

God's Design for Marriage - Session Five

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Welcome to Session Five of our series, God's Design for Marriage. Today's session is called, Total Intimacy. And Paul, I always think you had really such a great outline for this, understanding all the areas of intimacy that, really, God designs for couples to have.

Well, when we use the word intimacy, as you know today, it's assumed that we're only talking about one kind of intimacy and that's physical. But there are so many other areas of intimacy that a couple was intended by God to experience and enjoy. And that's what we're going to be covering in this session. And it's a very important one so that people can experience total intimacy. Let's get into session number five.

Part 5, the Christian couple. We're talking about the fact that you are declared, in the Word of God, to be one flesh. We read this first of all in Genesis chapter 2, I'll put it on the screen for you so we can see it together. And this is where we read that section that says,

Genesis 2:22 – 24 (ESV)

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. And then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

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And that's the term that I want to focus on here in this session, as we talk about what this means, what are the implications of the fact that the Bible refers to a man and a woman who come together, and really share less DNA than a parent to a child, but yet the Bible calls them "one flesh."

And that is, it's not only a difficult thing, frankly, to understand, but I think a lot of couples struggle sometimes to understand what it looks like in their marriage or how you walk it out. How is it played out in the marriage?

Well, there are some interesting statements made in the scriptures that help give us a little insight along those lines. And one of them is 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul writes to the Corinthians and he says,

1 Corinthians 7:4 (ESV)

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.

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So this is an equal sort of a thing where you enter into this marriage relationship. And I think that the reason that Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes reference to a person's body as now no longer really belonging just to you, is because you can't get much more intimate than that.

I mean, my possessions are outside of my body. I'm pretty connected to my body and so are you. And so when we talk about the fact that even our physical bodies, when we get married, no longer belong to simply ourselves. Well, that means everything else goes along with it. I mean, because everything else is really of pretty much lesser importance than that.

This begins to speak to us about this incredible sharing, coming together, and oneness that we have when a man and a woman come together in marriage as husband and wife and they are intimate. And that's a key word that we're going to really focus on here tonight, and that is the word, intimacy.

I want to talk about what it means, but I want to start by giving you a definition on the screen that I think might help. This is going to be our definition.

WHAT IS INTIMACY?

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All right? So as we go forth and talk about intimacy in marriage, we're going to talk about what you two share that you don't share with anyone else.

Intimacy is intended to be shared within marriage. It is intended to be enjoyed within marriage. It is intended to be protected within marriage. And I want you to think about this definition that we've given here, this idea of something that you only share with your spouse. Because there are certain, I guess, implications that go along with that, or maybe we should even say assumptions, things like privacy, things like vulnerability.

In fact, I believe that of all the different kinds of intimacy that you can have within a marriage, physical intimacy is a rather uncomplicated picture of what it means to be vulnerable in a marriage relationship. Because, and I'm not going to, I don't want to, I want you guys to know, we're not going to embarrass anybody tonight by talking too much about the issue of physical intimacy. But, there is a picture that it portrays in marriage that I think is important enough to at least touch on.

And that is the fact that, in order to be physically intimate, you have to disrobe. But the same is true to share intimacy in other areas of marriage as well. And that means peeling back the layers and letting my spouse see me as I am in all of the glories and warts and wrinkles that go along with it.

It's letting, it's allowing myself to be vulnerable in front of you. That's what happens within the context of marriage when a couple begins to share intimacy.

What do I mean when I talk about intimacy on other levels? Well, whenever you talk about intimacy or mentioned the word intimacy, in fact, if you were to ask a couple, are you guys intimate? immediately our minds go to physical intimacy. And that's just the go-to response or connection to that word. And certainly, that is an important aspect of what it means to be one flesh.

But, if that's all you have in a marriage, I mean, I think it doesn't take long for a married couple to be married and to be physically intimate, to realize that if that's all we have in the marriage, this is a pretty shallow relationship. If it only includes a physical level of intimacy and sharing.

But because there are other areas where God intended, I believe God intended a husband and a wife to share on an intimate level. Which unfortunately, I find

not all couples are doing. And this is what I refer to as total intimacy. And it's just a term that I coined over the years to describe firing on all cylinders.

Everybody knows what happens when you have a car that isn't firing on all cylinders. It backfires and you have a hard time getting from point A to point B if you even make it at all. And really the same is true for our marriages. God intended us to be intimate on every level and not to have a shallow relationship, but to have a deep one that goes beyond the simple and the superficial.

We're going to put these up on the screen and talk about what they mean. Areas of intimacy within the marriage, what are they?

AREAS OF INTIMACY?

- Physical Intimacy
- Spiritual Intimacy
- Emotional Intimacy
- Intellectual Intimacy

Physical Intimacy. Spiritual Intimacy. Emotional Intimacy. Intellectual Intimacy.

Well, again, we start with Physical Intimacy because that's what everybody understands. And I don't need to say anything about physical intimacy because everybody knows what that's all about.

And the thing, though, that I want to share with you about physical intimacy is that it's not just sexual. Because physical can even transfer over to the material. When we talk about the things that you own physically, that's another form of intimacy that goes outside the bedroom. It's the fact that what I have when I come into this marriage relationship is now yours. And what you have when you come into this marriage relationship is now mine. We share things in common: money, possessions, vehicles. It's no longer mine or yours. It's ours.

So physical intimacy goes beyond just the bedroom. It's sharing of really everything that I have. These aren't things that are difficult for couples to understand.

This, the physical intimacy, whether it is sexual or physical, or on the more material side of things, this is something that pretty much everybody understands. And they know that, when we come together, it's yours, mine, and

ours from this point forward. It's these other areas of intimacy that I find couples struggle with.

- Physical Intimacy
- **Spiritual Intimacy**
- Emotional Intimacy
- Intellectual Intimacy

And the next one is one that men particularly struggle with more than women, but it is Spiritual Intimacy.

I want to remind you something about this. Once again, it requires your willingness to be vulnerable in front of your spouse. And that means I'm going to peel back the layers and let you see me as I am, which may not be pretty all the time. It may not be attractive, but this is who I am.

And so when I talk about spiritual intimacy, I'm talking about a husband and a wife sharing things that they wouldn't share with anyone else. In other words, the way I pray in front of my wife, I would say things, I would confess things, I would admit faults that I wouldn't normally do in front of somebody else. Because I trust her.

I'm able to be vulnerable in front of my wife on a spiritual basis. I can even talk to her about my doubts and she's going to be okay. I know she's going to be okay because we've nurtured this relationship of intimacy where we can do this together. And you know, I think one of the best ways to begin to foster spiritual intimacy in a marriage relationship is for a husband and wife to begin to do just very simple things together, like reading through the Bible together.

It doesn't have to be a Bible study. It can just be opening up your Bible, and we're going to read through a chapter. We're going to start in the Gospel of Matthew, for an example, and we're going to read one chapter a day, together, maybe before bed, maybe in the morning, maybe in the middle of the day, whatever works for you. And I'm not going to be the big teacher, and you're not going to try to teach me, we're just going to read the word together, and then, we're going to pray.

I'm going to grab your hand and you take mine and we're, and it doesn't have to be a long prayer. It doesn't have to be some, incredible, you know, sort of a deal where we say all these really cool words in King James English. We're just going to pray for the day. I'm going to pray for you. You pray for me. Lord,

bless my wife. Be with her today. Strengthen her throughout the day. Thank you Jesus, amen. How long did that take?

That's not hard, but it begins there. It's got to begin somewhere. You're never going to get to a place of spiritual intimacy unless you begin, you start, somewhere.

Don't start by pouring out everything you've ever thought or believed or whatever. Start simply. Read a chapter in the Bible. Pray together.

And it's incredible to me how many couples have never prayed together. And I know that because I've asked them. I've done, in the past, more marriage counseling than I care to remember, frankly. And then I usually ask a couple, well, are you guys praying together? No?

In fact, one time I was chatting with a couple and I gave them homework and they said, they admitted to me, they didn't pray together. And so I said, well, that's your homework for this week. And I looked the husband right in the eye and I said, I want you to take your wife's hand this week, once a day, and I want you to pray with her. It doesn't have to be long. It doesn't have to be flowery. It doesn't even have to sound good. I just want you to pray. Okay? And he nodded.

So we get together a week later, we sit down, and of course, what do you suppose the first thing I ask, well, how did prayer go? They both just sat there quietly. And I was a little, they had agreed to do this. And I looked at him because, he's the head of the home.

I said, well, did you pray with your wife? No. Okay, we got something going on here. What's the holdup? What's the block?

Well, we start talking. Turned out that early on in their marriage, they had decided to pray together, once. And he began to pray, and she laughed at him, because he stumbled and stammered and didn't really know what to say. And he made a decision from that point forward he would never pray in front of his wife ever again.

Now, I know that's probably an extreme type example, but when I talk about being vulnerable in front of the other person, that means I'm willing to show you what I am and what I'm not. And as I said, sometimes it's not going to sound good. Sometimes it's not going to look good. But I'm trusting you to protect what I reveal, as ugly or as pretty as it may be. I'm expecting you to protect that.

Unfortunately, this wife didn't understand that. And instead of protecting him when he became vulnerable, she exposed him to ridicule. And he just shut down. I'm not going to do that ever again. So it took some time working with that couple, let me tell you. And those are the sorts of things that you have to be careful about in marriage.

Because as I said, I mean, think about it on a physical level. If you took your clothes off and your spouse laughed at you, you probably wouldn't be in the mood to go any further. So imagine that happening on a spiritual level. But this is something that you need to grow in. You need to get to the point where you're praying together. You need to then eventually grow to the area where you're sharing.

Talking about your own personal spiritual growth,

What's the Lord speaking to you about? What's He saying? What things is the Lord teaching you? What's your response to those things? Are you fighting Him? Are you resisting? Are you surrendering? Those are things you can share with your spouse when there's spiritual intimacy going on in the marriage.

Let's go on to the next one. and again, this one can be much more of a challenge for the men.

- Physical Intimacy
- Spiritual Intimacy
- **Emotional Intimacy**
- Intellectual Intimacy

Not in every case, but in some, Emotional Intimacy.

And then once again, being vulnerable and open on an emotional level can be very hard.

Now, interestingly enough, when Sue and I got married, we were reversed on this one because I came from a family with a lot of women. And they were very vocal about how they felt about things.

And so, my brother and I were exposed to a lot of - I was going to say estrogen - but a lot of emotion. There was a lot of emoting going on in our home. And we learned how to communicate on a more emotional level.

Interestingly enough, Sue was raised in a very, kind of a stout, strong, stoic German family. And it was like, you work hard and you don't really talk about how you feel.

And so we got married. In our early years, I was trying to draw her out as far as what she felt. Sue literally couldn't even form the words at first. I would say, how do you feel about that? And she was like, but I don't know.

And it was just, it was painful to watch actually. It was like I was pulling something out of a deep, dark hole. Now we've been married a long time now and she's wonderful at expressing her emotions. But that took time.

And I, now usually it's the other way around. Usually, a woman is trying to draw the emotional intimacy and communication out of her husband because typically men come from a place where showing emotions is un-masculine. It's not just not manly and we just don't do it. And frankly, they're just uncomfortable doing it.

And here's a little tip, ladies. I'm sure you all know this. Men don't like to be put in uncomfortable situations. So when you're emoting and telling him how you feel about life, you've put your husband in a challenging place. But it's something that we have to learn to do over time. And it doesn't come easy in many cases. Sometimes we just have to stay with it, but we have to remember why we're staying with it.

I don't want this thing running on only two cylinders. There's four cylinders that God has laid out for couples to really share total intimacy. And I don't want this thing backfiring as it goes down the road. So I'm going to learn how to talk to my wife and how to hear what she's saying. And I'll say one other thing about emotional intimacy in marriage.

And I can only speak, well, I can mostly speak at least, of spirit experientially from the place of the man. Because men are less emotional, typically. I know there's always exceptions to that rule. We tend to not only be uncomfortable with the expressing of emotion, but we tend to be critical of it as well.

And what I mean by that is when a woman begins to express how she feels, a man instantly begins to determine whether or not he believes what she's sharing is legitimate. And so she might say something that expresses her emotional state at the moment, and a man starts listening to it, and he processes what she's saying, and he determines in his man brain whether or not what she's saying

warrants his time and attention. And if it doesn't, he will roll his eyes and say, you really need to stop being such a baby.

Or he might even say something like, I disagree, which is a really stupid thing to say, because what she's doing is expressing her emotion and you can't disagree with somebody's emotion. All you can really do is just acknowledge it. And it really doesn't take up that much time and effort to simply acknowledge.

Listen, I see that you're upset and I'm sorry. Let's talk about this and let's see if we can't resolve this. But again, we men will listen to something. For example, a woman might come to her husband and say, I just feel like you don't want to spend time with me anymore.

And so he starts going, he's going through this little ticker tape in his brain and he's thinking, and so he comes back. He hears this, but he comes back and he says, didn't I ask you just on Sunday night to like go for a drive with me? And we went out for, I think, about a two-hour drive, didn't we? Yeah. And I think it was last Wednesday, I said, hey, let's me and you go get an ice cream cone. And you remember on that Friday, we put the kids down early and I suggested we watch a movie together. Do you remember that? Yeah.

See, now what is he doing? He's trying to justify the fact that she's wrong. In other words, he's not acknowledging her emotions. He's responding, he's refuting her emotions. Well, that's never going to go well because it essentially communicates to your wife, I don't really care how you feel. I'm not acknowledging what you feel. I'm saying no, I don't think you really have any right to feel that way.

Well, women are complex creatures. And when they begin to express some sort of emotional state, there could be something in the background that's in the background that has nothing to do with you that has just gotten her attention and made her feel unsettled.

Maybe it was an old high school friend that reconnected with her and started telling her about how her marriage failed and how her husband started showing signs of disinterest and eventually they came to the place of breaking up and getting a divorce. And it just sent shockwaves through your wife. And suddenly she her feelings are just raw.

And so what is she going to do? She's going to come to you and say, honey, I just don't feel like you want to spend time with me anymore, but that's really not what's going on. What's really happening is she feels unsettled in the

relationship and she needs us to listen and to respond and to acknowledge and to say, your feelings are important to me.

Whether I personally think that they're legitimate, I'm going to hold my opinion on that. And I'm going to acknowledge the fact that you feel this right here, right now. And we're going to talk about it. And we're going to pray about it and go from there. That's allowing my wife to be emotionally intimate with me. Even when it's uncomfortable, even when I don't get it, even when I don't want it, but it's not shutting her down.

And guys, we do this way too often. We shut down our wife's emotions by communicating to her that what she's saying just really isn't important. It isn't legitimate. She doesn't have any justifiable reason to express the emotions that she's just shared.

Keep the door open. That's what I'm saying. Keep the door open. And I know I'm speaking mostly to the guys here. But we are really the biggest bottleneck, honestly, usually to emotional intimacy within the marriage.

- Physical Intimacy
- Spiritual Intimacy
- Emotional Intimacy
- **Intellectual Intimacy**

And then we come to this last one, which is simply Intellectual Intimacy. And this is just the sharing of thoughts and ideas.

One of the common things we hear specifically from women after a couple gets married is they will say something like, we used to talk. We used to spend hours on the phone. We'd talk, we would share. He'd tell me his dreams and we'd talk about the future and we'd discuss what we were going to do and how we were going to do it. And he wanted to talk to me, but ever since we got married, we've gotten busy, we're each working a job and then kids come along.

And pretty soon we're up at night and tired and we're just not talking anymore. It's like, I have this roommate. We just happened to be married. We happen to be sharing the same name, but really, we're just roommates. We're not intellectually intimate anymore.

Well, this is one of those challenging areas because we've all been through this. Sue and I had four kids. We know what it's like to have that pressure and stuff, pressing in on a married couple and demanding of your time.

And it can be very hard for a couple to take the time, make the effort to make sure that your marriage is firing on all cylinders. To make sure that along with physical intimacy, there's also spiritual intimacy, emotional intimacy, and intellectual intimacy, you're talking. And guys, let me give you a little tip.

If you're firing on all cylinders, physical intimacy is going to be so much better. Because your wife is going to feel more connected to you. And it's important that a woman feels connected to her husband for even things like physical intimacy to make sense and to be enjoyable. So we talked about what all of these things look like.

I want to just give you some very brief exhortations. And so we're going to put these up on the screen. These are things I'm going to exhort you. And there's just three of them, so it won't take long. And they're very simple actually.

EXHORTATIONS

- Practice total intimacy

But the first one is that you need to take time to Practice total intimacy.

You now know, because we've shared what this total intimacy picture is. It's physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual. But you're going to have to practice doing those things, thinking about: are we talking, are, am I hearing what you're saying in your heart, are we praying together, are we talking about what we heard in the Sunday teaching or the Wednesday teaching, are we discussing how that impacts our lives and our family? Right? So keep in mind that there is such a thing as total intimacy. And practice doing it.

EXHORTATIONS

- Practice total intimacy
- **Plan and protect time for intimacy**

Secondly, Plan and Protect Time for (intimacy) doing it. And I think protect is probably the bigger one. Not only do we have to plan to enjoy intimacy within marriage on all of these levels, but we've got to protect it.

And let me just say this: if you're a married couple who lives close to family... Your family, as much as you love them, are going to be one of the biggest hindrances to you protecting time to be intimate together as a husband and wife. They will demand your time They will ask you to come over for this or join them for that or we're getting together for this.

And if you've determined as a married couple, well, we're going to take this day, for example, out of the week. And, this is our me time. This is when we come together and we're just going to, we're going to, this is our date night, for example. And I think a date night is a great idea. But you're going to get opposition to that, particularly if you have family and friends who like to demand of your time. So be careful about that.

Plan that time, but then protect that time, and be willing to say to people, oh, sorry, that's our date night. And we've just determined that we want our marriage to be good, and we want to be firing on all cylinders. Thank you for the invitation, but any other night of the week probably works, but that's our date night. Anyway, thank you.

That sort of a thing, it's not that hard to say. And I know that there can be a lot of pressure coming from family about those sorts of things. So be willing to protect it.

And then thirdly, it gets back to that story I told you about the couple, where the woman laughed at her husband when he tried to pray.

EXHORTATIONS

- Practice total intimacy
- Plan and protect time for intimacy
- **Protect the fruit of intimacy**

Protect the fruit of intimacy. The fruit of intimacy is when you step out and do something that makes you vulnerable. When someone says, I'm willing to be vulnerable in front of you, they're saying, I'm trusting you to protect this, to not share it with anybody. Anybody.

That's something you need to take seriously and be very careful to protect the vulnerability. Because when you do, your spouse will continue to want to be vulnerable. Because they'll know you're safe.