

## Sexuality in Marriage:- Sexual Problems

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 14 October 2010 11:25

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No doubt some readers will think that to tackle such an issue is either to be walking into a minefield, or to be talking about something that is 'private'. If it is a minefield, then the mines have all been laid by human beings, not by God. And if anything is 'private' it has been made so by human beings with vested interests! Only people who wish to retain their prejudices and unbiblical attitudes will say that any part of Christian life is 'private' to the exclusion of proper scriptural examination.

If something is *that* private, then it means people can get away with unbiblical beliefs and actions without any kind of check. This writer acknowledges the need to have a 'private life', especially within marriage. But that does not mean we can think or do whatever we wish, just because it is 'behind closed doors'. Christian principles still apply, in front of, or behind, closed doors!

Broadly, there are two basic kinds of reasons for maintaining a 'closed door' attitude. One is, that the married person is doing something, or would like to do something, that he or she knows very well cannot be condoned by scripture. Another is that the person is ignorant of Christian principles and is too embarrassed to talk about it. Either way, the result can be a life of misery for both partners (in *marriage*, that is - we will not even contemplate the 'alternatives') or for one of them. Usually, one is putting up with practices or demands from his/her partner for the sake of peace and quiet. Or, there are constant wrangles about what *one* wishes to do that the other does *not* want to do, either because it seems to be 'improper' (whether really or perceived), or, because of personal preference. The 'behind closed doors' syndrome can lead to many unhappy marriages, even amongst Christians.

In the same way, there are Christian men who actually beat their wives or treat them like slaves. Or, there are Christian women who nag and treat their husbands like providers-only and not as partners. The 'behind closed doors' defence is not acceptable! If what is being done is sin and the partners put on a front of respectability when in public, then they are being liars and cheats. They are hypocrites! With that in mind, let us look briefly at the thorny subject of sexuality within marriage. We will not go into graphic detail, for such would be inappropriate for this kind of publication.

Is every sexual preference allowable within marriage? No it is not. The best way to look at it is

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like this: as Believers, we are called to be pure and holy in our lives. That goes for sexuality, too. Purity and holiness (or, conversely, sin and wickedness) are the result of inward desires. Thus what is sexually right or wrong depend on scriptural principles and the inward desires of both partners.

Let me ask certain questions: is there any sexual practice that can be called 'wrong'? What about anal sex? This must be one of the few practices that should be rejected. The anus is a part of the body that is used to dispel dirty waste products. Its natural muscular action is downward and its wall membranes are so thin they tear easily (which is why so many homosexuals get AIDS). So - anal sex can hardly be said to be proper. Off-hand, I cannot think of any other practice that would affect one's godliness... but I am open to argument!

Some think it great 'fun' to cross-dress in women's clothes, in order to be aroused with their partners. This is also to be rejected. Firstly, it is not 'fun' - it is sin, for the Lord tells us that the effeminate are evil and that men and women must not dress in the clothing of the opposite sex. And let us not be deluded: most transsexuals and 'cross-dressers' are homosexuals in disguise.

What about using pornography and 'sex-aids'? Are these okay? No they are not, for they degrade the bodies of women and the minds of men. Pornography is just adultery in disguise. The same can be claimed for 'sex games' where partners 'pretend' that their partners are someone else. This is too close to adultery and should be avoided.

Then there are problems of 'how often?'. Should a wife 'give in' to her husband's every demand, whenever he wants sex? Really, the question is not a valid one, for the Bible tells us that each partner should satisfy the sexual requirements of the other. Does that mean a man can make sexual demands as many times as he wishes, regardless of his wife's feelings? No, it does not, for his role is to protect and cherish his wife. He must treat her with gentleness and with esteem. Any man who makes unreasonable sexual demands on his wife (who almost invariably 'gives in'), is being downright insensitive, if not sinful. But the same goes for the wife who refuses sexual union with her husband, or who 'rations' such activities, regardless of the feelings of the man. It works both ways!

Sexuality is God-given and married couples should never use it as a weapon or as a reward. It is to be enjoyed and used fully as part of a loving relationship - an expression of the love, care and oneness of the couple. However, one partner should not feel forced to do something he/she does not like, and should not consent to what is sinful.

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Wives should not underestimate the comfort given by them in sexual union. Husbands who make continuous sexual demands often do so because of an underlying insecurity or some other anxiety problem. Many women resort to eating vast quantities, some men turn to drink. With others (men *and* women) a constant demand for sex is not really a demand for sex at all, but for an alleviation of anxiety. This is not psychological nonsense but valid, observable fact. At all times, couples must communicate and talk about their innermost fears (and likes/dislikes). So, what *appears* to a woman to be a demanding sexual appetite, is not always what it first seems to be.

On the other hand, the husband's demands may be based on a quite legitimate complaint that the wife is being unduly mean with what she calls 'favours'! Let such a wife understand that within their marriage her body is not her own, but is her husband's. Likewise, the husband's body belongs to his wife. This, of course, tells us that we are 'as one' with our partners and we may not 'ration' our 'favours' as though we had the right to do so. They are not favours at all, but are legitimate activities within marriage, ordained by God. Each partner can *expect* regular sexual activity, as a God-given right. The only exception is when a partner wishes to fast and pray for a short while... and even this must be mutually agreed upon beforehand, with a good heart. And remember - it is for a *short* while!

One fact is that sexual activity usually diminishes with age. But, this is not necessarily the *result* of age! More likely, it is due to lack of interest on the part of one or both partners. Eventually, both of them get into a rut, taking each other for granted, and so the sex act (and usually all the little things that go with it, such as holding hands, looking into the other's eyes, feeling sexually excited or comfortable with the other person, etc. - all the things that put sparkle into married life) literally slows down and stops altogether. There is even a fallacy amongst some Christians that it is 'sinful' to be sexual after a certain age. Nonsense! Sexuality and the sex act can continue all the way through the couple's lives, including old age. Ignorance, not God's word, puts a stop to married sexuality.

There is a lot more to say about sexuality within marriage, but let us finish with a note about the female menopause. When women go through their menopause, it is quite normal for them to experience certain problems with sex acts. This is because their bodies are changing hormonally. (See paper on '*The Menopause*'). Also, changes can include a lack of sexual interest for a while. Husbands - don't get moody; it isn't personal... be more understanding! And wives - don't use the menopause as an excuse to shun your husband's needs or to be argumentative!

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### Offer of Advice

If you are anxious about practices in your own marriage you may contact the author, who will deal with questions sensibly, sensitively and with complete confidentiality. He will not be shocked. Don't suffer in silence! And don't think that your own particular problem is unique... there is nothing new under the sun! If you wish don't give your name. *(The author is a qualified psychiatric nurse, psychologist, and pastor, who has dealt with these problems many times).*

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