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**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Let's Talk About Sex

October 23, 2017

“All right,” the youth pastor said. “Let’s get all the giggles out now...” The topic of the night was sex. Students snickered all through the lesson like it was the first time they ever heard the term “sex.” I was a senior in high school, and this was the first time I ever heard sex talked about in church. The unfortunate part was, I already knew all about the topic. I started learning about it from “Sex Ed” in fifth grade. My friends discussed it around the lunch table. I had friends who had been having sex for years. Media taught me how to think about sex. *The Simpsons, Seinfeld, Friends*, and countless movies taught me it was just as much a part of life as eating and sleeping.

If you haven’t noticed, we live in a sex-charged world. Our culture has taught us what and how to think about the topic. But, very few of us were raised thinking correctly about sex. Perhaps this is because we so often shy away from the topic at church. Most people can list all the places that they have learned about sex, but the majority would not include church on that list. The first “Sex Ed” course most of us took was from the world we live in; we didn’t enroll in it, but we took in the information, feelings, presuppositions, and “facts” our culture wanted us to believe.

Due to the way we’ve seen sex treated or ignored throughout our lives, the church often has to react to how the world thinks about sex rather than using its influence to help parents raise up people who understand a healthy view of sexuality from a young age. Thankfully, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder got the conversation rolling this past weekend around what a healthy, biblical view of sexuality looks like by diving into Scripture.

1 Corinthians 7:1-7:

1 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. 2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

³The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. ⁴The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.

⁵Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.

Ben pointed out from verse two that the apostle Paul had to combat the unhealthy views of sex that were prevalent in *his* day and remain all too prevalent in our day as well. He pointed out that our culture has taught us several improper ways to view sex. For example, our culture tells us sex is instinctual, like an appetite; you're hungry, eat. Also, our culture says sex is informal, it's just another activity like going to the gym. Our culture views sex as the ultimate, almost deifying it. Actually, that makes us our own god which is idolatry. Many of us find our identity in sex rather than in Christ. Some view sex as a means to an end, it helps them get something they want. Then finally, many people, including those in the Christian community, view sex as evil.

Ben went on to show in verses two through four that ultimately, sex is sacred. Sex is something God created, and it can further our worship of him and connection to our spouse. The biblical sexual ethic that Ben outlined is that we should honor God with our bodies, we shouldn't sexualize our relationship outside of marriage, and we should be mastered by nothing. As we embrace this way of thinking, it will enhance our marriages both in and out of the bedroom.

The upside down principle is found in verse four, "The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife." The idea is that fulfillment is found in mutual submission, putting the needs of one's spouse before your own and

trusting they will do the same, because the more you give, the better it gets.

Ben described five areas of need to focus on in order to apply this upside down principle in our marriage relationships: spiritual, mental, practical, emotional, and sensual. As we unpack these five needs this week, we will begin to see this upside down principle—the more you give, the better it gets—come to life.

If you're married, use this as a catalyst to begin the conversation with your spouse.

If you're single, don't tune out over the next four days. As we learned this past weekend from 1 Corinthians 7:7, single doesn't mean second-class. God's design for sex is important to know no matter what stage of life you find yourself in. It will help you speak truth into a culture that will consistently push you the opposite direction of God's purpose for you in this area. Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:12, calls on those who are younger to "Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." If you are single, you are called to set an example of purity, which begins in the heart (Matthew 5:8). To live a life of purity, especially sexual purity, is a hard road as one denies certain desires in order to honor Christ and one's future spouse. Do not give up what you want most for what you want now.

If you have struggled or are currently struggling in the area of sexual purity, reach out to a mentor, step into GrowthTrack, find a group to do life with, and rest in the fact that God, in Christ, has made you spotless and blameless in his sight (Col. 1:22), a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Begin again!

Questions:

Have you ever held any of the improper views of sex that Ben talked about? If so, which ones, and why did you believe that?

Does the entertainment that you allow into your life (what you read or watch) help or hurt as you try to live out a biblical sexual ethic?

Next Step:

Pray. Pray individually and with your spouse today for God to reveal whether either of you have unhealthy views of sex that need to be addressed. If you are single, identify any obstacles in your life to living out the biblical sexual ethic, and ask a trusted friend to help keep you accountable for taking a step toward removing those obstacles.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for creating sex. You are the author of life and know exactly how you created sex to work. Help me to leave behind the improper views of sex that this culture throws at me. Let me honor you with my choices in entertainment and in how I handle sexual situations. Give me the courage to have the conversations I need to have with others to take my next steps in this area. Amen.

This post was written by Alex Woody, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Seek First the Kingdom

October 24, 2017

When we enter into marriage, a lot of promises are made when we say those vows. Most of them are said excitedly through smiles with teary eyes and anticipation for the unknown. I think it's safe to say that most of us have no real idea of what we're entering into. We know we are promising to stay together and to be there for each other through the good and the bad, but we say so with hopes that it will be all good, right? In reality, the attraction and butterflies that first brought you together may begin to fade; those aren't enough to keep your marriage strong and within God's design. God tells all of us to put him first, above *everything*. This means we are to put him above our spouses and even our children. After all, your spouse and children are his more than they are yours. Does this mean you cast your spouse aside and only focus on God? No. It means you both are a part of each other's spiritual life and journey. A goal in your relationship with your spouse should be to help each other get closer to God. As Ben Snyder pointed out this past weekend, as you both focus on God and move closer to him, you naturally end up getting closer to each other. God wants our marriages to be a source of spiritual encouragement and companionship, walking together as a couple toward God and seeking first his plan for our lives.

Matthew 6:33:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

So, what does this look like in a marriage? God wants married couples to seek his Kingdom together, encouraging each other along the way. The trouble is, we live in a broken world that offers many barriers to this wonderful design God has for us. Many times, spouses grew up in families that may have approached faith differently. Maybe one person's family prayed together and read the Bible together, while the other's family never spoke about God outside of church. Or maybe our lives have become so busy that we feel lucky to accomplish all our daily activities,

let alone make time to work on our spiritual life together with our spouse. Another barrier is if one spouse is further along on their faith journey than the other, or if one or both have a fear of being open and vulnerable with the other. Spiritual intimacy in marriage is about more than just spending time in God's word. Let's face it, spiritual talk touches the deepest part of our being—faults, doubts, fears, etc.—and we may be afraid to admit those things, even to the one we love most. Instead, be willing to verbalize what is holding you back. Tell the other what you need from them to help you get closer to God. Talk about your fears, questions, struggles, and hesitations, and you might be surprised how they respond.

Questions:

How is your spiritual life? What do you need from your spouse to help you receive from God? Are you willing to talk to them about this?

On the other hand, how can you encourage your spouse to grow and accept the things God has for them in life?

If you are single, do you have a trusted friend or small group to encourage you in your spiritual journey?

Next Step:

Talk to your spouse (or trusted friend). Discuss what you need to do to help each other grow spiritually. You can start with simply attending church together, praying together for each other, and sharing what God is doing in your life.

Prayer:

Dear God, help me to meet my spouse's spiritual needs. Help me to be willing to be open, vulnerable and receptive to those needs. Bring to light the barriers that are holding us back, and guide us on how to break through them. Help us to commit to seeking you first in the hopes that we will both grow spiritually and, as a result, become stronger together. Amen.

This post was written by Ashlee Grosjean, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Literature + Mud = Love

October 25, 2017

“Being a parent basically means that your entire adult life is crammed into a two-hour block each night after the kids go to bed.” Or so says a meme that is currently floating around Facebook. And in our family right now, that’s about it. Sadly, that means for my husband and I our entire adult life consists of washing dishes, sweeping up the two inches of food that somehow managed to fall onto the floor during dinner, wiping up spilled milk, and maybe (if we’re lucky) reading a book or watching a show. Most of the time we don’t have the energy for adult conversations unless they involve some issue we are working on with our children, our work schedules, or prayer for a full night’s sleep. However, God did not create us to survive on so little enjoyable, stimulating conversation. After a long exhausting day at work or at home, engaging in stimulating conversation can seem like more effort than it’s worth. However, God created us as three-dimensional beings: mind, body and spirit! Therefore, to neglect one part of ourselves is to do our life (whether married or single) a disservice. Our mental and emotional needs cannot be ignored.

I love to read, and I read widely. This year alone I’ve tackled 50 books, including *Les Miserables*, which was 1,400 pages long. I’ve read fiction, biographies, mommy books, middle-grade books, theological books, and educational books. I say this not to brag on myself, but to say that through this reading I have been exposed to great ideas that make me think and thus give me fodder for conversations with my husband. When I talk with him about an idea I’ve encountered in a book, I allow him to have a glimpse into my heart, and by his response I get a glimpse into his own heart. I allow him to have an opportunity to speak my love language, quality time, through stimulating conversation.

My husband is not an avid reader, but he does like to run races – especially through mud. To me, the idea of *intentionally* diving into a puddle of mud and then running in wet shoes for three miles is asinine. Why would I want to do that? However, this year I tied my shoes and

completed my first mud run. While it wasn't my favorite experience of the year, it wasn't terrible, and I agreed to do it again some time in the future. While it does not seem like a traditional "act of service," to him it is because I did it out of love for him. There are plenty of things we both enjoy doing, like working in our garden or taking the kids on walks in the woods, but it's the things we do that are not necessarily our own preference that speak the loudest to the ones we love.

As Ben said this weekend, "The more you give, the better it gets." So as we give our time, put aside our own preferences or step out and join our spouses in an activity that seems crazy in our minds, we also benefit. My husband benefits from the ideas I encounter because it makes him think about things that he may have never considered. I benefit from running a muddy race because we are spending time doing something together that does not involve our children, creating memories, and getting some exercise. He shows me he loves me by listening and responding to my thoughts, and I show that I respect him by entering into his world because he wants to have experiences with me.

In Ephesians 5, Paul is giving instructions to husbands and wives on how to truly love one another.

Ephesians 5:25:

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her.

Ephesians 5:33:

So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In her short book to her daughter, *Let Me Be a Woman*, Elisabeth Elliot says, "One of the most joyful discoveries of life is that in recognizing, affirming, and comforting another person we find ourselves recognized, affirmed and comforted." When we as wives respect our husbands, we value what they value and seek to join them in activities they enjoy. We set aside our preferences to participate in what they enjoy. A husband can love his wife by seeking after her heart, listening to what she is really

saying and responding appropriately. When we make the effort to engage with our spouses mentally and emotionally, we are not depleted but are actually filled.

Questions:

Think about the last time you really talked with your spouse about something other than the kids, your schedule, or work. How did you feel after that conversation?

What is one thing your spouse would love for you to do, but you really don't want to do? What's keeping you from actually doing it?

Next Step:

This week, plan on spending a night with your spouse without handheld screens. Go out on a date and talk to each other or go to a movie and talk about the movie afterward. Keep the screens away. Focus on the person sitting across/beside you.

Prayer:

God, thank you for giving me my spouse. Thank you for all the ways they make my life better. Thank you for the ways I experience you more fully through them. Give me your eyes to see how to engage more fully with them on a mental and emotional level. Give me the desire to follow through on what I see. Thank you for your grace and the opportunity to improve the relationships with those we love the most. Amen.

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Practically Speaking, Love is a Verb

October 26, 2017

If you've seen the 2006 movie *The Break-Up*, starring Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughn, there's likely one scene that immediately comes to mind. After hosting a dinner party, Aniston's character, Brooke, announces that she is going to do the dishes and suggests that she would appreciate the help of her live-in boyfriend, Gary (Vaughn), who is busy playing a video game. Gary, who just wants to relax, suggests that they tackle the dishes "tomorrow," to which Brooke responds, "Gary, you know I don't like to wake up to a dirty kitchen." As the banter escalates, an exasperated Gary relents, and the couple engages in the following exchange:

Gary: "Fine. I'll help you do the d--- dishes."

Brooke: "That's not what I want."

Gary: "You just said that you want me to help you do the dishes."

Brooke: "I want you to *want* to do the dishes."

Gary: "Why would I *want* to do dishes? Why?"

Brooke: "See, that's my whole point."

Gary: "Let me see if I'm following this, okay? Are you telling me that you're upset because I don't have a strong desire to clean dishes?"

Brooke: "No. I'm upset because you don't have a strong desire to *offer* to do the dishes."

Gary: "I just did!"

Brooke: "After I asked you!"

I think you get the idea. If you are in, or have been in, a relationship, chances are you've participated in a similar bout of "heated fellowship" at one time or another.

In the third week of The Upside Down series, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder examined the upside-down principle "the more you give, the better it gets." Giving and getting inherently involve needs. And over the course of this week's edition of *LivingItOut*, we have been unpacking a series of needs that contribute to turning our relationships right-side up. So far

this week, we've explored the importance of meeting the spiritual, emotional, and mental needs of our partners. Today, we tackle what may at first appear to be a decidedly "unsexy" topic—the practical needs of your spouse. But, as we've learned throughout this series, appearances can indeed be deceiving.

At the core of the above scene is the concept of placing the needs of your partner above your own. On the surface, Brooke wants Gary to share in her efforts to clean the dishes, while Gary just wants to relax after a long day and evening. But the crux of the argument is not whether Gary can be convinced to help with the dishes, but rather his willingness to consider Brooke's needs before his own. It's about Gary not considering the fact that Brooke herself had a long day - *and cooked the meal*. And, it's about caring enough to *want* to help with a simple task that will make her feel more at ease.

Of course, meeting the practical needs of your partner extends beyond stepping forward to share in chores. It involves orienting our thinking to recognize what matters to our partner and taking proactive steps to fulfill those needs. When we genuinely put our partner's needs above our own, we do this not out of a sense of obligation, or as a means of obtaining something in return, but just because we love them.

One of the most insightful quotes I've ever read about the topic of love comes from what many consider a business book. In his iconic book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey recalls a conversation with a man who was lamenting that the feeling of love was gone in his marriage. Covey replies to the man, "My friend, love is a verb. Love—the feeling—is a fruit of love, the verb. So, love her. Serve her. Sacrifice. Listen to her. Empathize. Appreciate. Affirm her. Are you willing to do that?"

Covey's bigger point is that reactive people make love a feeling; in doing so, they effectively empower their feelings to drive their actions. Conversely, proactive people make love a verb. They elevate love from something they feel to something they *do*.

As we learn in Philippians 2:4, it's essential that we expand our orientation beyond our own needs and wants: "Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

As this week's upside down principle suggests, giving to—and for—another enhances what both parties receive from their relationship. Much like our relationship with Jesus bears fruit in our lives, the caring and feeding of our spousal relationship strengthens the foundation for greater connection, love, and joy with our partner.

I genuinely enjoy doing things that demonstrate how much I love, respect, and appreciate my wife. Whether it's doing the dishes, making our bed, or simply leaving her a little love note before I leave every morning, I do these things because I know they matter to her, and she matters to me.

So, if you are looking for a practical way to serve your spouse's everyday needs, treat love as a verb. Show your partner how much you value them, and you really will find that the more you give, the better it will get.

Questions:

Do you have practical needs that are currently unmet by your spouse? Do they know that?

Would you be able to identify your spouse's practical needs?

Next Step:

Make a list of at least five practical needs of your spouse or significant other. From this list, choose three things you can do this week to fulfill the needs you have identified.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gift of the relationships in my life, all of which encircle my relationship with you. As I seek to be attentive to my partner, I ask that you provide me the awareness and wisdom to consider

the needs of my spouse above my own and to proactively serve those needs from a place of love. Amen.

This post was written by Todd Romain, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

A Celebration of Sexual Love

October 27, 2017

Over the last four days we have looked at meeting our spouse's spiritual, emotional, mental and practical needs. Today, we take a look at meeting our spouse's sensual needs.

When we are meeting our spouse's sensual needs, we are physically pleasing them. The word sensual is often used in a sexual context, but is not exclusively sexual in meaning. It's important to know what needs your spouse has physically beyond sex. We all have a tremendous need to be touched in non-sexual ways. Hugs from our spouses, holding hands, and giving back rubs can go along way in meeting our spouses sensual needs. When these touches are given with no expectations of sex in return, our spouse will feel loved and more fulfilled. There is so much power in touch, and it's important to not neglect it. Whether married or single, be aware of what your non-sexual physical needs are so that you can communicate them to your spouse or future spouse.

When are spouses non-sexual sensual needs are fulfilled, it will lead to a greater fulfillment of their sexual sensual needs. Let's take a look at the sexual context of meeting our spouse's sensual needs.

Did you know one of the greatest examples we have of spouses meeting each other's sensual needs is in the Bible? The example comes from the book of Song of Songs.

Song of Songs has been described as a celebration of sexual love. In it we see a bride and bridegroom seeking each other out. Their deep desire for each other is obvious as they praise each other's bodies in a song of love and longing. For a time, they are separated from each other; and as they wait, their anticipation for each other only heightens their desires. The lovers eventually present themselves to each other where they

experience an awakening of pleasure, meeting the needs of their physical senses.

Song of Songs 7:1-10:

¹ *How beautiful are your sandaled feet,
O queenly maiden.*

*Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of a skilled craftsman.*

² *Your navel is perfectly formed
like a goblet filled with mixed wine.*

*Between your thighs lies a mound of wheat
bordered with lilies.*

³ *Your breasts are like two fawns,
twin fawns of a gazelle.*

⁴ *Your neck is as beautiful as an ivory tower.
Your eyes are like the sparkling pools in Heshbon
by the gate of Bath-rabbim.*

*Your nose is as fine as the tower of Lebanon
overlooking Damascus.*

⁵ *Your head is as majestic as Mount Carmel,
and the sheen of your hair radiates royalty.
The king is held captive by its tresses.*

⁶ *Oh, how beautiful you are!
How pleasing, my love, how full of delights!*

⁷ *You are slender like a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its clusters of fruit.*

⁸ *I said, "I will climb the palm tree
and take hold of its fruit."*

*May your breasts be like grape clusters,
and the fragrance of your breath like apples.*

⁹ *May your kisses be as exciting as the best wine—
Yes, wine that goes down smoothly for my lover,
flowing gently over lips and teeth.*

¹⁰ *I am my lover's,
and he claims me as his own.*

The picture we see in Song of Songs is beautiful. It's a picture of the gift that God gave us. As Ben mentioned in this past weekend's message, sex is sacred. It is a sacred gift from God that we receive and we give. It is a very powerful, emotional, physical and spiritual force of bonding. God communicated sex's importance to us in 1 Corinthians 7 when Paul tells us that it should be a regular part of our marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5:

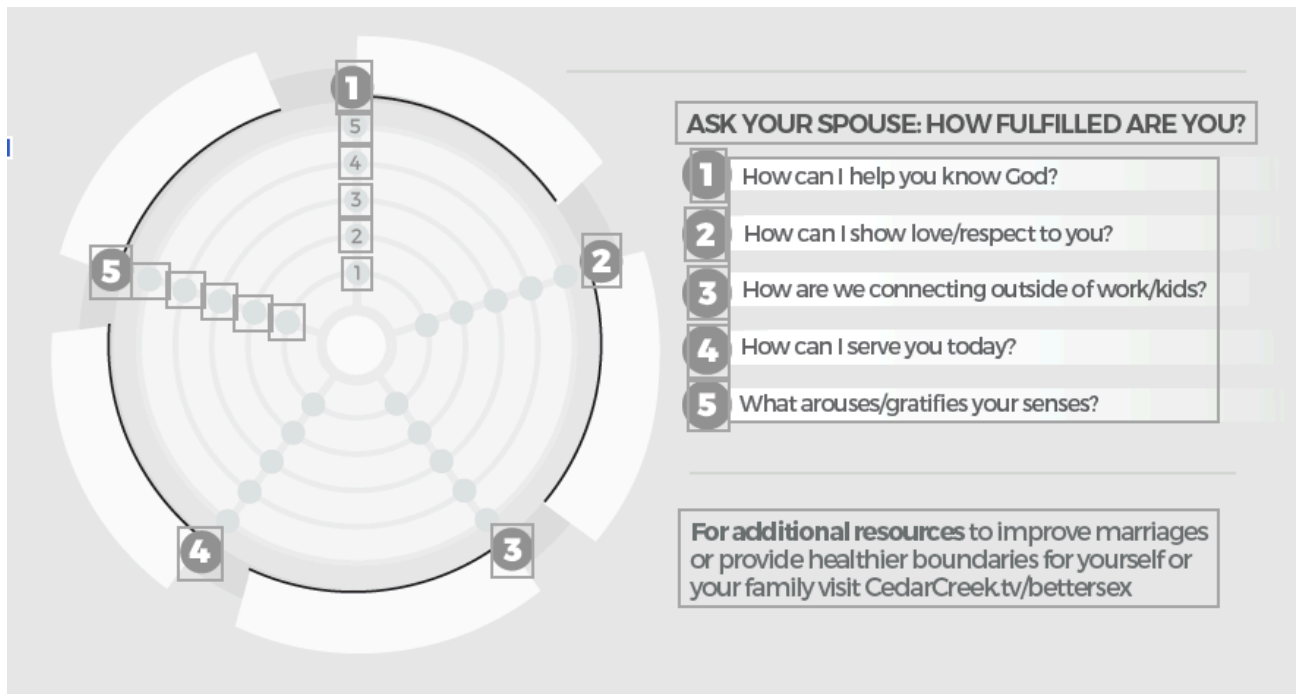
³The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. ⁴The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

I loved Ben's point this week that often in Christianity there is conversation about going too far sexually, but there really isn't enough conversation about going far enough.

When it comes to the idea of not going far enough, we are often led to the question of frequency. 1 Corinthians 7:3 tells us to "fulfill the needs of our spouse", and in verse 5 it says, "Do not deprive each other of sexual relations." In fact, the only reason given for not having sex is for prayer and fasting, and even that should be limited. God is calling us to have sex often. Going weeks and months without sexual intimacy is unbiblical.

Building healthy sexual intimacy in a marriage takes work, and often there are significant barriers that need to be overcome. So, how can we move to better sex life? When it comes to finding freedom from those barriers, look to your spouse as a teammate. One of the greatest things that we can do to have a satisfying sex life in our marriages is to communicate without fear of judgement. Having authentic and open conversation with our spouse about all of our needs is vital to fulfilling

those needs. Be upfront and remember that healthy people ask for what they want. Use this chart to begin the conversation.



If you're single, find someone that you can begin having conversation with about your spiritual, mental, emotional and practical needs. By beginning to have those dialogues now, you will be more equipped to have them with your future spouse.

There are a number of great books, websites, and videos available to us that will help us have a better sex life from a biblical perspective. We have compiled some of those resources at <https://cedarcreek.tv/bettersex/>.

Our hope for you is that your sex life improves as you begin to work on these five areas of need. If you're married, use this as a catalyst to begin the conversation with your spouse. Pray together and invite God into your conversations. If you are single there are resources for you at the same webpage. Our hope is that you grow in your understanding of God's design for sex. If you begin focusing on your spiritual, emotional,

mental and practical needs now, you will equipped you to have a better sex life in the future.

Questions:

How are you and your spouse doing in the application of 1 Corinthians 7:3-6?

What do you hope to see God do in your marriage through the upside down principle “The more you give the better it gets?”

Next Steps:

Have a conversation with your spouse about how you can learn to bring each other greater pleasure in your sexual relationship. If you're single, who can you begin talking with today?

Prayer:

God, thank you for the gift of sex that you have given us. Thank you for the book of Song of Songs and the example of intimacy that we receive from its beautiful story. Your gift of sex is a beautiful thing, yet there are many barriers that get in the way of its true design. Lord, help us break through those barriers. And help us to begin having meaningful, authentic dialogue with our spouse that will lead to meeting each other's needs. Amen.

This post was written by Ben Bockert, Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.