

Cultivating Connections

MARRIAGE CONFERENCE 2019

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Enhancing Emotional & Physical Intimacy in Marriage

Outline

- Review of the Biblical Foundations for Marital Sexuality
- Four Areas of Application:
 1. Intimacy by Color
 2. Pleasure: Attraction vs. Attachment
 3. Relaxation and Sexual Response
 4. The Role of Mindfulness

Biblical Foundations for Marital Sexuality

Biblical Foundations

God is the Creator of Sexuality.

Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

One Flesh Design

Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Procreation and Families

Genesis 9:1, "...Be fruitful and multiply.."

Biblical Foundations

Mutuality and Giving in Sexuality

1 Corinthians 7:3-5, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [kindness]: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not [don't deprive] one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [lack of self-control]."

Biblical Foundations

Sexuality is Pleasurable

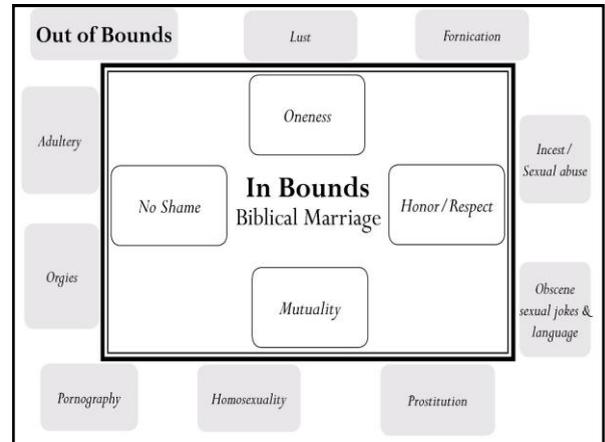
Proverbs 5:18-19, "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished [intoxicated] always with her love."

No Shame

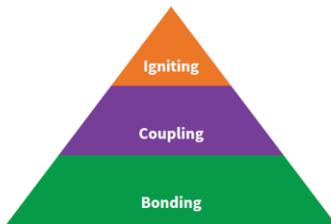
Genesis 2:25, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Boundaries to Protect Sexuality

Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."



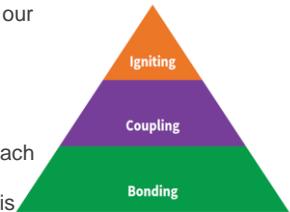
Intimacy by Color



Green = Bonding Intimacy

We are intimate companions and friends.

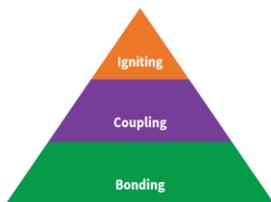
- Express feelings and share our hearts.
- Listen intently.
- Give time and attention.
- Give tender looks.
- Hug, put our arms around each other, hold hands.
- Note: This level of intimacy is not intended to be erotic.



Purple = Coupling Intimacy

We share a special, exclusive, romantic connection as a couple.

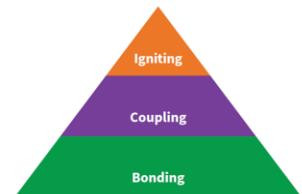
- Kissing, making-out
- Cuddle and hold each other
- Flirting
- Sensual touch
- More intense personal sharing
- Note: this type of intimacy is passionate but doesn't always proceed to genital sexuality.



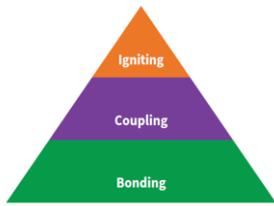
Orange = Igniting Intimacy

We are lovers.

- Sexual intimacy and passion
- Foreplay
- Genital touching
- Intercourse
- Note: This type of intimacy involves the full sexual experience.



Intimacy by Color and Intentionality



- In early marriage, green and purple intimacy often seem to occur effortlessly and spontaneously. Over time, couples often try to jump straight to orange without green and purple. Being intentional in the green, makes it more natural for the purple to emerge... and it follows that being intentional about the purple makes it more natural for the orange.

ROSEMAU A. NEEL (2013) www.rosemau.com

Pleasure: Excitement vs. Attachment

Considering Pleasure

"Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's [God's] ground... He [God] made the pleasure: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy [God] has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He [God] has forbidden." — **C.S. Lewis, Screwtape Letters**

"Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you will get neither." — **C.S. Lewis, The Joyful Christian**

Pursuing Pleasure: Good or Bad?

- The word "erotic" refers to the pursuit of sexual desire and arousal.
 - God designed sexuality to be pleasurable and powerful. He isn't surprised by it.
 - Whether this concept is good or bad will depend on whether we pursue a secular or Biblical mindset about it.
- Unbiblical thinking about sexuality unhinges sexual pleasure from a covenant marriage relationship that respects God's design.
 - Human nature tends toward being selfish and toward fulfilling our own desires.
 - God's model for living is paradoxical to human thinking (e.g., die that you may live)

Excitement vs. Attachment

THE WORLD'S MODEL EXCITEMENT-FOCUSED

"Seek higher levels of pleasure and excitement and you will be happy ever after."

GOD'S MODEL ATTACHMENT-FOCUSED

"Honor God's covenant design by bonding well and seeking mutual fulfillment and you will find sexuality pleasurable and exciting."

Erotic vs Covenant

Erotic

Focused on Excitement

- Dopamine & adrenaline
- "Exotic is erotic" thinking leads to continually seeking novelty and higher levels of excitement; fears boredom.
- Couples disappointed with sexuality are often seeking how to get back to the erotic sexuality (i.e., seek some new addition or dimension).
- Seeking excitement outside of God's bounds creates diminishing returns and harms the bond.

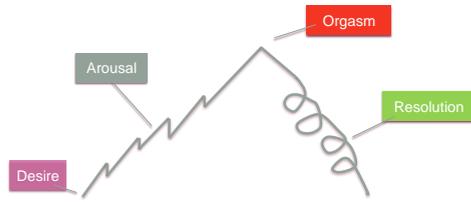
Covenant

Focused on Attachment

- Oxytocin
- Bonding and intimate sexuality is focused on knowing and being known,
- Safe acceptance and connection through grace allows both deeper connection and the shame-free experience of pure pleasure.
- Intimate sexuality according to God's design allows for excitement and strengthens the bond.

Relaxation and Sexual Response

Phases of Sexual Response



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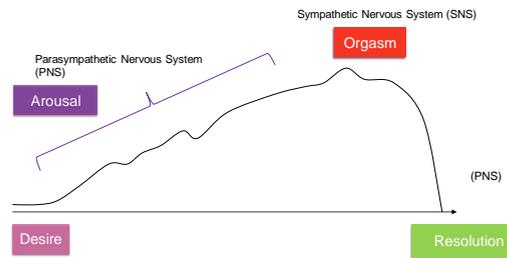
Biology

God created our bodies with two systems:

- Sympathetic Nervous System** (alarm/excitement): this system up-regulates our bodies; fight/flight/freeze; blood vessels constrict, blood moves away from the extremities toward vital organs.
- Parasympathetic Nervous System** (calming): this system down-regulates our bodies; quieting/contentment; blood vessels dilate, blood moves toward the extremities.

- Relaxation is key to sexual functioning.
- Love and trust create emotional and physical safety.
- Pressure and demands create a stress response (e.g., life demands or from the relationship).

Both Systems Involved



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Goals for Sexual Touch: CPR

- Connection
- Pleasure
- Relaxation
- Orgasm/Performance

By spending time with CPR couples will:

- Engage their parasympathetic nervous system (calming).
- Be able to be more present with each other.
- Avoid moving to genital sexuality prematurely.
- Enjoy the process of moving through the full sexual experience.

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The Role of Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is currently a buzzword being talked about in business, psychology, and in pop-culture.
- Mindfulness means different things to different people.
- Just like with “meditation,” it is practiced by some as part of Eastern religions.
- However, just like with Christian meditation, mindfulness can be practice in a way that helps us to increase our awareness of God and our lives.
- A working definition of Mindfulness: “The process of keeping one’s mind in the present moment while staying non-judgmentally detached from potentially unhealthy thoughts and feelings.” (Symington & Symington, 2011)

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Mindfulness and Physical Intimacy

1. Reduce anxiety and stress.
2. Focus on the present moment.
3. Shift from the “doing-mind” to the “being-mind”.
4. Detach from distractions, judgmental thoughts, and negative beliefs.
5. Sensate Focus – learning to focus on the physical sensations (touch, pleasure, etc.)

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Two-Screen Method

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FRONT SCREEN

SIDE SCREEN



ADAPTED FROM SYMINGTON AND SYMINGTON

FRONT SCREEN

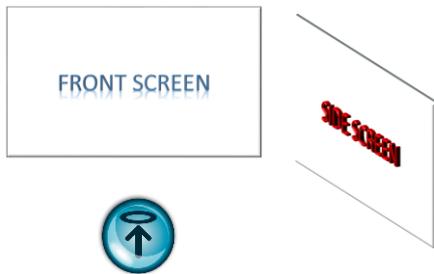
ATTENTION
REACTIVITY
AVOIDANCE

SIDE SCREEN



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Step 1: Accept & Redirect



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Step 2: Use Front Screen Anchors

1. Mindfulness Skills
1. **Acceptance:** "I can accept this current feeling."
2. Loving-Actions
2. **Redirect Attention:** Gently keep redirecting to the Front Screen
3. **Present Moment:** Fully engage in 5 senses in the present moment.

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