

Pastor Alfonso O. Espinosa

Headaches And Other Inadequate Excuses:

The Word of God presents a remarkable intersection between the physical and spiritual within holy matrimony in 1st Corinthians 7:2-5: ***“But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 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.”***

So there was this husband who wanted some intimate time with his wife, so when he came home, he immediately placed two aspirin into his wife’s hand. Puzzled, she countered his gesture, “I don’t have a headache.” To which he smiled and helped her up from her chair.

We shouldn’t have to be so sneaky.

The Holy Spirit writing through St. Paul reveals that a level of transformation takes place in the individuals who enter into marriage. In fact, the metamorphosis directly affects “individual” status. *Your body* is more than it was before (and I’m not referring to post-marriage weight-gain).

As of marriage, your spouse’s body is your body; your body is your spouse’s body. Listen to Adam’s celebration: ***“Then the man said, ‘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 leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*** (Genesis 2:23-24)

The physical union is a repeated affirmation of God’s gift. It submits to God’s declaration and the new reality we live in. It says among other good things, “Lord I thank You for the gift of my spouse and I will cherish him/her, because You gave him/her to me.” This was how Luther rejoiced in his wife Katie: “When I look at all the women in the world, I find none of whom I could boast as I boast with joyful conscience of my own. This one God himself gave to me, and I know that he and all the angels are pleased when I hold fast to her in love and fidelity.”

“Hold fast”...it is like the expression to the words in Genesis 2:24: ***“hold fast to his wife.”*** We hear that America is having a serious obesity epidemic. We forget that God gave us our bodies for a reason. We spoke of children in the last issue. For the most part, they can’t come into being apart from the physical union. They say that more cerebral people are less sexual. They may have the tendency to either forget about the importance of the body, or because more stock is placed in intellect, sexuality just gets less attention. Whatever the reason, intimacy is easily short-changed in a marriage.

The more religiously prudish -- those who would limit the union for "spiritual" reasons -- suggest that the union is strictly for procreation. The Word of God won't allow for this. There are at least two other reasons for the union.

The first other reason besides children is for the pleasure given to the man and woman as a married couple. This is entirely Scriptural. Proverbs 5:19: ***"Let her...fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love."*** Can it be that God actually desires that we enjoy and take pleasure in His gifts? Easy call.

The second other reason besides children takes us back to 1st Corinthians 7. Review the verse. The union is a form of spiritual protection. It is a real guard against the temptations of the evil one. We actually protect our spouse by being with them in the union. If for any reason, we deprive them, we set them up for temptation and moral compromise.

There are more good reasons for such intimacy. There are too many to list and too emotionally intimate to put down on paper. The point, however, is that it is crucial. It is absolutely critical that you are regular and frequent in your union. If you are not, it is almost a sure sign that something is wrong in the relationship. If we don't have time, are too tired and not in the mood, beware, beware, beware. The problem, however, is who do you talk to about this stuff? It is quite possibly the most difficult thing to broach even to the most trusted counselors. So, your first answer is to talk to each other.

One great goal for marriage is to know that it is not only good, but highly helpful when you -- as a couple -- can talk about your union. Do not leave important information to guessing. Men and women are just too different. Be up front. What do you like? What don't you like? Don't be shy. Talk about these things. For example, a simple tickle that is otherwise a form of affection and foreplay by the tickler can be highly irritating for the tickle-ee. But sometimes the irritated party won't say anything and just flinch every time it happens; all the while growing weary and resentful of the intruding behavior that is never wanted and always repulsive. Don't allow this to carry on.

If there is something you don't like, speak up. Your spouse will be thankful. Just be sure to tell them what you *do* like so as to affirm the fact that you desire to be with them!

A major element to keep in mind, however, is the dramatic differences between male and female. Ephesians 5 describes the roles in marriage. At the end of the day, it is clear that the man is to give his wife tender, loving care. It is absolutely fascinating how the Biblical description has the man specializing in tenderness and care towards his wife. Psychologists tell us that intimacy -- for the woman -- begins way before the bedroom. The Biblical model seems to substantiate this. The Ephesians 5 roles also seem to emphasize the need for the man to be respected and made to feel honored by his wife. That is, he seems to need more instant or straight-forward gratification. That is, the roles suggest a real give and take. Harley in his best-selling relational book *His Needs, Her Needs* says that one of the top five needs of men is sexual fulfillment, while one of the top five for women is openness and honesty. How will these translate when the two want to maintain a healthy union? Answer: the man will take time to serve the emotional needs of his wife without reducing the act to sheer physicality; the woman will emphasize physical touch for the man.

Who talks about these things without blushing? God does! The union is a gift and it is important. Let us not get so spiritual and overly-righteous (as Solomon warns). And most importantly, drink from your own cistern. We conclude with this clear word from the Lord: ***“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”*** (Hebrews 13:4)

In your service & to Christ’s glory,

Pastor Espinosa