

## Intimacy in Marriage You can be spiritual as well as sensual .....

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Intimacy can be defined as familiarity, closeness and understanding. It is also relationship and confidence. When you hear the word intimate, the first word, however, that comes to mind is relationship and sex. Did I just say sex? Among many believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is almost sacrilegious to discuss the sexual aspects of a marriage relationship. This I believe stems from the fact that many believe that it is unholy for the husband and the wife to talk about this very important aspect of their relationship. This lack of communication creates a lot of tension; everything is shrouded in so much mystery. The couple connects at night in thick darkness without much conversation going on.

It is important to pay attention to this issue of intimacy because in my experience from speaking to a lot of women from different nationalities, I have found that many are suffering in silence. The end result is that there is usually a lot of conflict in relationships because of desires that cannot be communicated or fulfilled. Some men and women too now go after other women to get the satisfaction that they crave so much.

*How do you view your relationship with your spouse? Is it intimate? What is your understanding of intimacy?* I was ministering to a large group of women in a night vigil several years ago and the discussion centered on marriage. There were a lot of emotions in the room when the discussion centered on this issue. Some women said that it is not easy to say 'I love you' to their spouse for different reasons. One very interesting response from a woman is that when growing up, she never heard her mother say those words to her father. Some believe also that sex is something you do at night and don't talk about. A woman is not supposed to express the desire to her husband until she is asked or she will be seen as a slut. The bible states in 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also

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the wife to her husband. 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." Not having an understanding of scripture and allowing the local culture to dictate the pace of a relationship can prevent a couple from enjoying a deeper fellowship. Yes, sexual intercourse in marriage must be entered into as a time of fellowship, sometimes spontaneous, sometimes planned. The Bible which is the standard does not permit sex before marriage, but lets us know that closeness can let those emotions rise within you for another person as to consider them for marriage. The book of 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 states, "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them to remain as I am; but if they cannot exercise self control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn." That being said, If you look at your spouse and all you see is a sexual object, there can be no real intimacy. Once the euphoria of the initially connection is over, you need another level of closeness to sustain the sexual part of your relationship otherwise it would grow stale. You remain married but are more like room mates taking care of bills or children if there are any. The love that you feel must be expressed in many different ways including verbally.

*You can be spiritual as well as sensual.* Marriage can be very enjoyable contrary to the general notion out there. Many unbelievers choose not to marry because they feel that they can get as much sex as they want without having to make any commitment. There are so-called Christians too who live that life. I want to submit here that marriage is not just sex. The intimacy that develops makes sex better and more beautiful, not just an action to gratify the flesh momentarily. Look into your marriage, what is the conversation like? Do you argue instead of communicating? The communication that goes on between some couples is just a lot of shouting without any end to the conflict, or they enter into silence that is very deafening. Do you understand each other or you have left well alone for the sake of peace? When you observe a couple, there will be no need to interview them to determine their closeness. The body language when they are around each other can speak volumes; a look, a touch, an aura around them that is so powerful that even a third party can feel the electricity. There is no shyness or awkwardness. They are playful, not stiff around each other. There is a confidence also that exudes from each party when viewed separately. A couple that has all these together will flow easily into a sexual intimacy that can be mind blowing. It is not unholy to enjoy sex within your marriage. It is not a slam dung thing. It is a time of intimacy that gives birth to ongoing feelings of joy. The Shulamite in the book, Song of Solomon in the Bible said, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave, its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it...." Such love and sexual fulfillment brings contentment and a feeling of peace around a couple, a world that is not easy to penetrate by a third party.

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*Do you find it difficult to pray with your spouse?* That can affect the level of intimacy. For a lot of married people, young and old alike praying together is usually difficult. Each one prays separately or not, and when it comes to spending time together in the presence of God, it becomes a problem. This area must be worked upon with utmost diligence! Connection in the spirit increases trust. You cannot be so spiritual as not to be able to pray with your family! The institution of marriage is under attack from the kingdom of darkness and so we must not continually see each other as the enemy. One who prays with their spouse has a greater tendency to stay together. Separation and divorce is an epidemic that must be stopped!

*What intimacy is not.*

That picture of togetherness should not be a cover for oppression where at least one party is secretly yearning for more. There are many relationships where the spouse is controlling. It could be either one insisting on spending every available minute together and doing everything together. Many times one of the parties has personal goals that are marginalized because of the husband or wife's insistence on controlling their every movement. My observation in these situations is that sometimes the controlling party has feelings of insecurity, a low self-esteem or there is no trust in the marriage. It may also be that one of them exhibits temper tantrums when they cannot get their way and the other person submits out of fear of being rejected. If you love someone, you let them fly. Spending time together should be a melting together because of deep love and respect for each other and not under compulsion. The Proverbs 31 wife that every man wants their wife to be is described as being like the merchant ships which bring their foods from afar. In verse 20 she is described as a Missionary, who extends her hand to the poor, and the needy. She cannot do the things described if she does not have the support of her husband who should trust her to make good decisions. She takes time to look good and so should the husband, and take time to compliment each other. A woman told me once that during the valentine in one year, her husband came home and nonchalantly threw a box of cheap chocolate which someone gave him at work on the table saying, 'do you want it? Happy valentine, and strolled out. The situation must have deteriorated to that point of indifference. Marriage is companionship, laughter, love, understanding, sexual fulfillment and more.....

Take a picture of your marriage to look closely and determine what needs to be thrown out or retained for better intimacy! Do it together! Do it now!

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