

## **It's Complicated: Dating, Sex, Love, and Marriage** *The Song of Songs*

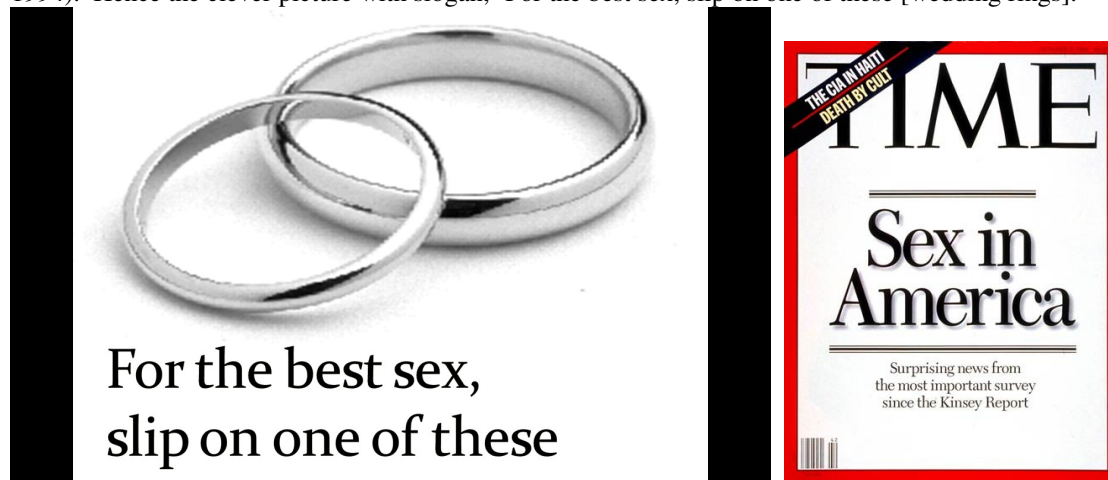
### **Act Three: The Glory of Sex (and Marriage)** *The Song of Songs 3:6 – 5:1*

#### **Introduction: Two Becoming One**

(SLIDE 1) Welcome back! Or welcome for the first time, to our series called 'It's Complicated: Dating, Sex, Love, and Marriage.' Tonight we're going to talk about 'the glory of sex.' (SLIDE 2) On May 15, 1999, I put on the only piece of jewelry I've ever worn for more than one day: this \$30 ring that Ming and I bought in Boston's Chinatown. It would symbolize our lifelong commitment to us being cheap. But more meaningfully, it would also symbolize my lifelong commitment to her, just as her ring symbolized her lifelong commitment to me. We were married in Christ the King Church in Central Square in Cambridge, and we did our reception at the YWCA right around the corner (where Cornerstone used to meet) by getting a lot of friends to help us and cook the food: 100 pounds of chicken, 250 pounds of noodles, and a bunch of other things.

Getting married was incredible because everything about it represented two becoming one. The two of us came together as one to do all the planning. We planned the service together. I planned the reception music, the ballroom dance lesson during the reception, and the tuxedos for my groomsmen. Ming planned everything else. When the day finally came, it was symbol after symbol of two becoming one. Our moms lit two separate candles; we took them and lit one candle together – the two flames became one. We kissed in front of our parents for the first time, and our two lips became one. Our friends came in as two different groups; they left as one. And that night, we physically became one. And for the last nine years, we've been on a journey together of learning how two become one.

My experience corroborates a study published in TIME magazine a few years ago (SLIDE 3), which says that the people who experience the greatest quality and quantity of sex are married people (*Sex in America*, TIME, Oct. 17, 1994). Hence the clever picture with slogan, 'For the best sex, slip on one of these [wedding rings].'



It clearly suggests that God knew what He was doing: sex is for marriage. Sex is the emblem of a commitment between a man and a woman where two become one, not just for a night, and not just for as long as it's convenient, but for a lifetime.

#### **Context:**

We're also going to look at another couple, a far more romantic couple, and their wedding day and even their wedding night, when two became one. Three weeks ago, we started this series called 'It's Complicated: Dating, Sex, Love, and Marriage' by looking at an ancient play. It's called *The Song of Songs*, and it's a play about a relationship from start to finish, from the basis of attraction (which we covered last week) through dating and problem solving through marriage through conflict and resolution all the way through old age. The benefit of

spending time with Solomon and ‘Abby’ the Shulamite in this play is that nowhere in life do we see an entire relationship from start to finish. (SLIDE 4) In Act One, we see them attracted to each other. In Act Two, we see them courting and working out problems in their relationship. In Act Three, we see them at the public wedding ceremony, and their private bedroom.

During our time together tonight, I want to do at least two things. First, I want to show you that God’s original ideal for sex and marriage is by far the best way to experience sex. I want to do this in a way that is relevant to you, no matter who you are or what your position is on this subject. Even if you are sexually active right now, I want you to know right up front that I hope to persuade you of the goodness of God’s vision for this. Or, if you haven’t had sexual experience but are grumpy about it because you’d like to have sex, I hope our time together builds some thankfulness for what seems like your great misfortune. Or, if you love God and if you want to follow Jesus and if you’ve struggled to keep integrity in your body and mind as much as possible, then I hope this gives you all the more reason to be happy about waiting, and happy with your convictions.

Second, I’d like to tell you what I wish other people told me as a single person about sex, because it will help you understand why God calls us to be pure while we’re single. So, let’s look at what this very God-centered couple experienced and discovered about the glory of sex.

### **Make Your Marriage More Important Than Your Career: 3:6 – 11**

(SLIDE 5)The very first point is to make your marriage more important than your career. Look at how *The Song of Songs* goes in Act Three. The first half is the coronation of Solomon as King. The second half is the wedding night of Solomon and the Shulamite. This is the day Solomon becomes King, but more importantly, it’s the day he marries his honey. AT LONG LAST!!! Here is the coronation scene:

#### *Friends*

(SLIDE 6) <sup>3:6</sup> What is this coming up from the wilderness

Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant?

<sup>7</sup> Behold, it is the traveling couch of Solomon;

Sixty mighty men around it,  
Of the mighty men of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> All of them are wielders of the sword,

Expert in war;  
Each man has his sword at his side,  
Guarding against the terrors of the night.

(SLIDE 7) <sup>9</sup> King Solomon has made for himself a sedan chair

From the timber of Lebanon.

<sup>10</sup> He made its posts of silver,

Its back of gold  
And its seat of purple fabric,  
With its interior lovingly fitted out  
By the daughters of Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> Go forth, O daughters of Zion,  
And gaze on King Solomon with the crown  
With which his mother has crowned him  
On the day of his wedding,  
And on the day of his gladness of heart.

This is the first time Solomon is called ‘King Solomon,’ in v.9 and v.11. And you can imagine that by itself, that’s a big deal. It’s like a promotion to being the President of the U.S. But as much pomp and circumstance that this coronation day is, the more important issue is that it’s his wedding day: ‘the day of his wedding...the day of his gladness of heart.’ Some high achieving people make career more important than marriage. In God’s view, that’s a problem. Other gods, moralities, and stories may not teach that. But the biblical God does. And if you are following Him, you are not ready to get married until you are ready to be flexible about your career. If you

absolutely want to achieve something in your career or your life other than marriage, that's fine. But know that in God's sight, marriage involves trade-offs.

### **Subpoint #1: These Are Different Moralities**

But why? Why is marriage so important to this God who speaks to us from the pages of this Bible and in the person of Jesus? I want to repeat something I said in Act Two. I understand that if you are not a Christian, you might feel like I am saying that Christians are 'more moral' than other people. That's not what I'm saying. So please listen carefully. Everyone is moral in their own way. But our moralities don't agree. For example, my mom is not a Christian. She believes it is immoral for me and my wife to raise our kids in a lower-income, higher crime, mostly Black neighborhood. We are not sending them to the best possible schools. We have taken lower paying jobs, so we don't give our kids the things she thinks we should buy. For Stanford and Harvard graduates like us to plan to send our kids to a public college rather than a private is immoral to her. The issue is not that we are 'more moral' than her. The issue is that we have *different moralities*. Another example: Non-Christians don't do evangelism, but evangelism is a moral duty for Christians because Jesus is a new humanity for all humanity; so is prioritizing forgiveness over retributive justice because Jesus forgives people; sex is for husband and wife in a lifelong marriage, even if both husband and wife agree to have an 'open marriage' where they can sleep with other people, because God designed marriage and His vision defines it. The moralities are actually different. And those different moralities flow out of different core commitments. You can't just evaluate one morality using another morality. Instead, you need to look into the *basis* of those moralities. Sadly, we don't have the time here for that. (please see my material on my website: [http://nagasawafamily.org/archives\\_question\\_proof.htm](http://nagasawafamily.org/archives_question_proof.htm))

So you may think I'm saying that there is a morality that everyone agrees with, and Christians are just better at it than other people. That is not what I'm saying. *There is no morality that everyone agrees with.* There's something I'd like you to keep in mind: I'm speaking as a Japanese-American. Meaning: Christian faith has never been a big part of my ethnic community, so I think of Christian morality as a *different* morality than what my parents taught me, and from what Buddhism taught me. But I think when you are Korean-American, where 77% of the population goes to church, or when you're surrounded by Korean-Americans (as we are here in BCACF), people who are leaving the church, or not Christians, think that they need to prove to the Christians that they can have the same morality and be 'just as moral.' I've found a similar dynamic to be true in the Black community, because of the high rates of church going, and also the White community. That's because some European modernists and some postmodernists would like us all to believe that there is really just one morality, and that some people are better at it than others. But it's because those White people are post-Christian and still feel like they need to prove something to the Christians. And then Christians and non-Christians get into debates about 'who is more moral.' But that doesn't make any sense. The problem goes even farther back. How you define good and evil, morality and immorality, self-giving and self-centeredness, depends on where you stand.

So do I have anything to say to those outside the Christian community? Yes. When I am speaking to you, I am trying to persuade you, whether you are Christian or not, by appealing to something in you that I would call 'the image of God.' That is, if the biblical story is true and factual, then there is something in each one of us that can glimpse this God who speaks through this sacred text, His word, through me, and through His people. When I am talking about what God calls us to, perhaps there is something in you that responds with a 'yes.' I'm asking you to please pay attention to that something in you.

### **The Wedding Night: 4:1 – 15**

Is God's original ideal for sex and marriage by far the best way to experience sex? Let's look at this couple. Solomon, as a character within this play, stands at the altar, but he's also standing at this moment with God, and God makes love and relationships real. The beloved woman, 'Abby' the Shulamite is the same way. No wonder they're looking forward to their wedding night (SLIDE 8).

(SLIDE 9) *Solomon*

<sup>4:1</sup> How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are like doves behind your veil;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.

Her eyes give him as sense of peace, like doves. Her hair is like a flock of goats because goats in Israel are black, and goatherds are huge. So when a flock of goats is streaming down a hillside, they are threading through each other magically, weaving their way down. Her hair streams down. We know at this point that they are in a bedroom because a Jewish woman of that time would have only let down her hair in the privacy of a bedroom for her husband's eyes only. Her hair was considered her glory.

(SLIDE 10) <sup>2</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.

Your teeth are like white lambs. All of them are there. What more needs to be said?

(SLIDE 11) <sup>3</sup> Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.

The color scarlet is not a garish red, but a deep red. That's the color of her lips. And a pomegranate has a delicate blush, and so does what we would call her cheekbones, what they call the temples.

(SLIDE 12) <sup>4</sup> Your neck is like the tower of David,  
Built with rows of stones  
On which are hung a thousand shields,  
All the round shields of the mighty men.

Now that's a little harder to explain. I think he's talking about the beauty of prominence and honor. Her necklace around her neck is like the shields of heroes around the tower of David.

(SLIDE 13) <sup>5</sup> Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle  
Which feed among the lilies.

Fawns bounce closely together. So he's saying her breasts are bouncy! And whereas before he declined to comment on that particular part of her body, now he says:

<sup>6</sup> Until the cool of the day  
When the shadows flee away,  
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh  
And to the hill of frankincense.  
<sup>7</sup> You are altogether beautiful, my darling,  
And there is no blemish in you.

He can play a long time on these two hills fragranced by her perfume. In case you didn't notice, what is the couple doing now? They're undressing. And whereas before he told her how beautiful her eyes were, now he says that she is beautiful from head to toe.

(SLIDE 14) <sup>8</sup> Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,  
May you come with me from Lebanon.  
Journey down from the summit of Amana,  
From the summit of Senir and Hermon,  
From the dens of lions,  
From the mountains of leopards.  
<sup>9</sup> You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride;  
You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes,  
With a single strand of your necklace.

(SLIDE 15)<sup>10</sup> How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!  
 How much better is your love than wine,  
 And the fragrance of your oils  
 Than all kinds of spices!  
<sup>11</sup> Your lips, my bride, drip honey;  
 Honey and milk are under your tongue,  
 And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

He says that her kisses are sweet and that her fragrance is fresh. Then, here is the most intimate statement:

(SLIDE 16)<sup>12</sup> A garden locked is my sister, my bride,  
 A rock garden locked, a spring sealed up.  
 (SLIDE 17)<sup>13</sup> Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates  
 With choice fruits, henna with nard plants,  
<sup>14</sup> Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
 With all the trees of frankincense,  
 Myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices.  
 (SLIDE 18)<sup>15</sup> You are a garden spring,  
 A well of fresh water,  
 And streams flowing from Lebanon.

Now it's getting fairly hot. What is he talking about when he calls her a locked garden? Her body. To him, she is a beautiful garden, filled with all kinds of sweet smells and sweet tastes, a garden in which he has been standing on the outside. In fact, the references to water are clever; she is like 'a well of fresh water' in the sense that she satisfies his thirst, and maybe also that she's aroused and moist. His desire for her is like a hunger for the finest fruit and spices. But she has been locked, meaning she has been chaste, sexually pure. The door into her body has been closed all the way until now. But now the time is right, and she says:

(SLIDE 19) *Shulamite*  
<sup>16</sup> Awake, O north wind,  
 And come, wind of the south;  
 Make my garden breathe out fragrance,  
 Let its spices be wafted abroad.  
 May my beloved come into his garden  
 And eat its choice fruits!

She says, 'Why don't you come inside and taste the best of it?' And then, the curtain very tastefully closes. They are left to their privacy. Then, when the curtain re-opens, Solomon says:

(SLIDE 20) *Solomon*  
<sup>5:1</sup> I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride;  
 I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam.  
 I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;  
 I have drunk my wine and my milk.

And then, outside, the friends sing a rousing chorus of, 'Great! Go back for more!':

(SLIDE 21) *Friends*  
 Eat, friends;  
 Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.

**A Comparison of Views on Sex: For the Married Couple vs. For the Public**

<i>God's View</i>	<i>Our Culture's View</i>
Sex is for the married couple	Sex is for the public

(SLIDE 22) As we reflect on this, there are three comparison points that I want to make. First, in God’s view, *sex is for the married couple*. In American culture, *sex is for the public*. Mothers go on talk shows and talk about how they had sex with their daughters’ teenage boyfriends. Calvin Klein models bare their body parts for all to see. Pornography floods the internet. From God’s point of view, that is totally backward morality. His moral system is different.

Now is the Bible simply being prude when it closes the curtain on the couple’s most intimate moment? I don’t think so. It doesn’t mean that we can’t talk about sex and what sex is like. In fact, I’m going to tell you a few things about it in just a moment. But the biblical writer ultimately respects the intimacy of the couple. And that’s the point. This is something for *the couple*. It’s part of *their* life journey together, as we’ll see here and in the coming chapters. This is about two becoming one, in all ways, for a lifetime.

That becoming one connects the two people in deeper ways than you think. Let me give an example of that. When a couple is physically intimate, many times they are verbally intimate and emotionally intimate. During that time together, a couple might share their sense of humor, or fondest hopes, or tears of reconciliation, or most vulnerable stories. Those things also create a bond. Personally, I can’t imagine sharing that time outside the context of marriage. That is another reason why sexual intimacy is for lifelong marriage. It is not for the casual hookup. Nor is it even for a dating relationship that is basically a mini-marriage, where a breakup is a mini-divorce. With every hookup and every broken relationship, you have less of yourself to give. Like a piece of tape that gets used and then pulled off, used and then pulled off, you get weaker and weaker. It’s partly why 67% of all second marriages end in divorce, and 74% of third marriages end in divorce.<sup>1</sup>

**A Comparison of Views on Sex: A Community Issue vs. A Private Issue**

<i>God’s View</i>	<i>Our Culture’s View</i>
Sex is for the married couple	Sex is for the public
Sex is a community issue	Sex is a private issue

(SLIDE 23) Secondly, in God’s view, sex is a community issue. In 5:1, the friends celebrate the fact that the married couple just had sex. They’re psyched for them. Previously, the friends celebrated their attraction and courtship and helped the couple stay sexually pure. So they’ve played a role all along. That’s not just God’s view, it’s been the view of all cultures and societies except Western culture today. Sex helps form the sacred bond between a couple so that they could establish a household and care for children, and that is everybody’s business. So sex is a community issue. Here’s another way to look at it. First, long before Ming and I ever met, when I was in college, I talked with my Christian guy friends about maintaining sexual purity, or at least struggling for it. Second, when Ming and I did start dating, we welcomed accountability. Friends and mentors asked us if we were being pure with each other. We had some modest physical involvement, and they corrected us. We agreed, and we stopped. Third, we went to pre-marital counseling. One of the many things we talked about there was any past sexual experience and/or what our preconceptions of sex were. Fourth, a week or two before I got married, one of my best friends took me aside and reenacted one of the sacred traditions of our group of guy friends. He was the person most recently married before me, so he cautioned me about what to expect on my wedding night, and how to be sensitive to my wife in this area. Fifth, on our wedding day, 250 friends and family showed up to encourage us to have sex for the first time that night. Even our parents! Sex is a community issue. Nowadays, even our housemates say, ‘Hey, why don’t we take the kids – you get some alone time.’ It’s something that the community is concerned about, celebrates, and safeguards as carefully as they can, in appropriate ways.

In our culture, though, even if sex is for public consumption, people think it’s a private issue. You can show your sexual activity all you want. You can even record it and post it on youtube. But if someone talks to you about it, you say, ‘Hey, that’s my business. It’s private.’ That radical individualism is a sickness. Therefore children taste the bitterness of divorce. They lose role models of faithfulness and loving commitment. And all they can do is shrug their shoulders and say, ‘Well, at least one day, I can have sex with whoever I want.’ HUH.

**A Comparison of Views on Sex: The Reasons vs. The Techniques**

<i>God’s View</i>	<i>Our Culture’s View</i>
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.divorcerate.org/>

Sex is for the married couple	Sex is for the public
Sex is a community issue	Sex is a private issue
Sex reasons – the why’s	Sex techniques – the how’s

(SLIDE 24) Finally, there’s a difference between what God wants to talk about and what our culture wants to talk about regarding sex. God wants to talk to us about the reasons for sex – the why’s. Our culture wants to talk to us about the techniques – the how’s. Go to the store, and look at any magazine cover. You’ll find articles like *sex secrets that’ll keep him* [‘until next week,’ they should add] or *new ways to please her*. Maybe that’s why sex in our culture has become a matter of boasting. How loud was it? How many times? That’s stupid, and it’s just a marketing ploy to make you feel insecure about having sex. In reality, sex techniques totally depend on who you are and who your spouse is, 100%. So there’s no way to know ahead of time what you’re really going to like or what your spouse will really like. It’s just something you’ll figure out when you get married. So don’t be anxious. Don’t think there’s a one size fits all.

What does sex mean in God’s framework? (SLIDE 25) A return to Eden, to paradise, to the garden of delights that God originally wanted all of humanity to taste. Recall the ‘garden’ language that’s been used: <sup>4:12</sup> *A **garden** locked is my sister, my bride; a rock **garden** locked, a spring sealed up...* <sup>4:15</sup> *You are a **garden** spring, a well of fresh water ...* <sup>4:16</sup> *Awake, O north wind; and come, wind of the south; make my **garden** breathe out fragrance...May my beloved come into his **garden** and eat its choice fruits!* <sup>5:1</sup> *I have come into my **garden**, my sister, my bride.*

This is the ultimate WHY of marriage. It’s not just that sex feels nice. Sex unlocks the past, present, and future for us. That is the glory of sex. Sex reminds us of the past. It reminds us of what we once had before humanity sinned: a paradise, given by a loving God who created us for each other and sex for marriage. It’s a picture of the harmony – emotionally and spiritually – between husband and wife.

Whenever anything is wrong between Ming and me, emotionally or spiritually, sex becomes a problem. When Ming and I have a disagreement, we are not attractive to each other. It wasn’t a surprise to me that she wasn’t attracted to me, but it was a surprise to me that I was not attracted to her. I thought, based on movies, that men always wanted to do it and were always ready. No! There are times I wouldn’t want to touch Ming with a ten foot pole. And the same goes for her, of course, during those times. Can you imagine saying, ‘I know you’re really mad at me and you hate me right now but let’s try a new technique’??? NO WAY!!! Instead, we have to keep learning to communicate, solve problems, deal with my own character flaws, and deal with hers, too. We have to keep learning that we are two becoming one, in the design of God and by the power of His Spirit. Only after that are we even attracted to each other again. Trying to have sex while you’re feeling disconnected from each other is awful. It is like hell, because it is making your body do something that your soul disagrees with. It is *disintegration*, not integration. The most important sex organs you have are your mind and your soul. We yearn for a deep spiritual connection, and out of that, a deep values connection, an *agreement* about what is important and joyful and meaningful.

Sex makes a good relationship better, but it does NOT make a bad relationship good. It makes a bad relationship *even worse*. (SLIDE 26) How many of you have seen a couple become more jealous, more insecure, after they have sex? Know why? It’s because they didn’t really trust each other beforehand; and now they have even less reason to trust each other. ‘Well, if they did it with me, and we’re not married, then they’ll do it with someone else, or maybe they’ve already done it with someone else...Maybe they’re thinking of someone else when we’re having sex...Maybe I should too...’ And it becomes a mess. Or, a couple feels more obligated toward each other because of guilt. Or, one or both people start to lose emotion because they start protecting themselves from getting hurt. Or, any number of things. Sex makes a bad relationship worse. Does it make sense to open a joint bank account if you don’t trust the person? NO WAY! It’ll give you more headaches and reasons to argue. Sex is the same way. It makes a bad relationship even worse.

I say all the time (and you need to raise this issue with everyone you know) that if your core commitment in life is fundamentally to yourself, you’ll always be disappointed with other people; other people will piss you off; even your future spouse will never be as committed to you as you are. You will find new ways to become angry. And sex will become a desperate thing, not the sweetness of God’s garden, but hell itself. And it will burn you. The paradox of life is that in order to find importance and joy and meaning, you have to give your life to something much larger than yourself. May I recommend Jesus?!?!?

Why? Because sex hints at God's good future. One day, God will consummate His union with His people and we will live in a new Garden. The whole planet will be renewed. God will embrace us in a love so honoring, it is hard to even describe it now. And sex is a picture of the present, where God has reunited Himself with humanity in the person of Jesus, who is both fully God and fully human, to begin that process of reuniting the divine and the human in everyone who gives their life to Jesus. Sex is not the meaning of the whole universe, but it hints to us about the meaning of the whole universe: union with God. That is one of the reasons why God reserved sex for husband and wife in lifelong commitment. Does God divorce His people? Does He flirt with humanity? Does He use human beings simply for some short term pleasure He gets? No way. He gives all of Himself to us, and He asks for all of ourselves in return for our good, so that we could be fully integrated people.

And the joy that God intended for all human relationships, not just marriage but especially marriage, is just a hint of what God has within Himself. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience relationship with each other that is filled with joy. They are eternally committed to each other in love. They delight in each other. So when a husband and wife find their deepest pleasures in their most tender moments, that is only a glimpse and a hint of the joy that is within God.

**Subpoint #2: This God Makes Marriage Meaningful**

What else makes sex and marriage meaningful? Someone once said to me, 'With my last boyfriend, sex was one of the most meaningful things I've ever done.' To which I asked, 'Really, then *why did it end?*' What is the *meaning* of something like that? Either you say you're the center of the universe and therefore whoever pleases you at the time is fine, or you say that God is the center of the universe and therefore we live for Him.

Sex and marriage have different meanings depending on what belief system you stand in. You cannot compare moralities; you have to compare the entire worldview package. But you can compare meanings. Here are three different views of sex and marriage (SLIDE 27).

	<b>Classical Greek &amp; Indian Religions</b>	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Atheism</b>
<b>US:</b> What are we?	<b>SOUL</b> We are immortal, good souls, wanting to escape the bad physical body	<b>SOUL AND BODY</b> We are both body and soul, and what we do to one affects the other	<b>BODY</b> We are physical, chemical beings
<b>SEX &amp; MARRIAGE</b> are...?	From <b>NEUTRAL</b> (Greek Epicureans said 'Have sex with anyone since the body is not important'), to <b>BAD</b> (Stoics, Gandhi, etc. said 'Don't have sex')	Marriage and sex are inseparably <b>UNITED AND GOOD</b> because God designed it that way.	Marriage is a <b>CONSTRUCT</b> . Sex is pleasurable but ultimately <b>FUNCTIONAL</b> , for the survival of the species.
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> are...	<b>INCIDENTAL</b> Aristotle thought that who you are, you are in isolation.	<b>DESIGNED BY GOD</b> God is relational, has ideals for relationships, and cares for the relationships between people	<b>SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS</b> The individual comes first, and all relationships are malleable
<b>HOPE:</b> What do we hope for?	<b>DISEMBODIMENT</b> The soul floats around and never returns, or <b>REINCARNATION</b> into another body	<b>RESURRECTION</b> The permanent joining of body and soul to God in God's renewal of the world	<b>NO CONSCIOUSNESS</b>



The issue here is not morality but meaning. In the biblical story, sex and marriage really have *meaning* because our bodies and our relationships are meant to reflect God’s character. Does sex have meaning otherwise? As atheist biologist Richard Dawkins said in *The God Delusion*, ‘Sex is [merely] the gene’s means to produce more genes.’ It’s nature’s trick to get us to have kids. If you wanted your significant other to be faithful to you, well, on what basis could you ask that? That’s an older notion of commitment, and that’s nice and romantic, but there’s no real reason for anyone to do that. Love is just a chemical reaction in your head; if you want to feel good, just eat chocolate – you’ll get the same endorphins. Love isn’t real. Likewise, marriage is just a social construct; it’s not real. The only real thing is the physical act of sex. Everything else is just socially designed to make it feel okay, or regulate it.

If you’re an atheist, how do you really make sense of sex? Take Sigmund Freud. When Freud was dying, he said to his wife, ‘Come and love me, irrationally.’ He wanted something that he knew was love, but he thought there is no such thing, really. But he wanted it anyway. So he couldn’t live in his own story. **NO ONE CAN LIVE IN THAT STORY.** If love is a construct, if relationships are constructs, then sex is all that really matters. Love and relationships are not *real*. It’s just a cover up for sex.

Here’s the challenging thing. I don’t see a way to blend these worldviews. Where you stand depends on bigger questions about whether we are souls or bodies or both, whether there is a good God who has a vision for our relationships or whether we are just individuals making relationships out of social constructs.

**Physical Intimacy in Dating – Four Points**

(SLIDE 28) What does that mean for you who are not married and are either dating or thinking about dating? **First**, if serious dating is a discernment period for marriage, then understand this: You don’t need any physical intimacy at all. You’re surprised, aren’t you? Some people talk about having physical chemistry. But there’s no such thing; you just grow into each other when you’re married. So remember: What did we say in week 1? (SLIDE 29)

The Order of Getting to Know Someone

- 1 Physical Attractiveness
- 2 Personality
- 3 Character & Values
- 4 Core Commitment

Is Opposite the Order of Importance

- 4 Physical Attractiveness
- 3 Personality
- 2 Character & Values
- 1 Core Commitment

So the big question when you look at couples or if you’re dating is, ‘Where is the chemistry?’ (SLIDE 30) What level is it happening on?

<i>Person A</i>	<i>Person B</i>
4 Physical Attractiveness	4 Physical Attractiveness
3 Personality	3 Personality
2 Character & Values	2 Character & Values
1 Core Commitment	1 Core Commitment

A relationship that goes as deep as physical to physical is obviously unwise. A connection that goes as deep as personality is volatile and unstable. A connection that goes as deep as character and values is much stronger but potentially rigid. And a connection that goes as deep as having the same core commitment – in this case, to Jesus – is best.

So regarding physical attraction, all you need to know is whether you’re physically attracted to each other. Then, just set that aside and work on the deeper three issues. Personality, Character & Values, and Core Commitment, because *those* are what make us unique and special. And *those* are much harder to discern; they take more time and conversation; they’re often not stable yet, and you need to figure all that out. Being physically intimate with someone doesn’t give you any useful information.

Illus: Here's an example of what I'm talking about. It's a crude example, but it's precise. In the movie *Quincinera*, one of the side stories is that there are two white girls, teenagers, who are both interested in the same older man. They wonder if giving themselves to him sexually will help him decide which one to be with. So they call over this Mexican boy. They bring him inside, ask him to blindfold himself, and they take turns giving him oral sex. They ask if he can tell the difference. He says, 'No'. That is exactly the point. NO, HE COULDN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE. Physical intimacy doesn't give you any unique information. It gives you generic information. Anyone can do that, especially if they were educated in the same 'techniques'. If you were blindfolded, you wouldn't even be able to tell the difference. So you don't actually need to do it at all.

Illus: In the movie *Hitch*, Hitch says, 'Eight out of ten women believe that the first kiss will tell them everything they need to know about a relationship.' If that's anywhere near true, that is flat out ridiculous. The divorce rate for marriages in America is 50%. So if you're going to base it on a kiss, you might as well skip the kiss and just flip a coin. Physical intimacy does not give you any real information.

If dating is a discernment period where you're trying to figure out whether you should marry this person, focus on the deeper things. Talk to each other, and keep talking. If you're with someone who always wants to make out, don't be flattered. Because that person actually thinks you're boring. Or that person is shallow and is trying to hide it. But if you have to TALK, then you have to...THINK. And you have to...LISTEN. And then you have to...FEEL...and...CARE about what they're saying. The period of waiting is a good thing, because it reveals real character and values.

Even if you've had sexual experience before, God wants to give you a better future. So often, people who have had sex figure, 'Well, I've lost my virginity, so what does it matter?' It's not about your past. It's always about your future. Having sex with people forms bonds that shouldn't be there, and that will impair your judgment about dating now. And it hurts your character.

(SLIDE 31) Also, **second**, understand that arousal is a false promise. It's like making a promise that you will deliver on that promise. In the movie *Vanilla Sky*, Cameron Diaz says to Tom Cruise, 'When you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise whether you do or not.' I think that's true, and I think that when you arouse someone while you're dating, you're making a false promise, because you don't know whether you'll be the one to carry through on it. We were made for sex. But when we disrespect God, the other person, and ourselves by hurtling over a good process, we wind up forming intense bonds that are based on nothing.

Illus: Before we were married, and before we were engaged, Ming and I visited Ming's parents in Ohio to talk with them, get to know them, and ask for their blessing. Still to come was my parents, and my visiting Boston for 2 months to get to know her community of friends and for them to get to know me. There was one night when Ming and I were in her living room alone, talking. It was a tender emotional moment and she said to me, 'I wish we could have sex.' I said, 'So do I'. But we both knew better. So we said goodnight. She went into her room. I went into the guest room. And we closed the doors and waited until we were married. If dating is discernment for marriage, as I'm convinced that it is, then you don't need physical involvement. All you have to do is acknowledge you have a sex drive, and you're attracted to each other. That's it.

(SLIDE 32) **Third**, have affection, but not arousal. Let me repeat: Affection, but not arousal. Look at the pattern in *The Song of Songs*. (SLIDE 33) In Act One, which focuses on attraction (1:1 – 2:5), the couple is taking a long walk in the woods alone and the opportunity comes to have sex. The man says no: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken my love until she pleases.' (SLIDE 34) Then in Act Two, which focuses on serious dating and courtship (2:6 – 3:5), the couple again has the opportunity to have sex. Again the man says no: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken my love until she pleases.' (SLIDE 35) It's only in Act Three, at the wedding night, where the woman says, 'Awake...May my beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits' (4:16). The pattern is 'Do not awaken,' and then 'Do not awaken,' and then at the wedding night, 'Awaken.' They kept their physical intimacy at affection, not arousal. CAN IT GET ANY CLEARER THAN THAT??? A lot of Christians ask, 'Where is the line? Can we make out in our underwear as long as we don't have sex?' NO: The line is at AROUSAL. That is where you STOP.

I observed that THE MAN in the previous two sections stopped the physical intimacy. Why is that? In our culture we tend to have the woman decide when to draw the line, wherever she feels uncomfortable. I think that is unfair and here's why. It is much more obvious to a man when he becomes aroused, and it usually happens much earlier. That means he should be the one to stop. Of course, if she's aroused, then she should stop, too. So, what does that mean? For most of you, you can hold hands, hug, and kiss lightly without being aroused, so that's great. Do that. There's the line for you. But if you're more easily aroused, and you need to talk about what activities are safe for you, then do that and make that commitment. If you make a mistake, ask the Lord for forgiveness, let Him cleanse you spiritually, tell other people, make sure the other person is telling other people, ask them to hold you accountable, and avoid the situations that are tempting for you.

On that note, I'm going to challenge you all with something very concrete. If you are with your boyfriend or girlfriend in your bedroom, do not close the door. There is no need. What do you have to do privately? Fight? You can do that with the door open! If you need to spend quality time, you can do that in a public place, or walking around. What is that you have to do privately? Don't close your door.

(SLIDE 36) **Fourth**, remember that premarital sex is absolutely inappropriate from God's standpoint. Wait a minute, you might say. If sex is so important, shouldn't we experiment before marriage? NO. I've given you all the reasons why. First, you don't need it to help you decide to marry that person. In fact, it distracts you from what's really important. Second, arousal is making and receiving a false promise with your body, so that also distract you from what's really important. Third, you can have affection but not arousal, and that is a biblical line that is there for our good. And finally, casual sex, breaking up after having sex, and even divorce betrays God because that's not who HE is. It's not just against what God commands, but against *who He is*. That is why the morality God gives to us is unique, and cannot be compared with any other moral system. Because our ultimate reason for living this way is to bear His image. This God, the God who ultimately reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, is the epitome of everlasting love and everlasting commitment and everlasting joy in relationship. He is in himself the marriage of divine nature and human nature. So once you understand God's vision of marriage, any sex outside of a lifelong marriage commitment is absolutely inappropriate.

So let me conclude with this chart again (SLIDE 37):

<i>God's View</i>	<i>Our Culture's View</i>
Sex is for the married couple	Sex is for the public
Sex is a community issue	Sex is a private issue
Sex reasons – the why's	Sex techniques – the how's

I hope I showed you that God's original ideal for sex and marriage is by far the best way to experience sex. If you are sexually active right now, I invite you to STOP and give your life back to God, the only one who brings meaning to sex and ALL relationships. If you want to talk with me after this about that, please do, or shoot me an email. I'm going to give you a few seconds of silence to figure out whether you want to do that. Or, if somehow you want to renew your commitment to Jesus as it relates to this, tell someone about that.