

October 2009

When we started mapping out a book on marriage, Stasi and I knew we wanted to speak to the issues entangled with sex. But now we're having second thoughts. *Dear Lord – we're going to include a chapter on sex? What in heaven's name do we say? What stories do we tell?* We decided to keep the whole chapter to three lines:

You need to do it. Often. In a way you both enjoy it. Immensely.

If this isn't the case, then you need to deal with why it isn't.

Cause you need to do it. Often. In a way you both enjoy it. Immensely.

We were only partly joking, but why the need to make jokes? What are we all so nervous about? What is it about sex that makes it the most awkward thing to talk about – one of the classic “no fly zones” – even among couples who've been married for years? (Do you two talk about your sex life much? With ease?) Isn't it because it touches upon who we are, how we are doing as a man and a woman, because the nakedness of sex is far more than physical?

Genesis says, “Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame” (2:25). Wow. There is an abandon being described there, a freedom with their bodies, with each other's body, with their sexuality and their selves. What if we could get back to that?! I was eavesdropping on a conversation between two couples – both empty nesters – about what it's like when the kids are gone. “It's wonderful – we have more time for Bible study.” “Bible study?! Are you crazy? We get to walk around the house naked and make love whenever we want!” One of those couples is far closer to Eden than the other, and it ain't the ones with the concordance on the nightstand.

It comes as a surprise to folks unfamiliar with the Bible how much God talks about sex, and with such, shall we say, *enthusiasm*. The stern commands are only part of the picture, given not in the spirit of, “It really would be best if you simply stayed away,” but more like the final briefing before new recruits go sky diving. The commands are all protection; they come from an appreciation of how wild and powerful sex is, how dangerous these skies can be, and how glorious.

There are three things that are too amazing for me,
four that I do not understand:
the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a maiden (Proverbs 30:18-19).

Read it again. The author is trying to explore the mystery of sex, and using poetry to do it (which is probably the only way; no technical manuals here). Did you notice the connections? An eagle in the sky, high and lifted up, rising above the earth. Sex is transcendent. Sex helps us to rise above the

petty, the little foxes; in fact for sex to be good we *have* to transcend ourselves as we love one another. Which is one of its greatest gifts – to be free, if but a moment, from that constant self-consciousness that besets mankind. Sex ought to lift you above yourself; it ought to be soaring.

A snake on a rock is usually warming itself, soaking in the rays of the sun and the heat radiating from the earth. The poem takes us from the transcendent to the earthy. It's hot and sweaty. Often Stasi and I draw close to one another and lie there warming ourselves to each other, warming to our bodies again, warming to the act. And when the snake begins to move, it is graceful and undulating.

Then the writer uses the metaphor of a ship on the high seas. Holy cow, these Bible guys really got it right. Sex as a storm. Sex as a ship carried along by a tempest – waves crashing over the decks, all hands holding on for dear life. We are meant to be swept up into it, carried along by its power and majesty. There is no such thing as “safe” sex; this is not something you can control nor do you really want to (though Lord knows in our fear and woundedness we do try and control it). The surging power of sex ought to humble us, unnerve us, cause us to want to learn its ways like sailors so that we can at least trim our sails, turn our bows into the oncoming waves, make the most of the careening ride. To be foolish with sex is to risk violence and destruction (that's where the stern commands come in). But after the storm has passed, we feel a sense of awe, of worship even.

God has created the human form and the human heart to experience passion and ecstasy when we are fully loving one another – transcendent, earthy, tempestuous. It is a gift he intended us to enjoy. Often. This ought to change your view of God – he is intense about pleasure. At the center of the Song of Songs, as the two lovers are really going at it full throttle, God speaks, and what he says is this: “Drink your fill, O lovers” (Songs 5:1). Drink your fill. Let's see if we can find our way back into that.

This is another peek into *Love and War; Finding the Marriage You've Dreamed Of*. It comes out December 15! (You can pre-order now on any on-line book seller). We also have a number of wonderful new resources available immediately – you'll see what we're offering on the enclosed flyer!! All of this is offered from our hearts' deep passion to help all of you – single and married – to grow and heal and find life in God which is life indeed.

With our love,



John