**God’s Design for Intimacy**

**The Purpose of Sex in Marriage**

**Where Sexual Addiction Impacted It**

It is important as you embark on a marital rebuild in your recovery that you seek to develop a healthy and comprehensive perspective on the purposes of human sexuality. What did God intend intimacy to bring within the confines of committed marital love. This is so different from the worldview so distorted by a hugely selfish sexually addicted lifestyle. The widespread view within society is so limited, self-seeking and frankly, skewed on its grasp of sex. It is paramount that you grow beyond such a negative, reductionistic view of sexuality. It should move toward one that embraces all that is possible for a vigorous, vibrant and mutual intimacy in a solid marriage.

Sex was God’s idea. ***He created sex and He wants your future sexual intimacy in marriage to be AWESOME!*** Remember: He created men and women as sexual creatures in the first place, and regarding His pinnacle of creation (humankind), He declared it was all *very good* – including the sexual capacity! Problem. Everything God creates as good, including sexuality, the enemy – Satan – tries to pervert, pollute or destroy. He tries to strip it of its meaning, its sanctity and its exclusiveness. That is what happens when sexual addiction rules the day. Open your mind and heart to learn all that God envisioned marital sex to be (once you have cleared out the negative, selfish cultural and addiction-based view.

The Purpose of Sex in Marriage: God’s Original Plan

1. **To Proclaim Love** – The greater the love, the greater the freedom to share in the joy of holistic sexual expression through your trusted and caring connection. Great marital intimacy is comprehensive in its scope: it is relational, emotional, spiritual and yes, fully sexual. Sex is part of the full manifestation of “I Love You” not the sole representation or the highest sign of love. Focus on the goal toward “making love” with your spouse not just “having sex” with them. Making love is designed to be relational where the partner is a person you love not an object you use. Love causes you to stay present, focusing on them during sexual experiences. Having sex is very self-absorbed and focuses on pushing to get personal needs met. That partner is into him or herself, is not present or in the moment but can often be in their own fantasy world letting their biological drive call the shots. It is often one-sided sex where the needs of both partners aren’t being met. There can even be anger, blaming, pressuring, criticizing when it is merely about sex. This is not making love – not US. Rather, with love making, say by your actions and disposition that I love you by being with you in this moment – we are sharing this mutually-fulfilling sensuous experience.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

1. **To Promote Unity** – The Bible calls it *“ONENESS”*. There is such joy in this unique and exclusive expression of connection. It achieves a harmony in friendship like nothing else can. Imagine, as God intended, the husband will be united to his wife – the two becoming one flesh. And what God has brought together, let no one separate. Read it for yourself – *“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’****7****‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,****8****and the two will become one flesh.’ So, they are no longer two, but one flesh.****9****Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10:6-9).* This joining of bodies – the sexual act of intercourse – is this amazing symbolism of two becoming one! As God intended, it expresses full unity knowing ‘I do this only with you’. There is literally, nothing between you – flesh on flesh – as your bodies are joined. When love making well, you are really close in every way and feel even closer afterwards. It is a very powerful and meaningful expression of the “US”. It is deeply captivating to know, “I am unique to you and you are unique to me.” Through joining of bodies, hearts and souls – We are ONE as God intended - unified. You are one flesh – unique – exclusive – just the two of you as ONE.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

1. **To Produce Identity** – There is joy of being able to make love well. There is both delight and satisfaction in fulfilling your role as a sexual creature with your spouse. With the affirmation of being declared a good lover brings great personal satisfaction. It is true and should be that ‘it is better to give than to receive.’ Within marriage, being a good lover is certainly a significant part of life-verification of one’s manhood or womanhood. There’s no argument that it is true and right to say regarding your sexual experiences with your spouse that ‘You make me feel like a man or a woman”. But that is only half of the equation. By giving love well and fully satisfying our spouse, it is equally true and right to say, “I make me feel like a man or a woman! – I loved you well.” My identity as a sexual partner is established. Sexual manhood and sexual womanhood are now fully part of the picture. Loving well and being loved well impacts both our sexual identify and our self-worth. With healthy and mutual intimacy, we feel wanted. Valued. Needed. Fulfilled. Pursued. Competent. But learning to be a good lover is not automatic. Sexual intimacy in marriage was designed to be a shared growing experience where you learn together what pleases the other person. And in doing so, to feel good about yourself as a sexual partner. Sadly, this healthy perspective on marital love-making and what it does for our sense of well-being is frequently distorted by histories of sexual abuse, pornography exposure, and recreational sex experiences. More often than not, personal love maps have been severely damaged before the couple comes into the marriage. Because of these types of narratives, a marriage partner can feel compared, evaluated and another “conquest” and not really loved. Work through the issues that may be preventing you from being able to love well.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

1. **To Prevent Fornication** – A vibrant, meaningful and satisfying sex life in marriage is designed to keep the couple unified for life. FAITHFULNESS is a beautiful thing when couched between loyalty and trust. The passion of sexual desire is a powerful draw intended to keep you coming back for more.This joy of sexual loyalty is a give and take relationship. On one hand, a person experiences ***the joy of staying faithful*** to their spouse in part because their innate pure, God-given needs of love and sexuality are consistently, sufficiently and exclusively met in the relationship. On the other hand, that same spouse can experience ***the joy of being faithful*** by the way they are working to meet their spouse’s sexual needs. Though not their responsibility alone, regular intimacy does assist the spouse in not looking elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians 7:5,6 – *“Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”*  Point is clear. Don’t deprive each other sexually so you might get tempted to go outside the marriage covenant to have sex with someone else. Satisfying and mutual sexual intimacy is designed to stop temptations to unfaithful involvement.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

1. **To Please Passionate Urges** – Face it. There is great joy in sexual gratification. God has created men and women alike in that with the pleasure explosion associated with sexual orgasm, there is a powerful surge of adrenaline in the brain. This incredibly intoxicating chemical cocktail is as thoroughly addictive as the strongest drug addiction – cocaine included. With the release of all these endorphins and enkephalins, the dopamine and later, the oxytocin into the central amygdala – the pleasure center of the brain – there develops a ‘craving for more’ appetite – the reward-repeat cycle is set in motion. Since it feels good – the brain says, “do that again”. Remember, sex is God-created and He set this adrenaline cycle in motion for a reason. The brain is wired chemically to seek to create further opportunities to re-experience the sexual surge of the orgasm. This is part of His plan to enjoy yourself in your sexual experiences for years to come. Yet, within humankind, unlike the animal kingdom, strong biological needs can still fall within the God-honouring moral structure of the brain – the prefrontal cortex – which causes us to behave and act wisely and faithful. Animal-like urges don’t have to rule. Human loyalty can win over lust. But within marriage, God wants you both to fully enjoy yourselves sexually. Aim at completely satisfying your mate.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

1. **To Procreate children** – The joy of parenting cannot be over-estimated. Beyond Donalyn and my marriage itself, our greatest blessing in life is the thrill of our ongoing engagement with our married children and our grandchildren. And that is God’s plan for families. *“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him” (Psalm 127:3).* They are an incredible gift from the Lord and the rewards of having them are clear. The sexual act under God’s divine plan allows you to experience the miracle ofa baby’s development and birth. Just seeing the first breath is in itself breath-taking. Then, examining the mystery of that little body that is all functioning as designed is overwhelming. Then, there’s the pride of holding your first child. You watch and observe every nuance of their growth: first smile, first giggle, first facial recognition of you, first audible sound, first words, walking, talking…hearing the words, “mama or dada” … intoxicating. And you can add more children – blessing upon blessing. Not only do you get to experience the pride of it all as mom and dad but if you parent well, they will be a gift that keeps on giving. The power of procreation is utterly astonishing.

God’s plan for human sexuality is beautiful. His purposes are extensive and enriching. Broaden your heart and mind as you grow your sexual union with your spouse. Embrace the opportunity to fulfill all of His design for marriage.

IMPLICATIONS IN RECOVERY:

**DISCUSSION STARTERS FOR MARRIED COUPLES IN RECOVERY**

1. Which of the 6 purposes were clearly violated by you in your marital love-making?
2. Which one of the 6 purposes seems the most important for you to address first? Explain why.
3. Which one of the 6 purposes do you feel you will have the hardest time with? Explain why.
4. Discuss the 6 purposes one at a time to fill out your reasons as a couple for developing a growing satisfying and mutual sex life in your marriage. Focus on what is appreciated and what needs to change.

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