

Equal, But Different

One Plus One Equals One – Song of Solomon 4 – God's Differences

"How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats that have descended from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes Which have come up from their washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost her young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields, all the round shields of the mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies. Until the cool of the day When the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you."

Song of Solomon 4:1-7

Did you know that men and women are different?

I know that seems like an obvious answer, but sit back and think about our world. Does the world try to downplay the differences and exemplify the similarities?

Why does the world want to see men and women as the same?

We have this mentality that we want to all be treated the same. There are no differences between the genders and anyone who says different is trying to cause problems. It seems as if we like to pronounce our equality, but when it suits our wants we will claim our differences. We want to be treated fairly, but we want to be treated differently. It's confusing. So which is it?

Both.

As men and women we are equal. We are all created in the image of God. Women do not have less of the image than men and vice versa. We are equal, but we are not the same. Beyond the obvious physical differences, men and women think and feel differently. We see the world differently. Therefore, we can rejoice in our equality and celebrate our differences.

What are some areas that you are different from your spouse?

Why is it important to recognize and celebrate both your equality and differences?

As we consider the subject of marriage, we have seen through the previous lessons that the man and woman are equal, but there are also differences such as the roles and positions. There are differences in feelings and communication styles. These differences can be a challenge to marriage, but they can also be a source of growth and understanding. The area of physical intimacy is no different.

Men and women think differently about sex and this can be a source of conflict in the marriage, but God does not leave us without instructions. Song of Solomon 4 is the description of what took place on the honeymoon night and helps us to see how different men and women are.

Why do we need to recognize these differences?

The answer to this question takes us back to the perspective of physical intimacy. Since it is an act of worship, we are celebrating the differences. It is hard for us to celebrate them if we are not recognizing them and it is hard for us to

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, may you come with me from Lebanon. Journey down from the summit of Amanah, from the summit of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes, with a single strand of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, And the fragrance of your oils than all kinds of spices! Your lips, my bride, drip honey; Honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."

Song of Solomon 4:8-11

serve our spouse if we do not understand how to serve him or her in the differences.

Turn in your Bible to Song of Solomon 4. You may not have spent much time in this book, but it has a lot to offer for a better understanding of marriage. There is one fact that we must recognize in understanding men and women.

Men's desire for physical intimacy is equal to women's desire for affection.

This one fact is foundational in the physical intimacy of marriage. Notice, it does not say men do not desire affection and women do not desire physical intimacy. Men do desire affection and women do desire physical intimacy, but the stronger desires are what we are more aware of and that is the way God made man and woman.

Why is it important to understand that God made man and woman this way?

It is true that these desires can be misdirected, manipulated, and abused, and that is why we are in the fix we are today with all the sexual perversion found in both genders. These God given desires, when controlled by the flesh, will cause problems and lead to sin. But on the flip-side, these God given desires, when controlled by the spirit, can bring joy and satisfaction in each other. Read through verses 1-7 of chapter 4.

Here is the picture. The bride and groom have pulled away from the wedding party and entered the tent. They are coming to a time of physical intimacy that they have kept themselves for. The previous chapters show the anticipation that has led them to this point. They are now standing before each other naked and unashamed as God intends. The man begins to describe what he sees. He is really admiring her body, hence our first point.

A man's strong sexual drive is normal. This groom is getting into what she looks like. He starts with her entire body, but quickly starts naming off parts. He talks about her eyes and hair. He mentions her neck and teeth. He desires to see his bride. Men, on average, think about sex thirty times a day and desire intimacy two to three times a week. On average, women only think about it once a day. He is all about her body, and this is normal, but notice he understands that a women desires affection, which is the next point.

A woman's strong desire for affection is normal. The bride is taking in the comments he is making about her. She is soaking in what he is saying. Looking back into the previous chapters, we see that this groom has a history of complimenting and romancing his bride. He makes special efforts to show his love for her outside of the bedroom. A woman desires this type of affection. She desires to hear her groom speak words of affection.

Why is it important to understand that your spouse's desire is equal to yours?

I would encourage you to talk to your spouse about these desires. They are equal, but different.

We continue through this night of passion and desire. Read verses 8-16. At this point in our picture the groom and bride are now embracing. They are holding each other and the groom continues to speak, which brings us to our second observation.

"A garden locked is my sister, my bride, A rock garden locked, a spring garden locked, a spring sealed up. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates With choice fruits, henna with nard plants, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, With all the trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices. You are a garden spring, A well of fresh water, And streams flowing from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind, and come, wind of the south; make my garden breathe out fragrance, let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden And eat its choice fruits!"

Song of Solomon 4:12-16

A man sees physical intimacy as a way to paradise. This groom is now embracing his bride and speaking words of respect to her. He calls her his bride and his sister. He is telling her what she means to him. He is in paradise. A man sees intimacy as paradise. The rest of the world could be crumbling down around him, but if he is able to embrace his wife, everything is perfect. If he is able to feel his wife's body against his then the feelings and troubles of the day disappear. Intimacy is paradise for the man, but women are different.

A woman sees physical intimacy as a result of paradise. This bride has come closer to her groom. She has allowed him to embrace her because of the affection he has shown her. This entire chapter is spoken by the groom with the exception of the final verse. Verse sixteen is the bride speaking out. The groom has met her need of affection and taken her into paradise. She has enjoyed his words and relished his affection. As a result she gives herself to him. In verse sixteen she says, "Take me, I'm yours!"

Talk to each other about how you perceive intimacy to be paradise. Remember, you are equal, but different.

There is one more point to be made about the differences.

A man's experience in intimacy reassures his manhood. A man may have lost his job, wrecked the car, and lost his wallet, but if he enjoys intimacy with his wife, then he feels like a man. I believe this truth ties in to the aspect of a woman fulfilling her role as helper. A woman helps a man feel like a man in physical intimacy. A man has a desire to fulfill his wife sexually. When he does this then he is fulfilled. He feels like his wife's hero and knight in shining armor.

A woman's experience in intimacy reassures her security. When a man truly shows his wife affection and seeks to fulfill his wife, she will feel safe and secure. She will feel as if nothing can harm her. She has been treated with affection and respect. She has been given love and admiration. She feels every part a woman. She feels complete and satisfied.

It is important to understand the deeper aspect of sexual intimacy and its effects on both the husband and the wife because they are equal, but different.

How does noting these truths affect your thinking?

Now we need to come back to our perspective of physical intimacy. Sex is not just an action, but an act of worship. Therefore, there should be an emphasis on the atmosphere more than the act. Here are some thoughts to consider.

- Understand that the woman will usually need more time to be prepared for intimacy. This is the idea that men need to show affection to their wives throughout the day. This can be done by appreciating her work, helping her with the dishes, and letting her know you love her. A dozen roses and doing dishes could both work. Women will want to show appreciation for the affection. A man needs to know if what he is doing is worth doing.
- Understand that intimacy is meant to share the complete person. This is to say that the man and woman should talk about their intimacy. Tell each other what is comfortable and what is not. Take time to talk through some of the finer points of sex. Remember that Solomon continued to use words to reassure and encourage his bride. In other words, don't rush things. Take your time and do it right.

- Finally, men have been tasked as the head of the home. Therefore, men are encouraged to take the initiative. This does not mean demanding sex, but it does mean intentionally taking the time to understand and show affection to your wife. It means taking the effort to be romantic and loving. If the man will be willing to show affection to his wife, then the wife will be willing to give herself to her husband. Take another look at the passage. It is the man who is taking the initiative and who shows affection. He is seeking to meet her needs through servant love. In the end, she desires to present herself to her husband. Husbands love your wives.

This all comes back to our perspective of sex. If you see it as just an act, then you will struggle at seeing how your spouse is different from you. When you embrace sex as an act of worship to God, then you will seek to glorify Him as you give yourself to your spouse.

God designed physical intimacy to be satisfying for both the man and woman. He wants both husband and wife to enjoy the passionate, physical joys of satisfying each other. He wants them to see that they are equal yet different and have fun with those differences.

So go talk to your spouse. Seek to understand how he or she ticks and then get in sync.

It is then that you will experience that $1+1=1$.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

