



Igniting the Flame

STUDY GUIDE

*Restoring the
passion, joy, and
wonder to your
sexual intimacy
in marriage*

IGNITING the FLAME

Regarding Sexual Intimacy: *“We should not be ashamed to talk about what God was not ashamed to create.”* ~Dr. Howard Hendricks.

----- is God’s idea & creation!

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

~Ephesians 5:31-32

“Sexual joy is a picture of God’s union with His bride.”

~Dr. Dan Allender

“Faith couples me and Christ more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife...faith is no idle quality.”

~ Martin Luther

Perhaps the most powerful illustration of the union of the sexual and the spiritual is found in the Song of Solomon. In these verses God paints an astounding picture. Solomon and Shulamith are engaged in steamy, erotic, sensuous lovemaking. Suddenly, a third Person appears in the room: God. Tenderly, the Almighty Creator gazes upon the naked lovers engaged in physical pleasures and extends His hand in spiritual blessing.

“Eat, friends; drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.”

~Song of Solomon 5:1.

Imagine! God is there. He sees the passion. He hears the sighs of delight. He watches the lovers as they caress one another in the most intimate of places. He is witness to the fleshy, earthy, sights, sounds, and smells. He sees it all and then urges the lovers to feast, to drink abundantly of the exquisite pleasures He created for them to enjoy.

God desires for us to rejoice in our sensuousness, to give in to it. He wants us to hold nothing back, to open the floodgates of physical passion and immerse ourselves in it. ‘Drink and imbibe deeply,’ He urges.

Perhaps you are thinking, I can give myself permission to go deeper in my sexuality because I see now that this is part of who God created me to be. But I’m not sure how this translates practically. What do I do? How should I act? What does a godly, sensuous woman look like?”

~ Linda Dillow, Intimate Issues.

“The Song of Solomon teaches the searcher of it’s truths that romantic, sensual

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love is His gift and creation for marriage – that He honors and blesses true romantic love between husband and wife; therefore, love – sexual love – can be developed in one’s marriage to the glory of God.”

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life (relational expert & OBGYN for 40+ years).

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
~1 Corinthians 10:31*

“...we must remember that we were created to glorify God in the body. We do this by singing praises and extolling his greatness in worship and by meditation on his Word and committing our lives and our labor to his service. We do it through our time and our resources, through feasting and celebrating his goodness. And we do it through the joining of our bodies as husband and wife, made in this image, rejoicing in the delight of becoming one.”

~Chris McCloskey, When Two Become One.

“It is important for you to share the Song of Solomon with your marriage partner so that you both can be aware of the truth that the love relationship (the sexual love) you experience is part of your worship of God.”

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life

“Although sex is physical, it’s an emotional connection of souls, and it is a spiritual act. Every single act of sexual intercourse is an act of worship. The question is, Who is being worshiped? Who is being glorified through this act? Is it glorifying God or is it glorifying the enemy? You cannot engage in a sexual act and not have it connect to the spiritual realm. It’s impossible.”

~ Christopher McCluskey, Christian Sex Therapist

Regarding God’s blessing of sexual intimacy between a man and his wife, in Song of Solomon 5:1-2:

“He takes pleasure in what has taken place. He is glad they have drunk deeply of the fountain of love. Two of His own have experienced love in all the beauty and fervor and purity that he intended for them.”

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life

Guilt-free-rapturous sex...God’s intention for every married couple to enjoy.

Sexual intimacy is a gift from God and designed for our_____.

A SATISFYING SEX LIFE IN MARRIAGE IS THE RESULT OF A SATISFYING MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP.

Renewing your _____.

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“This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”
~Song of Solomon 5:16b

“Picture the friendship of your marriage as a fire capable of dying out through indifference. But the fire can be rekindled and it’s intensity increased until the enjoyment of rapport between you becomes a live thing – like sparks igniting the space you share.”

~Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life

**Emotional intimacy leads to physical intimacy.
Emotional distance, leads to emotional distance.**

“The degree to which couples reported having fun together had the greatest bearing on overall marital satisfaction.”

~ John Gottman, national research expert on marital success.

Affirming your _____.

“What does this mean to the husband who longs for his wife to become sexually responsive? If he wants her to respond passionately with a beautiful relaxation and abandon in lovemaking, he needs to give her the absolute security of his love in the context of permanent commitment.”

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life

For whom would Jesus ever leave His bride?

Renewing & igniting the _____.

Enriching your _____ as a couple.

SEX IS A THERMOMETER (NOT A THERMOSTAT) THAT CAN MEASURE YOUR INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING AND THE HEALTH OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

“Physical desire with its sexual expression is without a doubt the most complicated aspect of love in marriage. So many potential causes of difficulty exist, and problem solving is complicated by silence, suspicion, anger, hurt misunderstanding, fear, or guilt, which are often hiding in the shadows.”

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life

Facing the enemies of intimacy:

- ◆ Too busy and too tired to care – stressed and fatigued. “God loves you and every one else has wonderful plan for your life.”
- ◆ Your emotional and sexual relationship gets the “left-over’s” of time and energy.

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- ◆ Incorrect information.
- ◆ Past scars that have not been healed.
- ◆ Inability to talk openly and often about your sexual relationship in order to find positive and creative solutions as your relationship grows, changes, and enters “new chapters.”

“Of all the therapeutic theory available today, no idea is more harmful than the notion that a poor sexual relationship can be cured by learning better technique. It will not remedy a poor emotional relationship.”

~ Masters & Johnson.

- ◆ Attempting to improve your sexual intimacy in your own strength and “wisdom.”

If the marriage relationship is lacking in friendship, commitment, passion, or spiritual intimacy, the sexual relationship may register the problem.

When friendship is lacking, intimacy often loses its _____.

“When you bare your body, you bare your soul.”

~Dr. Randy Alcorn

“To be naked, open or vulnerable and not ashamed is the essence of sexual trust. This was the quality of the man-woman relationship before the Fall. The intense intimacy involved in allowing oneself to let go totally with another person can trigger strong feelings of vulnerability. This elicits the need to know that the other person still cares and will not take advantage of the exposure that has just taken place.”

~Dr. Clifford & Joyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex*

“If cold, disconnected hearts come to bed, there will be little heat. The mood for sex must be set in an attitude of treasuring and serving one another. As one woman put it, ‘Good sex is all about two hearts that are in love with Jesus Christ. When a heart is filled with love for Jesus Christ, it looks for ways to serve others and express love.’

“Washing the dishes for your wife or complimenting your husband on his parenting are just as much foreplay for intimacy as anything that happens in the bedroom.”

~ Bill Hybels, *Tender Love*.

When commitment is lacking, sex can seem _____ and vulnerable.

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When passion and alluring creativity is lacking, intimacy can become _____.

When spiritual intimacy is lacking, sex can become _____ and self-focused [The very opposite of love. Love seeks the best for the one you love, not for yourself].

SEXUAL INTIMACY IN YOUR MARRIAGE CAN BE GREATLY ENHANCED BY UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE MASCULINE AND FEMININE WAY OF EXPERIENCING AND EXPRESSING SEXUAL DESIRE.

The differences we'll highlight in our session tonight are generally true regarding men and women. Of course there are exceptions, but in most cases it's an accurate depiction of male/female differences.

Men:

- ◆ Physical in their approach to sexuality
- ◆ Compartmentalized
- ◆ Body centered
- ◆ Stimulated visually

Men:

- ◆ Need to be respected
- ◆ Need to express themselves physically
- ◆ Long to connect and be wanted sexually

Men:

- ◆ Acyclical
- ◆ Quick excitement
- ◆ Difficult to distract

Women:

- ◆ Relational in their approach to sexuality
- ◆ Wholistic
- ◆ Person centered
- ◆ Stimulated through relational & emotional connection

Women:

- ◆ Need to feel safe
- ◆ Need to feel valued
- ◆ Long to be loved, cherished and treated with dignity

Women:

- ◆ Cyclical
- ◆ Slower excitement
- ◆ Easily distracted

THE IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES OF THE FEMALE ORGASM

Two thirds of women do not reach orgasm through sexual intercourse alone.

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One of the first areas to look at when there is a problem with orgasm is how much time you devote to sexual intimacy. Men are capable of becoming aroused and climaxing within minutes. Most women are physiologically not capable of such a rapid response! So unless you and your spouse devote enough time to lovemaking you cannot become orgasmic.

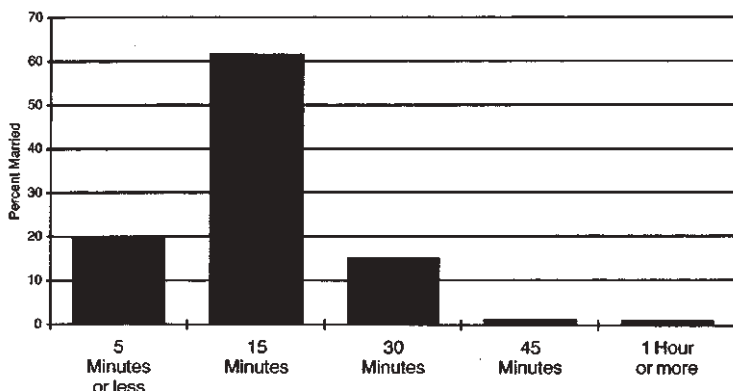
Often a woman may worry, or her husband may complain, that she is 'taking too long.' Invariably the woman will blame herself. After all, she sees how fast her husband responds and she compares herself to him. But it may not be her problem at all. Her husband's technique may be wrong or he may not be creating the right atmosphere for lovemaking.

It is possible that the difficulty may arise from within the woman herself. She may not be able to abandon herself to the experience because she fears the loss of control necessary for orgasm.

Husband and wife both need to accept that it takes time to really enjoy the sexual experiences together and to receive the stimulation necessary for orgasm.

Most women do require a long period of time to become excited and reach orgasm. How much time? Roughly 10 times that required for most men! And it may take even longer for some. ...There is a definite association between how long you take to make love and how frequently you reach orgasm. Good sex takes time!

STIMULATION NEEDED TO REACH ORGASM FOR MARRIED WOMEN



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80% of women need over 15 minutes of direct clitoral stimulation in order to experience an orgasm.

The reason it takes is that important biological changes must occur. If a woman is thinking, ‘Let’s just hurry up and get it over with,’ or is anxious that she is ‘taking too long’ these pressures will keep her from enjoying what is happening and short-circuit the arousal process.

Orgasm problems that are intermittent (at intervals over your life) or in specific situations are often connected to relationship problems. Why else would you be orgasmic at one time and not the next? Varying environmental or life conditions can also be the cause.

“Relationships that are filled with conflict, bitterness, and hostility tend to stifle orgasms. There is no way you are going to be able to achieve an adequate level of arousal when you don’t feel safe, secure, and loved. The solution? Heal the breach that is causing the conflict. Seek outside assistance through marriage enrichment events, books, or counseling.”

*~ Dr. Archabald Hart, Dr. Catherine Hart Weber,
& Debra Taylor. *The Secrets of Eve.**

- ◆ Since you’ll probably never go to an expert on this subject (sexual intimacy challenges in general, and specific challenges with the female orgasm) bring the experts home! Develop a library of Christian books on sexual intimacy in your home.
- ◆ It’s the most complex area in a marriage – yet least talked about it. Couples get stuck and lose hope. Bring the experts home! You’ll be amazed at their insight into your personal difficulties. They have answers and hope. Don’t stay isolated. Get hope. Get answers.

SEXUAL INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE CAN BE IMPROVED THROUGH:

1. ROMANCE

Men, you must touch her heart before you touch her body. And when you do touch her body, touch her tenderly, softly, slowly, with dignity, honor, elegance, romantically...giving her reason to feel safe and able to trust you.

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Our hearts have to connect before our bodies connect if we're to experience the rich oneness that God had in mind when He created this mysterious and powerful gift.

In order for a woman to be able to follow her God-given path of sexual response, she must feel safe, be able to relax, and feel cherished. TRUST is a key to unlock her God-given path of sexual response.

Men, in a relaxed moment of private conversation with your wife, ask her: "Sweetheart, what would it take for you to feel safe in our sexual relationship?"

Listen carefully to her answer, and don't scold or intimidate her when she is being open and vulnerable with you.

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

~ Galatians 5:22-23

- ◆ Revive the lost art of dating. Put first things 1st! Pursue the Lord and each other before everything else.

2. TENDERNESS

Give and receive love through an abundance of non-sexual touch. What happened to constantly holding hands, arms around each other, embracing, kissing, and savoring touching and being touched?

"I must emphasize that even though you apply every other principle I have given you in this book, it will be of little avail unless you learn to touch each other often and joyfully in nonsexual ways. Physical contact is absolutely essential in building the emotion of love. You may take it as a sobering warning that most of the time marital infidelity is not so much a search for sex as it is for emotional intimacy."

~ Dr. Ed Wheat, Love Life.

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There is often a dichotomy in male communication.

Closeness and intimacy with your spouse is a reflection of your closeness and intimacy with Jesus, the Lover of your soul.

We are invited by a Lover to become a lover. Get and stay in touch with His affection and let others watch how your heart, life, and demeanor will be transformed by the healing love of the Lord.

3. COMMUNICATION

Learn and enjoy the differences. Don't fight over your differences, thank God for them and enjoy them.

Recommended reading for understanding and cherishing your differences:

- Love & Respect - Dr. Emerson Eggerichs
- For Men Only - Jeff & Shaunti Feldhan
- For Women Only - Shaunti Feldhan.

4. Ignite the flame through:

PLANNING!!!

- Make it a priority. Schedule it in the best part of your day.
- Get to your life before everyone else does.
- Planning allows the wife to begin to direct her thoughts towards sexual intimacy and allows the man to remain encouraged because he can be certain it will be part of your lives on a regular basis.
- Time! Relaxed time is vitally important to a flourishing sexual intimacy in your marriage.

View your intimate lovemaking most often as a feast at Ruth's Chris Steak House [a meal where you linger, savor, enjoy, and luxuriate...no one rushes, because no one wants the experience to end], instead of a drive-through "quickie" from MacDonald's [yes, it's technically "food," but you'll die if it's your ongoing diet].

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You MUST take time if you're to experience the rich feast that the Lord has provided for you to experience.

CREATIVITY!

- Enhance the setting
- Vary the approach
- A fun suggestion to consider: _____.

INITIATIVE!

- Husband, take the initiative to provide romantic times and experiences. Be the man! Ignore what the culture thinks. Be the man!
- Wives - surprise & bless him occasionally in unique ways outside the normal times you and your husband have planned.

PRAY TOGETHER!

- Ask God to renew your hope and communication in this vital area of marriage.
- Consider praying during your intimate moments, thanking God for His goodness and kindness and asking for His blessing on your worship and glorifying of Him through sexual intimacy.

In this and every area of your marriage you're going to have to be a professional "forgiver."

**DO THE PROJECT!
DON'T SKIP THE PROJECT!!!**

**USE THIS PROJECT
EVERY COUPLE OF MONTHS
IN YOUR MARRIAGE!**

COUPLES PROJECT

ENHANCING YOUR ONENESS THROUGH SEXUAL INTIMACY

The project has two sections:

1. An Individual Section for each of you to personally write down your answers and give thought to a number of important items.
2. An Interaction Section where you share you thoughts and feelings about your answers to the questions in the first section.

INDIVIDUAL SECTION

Answer the following questions on your own.

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being best) how would your rate the following areas in your relationship? After rating each element, think of the answer to this question: “What would bring it closer to a ‘10’?”

1. The quality of our friendship_____.
2. The heart connection between us_____.
3. Our ability to resolve hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and conflict_____.
4. The amount of fun and laughter in our relationship_____.
5. The amount of warm, affectionate “non-sexual touch” outside our sexual intimacy_____.
6. The way we decide that we’re going to be sexually intimate_____.
7. The frequency of our sexual intimacy_____.
8. Viewing our physical intimacy with positive anticipation_____.
9. The variety of experiences during intimacy_____.
10. The amount of verbal communication while we’re enjoying a sexual time together _____.
11. Gentleness and tenderness in physical intimacy_____.
12. The ability to talk comfortably and often about our sexual relationship (how to adjust and improve it) _____.

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The things I most enjoy about our love-making:

The things I'd like us to consider changing during our intimacy (some of the things that are a hindrance to your full enjoyment of intimate times together, or things you're uncomfortable with):

In leading up to our sexual times together I'd like for you to:

I feel discouraged when you:

I feel most drawn to you sexually when:

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INTERACTION SECTION

Before you share your thoughts, hopes and concerns with each other from the Individual Section, we encourage the husband to lead in prayer. Ask the Father to give you open, tender hearts so you can experience a relaxed and healthy conversation on this important topic.

Throughout the Interaction Section, be sure you provide a safe and understanding attitude and demeanor as you listen to your spouse. They're taking a great risk in revealing their thoughts and feelings about a very personal and delicate subject – assure them by your response that it's safe to express what's on their heart.

1. Share and discuss each of the items you answered in the individual section. As you share your response to the “1-10” questions, it's important that you say what you believe would bring it closer to a “10” [this will provide some positive solutions and improvements to your intimacy together].
2. You may want to stop at various points of the discussion and turn to the Lord in prayer for wisdom, healing, and new hope and ideas. Your unity in this area will bring Him glory. He is ready, able, and willing to provide what you need in this important area of your marriage.
3. Agree together that this kind of discussion is needed more often in order to hear, understand, value, and love one another [Consider doing this project every 2 months. As you experience this level of communication more often, it will become less difficult to talk about and will provide more and more positive solutions].
4. Be ready to ask forgiveness for hurts that may surface.
5. Agree on solutions to areas of concerns or breaking through “stuck points” and “ruts.”
6. Conclude your time in prayer, asking God to give you new joy, strength, hope, and pleasure in your sexual intimacy together.

RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

When Two Become One – Chris McCloskey

Love Life – Dr. Ed Wheat (excellent book on overall marital joy and intimacy).

Intended for Pleasure – Dr. Ed Wheat (specific to sexual intimacy)

Intimacy Ignited – Jody & Linda Dillow (based on the Song of Solomon)

Intimate Issues – Linda Dillow (a superb book for women on sexual intimacy)

The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment – Dr. Clifford & Joyce Penner

Sexual Intimacy in Marriage – Dr. William Cutrer

For Women Only – Shaunti Feldhan (brilliant book on understanding men)

For Men Only – Jeff & Shaunti Feldhan (brilliant book on understanding women)

The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse – Dr. Dan Allender



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