

“Not Tonight Honey, I Have...”

If you are married, you have probably heard, “Not tonight, honey, I have...” The blank is filled in with many excuses - headache, too tired, not in the mood, the kids might hear, etc. Paul offered a reason that you have probably never heard! We’ll look at his keen insights in today’s Templates of Truth.

Like modern America, the ancient Corinthian culture was sex-saturated. Many of the views and practices were distorted and depraved. Unfortunately those views and practices remained a part of some individual lives even after they trusted Christ as their Savior, and the Apostle Paul had to deal with the church concerning them. One distorted view was that sex is inherently evil and should not be engaged in except for purposes of procreation, even among married couples.

To counter this twisted view of marital intimacy, Paul issued one basic command – *Stop depriving one another* (I Corinthians 7:5). The Greek word Paul uses for *depriving* comes from a root word meaning to rob or keep back by fraud. *Stop* is a strong negative in the Greek, so Paul’s basic admonishment is that sexual deprivation between spouses is marital fraud and should be stopped immediately. Paul qualifies his statement with several further insights.

First, sexual intimacy in marriage is a mutual obligation under the marriage covenant or contract – *Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband* (7:3). The Greek word translated *duty* refers to a debt that is owed, and the word, *fulfill* means to pay, give up or yield. Paul is reminding husbands & wives that we have a responsibility to each other to meet our spouse’s sexual needs in marriage. Our modern world focuses heavily on individual rights, especially the right we have over our own lives & bodies to choose for ourselves what we think is right and best. In marriage, however, Paul teaches that we forfeit a certain degree of that right – *The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does* (7:4). The word, *authority* refers to freedom and privilege. Partners agree to extend to each other their right & privilege to sexual access and freedom in marriage.

It is not practical to assume, however, that husbands & wives will always be totally available at all times to each other for the complete fulfillment of all sexual needs and desires. Paul concedes in 7:5, that there are times when abstinence is appropriate, but not for the reasons we commonly use. Notice the conditions Paul sets forth. Sexual abstinence in marriage should only be *by agreement*, or by mutual consent. It should be limited – only *for a time*, and by implication, an agreed upon set time. Aside from the obvious reasons of health, physical and certain emotional conditions, Paul says that abstinence should only be enforced for purposes of fasting & prayer – *that you may devote yourselves to prayer*. The concept of fasting is to sacrificially deprive yourself of certain needs so that a concentrated effort can be invested in worship and seeking God. Once that time has been completed, Paul commands, *come together again*. Resume normal intimate relations with one another.

These things were important for the Corinthian believers to observe because Paul knew one thing for certain – Satan loves to destroy lives through sexual sin. Paul’s teaching acknowledges that God created sex as a holy, beautiful and fulfilling experience but He designed the marriage relationship of husband & wife for its proper arena – *But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband* (7:2). Sexual behavior outside of a Biblical marriage is *immorality*. But even within marriage, when a spouse rejects their mate’s sexual needs & desires, refusing to be a covenant partner; it is a cruel act of negligence and abuse. Not only that, Paul warns that it leaves the deprived partner vulnerable to Satanic attack – *lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control* (7:5). A vulnerable spouse can come under the assault of the full arsenal of demonic sexual impurity, including pornography, affairs, and other inappropriate activities. God instituted marital sexual intimacy to protect husbands & wives from such destruction – *it is better to marry than to burn* (7:9).

Human sexual needs & experiences have many individual, complex dynamics. We have to remember that God created sex and gave it to us a gift – *each man has his own gift from God* (7:7). Like all divine gifts, they can be used, abused, ignored or neglected. Accordingly, they can bring great fulfillment, happiness & joy to our life; or, they can bring pain, suffering, loss and destruction. Married couples have an incredible gift in sexual intimacy. If they nurture that gift by giving it free and often expression between them, it can cause their love & intimacy to flourish. If they neglect and abuse it, it will destroy their happiness and motivation to remain together. Experience & enjoy your divine gift.

That’s today’s Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.