Marriage Enrichment



**Lesson Topic: Sexual Intimacy**

**Week Two Homework**

You have been learning how God wants you to enjoy His wonderful gift of sexual intimacy to its fullest as a way to help you foster physical and emotional oneness in your marriage. You will learn how to protect this intimacy as you dig deeper into the Song of Solomon this week. If you have not finished reading Song of Solomon, please finish it together. ***Also, please plan to invest some extended time with your spouse to discuss the “Private Discussion Questions” on Page 3, Number 3 in the “Talk About it Together” section.***

**Scripture Memory Verse**:

*“*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.” (1 Corinthians 7:4 NIV)

**In the Word Together**

Read and discuss the following verses and questions with your spouse:

1. In Song of Solomon verse 2:15, Solomon asks his lover to “Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil *the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.*” The adult foxes could reach the grapes on the vine to eat them but the “little foxes” were especially damaging. They would dig at the roots to tear down the foundation of the vine to make it fall over with the fruit. What do you think that this verse is warning us about? What might be some of the “little foxes” can creep in to destroy the foundation of a marriage – even one that may seem strong and “in full blossom” today? What can you do to help protect your marriage from “little foxes”?

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1. Read Song of Solomon 7:11-13. The young wife is planning a romantic getaway to the vineyards where their romantic relationship started. What do you think are the benefits of getting away alone with your spouse for getaways – especially in light of verse 5:16 which states “This is my beloved and this is my friend…”? [Please remember that visiting family does not count as a getaway].

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1. Read 1 Corinthians 7:2-6. Who does my body belong to? Verse 5 states “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” What is the risk of depriving each other of physical intimacy in any way other than as prescribed in this verse? Can you think of any ways that you are depriving your spouse and sending him/her out in the world hungry for physical intimacy?

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1. Read Song of Solomon 3:1-4. The message that love seeks to protect and involves personal sacrifice is revealed in these verses. What do you do to protect your spouse? What do you do to show love for your spouse in a self-sacrificing way?

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1. What boundaries have you established as a couple to protect your marriage? How do you safeguard yourself from sexual temptation at work, on the computer, with movies etc.? What boundaries have you established for yourself and as a couple? Please come prepared to share your protective boundaries at small group.

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**Talk About It Together:**

Discuss the following questions with your spouse and write down your shared responses. Please remember that transparency and openness in your marriage is developed by creating and being a safe place for your spouse to express his/her thoughts. This is especially important when talking about emotional issues – such as your sexual intimacy.

1. What are the distractions of daily life that can keep you from enjoying intimacy with your spouse? Have you been able to plan your time and schedules so that you can go to bed at the same time and have energy at the end of the day? If that has been a struggle, what do you need to change (or even give up) to allow for this to happen?

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1. One of the key ways to fuel your emotional and sexual intimacy is pursuit. Pursuit involves the idea of wanting to be with your spouse more than any other person on earth. Looking back at the beginning of your relationship, how did you pursue your spouse? If you want to feel what love you felt, do what your love did then. What did you do then that fueled your romantic love and passion? What do you need to do again to refresh the romantic love and passion in your marriage?

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1. **Private Discussion Questions:** Good healthy communication is critical for true emotional and physical intimacy. **Invest some extended time to discuss the following questions** to help improve your emotional and physical intimacy **(Note: these will not be shared in group)**

a. Do you or your spouse have any fears or concerns about sex or your sexual intimacy together?

b. Do you trust your spouse completely with your body?

c. Do you or your spouse have any incorrect attitudes about your body or his/her body?

d. Are you right with God and your spouse regarding any sexual intimacy that you experienced with each other before marriage?

e. Are we are on the “same page” with the following issues?

* The frequency and spontaneity of our physical intimacy
* Viewing sex with positive anticipation
* Our level of passion, or the “fire” of our passion
* Gentleness and tenderness during lovemaking
* The way we decide to have sex together
* The understanding I have for my spouse’s needs
* How previous “intimate” relationships may have affected our intimacy together
* The amount of communication during lovemaking (how to please each other better, etc.)

f. Discussion questions for any “season” of intimacy in our marriage:

* In leading up to sex, I like it when you . . . .
* When we are having sex, I like it when you . . . .
* I am discouraged or uncomfortable when you . . . .
* I am most drawn to you sexually when you . . . .

**Apply What We Learned:**

* The following list of “Love Attributes” is from 1 Corinthians 13:3-8. What do each of these attributes specifically look like in your marriage? (Discuss real concrete examples). In other words**, Patient** means . . .**Kind** means . . .**Not Envious** means . . .**Not Boastful** means . . . etc.

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| Love is patient | I put up with the imperfections of my spouse. Love never gives up. |
| Love is kind | Caring for others more than me and performing acts of kindness |
| Love does not envy | Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love rests secure. |
| Love does not boast | Love doesn't strut. It refrains from building itself up. |
| It is not arrogant | Doesn't have a swelled head. Instead it humbles itself. |
| It is not rude | Doesn't force itself on others, |
| It does not insist on its own way | Isn't always "me first." Instead I put my spouse’s needs/desires first |
| It is not irritable | Doesn't fly off the handle and refrains from rash outbursts |
| It is not resentful | Doesn't keep score of the sins of others and instead forgives |
| It does not rejoice at wrong-doing | Doesn't revel when others grovel, |
| But rejoices with the truth | My love grows out of a base of honesty and integrity |
| Love bears all things | Puts up with anything, |
| Love believes all things | Trusts God always and believe the best in my spouse |
| Love hopes all things | I hope for the best from and for my mate |
| Love endures all things | My love lasts through the toughest of times and keeps going |
| Love never ends. | Love never dies. I am always there to support my spouse! |

* Plan a romantic getaway together for some time this year so that you have something fun to look forward to just as Solomon’s wife did in chapter **7:11-13.** Take time to dream for it, plan for it, and save for it. Be creative and try to serve each other while planning where to go and what to do. As with the date nights, it does not need to be expensive, just try to be creative! Commit to getting away alone at least once per year! Do not mix visiting relatives or taking family along as any part of this “romantic” getaway!

**Recommended Additional Resources:**

* *“10 Ideas to Foster Emotional Intimacy with Your Spouse  
    
  “* (included with this homework)
* *“What Loving Husbands and Wives Should Know About Intimacy  
    
  “* (included with this homework)
* *“Language of Sex”* by Gary Smalley & Ted Cunningham
* *“Love, Sex & Lasting Relationships”* by Chip Ingram

**Breakout Time – Please come prepared to talk about the following:**

1. What have you done to pursue the two goals we discussed last week to improve the sexual intimacy in your marriage:

* To more fully express your love for your spouse outside of the bedroom
* To more fully express your love for your spouse and put his or her needs ahead of your own in regards to your physical intimacy together.

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1. Did you have an extended time to talk about your intimacy using the “Private Discussion Questions” from Page 3, Number 3 of the “Let’s Talk About it Together” Section above? We just want to know if you had your talk – no specifics need to be shared unless you have a specific concern or need counsel.
2. During breakout, we will invest more time talking about how we can protect the intimacy in our marriages in more detail. Specifically, the men will talk about issues that are more common and challenging to them and the women will do the same.
3. What has the Lord taught you in your personal times with him this past week? What are you reading and how many days were you in the word and prayer?

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1. If either of you have had some form of sexual abuse in your past or if you have recurring issues with your sexual intimacy, please consider seeking wise godly counsel from your small group leaders.

**10 Ideas to Foster Emotional Intimacy with Your Spouse (from Family Life)**

**1. Cultivate a common interest.** Your spouse should be your best friend, and friends enjoy spending time with one another. If you and your spouse have different hobbies, find something that you both enjoy doing and do it together. You may want to go bike riding, walk together at the end of a long day, play tennis, or learn how to ballroom dance. Shared experiences enrich marriages and deepen friendship.

**2.** **Go on weekly dates**. There are many ways to plan an inexpensive simple date with your spouse on a weekly basis. When the kids come along, if you don’t have a relative nearby who would gladly watch your kids, then consider swapping babysitting with a friend on a regular basis. For example, you would watch their kids on the first Friday of every month and they would watch your kids on the second Saturday of every month. With a little imagination, you can also plan some great dates at home … not only while the kids are sleeping, but also while they are enjoying pizza or watching a special movie.

**3. Try new adventures together.** We only live this life once. Try doing something different to force yourself out of the rut of normal day-to-day living. If you and your spouse would like to do something a little more daring, consider activities such as sky diving, parasailing, snorkeling, mountain climbing, etc.

**4. Write love letters to one another and read them over a romantic dinner.**Writing letters is almost a lost art form today. You may want to redeem it by regularly expressing your love to your spouse in a letter. Then read it to your spouse over a romantic dinner. You could purchase special wooden boxes for your love letters. Or, record them in individual journals as a lasting reminder to your legacy of your love for one another…”

**5. Go on overnight getaways—without the kids.** The possibilities are endless. Many state parks have great campsites and beautiful lodges. Staying at a nearby bed and breakfast can be a real treat. Also, hotels often have special weekend getaway packages.

**6.  Set aside regular time to talk with one another—without any distractions.** Make time to focus on one another and talk about the day’s events. Plan a 5-10 minute time to talk each evening (or when you have kids, after they go to bed). If you can, plan a lunch or dinner together alone once a week. Put it on the calendar and make definite appointments.  The important thing is to share heart to heart and face to face.

**7.  Read a book together and discuss it over coffee at a local coffeehouse or bookstore.** Take turns choosing the books. If a movie has been made out of the book, read and discuss it together and then watch the movie. Compare the book to the movie.

**8. Be accountable to one another.** Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 tells us, “*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.  For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion.*” You may want to ask your spouse to keep you accountable in a certain area. Being accountable to our spouse requires one-on-one time—whether it’s over coffee in the morning or evaluating a to-do list together in the afternoon.

**9. Pray together.** When we regularly pray with our spouse, our souls and hearts are uniquely knit together.  Sadly, we’ll forget many of the ways God answers our prayers unless we write them down. You may want to record how God answers your prayers in a notebook. Once or so a year, go on an overnight getaway with your spouse and review it together. Spend some time thanking the Lord for all He has done.

**10. Tune-up your marriage at a marriage conference or seminar**. Attending a marriage seminar (such as a [Weekend to Remember](http://www.familylife.com/site/c.dnJHKLNnFoG/b.3204559/k.F5BB/Attend_a_conference.htm) by Family Life @ www.Familylife.com) will help you get away from the distractions of life and focus on one another.

***What Loving Husbands and Wives Should Know about Intimacy***

*Things Loving Husbands Should Know (From a Wife’s point of view) . . . .*

1. We are more bashful about telling you what we like or don’t like sexually. Be patient and give us room to feel comfortable about talking out loud about intimate issues. It’s ok to ask us what we like and don’t like, but it might take some time for us to answer those kinds of questions.
2. We appreciate spontaneity but as our life circumstances change (work stressful, different hormonal times of month, having children, etc.) we may need “advance” notice to emotionally prepare to give ourselves to you with the right attitude
3. We usually enjoy an emotional connection (i.e. conversation) before we jump into a physical connection (we aren’t as “visually” motivated as you). We can be turned on by non-intimate related things, like seeing you do an unexpected good deed, a chore we normally take care of, an encouraging note, a new outfit you notice, etc.
4. We would love to know that not all physical touch has to end up leading to sexual intimacy (i.e. hugging in bed, back rub, etc.)
5. We appreciate encouraging words about our attractiveness to you, especially as our bodies change.
6. We want you to come to us with things you may be struggling with – honesty about any temptations - so that we can work together to combat the problem.
7. We also may not understand the direct connection between your temptations and how we may not be meeting your needs well enough. Help us understand how you are wired physically so we can learn to be more sacrificial when needed.
8. We women aren’t often the initiators (but that’s not always the case). Try to not get too frustrated with us if you are the initiator more often than not.
9. Just as marriages go through different “seasons”, so does our intimacy. Please keep communication lines open so that we can grow in our oneness in intimacy no matter how long we’ve been married!

*Things Loving Wives Should Know (from a Husband’s point of view). . . . .*

1. In our inmost being, we need to know that you are mine, and mine only. Show us and tell us often.
2. In early marriage days, spontaneity is usually not a problem and intimacy can happen pretty easily. However, it’s fun to “plan” intimacy sometimes, and to enjoy being imaginative, daring, and occasionally extravagant in displaying affection to you. We both should be open to needing to “pre-plan” as our circumstances change (i.e. children come along).
3. Since we don’t necessarily know what you enjoy sexually, please tell us specifically what you like (or don’t like!) during intimacy, so we can give you the most satisfaction. Don’t make us guess!
4. We often aren’t as aware of the need for an emotional connection before a physical interaction (we are more “visual” in general than you). Tell us your expectations so we understand if and why we get a “no” for an answer.
5. We like words of affirmation, too.
6. It may not be an issue just now, but denying us intimacy (especially if kids are in the picture) can make us more susceptible to temptation. If you really find yourself “not in the mood”, remember the denial in your mind, and be focused to follow through with intimacy soon.
7. We want to be able to share our struggles without feeling condemned – to feel safe if we are burdened with temptations by talking to you about them. It helps the oneness in our marriage to combat the problem together.
8. We like it for you to be the initiators sometimes, even if that’s not the way you usually operate.
9. Just as marriages go through different “seasons”, so does our intimacy. Please keep communication lines open so that we can grow in our oneness in intimacy no matter how long we’ve been married!