

Disciplined Lovemaking – Heb 13:4 - *The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage VII*

Introduction – “Without a robust account of the Christian vision of sex within marriage, the Christian insistence that unmarried folks refrain from sex just doesn’t make any sense” – Laura Winner. The Medieval and Victorian notions of sexuality are wrongly considered biblical. “Sex is a gift to be enjoyed by a man and a woman exclusively within marriage. It’s meant to accomplish several key purposes: union...intimacy...comfort, pleasure, and play...creation of life...protection from sexual temptation” – CJ Mahaney. Sex within marriage is a gift from God which must be vigorously disciplined to the glory of God.

The Honor of this Discipline (Heb 13:4) – There is nothing shameful about talking about sex. There is something shameful about talking about it the way our unbelieving culture does. But that is because what they are talking about is not really sex, but sexual fraud. Let’s put it another way: fornication and adultery are not lovemaking any more than a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill is money. “*Sexual union is such an intimate aspect of our lives that it has to be protected if we are to be protected. It must have a tall covenantal fence all the way around it...When a sexual union is sealed with a lawful covenantal oath, it is called marriage*” – Douglas Wilson. Before the Fall, lovemaking in marriage was designed as the means of procreation and close, relational pleasure (Gen 1:26-31, 2:18-25). After the Fall, God also established marital lovemaking as the primary protection against sexual temptation.

The Discipline of Procreation in the Dominion Mandate – Couples are often asked “how many children do you plan to have?” to which Gen 1:26-31 should be the answer. Marriage and the whole family structure is God’s design to accomplish the dominion mandate. We are to have children so that we build the Garden-City of a glorious, Christ-honoring culture all over the world. Families are the first steps in evangelism and discipleship. This is the mindset that should permeate all discussions about whether or not you should get married, how many children you should have, and questions about birth control.

The Discipline of Marital Celebration and Passionate Lovemaking (Song of Solomon) – The Song of Solomon is an erotic love poem, far from explicit or pornographic, it veils itself in lovely euphemisms rather than technical, medical, or instruction-manual language. Disciplined lovemaking is like that as well; like poetry, one is to go over and over the material finding deeper and deeper meanings, connections, and pleasure – over time and through the long relationship of marriage. (Side note: watching porn or trying to get your spouse to watch porn is a cheap fraud (and a sin) to the appropriate, biblical study of sexual pleasure.)

Disciplined Lovemaking is Sensual, Mutual, Giving, Blessing – In the Song, we see the husband’s love of his wife expressed (7:1-9). She is perfect because she is his and so he studies her perfections of beauty, comments on them to her. He describes his complete satisfaction in her and does so lovingly to her face. Of course, this occurs in a relationship where she senses his approval and satisfaction in all the other areas of their life together (i.e. Prov 31:29, Col 3:19, 3:7). Throughout the Song, she is addressed as lover, friend, sister, and confidant.

The wife’s passion for her husband is to be no less (5:10-16). She notes his handsomeness, he turns her head and is wholly desirable; and note, she dwells upon that which is desirable, telling herself and telling her husband. Of course, this also occurs in context. She is responding to and respecting his strength, authority, provision and protection which the Lord has given her to enjoy from him (Col 3:18, 1 Peter 3:1-6). Living before the Lord like this, she opens herself to her husband as beloved and friend.

The Discipline of Sexual Protection (1 Cor 7:2-5) – The passion is not always spontaneous; it is however, always practical. Sexual intimacy in marriage is a provision, a gift, to allay the temptations of sexual immorality and to simply give pleasure to the other with love. In these chapters, Paul is answering questions (v1) about marriage during “*the present distress*” (vv26-31). In the midst of those answers, we learn something about the giving of sexual pleasure to a spouse to whom we have made vows. It is a “duty” to be rendered (v3), and it is to be seen as a protection from sexual immorality (v2). Mutual authority (v4) implies that both husband and wife are to be aggressive in giving and meeting the needs and desires of the other. Finally, v5 instructs us that the only reason for extended abstinence is during a time of prayer and fasting; it is only to occur with mutual consent and it is only to be for a short time. To “deprive” one another (v5) is to defraud; it is stealing from the other spouse.

Authority Implies Responsibility – Rather than simply see this as a right to conjugal privileges, the first thing the Christian should understand is that this authority implies responsibility. The husband must take responsibility for his wife’s desires, fears, thoughts, distractions, energy, and her frame in rendering to her all that she needs from a one-flesh union. The wife must take responsibility for her husband’s desires, temptations, and his frame as a man. Both must learn to communicate with the other about these things and not take offense at how radically different men and women approach these desires. It is all about giving.

Getting Clean – In order to make headway on this in your marriage (or future marriage), we have to be honest about our transgressions, in word, thought, and deed, to the marriage covenant. Have you been guilty of lust, fornication or adultery? Have you been negligent of your covenant vows? Remember that purity does not come from good works. Purity, a clean conscience, forgiveness, repentance, and power from sin, are all the gift of God in Jesus Christ. Then and only then will we have the apologetic to our young people and to the world that the marriage bed is undefiled, and the Christian marriage bed is a particular place of delight and glory.