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Review:

- We are addressing the home sphere and how we can improve our marriages through God's design and not the patterns of the world.
- God's plan for marriage is meant to be a blessing and privilege. When we follow God's design and partner with our spouse to accomplish His purposes, our marriages thrive.

This week: Intimacy

- A closeness between people in a personal relationship that is built over time; where they care for one another in honesty and trust; where love for the other is placed above self.

John 15:15 (NIV) I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

1. Intimacy in marriage begins with God's love

1 John 4:7-11 (NIV) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- Agape: a self sacrificing, unconditional love that only comes from God.

Ephesians 5:25-26 (ESV) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

- Spiritual intimacy is cultivated when we love one another out of *agape* love.

Philippians 2:1-3 (NIV) Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

- Agape love produces the fruit of unity, trust, tenderness, compassion, humility and intimacy.

2. Marriage needs emotional Intimacy

Emotional intimacy in marriage means that there is a foundation of trust and comfort with each other. You are relaxed in each other's presence and are comfortable sharing things at a heart level. Your relationship is characterized by peace.

1 Peter 3:7 (NIV) Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

- Husbands seek to understand and love your wives for who they are, how they feel and think.

Ephesians 5:31-33 (NLT) As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."³² This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.³³ So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- Wives love and respect your husbands. This means embracing the way they are wired.

Ways to cultivate emotional intimacy:

- Ask your spouse about their day with sincerity and good listening.
- Go for walks, talk about things meaningful to both of you.
- Ask your spouse what their dreams in life are.
- Have regular 'dates' without your cell phone on.
- Men, give hugs with no agenda.
- Knowing each other's love language.

3. Marriage needs physical or sexual intimacy

God's design for marriage is good in every way, including sex.

- It's sin that has made it so complicated and even hurtful.

"Too many men demand sex as proof of love; too many women have given sex in hopes of love." Erwin McManus

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 (NIV) The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs.

⁴The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. ⁵ Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- Paul's thought behind this text is that Husbands and Wives are equal in value, character and responsibility and are meant to serve one another.

While sex is not the definition of love, it can be the ultimate expression of intimacy.

God has boundaries around sex and intimacy.

Hebrews 13:4 (NIV) Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

- God wants no sex outside of marriage. It's for our good.
- Guard yourself from pornography as it will destroy sexual intimacy!
- Physiological changes - libido can wane and physical functions can diminish as we get older!

Intimacy applies to all our important relationships, just at different levels. When we are abiding in Christ we naturally foster intimacy in our relationships.

For Small Group Discussion:

1. What was your takeaway from this week's message? How have love and intimacy been confused in our culture?
2. Is your busyness and being overly committed hurting intimacy in your marriage?
3. Are there distractions that get more attention than your marriage? Kids, grandkids, job, finances, hobbies, parents, friends? Time on Social Media?
4. If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, who will you talk with and pray with to take a different path? What is your part in turning this around?

Tips and Resources:

- Consider getting involved in our Pure Desire Ministry.
- *Holy Sexuality* by Christopher Yuan; *Mama Bear Apologetics Guide to Sexuality* by Hillary Morgan Ferrer

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