

## **Meaning of Marriage Homework**

### **August 5: Sex - The Act of Covenant Renewal**

#### **For reflection**

“Finally, strike a balance with regard to your sexual thoughts and desires. Some Christians feel deeply strained and defiled by any strong sexual thoughts or daydreams. Others indulge them. The gospel is neither legalism, nor antinomianism. Christians are not saved by obeying God, and yet true salvation will lead to obeying God, out of gratitude. This should lead to a very balanced approach to thoughts and temptations. Martin Luther, for example, was reputed to say about sexual desire, “You can’t stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making nests in your hair.” By that he meant that we can’t stop sexual thoughts from occurring to us -- they are natural and unavoidable. However, we are responsible for what we do with those thoughts. We must not entertain and dwell on them.

And if we do something that is sexually wrong, we should use the gospel of grace on our consciences. That gospel will neither take the sin lightly nor lead you to flagellate yourself and wallow in guilt indefinitely. It is important to get the gospel’s pardon and cleansing for wrongdoing. Often it is unresolved shame for past offenses that strip up present, obsessive fantasies.”

*The Meaning of Marriage*, pp. 262-63

#### **For discussion**

The temptation to sexual gratification outside of marriage attacks both the married and the single person. What kinds of sexual temptation have you historically faced/ What kinds of sexual temptation are you facing right now?

#### **Put it into practice**

In a society so immersed in sex, it is quite common for people to have sexual experiences that have left them feeling powerless and wounded -- whether from trauma, such as rape, abuse, or betrayal; or more nuanced things, such as disappointment caused by a former sexual partner. One effect of sin is for its victims to feel shame and isolation, but the gospel offers healing in community, and that can often begin with talking to someone about it. It will be a step of courage to choose to talk with someone, but the result can be to move you closer to the freedom you’ve been hoping for.

- From what pain from the past do you need healing? Do you have a trusted confidant with whom you can share your experiences and feelings?

The first step to freedom from any kind of sin is repentance. That is acknowledging to God what you’ve done as sin -- and then turning away from it and toward him. He

enables you to do this through the forgiveness he offers in the gospel. Repentance is not just feeling sorry but changing the direction of your heart's affections. In true repentance you begin to see Jesus as more desirable than the sin you thought you were finding satisfaction in. Only God's Spirit can provide lasting change, but such change begins as you choose the glory of God over the faux glory of sexual sin.

- For what sexual sin do you need to begin the process of forgiveness and repentance?

### **A Biblical checkup for your sexual intimacy**

As noted in chapter 8, "Sex and Marriage," sex is a powerful force created by God and prescribed for marriage. According to 1 Corinthians 7:3-5,

*"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."*

There is no way to obey this command of Scripture and maintain a dormant sex life as a married couple. The following is designed to help you take a step toward having a regular, active marital sexual partnership. Because every couple is different, a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work here. The goal is to help you take a step. It is up to you to build from there.

As with previous exercises, this one works best in a setting away from the normal distractions of your everyday life. Use the following questions to help you come to agreement on your next step toward experiencing the regular, active sexual intimacy God wants for your marriage.

- Do you believe our current sex life fully agrees with Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5?
- What is one *internal* factor in our marriage we need to address to move closer to God's vision for our sexual and emotional unity? (For example: unresolved conflict, lack of relational connectedness, physical ailments, etc.). Limit your answer to one thing. Because people are flawed and marriage is dynamic, it would be impossible to wait until you are perfect to have sexual intimacy. But you can work toward a better marriage as you work toward sexual intimacy.
- What is one *external* factor in our marriage we need to address to move closer to God's vision for our sexual and emotional unity? (For example: children, work hours,

Uncle Bob still lives in the guest room, television and internet distractions, etc.). As with the previous question, limit your answer to one thing.

- Knowing we will *both* have to have a selfless perspective to achieve greater intimacy, what is one step we could take to move in that direction? (For example: a weekend getaway, scheduled date nights, no TV or internet after 8PM. have sex tonight, move out Uncle Bob, etc.).
- Having open, clear dialogue is important in developing lasting sexual intimacy. How could we begin to talk more openly and candidly with one another about this area of our marriage?

**For next Sunday, August 12**

- Read Chapter 4, “The Mission of Marriage” in *The Meaning of Marriage*