



Addressing The Sexless Marriage

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Addressing The Sexless Marriage

I am a chess player, and over time, I have collected any number of books on openings and endgames, strategies and tactics. Whether it be a “poisoned pawn” or a “Fried Liver attack”, fianchettoing your kingside bishop or castling long, chess holds a myriad number of ways to attack and defend. I have discovered in my reading over the past decade that tactics and strategies are often deployed to mold a marriage into desired shape, as well. Strategies and tactics are not, of themselves, good or evil. For example, we have all seen (whether in magazines or online) articles on “Five Ways to Improve Your Marriage”, “Three Tricks to Better Lovemaking”, etc. There is nothing inherently wrong or evil in intentionally planning to improve a marriage.

However, when strategies and tactics are deployed in a marriage in order to manipulate and stifle one spouse, to create or maintain a sexless marriage, then it becomes sin. In this collection of posts gathered from my blog are articles that I have written that are prescriptive, as opposed to descriptive. My first two downloadable .pdfs on Bad & Good Teachings were descriptive, focusing on presenting teachings about sex and marriage that is promulgated by the Church. This .pdf is prescriptive, in that I attempt to blow away the fog that befuddles hurting husbands and wives, and then to present strategies for husbands and wives to counter these faithless strategies and tactics.

At its core, marriage is a spiritual AND sexual union unlike any other in human relationships. The sexual component is as vital to the health of the union as that of the spiritual. Yes, there are conditions that may alter accessibility down the road, that may necessitate a different approach to sexuality, but entering into marriage by making a vow to “have and to hold,” “keeping myself only unto thee,” is a promise to enter into a sexual relationship.

Choosing to impose a regime of celibacy is simply a renegeing of a solemn promise to spouse, society and God.

While this file is not a compendium of all knowledge, it is an attempt to help cut through the pure bovine effluvia that is thrown at refused spouses in order to maintain a celibate status quo.

CSL

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As always, my disclaimer: I am not a counselor, doctor, or pastor. For that matter, Wife says I don't play well with others. My advice and comments come from my concern for hurting Christian husbands and wives. Someone once said to me, “Church shouldn't hurt”, and I believe the same thing goes for marriage. I call 'em as I see 'em, but please, don't take my word as gospel. Yes, read what I say, but pray about what I say, and be a Berean (Acts 17:11); do your own “due diligence.”

Chapter 1: “Marriage Doesn’t Convey Consent” ~ Again?

(For the purpose of pronoun simplicity, throughout this .pdf, I am going to write this post to refused husbands. Wives, if you are the one desiring more sexual intimacy, please keep reading, because I believe that pretty much everything I am going to say will apply to your situation, as well.)

A few years back, one of my favorite marriage bloggers ran a gauntlet of attacks from feminists, faux-Christians and other loons over a post on the ills of sexual gatekeeping. Knowing that she was a nice person and incapable of giving those eejits the welcome they required, I felt she needed someone commenting on her blog who wasn’t nice (a niche I nicely fill), and went in with guns blazing. Ah, such larks. *sigh*

A year later, after starting my own blog, I had my own discussion with a blogger who was, apparently, of the same house as those who went after my friend. Having become a blogger myself, I understood the peril of coming across as an internet troll, so I made a point to keep our limited exchanges civil, and I withdrew from discussion before any blood was spilled; however something that that blogger wrote triggered this post/article.

Echoing the premise that fueled the previous year’s bombardment, this blogger criticized the idea that marriage conveys sexual assent. I, in a most un-Curmudgeonly manner, wrote in the comments section about how I believed her premise to be wrong. (I kept myself civil; I promise the premise was unharmed). In further exchanges, we responded back and forth a few times until I felt it was time to end our discussion before I became Curmudgeonly. A final statement in her last comment triggered some thoughts, and so this chapter.

In response to my assertion that marriage is sexual by definition, this writer attempted to defend her proposition that it would be unfair to hold someone to the expectations of marriage if s/he experienced sex after marriage and discovered that they didn’t like it. Her point was that obligatory sex is damaging, and she put this question to me, in order to justify someone opting out of sex:

“I understand your feeling about making a commitment to marriage and sex. But, how do you know if you like sex if you have never tried it? This question is not an admonition for trying premarital sex, it is a query about your logic.”

Taste-testing Marriage?

For me, the way in which she phrased this question is extremely problematic in at least two ways.

First, as a Christian, I believe that sex was created by God. I believe that sex is reserved for husbands and wives within the bounds of marriage. At a minimum, marriage is a sexual union, as sex is the defining activity of marriage. I've stated it before, but here it is again: there is no other activity that husbands and wives may engage in that friends and roommates can't also do. Sex is what separates friendships/roommates from marriage.

Granted, we all have favorite activities and hobbies; travel, music, art, sports, etc., but none of these are prescribed or proscribed in the Bible. They are all just different things that people like to do. Sex, however, isn't just a hobby or pastime, and the Bible has both prescriptions and proscriptions concerning sex. That line, "*how do you know if you like sex if you have never tried it*", is denigrating to God and His creation. Imagine asking someone if they like walking, talking or eating. These are all functions of living, as is sex.

Do you remember the Life cereal commercial with Mikey, where the two boys are dubious about the new breakfast cereal on the table? After conferring, they decide to let their little brother test it first, because "he hates everything." According to the blogger, sex in marriage is a Mikey situation, one in which you try it to see if you like it. In her post, and in her responses to me, she defended the right to unilaterally choose a sexless marriage. Look at that question again:

But, how do you know if you like sex if you have never tried it?

Basically, the way she presents this question makes it sound as if sex, designed by God, created by God, is akin to a cuisine, merely a choice off of a menu. "Ooooh, I don't like Thai, and Chinese food doesn't float my boat, but you can give me Tex-Mex any day of the week."

No. Just no. Sorry, but sex isn't merely a preference, it's a natural human function. You don't ask people if they like eating, sleeping or seeing, right? What she and others are doing is debasing and devaluing God's creative work.

Whose Logic Needs Querying?

Which now leads to my second problem with how she phrased her question. In the last line of the paragraph, she says that she wants to "*query my logic*." But is it my logic that needs to be called into question, or hers? To be fair to her, she wasn't saying that she is advocating for pre-marital sexual experimentation. Instead, she is merely arguing for the right for one spouse to try sex, and if s/he doesn't like it, be allowed to foreswear sex for the rest of the marriage.

My mind boggles at the idea that people honestly expect a husband or wife to be totally okay with being told, "No sex for you!" How does one even get to the point of thinking that sex is just a menu selection in a marital relationship? Now, I realize that in some marriages, there are physical impediments to having a sex life in a marriage. As well,

there are at least two reasons that I would tell a wife to say “No way” to a husband. (I will add that these are, to my mind, reasons for kicking his butt out of the house; jes’ sayin’.)

Let’s turn this around and examine this blogger’s logic. She is advocating that someone can get married at 20-25, and then make up his/her mind after the wedding about whether or not they like sex. Further, since they then decide after the experience that sex isn’t for them, they may now impose celibacy on their spouse for the next 40-50 years. She thinks that it is unreasonable for a husband or wife to expect their spouse to engage in a sex life after marriage, but finds the life-long torture of another human being via a sexless marriage to be acceptable. And I’m the one who needs to have his logic queried?

In my opening paragraph above, I said that my blogger-friend was attacked by “faux-Christians”, and I think that this was just a matter of “second verse, same as the first.” I ended my discussion with this writer by asking this question:

- Since you present sex as a take-it-or-leave-it option for either spouse,
- and since Paul commanded, in 1 Cor. 7, don’t “defraud” (KJV), or “deprive” (modern translations),
- and since you support the right of one spouse to “defraud”/”deprive” the other of sex,
- do you arrogate to yourself the right to correct God’s obvious errors?

Unfortunately, I believe her answer, and the answer of many others, would be “Yes.” And that’s just wrong.

CSL

Chapter 2: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 1

This chapter and the five following it are a series from my blog on working to change a sexless marriage. [At the time that I wrote this post, I had previously alluded to the topic of sexless marriages, but now decided to address the topic head-on.] According to different writers and researchers, the phenomenon of marriages with a restricted or non-existent sex life is on the rise in America. One figure I've seen tossed about says 1-in-5, 20%, of all marriages are sexless or nearly so.

Before diving straight in, however, I want to give some “pre-advice,” something for anyone who finds themselves in this situation, and that is that you need to give serious thought to your approach before starting any course of action. Approaching a spouse who is throttling the marriage bed is not an easy task; a sexless marriage isn't dealt with by a casual “Hey, you know, our frequency is down, and I think we should make love more often.” Anyone expecting a “You know, you're right, let's get it on” is living in La-La Land, and has low-lying waterfront property in their investment portfolio.

Yes, a spouse who creates the sexless marriage needs to be confronted, but before the throttle-ee approaches the throttle-er, s/he needs to do some serious thinking.

Count The Cost

In Luke 14, Jesus told this small parable:

Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. (v. 31-32)

In the same vein, the refused spouse needs to decide if “going to the mattresses” is worth it. One man I know said that the stormiest two years of his marriage were the two years he refused to let the sexless state of his marriage be. He could have just “sucked it up” and continued in his denied state, but since he'd been pretty much denied for 15 years, he'd had enough. And so he and his wife fought about sex for two years. Anyone in the same situation will have to give this possibility consideration. After all, is a marital sex life worth the ruckus that it will take to create one, or is marital peace so dear as to be purchased at the price of accepting imposed celibacy?

In a post on my blog, I presented this quote from Dr. Corey Allan, taken from one of his Sexy Marriage Radio podcasts:

“Even before you have this conversation (and I'm going to speak directly to the partner that is interested in sex in their marriage), before you even have this

conversation, you need to have a little, maybe a lot of soul searching. Is a sexless marriage a deal-breaker for you? What do you really believe? What do you really want in your marriage? Is life without sex with your spouse a possibility, is this a deal-breaker? That's a rough, tough journey."

I am coming back to this, presenting it again and addressing this specifically to anyone thinking about confronting their sexless situation. There will be a cost to attempt to change your marriage. Are you willing to pay that price?

Stop And Think About It First

Here's why. It might go well. You say to your wife, "Wife, I'm not happy with our sex life; we don't make love anymore; we need to reactivate our marriage bed." And it is possible that she will say, "You know, you're right, let's!"

But there's also the chance that she will say, "Sex! That's all you ever think about! You're a sex fiend, a sex addict! Why don't you learn some self-control!"

I know the story of one man who approached his wife with his concern and suggested marriage counseling, and was met with a full-blown, screaming temper tantrum in the middle of their kitchen that only ended when he promised that he would never mention it again. That show of 'strength' on his part, being willing to back down in the face of emotional bullying and threatening, pretty much sealed his sexless state for the rest of his marriage.

So, before beginning the action of dealing with the sexless state of your marriage, heed Allan's advice and do some serious soul-searching. Just how important is it to you to have a sex life with your wife? I don't know your situation, the length of time that you have been frustrated in your marriage. I know of men and women who tell of being kept nearly/completely sexless for twenty and thirty years.

If your situation is that it has only been five or six years, ask yourself how long are you willing to go along in this way? Another five? Maybe ten? Can you go an entire marriage being denied a sex life? These are serious matters. And notice what Corey Allan says to consider, "Is a sexless marriage a deal-breaker for you?" Are you willing to stay in a marriage in which your spouse imposes celibacy on you?

"Don't You Support Marriage?"

Yes, I do. However, in the words of that Cole Porter song, "I'm always true to you in my fashion, I'm always true to you in my way," I support marriage in my fashion. However, my support for marriage might not look like someone else's support for marriage. In my *Bad Teachings .pdf*, I made it clear that I believe that the Church has created an idol of

marriage, and condemns Christians needlessly to a life of misery in the name of Holy Matrimony.

But let me turn this around and ask you this: do you know who ISN'T supporting marriage? The throttling spouse who chokes the sex life out of a marriage, for whatever reason, that's who! After all, didn't that spouse, in saying his/her vows, promise to enter into a sexual relationship? Yes s/he did! (*Scotching any wrong answers before some decides otherwise. Check out my .pdf on Good Teaching.*) When a man and a woman stand before the preacher or Justice of the Peace and say "I do", they are saying that they are willing to get it on and do it. A sex life in a marriage is not a topic for debate, it's a given.

In my Covenant Or Contract series (see my Good Teaching .pdf), I wrote that marriage is a contract which can be broken and voided. I believe that marriage is a sexual relationship, and if one spouse decides unilaterally that sex is ended in the marriage, then the marriage is ended. Why? Because that spouse has unilaterally voided the marriage contract.

And I'm not the only one who believes this to be the case. No less a personage than Martin Luther, the great Reformer, wrote that sexual abandonment of marriage is a valid ground for divorce, with no stigma of sin attached. This is from his essay, *The Estate of Marriage (1522)*:

The third case for divorce is that in which one of the parties deprives and avoids the other, refusing to fulfil the conjugal duty or to live with the other person. For example, one finds many a stubborn wife like that who will not give in, and who cares not a whit whether her husband falls into the sin of unchastity ten times over. Here it is time for the husband to say, "If you will not, another will; the maid will come if the wife will not." Only first the husband should admonish and warn his wife two or three times, and let the situation be known to others so that her stubbornness becomes a matter of common knowledge and is rebuked before the congregation. If she still refuses, get rid of her; take an Esther and let Vashti go, as King Ahasuerus did [Esther 1:1 :17].

Here you should be guided by the words of St. Paul, I Corinthians 7 [:4-5], "The husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does; likewise the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does. Do not deprive each other, except by agreement," etc. Notice that St. Paul forbids either party to deprive the other, for by the marriage vow each submits his body to the other in conjugal duty. When one resists the other and refuses the conjugal duty she is robbing the other of the body she had bestowed upon him. This is really contrary to marriage, and dissolves the marriage.

“But I Don’t Agree With You!”

Fine. Never said you had to. It’s your privilege to disagree with me, as it is my privilege to disagree with you. However, my advice still stands: Before approaching a refusing, denying spouse, you must give consideration to just how far you are willing to go in seeking to restore your marriage to a healthy, functioning state. In the next chapter, I discuss addressing a refusing spouse with The Talk.

CSL

Link:

Corey Allan, Sexy Marriage Radio podcast. The Sexless Marriage, episode #122.
<http://sexymarriageradio.com/>

Chapter 3: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 2

In the previous chapter, I finished by saying that I would start discussing The Talk. The Talk is a sit-down, face-to-face, cards-on-the-table discussion in which the spouse who is dissatisfied with intimacy in the marriage lays it all out. The first question that needs to be answered is whether The Talk is needed or not.

In approaching The Talk, history and circumstances come into play. If your marriage is only a few years old, and much of the 'blame' can be attributed to a new-born or two, and if the wife is good-hearted and generous, then The Talk could amount to nothing more than a "Hon, we need to look at our marriage and see where we can improve." (Be prepared to listen, however; in a marriage of good-willed partners, it is rare that difficulties are totally one-sided. If need be, be prepared to deal with shortcomings on your part, if they are a valid contribution to the problem.)

If, however, frequent or complete refusal is deeply entrenched in a marriage, then The Talk may be the only way out of it.

Two Terms

In discussing sexless marriages, there are two terms commonly used, (both of which upset the spouse to whom they apply, btw): Refuser and Gatekeeper.

The Refuser – This is just what you would expect, given the name. The Refuser basically has shut down most, if not all, sex in the marriage, with no input from or care for the other. Celibacy is the watchword of this marriage. It's not uncommon to read of a husband or wife saying that they haven't had sex in years. The spouse with the libido in the family may want sex 2-5 times a week, but is lucky if s/he gets a grudging toss in the hay once every month or three. Or once every year or three.

The Gatekeeper – This person isn't a Refuser, per se, but has so many rules and regulations, stipulations, requirements, and whys and wherefores that sex, if it occurs at all, appears to be due to some ineffable quality that, seemingly, can't be duplicated ever again. The result is that the 'keeper isn't sure, when sex does manage to occur, how it even came about that the 'keeper approved the request. Quite often, Gatekeepers have requirements that limit sex. "No lights, no noise, missionary only, not until the children are asleep, never in the morning, not on nights Seinfeld and Friends reruns are on, etc." The spouse of a Gatekeeper begins to wonder maybe if he held his mouth just the right way, or if he said, "Pretty please, with sugar on top" with just the right wheedle or quaver in his/her voice, it might improve his chances of 'getting lucky tonight'.

(Speaking of Seinfeld, as I'm proofreading this chapter and going over this section, unbidden came the image of the Soup Nazi, and I think this is a fitting image for The Refuser: "No sex for you!")

Two Key Attitudes

As well, there are two attitudes that might indicate the necessity for having The Talk. The first is the Refuser/Gatekeeper's perception of sex. Is sex a reward and/or punishment? Is sexual intimacy something that the other spouse has to earn, or be deemed worthy enough to be indulged? Is sexual intimacy (indeed, any intimacy) something to be doled out only when *noblesse oblige* dictates? For that matter, does the Refuser/Gatekeeper view sex as "disgusting, vile and filthy, and why do you want to have sex anyway, you perv?" You get my drift; the desire for sex with his/her spouse is somewhat akin to the desire to muck out the stables or sanitize the bathroom with her tongue.

The second attitude or mindset occurs in the Refused/'Kept spouse. That is, "Am I going to get lucky tonight?" When a husband or wife feels like their chances for sex are about on par with a teenager looking to score, something's wrong.

Several years ago, there was an internet sensation, a two-day kerfuffle over one husband's sex spreadsheet email [link below]. The story was of a husband who kept a spreadsheet of his wife's excuses for not having sex. The wife was a Gatekeeper, as was ably demonstrated by the guy's catalog of his wife's excuses for not having sex with him. Yes, the general consensus of the public's reaction was that the guy was a jerk for emailing the spreadsheet to his wife just as she was leaving for a business trip. But reading his spreadsheet, a lot of people, both men and women, recognized the the wife was guilty of Gatekeeping, and the husband had sufficient data to prove it.

In essence, it comes down to this: if you feel that the default mode for your spouse is "No", be it through refusal or gatekeeping, then it's time to look at intimacy in the marriage and figure out "What's wrong and how do we fix it?," and start planning for The Talk.

"Shot Across the Bow"

Below is a post from the old Marriage Bed forum website, and was written by a poster named *Job29Man*, and he gave me permission to share this on my blog, and I include it in this .pdf. This was written several years ago, so the events and discussion between Job and his wife Sarah (not their real names) occurred more than a decade ago. This is one man's 'sit-down' with his wife to address the fact that the default in their marriage bed was set at "No."

It was about 3 years ago. Communication and intimacy were breaking down in our marriage. My dear Sarah and I had always had a policy of “no refusal” unless for a seriously good reason. Sarah had recently begun redefining “seriously good reason” to include “I’m tired.” or “It’s late.” or “The bills aren’t paid yet” or “You looked busy with your book over there and now I need to make tomorrow’s shopping list.” [In real life], these were bogus claims. So I made a real attempt to come to terms with her and help her out more, etc, but she had fallen prey to the “sex is too much bother” idea. I worked on this for about two years I think (time starts to blur here). I had many talks with her... to no effect.

Finally I took her aside for a meeting one day. No romance was on the agenda. I sat her down and told her. “My dear wife. I’m going to expose all my cards here and put myself at a place of vulnerability, but also I have a serious message to deliver to you.” Her eyes got big. “Honey. I am unhappy in our marriage.” Her [reaction?] “Gulp”. “Now... here’s where I show you my cards...I’m going to tell you my negotiating position. I am totally committed to this marriage. I will never, ever leave you. That’s not the man I am. I am not threatening you with anything because I have no intention of following through on any kind of ultimatum that involves me leaving you. Just not gonna happen. If you and I come to NO agreement today you will still have me as your committed husband until the day one of us dies.” (Big sigh of relief from her. Tension level goes down.) “But honey, I am not a happy husband. You have my body and support until I die, but you are losing my heart.”

*“This is not the marriage we both committed to. If you have rebuke for me. I am all ears. I want to be the best husband for you that I can be. You can lay it on me and I will not resist, but will redouble my efforts. I will withhold NOTHING from you. I will give up ANYTHING that you feel is needed. You just say the word. But if you will permit me now to state my own complaint to you in the same spirit... I am a sexually miserable man. I go out into the world of ... temptation... every day. Women like me. I ignore them. But you are not making it easy to resist temptation. For the first time in our marriage, it is difficult to turn my face the other way. I DO it! But it used to be a no brainer. It was easy. For the first time in our marriage if a man were to ask me “Isn’t marriage great?” I wouldn’t know how to answer him. Now ... I’m a sexually frustrated man who is not happy in his marriage bed. You are a wonderful mother and a great person. You are better than this. I respect you too much not to give you notice of my feelings. I thought you deserved a **WARNING SHOT ACROSS YOUR BOW.**” “Now Sarah. I give you no ultimatum. I’m just telling you that you are losing my heart, my passion, even my affection. You do with that information whatever you choose. You will not lose me either way. But think how much you will gain if you change your heart and regain mine.”*

At that point Sarah had a clear choice... live with a committed but unhappy husband, or live in joy with a committed and happy husband. She chose the happy husband and has never regretted it. Nor have I.

*(On the old Marriage Bed forum, Job’s post was considered *de rigueur* reading for refused spouses and is known as *The Shot Across The Bow* post.)*

Recap

From this you see how one man approached his wife to address the sexless nature of his marriage. He made a direct appeal to his wife, and in his case, he told her that the choice was hers, that while he would not divorce, that it was possible that she would live with the knowledge that she would lose the love of her husband. And, as you read, this talk changed the marriage.

I have recounted on my blog how Wife and I had our own version of The Talk on New Year's Eve 2010, and how it cleared up a massive misunderstanding. The Talk absolutely can have an impact on a marriage. But there is no guarantee that every instance of The Talk will bring about a change so efficaciously.

There is more to discuss, and in the next chapter, I present another version of The Talk, known as *The End of Normal Life*. I also want to present and discuss boundaries and possible courses of action that may be used in connection with The Talk.

CSL

Links:

Bing search, Spreadsheet Story:

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=husband+emails+sex+spreadsheet&form=APMCS1>

Keeper of the Gate – By Chris Taylor at Forgiven Wife, an explication and analogy from Song of Solomon on the consequences of gatekeeping:

<http://forgivenwife.com/2013/11/14/keeper-of-the-gate/%20>

Be Your Husband's Sure Thing – By J. Parker at Hot, Holy and Humorous. Yes, I know that this isn't addressed to refused spouses, but it gives voice and shape to the anxiety that the refused feel.

<http://hotholyhumorous.com/2012/11/be-your-husbands-sure-thing-3/>

Chapter 4: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 3

In the last chapter, I presented a version of The Talk known as *The Shot Across The Bow*. In that post, the writer, *Job29Man*, tells how he approached his wife with his concerns that their marriage was becoming sexless. In preparing that speech, Job had done some of the hard work ahead of time, as I recommend that you do.

Today, I'm going to present a different version of The Talk, but before I do, I need to address the fact that, today, there seem to be many barriers to having a decent/good sex life in a marriage. (Remember, I am writing to Christian husbands and wives, so if these don't apply to someone who strays, due to Google, through my blog, *c'est la vie*.)

Shooting Ourselves In The Foot

When I say that there "can be" barriers, what I am actually saying is that we make those barriers ourselves. Yes, we have our jobs, and that's normal and good. After all, we have to be about making a living to support our family, so that's not part of the problem. And, of course, there is the family we are creating, and that not a part of the problem; that is part of living our lives together, as God intended. Then the family doesn't exist in a vacuum; after all, we are commanded to nurture our children and raise them in the knowledge of the Lord, and so, as earnest Christians, we are part of a local congregation. All these things are well and good.

However, the job that I have might require that I work more than eight hours a day. Did I say job? Maybe I'm the owner of a business, and its "eight hour days? Try 12- or 14-hour days." It could be that one of us (both?) work different shifts, or has to travel. So the job, while good and right, can put up barriers to sexual intimacy, time-wise.

Family? Our pride and joy, right? Well, maybe right, maybe wrong. All too often, family becomes a higher priority than marriage. There is an old Christian aphorism that goes "if you want to know joy, remember that JOY is spelled Jesus, Others and You." The problem comes when your spouse has to take a number to be included among the Others. The old idea that our priorities should be ranked God, Family, Church and, finally, Others is incorrect, **IF** your spouse is placed in the Others category. The correct way to prioritize would be God, Spouse, Children, Church and Others. If your focus is on your children over your spouse, you have distorted God's picture of what a family is supposed to be. The marriage becomes a tool rather than a home.

Lastly, it is possible for church to become a barrier to marital intimacy, what with the many obligations we allow ourselves to assume. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying that volunteering to serve your church is a bad thing. I'm a Sunday School teacher in our congregation; Wife is both a Sunday School teacher and vice-president of our church's

women's organization. Serving your fellow believers by creating and maintaining the church is good and right.

What is wrong is when the church occupies so much of your time that your marriage becomes a lesser priority to such activities as AWANA, Worship Team rehearsals, the latest series of teaching classes on Biblical prophecy, etc. When running the Food Bank becomes the equivalent of a full-time job ON TOP OF your full-time job, while your husband is eating TV dinners—nope, not good.

“Oh, but we're doing the Lord's work, Brother Curmudgeon,” you might say. If you are creating a sexless marriage, then my response will be “You're are destroying your marriage, dummy.” (Yeah, I abuse the privilege being a coot. I would have used the biblical term, from Prov. 14:1, but that might have put me in danger of hellfire.)

The End of Normal Life

So, with all of this as background, I present *The End of Normal Life*. This is another version of The Talk, and was written by Job29Man, the author of *The Shot Across The Bow* in the previous chapter. This was also posted on The Marriage Bed forum, and is used by permission of the author.

Job was writing to help Refused spouses who kept getting put off when trying to initiate sex. There seemed to be an endless list of reasons as to why sex was “impossible tonight, maybe tomorrow”, but tomorrow never comes. Something else comes up to make sex impossible the next night, and the next, and the next. So Job wrote this version, addressing the need to stop all activities until the marriage is set aright:

When your mate ...

- 1. Delays,*
- 2. makes excuses and breaks promises,*
- 3. creates situations where having sex is impossible,*
- 4. has “really good reasons” to not have sex, reasons that “no one could argue with”...*

–I'm sick

–The children are sick

–Ministry needs prevent it “today”

–the children, the children, the children, the children...

–I'm tired, so tired, so very very tired

–I'm busy, so busy, so very very busy...

...well, whaddya do?

IMHO one viable option is “Honey, I love you but... This is the end of all normal life as you know it.”

We will figure out ...

why you are so sick

*why the children are sick
why *ministry* seems to trump our marriage
why other couples have children and sex, but we don't
why you are so tired
why you are so busy*

We will now stop all normal life until we solve this problem.

*No more ministry, no more Sunday School, reduce "church" to Sunday morning only,
drop all church leadership and ministry,
reduce homeschool work,
reduce "fun for the kids",
reduce kids sports and clubs and activities,
reduce all internet, facebook, reading books, and hobbies,
to what can be maintained AND have a good sex life at the same time.*

We will not do these things again until we have a good, vigorous, and frequent sex life on a sustainable basis for at least one year.

Our marriage is more important than all these optional things, and we will vigorously research why we cannot hold jobs/have illness/etc. AND have good sex, but OTHERS CAN.

This is "the end of all normal life" until we get "a healthy sex life."

"But That's Controlling!"

So? You think it's better for others outside your marriage, whether it be church, Little League, homeschooling, hobbies, electronics, or what-have-you to control your marriage?

"Why should our kids have to suffer?"

"Because you are using them as a weapon and a wedge to avoid intimacy with your spouse, that's why." The kids' soccer practice, kung fu lessons, music lessons, etc. are extraneous activities, not necessary to the development of marriage and home.

"But the ministry of our church will suffer if I'm not teaching/leading worship/being den mother in Royal Rangers." Well, that's too bad. I'm sorry that the church's ministry will come tumbling down, and crash and burn because you are the one irreplaceable cog whose removal will destroy the church. However, your first priority is your marriage, and that is in trouble. When you get your marriage fixed and running right, then you can re-engage in other activities, but not to the detriment of your marriage.

Simple Summary

As Christians, we like simple statements, supposedly pithy, that help to get a single, important point across. One formula that I've seen many times goes like this:

“If you're too busy to pray, you're too busy.”

“If you're too busy to read your Bible, you're too busy.”

“If you're too busy to spend time with God, you're too busy.”

Well, if you're too busy to have a healthy sex life with your spouse, you're too busy. 'Nuff said.

In the next chapter, I present some action steps that you might consider using in addressing the sexless state of your marriage with your spouse.

CSL

Chapter 5: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 4

In the two previous chapters, I presented two versions of The Talk, both written by a poster on The Marriage Bed forum. I spoke of the necessity of knowing ahead of time just what your boundaries are, just what you feel is acceptable or unacceptable in your marriage. In preparing his *Shot Across The Bow*, *Job29Man* decided that sexlessness would not be a make-or-break issue for him; he promised his wife that he would be in the marriage whether it was sexless or not. But he did tell her that her actions of neglect were damaging to the heart of their marriage. For his wife, Job's version of The Talk was enough to break through to her heart, and bring about a change in the direction their marriage was heading.

For others, it might not have been enough. In the situation of another man that I know of, the wife's preference for celibacy trumped any need to improve her relationship with her husband, and she opted for divorce. He did not have to initiate divorce proceedings over his sexless marriage; his statement that celibacy was no longer an option for their marriage was enough for her to initiate separation and divorce on her own.

Having been presented with two versions of The Talk and reading about three different outcomes from The Talk (*Job29Man*, me and the anonymous brother), I hope you can see that it is not merely a stratagem for 'getting lucky'. It is not an attempt to manipulate a spouse into giving "putting out," a way to get more sex; it is an attempt to change the dynamics of a marriage going/gone south.

One thing to keep in mind about The Talk is that it isn't a first-step action. As I said in chapter 2, The Talk takes place after serious consideration, and should come only after lesser measures have been used to try to change the marriage direction. In Job's case, I hope you caught this line at the end of his first paragraph:

I worked on this for about two years I think (time starts to blur here). I had many talks with her... to no effect.

"Two years," "many talks." Job had been trying to communicate with his wife about their stinkin' sex life for some time. For him, *The Shot Across The Bow* was the culmination of past attempts and failures to reach his wife with his concerns and needs. It wasn't a spur-of-the-moment whim, but an attempt to communicate clearly and completely how her wrong actions were hurting him, and could affect their marriage.

Two Preparation Steps

As you prepare for The Talk, thinking about what you want to say, and what it is that you want to achieve, going into this process, do two things: Pray and examine yourself.

Prayer is a given. While I am not one who is too sanguine about God performing Jedi Mind Tricks in answer to prayer, it is a necessity that you, as a Christian, approach this in a godly manner, and that you maintain a godly attitude throughout. In a podcast concerning shaking up a sexless marriage, Shannon Etheridge said that the tone of The Talk at its beginning will likely be the tone with which it ends. Begin with accusations and vituperation, end with bitterness, anger and entrenched positions.

Self examination? Yeah, most definitely. Think about it; if you were married to you, would you want to have sex with you? Are you a selfish lover? Do you think that it's all about you and your jollies? Have you decided that since she isn't going to have sex with you that porn is acceptable? Seriously, are you presenting the best "you" that you can? I am not saying that you have to have achieved sainthood here on earth to have an acceptable sex life, but ask yourself: Am I really in this marriage?

In that same Sexy Marriage Radio podcast that I referenced above, Corey Allan tells of hearing his wife, in counseling, say something hard to hear: "I like sex. I just don't like sex with you." Allan did a commendable thing; he didn't stonker off, feeling all butthurt over that statement; instead, he listened to what his wife was saying and realized, "Hey, I wouldn't want to make love to me, either," and changed. So, right off the bat, be ready to answer, is sex for you or for y'all?

Interim Options and Actions

Job hints that he had attempted to address their marriage in less dramatic fashion, prior to his *Shot Across The Bow*, and this brings me to the discussion of some different ideas and methods that you may want to consider using, as you address refusal and gatekeeping. These different approaches may occur before The Talk, they may be part of The Talk, or they may be the boundaries that are put in place after The Talk. But these are just some action steps to consider as you think about what you want to accomplish.

1. If you haven't done so, register as a member of the christian marriage forum, The Marriage Bed, and start reading posts in the Sexually Refused sub-forum.
2. Print out the following two articles by Julie Sibert [links listed below], and give them to your wife to read. If she refuses to read them, sit down and read them to her, out loud (If, as I think could possibly happen, she walks out, just wait until she comes back, and pick up where you left off reading. Do not let histrionics deter you.):
 - Five Dangers of Regularly Saying No to Sex
 - Could This Wife's Story Be Yours?

As well, you might look at my post on my blog to wives, Lady, It's Not About You!

3. Schedule marriage counseling with your pastor. Inform your wife that the marriage is not good, that it has problems, and that you believe that the two of you need counseling. Your wife may or may not accept your invitation to schedule an appointment with the pastor or a marriage counselor. In fact, she may be adamantly opposed to

seeking counseling. The reason is that, for many wives, the facade of a Good Christian Marriage is their pride and joy, and going to the pastor **gasp** and telling him that the marriage has problems is an admission of failure. So it is quite likely that your spouse (husbands as well as wives don't want to admit to failure before church leadership) will say "No way!" to counseling. So, just go ahead and make your appointment with the pastor or counselor, inform your spouse of the date and time, and tell them, "I'm going to see the pastor. You're welcome to come to tell your side." And go.

4. Withdraw romance. As one of my favorite posters once said, "Romance is a mating dance, and without sex, it is a fool's errand." Prior to marriage, romance, while not ending in sex, is pointing toward sex, as romance is the wooing and gaining of a mate; that is the looked-for sexual outcome of romance. Romance continued in marriage is still sexual, as it is part of the sexual play of a loving husband and wife.. To expect, or even demand romance, but deny sex, is both selfish and cruel.

"But Brother Curmudgeon, aren't we supposed to love our wives like Christ loved the Church?" Sure we are, but before you try to play that card, show me where Jesus ever took the Church out for Date Night, will you?

5. Consider withdrawing affection. After all, you were friends with your college roommate, not lovers. When your spouse imposes celibacy on you, you are reduced to being roommates. So live like roommates. In a post on my blog, I shared the story of a man who removed care and affection from his wife's life. When she came to him steaming about how he was neglecting her by not pampering her, etc., he told her that he had been treating her as she treated him, and that unless the sexless nature of their marriage stopped and she became his lover and partner again, it would continue. (Hey, it's not for nothing that I am known for the creation of The Golden Rule Corollary™ **)

Why, you could have knocked her over with a feather! Right then and there she announced if that was the way he was going to act, she wanted a divorce, but was startled by his reaction. Instead of crumbling in the face of her threat and apologizing to her, he merely got out a newspaper and started searching the classified ads for an apartment for her to move into. When she saw that the threat of divorce didn't scare him and didn't make him kowtow to her, she agreed to his conditions that they begin marriage counseling together. The last I heard, the marriage was doing much better.

6. Remove/return your wedding ring. I first read of this being done by a man who had been sexually refused for 26 years. One morning, he removed his wedding ring and left it on his night stand. His wife saw it sometime during the day, realized the significance of his action (sex had been a source of conflict for most of their marriage), and took him to bed that evening. He explained that their faith-tradition put great emphasis on symbols and tradition, and the symbolic removal of the ring was the wake-up call his wife needed. As a result, he and his wife had their version of The Talk, and it changed the dynamics of their marriage.

I remember asking a group about this, and one man got upset and adamantly insisted that this was just wrong! When I asked him why, he said that one day he discovered that his wife had not been wearing her wedding ring for months, and that she was slowing moving toward divorce. He started going to counseling with his wife, and their marriage was changed. But he was still upset about that ring being off of his wife's finger. After all, he told me, his wife had removed her wedding ring because she was starting to check out of the marriage, not because she was trying to get his attention. My reply was, "So? It shook you up, didn't it?"

7. Separate bedrooms – If nothing else, this accomplishes two things. First, it removes the pain of lying next to the unattainable, being tortured by desires that s/he, at this point, cares nothing for. (I can't begin to tell you how many times I have read of refused spouses being tortured from sleep by their refusing spouse cuddling up to them in the night, after just having turned them down for the umpteenth time.)

Second, it makes the statement that the bedroom is for lovers, not roommates. When you were at college, or sharing an apartment, you didn't sleep with your flatmate, did you? Then why do so now? I know of many husbands who decided to sleep on the couch rather than with their refusing wives. Personally, I am in favor of moving the refusing spouse to the couch, and telling them, "This bedroom is for lovers; when you decide that you want to be a lover, you will be allowed back in."

8. Redemptive Separation. This is just what it says, separation; different living arrangements. Not easy, certainly with a high cost (two living quarters, as opposed to one.) Please notice that the term is "Redemptive" separation; this is not a separation for the purpose of easing into divorce, but for the purpose of trying to save the marriage. I know of one wife who moved to another house, and within two days, her husband asked her back, met with a friend who agreed to help hold him accountable, and scheduled an appointment with a doctor to have tests performed to check out his testosterone levels. The marriage was turned around by the separation. Below is a link to a Wall Street Journal article from several years ago addresses this practice.

Simple Summary

The Talk isn't a gimmick or a trick. It is a fork in the road, a turning from the road that you have been traveling on, and a start in heading in a new direction. The Talk requires serious preparation and forethought, both in what is to be said, and in the speaker.

CSL

** The Golden Rule Corollary says that since the Golden Rule is known by all, even atheists, then someone who behaves a certain way towards you is showing you how they want you to treat them; so do it!

Links:

Shannon Etheridge, Sexy Marriage Radio podcast. The Sexless Marriage, episode #122.
<https://smrnation.com/sexy-marriage-radio/>

The Marriage Bed: <https://qna.themarriagebed.com/>

Julie Sibert, Five Dangers of Regularly Saying No to Sex:
<http://intimacyinmarriage.com/2012/11/05/five-dangers-of-denying-sex/>

Julie Sibert, Could This Wife's Story Be Yours?:
<http://intimacyinmarriage.com/2012/11/08/could-this-wifes-story-be-yours/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, Lady, It's Not About You:
<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/hard-things-to-hear-6-lady-its-not-about-you/>

Wall Street Journal, To Save A Marriage, Split Up:
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111904140604576496240815891366%20>

Chapter 6: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 5

Over the past four chapters, I have presented two ways to approach a refusing/gatekeeping spouse, presented a number of different ideas for responding to refusing, and linked to different resources that discuss sexless marriage. Why do this at all, other than just to grouse? Is my purpose to merely kvetch? After all, kvetching is what coots do best, right? So I'm just venting my spleen for the world's edification?

Not hardly. I know that nothing is easier or more tempting for guys than to go along in whatever situation we find ourselves, as long as we can have some semblance of peace and/or quiet in our homes. For most men, yelling and fighting when we come home ranks right up there with undergoing serial root canals without benefit of Novocaine.

But when experts tell us that approximately 20% of all marriages are sexless, and when I read the 'anti-testimonies' of refused and denied spouses on different message boards, Christian and non-, and when I read the frustration and fear that many refused express, I can't keep quiet. I guess I'm like the fool in Proverbs 29:11 who gives *full vent to his spirit*; well, so be it.

Marriage Isn't Supposed to Hurt!

Years ago, I was discussing church practices with a wise pastor, and in the midst of our discussion, he said, "Church isn't supposed to hurt." In a series on my blog (and copied into my Bad Teachings .pdf), I addressed this whole *faux*-debate about whether marriage is for making you holy or happy. Isn't it interesting that no one ever says about church, "You aren't supposed to be happy in your church; after all, church is there to make you holy." We are willing to talk about toxic churches and toxic faith, but we really don't like to entertain the idea that some marriages can be toxic, do we?

I'm going to say it here: Marriage isn't supposed to hurt. If your marriage is hurting you, then by Billy Bedamned Hangtree, do something about it! The purpose of this *Addressing The Sexless Marriage* series is to help people see that there are alternatives, other options to enduring misery and hurt. Again, if you are being hurt IN your marriage BY your marriage, then do something to CHANGE your marriage.

"Better the Devil You Know Than the Devil You Don't Know!"

Yeesh!!

First off, that's some pretty stinkin' thinkin', right there, don't you think? I mean, *Sure my marriage stinks, but it could always be worse* is hardly a ringing endorsement for the institution of marriage, is it? Hoo boy! With the world questioning the value of

marriage, it's really quite the winning argument for Christians to say, "Well, yeah it sucks, but that's life." With evangelism like that, it's no wonder we see marriage going down the tube in America.

Second, if you found yourself nodding/agreeing with that whole "devil you know vs. devil you don't know" quote, uh, isn't it pretty revealing that you could even find yourself comparing marriage to acceptable devils?
Erm, ... maybe I should just leave that one alone....

I hear someone saying, "Brother Curmudgeon, we agree that refusal and/or gatekeeping is wrong, but you don't know our situations. We've got wives (or husbands – haven't forgotten you refused wives) that would take to the warpath if we did any of those things that you suggested. And after all, one of your ideas calls for separation; that would be expensive!"

What you are saying is true; I don't know your spouses and I don't know your situations. And, yes, I do know that the ideas that I am presenting are provocative, maybe provocative in the extreme. And, yes, I do know that separation would be expensive. All of this is true.

But, underneath all of these reasons/excuses/deflections, the question that is the heart of the matter is still there, throbbing, refusing to be ignored:

Does your marriage make you happy or miserable?

If the latter is true, and if there is something that you can do, something that is within your power to change, is it not worthwhile to give thought to the possibility of having a truly good Christian marriage?

So What If I Don't Know? You Do!

Yes, you know your situations. Those of you who are miserable, feeling trapped by your faith in a marriage that is nothing like what you felt was promised to you by God and the Church, do something! Why is it that men can go out into the world and work their butts off to provide the life that they want for their families, but can't come back into their own homes and work to have the marriage that they themselves want?

The purpose for all of these Talks, tactics, suggestions and encouragements is to do that very thing – to help you work for that marriage that you want. Just this week [at the time I wrote this post], I read another story of a spouse being 'teased', jollied during the day with hints of intimacy, then being shot down at bedtime when trying to initiate sex. Then, to add insult to injury, the next day, when expressing annoyance about the 'tease', this person got the "You're an addict, all you think about is sex" business. The final capper was that this poor refused spouse ended up apologizing for having caused a fight!

It's not enough that the refuser has made the marriage a misery for the other spouse. Oh, no! To add insult to this injury, the refused is told "you're the problem, you're a sex addict!"

Gah!!!!

The Wisdom of Mark Twain, Ben Franklin and Wife

Recently, I have been communicating with a fellow blogger and on-line friend about the scope of my blog, about it being a "ministry," about whether or not I could see myself creating, via my blog, a "safe place for refused husbands to land." That's an interesting thought for me, because I basically saw my blog as a safe place for this old coot to coot around.

I do hope that refused spouses, especially men, can come to this blog and feel "safe." I do know that many feel that they can't talk to their wives about sex, for varied and sundry reasons. But here's what I do know: while there is a place for talking, there is also a place for doing something. One of my favorite Mark Twain quotes deals with just this very thing:

Thunder's good, thunder's loud. But it's lightning that does the work.

There is a time for talking. But there is also a time for striking, for taking action. There comes a time when you have to just rip the bandage off and expose the festering wound to the open air for healing. One man that I am familiar with tells how he had fifteen years of a "good" marriage; it was a peaceful marriage, and a sexless marriage. And his wife was, oh, so happy! But then he decided to take action and start addressing the sexless state of his marriage, and the next two years were the worst two years of his marriage, as he and his wife constantly fought about sex. But, his marriage changed, eventually, for the better.

I am making no guarantees, no promises; I can't possibly do that. I can only point out that your options are:

1. do nothing and hope your marriage will change
2. do something to try to change your marriage.

Wife and I were talking about this post a couple of days ago, and she put it simply: "Anything worth having is worth fighting for!" So, while I do hope that the refused can feel safe in coming to Curmudgeonly Librarian, my real hope is that you will work to make your home the safe place that Christian marriage is supposed to be. The old Ben Franklin line, "He who gives up freedom for safety deserves neither" applies here. Don't be lulled into believing that giving up a sex life will make your marriage right.

CSL

Chapter 7: Addressing The Sexless Marriage, part 6

In the last chapter, I shared an incident that I had read about where a Refuser turned on his spouse and made accusations against his wife (yeah, you read that right, “wife”; it happens) saying that she was “a sex addict,” pestering him all the time. Again, this type of thing really burns my biscuits, folks, because it’s just plain dirty pool. I’m sorry, but more often than not, the problem is the refuser, and this type of response, which is all too common, stinks.

It’s never the refuser’s fault that sex is not happening in the marriage. There is usually a list of myriad reasons for not having sex, at the moment, but when the string starts to get long, and both know that the drought is approaching weeks, months, or even years, excuses get pushed aside for bigger guns: accusations, recriminations and blame-shifting.

Accusation #1: “All You Think About Is Sex”

I’m going to say that this is probably true. After all,...

you know who thinks about food all the time? A starving man.
you know who thinks about water all the time? A thirsting man.
you know who thinks about oxygen all the time? A man being choked to death.

Basically when you deprive a man or woman of something that they need, it becomes the focal point of their thinking. It’s human nature.

It is true that the refused spouse DOES think about sex a lot. But let’s turn this accusation on its head; let’s consider this question:

“Who doesn’t think about sex all the time?”

I’ll tell you who doesn’t think about sex all the time; someone who doesn’t have to worry if he’s going to get lucky this year, that’s who. When sex is a regular part of a marriage, it ceases to be the continual tussle that it is in a sexless marriage. There is no more stress of trying and failing, yet again, to initiate sex.

For wives who might be convinced that they do need to change their attitude toward sex and start to become more open to initiation, here is a caveat. Please accept that your husband may not believe that this is real or even permanent. After all, you have taught him that he can’t expect a sex life, and it is reasonable that he may believe that this largesse on your part is only temporary and may be withdrawn at any moment, without warning.

After WWII, aid workers who worked with starved men and women from the prison camps noted that these former prisoners would take some of the food that they were given and hide it in a pocket. The aid workers told them that they didn't have to do that, that there would be food at the next mealtime, but they had been conditioned to not being able to expect food regularly. So these workers took to giving these people two portions of bread at each meal, one to eat, and one to save. In time, the former prisoners came to realize that they weren't going to be starved again.

If, by some odd freak of chance a wife who has been a refuser wanders in here, please give your husband time to learn that you want to be his lover, not his keeper. With that in mind, please go to the Forgiven Wife website and read three posts by Chris Taylor [articles links given below]. She has written very eloquently about this.

Accusation #2: “All You Want Me For Is Sex”

There are so many good comebacks to this one, but the best one I've ever heard came from a marriage counselor. One woman made that accusation against her husband in couple's counseling: “All he wants me for is sex. To him, that's all I'm good for.” The counselor shut that down with a simple question: “If that's true, why would he even stay married to you, since you don't have sex?”

This is one accusation that, when you look at it, actually has no force behind it; it's merely an attempt to push away the spouse who is being refused and make them the guilty party. There is nothing wrong with wanting to have sex with your husband or wife. It's biblical, it's natural, and given Paul's command, in 1 Cor. 7, to not defraud your spouse in the matter of sex, it's expected. There is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to have sex with your spouse.

Do you know what is not natural? Not wanting to have sex with your spouse. As I sit here, thinking and writing, it seems that it is only right to return the question: “Just why do you want me? Why do you want to be married to me?”

Father to our kids? “Okay, but what about when they're grown and gone?”

You love me? “Funny, but I don't feel loved. I feel ignored, unloved and undesired.”

“So, just why do you want me? You accuse me of wanting you only for sex, but why do you even want me?”

Accusation #3: “Well, If You Did More _____, Then Maybe I'd Want Sex More” (Fill In The Blank)

This one is easy to answer: “**BOVINE EFFLUVIA!**” **

This accusation is the invitation to a never-ending maze with the sign over the entrance saying, “CHOREPLAY.” This accusation invites you to start trying to earn sex by

jumping through hoops, (the quantity of said hoops is unknown and quite likely expanding), with the desired result (sex) always very much in doubt. After all, there is that one word, MAYBE. It's not a promise of more sex, it is merely a tease for more sex, much like the carrot dangled before a hungry mule.

Before I go any further, let me insert this caveat. If it turns out that you are one of those pseudo-men who come home from work and unwind by playing video games for six hours, or spend all your time fishing, hunting, watching sports, and do nothing around the house, then you don't get sex, pure and simple. Your contribution to this marriage isn't just a paycheck, so do your share around the house. And read my post *Hard Things To Hear, #5: It's Not About You, Dude!* [link below]

Having said that, I categorically state that sexual intimacy in marriage is not a bargaining chip. I'm reminded of the old story of a man who meets a beautiful woman at a party and asks her if she would sleep with him for a million dollars. She gives a little consideration, looking him up and down, and answers, "Sure I would." The man then asks, "Would you sleep with me for \$10.00?" She blows up into a huge huff and demands, "What do you think I am?" To which the man replies, "We've established what you are. Now we're just negotiating."

Any Christian wife who would even entertain trying to make her husband "earn" sex with "for services rendered" is damaging her marriage. Pure and simple.

Accusation #4: "You're An Addict!"

This vicious shot is both the meanest and the most false of the different accusations hurled at a refused spouse. There is nothing wrong with wanting to have sex with your wife. Nothing. To make this accusation against a spouse is simply vile. It's one thing to not like sex or to want sex; if that is the case, admit it and seek help, counseling and/or treatment. But do not make false accusation against your spouse for wanting to engage in something that God has created, has pronounced His blessing upon, and has said is right and good.

This accusation is, frankly, just stinkin' and rotten. But, to my way of thinking, it should actually be one of the easiest diversion tactics to disarm. Let's look at how this conversation could go:

Husband tries to initiate sex, and wife says, "What? We just had sex a week or so ago. You're a sex addict!"

Husband: "Oh, do you think so? If that's the case then we need to have me seen by a doctor or counselor."

Wife: "No, you don't have to do that. Just don't pester me for sex all the time."

Husband: “No, dear. After all, ‘sexual addiction’ is a serious psychological disorder, and there are treatments for it. If I have a sexual addiction, I need to seek treatment. Let’s schedule an initial appointment with a counselor to see what our options are.”

She’s locked in, isn’t she? She’s made the accusation, and sexual addiction is a serious psychological disorder. She can’t very well be seen as a loving, caring wife and yet deny you treatment, right? So you get her before a counselor, a third party, and when you tell him/her, with your wife right there, that your wife believes you to have a sex addiction for wanting to have sex three times a week, the counselor will laugh her out of the office. Or make her deal with the fact that she has made a false accusation against you and that she is a refuser.

Okay, that’s a scenario I’d love to see played out, but I don’t know anyone who’d try it. But the situation comes down to this: your desire for sexual intimacy with your wife is not wrong, but her refusal to allow sex is wrong. You’re not in the wrong, she is. Stand on that fact, and call it what it is: sin.

Quick Summary

I’ve presented four of the most common accusations made by refusers to justify their refusal. Each and every one is merely an attempt to divert blame to the refused, making their feelings of frustrations and neglect their problems and of no concern to the refuser. I hope that, if is the case that you have experienced one or more of these accusations, that you are now able to see them for the smoke screens and diversions that they are and are able to see that what you desire is right and good, and not wrong.

CSL

** The story goes that a ladies delegation visited Bess Truman at the White House, and in the course of their visit, one of the women said to Bess, “Can’t you get Harry to stop saying ‘manure’? It sounds so crude.” To which Bess is said to have replied, “It took me 35 years to get Harry to say ‘manure’.” Be grateful for the “bovine effluvia” euphemism.

Links:

Chris Taylor, Forgiven Wife:

Extending Grace: <http://forgivenwife.com/2013/06/07/extending-grace/>

Rebuilding His Trust: <http://forgivenwife.com/2014/06/21/rebuilding-his-trust/>

Your Husband’s Healing: <http://forgivenwife.com/2015/02/20/your-husbands-healing/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian. Hard Things to Hear, #5: It’s Not about You, Dude!: <https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/03/03/hard-things-to-hear-5-its-not-about-you-dude/>

Chapter 8: *The Shot Across The Bow Reloaded*

The Shot Across The Bow, in chapter 3, was written by a husband who was explaining how he addressed the sexual refusal situation that had developed in his marriage. I presented it as an example/a template for husbands to use in confronting the gatekeeping/refusal issue in their marriage.

In discussions with my good internet friend and fellow blogger, Chris Taylor, of *Forgiven Wife*, told me that she has always had a negative reaction to the piece, and in the third post of our colloquy [see link below], she went into painful examination of her reasoning. I found her reasoning to be more than reasonable, and hence this chapter.

I need to re-address *Job29Man's Shot Across The Bow*, (naturally, with my customary tact and equanimity), so here goes. If you are a husband in a sexless marriage and are thinking of using something akin to Job's *Shot*, then be sure to....

BE A MAN, AND NOT A TOOL!

Let me refresh everyone's memory as to the core of *The Shot*, as to exactly it calls for and what it promises:

I'm going to tell you my negotiating position. I am totally committed to this marriage. I will never, ever leave you. That's not the man I am. I am not threatening you with anything because I have no intention of following through on any kind of ultimatum that involves me leaving you. Just not gonna happen. If you and I come to NO agreement today you will still have me as your committed husband until the day one of us dies.
~ *Job29Man, Shot Across The Bow*

There are several promises in Job's presentation that may or may not be used by someone else who chooses to use this or to adapt it. Job promises Sarah no ultimatums and that no matter what she does or does not do, he will never divorce or separate. Every man is different and needs to decide for himself what is his breaking point, his dealbreaker. But one thing in this speech that is central to its presentation and is NOT a negotiable: integrity.

The Shot is intended to be nothing more than the breaking up of the logjam that is hindering the entire marriage relationship. It is NOT a mechanism for "getting lucky with the little lady." If, in reading my *Addressing the Sexless Marriage* series, you are thinking "This is something I can use to get in her pants," then you are a total dick who doesn't know squat about being a Lover to your wife! (See? Tact AND equanimity, right?)

Are You A Man Or A Weasel?

One thing I learned years ago was the importance of being someone whom others can trust, someone for whom integrity and honest-dealing are your hallmarks. I realize that our society puts a lot of store in “wiggle room,” and being able to keep our options “open.” I’m old-fashioned enough to believe that this is bovine effluvia!

Whenever I hear someone try to parse out previous statements, usually what comes to my mind is Bill Clinton saying, “Well, it depends on what the definition of ‘is’ is.” Guys, I’m sorry but that’s just crap, and if this is what you’re doing, you’re just serving up a big, ol’ crap sandwich!

I see so many writers who are telling wives that they need to show their husbands respect, that they shouldn’t be saying things about their husbands to others, talking disrespectfully to or about them, etc. While I can say “Amen!” to those statements, I always want to add a little paragraph at the end of these articles that says “And men, be worthy of that respect!”

I’m telling you straight up, one of the quickest ways to piss away your wife’s respect is to use weasel words, to parse out how what you promised wasn’t what you meant, etc. If somehow you have failed to live up to your promise, then admit it. Apologize for failing to live up to your word, tell her you are recommitting to live by your promise and ask her to help you keep to it. And then live it.

Integrity

Integrity is a great concept. It should be one of the top qualities of every Christian man. Someone should be able to look at you and whether they agree with you or not, have to say, “He walks in integrity.” (Did I say “Christian man”? I need to apologize, because that’s not quite accurate. What I mean to say is that it should be one of the top qualities of every Christian, whether man OR woman.)

My wife and I watched the *Longmire* series on Netflix (a couple of times, truth be told). Set in Wyoming, it’s about a sheriff in a rural county near an Indian reservation. In one episode, one of the characters, Henry Standing Bear, tells the sheriff about how Cheyenne warriors would fight. According to Henry, these warriors would take a length of rope and tie one end to a stake, and drive the stake into the ground. Then they would tie the other end of the rope to their leg, so that they could not retreat. They were making the statement that this was where they would win or die. “This far and no further.”

As I’ve tried to make clear in several chapters, the *Shot Across The Bow* is not a magic bullet for resolving a sexless marriage. All too often, it can mark the onset of Armageddon, and what will likely ensue is anger and argument. However, if you decide that you are going to change your marriage, for good or ill, and like Popeye, you have

reached the point where you say, “That’s all I can stand ‘cause I can’t stand no more”, then the *Shot* is for you. *The End of Normal Life* is for you. Like the Cheyenne rope, they are statements of “This far and no further.”

That said, be a man of integrity and follow through on your word. Your promises must be supported by your actions.

Final Word

Don’t wait until you decide to deliver *The Shot* or *End of Normal Life* to start being a man of integrity. Start living in integrity now. If you need to, ask your wife where you have failed her, if you have any unkept promises between you. Then keep them.

CSL

Links:

The Forgiven Wife:

www.forgivenwife.com

Curmudgeonly Librarian. A Wife’s Heart: Colloquy #3:

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/?s=colloquy+3>

Chapter 9: Refused? Read This Woman's Advice!

In Dec., 2015, Sheila Wray Gregoire wrote an article on her blog for wives whose husbands are gatekeepers/refusers. Guess what? The eight steps that Gregoire gives to these refused wives who write to her are, for the most part, the same advice I have been writing for refused husbands.

I am not going to do extensive quoting from Gregoire's article, but I want to go over her eight action steps, and relate what she writes to what you need to hear. Yes, I know that she is writing to refused wives, but listen up; if this is good advice for the goose, then it is good advice for the gander. There is no reason on God's green earth why it should be just rotten for wives to be refused but SOP for husbands to be refused. So guys, listen to a woman's advice on dealing with refusal.

1) Get a Support Group and Pray Hard. This is a battle.

"Support group." Yup, I have written about distancing, and I see finding support in others as part of this distancing.

"Pray hard." Yup, I've written several posts about the need to work on yourself, to spend time with God, with His Word, in prayer.

"This is a battle." Yup, I've written about WWII, that it will get uglier before it gets better.

She is spot-on here. Find friends, spend time with other Christians, and spend time with God. Feed your soul, and don't depend on your wife during this time. Until such time as God deals with her heart, she isn't the "helpmeet" that she promised to be. Harsh, but true.

2) Have a game plan—Know what you want

"Before you start the conversation, know what you want to get out of it," Gregoire advised. Yup, I have written several times about taking the time to pray and consider the cost. To think about what you want to say in The Talk. I guess I haven't said this, or if I have, I wasn't specific, so let me put this out here and now: know what it is that you want in your marriage, and be prepared with concrete action steps. It's not enough to say, "We need to be more intimate," get an "I'll try" response, and then nothing changes. One guy I know said that his conditions were that they were to go to counseling and she was to read a certain book.

The important thing is to have steps in mind that are achievable, and in a time-line that is not open-ended. I am not saying that you issue a "60-day fix-this-or-else" ukase, but

require that observable effort be put into the marriage, and that reasonable progress be made in a reasonable amount of time.

3) Ask to start praying together

I will admit that I have not made this suggestion, but I have a good reason for this. While well-intentioned, Gregoire is writing to her Good Christian Wife audience. In my *Please Lead* series [see link below], I spoke about Christian wives attempting to impose their visions/versions of spiritual leadership onto their husbands, expecting their husbands to be their mini-Pastor On The Hearth.

When Gregoire says a husband and wife praying together can be “deeply intimate with each other. And ask God to work in our lives, and it’s His power that we really need,” I agree with her. This is true. But what is also true is that many Good Christian Wives do not respect their husbands as spiritual leaders. With this suggestion, I would add a caveat. If your wife truly does respect your spiritual leadership, then ask her to pray with you. If, instead, she resents your spiritual leadership (or lack thereof, by her lights), then don’t. It will only result in opening another front.

4) Insist on a conversation

Amen! Amen! Amen! Uh, hello. The Talk, anyone?

This is a biggie, about which I have written many times and in many ways. I love what she says about being persistent.

If he starts yelling or refuses to talk or says, “this is over”, you say, “I am not willing to accept that, and I do not believe that. If you will not talk about it now, then I will be bringing it up again tomorrow night and the night after that and the night after that. This is not going anywhere. We need to figure this out. So let’s settle a time when we can discuss this.”

So many times I have seen husbands write and say “It didn’t go well, so I guess that’s it, huh?” Why would you even think like that? If a woman writer can tell refused women to not let the matter drop, take the hint, Bubie: don’t let it drop! After all, it’s only your marriage and your life we’re talking about, right?

I get that, for many guys, thinking on your feet isn’t your strong suit, that when you’ve tried to address this before, your wife has deflected your concerns, maybe deflected blame onto you or even accused you of things that may have been in your past, or not even true (after all, “You’re a sex addict” is a favorite go-to line.)

Let me put it to you in a more concrete way to picture it. Take the number of years that your wife has engaged in refusal and/or gatekeeping. Now double it. Are you willing to accept that you are only at half-time in being refused in your marriage? Are you willing

to continue into the third and fourth quarters of your marriage, of your life, in the same way? There's your motivation, Bubie.

5) Refuse to cover for him anymore

In this section, all of Gregoire's recommendations and suggestions come under one of my go-to lines: *tear down the facade!* My constant refrain for Christian husbands dealing with long-term refusal is to come out from behind your wife's cherished facade of having the happy Christian home. If you're not happy, why support the lie that you are? Here are some of her statements to refused wives:

- one of the first steps to helping your loved one get help is to stop enabling them—to stop covering up for them anymore.
- be in separate bedrooms until your husband agrees to get some help.
- it's okay to go to the pastor in private and say, "We're having some marital difficulties"
- It's okay to stop going to social functions as a couple until he works on things.

Guys, Gregoire gets it. I have a saying that I've used before: *if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got.* Reading her article gave me a new line, and I'm going to start using it here:

I'm called to be good. I'm not necessarily called to always be nice.

Being a good guy might just mean that sometimes you can't be nice. This is not an excuse to act stinkin'; instead, it means that you will no longer "go along to get along." You'll let the consequences of her actions come to pass and not shield her from them. And you won't hide them. You may be accused of being mean, etc., but you just do what is right. You're not mean, just good.

6) Stage an intervention

You know, this sounds familiar. Not from me, but the Bible!

If your wife sins against you, go and tell her her fault, between you and her alone. If she listens to you, you have gained your wife. But if she does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (Matt. 18:15-16)

If you're tempted to say, "CSL, isn't that a little harsh? Getting others involved in our private matters?", would you say the same thing to Jesus? After all, a private matter between brothers is just that - private - right? By the way, in the previous suggestion, notice the line about going to the pastor? That's part of the intervention, isn't it?

And I do agree with the statement by Gregoire about seeing a counselor. The Matt. 18 approach begins with The Talk, "approach your wife in private...." If your wife resists

attempts to change the marriage after The Talk, then you go to your pastor, and seek counseling, or seek professional help.

So, again, Gregoire is spot-on. Are you listening?

7) Decide what to do

Neither Gregoire nor I (nor anyone else, for that matter) can give you any money-back guarantees; there are no silver bullets, no magic words and no Jedi mind tricks that you can employ that will automatically change your marriage. You can only do what you can do, and leave the rest up to God and your wife.

But, as I said, you can do what you purpose to do. Gregoire wrote: “What if he doesn’t seek help and refuses? Now you have some decisions to make about what you will do.” In several of my past posts, I have said that you need to sit down for some time before The Talk and think about what you want in your marriage, write down some concrete steps to get there, and decide what will be your deal-breakers. Gregoire recommends a book by a Leslie Vernick, but since I have read other writings by her, I can’t do so. To my mind, she identifies too closely with her intended audience. Instead, I highly recommend *Boundaries*, by Cloud and Townsend.

Whichever book you choose, however, “decide what to do” and do it. Don’t Milquetoast your marriage anymore.

8) Be Prepared

In a way, this last one had me shaking my head. The automatic assumption that if a husband refuses sex, he’s gay? That’s like saying that your wife is just frigid and not doing anything to help her.

Be that as it may, there may be many reasons why your wife refuses:

- Good-girl syndrome
- Truly stinkin’ bad theology
- Past hurts (from your or from others)
- Past sexual abuse
- Guilt over sexual sin
- Genophobia, true sexual aversion

And on, and on..... But Gregoire makes one statement that applies to both refusing husbands and refusing wives:

They’re running from the truth.

The truth is that God's plan for marriage is a healthy sexual intimacy that binds husband and wife in a strong and loving bond, "one flesh." By denying sexual intimacy, refusers are running from God's truth. The only question now is, Are you going to continue to enable her to run from the truth, or are you going to try to change the direction you are running?

CSL

Resources:

Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Boundaries. http://www.amazon.com/Boundaries-When-Take-Control-Your/dp/0310247454/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1450991778&sr=8-1&keywords=boundaries

Links:

Sheila Wray Gregoire, Do I Have To Live With A Sexless Marriage.
<https://tolovehonorandvacuum.com/2015/12/sexless-marriage-question/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, "Please Lead" (But Do It My Way), part 1.
<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/03/25/please-lead-but-do-it-my-way-part-1/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, "Please Lead", part 2.
<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/04/01/please-lead-part-2/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, "All You Think About Is Sex".
<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/06/03/all-you-think-about-is-sex/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, Christian Go-To Marital Tools, part 2.1 (Milqtoast reference).
<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/christian-go-to-marital-tools-part-2-1/>

Chapter 10: “If You Loved Me/Accepted Me”

In the free downloadable Bad Teaching .pdf on my blog, you can read what I wrote about how the Church has screwed up Paul’s teaching on “Love You Wife Like Christ Loved The Church (referred to as LYWLCLTC throughout this .pdf), and I think I demonstrated that much of what passes for marital advice today based Eph. 5:25-31 is just so much codswallop.

Yes, husbands are enjoined to love their wives “as Christ loved the Church,” but this biblical statement has been heated in the fervid minds of teachers and shaped into a cudgel with which to browbeat husbands into a meek submission to wife and children in the name of Christ. Husbands are enjoined to be more Christian than Christ ever was. And recently, I have come across a couple of statements by husbands who tell of this same teaching appearing in yet another guise in their lives.

“If You Loved Me”

On my blog, a commenter told how his wife said this to him during a conversation, and I had flashbacks to high school. Breathes there a teen-aged boy in this land who hasn’t tried the line, “If you loved me, you would.”?

I’m truly surprised that the spouse who pleads “If you loved me.....” actually believes what they are saying. It’s such a juvenile statement, a manifestly blatant attempt at emotional manipulation, and would be laughable if it weren’t said in earnest. Wife and I raised four kids, and there isn’t one of the little sprouts who didn’t try the “If you love me, you’ll give me a cookie” ploy.

Do refusers/gatekeepers think that attaining one’s majority somehow turns childish attempts at manipulation into mature reasoning? And if by some miracle of growth, “If you love me...” becomes a valid line of appeal, why doesn’t this cut two ways? After all, there are two people in the marriage, both with needs, both of whom can appeal to Love.

As in:

“If you loved me, you wouldn’t keep asking me for sex.”
“But f you loved me, you would have sex with me.”

Maybe I missed the meeting where it was determined that the first “If...” was valid but the second “If...” was a bridge too far. All I know is I didn’t get the memo on that one.

“Accept Me As I Am”

Then there is the classic, “Why can’t you accept me for who I am?” Usually, this is accompanied with pleadings that run along of lines of “This is just who I am, I can’t change. Why can’t you accept this?” There are different ways of saying this, such as:

“That’s just who I am.”

“That’s not me”

“I can’t change”

No matter the manner in which the thought is expressed, the message implicit message is still the same. “Tough. You’re stuck with me.”

My reaction? “Really? Are you saying that you are who you were when you got married, that you’ve never changed?”

Forget that old saw that says when a man marries, he hopes his wife never changes, but when a woman marries, she hopes her husband will change. We know that it’s just a joke, and we know the truth that marriage changes a person as s/he learns to integrate into a shared life. So, yes, she CAN change; she did it before and she can do it again.

The ugly truth isn’t that she can’t change; instead, it’s just that she doesn’t want to change. Interestingly enough, though, you are expected to change.

“Love On My Terms”

While not articulated, this statement encapsulates just what the “accept me as I am” statements intend. Saying “Accept me” is short-hand for “Love me with Unconditional Love like God told you to.” (And as an aside, you know who gets to say when the meter pegs out at “Unconditional Love,” don’t you? Yup, you guessed it; the one who is demanding that unconditional love.)

A commenter on a marriage forum observed that when the Good Christian Husband is told that he needs to LYWACLTC, the wife is the one who gets to be the arbiter and decide if Hubs has loved enough. And guess what? In many marriages the counter is reset every day at the crack of dawn and you have to begin all over again.

So here we come to the crux of the matter, don’t we? One person in the marriage assumes the right to define the relationship: what is love, what love looks like and what acceptance looks like. Based on one spouse’s definition/expectation, the other is informed that their actions are not “loving.” that s/he is not doing marriage right. It’s a one-sided judgment, from which there is usually no appeal.

Some time back, a commenter on one of my blogposts addressed the problem of the “You don’t love me/accept me as I am” statements. Sharing that his wife used these accusations on him, he noted,

“...the problem with both of those weapons is that they are based on an if/then premise: if one thing is true it MUST imply another truth. And here we have the problem. The spouse using this statement has a clear idea of what the resulting TRUTH looks like.... if you loved me you would respect my sexuality as it is, you don’t accept me because you do X. The problem is that truth can be distorted by the spouse’s experiences.”

Squeak Up,... er Speak Up!

There it is, in a nutshell. Yes, the accusatory spouse may truly believe that s/he isn’t being loved or accepted, but as I am wont to say, their say-so doesn’t make it so. Past experiences, bad teaching, etc., can distort their perception of love and acceptance, and even reality, with the result that their beliefs don’t conform to any semblance of the truth. Hubs/Wife may be told that their actions aren’t loving or accepting, when by any measure or observation, they actually are loving and accepting.

I am an old coot, and as you know, I’m not one for tea and sympathy. If your marriage is sputtering along like Jack Benny’s Maxwell (listen to it on YouTube, link below--you’ll get the illustration) because your spouse is operating from a lie and not the truth, then I’m all in favor of throwing some truth into the mix and countering the balderdash fueling your misery.

“You don’t accept me as I am” – “Neither do you.”

“If you loved me, you wouldn’t...” – “If you loved me, you would....”

One of my many mantras is “It’s not his marriage, it’s not her marriage; it’s y’all’s marriage.” That means you have to learn to live in peace as a husband with her and she has to learn to live in peace as a wife with you. Both of you need to learn to love each other, and learn to do the things that communicate love. And one way to communicate love is to speak the truth.

CSL

Jack Benny’s Maxwell (voiced by the late, great Mel Blanc).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17N2g2Ryqi8>

Chapter 11: Sex And Resentment, part 1

As we all know, there are three types of people: optimists, pessimists and curmudgeons. Optimists see the glass as half full while pessimists see the glass as half empty; curmudgeons want to know who drank half their milk, and are pretty sure that whoever it was, they spit in the half that was left.

Give a curmudgeon a scenario, and he can tell you six ways to Sunday how things can go wrong. Which brings me to a category of statement that I've been coming across recently.

“Having Sex When You Don't Want To Makes You Resentful”

On different marriage fora and in comments on different blogs, I have read variations of this statement written by wives, all expressing the idea that having sex when it isn't her idea causes resentment, anxiety and anger. This type of statement concerns me, because, while it is possible to see an internal, binary logic to it, there are other implications surrounding them that do not bode well for a marriage and do not promise an easy fix, or even a fix at all. The spouse making this statement is revealing bad teaching, bad feelings and/or bad faith.

Bad Teaching:

If you are a veteran reader of my blog, you will recall that I seriously love me some old movies. But my enjoyment of said movies does not mean that I am snowed by Hollywood's romance mythos and buy into what they are selling. It is unfortunate that Hollywood's Big Lie about love and romance is so pervasive in our culture. Our culture is saturated with so many bad messages that it would be impossible to enumerate them, but here are some that all of us can recognize, and can probably name a film, a character or a book that typifies these thoughts:

Love conquers all
Follow your heart/bliss
Opposites attract
Pre-marital sex is always great

(Of course, we Christians have our own version of romance mythology, “It was God who brought us together.”)

BTW, while I was in the rough draft stage of this post for my blog, a tweet came across my Twitter feed one day telling of a new post by Julie Sibert, of *Intimacy in Marriage*. Entitled *5 Fabulous Truths About Sex That You Won't See In A Romantic Movie*, it's an excellent take-down of the Romance mythos, and an excellent refutation of the wait-for-perfect-conditions mentality. Read it at the link below and use it.

The basic truths about love, marriage and sex that Hollywood conveniently skips are:

Love is a choice of the spirit, not a flutter in the loins,
Marriage is a commitment that takes work and requires sacrifice and humor,
And, Sex, good sex, takes practice.

Yes, good sex may include flutters in the loins, but it includes choosing to be a lover to your spouse. Good sex takes work to get good; those sex scenes in our favorite movies don't include the awkward first attempts, the experimenting with positions, and the squishy sheets. Good sex requires sacrifice of ourselves to be lovers. Whether it be a quickie for him, or (guys!) taking the time for foreplay to help your wife to become aroused, you make that sacrifice because it's what lovers do.

And humor? Yes, good sex requires humor; when something doesn't work or something silly happens to makes you laugh instead of moan, that's extending grace towards yourselves, because you know that there is always a next time.

Bad Attitudes:

"I feel disrespect for myself when I say 'yes' when I'm not in the mood."

"I feel like I'm nothing but a sperm dump when I say 'yes.'"

"Saying yes when I don't want to makes me feel resentful."

I hate to point this out, but these kinds of statements say so much about the persons making them. Contrast these with the wife who says, "Yeah, it's inconvenient, yeah, I'm not 'in the mood', but I love him and I can show my love for him in this way." Another wife may say, "My husband feels so connected with me when we have sex." In preparing this post, Wife reminded me of her reaction to Dr. Laura's book *Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*. Wife reviewed the book for *The Forgiven Wife* audience (*How Do Men Receive Love?*), and included this sentence:

"But what if I'm not in the mood?", women ask. Do you love him? I cannot speak for all women, but knowing that my husband is satisfied is deeply joyous and gratifying to me.

Contrast the attitude expressed in what Wife wrote with that expressed here: "Saying yes when I don't want to makes me feel resentful." When husbands and wives are lovers, sexual intimacy is a way to provide connection for both. However, if sexual activity causes you to resent sex and your spouse, then you are no longer a lover, but an adversary. It's not just that the two of you are no longer on the same team, it's like you've gone over to the other side!

Bad Faith:

By this, I'm not referring to one's salvation and walk with God (although, as to the latter, the jury is still out) , but with one's walk with their spouse. I think we can all agree that it's pretty much been established that sexual intimacy is the defining act of marriage, that sex is universally accepted as a given in marriage. When you, as either bride or

groom, stand before the preacher or Justice of the Peace and say “I do”, you’re promising to do your spouse. I know that it’s not considered kosher, nowadays, to use the Bible to tell people, especially Good Christian Wives, that their refusal is sin, but even a personage as prestigious as Martin Luther DID label refusing as *abandonment of the marriage bed*, and said it was grounds for divorce. I mean, if you can’t explain away 1 Cor. 7:5 AND have Martin Luther on your case, you can’t win.

(Come to think of it, the Jews also saw denial of marital rights as an accepted reason for separation and divorce, going back 3000 years. So, while I may not be calling one’s salvation into question, maybe I’m justified in doubting the sincerity of one’s claims of devotion to God if they believe that they can make marriage over in their own image.)

Another of my commenters wrote something that stayed with me, and I share it here in this context. The man wrote, *“I’ll never understand how a person could see himself/herself as a loving spouse if they persist in giving the shabbiest and least in love-making.”* When I read that, I was reminded of the words of Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament.

When confronted with the charge of despising God, Judah asked, *“How have we despised God?”* To which Malachi responded,

By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the Lord’s table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 1:7-8)

My question to Refusers (well, one of many, if I’m to be honest) would be “If you showed the same love to God that you show to your spouse, would He even think you’re one of His?” Before anyone attempts to try to mitigate the repercussions of refusal with the cliched “But what about all the other things I do for him/her? Don’t they count?” The answer, pure and simple, is “Unfortunately, no, they don’t.” If your spouse can truthfully say that they feel alone, unloved and miserable in your version of companionate marriage, then no, it isn’t enough. It bewilders me when a spouse seems to think that it is enough for one person to be happy in a marriage.

Resentful Or Loving; Take Your Pick

Storytime!

Two men were traveling on a train. When the train gets to a station, the first man goes up to a porter by the tracks and asks, “What are the people like around here?”

The porter returns the question, “Oh, I guess that depends; what were the people like where you come from?”

“Oh, they’re good people, salt of the earth types. Give you the shirt off their backs.”

“Well, you’ll find the people in this town are pretty much the same.”

The second man, after looking around the station, comes up to the same porter and says, “I’m looking for a good place to settle down. What are the folks like around here?”

Again, the porter turns the question back, asking what people were like where he came from.

“Oh, I couldn’t wait to get out of there. Those folks would just as soon stab you in the back as look at you!”

“Mister,” the porter said, “You’d better get on that train and keep on looking. You’ll find the folks here just like those you left.”

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*“Saying yes when I don’t want to makes me feel resentful.”*

or

*“But what if I’m not in the mood?”, women ask. Do you love him?”*

Sex: its import is what you imbue it with. Defilement or Love: you choose.

CSL

Links:

Julie Sibert, 5 Fabulous Truths About Sex That You Won’t See In A Romantic Movie.  
<http://intimacyinmarriage.com/2016/10/28/5-fabulous-truths-about-sex-that-you-wont-see-in-a-romantic-movie/>

Mrs. CSL at Forgiven Wife, *How Do Men Receive Love?*  
<http://forgivenwife.com/how-do-men-receive-love/>

## Chapter 12: Sex and Resentment, part 2

Okay, I wrote the last chapter for my blog, but even as I was hitting the button to publish it, I felt that it wasn't 'complete.' I'm not apologizing for what I wrote, and I'm not saying that what I wrote was wrong, and it's not that I didn't attempt to "speak the truth in love"; I did some heavy editing in order to pull back on my normal curmudgeonly-ness. But as I rehash the topic in my mind, I find that I am still somewhat uneasy about it.

All-wise Curmudgeon that I am, after I've written about a topic, I usually feel that I am done with it. I confess an affinity with L'il Abner's mother, Mammy Yokum, who was known for her pronouncement, "I has spoken!" After all, as the old saying goes, "CSL said it, I believe it, that settles it", right?\*\*\*

But this topic won't let me be.

### Sex: A Source of Mutual Resentment

About the time that I was writing that first post on Sex and Resentment, I had been introduced by another blogger to a different forum dealing with *#SexlessMarriage*. Unlike the christian marriage forum I habituated, this new forum wasn't operated by Christians; instead it is an open forum where people of all persuasions participate. And unlike other marriage fora, its only focus is sexless marriages. Given the overwhelmingly secular pool it draws from and its singular focus, you can imagine that it isn't necessarily a happy place.

To be frank, resentment runs *high*.

And since my last chapter was about sex and resentment, you can guess why this topic weighed on me. I wrote of spouses sharing how they've come to resent sex because their partners wanted sex with them. Spouses, both husbands and wives, on that other sexless marriage forum also shared their resentment—a reverse resentment at enforced celibacy by *frigid* spouses. (their word, not mine; as I said, it's not a Christian site, and many of the participants are bitter.)

Recently, one of the Old Guard of that forum held forth, giving counsel to a new arrival, a refused husband who came and vented about having to deal with years of celibacy. The poor sod had been told by his wife (after he was finally able to drag her to counseling), "I have to feel emotionally close before I can have sex." That, of course, struck home for me because of the *Colloquy* that Chris Taylor (of Forgiven Wife) and I did in 2015. In the *Colloquy* and on her site, Chris writes of a woman's need for *emotional closeness*.

As I was saying, one of the regulars of the site responded to the new guy receiving the emotional closeness blockade, and shared with him his "wisdom":

*[Her statement about needing emotional connection] was, whether she meant to imply so or not, evidence that this marriage was terminal. If we were so distant from one another that she couldn't bear to have sex, it was time to put it out of its misery.*

“... this marriage is terminal.... put the marriage out of its misery.” And thus ended the worldly wisdom lesson for today. :(

## Doing What Comes Naturally

But is he wrong, actually? By his light, is he too far off-base? Given the natural progression of things, he's right, isn't he? After all, his perception is that the wife can no longer “bear to have sex” with her husband. Our own Martin Luther says abandonment of the marriage bed is a valid reason for divorce, so why should I be discomfited by his ‘advice’?

Some time ago, a wife who reads my blog wrote three short paragraphs that chronicled the natural progression of sexual resentment due to refusal vs. physical trauma; looking back at it, I find that it lends itself to describing another natural downward spiral:

1. Husband wants sex because, well,... *Hey it's great, it's fun. It's how I connect.*
2. Wife wants emotional connection because, well,... *Hey, it's loving, it's bonding, and it's how I connect.*
3. End result? Each resents the other because of imposed sexual prerequisites.

And so, again by natural progression, we arrive at an impasse, all natural-like. And we are back to that Job's Counselor who wrote “put the marriage out of its misery”—his words seem on the mark, right? And I don't think it's fair to simply say, “Well, that's the world. What do you expect?” After all, the existence of so many marriage bloggers demonstrates the need for help in Christian marriages, as well.

Christian men and women are also subject to the same bitterness and despair that living in a sexless marriage creates. It's not *worldly*, it's *natural*. Some time back, I read in the comments on another Christian blog where one guy told of being resigned to misery, and that he hated his marriage, his wife, his religion and his life. Reading that, I had to admire the guy for being pretty thorough.

## My *Natural* Discomfort

It's that one word, and all its baggage: *Natural*. If a husband is refused intimacy in marriage by his wife, it is *natural* to resent her. If a wife finds that her efforts to connect emotionally with her husband are short-circuited, it is *natural* to resent him. And, yes, if a wife can no longer bear to have sex with her husband, it is *natural* to divorce.

The source of my discomfort is how easily we accept the *natural*, when there is nothing *natural* about making a marriage, a relationship, work. In my *Christian Go-To Tools* series, I wrote about Mr. Natural, the guy who is the first Go-To tool in marriage.

We're told, "it will all work itself out in the end." But when it doesn't we go the opposite direction, staying with Mr. Natural, and we spiral downward, because it's *natural*.

But to my mind, there is nothing natural about marriage. I'm not talking about monogamy vs. having the morals of an alley-cat; I'm referring to what it takes to make a relationship work. Awesome moment of truth, folks:

*Men and Women Are Different!*  
(I tell you, they should pay me for such deep insights!)

A man and a woman enter into marriage with all their past history and education and training, and begin to forge one new life, together. Just as there are a lot of stepped-on toes when a couple learns to dance together, there are a lot of missteps, stops and starts, and learned adjustments when creating a marriage. These all take grace; grace from each to the other, and certainly God's grace throughout the lives of both. There is no way that a marriage can last without each being willing to modify their lives and expectations, and learning to live with the idiosyncrasies of their partner for doing life.

Marriage is never an easy fit; the meshing of two single lives into a marriage is going to take grace and good-will to keep the gears from clashing as they undertake to create their roles as husband and wife. And, although some don't want to hear it, being a lover is part of that learning process.

## Sexual Resentment: Relationship Red Flag!

A video (supposedly satire) went viral on Facebook a couple of years ago. I've seen the video, and it views like a documentary of that spreadsheet story I referenced in Chapter 3, above. Basically, it's a video of a wife giving her husband excuses for her "Not tonight." Shaunti Feldhaun, the Christian marriage researcher/writer, watched the video, and in a nice Christian manner, shredded the heck out of it. Her last three paragraphs go straight to the matter of this being resentful of sex:

*... I've come to believe that if we women could just grasp the emotional importance for men of feeling desired – which is a bit like the emotional importance for a woman of her husband really wanting to listen and have close, intimate conversation with her – we would never look at sex the same way again.*

*Now, we may in fact be tired. We may not be able to respond that night. I'm not saying we should necessarily put aside our needs to meet his. That's not the point. We have hard days and may find ourselves emotionally vulnerable too. We need our men to understand us, as well.*

*But if we care about this man to whom we are wed, what matters to him so deeply should matter to us.*

To cap it off, at the time that I was working on these two Sex and Resentment chapters for my blog, Wife and I were discussing the subject, and she said this:

*“Do you wait until you feel like it to go to work? Do you have to be in the mood to do your job or to do laundry? Why do you have to be ‘in the mood’ to have sex with your husband?”*

I’m going to come back to a line from my last post, where I said that it no longer seems that you are on the same team, but are actually playing for the other side. I know that it’s not this simple, but it kinda is: are you for your spouse or against him/her? If you resent doing the very thing that makes a spouse feel loved, that’s a major red flag.

Jes’ sayin’.

CSL

\*\* In the interest of full disclosure of my delusions of grandeur, I should let you know that one of my favorite Mark Twain lines was “God and I know everything. God knows all that can be known. And I know the rest.”

Links:

Curmudgeonly Librarian & Forgiven Wife, Colloquy. The first of nine posts can be found at this link, and are linked from this one:

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/07/14/a-wifes-heart-colloquy-1/>

Curmudgeonly Librarian, Christian Marital Go-To Tools, 3.1.

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/02/11/christian-go-to-marital-tools-part-3-1/>

Chris Taylor, Forgiven Wife.

[www.forgivenwife.com](http://www.forgivenwife.com)

Shaunti Feldhaun, Why the “Married Sex” Video Makes Me Furious.

<http://www.shaunti.com/2016/10/why-the-married-sex-video-makes-me-furious/>



## Chapter 13: Ignore The Hypotheticals

In the spring of 2017, I wrote a series of articles for my blog in which I attempted to bring balance to the discussion of Christian marriage and the validity of sometimes having to bring an end to a dysfunctional marriage by divorce. The springboard into that series was the attempt to provide an answer to a reader's question of "how much refusal is refusal," and when does it justify separation and divorce.

In preparing for that series, I came across several "testimonies" from refused spouses who told of trying to have discussions with their refusers about the sorry state of their marriage bed, only to have these discussions turned back on them with accusations of a common theme—the refusing spouse accused the desirous spouse of wanting too much sex. (Just for your info, I've read stories in which both husbands and wives are accused of this, so it's not solely a wife-specific complaint.)

If you're a regular reader of my blog, you'll not be surprised to learn that these accusations were usually along the line of how the desirous spouse was damaging their marriage with their insatiability, maybe even to the point of ending the marriage. But there was one common theme in these accusations that I recently came across; these accusations added a new wrinkle to the eternal argument, shifting it into the future by adding a couple of hypotheticals.

"Hypotheticals?"

"What If I Can't Have Sex?"

Here's one recent example of a hypothetical: a wife began by arguing that her husband only wanted her for sex, thus making him the bad guy for putting a strain on their marriage. But then she changed gears and tried to make him feel guilty with this line: "So what if I'm not able to have sex, am I not a good wife to you anymore? Will you decide to divorce me if I'm sick and can't do you anymore?"

As I said, this is not an isolated incident as I have read several stories like this recently, and I find it interesting that the refuser jumps to a "What if" question concerning the future. Looking at this statement, it's easy to see it for what it is—an evasion—an attempt to dodge the question, isn't it? Instead of addressing the very real and immediate concerns of the refused, s/he tries to deflect from the matter at hand and turns to launch a preemptive attack on the motives of the refused spouse.

So it is at this point that I don my Solomonic robes and, with my customary Curmudgeonly wisdom, pronounce "Okay, down the road, if there are any physical challenges to the ability to have sexual relations, then you can deal with those challenges. But today, the matter at hand isn't some future 'what if you can't...' but a

very immediate ‘Can you...?’ As in, ‘If you can have sex now, why are you refusing to have sex with me?’”

Refusal is the immediate elephant in the room, and future exigencies can be met by future actions if the need arises. But what is of primary importance is the here-and-now, and if a climate of refusal has been created by Won’ts, the Can’ts can wait their turn. The here-and-now must be dealt with here and now.

If you are presented with a “What if I can’t...” argument, just remember this one fact and deal with the elephant in the room:

**“Won’t” ≠ “Can’t”**

When I saw that “What if I can’t have sex?” argument, I was reminded of one of my old posts, “If You Loved Me...” (see chapter 10) In that, I wrote how “If you loved me, you’d accept me” was basically a resort to childish argumentation, akin to a Kindergartner telling his mother, “If you loved me, you’d give me a cookie.” (Ask me how I know about that.)

As I demonstrated, the *If you loved me...* line is an unserious attempt to deflect from having to deal with a serious issue, the attempt to restore intimacy; well, so is this *What if I can’t...* line. One is an attempt to bargain while the other is an attempt to question the refused spouse’s motive and character. (By the way, both are attempts at manipulation.)

## The Second Hypothetical... Is Just As Unserious

Unserious? Yes, I mean “unserious.”

Above, I mentioned that some refusers were making the accusations that their spouses’ insatiability was damaging their calm and might be threatening their marriages. In the second hypothetical, the refuser casts him/herself in the role of a victim. In an effort to appear martyr-like (which is, as we all know, next to deity itself) this question/accusation has been presented:

*“Would you really destroy our marriage, all that we’ve been to each other, over.... SEX?”*

Okay, I have to confess that my immediate reaction to this is somewhat less than diplomatic, and certainly within my curmudgeonly character:

*“Me? You’ve been destroying our marriage over sex for umpty-ump years; I’m just calling time of death!”*

(Hmm, decidedly undiplomatic...) And most likely, you AREN'T calling TOD on your marriage, but trying to get your spouse to help you in improving your marriage. But in reflection, I'm not really all that wrong, am I? The refuser HAS been actively destroying his/her marriage over sex by denying its proper role in the relationship.

I really do wonder at the amount of self-control a Refuser has to have in order to ask that question with a straight face. After all, 5, 10, or 20+ years of gatekeeping and refusal into a marriage and s/he wants to claim that they have built a marriage together with you? When I read this I was reminded of one of my personal heroes who, when asked to renew vows for their 20th anniversary, responded, "Why? What have we got to celebrate?"

As you might imagine, Hero's words were a mega-slap in the face for his wife (metaphorically speaking), but they were also a crushing blow to the Happy Marriage fiction she wanted to maintain in front of family and friends. Hero's response was an honest assessment of what his marriage had done to him, and instead of having constructed a life and testimony to God and to the beauty of marriage, the refuser embodied the truth of Prov. 14:1:

*"The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down."*

It's ironic that this second accusation, this second unserious line, is actually true, but only in reverse. When God created man and woman and instituted marriage as the channel for the holy expression of one's sexuality, He said, "It is good." Men and women are sexual beings by God's design, and He ordained that sexuality be the province of the married. But when one spouse gets the notion that they don't have to honor their partner's God-given, God-ordained need for sex, s/he sets in motion the engine that will demolish his/her house.

So there is no validity to a sexual refuser trying to seek refuge in the institution that they have worked so hard to destroy.

## Don't Accept The Deflect

*"What if I couldn't have sex?"*

*"Would you destroy our happy marriage just because of sex?"*

So what are you to do if you receive accusations along this line, from your spouse? Just remember that they are merely attempts to deflect from the real issues of your marriage; don't allow yourself to get bogged down in these rabbit trails. Instead, keep the main thing the main thing, and keep pursuing genuine marital healing for the both of you.

CSL

## Chapter 14: Therapeutic Distancing

On my blog, I wrote a post entitled *Truly Miserable?*, in which I basically told some readers that they aren't ready to read my blog; after all, I wrote, it is only when you are truly miserable in your marriage, when you recognize that you can't take anymore, that you decide to NOT take anymore. Until then, you will take it.

Readers of my blog know that this is no new revelation. After all, as I am wont to say "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." It is only when that which you have always "got" is no longer tolerable that you will refuse to tolerate it anymore.

A husband made a comment on one of my posts saying that in 25 years of marriage, talking to his wife about their problems didn't work because she always attacked him, turning his words back on him in anger. With tongue only half in cheek did I respond "If talking doesn't work, try walking." And then I promised him that I would write a post about *Therapeutic Distancing*.

This chapter is the post that I promised him.

### Emotional Distance

First off, let me begin by saying that this post is not for newlyweds or even semi-newlyweds. I am addressing myself only to spouses who have been/are in long-term marriages in which sexual refusal and/or gatekeeping are the norm. If you have not worked through different stages and steps in trying to work on your relationship, go back and read the *Addressing The Sexless Marriage* chapters above, and start working with less confrontational methods to change your marriage.

Now, to you who have been made Truly Miserable and truly need to heal from the emotional soul damage and emasculation that has been done to you by the constant refusal, let me say this:

#### ***Take a standing eight count.***

It used to be that when a boxer in the ring was in trouble, a referee would separate the two fighters, sending the aggressor to a neutral corner and doing a standing-eight count for the other, all the while trying to assess the boxer's ability to continue to defend himself. (Why this was discontinued, I'll never understand. After all, Benny "Kid" Paret. Amirite?)

Unlike boxing, marriage does not have a referee. When one spouse has taken so much damage that s/he can no longer function in a healthy manner, they need to step back

and take care of themselves without the “threat” of continued damage, hurt, and pain. Therefore you are going to have to give yourself permission to take a Standing-Eight Count. You are going to have to give yourself permission to disengage emotionally from your spouse, in order to back off to safe levels of interaction.

“That’s not Christ-like!”

Oh, really? Why is it Christ-like to have to submit to emotional abuse, but not be seen as unChrist-like when a spouse decamps a situation marked by physical abuse? After all, Jesus stayed and “took it,” on Calvary, didn’t He? And no, I’m not saying that wives need to stick around for more beatings. My mind boggles at the theological foundations of those who believe that marriage vows are “godly bonds” that bind a person to emotional destruction, to the point of wanting to die.

[Let me be as clear and curmudgeonly as I can: If you are in a situation where you are physically abused, GET THE HELL OUTTA THERE/CALL THE COPS!!]

In what has become a must-read for many marriages, Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend explain the need for emotional distancing:

*Emotional distance is a temporary boundary to give your heart the space it needs to be safe; it is never a permanent way of living. People who have been in abusive relationships need to find a safe place to begin to “fall out” emotionally. Sometimes in abusive marriages the abused spouse needs to keep emotional distance until the abusive partner begins to face his or her problems and become trustworthy.*

*You should not continue to set yourself up for hurt and disappointment if you’ve been in an abusive relationship, you should wait until it is safe and until real patterns of change have been demonstrated before you go back.*

*~ Boundaries, Cloud and Townsend*

By the way, if anyone wants to niggle about defining emotional vs. physical abuse, I’m going to cut you off with a request that you read a blog post by Chris Taylor, at her Forgiven Wife website, entitled *Care For Your Husband’s Heart* [see link below]. Chris received an email with a chilling endline, but I have to say that the guy in the post is not unique; I know of others to whom dying has appeared as a preferable option.

How?

That is a heck of a good question, that is. But I’m sorry to say that I can’t even begin to answer it for you, because I don’t know your exact situation, and each situation has its own gradation of emotional pain. What I can tell you is that you need to examine your situation and relationship, and identify the triggers that damage you. Yes, sexual refusal

is going to be high on the list, but there are other actions/inactions that are triggers, also.

I've read where guys say that they are seeking chemical castration because they can't take any more rejection. I've read where guys say that they are lonely, as there are no signs of affection. I've read about guys who are drawn into their wives' drama with, well, ...the world, when you come down to it. I've read about guys who feel like they are their wives' servants, and treated as lackeys or merely as walking wallets.

Because these are all different, I can't give a blanket, one-size-fits-all, suggestion. But I can say this: to help create emotional distance, re-learn two words: *don't* and *no*.

**Don't:**

This is the word you keep telling yourself. When you see yourself going down old ways that have always led to hurt, tell yourself Don't! Don't get involved with her drama with her family, the church, the choir, or whoever. Don't try to protect her from the consequences of her sin, and don't automatically support her in her sin. Don't cover for her with others and don't try to shield her from the consequences of her bad actions.

**No:**

This is the word that you will use to distance yourself from your wife. If a roommate status has been imposed on you, live as an equal roommate. You're not married to Sheldon Cooper, so don't tiptoe about your house and cater to each and every whim. If need be, you might even take the roommate idea to its logical conclusion, with separate bedrooms, etc.

Like I say, I can't tell you how to go about distancing in your situation. But what I can say is this: whatever your "normal" is, whatever causes you pain and emotional distress, simply unplug from it. Take your figurative headphones, unplug your figurative phonejack, and, as I told the commenter, above, . . .

**"If talking doesn't work, try walking."**

I come back to this advice. Remove yourself to a neutral corner and take your standing eight count. Take your iPod/iPad and your Bible, and retire to another room to carve out separation for your recuperation.

When it comes to church-related activities, remember this: you're a patient and not a doctor. Find time and space to receive ministry. Take a break from ministry and be ministered to. As to church attendance, take two cars and sit in a different pew. If need be, visit a separate church; again, remember that you are a patient, so be willing to receive treatment.

Last but not least, go to Amazon and read the first two chapters of Cloud and Townsend's *Boundaries* (they are presented in Amazon's "Look Inside" sampling feature). If you see yourself and your need in there, buy the book ASAP. As well, if you have not done so, register to participate on Paul Byerlys' *Marriage Bed* forum, and ask the board veterans about how to set boundaries in marriage.

CSL

Resources:

Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries*.

[http://www.amazon.com/Boundaries-When-Take-Control-Your/dp/0310247454/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1448823124&sr=8-1&keywords=boundaries](http://www.amazon.com/Boundaries-When-Take-Control-Your/dp/0310247454/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1448823124&sr=8-1&keywords=boundaries)

Links:

Curmudgeonly Librarian, Truly Miserable.

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/11/11/truly-miserable/>

Chris Taylor, Care For Your Husband's Heart.

<https://forgivenwife.com/care-for-your-husbands-heart/>

The Marriage Bed forum.

<https://qna.themarriagebed.com/>