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## SEX: GOD, GROSS, OR GIFT?

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### Part 6 of Real Marriage

Pastor Mark Driscoll | February 19, 2012

### INTRODUCTION

One of the things that Grace and I do in the book is we try to be honest. Our view is if we're not honest with one another, we can't really have a marriage that is close, and intimate, and God glorifying, and fun. And what we realized was in counseling appointments with people, talking to them one-on-one in private, as we would be honest about our struggles and our sins, they would be honest with us, they'd be honest with God, they'd be honest with one another. And we want you to be honest. And so we try to be honest.

And the honest truth is that when it comes to the issue of sex—and some people have even asked, “Why do you talk about that so much in the book?” Well, it's kind of an issue for a lot of people, and it is the distinguishing aspect of marriage. It's what distinguishes other relationships from marriage, like golfing buddies or racquetball partners. It's the distinguishing aspect of marriage, according to the Bible.

No couple comes into marriage with a perfectly biblical, untainted view of marriage and sex and then just begins with nothing but a clean slate of gladness and goodness and *The Sound of Music* soundtrack just ringing in their ears as they walk down the aisle. For Grace and I, we came into the marriage, particularly on the issue of sex, from very different places. Grace grew up in a conservative, Bible-teaching, Christian home. She had quite a bit of naivety about guys, didn't have a brother, and learned some things the hard way. She also had been sexually assaulted, raped, and abused, something I didn't know until many years into our marriage, about a decade or more into our marriage. I grew up as a non-Christian. I grew up in a rough neighborhood. I grew up near the strip clubs and the prostitutes and was exposed to pornography at a young age. And we came from completely different backgrounds regarding sex.

When we met, we were not virgins, and in our dating relationship, we were, in fact, sleeping together. She was not walking faithfully with the Lord as a Christian, and I was a non-Christian, and we were a mess. God saved me at the age of nineteen, about the same time that Grace was coming back into a real vibrant relationship with Jesus. I'll never forget, I was in a collegiate Bible study, and the pastor was talking about fornication, a completely new “f” word to me. I'd never heard of that word. And he read—I think it was Corinthians, probably, where it says that fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God. And I thought, “Wow, that's a big deal. Boy, I really feel bad for those fornicators. I wonder what a fornicator is.”

So, I called the pastor, and I said, “I've got a friend of mine. I fear he may be a fornicator.” I said, “So, I would like to get from you the definition of a fornicator.” He said, “Well, is your buddy sleeping with his girlfriend?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “They're fornicating.” I was like, “Whoa! Are you sure?” “Yes, I am sure.” “They love each other.” “It's still fornicating.” “Oh, okay.” I'm looking for the fine print. “Well, they're going to get married.” “Still fornicating.” “Oh, okay. Well, they've already slept together, so, you know, it's too late now. So, why should they stop?” He said, “Because they're fornicating.” I was like, “Oh, okay. Well, I will let my friend know that. This is very serious.”

So, I called Grace, my friend. I said, “We are fornicating.” She said, “Yeah, I know.” She said, “We're not supposed to, and you now belong to Jesus, and I've returned to a vibrant relationship with him, and we need to stop fornicating.” So, we stopped fornicating, by the grace of God, and we got engaged to be married.

We were married between our junior and senior year of college. Some people are like, “Why'd you get married so young?” Some reasons. And I thought, “Okay, now we're Christians. “Jesus died for our sin. We get to love one another, enjoy one another, and be close.” And, honestly, it wasn't working. It's like, “How come we're not close? How come we're not enjoying one another? How come it's not like I thought it would be?” And my sin was I was very selfish, and I think I even got bitter against God, to some degree. Like, “I'm a Christian now. I stopped doing bad things. I started doing what the Bible says. How come it's not working?”

Grace and I are now at the point that—God has been very good to us. And through biblical study, and prayer, and repentance of sin, and as we have taught this content all over the US and all over the world, on dating, and sex, and marriage, what we find over and over and over is that most of the time, when two people are married, they come from diametrically opposed perspectives on sex and marriage. Sometimes they see it as god, the most important thing in the world. Sometimes they see it as gross, “dirty, nasty, vile, and wrong, so save it for the one you love,” they were told in youth group. Very confusing message. And the Bible presents sex as a gift. It's not god, and it's not gross. It can be a false god. It can be done in a way that is gross because it dishonors God. But, ultimately, sex is a gift from God.

### SEX BEFORE SIN

I'll read the first marriage, and the first wedding, and the first account of sexual relationship, and it's sex before sin in Genesis 2:18–25: "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone.'" Every man who gets married agrees with this. It says it's not good to be alone. "'I will make a helper fit for him.' Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, birds of the heaven, beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him."

Now, can you just imagine that? We read that. Can you imagine you're Adam, and God says, "You shouldn't be alone. You need a wife." Adam's like, "I second the motion," right? "I would like to have a wife—I don't know what a wife is, but that sounds fantastic." God says, "Okay, first, let me bring you some beings you need to meet." And God brings along—here's an aardvark, here's a goat. You know, I'm sure Adam's looking at God, like, "That's not her, right?" "No, it's not." "Okay, good. Okay, well." This is a big day for Adam. And so he names all the animals, and then God brings to him the woman.

So, here it is, the first love story in all the Bible. The story goes on. "For Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that he had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." It's a big day, right, ladies? You just got made. It's a big day. You're going to get married naked. That's how they say it in Texas. That's a big day. That's a lot.

So, God brings the woman to the man. Verse 23, "The man said—" He sings to her. It's a poem in Hebrew. "This at last—" Enough of the aardvarks, and goats, and potbelly pigs. "'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall," number one, "leave his father and mother." Single guys, go home and pack your stuff. Number two, "Hold fast to his wife," that's the covenant of marriage. "The two shall become one flesh." That's the consummation of the covenant. "And the man and his wife were both—" What? "Naked. And were not—" What? "Ashamed." God was glorified. They were satisfied. That's sex before sin.

Seven things. Number one, God made us male and female with equal dignity but different roles.

Number two, love is more like a song than a math equation. Adam sings to Eve. Some of you, you live in your heads. You're very systematic. Maybe you're theologians, or you're mathematicians, or you're administrators, organizers. You're engineers. Love is more like poetry than math. It's something that you not only think in your head, but you feel with your heart. That's why Adam sings to Eve.

Number three, marriage is for one man and one woman by God's design, and it doesn't matter what the vote says. There's one vote that counts: the Maker of heaven and earth.

Number four, God created our bodies for sexual pleasure and called it very good! It wasn't when Adam and Eve got married and, you know, God went to get a mocha, came back, and was, "What are they doing? I never, ever thought that that would happen." Right?

Number five, all sex outside of heterosexual marriage is a sin. Some of you say, "What about that?" Yes, whatever "it" is outside of heterosexual marriage: sex before marriage, sex outside of marriage, polygamy, adultery, fornication, pornography, whatever. Sex is a gift, and it's to be contained and restrained by marriage.

Number six, sex is to be without shame. It says that the man and the woman were naked without shame, no shame. They didn't feel dirty about it. It wasn't sinful. It wasn't horrible. It was a gift that God gave them to enjoy as a married couple.

And number seven—this might be the biggest idea of the whole sermon. This could change your whole marriage and renew your mind. Your standard of beauty is your spouse. God does not give us a standard of beauty. He gives us a spouse. God didn't go to Adam, "Well, what do you like? Tall, short, white, black, Asian, young, old, long hair, short hair, skinny, formerly skinny? What do you like? What do you like?" He came to Adam. He said, "Aardvark, Eve." Adam said, "Eve looks amazing. That's amazing right there." Eve's standard of beauty was Adam. Adam's standard of beauty was Eve.

Marketing, pornography, coveting, lust—what Jesus calls "adultery of the heart"—is having a standard of beauty other than your spouse, comparing your spouse to them, becoming dissatisfied, and then ultimately becoming an adulterer; if not just in your heart, also with your hands.

Your standard of beauty is your spouse, so here's what this means. Whoever you married, that's what you're into. Okay? If you marry someone short, you're into short! You love short! You're thinking about short! You're glad for short! Yay, short! Okay? God does not give you a standard of beauty. God gives you a spouse. All right. I will proceed before I have to fire myself.

Now, what I want to look at is there are three primary views of sex. We'll talk about them in succession. Sex as god. Sex as gross. Sex as gift. Okay?

## SEX AS GOD

Sex as god. Now, this is a position where—I shouldn't have said it like that. Okay, the first perspective is sex as god, and this is where sex is your identity. "I'm gay, straight, bi." Your life is consumed by it. Your identity is set by it. It becomes a dominating aspect of your being. Romans 12:1 says to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . . which is your spiritual worship." Worship is what you do with your body. You ever wonder why false religions and cults throughout the history of the world have oftentimes had illicit sex, sinful sex as part of their ritual? Because what you do with your body is not just physical; it's deeply spiritual, and you're offering your body as a sacrifice, either to the glory of God or to worship a false god.

Okay, so for those of you who are single, hear me in this. I've had this conversation many times in many forms, but I'll give you one example. A young woman comes up to me after I preach something like this. She says, "Pastor Mark, I think you're old school. I think you're old-fashioned. I think you're a little negative. My boyfriend and I, we're living together, and/or we're sleeping together. We love each other. We care about each other. We're probably going to get married. We're not hurting anybody. We're consenting adults. What's the problem?" Answer: "You're an idolater." You are worshipping a false god. Your problem goes deeper than sex. It goes all the way down to worship.

She'll look at me very confused— "What are you talking about? I'm a Christian." No, because you had to choose between Jesus and your boyfriend, and you chose the boyfriend as the most important man in your life, and you turned your back on Jesus to pursue a relationship with the boyfriend. And when the two of you are together, it's not to the glory of God. That means that your bed is a pagan altar, and your boyfriend is a pagan priest, and your body is a living sacrifice. It's idolatry, which is the worship of someone or something other than the God of the Bible.

This is what is also said in 1 Corinthians 10:7-8. "Do not be—" What's the word? "Idolaters." See, we tend to think of idolatry as, "Oh, those poor pagan people in those faraway lands. They set up a statue, and then they give money to it and homage to it, and they bow down to it. And it's right in the middle of their home, and it's on the mantle, and it dominates their life, and they've got that little false god that they all sit around and look at." And they walk into our home, see porn on the TV and say, "I can't find the difference." Our idol plugs in.

We are all idolaters in varying ways, and idolatry is because we are all worshipers, unceasing worshipers. We're passionate people. We give ourselves away—our time, talent, and treasure—to something, to someone, to a cause, to an experience, to a group. And the question is not, "Are you a worshiper?" The question is, "Who or what is the object of your worship?" That's the question. And those who don't worship the God of the Bible, they are idolaters.

So he says, "Do not be idolaters as some of them were." And he goes back to the Old Testament. "As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.'" And the word there is, "They had a few drinks, they had a nice meal, and the next thing you know, it's getting sexually flirtatious. It's now escalating." "We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day." God just killed twenty-three thousand people. That's a big funeral.

And what he says is, sexual immorality is what? Idolatry. Let me bring this all together for you in Romans 1. Take a deep breath. Put a seatbelt on. This is a hard word. God uses hard words to produce soft people. And if all we ever get are soft words, we become hard people. He talks about idolaters: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever blessed! Amen."

Here it is! Here it is. Hear me on this! This is very significant. Our world knows nothing about it, and the church is absolutely ignorant! We are all worshipers. We worship the Creator and enjoy and steward created things, like the human body, and pleasure, and sex; or we worship the created, and as a result, we're idolaters.

Do you know what porn is? Idolatry. Do you know what fornication is? Idolatry. Do you know what adultery is? Idolatry. Some of you say, "Well, what about tolerance and diversity?" What about God? What about God who made us in his image and likeness? What about God who says, "It's not about your sexual orientation; it's about my glory"?

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature," this is the only express forbidding of lesbianism in the whole Bible. "And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another," that's homosexuality. "Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error." Some of your translations will say "perversion."

If you are an idolater, and you worship created things rather than the Creator God, you will end up being a pervert. Do you know why? There's nothing more magnificent, majestic, and mysterious than the human body. When God created the world, he said that everything was good. When he made the man and woman in his image and likeness, he said it was very good. The apex of God's creation is the man and the woman. There's nothing more amazing. There's nothing more astonishing. There's nothing more compelling.

And what happens if sex is your god? You're going to end up desiring disgusting things, doing disgusting things—homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, fornication, adultery, pornography. And let me say this. If these are your sins, the goal is not just to make you a heterosexual, but to make you a Christian, because the goal is not to just get you to stop sinning sexually, but to start worshipping Jesus, the Creator. And you can't simultaneously worship the Creator while worshipping the created.

So, the answer for sex as god is Jesus as God. For those of you who think, "But I have to be sexually active," Jesus died, and rose, and ascended into heaven, having never had any romantic or sexually physical relationship with anyone.

Here's what happens when you have a culture where sex is god. I'll read at length from the book. "Annual pornography revenues are more than \$90 billion worldwide. In the US, pornography revenues were \$13 billion," this is the latest statistics, now six years old. "More than all the combined revenues of pro baseball, basketball, and football combined. More than the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC combined. Porn sites account for 12 percent of all Internet sites. Every day, 2.5 million pornographic emails are sent. Ninety percent of children, ages eight to sixteen have viewed porn on the Internet. The average age of first porn Internet observation is eleven. The number one consumer of online pornography is twelve- to seventeen-year-old boys." You really conservative Christian parents who have a sixth grader, and you wonder, "When should I talk to them?" Two years ago.

“Youth with significant exposure to sexuality in the media are consistently more likely to have intercourse before the age of fourteen. The average person today has sex for the first time at age sixteen. Fifty-seven percent of pastors say that porn addiction is the ‘most damaging issue’ to their congregations. The problem is one-third of evangelical pastors have a porn problem.” So to say, “Well, go talk to your pastor,” what he’ll tell you is, “I don’t know. I’m clicking on the same sites as you,” in one of three occasions.

What do you think the number one day of the week is for pornography being downloaded off the Internet? Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the day, above all other days, when porn is downloaded from the Internet. Because on Sunday, it’s not Jesus who’s primarily worshiped as God. It’s sex that’s worshiped as god.

And this is a massive cultural experiment, that they didn’t know what would happen, and now you’re going to pay the price. This leads to massive sexual abuse. One in four women and one in six men is sexually assaulted. And this leads to sexual slavery, as across our nation and world, major cities are trafficking centers for teenage girls who are slaves. Because what happens when you worship sex as god, sacrifices have to be made. Human sacrifices have to be made. Okay?

So, if you’re here and your inclination is in the direction of sex as god, repent. Don’t try and get your spouse to worship your god. Don’t say, “Watch this with me. I saw in a movie, or in a prior relationship this activity was done, and I want you to do it.” What you’re saying is, “I want you to join me in my idolatry and worship my god called sex.” No. Okay, so this is a really dangerous, very deadly, highly prominent position.

## SEX AS GROSS

Now, secondarily, there’s an overreaction, “Sex is gross.” For some, sex is god. For others, it’s just gross. In the culture, it tends to be sex as god. In the church, it tends to be sex as gross. Now, this starts with Platonic thinking back in Greek philosophy: Epimenides, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato. This concept of dualism: that there’s the spiritual and there’s the physical, and the spiritual is good and the physical is bad. This stoic thinking, philosophically, dominates much of the early church fathers’ instruction on the New Testament. The result is that the body is not good, even though Jesus came in human flesh, and passion and pleasure is not good, and sex, within marriage, is only for procreation. It’s not for enjoyment, pleasure, and the other biblical purposes.

So, what this does is this affects—this non-Christian, Greek thinking, it’s not biblical, but it affects early Christian teaching. So, Tertullian and Ambrose, when they were asked if they preferred intercourse between husbands and wives or the extinction of the human race, they said, “We would rather have the extinction of the human race.” It’s sort of a big statement. “We’d rather that people ceased to exist than couples continue to be intimate.”

In our present day, “sex as gross” is still really common. I mean, the Song of Solomon is one of the books of the Bible. It’s great. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. Some would say, “All except for that one.” It’s a series of love songs between a husband and wife. It’s frank without being crass. She speaks first. She speaks most. She speaks freely. She speaks frankly. It’s a great book. It’s three thousand years old. It’s so current that people even read it and say, “Oh, that can’t be about a husband and wife. God wouldn’t allow them to talk to each other with that kind of poetic freedom.” Yeah, he does. I mean, it used to be that you couldn’t read it unless you were thirty or married. That was the Jewish rule.

It’s really a great book. Even though it’s three thousand years old and was in a conservative eastern context, wow, it really gets to a lot of issues. But people who see sex as gross, they will not even allow the book to be about a husband and a wife. Now, truth be told, marriage is a picture and portrait of the gospel and Jesus’ love for the church, so there could be secondary meaning for Jesus’ relationship with his bride, the church, but the primary first meaning is between a husband and a wife. When I even taught this book of the Bible, I got whacked like a piñata on Cinco de Mayo, because I had a bunch of people saying, “You shouldn’t teach that book of the Bible!” Really? Are there any other ones I shouldn’t teach? Like, why?

To be fair and to be honest, there are some people who see sex as gross because they’ve been sinned against, or they’ve sinned sexually. They’ve not experienced, you know, full cleansing and healing. They’ve not really worked it through with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Again, my wife, part of her story is sexual assault victim. So, if that’s part of your story, I don’t mean to make fun of you, but to say you’ve still got to work that through, because for you, you might feel that sex is gross.

I can still remember talking to a really sweet gal, who was an abuse victim as a child, and she said, “Growing up, I just felt that everything below my neck was gross.” Those were her words. I said, “Okay, well then we’ve got to help you to receive cleansing from sin that was committed against you and see yourself as God sees you, not as your abuse defines you.”

## SEX AS GIFT

Sex isn’t god. Sex isn’t gross. Now, don’t raise your hand, but how many of you, on the scale, you would lean toward sex as god? How many of you, you would lean toward sex as gross? How many of you are married to somebody who’s totally the opposite of you, which is why you are here? And you’re trying to pull them toward your perspective. Let me say, let’s invite you both, together, to the Bible, where sex is not god, it’s not gross, but sex is a gift from God, and it doesn’t have to be gross. So, there are, according to the Scriptures, six ways in which sex is a gift.

Again, some of you say, “Man, is this appropriate?” It is. Again, by age eight, a lot of kids are seeing porn on the Internet. By age eleven, most kids have seen porn on the Internet. The number one consumer of porn is twelve- to seventeen-year-old boys. The average sixteen-year-old has already had sex with someone. If we don’t get our information from the Word of God, we will get it somewhere else, and it won’t lead to life; it’ll lead to death.

The Bible gives six ways in which sex is a gift from God. Number one, it’s for pleasure. Right? I mean, pleasure is not bad. Some of you, you’re way too worried about pleasure. And some of you think, “Pleasure could lead me to sin.” You know what? Pleasure could lead you to worship, too. And I

would encourage you, don't go for shallow, lesser pleasures. Go for the deep pleasures, the desires of God. The Bible says that, "Pleasures are in your right hand, Lord God, forevermore." That's what the psalmist says. Pleasure is not a bad thing. It can be a gift that God gives.

In the Song of Solomon, kids are never mentioned. Kids are a gift, they're a blessing, they're awesome, but they're never mentioned. In the Song of Solomon, the whole book is about the pleasure, enjoying it, having fun. Again, if you're friends, you're together, you love God, there's no shame. Your conscience is clear. Pleasure is a gift. Some of you, though, even enjoying things with your spouse, you feel guilty about that, because maybe that's not holy. You need to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Number two, it can also be for children. It doesn't always have to be for procreation. But at the moment of intimacy, God allows life to be born. We've got five kids. We love our kids. I'm glad to have kids. Kids are a blessing. And sometimes the intimacy results in children. It doesn't mean that birth control is always a sin or things of that nature. We deal with all of that in the book. But, yeah, children are a blessing, and it's one of the reasons that God gave us this great gift.

Number three, it's knowledge. Genesis 4:1 says that Adam lay with his wife Eve, and he knew her. There's a knowledge. There's an intimacy. There's a trust that's built between a husband and wife that is sacred. You trust, and know, and love, and enjoy one another in a way that nobody else knows you. Nobody else knows them.

Number four, it's for protection. First Corinthians 7:2-5 says do not deprive one another, but by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, to work on some issue in your marriage, most likely, because there's some problem outside of the bedroom that's affecting joy, and freedom, and intimacy, and frequency in the bedroom. And then come back together. Otherwise, you're going to give the devil an opportunity to do great damage to your marriage. That's my paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 7. It's protection. There's no excuse for adultery, including lustful adultery of pornography or flirtation outside of marriage. But if a couple is together, it helps to safeguard them against temptation.

Number five, it's for comfort. There's an occasion in 2 Samuel 12:24 where there's a death of a child, and a husband and a wife grieve and comfort one another through intimacy. There are times when you can't fix it. There are times when you don't want to talk about it anymore, but you just want to be together so you don't feel alone, and you feel connected, and safe, and vulnerable, and cared for.

And number six, it's for oneness. Genesis 2:24 says that the husband and wife were one, and they were naked without shame. And that word in the Hebrew is *echad*, and it's the same word that's used in Deuteronomy, and the Orthodox Jews would say it three times a day: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, he's one." Like God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are one, in a similar way—not completely identical—a husband and a wife, who are intimate in covenant, they're one. They're one. This is something true covenantally. This is something true emotionally. This is something true practically. This is why you should have one last name, live in one house, have one bedroom with one bed. You should be one, and one flesh.

God has built this great gift to bring a couple together. Dr. Stephen Arterburn says it this way: "Sexual pleasure is one of the most intense human experiences. Physically speaking, when a man and woman are together," he says that, "a chemical is released into the brain called an opioid." That means opium-like. He goes on to say, "Apart from a heroin-induced experience, nothing is more physically pleasurable. This is a wonderful thing in a committed marriage relationship, because it helps bond two people together and bring joy to living together and building a relationship." It brings oneness.

See, so when God tells you to be faithful to your spouse, to practice chastity before marriage, to enjoy fidelity within marriage, what he's saying is, "I want the best for you. I want you to be one with your spouse. I want you to be connected theologically. I want you to be connected emotionally. I want you to be connected mentally. I want you to be connected financially. I want you to be connected biologically. I want you to increasingly grow to be one."

Now, let me ask you this. Sex is god—is that your leaning? Repent of that as a sin. Sex is gross—is that your leaning? Repent of that as a sin. Grace and I came into the marriage with me leaning toward sex as god, her leaning toward sex as gross; and in the grace of God, we are growing as one, enjoying sex as a gift from God. I'm going to leave it there, and I'm going to pray for you, and I'm going to bring Grace out, and we'll answer your questions, okay?

## PRAYER

Father God, I just feel this is a heavy moment. Holy Spirit, I ask that you would help people not to feel condemnation, but conviction; because condemnation leads to death, and conviction leads to life; and condemnation leads to shame, and conviction leads to cleansing; and condemnation causes us to give up, and conviction enables us to get up and to walk the road you've set before us, to be the people you intend for us to be, and to leave the legacy that, by your grace, we can.

God, for those who have inclinations toward sex as god, I pray that they would repent of that idolatry. God, for those who have inclinations toward sex as gross, I pray they would stop thinking contrary to the Scriptures, that they would be transformed by the renewing of their mind, according to the Word of God. God, I pray for those who are single, that they would see that sex is deeply spiritual. It is not just physical. It's about worship and idolatry, and sexual problems are really God problems.

I pray for those, Lord God, who are newly married and very impatient and selfish, that, Lord God, they would love and serve their spouse, both in and out of the bedroom. God, for those couples who are already experiencing the devastation from sexual sin, I pray that they would come clean before they get caught and that, Lord God, the enemy would not have a foothold in their life and marriage, taking this great gift and perverting, and destroying, and

corrupting it.

And, Lord God, I thank you for your forgiveness of my sin and Grace's sin and the reconciliation of our friendship and the restoration of our intimacy, and I pray that for our friends, who have given us this great gift of speaking on a very important but sensitive matter and have been kind enough to give us their ear, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Q&A WITH GRACE

I'm going to go get Grace. I'll be right back. *[Applauding]* You ready, babe?

Grace: Sure.

Well, I'm glad one of us is. Okay. Thank you for joining me and being brave and helpful. All right, we will do some Q&A time.

*"What if the friendship is there, but the sex isn't?"*

I'm assuming in the context of marriage. If it's not in the context of marriage, praise God. Keep it like it is.

Grace: I think, again, there are usually issues. I think we had a friendship going into things, and the sex was not there for the most part, and we had to figure out what was behind why we weren't willing to or why I wasn't—

So, what kind of things could be behind, you know, underlying variables that are causing a couple not to be intimate very frequently, even if they feel friendly toward one another?

Grace: Well, I think, for me, there were fears. There were sexual assault issues. There was the issue of, like you just talked about, sex as gross, and then you tending toward sex as good, and so really being at different ends of the spectrum and a lot of fear in between there for a woman. And not seeing my point of view as wrong. I saw that there was something off in our marriage, but I didn't want to look at my view as being wrong. I wanted you to see your view as wrong and you to figure it out.

I was thinking the same thing.

Grace: Yeah, I know. Somehow, I saw your sin as worse than mine, and so God convicted me of my sin, as I started realizing this is really broken. And, again, it starts with the mind, and I needed to work on my view of sex overall, that just as God created it, and then since I was the one that was convicted first of my sin, I needed to repent first and not wait for you to do that first, and see that my sin was just as grievous.

Yeah, and I was guilty of the exact same thing, where seeing your sin more clearly than my own, wishing you would grow theologically in some areas, to come to a more biblical position that I wasn't holding at the time. I mean, so it's very interesting how, you know, we were from different perspectives, but still guilty of the same things.

So, in something like this, it may be a biological issue, and you've got to go talk to your doctor and, say, "Is there a problem, you know, physically or hormonally?" Is there a secret sin in the marriage? Pornography or something going on you don't know about? Is there abuse in one or both of your pasts, where you've not worked that through, so it's not fully healed and redeemed just yet, by the grace of God?

Is it that life is just too busy, and you don't take the time to be together and just really invest in one another? And it's a lot of shoulder-to-shoulder, and you're not getting your face-to-face time?

You know, there could be underlying causes and reasons, but I would just go ahead and ask your spouse. Say, "Okay, what is it, and what do we need, in the grace of God, to work on?" Because if a couple is happy and satisfied, then that's okay. But if you're asking the question, that means it's not okay. Something is wrong. So, we wouldn't say it has to be like this, or it has to be this way. We wouldn't say those things. But if one person is saying, "It ain't working," well then there's a problem, and that needs to be addressed, and that may take, as well, a counselor, a biblical counselor, a pastor, a ministry leader, if there is a real serious underlying issue that needs to be addressed. Because like Grace said, sometimes we're blind to our own blindness, and somebody else is able to help us see more quickly.

Grace: And I was afraid of intimacy, because I didn't want to be known. I was afraid of what that meant, even though I didn't fully understand what it meant. And so because of what had happened to me in the past and because of my own sins and the shame that I carried, instead of letting God forgive me for those, then I put that into our relationship, and I didn't want to be known. I was afraid of rejection and all of those things. So, I started believing lies and let those accumulate and become more prominent than the issue of my sin and working through our relationship.

Yeah, and the sin that was committed against you, and I think a big breakthrough for us, when you kind of gave me those details, and we got to clearly see what had happened to you, it helped me to know how to be a better friend, and that friendship then helped change the intimacy. So, yeah. Next question.

*"As a single man pursuing Jesus, what is the best way I can prepare for the day God brings my wife into my life?"*

That's a great question. Why don't you take that one first, and then I'll pick it up. Single guy pursuing Jesus, and he wants to get ready to be married

someday. It's a good question.

Grace: Well, much of marriage is serving and being selfless, instead of selfish, so continue to work on your relationship with Jesus, but extending that beyond that and serving: serving children, families, women in the church, whatever ways you can find to serve and just growing that serving gift and learning how to not be selfish. Also, like you've talked about before, we, men and women, tend to make a list of what we want in a spouse, but making a list of who you see God wants you to be, prayerfully, as a spouse someday, what gifts you have, what characteristics you have, and putting those down and seeing how you can continue to grow in those, so that you can serve your future spouse.

I'd give a practical thing, too, for single guys. It's good to be journaling for your wife someday, praying for her, as Scripture comes to mind, and then using that as a way to have affection and devotion, even though you may have not met her yet. And then I would encourage you guys—I can't think of anything cooler than, if you're praying for her, thinking about her, writing down memories, "Here's what God showed me today; he's got me meditating on this verse," just journaling.

And then the day you meet her, and you get to know her, and then you become engaged to her, to give her that and say, "You know, I've loved you before I met you. I've been praying for you and waiting for you, and I was thinking about you, and I want you to know what was on my heart before we met." Ladies, would that work? Yeah! Okay, so just because you're single doesn't mean you can't be loving your wife right now. Just got to meet her eventually, that's all. Okay?

And I think that's what so many guys do. They just sort of walk through life until they meet a woman, and then they're trying to figure out how to get ready, and this is a good question on how to get ready. So, I'd honor that question. It's a great question. Let's do another one.

*"How do I get my husband to pursue me more?"*

Grace: Well, since God took me on a repentance journey, the last few years, specifically, I often start out with repentance, and just ask the question, "How can I be easier for you to pursue? Are there ways that I keep you from wanting to pursue me? What are things that I can do to help you want to serve me, even?" I mean, that sounds like a weird question, opposite of what it should be, but yet that's a way to serve them, to figure out how to know each other even better, through—

To invite them in. I think that's what you're saying.

Grace: Yeah. So, I think just even asking the question of the person, of your spouse, "How can I be easier to pursue? Is there anything inhibiting that?"

Yeah, sometimes that can be, you know, the person was pursuing, and then they got really shut down, or ashamed, or rejected.

Grace: I think that happened to us, where you were pursuing me, and then I was not understanding what that pursuit was. I didn't see it as love. And we started to talk about the love languages, too, and just trying to understand how you best receive love, how I best receive love. I tend to give through serving in certain ways, but that wasn't necessarily how you felt loved. You tended to give gifts, but that wasn't necessarily how I received love. So, we thought we were loving each other and pursuing each other, but we weren't necessarily understanding it that way.

So, what practical things during a day—let's say a husband and wife are separated by work or whatever—they're busy, they're doing their stuff, and then they're going to see each other in the evening. What practical things could this woman do—it's a woman's question—to invite her husband, to welcome him to be pursuing her?

Grace: Well, I think, you know, for us—I don't know what he likes, so I would say, for us, you appreciate being texted or have notes left, so that you see I'm in regular communication and thinking about you throughout the day. You appreciate affection and just even acknowledgement when you come home, and "How are you?" instead of "What did you do today?" Engaging. I think we may—sometimes we want someone to pursue us, but we're not pursuing, and so making sure that you're doing things that are pursuing, like I'm saying, notes or whatever ways he feels appreciated, and loved, and encouraged.

I think that's a big thing, because a lot of times what happens is a husband wants to love his wife, or a wife wants to love her husband, and so they'll talk to their friends, "What do you do?" And then we try that, and you're like, "Well, it didn't work." Well, it's because you're married to somebody else.

It really comes down to asking your spouse—like, on this, even, it'd be going to your husband and saying, "I like to be pursued. I pick you. What could I do to encourage that to happen more frequently?" And that's, I mean, even—and I say that even kind of a funny way, because you don't want to make it all serious, like a job description, you know, "Thou shalt pursue me." It's like, "Really?" Not like that. "Tag, you're it." You know, I mean make it fun. "Catch me if you can."

And inviting your spouse to tell you, like, "Well, actually, this would be loving. This is what friendship looks like. This is why I don't pursue you like I used to, because this happened, and I'm feeling a little rejected and hurt. And could we talk about that and maybe get through it?" It's asking your spouse.

And we wrote the book together, and we wanted to encourage couples to talk about these things together. And so if there was any big take-away, it

would be talk to each other, and do so face-to-face, and carve out time when you're not on the phone, or in front of the kids, or watching the TV, and get to the level of real intimacy, and get to the issues that matter, and get to the root of your problems. And by the grace of God, get beyond them.

That's really what we want for you. We want you to talk to each other. And if you will, we believe God will honor that, and it means guard your words, because life and death are in the power of the tongue, Proverbs says. So this is not to attack or to harm your spouse, but it's to know that your spouse is not your enemy, but they're your ally in your war against your enemy, and it's trying to align with them so that, together, you can be one, and he can be far away. And so I'd just even encourage his wife, talk to your husband.

Grace: And being gracious with it, too, and continually talking about it, because it can change. One minute, they may appreciate a certain, you know, gift or time together; another season, they may not. They may need something different. Like, with women, after you have kids, you may not feel as appreciated, if you have kids hanging on you all day in various forms, and then your husband wants to just be another person who's taking from you. It feels like, "I don't need more touch today." There's just seasons that can change, and so learning to ebb and flow with that and not feel rejected. We didn't talk about that a lot, initially, and so you would pursue me, and I would feel overwhelmed, and then you felt rejected, and so we just, you know—it continued to divide us even more. So, like you're saying, on a light note, learning to talk about it, not automatically feel rejected, if the person isn't pursuing the way you want or the way they want.

Are we going to do one more, or is that all? Do one more.

*"How does a wife heal from her husband's sin of viewing porn?"*

Boy, this is a huge question that I don't want to give a bumper sticker answer to. I would say, number one, pornography is a sin. Jesus says in Matthew 5 it's adultery of the heart, and so it needs to be viewed as a sin, not just a fault, or a thing, or a mistake, or a guy thing.

Number two, the husband needs to repent. This is the taking out the trash chapter on sin in general. He needs to repent. Tell the truth, apologize. This is him being honest with his wife. And then the wife forgiving him, not because it's okay, but because it's such a bad thing that Jesus died for it. So, it's actually a bigger deal than you probably think. It was so big that it killed God. And because Jesus died for it, you can put the sin to death, and you don't need to let the sin kill your marriage. This is a process and a decision. It's a decision you make, but it's a process that you feel emotionally.

To understand what you're up against, we've got the whole chapter on porn in the book, and the reason we put it in was because it's a big issue in a lot of marriages. And it's not just men; it's women too. Statistically, the fastest-growing consumer of porn is actually women, and so it's a male and female issue and problem.

There's a book called *Wired for Intimacy* that I would encourage you to read. It talks about the physical re-hardwiring of the body and brain that pornography creates, and it creates an addiction cycle that's similar to heroin or opium. It's very serious. And if somebody hates it and wants to stop, it's like an addict getting off of drugs. It's still going to be a fight, and you need to know what you're up against and what your spouse is up against.

This will include him having accountability, like software on the computer, so you can know what he's visiting and not visiting, not to be a nanny, but for accountability. And this would include godly men speaking into his life, and the church, and him getting the help, and hope, and healing that he needs in community with other men.

For a wife, this is a desperate betrayal. One of the leading causes of divorce, at least in divorce proceedings in court, is the mention of pornography, that pornography is killing marriages. It just is. And so for the many who are here, and this is an issue—perhaps the wife, perhaps the husband, perhaps both are guilty of this sin—I would say, beyond that very simple introductory counsel, you're probably going to need to get a biblical counselor and/or a pastor involved. And just say, "Help us unpack this. It feels like a bomb just went off in our soul, and we need to get out from underneath the shrapnel and start to heal, and we're going to need some help with that."

For you men, you're going to say, "I don't want to do that, because I'm ashamed." Hebrews says that Jesus went to the cross, and he scorned our shame. And so Jesus takes the shame. And as Jesus takes the shame, then you and I can be honest to get the help we need to live as God would have us. Okay?

And so we do have the taking out the trash chapter that deals with how to deal with sin. We do have the sex as gross, god, and gift chapter to have the two of you come to the biblical understanding of sex. We do have the pornography chapter, and I would encourage the husband and wife to read that one, as well. It's very frank, without being crass, and I think it puts a heart on the issue, instead of just a clinical perspective, though there is some of that in there.

Yeah, and for the wife, I would just say, not in any disingenuous way, I'm sorry. It's an epidemic, and it's tragic, but there is hope, help, and healing through a process with Jesus together.

I don't know if you'd add anything to that. Okay. Anything else, guys? Why don't we do this, sweetheart? I'm going to ask you—it got heavy, but that's okay. It means that the Holy Spirit is working in people's hearts and souls, and it's going deep. I know your heart is not just that we would, you know, give a few simple answers to complex problems, but that we would open a conversation among couples, where the Holy Spirit could really do a healing work in their soul. And so why don't you close our time in prayer, as we commission those singles to investigate how they may see sex as gross or god, and how they need to have a renewing of the mind, and those married couples that may be guilty of the same sins. And as people are talking about this with God and their spouse, why don't you just go ahead and pray for those conversations?

Grace: Thank you, Lord, that you have brought these people here to learn and to both be convicted and encouraged in all the things that your Holy Spirit wants to happen here. Lord, I thank you that you have given us sex as a gift, and I pray that for all of us, you would renew our minds as to what that looks like in our marriages; and for those that are single, that you would renew their minds, so that when they do get married, they would have a right, holy view of sex. Lord, I pray that you would heal people's marriages, starting tonight, that if they view sex as gross or god, that you would begin to transform that into a holy meaning, that you created it to be. Lord, I just pray for just honest conversations, that fear would not grip them, but that they would just be able to enter into gracious, forgiving, and honest conversations with each other. Lord, begin this process and continue to see it through to forgiveness, and reconciliation, and newness in their marriage. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.*

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