

## 6 The Gift of Intimacy in Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. <sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. <sup>3</sup> Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup> But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. <sup>7</sup> For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

<sup>8</sup> But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; <sup>9</sup> but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

### 1. **Chastity within marriage and abstinence from physical intimacy outside of marriage (fornication) is good.**

This assertion arose out of the question put to Paul, "Is it good for a man not to touch a woman?" Answer: Yes! And such chastity is from God.

Chastity and the fidelity associated with abstinence from physical intimacy outside of marriage is a service of love for our neighbor. (Proverbs 5:15, 18, 20)

### 2. **The physical union between a man and a woman creates and implies a bond of self-giving commitment to each other for the creation and nurturing of life as the man and the woman give and receive each other's love physically.**

When two people are united physically they also become deeply entwined with each other emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. This helps us understand why a life-long commitment and pledge of fidelity between a man and a woman needs to precede the physical union.

### 3. **The one flesh union between a husband and wife is patterned after the physical union of love that Christ has established with His bride the Church.**

Christ's union with His bride the Church is NOT sexual in nature, but it is, nonetheless, physical as He offers up His body and blood for us upon the cross and as we receive His body and blood in the Sacrament. His joy and delight come from Him giving Himself to His bride for her good and from her receiving His love, rather than from Him "having His desires and needs met" by her. This basic perspective from the Gospel shapes our understanding of the gift of intimacy in marriage. (Song of Solomon 2:16a; 6:3; 7:10)

4. **Marriage between one man and one woman is ordained by God to help Christians avoid fornication** (i.e., sexual immorality).

This purpose for marriage is an expansion of the original purpose of marriage given by God before the fall into sin. Since the fall, sin has caused our desires and appetites to become self-centered and bent in upon ourselves. After the fall, the institution of marriage, therefore, is to channel our desires toward their original purpose of self-giving sacrificial love.

*"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."*

5. **The one flesh union between a husband and a wife means that the body of each belongs to the other, not for the service of the self, but for the loving service of the other.**

"My body belongs to my wife, that I might give my body to her in love for her comfort, help, support, and protection. My body is my gift to her for the nurture and promotion of her life and well-being. I do not live for myself, but for her. I give my body to her that she might receive my life and, when it is God's will receive the miracle of life in the gift of children."

"My body belongs to my husband, that I might joyfully receive him in love physically for companionship, comfort, help, support, and protection. My body is my gift to him that he might delight to give of himself to me as Christ delighted to give Himself for His bride the Church. My body belongs to him that in receiving his love physically, I might, when it is God's will, receive the miracle of conception and the birth of children."

Note: This mutual and reciprocal self-giving understanding of the relationship of the husband and the wife to each other physically extends beyond the one flesh union of physical intimacy to every aspect of the husband's and wife's physical relationship.

6. **The mutual "authority" that each spouse has over the body of the other is NOT patterned after the Old Adam's selfish will, but after Christ's self-giving love in His relationship to His bride the Church.**

Husband: "The body of my wife belongs to me that I might nurture, serve, protect and care for her. I delight in her."

Wife: "The body of my husband belongs to me that I might receive his forgiveness, help, comfort, and strength. I delight in him." (Genesis 2:23-25)