

*God's Good Gift
Sex in Marriage
Pastor Bob and Ruth Froese*



GOD'S GOOD GIFT

Sex in marriage

Welcome	pg. 5
Chapter 1 How can you say sex is pure and holy?	pg. 7
Chapter 2 Afraid? Who, me?	pg. 11
Chapter 3 Sex is just too uncomfortable for me these days	pg. 17
Chapter 4 But you don't know what my spouse did to me	pg. 25
Chapter 5 There's nothing wrong with feeling good	pg. 31

WELCOME

Welcome to a little booklet about sex in marriage. Please note that **it's not entitled "Everything you every wanted or need to know about sex."** Hardly. We barely scrape the surface of this wonderful topic.

So, why should you read it? Because we've found that pretty much every couple with whom we've had frank interaction struggles to enjoy this wonderful gift. And, we know that couples can be helped when they look at the right place to understand where the problems originate and go to the right Person for the solution.

The Bible tells us that what's going on in our hearts affects how we live our lives. As you read "God's Good Gift: Sex in marriage," you will be led to think about four types of hearts which make it difficult to enjoy sex. The idea for this paradigm comes from the development of the teaching in James 1:12-15, where we are taught that the **reason we don't count tough times joy is because the desires of our hearts get hooked and our relationships die.**

To bring the four types of hearts into the context of sex in marriage, we have used stories as examples. The stories and names are all fictional, but have been built out of the problems we ourselves have **had, or problems we've seen others struggle with. None of them are anyone's specific story, they are all compilations of bits and pieces, so please don't think we know your story and have printed it here.** We have not.

As stated, this book is not a “how to” book on sex. There are many great books written by authors who attempt to answer “how to” questions from a biblical point of view. On the last page we’ve given a list of books you might find helpful.

We pray that our lives and our words point to the awesomeness of Almighty, Perfect, Holy God, the Creator of all good things, and the Giver of all good gifts. We pray that you are driven to Him as your Solid Rock and Eternal Refuge. We pray that our lives and marriages glorify God by showing a watching world that His ways are wonderful.

1.

How can you say sex is pure and holy?

Sex is God's idea, part of the wonder of His perfect creation. You might think of it as a "big bang" or cosmic event, but sex is not part of a cosmological evolution. God, in His love and creative perfection, fashioned into humanity a brilliant and exquisite desire, and gave them the avenue of marriage in which to fulfill that desire.

Sex in marriage is part of being joined to the Lord (Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 6:16-17). **In God's plan, the sexual relationship is the fruit of other aspects of marital oneness.** Often we in the church have allowed sin to taint our view of sex, but we need to see it as God does—part of His perfect creation.

VERY GOOD

In Genesis 1:31, God calls the creation of mankind "very good." Even after the entry of sin, the fall of the world, and the passage of time, God still calls sex good and honorable (Hebrews 13:4). Wise couples enjoy sex to the point of being exhilarated, intoxicated, and fully satisfied by it (Proverbs 5:18-19).

Sexual thoughts are not necessarily impure thoughts, and sexual desire is not sin—lust is sin. Thinking about and preparing your

mind for sex with your husband or wife is just as pure and holy as preparing to cook a pot of soup to serve to a homeless person.

Do you agree with God about sex, or have you made up your own **definition**? **If you agree with God about sex, it'll come out in your actions with your spouse.** Likewise, a sinful view will result in sinful actions, and bring death into the relationship.

WHAT IS GOD'S VIEW OF SEX IN MARRIAGE?

Marriage is not predominantly about sex, and the physical act of sex **is not the foundation for marriage.** **Otherwise, Jesus wouldn't have told the woman who had plenty of sexual partners that she didn't have a husband (John 4:18).** Sex is not the most important part of marriage—unity and companionship are prerequisites to a healthy sexual relationship.

But, sex is very important! Husbands and wives need to participate wholeheartedly, aggressively, and passionately. Passivity is unbiblical (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). **If God's Word is the ultimate authority in your life, then you will agree with Him about sex in your marriage. You won't just be excited about sex for you, rather your number one focus will be your mate.**

God intended sex to be pleasurable for both men and women. He **even created women's bodies with an organ that has no other possible use than pleasure.** **There are cultures that disobey God's plan,** in which female circumcision is performed as the clitoris is cut out of the bodies of little girls. But God intends that women as well as men find sex pleasurable. Read through the Song of Solomon and **you'll see for yourself!**

EQUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIVILEGE

Sex is an area of fundamental personhood. As such, husbands and wives have equal responsibility to aggressively pursue the sexual fulfillment of their spouse (1 Corinthians 7:2-6). In the love story told in the Song of Solomon, both the husband and the wife were

aggressive pursuers. Check out Song of Solomon 7:10-12 for a biblical example of a woman initiating,

If we have equal responsibility, then we are also equally answerable to God. How does that look? It depends. If you are a person who hits on porn sites, it means you are answerable to God for your sin. If you are a person who defrauds your spouse of regular sex, it means you are answerable to God for your sin.

Women, sex is an aspect of the marriage relationship where we may **and should take initiative. Especially if you've been physically** abused in the past, which many women can attest to at some level, or you have been involved in sexual sin, it would be especially good for you to deliberately take initiative for sex with your husband. Read Chapter 3 to find out why.

Sexual readiness is a discipline of the mind. Make it a matter of **prayer to keep thoughts under control. In God's presence is fullness** of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. God is the One who makes us able to enjoy His good gift of sex in marriage.

WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT?

Have you heard of the husband who had to be persuaded to participate in a passionate interlude, who turned to his wife **afterward and said, "That wasn't as bad as I thought it would be"?** No? Well, we haven't either. Few men have a **"this is gonna be bad" attitude about sex.**

One man approached his wife and handed her an aspirin for her **headache. She said with a puzzled look, "I don't have a headache."** He said, **"I've been waiting all week to hear you say that."** Most often it's women who say, **"I don't feel like it."**

Christians have a responsibility to bless our spouses (1 Peter 3:8-9). **To do so, each of us must be sure that our spouse's sexual desires are being satisfied. When we don't think about sex the way God does, it's sin. God's Word invades our thinking about the topic of sex, and labels our reasons for disobedience at the deepest level,**

the level of our hearts. That's exactly where He brings healing, too. Way down deep inside our hearts, inside our inner man.

We do not write this as experts, we write it out of our weakness.

Because in our weakness, Christ's strength shines. In our weakness, He is strong. We are proof that the gospel has power to forgive our **sins and heal our diseases. Our relationship is living proof that it's possible for any married couple to enjoy sex in their marriage. We're** not going to give you techniques or methods, because great sex comes from a transformed heart.

FOUR HEARTS THAT NEED TRANSFORMING*

A sinful sex life is deadly. The deadliness comes from combining two combustible things—a desire and a temptation. When your desire combines with a temptation, the result is death (James 1:12-15).

I'll bet you read that and thought, “Here we go again.” Obviously, lust is the desire and a sexy person or porn is the temptation. Then, **probably, your mind went one of two ways. Either you thought, “Oh, no. They know me. I'm so tired of these accusations.” Or, you thought, “Oh, yes. They know my spouse. Now he or she will hear what they need to hear.”**

Obviously there are times when desire for pleasure combines with the opportunity to indulge, resulting in problems in a relationship. But we propose that, more often than you might think, there are other desires that combine with temptation. There are four kinds of hearts in which desires grow—a heart of fear, a heart of despair, a heart of anger, and a heart of folly. Even good, God-given desires that arise from these hearts can be hooked by temptation. Then, before you know it, your relationship is on a deadly path.

Each of the following chapters looks at one of the four hearts, and how they bring death to relationships. They also consider ways **God's Word can take your desires down the glorious road of** enjoying His good gift of sex in marriage.

*The four types of hearts were taught by Garrett Higbee at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference in February 2009

2. Afraid? Who, me?

Couples often have trouble in the sexual aspect of their relationships because one (or both of them) respond(s) to the idea of sex from a heart of fear.

A heart of fear easily becomes consumed by the desire for security, **but the cues it sends are subtle. It doesn't stand up and say, "I must have security." If you listen carefully, you can hear a trembling heart behind these statements:**

- ♦ **"My body is ugly. I'm just not made like women who look sexy. My husband can't possibly find me attractive—I'm staying covered up."**
- ♦ **"If the house isn't just the way I like it, I'm way too bugged for sex. You get the vacuum out and get busy. I'm working in the kitchen."**
- ♦ **"I'm failing in my job. When I go to bed at night, I just lie there and try to figure out how I can stay out of trouble tomorrow."**

The desire for security walks hand in hand with the obsessive **behavior of perfectionism**. **Perfectionism isn't always what we** typically think it might be—a neat and tidy home or a perfectly organized briefcase. Perfectionism that feeds a desire for security can take on many faces.

Lucy feels secure when she's in her house, but not if she's alone. She makes sure that it never happens—she makes sure that **there's always movement and sound and a live body to touch** around her. Her perfectionism is found in having at least 30 cats roaming, always roaming around.

Hubert finds perfection in having cars around him. His cars don't have to take him anywhere, and some folks think his yard is a junkyard. It certainly looks a lot different than that of his neighbor Tony, who washes his car several times a week, and sells his cars before they are two years old. But both behaviors can come from a desire for security. Everyone with a heart of fear makes up their **own definition of a “security blanket.”**

Part of God's purpose for Christian marriages is that they would present a model of what it's like to be the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:28-31). **As such, wouldn't Christian marriages be** havens of safety and security? But just one look around reveals **that they aren't. Instead of showing a watching world what security** in Christ looks like, often our marriages are more of a magnifying glass that reveals our fearful hearts.

When the desire for security gets hooked by temptation, the result is that sinful thoughts result in sinful actions, and the relationship begins to die (see diagram on next page).

Ways a heart of fear brings death to marriage



Are your thoughts and emotions characterized by worry, anxiety, double-mindedness, faintheartedness, and/or self-consciousness or shame? These are the thoughts and emotions often driven by a desire for se-

curity. A worried and anxious mindset gets fed by the lie that you must find your own refuge.



A fearful heart takes action towards creating some type of personal refuge. Personal refuges can include: being too busy for sex, being too stressed for sex, or refusing to prepare yourself mentally for sex. Sexual passivity or sexual unresponsiveness often result from a fearful heart, resulting in moments of panic or generalized anxiety.

Pornography can be the refuge a fearful heart chooses. Somewhere along the way, the fearful heart that chose a fantasy world instead of the real world combines with a foolish heart, and pornographic behavior escalates. Therefore, rather than discussing the problem of pornography in this chapter, we will look at it in the chapter that considers a foolish heart.



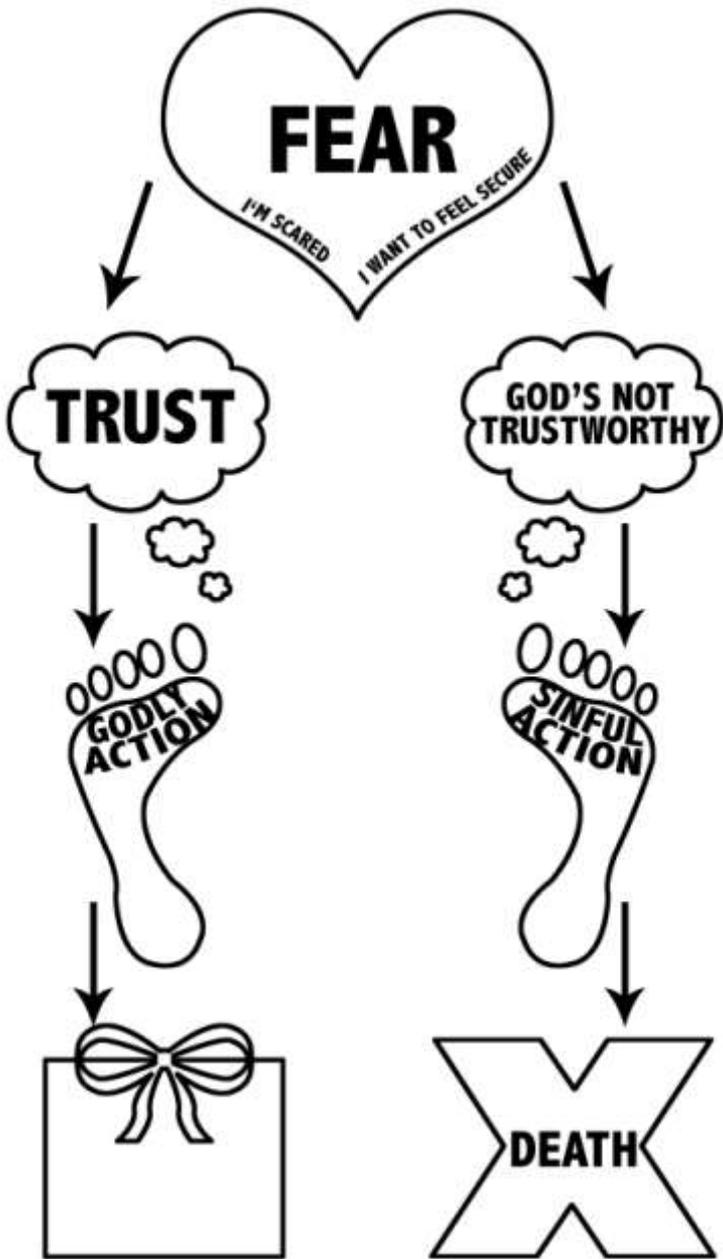
The death of a relationship for those with a heart of fear is evidenced by a relationship characterized by self-consciousness. Do you view your body with embarrassment or dislike, as something less than a gift to give your spouse in obedient generosity? Do you prefer to take sexual satisfaction into your own hands rather than obediently pursuing it with your spouse? Is your willingness to be sexually aggressive **with your spouse dependant on what he or she does or doesn't say?** Your self-consciousness may have moved to fear of man over fear of God—a path of death. You can expect to feel panicky, anxious, and traumatized.

Ways a heart of fear Can enjoy God's good gift



God's Word makes it clear that we are to rejoice in and be grateful for the bodies He has given us (Psalm 139:13-18). Our bodies must be used to honor God and please our spouse. Selfless love concentrates more on giving and receiving pleasure than on what we look like.

If you combine your desire for security with God's Word, God will be your refuge. As a result you will choose freedom, vulnerability and



expressiveness instead of stiltedness, shyness and lack of communication about sex.

The lie which a fearful heart listens to is the lie that other refuges are trustworthy. When a heart of fear leads to sinful thoughts and actions, it is ultimately a result of not considering God to be trustworthy.

In order for a fearful heart to be transformed, you must intercept the refuges your fearful heart has chosen, and replace the lies with the truth that God is trustworthy. Read this old hymn carefully. If you cling to the truths it expresses, you will gain courage. Trust does not come from big effort, trust comes as you cling desperately to the cross.

In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine
A wondrous beauty I see

For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died

To pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true
Its shame and reproach gladly bear

Then He'll call me some day to my home far away

Where His glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross

Till my trophies at last I lay down

I will cling to the old rugged cross

And exchange it some day for a crown.

It is nothing less than being crucified with Christ that can give a fearful heart courage. As you picture Christ on the cross, pray hard to the God who never faints or grows weary, the God who reigns forever, who is our hope, our strong deliverer. Waiting on the Lord rises His strength in you. God is the defender of the weak, the comforter of those in need. He will lift you up, He will give you the courage to be generous with your spouse in the area of sex.



Wives especially need to keep their eyes on Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3) as they become generous, instead of stingy and fearful, in the area of sensuality. Women need to find ways not to be fearful to let their husbands look at their bodies. Husbands married to a wife with a fearful heart can help by reassuring her that he finds her beautiful.

A trusted, conservative, and traditional pastor once said about his wife, who is a heavy woman with a physique that would never be **used for a model, that “she is an amazing woman with costumes.”** There is always a way to make your body inviting to look at, but you have to want to share it. Why not start by turning off the lights, spraying a scent you enjoy, and lighting a few candles.



As you choose the godly action of being an over-comer who is generous with time and sensuality, you show the power of prayer (1 John 5:4). Your relationship becomes characterized by faith, and God is glorified.

3. Sex is just too uncomfortable for me these days

When Judy was a little girl, Alice (her mother) struggled to find child care for her while she worked. Alice was relieved when her younger **brother, Judy's uncle, offered to stay with Judy after school. Years** later Alice denied that her brother could possibly have molested Judy, but Judy knew she had been abused. Judy decided she would never put her two daughters into a situation where there was potential to relive her horror. She made sure her husband was never alone with them. Her devotion to her daughters was admired by all, including her dedicated husband. But, when he approached her for sex, she would often find herself crying. At first she had hidden it, but as the years went by, it became clear that there was a barrier to their sexual relationship.

Larry was a virgin when he and Amanda got married. Just prior to their wedding, Amanda had confessed to him that she was not, and

that before they began dating, she had been involved in a sexual relationship. She said she wanted to be open and honest with Larry, **who was furious, but didn't say much because the wedding was only a few days away.** Her confession always stayed in the back of his mind, and he was often suspicious of her. Twenty-five years later, after their children were grown and out of the house, Larry found **that Amanda's touch repulsed him. He felt the situation was hopeless.**

Dan wasn't Denise's first husband. She had married a young man in her high school class, but it had only lasted a year. After a quick divorce, she had gone away to school, graduated, and married Dan. Now she lay awake at night after sex, realizing that the way she felt about Dan felt pretty familiar.

At the bottom of it all, a heart of despair desires comfort. Times of involvement in the vulnerability and openness of a sexual relationship can become terribly uncomfortable for a despairing heart. The pain can feel so real and tangible, that it cuts like a knife.

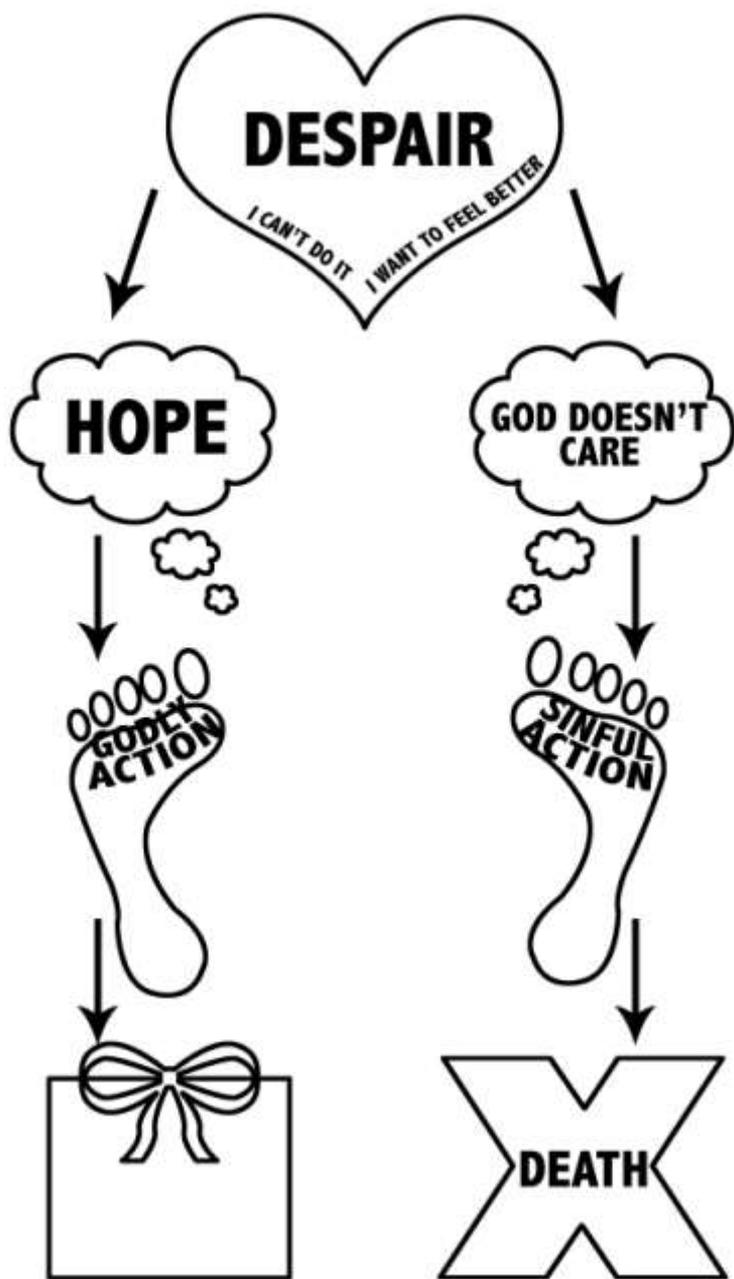
All too often the despairing heart's desire for comfort gets hooked by the temptation to be disobedient to God's command to aggressively minister sexually to its spouse.

Ways a heart of despair brings death to marriage

Hopelessness, grief, and sadness are the thoughts and emotions that result when a heart of despair hooks the temptation to be **disobedient to God's commands. These dear people become sad,** downcast and feel deep self-pity. They withdraw because they operate from a victim mentality. If they would be honest, they would say that they are reacting to the sin of others against them.



They believe the lie that God doesn't care, and that they are in the battle alone. They don't think anyone could understand how uncomfortable it is for them to be sexually active with their spouse. The problems are

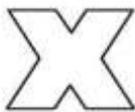


compounded when a spouse becomes critical and demanding. It doesn't take long before, in their mindset, they can point to the activity of the spouse as the lone root of the problem.

For both men and women, particularly woman, becoming sexually aroused is more of a decision than a product of stimulation by her husband. If she has decided to be uninterested, caressing her body will probably annoy her, and feel very uncomfortable. If she has decided to be obedient to God and has chosen to look forward to a sexual encounter, that same stimulation can be pleasurable.



There are a lot of married men and women who do not find sex pleasurable—rather they find it agonizingly uncomfortable. Soon they are making excuses not to be involved in sex and eventually withdraw from having sex altogether. These are the tragic actions that result when a desire for comfort has been hooked by temptation.



The inevitable result is destructive interaction of a victim mentality, greater and greater levels of withdrawal, depression, bipolar behavior, a feeling of doom, and even suicidality.

We would be neglectful if we did not mention that there are some medical conditions that make an erection impossible (i.e. prostate cancer surgery). If sex is impossible, even the man or woman with the most debilitating medical condition needs plenty of affectionate touch. Also, both men and women can experience lessened ability to become aroused due to aging or side effects of medication. When **that happens, it's a good time to visit your physician.** For women, there are creams that assist by increasing lubrication, and for men, there are medications that assist by increasing blood flow.

Ways a heart of Despair Can enjoy God's good gift

Even a heart of despair has a Christian duty—to be sure sex is pleasurable for our spouses. So we can choose to perform dutifully for our spouse, rather than think about our personal pleasure. But,

think how it would feel if someone was kind to you and then stated, **“I hated doing that, but I had to.”** That’s hardly the type of interaction that will grow a relationship. Instead, it would be cold and cruel.



A heart of despair needs to remember that we love God because He first loved us. Feel the awful suffering Jesus bore. Experience the grueling pain Jesus felt when He **was being whipped. Blink as nasty spit hit Jesus’ eyes,** feel tears well up as He is unable to wipe the grossness away because His hands were tied. Close your eyes in agony as parts of His beard are pulled out. Sense the shame and throbbing ache as the crown of thorns is forced into His skull. Stumble blindly during the torture of carrying the heavy rough cross on the gaping, oozing wounds on His back and shoulders. Suffer as the hammer pounds into every nerve of His hands and feet and His body involuntarily jerks against the splintering, blistering wood. The taste of these tears is the taste of love. Jesus did what He did out of love, the same love that can motivate us to give pleasure to our spouse.

If horrific things that have been done to you flood your mind, **there’s one thing you must do. It’s essential that you separate what** has been done to you from your responses. There may be aspects of your past where you have been sinned against and others are **guilty, but that can’t stop you from enjoying God’s good gift of sex. If the sin of others stops you from obedience, you’ve now moved to** responding sinfully, so now you also stand guilty before God. You **need to separate what you’re innocent of from what you’re guilty of.**

Please know that Jesus doesn’t ignore you, He suffered and was wounded for one reason—to bring healing to your wounds. Don’t try to pull up your bootstraps and ignore the sin against you. Deal with it biblically and be healed by His stripes.

At the same time, we must realize that we compound matters when **we bring sinful responses in. Carefully separate what you’re** innocent of from what God will hold you responsible for. God will hold you responsible for obedience to His commands. When those who have been abused in the past deliberately take initiative for sex

with their spouse, they are responding in a godly manner that pleases God.

Guilt and innocence are not defined by us, they are defined by God. He will hold us all accountable to have blessed our spouse sexually (1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3). In order to be like Jesus, we will consider the comfort of our spouse above our comfort (Philippians 2:3-4). This is not possible by gritting your teeth and determining to do it. It requires the powerful grace of God and the mighty work of the Holy Spirit, that raised Jesus from the dead—and is exactly what Jesus wants to give you.

If you find yourself responding to being sinned against in ways that stop you from obedience, you are choosing to wallow in sin and **compound your own guilt. If what you've read here about sexual abuse is true for you, please don't ignore it. God doesn't.**

Compassionate Biblical Counseling can help you see how you no longer need to live with a heart of despair. You will be able to grasp **how God can use even the suffering that's come into your life for His glory, and that His glory is the same thing as your good. There's a number on the back cover of this booklet for the Faith Fellowship Biblical Counseling Center. Please call.**



When your spouse's comfort and joy matter more to you than your own, God will have powerfully worked in you to overcome a heart of despair. But no amount of huge effort will bring your thoughts and emotions into truth apart from abiding in Christ. How can you abide in Christ when every touch means you shudder in horror? Here's the answer—you think about Him. He is the shade tree you are resting under. He is the tree trunk you are a branch sticking out of. He is the air you are breathing. He is the pitcher you are drawing water from. He is the water your thirst is being quenched with. He is the Father carrying you. He is the Shepherd leading you to safety. He is the Sovereign Controller who can turn your nightmare into good, and change you so that you respond to suffering like Jesus did (Romans 8:28-29).

Unless you think about Jesus, bowing in worship, you won't be able to give your body. But when you think about Jesus and how He laid

His body down for you, to forgive you for your own sins, you will be able to forgive those who sinned against you. It is only as we know **the healing power of Christ's blood for our own sins of bitterness and rebellion against God's sovereignty, only as we are forgiven** ourselves, that we will be able to forgive those who sin against us. And it is only then that we will be able to lay our body down on the altar in the worshipful act of sexual obedience in marriage.



When you abide in Christ, His Holy Spirit will empower you to present your own body, though it be bruised and battered, as a living sacrifice to the Lord by sexual obedience with your spouse. This is holy and acceptable to God, your reasonable duty in marriage. Then we can know the joy of sex as a new pleasure—the pleasure of giving our spouse what God has commanded.

A HEART OF DESPAIR CAN GLORIFY GOD

A heart of despair that abides in Christ it is a powerful testimony of the hope found in Christ. Part of the blessing of a hurting relationship that becomes characterized by hope is the knowledge that nothing apart from the love of God could have healed the relationship. When you avail yourself of the power found in identifying with the sufferings of Christ and of the healing brought about by abiding in Christ, you show the watching world how glorious God is and how superior life with Christ is. Even a heart of despair can walk in His courage and strength.

4.

But you Don't
know what my
spouse did to me

Tom had had enough. After the kids had been put to bed, the phone **had rung... again. Ellen was on the phone with her mother... again.** The day before it had been her sister. The day before that, her friend. Now it was 10:30 pm, and Tom was tired of it. Never one to be very demanding, Tom simply fell asleep angry. But during the day, the friendly secretary who always had time to bring him coffee and was never too busy on the phone to help him out, started to look attractive. The next day, when Ellen picked up the phone, Tom **simply shut the bedroom door. He wasn't going to beg for it** anymore.

Martha works hard. Each day begins at 4:30am, so she goes to bed by 8:30pm. Bob comes to bed after watching the news at 11. One **night Martha couldn't sleep so she meandered downstairs to sit with Bob, only to find that he wasn't on the couch. She followed the light** at the foot of the basement stairs and found him sitting behind the computer screen, interacting with porn. Martha felt horribly betrayed and accused Bob of cheating on her. A year later, she was still

testing him to see if he was meeting the protective ultimatums she **had set in place for him. He had to prove his fidelity before she'd be** able to respond to him sexually. As she talked with her friends about his betrayal, their strong reactions deepened her vigilant protectiveness of her body.

A heart of anger is triggered by a desire to control how it is being **treated. A heart of anger wants revenge and doesn't think God will get it right. Way down deep, a heart of anger thinks God won't be** able to fix it, and they have to take matters into their own hands.

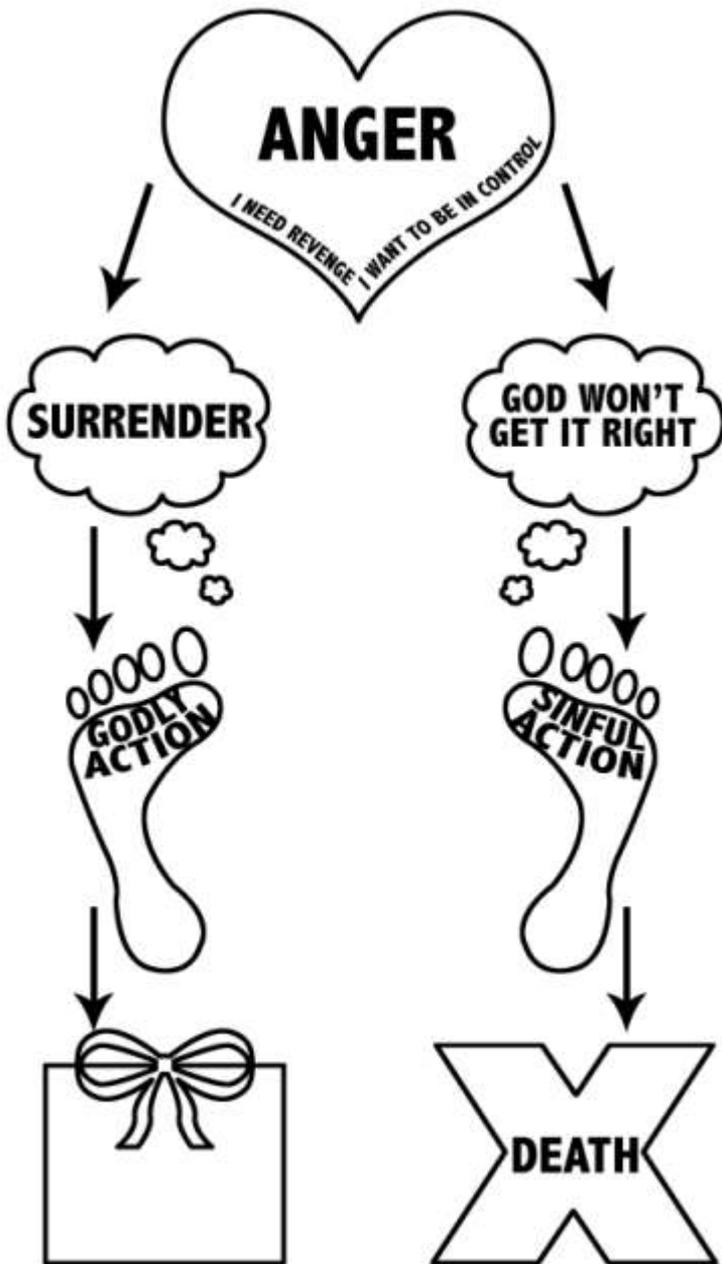
Ways a heart of anger brings death to marriage



There are many clues to help us see our angry hearts. **They don't always show up quickly in the marriage bed,** but there will be times when this heart turns against its spouse. A heart of anger can appear on the outside to be very controlled. That is the deception of the desire to control. We control how others see us, and control what our spouse sees as well. If you feel your gut rile up in non-compliance when those in **authority ask you to do something that you don't want to do, when** you defiantly control and manipulate to attempt to make changes, be clued in that you have a heart of anger. Other clues that we have an angry heart include rebellion to authority, maliciously making sure others suffer consequences of their behavior, a stiff-necked insistence on things going your way, and bitterness. In marriage, the heart of anger seeks revenge for sins they perceive to be against them.



The actions of a heart of anger are refusal of sex as well **as the refusal to live according to God's definitions of role** differences. For a wife that can include refusal to submit, and for a husband, refusal to lead a wife biblically. A husband who is angry may enjoy sins of gossip and riling up against authority that his wife triggers. A wife who is angry may enjoy putting her husband down and gossiping about him to other women. A wife may become upset because her husband wants sex



without taking time to talk, or because a husband wants sex quickly, **or because he is on a shift that doesn't allow for them to have the** kind of interaction that she enjoys. A husband may become angered when there are children who deter unhindered sex. There can also be an abuse of sex – an insisting that the spouse do something the other is not comfortable with. Also, there can be a controlling of the **spouse through how often sex does or doesn't happen.**



Death of the relationship can be seen in bitter interaction, or in the hatred of sex with the spouse. The abusive actions that result from this thinking often extends beyond physical abusive actions to verbal accusations and name calling that breaks down the spouse instead of imparting grace.

Ways a heart of anger Can enjoy God's good gift

Angry hearts can have glorious victory in giving the spouse pleasure. A wise man or woman will understand that this begins with confession of the sin of his speech that has put the spouse down and made him or her feel betrayed and ugly (Ephesians 4:29). Patterns of abusive speech can become so engrained that the angry spouse does not even recognize how their negative and complaining speech make it difficult for the spouse to become turned on sexually.



When a heart of anger bows to God's Word, there is obedience in gracious speech and an understanding of what the spouse enjoys sexually. Song of Solomon gives an example of wonderful patterns of sexual speech that arouses instead of disrupts. Try using symbolism instead of harsh description of desired sexual interaction, combined with stated awe **at the beauty of the spouse's naked body. As well as arriving at** a sexual understanding of what the spouse enjoys, there will also be obedience to deliberate protection of the spouse from temptation (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).



An angry heart that bows to God's Word may still desire control, but now that desire can help them work together and talk with each other about what they like sexually.

They work hard at reconciliation, and come to each other open armed and vulnerable. To arrive at this point takes determined surrender that begins with forgiveness. Forgiveness does not come until there is conviction of personal sin, and confession of the same. Once an angry heart has confessed its disruptive behavior as sin, there can be forgiveness towards those they believe have triggered the anger.



In this attitude of surrender, they treat the spouse as they want to be treated. The truthful thoughts and emotions of a heart of anger include an understanding of their identity in Christ and their responsibility to forgive as they have been forgiven, in an attitude of surrender.

The godly actions of a heart of anger include victory and surrendered sexual obedience (Matthew 12:20-21). The married couple can then enjoy the blessing of a relationship characterized by peace that honors God, and the body of Christ will be edified as **they watch a relationship that gives them a model of Christ's sacrificial love for the church** (Ephesians 5:25-27).

5.

**There's nothing
wrong with
feeling good**

Brian really liked the way the new receptionist made him feel when she laughed at his jokes, so he started taking the stairs instead of the elevator in order to pass her desk more often. One day he asked her to help him out with a project, and she cheerfully agreed. He realized how enjoyable it was to work with her, and found new ways for her to assist him. At first he talked with his wife about his new **assistant, but after a few months, he just didn't. When she would call him on his cell phone, and his wife would ask who it was, he would say, "Just someone from work." It didn't bother him that he** talked more with his assistant than with his spouse. After all, she was really helping him, not like his wife. His wife always seemed to be part of difficult situations and problems he had to deal with, while his assistant just made his life easier. Brian knew he was in trouble when he found himself thinking about what sex would be like with his assistant while making love with his wife.

Victoria had tried her best to be a submissive wife to Tony. Whenever they had an argument, she was the one who gave in, she was the one who apologized. Then one day Tom started working at the plant during her shift. Tom was gentle and soft spoken. They had a lot of fun working side by side. When their eyes met, a feeling of camaraderie surged through Victoria that she had never felt with Tony. The relationship with Tom was so rewarding. It was so nice to have a friend who understood her. Soon, Victoria stopped caring about whether she and her husband made up when they argued. After all, she had a real friend now.

Michael was tired of Angie's demands. Every evening she asked the same old questions. Did you get the oil changed? Did you fix the lawnmower? Did you get your raise? Did you bring the garbage out? Did you put the kids to bed? Tired, tired, tired. Finally, Angie went to get ready for bed. Michael turned the TV down so he'd hear the mattress creak, then he looked at the computer. In just a few minutes he'd feel energized. At least there was one way he could get a little pleasure in life.

Francis was working with Pastor Ron, the associate pastor of her church, on a project for the church youth. It didn't take long for them to realize they worked well as a team. They enjoyed working together, and the time flew by when they met to throw around ideas and make decisions. Before long, Pastor Ron was calling her at work for help with decisions. She began sending him Garfield emails she knew he would enjoy. The first time he confided unhappiness in his marriage, Francis felt deep sympathy for Ron and wanted to help. Before long, she realized she was involved in a mental affair. In conversations with her husband, she found herself leaving out parts of her conversations with Ron, knowing he would be upset if he knew the whole truth. Eventually Francis confessed her need for accountability to a friend. Her confession helped break her obsession. They worked out steps Francis had to take to unravel the tangled web she had woven—she was in so deep that she finally had to remove herself from all situations where-in she had contact with Pastor Ron.

A foolish heart elevates the desire for self-gratification. It looks for the easiest way to feel better, without considering the divisive and faithless results of its actions. Arousal, reward, and pleasure are priorities for the heart of foolishness. It justifies the desire to have what it wants, and have it now, by blaming someone else for problems instead of solving problems.

The desire for pleasure gets hooked by any sort of disliked action on the part of the spouse, as the heart of foolishness takes the irresponsible, self-destructive, and deadly path of pleasure.

WAYS A HEART OF FOLLY BRINGS DEATH TO MARRIAGE



The thoughts of a foolish heart are, quite plainly, foolish thoughts. A perfectly intelligent mind justifies simple-minded thinking that results in perversity. Desires for fulfillment, gratification, variety, and self-reward become consuming. The foolish heart is characterized by refusal to think objectively, an obsessive focus on divisive acts by others, and flirtation with faithlessness. Feelings become all important. The forbidden becomes the desired when the foolish heart is convinced **that God doesn't know best, and that personal pleasure is more important than pleasing God.**



Inappropriate cross-gender (or sometimes same-gender) attention, inappropriate affectionate actions, thoughts, and comments are found on the **dead-man's curve traveled by** the heart of foolishness. The sexual actions of a foolish heart result in intimacy outside of marriage—any type of inappropriate affections with other men or women. Acts of self-gratification include flirtation with or fantasy about another man or woman, as well as any type of pornography use.

The downward spiral of addiction to pornography begins with a foolish heart that is busy pursuing pleasure. Self-glory is elevated above God-glory. The eyes of the indulger are completely off God and what He has done, and on self and a dissatisfaction with what is

happening in his or her life. As the heart darkens, the thought life becomes dominated with the wonders of apparent willing and gratifying partners. These vain imaginations and fantasies gain a foothold, and then become strongholds in the mind. When the mind is dominated by sin, it becomes less and less sensitive to the Holy **Spirit's conviction, and more and more likely to suppress the truth** and listen to a downward spiral of lies:

- ♦ **“I’m still a Christian, I just have this one little problem.”**
- ♦ **“This is a difficult time with my wife right now, it’ll pass when she changes.”**
- ♦ **“God understands what is happening. He has given me this vehicle of pornography or masturbation to satisfy my natural passions.”**

Eventually sin loses its power to satisfy, and the indulger is given over (Romans 1:21-26), and filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:32). It prefers and seeks out the company of others wallowing in the same lifestyle, choosing to leave the church or change to a church where no one will truly hold him or her accountable.



Hearts of folly that travel down the dead man's curve of

their desires have relationships characterized by unfaithfulness, irresponsibility, self-destruction, and divisiveness. Many broken marriages point back to infidelity, and it all began with a self-justified desire for pleasure.

BETRAYED BY PORN

Since it's most common for men to be caught up in porn (although statistics say women are close behind), we are going to address the problem from the viewpoint of a wife, but the principles would be the same for a husband. Pornography brings anguish of heart to the spouse of the person caught up in it because of the betrayal aspect. Another person has been brought into the one-flesh union. (a person no wife can compete with—she never argues, is never

moody, never does anything but affirm).

A woman whose husband is caught up in pornography must realize that the real battle is not between her and her husband – it is a **battle for her husband’s soul. Satan is the enemy who wants her husband to become addicted and wants to break up the marriage.** The struggle is an unseen spiritual one (Ephesians 6:12-13). The true enemy in this battle is Satan, not the husband. Jesus has **defeated Satan, and it’s only in Jesus that this battle can be won.** It will help a wife if she understands whether she responds to her **husband’s sin from a heart of fear, despair, anger or folly.**

Responses from a heart of fear can be overcome by recognizing that God is a redeeming and trustworthy God. She is in a one-flesh trial **that sovereign God has allowed, not just for her husband’s good but also hers.** Fear is focused on self, fear is overcome by love. She must face her own indulgent sins, including sinful fear. If there is **talk to others about what’s going on in the marriage, she is sinning** by gossiping. She must speak in a way that honors her husband, **and communicate about sex biblically to her children as God’s good and beautiful gift. When sinful fear consumes a woman, it’s just as obsessive and self-centered as a husband’s lust.**

A wife who responds from a heart of anger/bitterness will need to overcome her sin. This will require that she stops listening to voices, including her own, that speak on the basis of her feelings. **Bitter anger does not leave room for God’s judgment (Romans 12:9).** **Let’s consider a few evidences of bitterness. Withholding sex proves** that a woman is acting on her bitterness. Excessive sorrow, which can be seen when the wife exhibits greater sorrow over her **husbands’ sin than over her own sin, proves bitterness. A focus on,** or talking about her own wounds reveals bitterness. Such bitterness enslaves (Luke 17:1-10), while freedom in Christ empowers her to serve and bless (Romans 12:20).

When a wife responds from a heart of despair/self pity she **continually says, “Woe is me, I’ve got it so bad.” This thinking** leads to bondage that can take total possession of the mind. She must recognize that God is revealing her own evil desires by which

she has elevated herself to the point where she considers herself as above being sinned against. Self-pity has no room for sin against her by others. The sin of others causes her to lose sight of God or to believe her feelings that she is forsaken by God. Self-pity leads to grumbling—a direct sinful offense against God and the work He is doing. A murmuring heart must realize that the sin of murmuring is equally as offensive to God as the sin of pornography, then put off complaining and put on praising God.

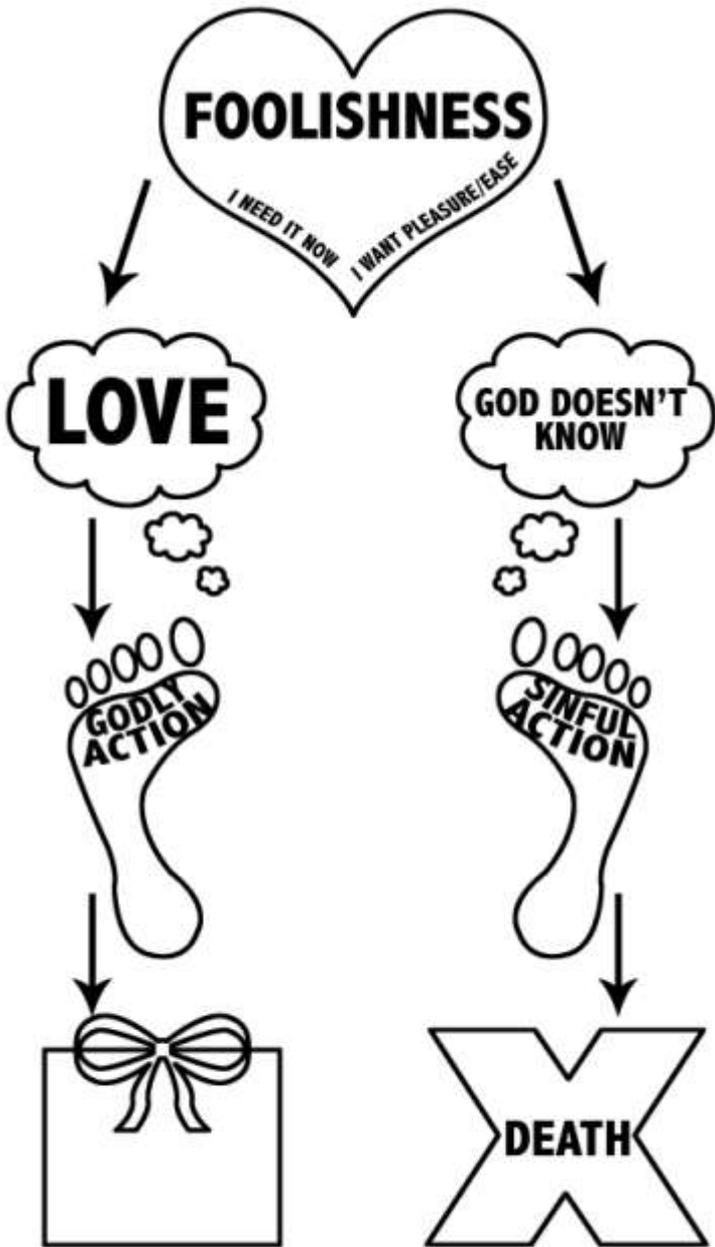
No matter what type of heart prevails in the anguish brought on by pornography or other forms of betrayal, the spouse must see his or her position in Christ as an over-comer who does not have to work toward victory, but rather works from victory. She must humble herself to the pain, expect God to give her grace and mature her **through it, and place her grief stricken heart into God's hands. Self-righteousness is opposed to this and feeds self-pity.** A betrayed spouse who bravely considers his or her own sin and relies on the grace of God for forgiveness will be able to extend the grace he or she has experienced, to the betrayer (Colossians 3:13). Only the grace of God trumps sin.

Ways a heart of folly can enjoy God's good gift

It's time to stop listening to lies. They feel good at the moment, but any gain is short-term, while the inevitable pain is long-term. A few of the common areas about which Satan has been busy casting lies are: masturbation, homosexuality, and the stimulating of emotional **and sexual desires outside of marriage. Let's refute those lies with truth.**

Sex was made by God as a good gift to be shared within the married companionship of two people, thus masturbation is excluded from being an acceptable sexual release (Song of Solomon 2:7).

God created two sexes for marriage, each with a different role in their relationship. God names homosexuality among the list of unrighteousness that will not inherit His kingdom (Romans 1:26-27,



1 Corinthians 6:9). The issue is not how we are made, but how we **will stay**. God says, “**Such *were* some of you.**” (1 Corinthians 6:10).

The stimulation of sexual desires prior to marriage or outside of marriage is unacceptable to God, named among the list of unrighteousness that will not inherit His kingdom (Song of Solomon 8:8-9, 1 Corinthians 6:9). Let your knees shake on that one, and be wise instead of foolish.



The truthful thoughts and emotions which the heart of folly must deliberately put on are those of a warrior conqueror. Read the end of the Book, and see that Christ is victorious. Satan and sin are defeated (1 Corinthians 15:56-57, Revelation 1:18). Daily put on the armor of God and face the battle as a conqueror (Ephesians 6:10-31). Think about living in the glory which God has called you to, chosen you for, and given to you.



Train in putting on love. Love that overcomes folly acts in self-control, wisdom, being a blessing to your spouse, and being less needy. A needy person reacts and responds to the behavior of his or her spouse. A person living in the fear of God does not blame the sinful actions of a spouse for foolish responses, but chooses to love no matter what.

Make deliberate choices to treat your spouse in your heart and in your actions the way you want to be treated. Stay away from sinful **affections and actions**. **Here's a list of questions to hold you** accountable, or to present to a friend who can ask you the questions and hold you accountable.

- ♦ Is there anyone besides my husband or wife whom I am taking time to get close to?
- ♦ Do I manipulate anything in order to be near another person?
- ♦ Am I taking special care of my dress of appearance because of another person who is not my spouse?
- ♦ Do I think about or talk with a person frequently outside the

context of my work contact? More than with my spouse?

- ♦ Do I withhold some conversations, communications, or events from my spouse?
- ♦ Do I think about another person instead of my spouse during romantic activities with my spouse?
- ♦ Do I welcome someone to hold me accountable for my thoughts and actions?

A HEART OF FOLLY CAN GLORIFY GOD



God is glorified when we put our feelings under His control and give our spouse his or her sexual pleasure instead of focusing on how we feel. Ask yourself what fun thing your spouse would like you to do. Choose to laugh with your spouse. Choose to be a blessing to your spouse.

If you have children, you will set an example and give them the security that they not only crave, but that by definition of being their parents you have promised to give them.

When a heart of folly chooses to glorify God instead of self, to give pleasure to the spouse instead of trying to get it for self, the resulting marriage is the type that people long for. Marriages like that demonstrate the power and wonder of God. And sometimes they even give little glimpses of the delightful and fun aspects of our Creator, which we will enjoy for eternity.

Some books that might help you to enjoy
God's Good Gift: Sex in marriage

“From Ashes to Beauty” by Jeff Colon (Pure Life Ministries, 2009).

“Sexual Intimacy in Marriage” by William Cutrer and Sandra Glahn, (Kregel Publications, 2001).

“At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry” by Steve Gallagher (Pure Life Ministries, 2000).

“Intimate Issues” by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus (for women), (Waterbrook Press, 1999).

“When Sinners Say I Do” by Dave Harvey, (Shepherd Press, 2007).

“Sheet Music” by Kevin Lehman, (Tyndale House Publishers, 2003).

“The Gift of Sex” by Clifford and Joyce Penner, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003).

“This Momentary Marriage” by John Piper, (Crossway Books, 2009).