takes real courage to be fully connected to another person – to be completely vulnerable with them. It takes a lot of courage to open ourselves to another human. In fact, if you remember your King James Version Bible, you may recall that the Hebrew word for sex was translated “to know.” “Adam knew Eve, and she conceived a son...” I don't think that's an accident. Sacred sex is built on relationship, where we are known – where all the walls between us come down.

2. Sacred sex is grounded in intimacy. This is especially challenging for men, who need about 15 seconds to be in the starting blocks and ready for the gun. Gentlemen, I hate to be the one to break this to you, but intimacy cannot be achieved in the 15 seconds it takes you to be ready for sex.

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Sacred sex is grounded in intimacy because it values the person more than anything else – and that doesn't come across so well when you walk in the door and say, "I'm ready!" During counseling one time, a woman said to me, "You know, I think my husband just needs my body parts to show up. As long as that happens, he's fine. Sometimes I wish he'd love me – the person". I suspect there is a chorus of millions of women behind her who would echo that sentiment.

I need to talk with the men here because the intimacy we're talking about is often an issue with men. Guys, in God's plan for sex, emotional intimacy comes before physical. That's not how we were conditioned, but it is God's way. Taking a sincere interest in your wife's day...helping out around the house instead of criticizing...giving her your full attention instead of halfway listening while you check email...that builds trust that spreads throughout your marriage. God's plan is to connect first and foremost with the person, not just the body parts.

Imagine this: what if your wife heard you praying for her? What if, in her presence, you asked God to make you a better husband, a better servant, a better father? What if you confessed your wish to please her? --- Prayer? Confession? That, gentlemen, is Biblical foreplay. Could you imagine how turbo-charged your entire marriage would be if your wife first knew you were praying for her? If she saw you making provision for a romantic mood, instead of just showing up and tapping your feet? Whoa – look out.

Guys, we can do this. The second hallmark of sacred sex is intimacy – and not just in the bedroom.

3. Sacred lovers are servants – broken sex is selfish. "Why can't you do what I like? Why can't you meet my needs?" Unfortunately, incorrect Scripture interpretation has added to this problem. Many have quoted Paul in I Corinthians where he says, The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. (I Cor. 7:3-4, NLT)

I'm afraid this Scripture has led many to justify two very unholy actions: demanding sex, and withholding sex. Many have quoted this Scripture and said, "See, it says right there, it's my right...it's not up to you." Believe me, that is one of the most unscriptural and unholy things a husband can say – and it's not what the Bible says either. And in response, many women will wield sex like a weapon, and use it as leverage. "Unless you do what I want, and listen to me, nothing doing."

Sacred sex doesn't look like that – sacred sex is servant-based. Listen to the Message translation of the same verse in I Corinthians: Marriage is not a place to 'stand up for your rights.' Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. (I Cor.

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7:4, MSG) That captures the flavor of what Paul was saying. Sacred sex seeks the pleasure of the other before your own. That's what a servant does.

4. Sacred sex is based on (freedom) – it's not (rules-oriented). Because the world has perverted what sex was meant to be, we get into a lot of needless “what's ok and what's not ok” discussions.

It's interesting the Bible doesn't go into a lot of detail about what's permissible and what's not. Christians ask themselves a lot of technique questions they really don't need to. Basically, there are two Scriptural principles:

- a. Is it within a heterosexual marriage?
- b. Does it honor your spouse and lead to mutual pleasure?

The Bible is basically silent when it comes to the “how's” of sex – except for the Song of Solomon. That is really hot stuff – and it's in the Bible! Read it sometime with your spouse. I think you'll glean at least three things from it:

- a. Focus more on giving, and see what happens.
- b. They talk to each other a lot.
- c. Lust and seduction are wrong outside of a marriage, but terrific within one.

5. Sacred sex is open – unholy sex is secretive. Satan would have us develop a double life where our greatest fantasies are played outside of the presence and accountability of our spouses. But there is no association between light and dark, between secrecy and godliness. Is there anything about your sexuality that your mate doesn't know? A fantasy about someone else? A habit you've developed while traveling on business? Stop and think – because secrecy is one of Satan's strongest tools. Jesus said, Those who do what is right come to the light gladly, so everyone can see that they are doing what God wants. (John 3:21, NLT) A compartment of your sex life that is in darkness, that is withheld from your wife or your husband, is a tool of the enemy.
6. Sacred sex leads to fulfillment – broken sex ends in emptiness. Sex is all about achieving a oneness that fuses the two of you together. And we need to deal here with the most pervasive enemy of sacred sex today: pornography. I know a guy who began by surfing the web for porn at night. At first it was just here and there, but then it became an hour, then two, then three. Three hours a night, while his wife slept, and he was still empty when he finished. Unholy sex always ends in emptiness.

Here's another example. A wife confided not too long ago to a marriage counselor how embarrassed and humiliated she was that her husband required porn prior to sex – kept the magazines right in his nightstand. He said it was what “got his engine running,” and – get this – that she should be happy – be grateful – that he uses it because, after all, she was the beneficiary. Is that warped or what?

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The message that man sent to his wife was this: “You are not enough.” Can you imagine how empty she felt afterward? How unfulfilled? I can’t imagine how ashamed she must have felt. Pornography will do that to a marriage. I wonder how he would feel if the roles were reversed?

Sacred sex, though, leaves you fulfilled because you are both servants, because your spouse seeks to honor you, so that more than anything else, you are cherished.

And last,

7. Sacred sex is a vehicle – worldly sex is an idol.

Sex becomes an idol when it becomes all about you. An idol is something that takes the place of God, and sex becomes an idol when it stops pointing people to God. Sex should be a directional arrow pointing us to its Creator.

Listen to Paul in Ephesians:

And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her; as the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.” (Eph. 5:25, 31-32, NLT)

Did you catch that? “The two are united into one...it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.” Here’s the next point on your outline:

God shows you Himself through the expression of sexual love. Stop and think: What does God want from us? To join His Spirit with ours. Listen to I Corinthians 6:

Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don’t you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.” But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (I Cor. 6:15-17, NLT)

I’ve got news: The Big O: Oneness. God shows us a picture of what he wants as you are joined to your mate through sex. That integration? That sense of complete abandon? That vulnerability? That defenselessness? That perfect fit together? Know how that feels? God says, “THAT’S what I want – I want you to be that open, that trusting, that one with me. Sacred sex is the perfect metaphor of what I desire with you.”

He desires to join his Spirit with you permanently, in the same way you join yourself with your spouse. This is why sex is so sacred. This is why God says to keep it only between you and your wife – because the Oneness created from sex is representative of the same fusion he desires with us.

Listen to the sexual imagery all the way back in Exodus:

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“Do not make treaties of any kind with the people living in the land. They are spiritual prostitutes, committing adultery against me by sacrificing to their gods. (Exodus 34:15, NLT, emphasis mine)

And then in the book of James:

What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful?” (James 4:5, NLT, emphasis mine)

God is present where oneness occurs. God is all about oneness – and sexuality is used as a metaphor throughout the Bible for how God jealously wants union and faithfulness with us.

God wants intimacy with you. And, in the right context, he wants intimacy for you.

We are never more exposed – literally and figuratively – than when we are joined to another human being. We **MUST** protect what God designed sex to be. Let’s resolve today to use it to honor and cherish our spouses, as we honor the God who gave it to us as a gift.