



Cruciform Press

FRIENDS AND LOVERS

CULTIVATING COMPANIONSHIP AND INTIMACY
IN MARRIAGE

Joel R. Beeke

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in Marriage*

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To Mary, the WMWW,
my best friend, whose price is far above rubies;
in her tongue is the law of kindness (Proverbs 31).

– Joel R. Beeke

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“A book about love, marriage, and sex from Joel Beeke that is surprisingly candid yet without a trace of smuttiness. Putting Puritans in a new light perhaps, Beeke manages, at the same time, to be theologically thorough and pointedly practical. Fresh and refreshingly straightforward, **this is the best book of its kind.**”

Derek W H Thomas, Minister of Preaching and Teaching, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia SC; Distinguished Visiting Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary; Editorial Director, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals

“Marriage is hard work. And wonderful. And sometimes, it’s both at the same time. *Friends and Lovers* is **like a personal mentoring session on marriage** with a man whose heart is devoted to seeing Christ honored in how we love each other as husbands and wives. It’s full of practical wisdom and grace. A delight.”

Bob Lepine, Co-Host, *FamilyLife Today*

“By laying the theological, emotional, social, and spiritual foundations of marriage before heading to the bedroom, Joel Beeke provides a healthy corrective to the excessive and obsessive sex-focus of our generation and even of some pastors. Thankfully, he also goes on to provide **wise, practical, down-to-earth direction** for couples wanting to discover or recover physical intimacy that will both satisfy themselves and honor God.”

Dr. David Murray, Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

“After years of marriage some of us still have to pray, ‘Father, forgive me for my sins against those who love me the most.’ We never stop needing counsel to better nourish and cherish those who are flesh of our flesh, our co-inheritors of the grace of life. **There is no better book than this** to renew the affection of happy marriage.”

Geoffrey Thomas, Pastor, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales

“Central to the historical account of the creation of the human race is the marriage of Adam and Eve, their marriage being utterly vital to God’s purposes for humanity. The pure delight our ancient parents had in each other, touching every aspect of their lives together, was sadly lost at the fall. What this book powerfully shows through the teaching of the Scriptures, though, is that this delight is recoverable to a great degree in Christ. Christian marriages should know a depth of intimacy, in all the best senses of that word, which other marriages do not have. It is a matter of sadness that some do not. Here, the biblical wisdom about marriage in these pages can help enormously. A mini-addendum: I appreciated enormously the way in which the divine gift of human sexuality is handled, with **biblical honesty but without any pandering to our culture’s prurient ways.**”

Michael A.G. Haykin, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Recently, a number of well known teachers have published books on marriage, some of which have caused quite a stir among Christians. Although these books offer some helpful insights, some are marred by an imbalance and even unbiblical teaching. Dr. Beeke’s book, *Friends and Lovers: Cultivating Companionship and Intimacy in Marriage*, introduces biblical sanity into the discussion. With characteristic piety, scriptural knowledge, and practical guidelines, Dr. Beeke sets before us these two essential ingredients (friendship and intimacy) for a durable and happy marriage. This book **will strengthen the marriage of everyone who reads it.** I know it has mine.”

Joseph A. Pipa Jr., President, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Table of Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	6
	Rekindle the Fire	
Part One: Friends–Companionship in Marriage		
	Introduction	11
1	<i>Remember</i>	14
	The Foundation of Friendship in Marriage	
2	<i>Nourish</i>	19
	The Cultivation of Friendship in Marriage	
	Sharing Yourself	
	Sharing Your Faith	
	Sharing Your Trust	
	Sharing Your Joy	
3	<i>Resist</i>	33
	The Temptations of Friendship in Marriage	
	Avoiding Correction	
	Imbalance in Other Relationships	
	Personal Crises	
Part Two: Lovers–Sexual Intimacy in Marriage		
	Introduction	45
4	<i>Cherish</i>	50
	Sex Is the Act of Cherishing Each Other as God’s Image-Bearers	
5	<i>Multiply</i>	56
	Godly Lovers Delight in Multiplication	
6	<i>Obey</i>	59
	Sex in Marriage Is Obedience to God’s Commandments	

7	<i>Liberate</i>	64
	Sexual Freedom Comes Through Forgiveness of Sins	
8	<i>Rely</i>	67
	Faith in Christ Empowers Sexual Love	
9	<i>Give</i>	70
	Sex Is More Loving with Self-Denial	
10	<i>Restore</i>	74
	Our Father in Heaven Can Heal Fear and Shame	
11	<i>Repent</i>	77
	Sexual Idolatry Requires Repentance	
12	<i>Appreciate</i>	82
	Gratitude and Contentment Sweeten Sex	
	<i>Conclusion</i>	87
	<i>Appendix</i>	89
	Questions to Ponder	
	Endnotes	94
	More books from Cruciform Press.....	97

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Preface

REKINDLE THE FIRE

What once was a blazing fire has cooled into a smoldering heap of ashen coals. But if you blow gently upon the coals, you can rekindle that fire. Shave thin slices of wood off a dry log, gently pile them on the coals, and blow on them. Soon, flickers of flame will reward your efforts. Now carefully place small sticks of pine over the burning shavings. After they catch, add larger pieces of wood one at a time, pausing periodically to blow more air on the fire. Then smile as the flames mount higher. The fireplace will soon blaze and crackle.

Marriages can be like that fire. What once blazed hot now smolders faintly. The fire has not gone out, however, and the coals may retain their heat for some time. But the marriage is no longer warmed by the blazing fire that was there at first.

I am writing to tell you that God can rekindle the fire in your marriage.

Some people would say that the fire of marriage is the pleasurable intimacy of sex. Others would say that the fire is the companionship of dearest friends. In reality, both are true. Hand in hand, face to face, body to body, and heart to heart—marriage aims at *intimate companionship*. God gave us a picture of this grand aim when he made the first woman out of the man's side. When Adam saw her

he exclaimed, “Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” The two became “one flesh” (Genesis 2:23, 24). It was a perfect match.

God intends for a husband and wife to walk together, talk together, work together, and sleep together. Matthew Henry famously said the woman was “not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near to his heart to be beloved.” He then added, “See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife; such as there is to our own bodies (Ephesians 5:28).”¹

Sadly, sin and death entered the world, and with it came shame, blame, and power games within marriage (Genesis 3:7, 12, 16). The relationship that was once the fairest blossom of paradise is now a rose with thorns. The sins in our marriages pierce our hearts. But thorns and all, marriage still remains a fragrant flower worthy of desire. We were not made to be alone. So how can we keep the hearth fire of marriage burning?

By nature we are ignorant of what true love and marriage should be, but Christ our prophet offers us guidance in the Bible. We are guilty of dishonoring marriage through our disobedience towards the God who designed it, but Christ our priest shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins and now intercedes for us. We are rebels without the strength to overcome the evil that distorts and disrupts our human relationships, but Christ our king conquers sin and rules us by his mighty Spirit, making all things new—including our marriages. God

our creator is also our redeemer. The divine lawgiver who cursed us for our disobedience has sent forth his Son to redeem us from the curse of his law (Galatians 3:10–14, 4:4–5). God sent his Son to save sinners. He is the mediator who brings his people back to God and leads them once more in the paths of righteousness.

God's ultimate goal in saving us is far greater than just saving our marriages. One day Christ will raise up all believers and summon us to a wedding feast, the likes of which we have never seen. What a day it will be when we are face to face with him! On the way to glory, however, God transforms us in every area of life. Our submission to the heavenly Bridegroom requires doing his will today as husbands and wives.

This book aims to help you rekindle the flames of love in your marriage by the grace of God. If your marriage is still burning cheerfully, I hope it will help your love burn even brighter and hotter.

This little book is not a comprehensive marriage manual, nor is it a complete exploration of the theological significance of marriage. Instead it focuses on two key ingredients in a vital marriage: *friendship* and *sexual intimacy*. Drawing from the wisdom of the Bible, especially the book of Proverbs, I hope to help you grow closer to your spouse both emotionally and physically.

I dedicate this book to my dear wife Mary, the WMWW (world's most wonderful woman), who has given me untold joy in nearly a quarter of a century of marriage. I love her far more than words can ever express and thank God every day for her. Thanks, too, to our

children, Calvin, Esther, and Lydia, who have been a joy to raise and haven't given any gray hairs to their parents.

May the Spirit of God blow upon your marriage through the Word of Christ so that smoldering coals of love may burst once more into flame, and may the fire of love be refueled to produce marriages that blaze with love to the glory of God!

* * *

This book grew out of two addresses I gave at a conference sponsored by the National Council of Family Integrated Churches in Asheville, North Carolina, on October 28, 2011. I am grateful to Scott Brown and the leaders of NCFIC for the invitation to speak and for their warm, gracious hospitality. It was a blessing to be among them. I also thank Rev. Paul Smalley, Rev. Ray Lanning, Phyllis Ten Elshof, and Kevin Meath for their work in assisting me with this book.

Part One: Friends

COMPANIONSHIP IN MARRIAGE

There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

– Proverbs 18:24

This is my beloved, and this is my friend.

– Song of Solomon 5:16

Introduction

Next to new life in Christ, close friendship in marriage is life's greatest gift. I am privileged to be engaged in a number of ministries, but friendship with my wife is worth more to me than any of them. Her friendship is priceless to me.

There's something deep and mysterious about this bond of Christian friendship because it reflects the very nature of God. We might define it as *the personal bond of shared life*. By this I mean something that joins two people together for a time. Friendship does not have to last for a lifetime to be true friendship, but the bond of true friendship typically takes months to build and lasts for years. It is not an accidental connection; it is a mutual bond of faithfulness. The highest form of such a bond here on earth is the lifetime covenant of marriage between a man and woman.

Friendship is not just any bond or relationship, but a bond of *shared life*. Deuteronomy 13:6 makes a passing reference to "thy friend, which is as thine own soul." This implies that losing such a friend would be like death. Your lives are so bound together that whatever touches your friend touches you.

Friendship is like the force that holds together the nucleus of an atom. It is an intimate bond that holds us together when other forces would push us apart. The stronger the friendship is, the closer its intimacy. R. C. Sproul writes, “In modern usage the term *intimacy* suggests merely a sexual relationship. But the word goes deeper than that. In its broad meaning, intimacy moves beyond the external and the superficial and penetrates the innermost dimensions of our life.”²

As a bond of shared life, friendship brings our hearts and minds together in harmony. You might work closely with someone who has a very different mindset than you, but you are not likely to be friends. Friendship requires kindred spirits—that is, hearts and minds on the same wavelength. After a time, you may not even need to speak for a friend to know what you are thinking. You are like two strings on a well-tuned guitar: when one is plucked, the other string vibrates in harmony.

In choosing a marriage partner, we should seek such harmony. We want commitment, companionship, and closeness. We want to be best friends.

True friendship is as precious as it is rare. Indeed, the concept of friendship has become quite shallow today. For many people, “friends” are mere acquaintances or people you have “friended” on Facebook. Frankly, many people are so busy making money and entertaining themselves that they have little time for real friendships. The relational networks of our culture are breaking down even as our opportunities to communicate multiply through electronic media. In cyberspace we are awash

with superficial connections and conversations, yet, in reality, many people are very lonely.

When it comes to human relationships, nothing is more tragic than loneliness in marriage. It is certainly possible to live in the same house, have joint bank accounts, and sleep in the same bed without being true friends. On the other hand, long ago Puritan Thomas Gataker (1574–1654) said, “There is no society [relationship]³ more near, more entire, more needful, more kindly, more delightful, more comfortable, more constant, more continual, than the society of man and wife.”⁴ By the grace of God, such friendship between husbands and wives is possible and practical and should be our priority.

Few books on marriage include even one chapter on friendship. But with God’s help, we will first consider the foundation of friendship in marriage; second, how to cultivate friendship in marriage; and third, the temptations of friendship in marriage.

1: REMEMBER

The Foundation of Friendship in Marriage

Marriage was instituted by God at the dawn of human history. Both the sweet possibilities and bitter tragedies of marriage are rooted in the Bible's description of God's dealings with our first father and mother in Genesis 1–3. In Genesis 1:26, the Lord said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The divine image in man is the reflection of the divine “us”—that is, the three persons of the Godhead, one in substance and equal in power and glory, living together in unity and eternal love. The three persons constantly commune with one another and cooperate as one God in all they do (John 5:19–20). At the same time, as they work together, they subordinate themselves one to another in love. The Son delights to do the Father's will, and the Spirit delights to glorify the Son. This is beyond our comprehension, but by faith we believe that authentic friendship in Christ is rooted in the relationship of the three Persons of the Trinity with each other.

The triune God has chosen to display his glory in our common humanity, our gender differences, and our relationships with each other. “So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). There is but one humanity, shared by both men and women as creatures made in the image of God; yet there are two sexes, male and female, each distinct from the other, and both essential to human reproduction. Genesis 2 reminds us that without woman, man would be alone and bereft of companionship: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (verse 18). A search of the animal world revealed that there was as yet no creature fit to stand alongside the man as his companion in life and work. So God created woman—and man met his match!

As different as male and female are, they are united in marriage on the basis of their common humanity. “Marriage is honorable in all” (Hebrews 13:4), but it is not marriage per se: there is an added dimension to Christian marriage, for Christians are to marry only in the Lord. The partnership of two becoming one actually includes the Lord as a third party. Any definition of such marital friendship must then include the words *in Christ*; true marital friendship is *the personal bond of shared life in Christ*. Moreover, where husband and wife love and serve the same Lord, we see an earthly tri-unity that reflects the Trinity in heaven. The bond I feel with my wife, by which we two are one in the Lord, has helped me to know God better. It has helped me understand just a bit more how God can be three persons in one essence.

The purpose of marriage is more than emotional satisfaction or the fulfillment of physical desires. Married persons living together in love as heirs of the grace of life

glorify God who is a community of three divine persons who share love, communication, cooperation, and their very essence. Alan Dunn says, “Marital intimacy is something more wonderful than mere biological mechanisms or animal urges. . . . Our inclination to intimacy is essential to our being: we are creatures made in the image of God.”⁵

God’s intent for marriage is clarified in the way he created woman. In Genesis 2:18, we read, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” He then showed the man that no mere animal would fit that description. Man’s well-being depended on having a companion who could come to his aid in time of need and unite with him in doing God’s will in the world. He needed someone “meet,” or suitable, to who and what he was. This was a true friend.

So the Lord formed woman out of man’s side. Genesis 2:23–25 says,

And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

This is a remarkable description of God’s design for marriage, which includes oneness, separation into a special and unique relationship, mutual commitment to one another, and total openness.

Sadly, our first parents fell into sin, and their corruption had dire effects on their marriage. We see this in Genesis 3. Paradise ended even before the man and woman left the Garden of Eden; the loss of original righteousness severed their relationship with God and damaged their marriage bond. Their openness gave way to shame and guilt, so they covered their nakedness with aprons of fig leaves. As for mutual commitment, when God confronted them, the man tried to shift blame to the woman, knowing full well that the penalty of sin was death. God told the woman that the result of her sin was that her desire would be to conquer her husband, but that he would continue to rule over her, resulting in conflict, anger, and bitter estrangement. If you wonder why friendship in marriage can be difficult, the short answer is “original sin.”

But God also showed grace to the couple. In Genesis 3:15, God declared that he would turn the hearts of the woman and her offspring against the devil. One day a descendant of the woman would crush the serpent’s head and by his redemptive suffering bring deliverance to fallen mankind. They believed God’s promise, so the man gave his wife a new name. He did not call her “mother of the dead,” though death was now due to the race because of sin. Instead, he essentially repented of having blamed her for his own sin by calling her “Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). He blessed her with a name of hope. He used his authority over woman to bless her, not to curse! By calling her “mother,” he also recommitted himself to her as his wife and the mother of their

children. Thus, by the grace of God revealed in the gospel, their relationship as husband and wife was renewed.

We learn from the first three chapters of the Bible that friendship in marriage has a theological foundation. Married persons are to be friends in the best and deepest sense of the term. Such friendship glorifies the triune God by realizing the full, God-given potential of the marriage bond. Marriage is rooted in the basic facts of our creation; we were made to have communion with each other, and the closest possible communion is that between husband and wife. The beauty of this communion was marred by the Fall and obscured by the curse of sin, but friendship in marriage can be restored and renewed by faith in the promise of a Savior.

Part Two: Lovers

SEXUAL INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.... Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

— Proverbs 5:1–2, 15–19

Introduction

The gospel of Christ energizes us to enjoy sex as a sacred passion. The gospel I refer to is the good news that God's Son died for sinners, taking the punishment that his people deserved, and then rose from the dead, offering eternal life to all who repent of sin and trust in him alone. The gospel offers all people, whether single or married, present joy and future blessing beyond our deepest imagination. But for married people, the gospel also motivates us to make sacred love.

This may surprise you. The root of much sexual dysfunction is a lingering doubt whether marital sex is pure and acceptable in God's sight. In some ways this dysfunction is much like what someone might say about a piece of double chocolate cake: "It tastes so good, it must be sinful." Do you sense how perverse the statement is—that good things are sinful?

Paul warns against this mindset:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies

in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:1–5)

If we believe that it is wrong to enjoy God's creations such as food or marital sex, then we believe a lie of the devil. All things are to be received with thanksgiving as the good gifts of a loving Father in heaven. However much the gifts of God may have been abused, perverted, and corrupted in the world, for the Christian they are cleansed and made holy again by truth of the Word and the power of believing prayer. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17 that the opposite of materialism is not asceticism but putting our hope "in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

Sexual love in marriage is like fire in a fireplace. If the fire breaks through the boundaries of the fireplace and ignites other parts of the house, it can destroy your property, kill your family, and end your life. Likewise, sex outside of its God-ordained boundaries destroys and kills. What the world considers sexual freedom is really death. "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Proverbs 6:32). But we would not want to harbor such a fear of fire that we could never again enjoy

the dancing flames in a fireplace. A blazing hearth is warm and beautiful. Likewise, sex within marriage is a warm and beautiful way to be close to the one you love.

Christianity does not forbid or frown upon sex. Nor was sex rediscovered by archaeologists in the 1960s after centuries of being locked in a church basement. Vibrant sexuality is part of our Reformed heritage. It is true that in the Ancient Church and in the Middle Ages, the church generally frowned upon sex, glorifying celibacy even in marriage. Indeed, marriage was usually viewed as a mere concession to human weakness.¹³ The church forbade sex on holy days and sacred seasons, which, based on the crowded medieval church calendar, made sex with one's spouse a sin for more than three-quarters of the year.¹⁴ Ironically, this led to glorifying sex and romance in the context of adultery. You could either be holy with the Virgin Mary or have fun with wicked Jezebel. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century brought people back to a biblical view of sex as God's creation within marriage.

The Puritans also taught the importance of a good sex life within marriage.¹⁵ More than that, they celebrated romantic love. Leland Ryken writes,

Throughout the Middle Ages, love poetry and love stories had celebrated adulterous romantic love. By the time we reach the end of the sixteenth century, the ideal of *wedded* romantic love had replaced the adulterous courtly love ideal of the Middle Ages as the customary subject for literature. C. S. Lewis

has shown that “the conversion of courtly love into romantic monogamous love was... largely the work of English, and even of Puritan, poets.” Someone else claims that the Puritans “did what courtly lovers had never dared to do; by combining the romantic love relation and the marriage relation, they created the new social institution of romantic marriage.”¹⁶

Indeed, the Reformed and Puritan tradition has a healthy, God-glorifying, marriage-honoring perspective on sexual intimacy in marriage. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) wrote of being “always ravished with the love of a faithful virtuous wife.”¹⁷ In biblical thinking, passion and purity go together. Sex becomes the beautiful and noble crown upon a godly marriage.

But how does the river of human sexuality, poisoned by our Fall, polluted and disgusting, become a clear stream of refreshing water through the gospel of Christ? The gospel is not just the gateway into the Christian life or a ticket to heaven; it must be central to the entire Christian life. As Paul says in Titus 2:11–12, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Therefore, the gospel is central to Christian marriage; it trains us to forsake sin and to live rightly towards our spouse. Paul’s teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5 is full of the gospel.

According to the Bible, sex is an important part of marriage. God designed it so when he created man and

woman. Sex is part of the created order, sustained by his common grace. Since the created order is fallen, however, sin has deeply wounded us at the point of our sexuality, as part of the totality of our depravity. But praise God for the gospel, for by it, grace heals fallen nature. The gospel teaches us to receive the gift of sex in marriage as God's gift to us, to be used for our good and for his glory. All humanity, not just Christians, can enjoy the emotional and physical benefits of sex within marriage. For helpful advice from a Christian perspective, I recommend Ed and Gaye Wheat's book *Intended for Pleasure*.¹⁸

Let's consider nine ways (sections 4 through 12) in which making love to our spouses can glorify God and bring the promise of great blessing for Christians.

4: CHERISH

Sex Is the Act of Cherishing Each Other as God's Image-Bearers

Sex starts in the kitchen, as the saying goes. That means that what happens in your bedroom is in many ways determined by how you relate to each other throughout the day. Sex does not *make* a good marriage; it is the *fruit* of a good marriage. Husband, the way you treat your wife at the breakfast table may well affect your wife's response to you at night in the bedroom, even if you can't remember what you said about the pancakes.

Humans cannot treat sex as a mere physical act in isolation from the rest of life, as though it is a mere animal instinct. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Our gender and sexuality are dimensions of an entire person created in God's image. So sex is not just about genitals and hormones. Human sexuality is the coming together of two people—male and female—who were made to serve God and love one another. The best sex springs from a relationship in which we honor each other throughout life.

This implies that sex should never degrade or demean

a spouse. While the Bible does not go into detail about what kinds of sexual activity are permissible, it does make clear that we should not engage in sex in a way that treats someone like a slave, an animal, or an object. Sex should always communicate honor to a person in a way that is appropriate to God's image-bearer. The Heidelberg Catechism (Question 108) puts its finger on essential values of the Christian life—purity and holiness—when it says that the seventh commandment teaches us to detest all uncleanness, and “live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life.”

Scripture furthermore implies that sex thrives in an environment of personal communication. Men and women were made in the image of God as a result of communication among the three persons of the Godhead, all of whom agreed to the proposal, “Let us make man in our image.” So too husbands and wives must talk with one another in a spirit of agreement for their physical relationship to flourish. Gary Chapman writes, “Sexual intimacy is the result of a relationship, and relationship is fostered by communication. . . . If we do not have time to talk, then we don't have time for sex.”¹⁹

The Bible often refers to sex using the biblical idiom “to know” your spouse. For example, Genesis 4:1 says, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.” While this word for sex does not always imply a relationship,²⁰ it does imply that sexual intimacy grows in the context of mutual knowledge and commitment.²¹ If you believe that your spouse is God's image-bearer, then you will want to know her, cherish her, and care for her,

much as you long to know God and express your love for him. Sex is part of knowing your spouse.

Peter says in 1 Peter 3:7, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” We must treat our wives with honor and respect as fellow human beings and, if they are believers, as fellow children of God. At the same time, we are called to remember how different our wives are from us and not put them down for their weaknesses; rather, their differences are just another reason to honor them.

Forgive me for stating the obvious, but women are quite different from men. Men generally have a higher metabolism, less body fat, more muscle, and stronger bones than women. Their hearts and lung capacity in proportion to their weight is larger than that of women. Women, on the other hand, have stronger immune systems than men. At the same time, their bodies are generally more sensitive and responsive to touch, taste, smells, and sounds.

The difference between men and women is also social. A study of 250 cultures showed that males are almost always the rule makers, hunters, builders, weapon makers, and forgers of metal, wood, and stone. Women are consistently most involved in raising children, caring for the home, and preparing food and clothing. They are also more skilled at reading people’s emotions and relationships.²²

The differences between men and women show up most powerfully in marriage. A husband and wife

approach their relationship differently, with different desires and goals. Psychologist Willard Harley has described these differences well, although his book *His Needs, Her Needs* gives the false impression that if you do not meet your spouse's needs, your marriage is doomed to end in adultery and/or divorce.²³ In reality, godly people have faithfully endured bad marriages while finding deep joy and comfort in Jesus Christ. But if we aim to love each other, we cannot ignore the desires and longings of our spouse.

We must never forget that our deepest desires and needs are for God and can only be met by God. Nonetheless, the more we seek to satisfy a spouse's desires, the deeper our sexual intimacy will grow and honor God. Harley's book offers some suggestions that can help us think about how to love our spouses. These are generalizations, so apply them as you learn how to best serve your spouse.

Husbands, honor your wives. A wife's primary desires from her husband usually include leadership, affection, conversation, appreciation, trustworthiness, financial support, and fatherly commitment to the children. So husband, don't expect your wife to respond to your sexual advances if you give her little time beforehand for personal conversation, especially telling her how much you love her and appreciate her work around the house. She might say to you, "Honey, I love your hugs, and I love your kisses, but what I need right now is help with the dishes." C. J. Mahaney advises, "Touch the heart and mind of your wife before you touch her body."²⁴

If you touch her heart often through kind words and trustworthy deeds, you most likely will be delighted to discover what happens when you do touch her body.

Husbands and wives, be sensitive to each other's desires. Men also need to understand that the sexual experience of a woman is somewhat different from that of a man. Both men and women want sex. However, as Chapman points out, men tend to have more of a physical drive towards sexual intimacy whereas women tend to have more of an emotional drive towards sexual intimacy. A man is visually aroused by the sight of his wife, whereas a woman is aroused by such things as tenderness, thoughtfulness, talking, touching, and time spent together. Men often want to move quickly towards a sexual climax, while women move more slowly.²⁵ These are generalizations, of course, for a husband's needs for emotional intimacy can be every bit as great or even greater than his wife's and a wife's physical desires for sex can be every bit as great or even greater than her husband's, but the point is that you should learn how your spouse operates and work together for mutual satisfaction.

Wives, respect your husbands. A husband has a strong desire for a wife who gives him companionship, sexual fulfillment, submissiveness, attractiveness both in body and soul, admiration, domestic support, and motherly commitment to their children. So wives, you might be surprised how much more attractive you would appear to your man if you frequently praised him for his accomplishments at work. You might say, "What does that have to do with sex?" It has everything to do with sex,

because sex is not just a physical act but one dimension of a relationship between two people created in God's image.

Perhaps it would be good after this section to sit down as a couple and ask each other, "What do you most deeply desire from me and our marriage? How can I do a better job of serving you that way?" Sex is a relationship between two people in God's image.



[Intentional Parenting](#)

Family Discipleship by Design

by Tad Thompson

The Big Picture and a Simple Plan – That's What You Need to Do Family Discipleship Well

This book will allow you to take all the sermons, teachings, and exhortations you have received on the topic of family discipleship, make sense of it, and put it to use.

“As parents, we know God has given us the responsibility to train our children in his ways. But many parents don’t know where or how to start. Tad has done us all a favor by identifying seven key categories of biblical teaching we can utilize in teaching our children godly truth and principles. This easy-to-follow plan will help any parent put the truth of God’s Word into their children’s hearts.”

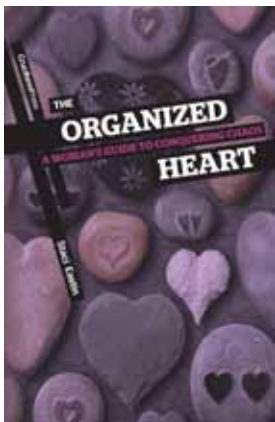
***Kevin Ezell, President, North American Mission Board,
Southern Baptist Convention; father of six***

“Here is a practical page-turner that encourages fathers to engage the hearts of their families with truth and grace. In an age when truth is either ignored or despised, it is refreshing to see a book written for ordinary fathers who want their families to be sanctified by the truth. Thompson writes with a grace which reminds us that parenting flows from the sweet mercies of Christ.”

***Joel Beeke, President, Puritan Reformed Theological
Seminary***

“Need an introductory text to the topic of discipling children? Here is a clear, simple book on family discipleship, centered on the gospel rather than human successes or external behaviors.”

***James M. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Biblical
Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary***



[The Organized Heart](#)

A Woman's Guide to Conquering Chaos

by Staci Eastin

Disorganized?

You don't need more rules, the latest technique, or a new gadget.

This book will show you a different, better way. A way grounded in the grace of God.

“Staci Eastin packs a gracious punch, full of insights about our disorganized hearts and lives, immediately followed by the balm of gospel-shaped hopes. This book is ideal for accountability partners and small groups.”

Carolyn McCulley, blogger, filmmaker, author of Radical Womanhood and Did I Kiss Marriage Goodbye?

“Unless we understand the spiritual dimension of productivity, our techniques will ultimately backfire. Find that dimension here. Encouraging and uplifting rather than guilt-driven, this book can help women who want to be more organized but know that adding a new method is not enough.”

Matt Perman, Director of Strategy at Desiring God, blogger, author of the forthcoming book, What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done

“Organizing a home can be an insurmountable challenge for a woman. The Organized Heart makes a unique connection between idols of the heart and the ability to run a well-managed home. This is not a how-to. Eastin looks at sin as the root problem of disorganization. She offers a fresh new approach and one I recommend, especially to those of us who have tried all the other self-help models and failed.”

Aileen Challies, Mom of three, and wife of blogger, author, and pastor Tim Challies



[“But God...”](#)

The Two Words at the Heart of the Gospel

by Casey Lute

**Just two words.
Understand their use in Scripture,
and you will never be the same.**

“Rock-solid theology packaged in an engaging and accessible form.”

- Louis Tullo, *Sight Regained* blog

“Keying off of nine occurrences of “But God” in the English Bible, Casey Lute ably opens up Scripture in a manner that is instructive, edifying, encouraging, and convicting. This little book would be useful in family or personal reading, or as a gift to a friend. You will enjoy Casey’s style, you will have a fresh view of some critical Scripture, and your appreciation for God’s mighty grace will be deepened.”

Dan Phillips, *Pyromaniacs* blog, author of *The World-Tilting Gospel* (forthcoming from Kregel)

“A refreshingly concise, yet comprehensive biblical theology of grace that left this reader more in awe of the grace of God.”

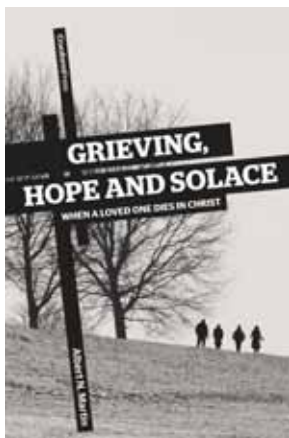
Aaron Armstrong, *BloggingTheologically.com*

“Casey Lute reminds us that nothing is impossible with God, that we must always reckon with God, and that God brings life out of death and joy out of sorrow.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“A mini-theology that will speak to the needs of every reader of this small but powerful book. Read it yourself and you will be blessed. Give it to a friend and you will be a blessing.”

William Varner, Prof. of Biblical Studies, The Master’s College



[Grieving, Hope and Solace](#)

When a Loved One Dies in Christ

by Albert N. Martin

**There is comfort for the grief.
There are answers to the questions.
The Bible does offer hope, solace,
healing, and confidence.**

**Pastor Albert Martin has been
there.**

“This tender book by a much-loved pastor, written after the death of his beloved wife, offers comfort to those in tears. A rare guidebook to teach us how to grieve with godliness, it is relevant to us all – if not for today, then no doubt for tomorrow.”

Maurice Roberts, former editor, Banner of Truth magazine

“Albert N. Martin is a seasoned pastor, skilled teacher, and gifted writer who has given us a priceless treasure in this book. All who read these pages will, unquestionably, be pointed to Christ and find themselves greatly helped.”

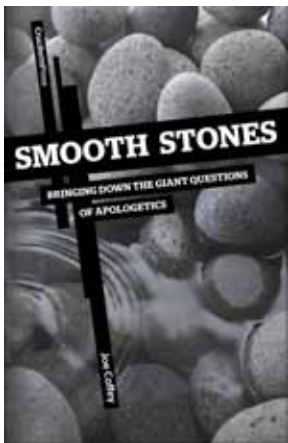
Steve Lawson, Christ Fellowship Baptist Church, Mobile, AL

“Like turning the corner and being met by a glorious moonrise, or discovering a painter or musician who touches us in the deepest recesses of our being—this little book by Pastor Al Martin has been such an experience for me. Whether you are a pastor or counselor, one who is experiencing the pangs of grief, or a member of the church who wants to be useful to others, you need to read this book.”

Joseph Pipa, President, Greenville Presbyterian Theo. Sem.

“Personal tenderness and biblical teaching in a sweet book of comfort. Buy it and give it away, but make sure to get a copy for yourself.”

Dr. Joel R. Beeke, President, Puritan Reformed Theo. Sem.



[Smooth Stones](#)

Bringing Down the Giant Questions of Apologetics

by Joe Coffey

Street-level apologetics for everyday Christians.

Because faith in Jesus makes sense. And you don't need an advanced degree to understand why.

“What a thrill for me to see Joe Coffey, a graduate of our first Centurions Program class, apply the biblical worldview principles we teach at BreakPoint and the Colson Center. In this marvelous little book, Joe simply and succinctly lays out the tenets of the Christian faith within the context of the four key life and worldview questions. This is an excellent resource for Christians and non-Christians alike who are seeking the Truth.”

Chuck Colson, Founder of Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

“This book may be the best resource I've seen to answer common objections in everyday language.”

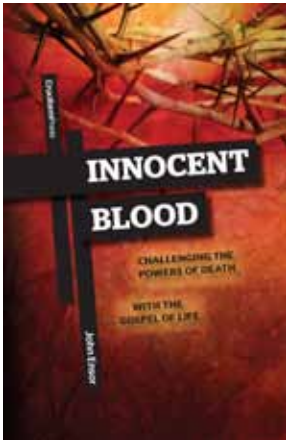
Jared Totten, Critical Thinking Blog

“A quick read that packs a punch...I'm always on the lookout for something like this. *Smooth Stones* is a winner.”

Mike del Rosario, ApologeticsGuy.Com

“Most books on apologetics are too long, too deep, and too complicated. This book has none of these defects. Like its title, it is like a smooth stone from David's apologetic sling directed right to the mind of an enquiring reader”

Norman L. Geisler, Distinguished Professor of Apologetics, Veritas Evangelical Seminary, Murrieta, CA



[Innocent Blood](#)

Challenging the Powers of Death
with the Gospel of Life

John Ensor

The shedding of innocent blood, primarily through abortion, has now marked an entire generation. But God's call to protect the innocent is unchanged. We can obey that call.

“God's Word tells us to be prepared to give an answer to everyone

who asks us a reason for the hope within us, and it also tells us that we should do this with gentleness and respect. This book does just that. With decades of experience and true wisdom, John Ensor beautifully shows us how our glorious God delights in our courageous fight for the innocent, and that he commands us to fight, not with the words and weapons of man but with the living and active Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Burk Parsons, pastor; editor of Tabletalk

“...a powerful indictment. There are areas of theology about which sincere Christians can disagree, but this is not one of them.”

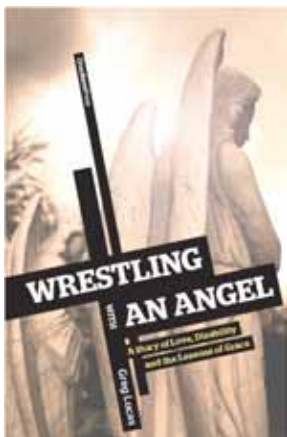
John Frame, Professor, Reformed Theological Seminary

“By showing how our activism is to be motivated and fueled by the gospel, Ensor challenges us to devote our lives to magnifying Jesus Christ through seeking justice for the unborn.”

Trevin Wax, author, editor at LifeWay Christian Resources

Stellar! John Ensor provides a bridge between the defense of innocent human life and the proclamation of the gospel. His concisely worded thesis is theologically grounded and philosophically sound. I wholeheartedly recommend this book!

Scott Klusendorf, speaker and author



[Wrestling with an Angel](#)

A Story of Love, Disability
and the Lessons of Grace

by Greg Lucas

The riveting, inspiring true story that readers have called “a touchstone book of my life,” and “alternately hilarious and heartbreaking,” a book that “turns the diamond of grace in such a way that you see facets you never really noticed before.”

“C.S. Lewis wrote that he paradoxically loved *The Lord of the Rings* because it ‘broke his heart’ – and Greg Lucas’ writing does the same for me.”

Justin Taylor, Managing Editor, ESV Study Bible

“Witty...stunning...striking...humorous and heartfelt. *Wrestling with an Angel* provides a fresh, honest look at one father’s struggle to embrace God in the midst of his son’s disability. Can sheer laughter and weeping gracefully coexist in a world of so much affliction? Greg knows all about it. I highly recommend this wonderfully personal book!”

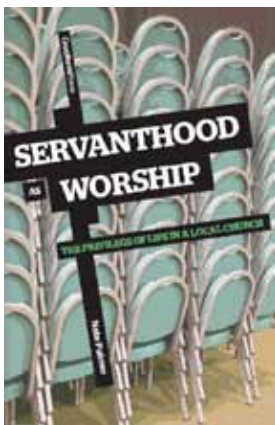
Joni Eareckson Tada, Joni and Friends International

“You will laugh; you will cry. You will feel sick; you will feel inspired. You will be repulsed by the ugliness of sin; you will be overwhelmed by the love of God. Greg Lucas takes us on an unforgettable ride as he extracts the most beautiful insights into grace from the most painful experiences of life.”

David P. Murray, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

“Greg Lucas is a captivating storyteller. When he writes about life with Jake, I recognize God’s grace and loving persistence in my life. I want more!”

Noël Piper, author, and wife of pastor and author John Piper



[Servanthood as Worship](#)

The Privilege of Life in a Local Church

by Nate Palmer

We [serve] because he first [served] us. - 1 John 1:19 [sort of]

What ever happened to servanthood? Here is a biblical presentation of our calling to serve in the church, motivated by the grace that is ours in the gospel.

"In an age where the church can be likened to Cinderella - beautiful, but largely ignored and forgotten - Nate Palmer's brief book forces us to rethink both the church and our relationship to her. In an age where egocentrism ensures we sing, 'O say, can you see - what's in it for me?' on a weekly basis, Palmer forces us to say instead, 'How can I best serve the church?' Looking at the needs of others rather than one's own is possibly the most serious deficiency in the church today. Reading this book will help redress the deficiency. I heartily recommend it."

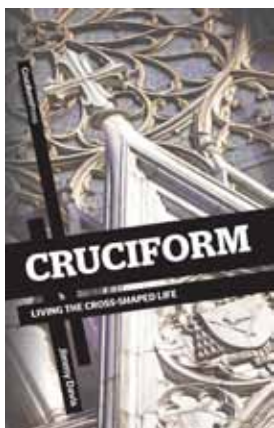
***Derek W.H. Thomas, Professor of Theology
Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson)***

"Think of these pages as a handbook. It contains a sustainable, practical vision for serving in the local church that is powered by grace. Along the way, you'll get a mini theological education."

Justin Buzzard, pastor, San Francisco Bay Area, Buzzard Blog

"In our media-crazed, me-first culture, the art of the basin and the towel has been shoved off onto those who get paid to serve - certainly a call to serve in humility can't be God's will for all of us, or could it? Nate Palmer gets at the heart of our resistance. I strongly recommend this book."

Elyse Fitzpatrick, author of Because He Loves Me



[Cruciform](#)

Living the Cross-Shaped Life

by Jimmy Davis

This is the shape of the gospel.

“Jimmy Davis loves the cross. This little book will open your heart up to see how the cross is the center of all of life. Well done.”

— **Paul Miller, Director of seeJesus.net, author of *A Praying Life***

“Jimmy Davis shows us how to cut through the fog of contemporary Christian thinking to recover the Savior’s plan for our lives.”

T.M. Moore, Dean, Chuck Colson’s Centurions Program

“Jimmy shows from personal experience how a lack of passion and purpose, focus and fervor, compassion and conviction, is always due to distance from the now-power of the gospel. I pray that through this book you will rediscover the beauty and brilliance of the gospel in brand new ways.”

Tullian Tchividjian, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church

“*Cruciform* is a theologically grounded and redemptively freeing picture of a life spent boasting in the cross of Jesus.”

Scotty Smith, Christ Community Church

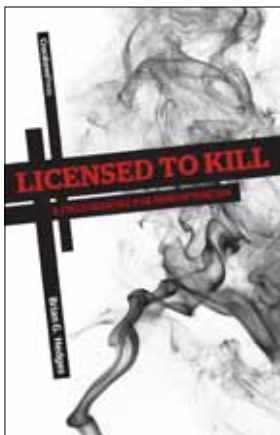
“

This book will be a help to everyone struggling with ‘Why, God?’ I believe every person planning for, and serving, in a place of Christian ministry should read this book.”

Dr. Brian Richardson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is a terrific book for those breakfast discipleship groups. It is the next one I am going to use.”

Dr. William E. Brown, President, Cedarville University



[Licensed to Kill](#)

A Field Manual for Mortifying Sin

by Brian G. Hedges

Your soul is a war zone.

Know your enemy.

Learn to fight.

“A faithful, smart, Word-centered guide.”

- **Wes Ward, Revive Our Hearts**

“Are there things you hate that you end up doing anyway? Have you tried to stop sinning in certain areas of your life, only to face defeat over and over again? If you’re ready to get serious about sin patterns in your life—ready to put sin to death instead of trying to manage it—this book outlines the only strategy that works. This is a book I will return to and regularly recommend to others.”

Bob Lepine, Co-Host, FamilyLife Today

“Brian Hedges shows the importance of fighting the sin that so easily entangles us and robs us of our freedom, by fleeing to the finished work of Christ every day. Well done!”

Tullian Tchividjian, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; author, Jesus + Nothing = Everything

“Rather than aiming at simple moral reformation, *Licensed to Kill* aims at our spiritual transformation. Like any good field manual, this one focuses on the most critical information regarding our enemy, and gives practical instruction concerning the stalking and killing of sin. This is a theologically solid and helpfully illustrated book that holds out the gospel confidence of sin’s ultimate demise.”

Joe Thorn, pastor and author, Note to Self: The Discipline of Preaching to Yourself



[Getting Back in the Race](#)

The Cure for Backsliding

by Joel R. Beeke

Backsliding is the worst thing that can happen to anyone claiming faith in Jesus.

Find out why. Learn the diagnosis. Experience the cure.

“This book is a masterpiece, and I do not say that lightly. This excellent work, so helpfully spiced with quotations from the Puritans, needs to be read over and over again. I heartily commend it.”

Martin Holdt, Pastor; editor, Reformation Africa South

“Joel Beeke’s characteristic clarity, biblical fidelity, and unflinching care as to detail and pastoral wisdom is obvious on every page. This book is an honest and sometimes chilling exposition of the seriousness of backsliding; at the same time, it unfailingly breathes the air of grace and hope. Timely and judicious.”

***Derek W.H. Thomas, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC;
Editorial Director, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals***

“Don’t settle for being a spiritual shrimp,’ argues Dr. Beeke. The pity is that too many modern Christians are opting for shrimpishly small degrees of grace. Indwelling sin drags the careless believer down into guilty backsliding. This book is a prescription for the believer who feels his guilt.”

Maurice Roberts, former editor, Banner of Truth magazine

“Dr. Beeke outlines the best means of bringing balm and healing to the backslidden soul. Highly recommended.”

Michael Haykin, Professor, Southern Baptist Theo. Sem.