

Intimacy in marriage

Intimacy in a Christian marriage is a holistic, "one-flesh" union (Genesis 2:24) encompassing spiritual, emotional, and physical closeness, designed by God for mutual delight, companionship, and covenant reflection. The intimate relationship of husband and wife is a deeply satisfying closeness of mind, body, heart and spirit shared by two equals who relate as lovers and best friends in the permanent context of marriage. We might have had intimate friends who enriched our lives but intimacy in marriage should surpass any other relationship. Marriage never guarantees the delights of intimacy and it needs to be worked out by both partners. One cannot create intimacy by making an intellectual choice to do it. One can love the other person with an unconditional love by choice of one's will and by a commitment and may continue to do so even if the other person does not respond. But it takes two people's efforts for an intimate relationship and response from the other person which is its life blood.

The following four principles regarding intimacy in marriage exemplify honouring God:

Intimacy is for God's glory.

Intimacy unites couples.

Intimacy should be a regular activity.

Intimacy should be "other-oriented."

To build intimacy in our marriage, we need to begin by giving up false assumptions about ourselves and unrealistic expectations of our mate. Most of us enter into our marriage relationship with grossly unrealistic expectations. Intimacy can begin only when we see ourselves as we are and love and accept and delight in our partner on the basis of reality which is an ongoing process. David and Vera Mace says, "What a couple have on their wedding day is not a key to a beautiful garden but just a vacant lot and a few Gardening tools." We not only have a few tools and a vacant lot but we also have the creator of the garden. As we allow Him to control and direct our loves, our marriage can grow into an intimate relationship.

Secondly intimacy depends on the experience of shared feelings and deeper understanding. This needs wisdom and involves time. Intimacy comes only out of **our choice to know and be known**. Both partners need to develop verbal skill and learn to express inner feelings to one another. We have to open ourselves even if it means the risk of humiliation. Display mutual respect for one another. Intimacy thrives on vulnerability, trust, and selfless love.

Thirdly **sex is no substitute for intimacy**. Fill your marriage with tender non sexual physical touching. Physical contact apart from sex is absolutely essential in keeping the fire of romantic love lit.

Fourthly there must be trust in one another. To have trust there must be acceptance of one another. Prov. 25: 19.

Lastly prayer can cement marriage and togetherness in a deeper way.

Anyone can have sex; but it takes something special to move from a mere physical activity to intimacy. It involves deep trust in one another, in- depth communication – both verbal and non-verbal, tenderness, acceptance, genuine, unselfish love, appreciation, forgiveness etc. **The key to sexual intimacy is sexual liberation, a state that takes time, patience and tremendous trust to reach**. They begin to know each other on a spiritual, emotional and psychological level that leads to knowing each other on an intimate physical level. Husbands and wives are called to be vulnerable

before each other. Your mate is the one with whom you share all of the intimate details of your life, thoughts, fears, dreams etc. Our mates should have a growing, deep knowledge of our emotions, mental state and spiritual state. This is especially true concerning our own sexuality. Physical fulfillment in marriage starts as we begin the process of fully sharing our inner selves before our mates in an atmosphere of love, commitment and trust. We must open ourselves up to our mates and attentively listen when they open themselves up to us. Without trust, you do not have intimacy.

Sexual liberation is the right to accept or decline advances without fear of ridicule, rape or coercion. If wife withholds sex regularly as a tool of manipulation, sexual liberation has not been achieved. If a man withholds sex due to physical problems without making his partner aware of these, such as embarrassment over erectile dysfunction or a lack of desire due to stress, sexual intimacy has not been achieved.

Following are a few Obstacles to Intimacy:

Common barriers include a lack of forgiveness, lack of effort invested in cultivating intimacy; fear of vulnerability, busyness, and idolatry; (such as pornography or prioritizing work over the spouse); insecurity.

Conclusion

Someone said "Being Intimate Means "Into-Me-See". Developing intimacy is like peeling an onion — it can happen just a little at a time while trust is developed. Because God made us, He intimately knows us better than anyone can. Therefore, one needs to first experience the joy that comes from having an intimate relationship with God and that out of that love you have experienced with Him, that you will find intimacy with a special someone who will make the load of walking the earth a little lighter.

True marital intimacy is a precious jewel to be prayed for, prized, and pursued. It's worth the work.