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**HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES**

This is the central message of this book, for it expresses the foundational reason that God gave us our male sexuality—to love our wives. He could have handled procreation in many other ways, some of them far more efficient, but He chose to couple our capacity to create new life with the union of hearts and minds and spirits that is His plan for the marital relationship. As He created us in love, His desire for us is that we too create in love, the love of a husband and wife. Husbands, love your wives.

The great task before every man who wants to become God's sexual man is to bring his shattered and scattered parts back together, to capture his wild free-flowing sexuality and place it back where it belongs, in the total man, more specifically, to reintegrate his sexual desire and love.

In this regard, it might surprise many to realize that for most men, in this great venture of restoring what sin has damaged, our initial daunting challenge will not be in the area of sex, but in loving our wives as we should. God intended that sexual desire flow out of love which means that love comes first, and it follows that in bringing our hearts and bodies into conformity with God's plan, we start with love.

**IF WE LOVED MORE**

One of the things that Chris in Chapter 4 said to himself after his evening of wallowing in lust was that if he loved his wife more he wouldn't do such things. Is this valid? I suspect many Christian men have said this to themselves in their times of repentance, so let's examine the question.

In John 14:15 Jesus tells us, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments*. This message is so important that He repeats it in other passages (verses 21 and 23 of the same chapter and in 1 John 5:3 and in 2 John 6). For a Christian serving a loving God, the connection between loving God and obedience to Him is undeniable.

But the fact is, at certain points in our Christian walk we can love God and engage in our sin. This is what it means to be double-minded, or to experience conflict, something all Christians encounter to some degree in their journey towards becoming more Christlike. But ultimately, this double-mindedness is intolerable. At some point we have to choose between Jesus and the other things that we desire. Sometimes we make a great decision and with utmost clarity we reject the old way, and sometimes it is a lot of little decisions that we make, that cause us to one day realize that we do love Jesus more than our sin.

Jesus' words that if we love him we will keep his commandments are not spoken as a rebuke, but as a fact, a reality that will be fulfilled in those who truly love Him. But as with many things, the road may not have brought us there yet.

It is the same way with loving our wives. If we did truly love them as we should, we would not be adulterers, either with our bodies or in our hearts. But we are double-minded and conflicted men. In Regeneration we have encountered a tragic number of sex addicted men who passionately loved their wives, but saw their marriages destroyed because they could or would not stop their sexual acting out.

Do such men love themselves—or their sin—more than they love their wives? You could make a case that they do, but simple knowledge of this fact doesn't help much, unless it brings forth the understanding that part of their solution is to grow in love for their wives.

Unfortunately, and this goes to the heart of the point being made here, too many men try to be sexually faithful without seeking to love their wives more. They are dealing with only one side of the equation. And just as obedience to God without loving Him can lead to harsh legalism, trying to avoid sexual sin without trying to let our sexuality become a means of expressing love to our wives, can lead to frustration, resentment, failure, and ultimately, to more sin.

The statement that if we loved our wives more, we wouldn't engage in sexual lust goes to the very heart of the problem we are dealing with; the disconnect we experience between loving our wives and our sexual desires. Our challenge is to restore the connection and we do this by seeking to be obedient *and* by seeking to love our wives more. Because it is God's purpose that our sexual desire flow out of love for our wives, kindling and growing that love will help turn our eyes and hearts towards our wives and away from the counterfeit loves that lust offers. As the connection grows more solid, true love and desire will come closer together. Passion will find a common expression in both our hearts and our bodies.

#### **WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE OUR WIVES WELL**

To love someone is to always want the best for them. If I love my neighbor, I want for him good health, prosperity, an abundance of joy in his life, and most of all, a blessed intimate relationship with the Lord. For my wife I want all of these things too, but because my wife and I have been joined by God in a covenant relationship, there is something else I want for her; I want her to have the best of me, the best of my heart, my feelings, my thoughts, and yes, my body. She can have these things only if I give them to her. I love my wife well when I, to the greatest of my ability, give myself to her. I love her as I love my own body and as Christ loves the church.

The gift; in sexuality and in marital love, it all comes back to the gift. God has given to me, and I in turn give to the one to whom He has joined me in a one flesh union.

Men, you will know when you love your wife well because when you do the great paradox of life will come through. In giving you will receive. In giving love, you will experience an abundance of joy.

### **GROWING TO LOVE OUR WIVES WELL**

Because of sin, which at its most fundamental level is selfishness, *none* of us love our wives as well as we might. Conflicts are often present that batter love. Expectations are not met that lead to critical judging. Our male tendency towards narcissism, that unhappy trait that makes us view the world—and our wives—primarily in terms of how they affect us, makes us less than the lovers we are intended to be. We, each of us married men, need to intentionally do those things that will enable us to love our wives better. Single men, those who expect to marry some day, need not wait until they have to take corrective action; they can prepare their hearts now to become men who will love their wives well.

Wise counselors have offered many ways in which we can grow to love our wives more fully, but I would like to focus on just five which, as they are fulfilled, will lead us to give ourselves to our wives more fully and thereby love them better. Let me share them with you. Ponder them and experiment with them, and see if you don't grow in your capacity to love your wife.

**1. Start with the decision to love her and to love her well.** Sexual attraction often just happens. So does infatuation. Love also sometimes “just happens”, but for it to be sustained and to grow fuller and richer, we must involve the will. My pastor says to every couple that he marries, “You are getting married because you love each other. From this time forward, you are to love each other because you are married.” This wise counsel comes directly from our Lord's commandment that we love our wives.

Our wills, our manly God-strengthened wills are far more powerful than most of us give them credit for being. We live in a world that gives primacy to feelings and all but ignores the will. Might this be a reason why our divorce rate approaches 50%?

I have decided to love people, even people I didn't like, and when I made the decision before God to love them, and followed it up with prayer, I actually did grow to love them. It is not “natural” to love those who use or abuse us, or even to love people whom we find to be extremely unlikable, but Jesus does tell us to love them. If this were not possible; if the will—and He who is in us—were not stronger than our natural affinities, God would have given us an impossible command. He doesn't do that.

It follows that when Jesus told us to love our wives—in an extraordinary way (like we love ourselves, like He loves the church) such love on our part must be attainable. Most of us do love our wives, but all of us could love them better. Making the decision to love them and love them well is the first step.

**2. Accept your wife—just as she is.** In the early stages of love, we often see only the “lovable” qualities of the beloved. The need to “willfully” accept them as they are usually

becomes relevant only after a while, after we have lived with our wives for a time and have discovered that there are some things about her that we really don't like, that we wish she would change. It becomes very relevant with the discovery that her will and yours are often not in sync. At this point, *acceptance* becomes the critical element in loving our wives.

Most Christians are familiar with the great "love chapter" in the Bible, 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13. If you haven't read it yourself, you've probably heard it read a number of times in weddings. It gives us God's definition of love, and it does so by listing the characteristics of love. In this listing more than half of the characteristics of love relate to our accepting the one we love as who he or she is. *Love is patient....does not insist on its own way...is not irritable...bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things* (verses 4-7).

For most men, this call to accept their wives as they are is a huge challenge. I have been working on it for years, and still find some part of me that thinks Willa ought to act differently, respond differently, be more logical, etc., etc., etc. So let me suggest three things that have helped me and might help you.

First, *make the decision* to accept her just as she is. Here we are back to our great underappreciated resource, our will. You chose her, to be your wife, and you promised to stand by her for better or worse. Now, as a man, stand by your decision and your promise. You chose her, not some woman that she would become. To support this decision, specifically choose to think about, to meditate on, her positive qualities. A good way to do this is to thank God for those qualities regularly in your prayer times. Never, never, fantasize about ways of escape from her.

Second, abandon any efforts to try and change her directly. You probably can't do it anyway. Take this from a man who has been married for almost fifty years (although I admit that after all these years there is very little I would want to change about Willa). However, and this can be critical in giving you the patience and hope that you need, as *you* change, she will change, and most of the time, as you change for the better, her changes will be for the better also. This is God's way. We men are the primary initiators. It is often hard to recognize exactly the cause-effect relationships here, but it happens. I will address this more fully in Chapter 16.

Third, try to develop a degree of humility. The speck in her eye is probably tiny compared to the log in yours (Luke 6:41). Every time you find yourself looking at your wife with a critical eye, ask God to help you take a realistic look at yourself. In those rare moments when I let God's light fully shine on my personality and flaws, I wind up asking myself, "How in the world does she put up with me?"

I do believe that the feminine nurturing, responding, nature more easily accepts flawed people than does our masculine critical, analytical nature, but God commands us to love, and He does not ask of us the impossible. Read over 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, and



ponder those characteristics of love. With God's grace—and time—they can describe your love for your wife.

Love is a today thing; we can only love someone for who they are, not for who we hope they will become.

**3. Speak words of love to her.** Did you ever find yourself talking about some person who you had loved very much who had passed away, and as you started to speak, you choked up or began to cry? Then you wondered where that came from because you weren't feeling especially sad when you started talking. You reacted the way you did because spoken words have power. They have the power to make feelings real and alive. Spoken words have a special power not present in thoughts or actions to reach deep into the heart and draw out feelings of sadness, and loss—and love.

Women live in a different place from men, and to love them well, we must enter their world, a world of words and of exclusivity. Men and women both need intimacy, but for women intimacy is found where words of love are spoken, and they are shared privately and exclusively between the two lovers.

I am one of the men for whom this does not come easily, except perhaps in the midst of making love to my wife physically. Words of love spoken in the midst of sexual intercourse are essential, but they may not fully meet the needs of a woman. Men are physical beings, and words of love spoken in the midst of physical love making, are being spoken in our world. If a woman has any insecurities at all, she can interpret her husband's word offered during physical love making as a sign that he loves her only because she satisfies him sexually.

As we put our pieces together we will find that verbal and physical expressions of love stimulate and nourish one another. This came through to me several years ago when a man, we'll call him Stuart, came to me for help. Stuart was a Christian who lived in a non-Christian country. He was married and had struggled with homosexuality. When he came to our ministry he had already made great progress in overcoming his same-sex attractions. He was no longer homosexually active, and in fact, was not at all troubled by homosexual desires. However, he was discouraged by how little sexual attraction he felt for his wife, and that was the reason for his visit. Stuart was a wealthy man and could afford to go wherever he needed to go to seek help. When he visited our ministry, he also visited similar ministries in Texas and California.

He told us at the end of the trip that his visits in the US had helped him some, but judging by the tone of his voice, I suspected that he was just being polite. However, about six months later, he called filled with excitement. "I found the answer," he declared. He had gone to a secular sex therapist in his adopted country, and she had told him to do just one thing on his first visit, "Speak tenderly to your wife." He did, and immediately his sexual desire started to surge. Words have power in ways that most of us just don't fully understand.

We need to learn to speak words of love in their world, not just because it is the right and loving thing to do for our wives, but because spoken words of love have power. They will increase our love for them; they will touch the deep places of our hearts that drew us to them in the beginning.

**4. Touch her.** Here I am speaking of non-sexual touch. Touch that is preliminary to sexual interaction or that is aimed at stirring up sexual feelings is good and appropriate, but sadly, given our nature as fallen men, our touching our wives can always be interpreted as, “Oh, he wants sex.” Non-sexual touch, on the other hand, is most likely to be interpreted, and rightly so, as pure love. You touch her cheek, you lay your hand on hers, simply because you love her.

Men are actually quite good at showing affection though non-sexual touch—to other men. If you think not, you probably don’t watch many sporting events. Swats on the behind, hugs, bumping chests are usually expressions of admiration and appreciation coming out of brotherly affection. Men are physical creatures, so this seems appropriate.

As is fitting with men, these expressions of male to male affection usually take place openly and in a group. The touching of our wives, however, to meet them in their feminine place will be most meaningful when it is private and exclusive.

Love, to develop fully, needs to be expressed. Touching our wives can be a beautiful expression of love.

**5. Be sexual with her.** The governing words are quite clear here in Scripture:

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. 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.*

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

When a man and woman marry they give their bodies to each other. Why did God so order it this way? Was it solely so that they would have lots of children to populate the earth? Was it so that they wouldn’t be seeking sex out of marriage as Paul seems to imply?

Before we address the contribution that sexual intercourse makes to our re-connecting sexual desire and love, we need to address two points that Paul is making that are quite troublesome to some Christians.

First is the statement that it is good for a man *not* to have sexual relations with a woman. It is generally held that Paul is addressing the special role of celibacy to which some people are called—for the Kingdom of God. This is a special calling (just as marriage is) and in certain specific ways it could be a higher calling as Paul seems to believe. We will look more closely at this in Chapter 17 on Singleness.

Second, any way you look at it, Paul is addressing marital sex as a means of avoiding lust. He drives this point home even more directly in verse 9 where he says that some people should marry because *it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion*. Wow!

If we put this in the context of all that Scripture has to say about marriage, and if we acknowledge that avoiding lust is *one* good reason—among many—for marriage, the passage becomes less troublesome.

I happen to believe that marriage and the fatherhood that usually follows provide one of the best remedies for the narcissism that is common to fallen men. Having to consider the needs and feelings of a wife and children in every decision that you make, having to sometimes go where your wife wants to go, having to spend you money on her wants and needs, having to get up in the middle of the night to attend to a crying child; the marital life can be like a boot camp for becoming human, or more appropriately, as training for becoming more selfless Christian men. Marriage does this, but it is only one reason for getting married. Similarly, marriage can help solve our lust problem, but it is only one reason for getting married.

Overriding all of these specific passages is the fact that God established marriage from the beginning—the very beginning—as something good and blessed and fruitful, and He affirms this over and over again. The “one flesh” statement in Genesis is repeated *four* times in the New Testament, twice in the Gospels and twice in the Epistles.

Something that God created can, at the same time, provide *both* a means of avoiding something bad and of experiencing something very good. Marriage and sex within marriage provide a perfect example of this.

The good that sex provides in marriage is not just its capacity to satisfy our need to connect, to complete and to create as described earlier, but it also increases love between a husband and his wife. Sexual relations in marriage involves touch, involves communications, and most importantly, provides a husband and a wife the opportunity to make a gift to one another, one of the most valuable gifts that can be given, themselves. Touching, communicating and giving can all be a means of increasing love. Sexual intercourse with our wives increases our love for them

Most men don't need prompting in this area; they don't need me to give them reasons to have sexual intercourse with their wives. But some do. The busyness and pressures of life on younger men, a declining libido and medical problems in older men, many things, can lead men to believe that “it's not worth the effort.” And most sadly, where “easy”

satisfaction of sexual desire is being found in pornography and masturbation, marital love making can be the first and greatest casualty.

A young man speaking to his buddy might ask using worldly language if he and his date “made love” last night. What he is really asking is, “Did you and she engage in *make believe love* by having sex last night?” We husbands who truly love our wives, and want to love them more are, in the truest sense “making love” when we are sexual with them. Consciousness of this can do a great deal to renew the connection between love and sexual desire that God created in the beginning.

### **THE INTEGRATION OF LOVE AND SEXUAL DESIRE**

There are many great reasons for us to love our wives well, but I am addressing the subject here in the context of our reconnecting our love for our wives with our sexuality. I want to return to this subject now by sharing some things from my own experiences.

People may wonder how it is that a man like me, a man from a background of same-sex attraction should write a book teaching men about sexuality. One answer I have to that question is to point out that what we have here is similar to the type of situation wherein the best person to teach you about the blessings of being able to see might be a man who was once blind but regained his sight. But beyond this, there is a phenomenon that we see in our ministry, and I experienced in my own life, that gave me a special somewhat unique insight, one that might be much less obvious to other men, into the goodness and reality of the connection of love with sexual desire.

In Regeneration’s ministry to same-sex attracted men, typically as a man gains victory over homosexual attractions and behavior, and as his homosexual identity becomes replaced with a sense of his true manhood, he starts quite naturally looking for feelings of sexual attraction towards women. Although he has come to appreciate women in a new way, and he delights in the qualities that make them feminine, if he is like most of these men, he is not being “turned on” by women as he was by men. This is quite distressing to many of these men until they realize that what they really are looking for is to exchange their lust for men for a lust for women. But God is not in the business of dealing out lust. He does not give these men a fallen heterosexuality in place of their fallen homosexuality.

Rather, what God does follows much more closely to His original plan for men. These men typically do not experience a wide ranging, somewhat indiscriminate, visually oriented sexual attraction to women. But God brings that one woman into his life. He likes her and appreciates what makes her a woman. Then liking turns to delight, and eventually delight into love. Then love does its work of stirring in him a desire to be close to her physically, to touch her and to experience her with the other senses, to be intimate with her , and finally to be one with her. Out of love has come sexual desire.

I might note here that in the great majority of situations where I have seen this occur and marriage has been the outcome, these marriages have worked well at every level, including the sexual.

In my own healing, it was some years before I recognized what was perhaps the most critical things God had done with me in setting me free from homosexuality. As a man almost incapable of loving, with my conversion I was set free to love, and quite naturally, my love became directed towards the woman who had stood by me through all of the dark years of my unfaithfulness. I loved my wife passionately, and out of that love came sexual desire.

### **IMAGINING ADAM AND EVE**

What we have seen God do in same-sex attracted men is an example of what He will do in all men, but it is not the perfect example. We are still men touched by sin, ours and that which we inherited. For the perfect example of the intertwining of love and sexual desire, let us turn to Adam and Eve—before the fall. Try to picture the following.

God created Adam with all of his manly splendor. Although God has given him a creation to care for and bring purpose into his life, and animals to be his companions, and of course, most importantly, a relationship with Himself, Adam still has a feeling of aloneness. There was something missing. It is doubtful if he knew what was lacking, but he felt that there was an empty place inside of him. God has intentionally placed that sense of aloneness in Adam to prepare him to receive the great gift that God was about to give him.

God caused Adam to fall asleep and, when he did, God took out a part of him and fashioned a woman. Adam awoke and beheld the woman, his Eve. This exciting creature delighted Adam in every way possible. He knew that having both been made in the image of God, they shared a common humanity, but his eyes and heart were drawn to that which made her different from him; her breasts, the curve of hips, the smooth softness of her skin. Everything that exuded the feminine in her was like a magnet drawing him to her. He did draw near to her, and he wanted to touch her, and he did touch her, and feelings of delight ran through his body. “This wonderful creature”, he thought, “What can I do for her. She is worthy of whatever I can do for her. I know, let me give myself to her.” He wrapped his arms around her as if to offer her his manly strength. He pressed his body against hers, and his joy increased, and he felt in her a similar drawing of herself towards him. Gently he laid her on the grass, and he felt he wanted to cover her with his body to be her shield and defense. He did, and as their bodies touched and he felt her respond, his penis grew firm and erect. Totally sensitive to her needs, at just the right time, he gently slid it into her vagina, as if to say, I give myself to you, let me fill the empty places in you.

In her heart she was saying, “I have prepared a place for you. Come into me and find joy and comfort in my body.” Their giving of their bodies to each other and their receiving each other’s bodies became totally indistinguishable. Their love and their physical desire for each other became totally entwined. Giving and receiving were exchanged with increasing joy, like a wheel spinning, a wheel of erotic joy and love experienced as they moved their bodies to intensify their ecstatic excitement. Then finally, like a spinning wheel that goes so fast it flies apart, when they were thinking that nothing could be any



better than this, the explosion came, and the thrill that they were feeling where their bodies were joined seemed to course through their whole being, a pleasure like nothing else on earth.

Then just as suddenly as the explosion had come, it subsided, but there was no letdown, for instantly there flowed over them a sense of peace and relaxation like none they had never known. For a few minutes he remained in her body, loving the touch of their legs and bellies and his chest with her breasts. Then he gently withdrew and rolled over to lay beside her. She placed her head on his chest, and he wrapped his arm around her. Peace; a peace that passed anything they could have imagined. He thought, "This is right. This is as it should be."

Some men reading this may be feeling sexually aroused. That's okay. There is nothing wrong with sexual arousal. I repeat that: there is nothing wrong with sexual arousal. But sexual arousal does make men vulnerable, and we men do have a propensity to sin, so quickly now, change this picture. Now you are Adam and your wife is Eve. This is you loving your wife with all of your heart and your body, loving her as God intended you to love her from the beginning. Spend whatever time you need imagining this.

Now make another change. Bring God into the picture. After having expressed your love for her in this way, and now lying side by side with her, look up and see God smiling at you both. He made you for this. He intended that you experience this joy. He is pleased that what He designed is working in you just as it should. You both are lying there naked, fat or thin or "perfect" old or young, it doesn't matter. You are lying there naked beholding God's joyful look at you, and you are not ashamed.

It is my prayer that something like this will work into every married man's vision of the sexual man he is to become, and that he will prayerfully work to make it a reality for him and his wife. And for the single men, my prayer is that you will take this as a glimpse of what God wants for you. Let it become a part of your vision, but file it away in your heart for that day when God gives you your Eve.