



## Right or Wrong in the Marriage Bed?

by Jeff Colón

What is proper for the Christian marriage bed? I can't tell you how many times this question has come up through the years as I counsel couples that are dealing with the aftermath of sexual sin.

This question arises because sin has marred what God intended for pleasure. Our society has reduced sex to a selfish, lust-filled desire. It has become twisted and deformed from the purity that God originally created it in. But I want every couple to know that God can restore purity, even when a spouse's sexual sin has brought added confusion, guilt or awkwardness into the marriage bed. My own testimony is that He can indeed make sex pure again. Sexual intimacy is a beautiful experience for the couple who sees it as a God-given gift and as a means to bless one another.

When God created man and woman He looked at all He had done and it was pleasing in His eyes. The Bible says, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31) The word "everything" includes the way He made and designed our bodies, does it not? I say that because I want you to clearly understand that God intended for us to *enjoy* sexual relations in the covenant of marriage. Sexual relations were designed by God for procreation, but also to be a time of giving and expressing our love to one another through the giving of our body to bring pleasure and delight to each other.

The question that inevitably comes up is, "What acts are considered acceptable before God to bring that pleasure to my spouse?" Of course, the Word of God is clear about certain acts being sin, such as bringing pornography or another person into your marriage bed. But beyond these blatant violations of the biblical standard, what is permissible? I'd rather not try to convince anyone that particular acts are right or wrong. What I intend to do is to provide the biblical basis for establishing purity in your marriage bed. This isn't a behavioral issue, it's a heart issue. The truth is, if your heart is right, you will be able to discern for yourself, with the Spirit's help, which acts are right and which acts are wrong for you as a couple.

The Scriptures admonish us to, "look out not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4). Paul also instructs the husband to "render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." (1Corinthians 7:3) Lust and self gratification are self-centered, whereas true *agape* love is others-centered. Giving, not getting, is what should be in the heart of each spouse as they come together. Love-making should be a time of giving and blessing the other. Our times of intimacy should be expressions of love, not lust.

The apostle Paul wrote, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing

unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” (Romans 14:12-14). The context here was the eating of certain foods but the principle applies to the marriage bed. Approached from this standpoint, doing things that would violate your mate’s conscience or cause a stumbling block to either spouse is automatically precluded.

Let me just say that anything out of the ordinary can prove to be a stumbling block to either spouse, especially a person coming out of sexual sin. I would encourage couples to have open communication about their love-making. Both husbands and wives need to be able to ask questions about what is pleasing to the other, and they also need to be sensitive to things that might be uncomfortable for their partner. I realize these discussions can be awkward for many couples at first. Most of us haven’t nurtured the kind of openness that is required to address sexual issues in our marriage. My wife and I had to go through all of this ourselves as the Lord led us through the process of restoring our marriage after my sexual sin. It meant honestly evaluating what we did in our marriage bed through prayer and using the Scriptures as our guide. As a counselor, I often recommend that couples go through the book *Intended for Pleasure* by Dr. Ed Wheat. This book can help Christian couples identify and work through some of their sexual intimacy issues.

Putting the needs of our spouse before our own truly is the way of blessing. When God is in the midst of our love-making, and we are focusing on pleasing Him and our spouse, there is a oneness involved that is beautiful, fulfilling and lasting—the very opposite of lust which is fleeting, unfulfilling and ugly. God desires married couples to enjoy sexual relations as a divine blessing. Couples need to bring godly convictions into their sexual intimacy but they don’t need to allow the past or the devil to rob them of the blessing and sanctity of the marriage bed.

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