

Solomon on Sex - Sin in the Bedroom

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March 4, 2012

Good morning Faith family. We are in the ninth week of the *Solomon on Sex* series. Last week, we crossed the middle of the book. Solomon and his bride enjoyed their wedding night. While life leading up to their wedding was exciting, after the wedding, real life settles in. Marriage is not easy.

Sex inside of marriage is to be an all-you-can-eat buffet, but rent, a job, dishes, laundry, taxes and getting the kids to school can suck a marriage dry. Romance changes to reality. This is where we find our newlyweds. We don't know how long it is after the wedding but romance is being squeezed out of their relationship by real life.

Let's put our finger in the text.

What is the problem?

I slept, but my heart was awake. Song of Solomon 5:2 (ESV)

This is a familiar phrase. We saw it in chapter 3. The Shulamite is describing her dream. Since she is about to describe a dream, we must realize everything happening in a dream is not reality. We do things in dreams that we haven't done in reality. Sometimes I have a falling sensation in my dreams. Have you ever had that experience? In some of our dreams, we can fly. Those things didn't happen, they were just part of our dream.

On the other hand, our dreams are usually based in reality. Sometimes our dreams take us back to the house we grew up in. If we have a stressful time in work, we lay in bed running the day's events through our mind. Sometimes we

dream about our problems and how we will solve them. That is what happens to the Shulamite. This is her dream, but it is based on real difficulties she has in her marriage.

...A sound! My beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." Song of Solomon 5:2 (ESV)

In the dream, Solomon knocks on the Shulamite's bedroom door. In this culture, wealthy couples had separate bedrooms. The Shulamite is in her bedroom. Solomon wants to pay a conjugal visit. Unfortunately, she locked her bedroom door.

Another clue in the text gives us some background on the marriage problem. Solomon says his head is wet with dew. In Israel's late summer months, heavy dew descends on the ground around midnight. The dew, at that time of the year, is so thick it is almost like rain.¹ It is late. Solomon finally arrived home from work. It is after midnight when he walks in the door.

Most likely, this is not the first time he has come home late from the office. If we remember chapter 3, she talked about little marital foxes. Marrying a busy king was one of her fears. She was afraid she wouldn't have much time with him because he was often busy with kingly duties. Now that they are married, this is what's happening. She is dreaming about how to respond. She is tired of eating dinner by herself. She is tired of watching him walk out of their home after breakfast and not seeing him until midnight. She is tired of him approaching her in the middle of the night expecting her to be thrilled to see him and ready for

¹ David Jeremiah, *What the Bible Says About Love, Marriage and Sex*. pg. 173.

intimacy. As we learned, that is not the way a wife is programmed by God to operate.

In her dream, she decides how she will get even. If he can't be home at a decent hour, he shouldn't expect love and affection when he walks in the door. In her dream, he is knocking on her locked bedroom door. Let's see what she does.

We give lame excuses for denying our spouse intimacy.

I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? Song of Solomon 5:3 (ESV)

She tells him she is lying in bed naked, but she is too tired to put on her bathrobe, walk across the room and unlock the door. I think her words were designed as a form of husbandly torture. This may be part of her strategy to get even with him for coming home late. I think Solomon likes the idea of her in bed without the flannel pajamas. He hopes she *doesn't* put on a bathrobe.

This is similar to calling your wife at night when you are on a business trip. When you ask her what she is wearing, she answers by telling you what she is *not wearing*. That kind of answer leaves husbands biting their knuckles until they bleed. I think Solomon is biting his knuckles outside her door.

Not only does she not want to do the work of putting on a bathrobe but she doesn't want to do the work of washing her feet. In this culture, people washed their feet before they went to bed. It kept the sheets clean. Think about this. She is the queen living in a palace. She only needs to walk across the room. How dirty could her feet get? It is the palace. The floor is probably so clean you could eat off it.

In short, she gives him a list of lame excuses to reject him and deny him intimacy. If he has any sense about him, he knows it. This is her way of getting even with him for coming home late and not meeting her emotional needs. "I don't like it when you are gone, so you won't like it when you are home."

Put your hands up if you are married. Keep your hands up if you can relate to this couple.

Some of you ladies can completely understand her feelings on this one. He is not meeting her emotional needs. He is not giving her enough time. He is not talking with her to entice her, to listen to her and to love her like he did when they were courting. This is not what a marriage should look like. He deserves this kind of cold shoulder treatment. This will teach him not to take her for granted. Do any of you wives think she has a right to feel this way? Can any of you understand where she is coming from?

Most sin in the bedroom is rooted in selfishness.

Let me just call your bluff on this one. You are right. It doesn't look like she is adequately loved and cared for by her husband; but locking the bedroom door and giving him lame excuses of why she can't let him in is wrong. Her responses to him are sinful and selfish. Why was Solomon late at the office? We don't know. Do you think he is stressed? Yes! He wants to be in the arms of his wife --- the one place he feels safe from the pace of life, the one place of peace and rest. Is midnight the best time to approach her? No. He needs to work on this. She may rightfully feel Solomon has areas to improve on but what she does is sinful and selfish.

Selfishness is one of the toughest issues of sin a married couple has to battle with. Marriage is not about being served by your mate but about being a servant to your mate. In real life, things are messy. Your spouse will hurt you. Your spouse will disappoint you. Nobody who is married serves their spouse like they should. When your spouse disappoints you, it is sinful to respond in selfishness. It is selfishness to saying, "Since you hurt me out of the bedroom, I will hurt you in the bedroom."

That is called revenge theology. Satan is the author of that book. God's book says forgive as you were forgiven. Jesus says I am among you as one who serves. Greatness in God's eyes is found in servanthood, not selfishness. Serving means you do things that are not comfortable for you but they serve a need in your spouse. That includes the bedroom!

Let me show you ways sinful selfishness shows up in the bedroom.

Denying your spouse's request for intimacy - This is saying you have a headache, a backache, a stomachache. This is denying your spouse because they forgot to brush their teeth. It is telling your spouse that because they were already intimate with you earlier in the week they can't participate in intimacy later in the week. It is a list of lame excuses.

This is a news flash for some of you. If, as a married couple, the only time you enjoy intimacy is when both of you are in the mood, that means sex in your marriage is the way you serve yourself, not serve your spouse. That is a red flag. It shows there is selfishness in your sex life. Marriage is about serving your spouse before it is about serving yourself.

There is a great passage in the New Testament that speaks to this.

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 (ESV)

The reason the Shulamite denied Solomon was not because she was in a prayer meeting. It was selfishness. It was pride. She wasn't seeing herself as a servant.

Some of you tie sex to your spouse's behavior. If they want intimacy, they need to get the honey-do list done. You know what that is? It is a form of marital prostitution. It is making your spouse pay for intimacy. That is selfishness. It is sinfulness. It is not servanthood.

Let me be open about this. I have talked with many Christian couples who are living in sexless marriages. One spouse decided to shut down sexually on their mate. For some, it is a sick form of revenge. For others, it is a form of manipulation. This is a serious issue of sin. This is not just wives shutting down sexually on their husbands but husbands shutting down sexually on their wives. I have talked with both. At the root of this is sin. It is viewing sexual intimacy as a way to selfishly serve yourself rather than selflessly serve your spouse.

If that is you, get on your knees and repent. I know there are circumstances surrounding your frustration that leave you feeling justified in giving your spouse the cold sexual shoulder. Some of you were abused. I

understand all that. At the root of all those circumstances is sin. There is selfishness that needs to be repented of.

Not initiating intimacy - Some of you are in marriages where only one partner initiates intimacy. That is not healthy. I read some interesting statistics last week on the importance of both husbands and wives initiating intimacy for long-term marital health. When only one partner initiates intimacy, it is not just a sign of sexual selfishness, it is a recipe for sexual boredom. If intimacy has become routine, you need to ask yourself what you need to do to freshen things up in your marriage. When intimacy becomes routine, many times it is because one spouse is the sole initiator. It stems from thinking intimacy is a way you are served, not a way you serve your spouse.

As little effort as possible - This is intimacy with as little passion as possible. It is hoping to get intimacy over with as soon as possible so you can either go to sleep or get back to your favorite book. It is saying you are too tired to put energy into serving your spouse but you have energy to read a book and serve yourself. I understand that sometimes we are tired. Many times I am exhausted. No matter how tired we are, how much effort we put into serving our spouse is always a choice. If the smoke detector went off in your bedroom, you would find the energy. Putting as little effort as possible into intimacy is rooted in sinful selfishness.

It is sin to sexually manipulate your spouse.

My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. Song of Solomon 5:4 (ESV)

We know he was already knocking on the door. She is giving lame excuses for not opening the door. She is denying him sex as a way to hurt him. Now, he is frustrated. No more knocking, he is trying to force open the latch. In her selfish revenge theology, she has him just where she wants him. He is feeling the pain. He may be the king during the day, but tonight, she is in control. She will teach him not to come home late. She is manipulating him.

Interestingly, deep inside, she wants him to come through the door. She wants to be with him. She doesn't open the door. Getting out of bed and unlocking the door would require her to swallow her pride. She stays in bed listening to him struggle with a smirk on her face. Her heart is split. She knows the right thing to do, but her sinful selfish nature is getting joy over teaching a lesson.

She knows the right thing to do, but she doesn't want to humble herself, and let him in. This is a huge issue in marriage counseling. In marital conflict, most couples know the right thing to do. They know they need to forgive their spouse like Christ forgave them. The problem is they won't swallow their pride and do it. Is that you today? You know the right thing to do to fix your marriage but you are too proud to do it. Your unwillingness to humble yourself is a matter of sin.

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
James 4:17 (ESV)

My selfishness doesn't help me; it hurts my marriage.

I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. Song of Solomon 5:5 (ESV)

Time has passed. Solomon has knocked on the door and tried forcing his way in. Deep inside, the Shulamite wants him to come through the door. She takes her time repenting of selfishness. Knowing the right thing to do and not doing it is sin. Finally she gets up from bed. She pretties her face in the mirror. She put on fresh perfume and opens the door expecting to see Solomon groveling on his knees. Things have changed. He is gone.

Ladies, if this is you, understand the risk you run in selfishness. Most husbands will not fight with their wife. Husbands learn that when they fight with their wives and lose, they lose. When they fight with their wife and win, they still lose. Most men just emotionally shut down. They will withdraw. They go into emotional hibernation. Ladies, this is exactly what you do not want. You want your husband to be open with you. You want him to talk with you. You want him to connect with you. You want him to love and support you. When he feels rejected, he will not fight with you. He will withdraw from you. That leaves you feeling distant, which starts the whole cycle over again that made this woman frustrated in the first place. Manipulating her husband only made things worse.

Not only do you run the risk of him clamming up but you run the risk of him walking away. That doesn't mean he will go and have an affair. It certainly doesn't justify one, but when it is painful to be in the home, guys don't want to spend time at the home.

In Solomon's case, he just found it too painful to come home and have his wife lock the door and refuse to open it. He felt so rejected that he needed to get out of the house and go for a walk. It was too much pain.

Repent of selfishness; be a servant like Jesus.

I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love. Song of Solomon 5:6–8 (ESV)

What I love about this woman is that in this dream she realizes she went too far. She realized her selfishness was not just hurting him, it was hurting them. She had a choice. It was either repent of her selfishness, swallow her pride and humbly hunt him down or hold onto her selfishness and hope he comes home.

I love how she repents of the sin of selfishness. She swallows her pride and seeks him. There is a break between them. Somebody has to bridge the gulf. It will be her. In her dream, she goes about the city looking for him late in the night. In her dream, she encounters the watchmen, the nighttime rental cops. In her dream, they beat her and take her veil. But this will not slow her down. She is not going to let anyone keep her from her husband. She will find him. She even swallows her pride enough to ask her friends to help find him. When there is a break in your marriage, do you sit and wait for your spouse to come back or will you swallow your pride, hunt them down, bridge the gap and bring them home?

Greatness is found in being a servant.

When Jesus walked on earth, the culture around him defined greatness as how many people served you. Jesus flipped the culture on its head. In God's book, greatness is found in how you serve others.

But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. Luke 22:26–27 (ESV)

Greatness in God's eyes is found in serving. In marriage, this means the mother that selflessly works hard to make dinner for her family, to wash the laundry, to cleaning the dishes, is great in God's eyes. She is serving her family. This means the father that sits down with his kids to help them with their homework is great in God's eyes. He is serving them. This means all the hard work you do for others in your family defines your greatness in God's eyes. In the bedroom, how you serve your spouse, especially when it is not easy or convenient, defines your greatness in God's eyes.

Application

For singles - Remember that singleness trains you in selfishness.

This morning, some of you are single. You are wondering how this message relates to you. When you are single, you live in a self-centered world. You eat when you want to eat. You go to bed when you want to go to bed. You dress the way you want to dress. You buy what you want to buy. You spend your single life improving your selfishness because you live only for yourself. Then you get married and marriage is hard. You wonder why. It is because you spent your life improving your selfishness. Now that you are married, you have to root out selfishness and train yourself in servanthood.

Singles, train yourself in servanthood before marriage so that when you marry you will serve well. Singles, who are you serving? How are you serving

others? How are you serving your church? If you want to have a great marriage, train in servanthood, not in selfishness.

For the married - Take the Servanthood Quiz.

For the married, I am giving you a piece of homework as we close. I want you to take the Servanthood Quiz. Ask your spouse to rate you on a scale of 1 to 10 --- 1 being terrible, 10 being incredible.

1. How am I as a servant outside the bedroom?
2. What can I do to improve that score?
3. How am I as a servant inside the bedroom?
4. What can I do to improve that score?

Questions and Answers



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