

How To Stop a Sexless Marriage



MarriageHelper



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Help! I'm stuck in a sexless marriage!

The extent of the research and the methodology employed far surpassed any study before it. Published by the University of Chicago in 1994, the “public” version of the report was provocatively titled *Sex in America*. The scientific version carried the duller title of *The Social Organization of Sexuality*. Though all sex studies are controversial, this one did its homework in its attempt to avoid research flaws and to get as true a representation of America as possible. Trained workers interviewed 3,432 scientifically randomly selected American men and women across America between the ages of 18 and 59.

One unexpected finding was that sex is not happening as much as most folks thought. The research indicates "about a third have sex with a partner at least twice a week, a third have sex with a partner a few times a month, and the rest have sex with a partner a few times a year or have no sexual partners at all." How do those numbers change if you leave out singles and consider only those that are married? It seems that 20% of married couples between the ages of 18 and 59 have sex with each other ten times or less per year. Another 15% have sex with each other about twice a month or less. The “ten time or less” couples are often referred to as no-sex marriages (or sexless marriages) and the “about twice a month” group as low-sex marriages. In this article, we’ll combine them into the term sexless marriages.

Why should sexless marriages concern Christians? First, there is a Biblical imperative that should prevent Christian couples from having sexless marriages, but they exist anyway. Second, ample research exists to show that marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction rise and fall together. If one or both mates are sexually dissatisfied, that negatively affects their satisfaction with their marriage as a whole. Third, medical science has found that those having sexual fulfillment benefit medically in important ways. If we believe that Christians must take care of their bodies, then we should believe that they must be sexually active in their marriages. Fourth, pornography. It may be that a sexless marriage increases temptation for porn usage. On the other hand, porn usage may lead to a sexless marriage. Either way, sexual fulfillment in marriage either affects or is affected by porn usage.

Biblical Imperative

Though some claim that sex is immaterial in a Christian marriage, Paul said that it is. “The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. 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.” (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

Though not often preached from modern pulpits, this is a command of God. Depriving a spouse of sexual fulfillment is wrong. It is a sin.

How often is enough to obey this command? There may be an answer to that in the health benefits discussed below.



Marital Satisfaction

Many studies could be cited, but common sense and observation told us this before any social scientist tested the hypothesis; marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction go hand in hand. Interestingly, as far as the social sciences are concerned it is somewhat of a “chicken and egg” question. Does a couple’s increased marital satisfaction lead to increased sexual satisfaction, or is it the other way around? I’m currently researching that question through the auspices of the University of Sydney (Australia).

My work with thousands of marriages indicates that when one is not satisfied with the marriage, s/he seldom is satisfied with sex in that marriage. Also, if either spouse is not satisfied with the sex in the marriage, s/he is not satisfied with the marriage either. Maybe it’s so symbiotic that one cannot exist without the other for most couples. One thing is sure, if a husband or wife is dissatisfied with the sexual relationship in the marriage – too little, not sensual enough, too much emphasis on the sensual, poor skills, body no longer in shape, hygiene, hang-ups, you name it – then that person is usually not terribly satisfied with the marriage itself.

God commanded us to fulfill each other sexually in our marriages. Science shows it is a factor in marital satisfaction. If the church believes that divorce is bad and staying married is good, then the church should be clearly teaching the Bible's sexual command for sexual fulfillment.

Health Benefits

A great deal of study has been done around the world as to the medical effects of achieving fulfillment in a sexual encounter. There isn't room to cite all the studies, but if you wish to know more a good source is a book published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, *The Science of Orgasm*.

An Israeli study found that women who regularly reach fulfillment are less likely to have a heart attack. There is associated research from other places in the world that address decrease in the likelihood of endometriosis, reduction of the intensity of cramps, and the like. From sexual interaction with the man there are also benefits that reduce the likelihood of breast cancer.

A British study found that men who regularly reach fulfillment are less likely to have a fatal heart attack. Other studies show that they are less likely to have prostate cancer.

Each time a man or woman reaches fulfillment, oxytocin releases into the brain and body in quantities that promote bonding between the two people. The more a married couple have sexual fulfillment (each of them fulfilled), the more they bond with each other; they become closer and more attached.

Additionally, with each achieved fulfillment, stress reduces, anxiety reduces, and the body's ability to handle pain improves.

How often are the "fulfillments" that have good health effect taking place in these studies? Think of it this way, the male body produces a new batch of sperm about every 72 hours; that's the way God made men. If fulfillment were achieved on average every 72 hours, that would be about two to three times per week. That's about the average that most of these studies found to be medically beneficial. It appears that God made us to have sex with our spouses two to three times per week and that each of us should reach fulfillment. In marriages where that frequency occurs, not only are there health and emotional benefits, but satisfaction with the marriage increases, as indicated earlier. Taking care of one's body, especially in sexual fulfillment, also helps take care of one's marriage. It all ties together.

Porn

I realize the danger in discussing this because far too many women have suffered self-doubts about their appearance and ability as a result of their husbands turning to pornography. A lady once told me that she wished she had the money to have plastic surgery from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet so that her husband would want to look at her rather than those women on the Internet. Be assured that I do not in any way wish any woman or man to take blame for the sins of a spouse. Porn addiction is just that; an addiction. Drunks who claim their spouses drove them to drink are just as ridiculous as porn addicts who claim their spouses drove them to porn. Each person makes his or her own decisions. No one makes us addicts; we do it to ourselves.

Also, in this age many enter marriage with a distorted view of sex, sexuality, and sexual fulfillment. The more that people are exposed to porn before they are married, the more likely they are to believe that there are men and women who are always craving sex and that will do anything, anywhere, at any time. Boys and girls who have this as their “teacher” about what sex will be like in marriage are in for a great disappointment and, very likely, a lot of anger when they realize that their spouse isn’t like that. No one is. Not even the porn actors. If a person enters marriage with that expectation then his or her spouse is going to find it nearly impossible to please them sexually. Intense and repetitive education, maybe therapy, perhaps a miracle will work, but the other spouse trying to live up to this spouse’s fantasy won’t.

With that said, allow me to share a few thoughts about how a married couple might use sexual fulfillment to overcome pornography.

In the passage cited earlier, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, note that a major reason to sexually fulfill each other in marriage is “so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” God put our sexual drives within us. He knows how powerful that drive is and how a human that is sexually unfulfilled has a greater likelihood of yielding to temptation. That’s not a new thought; it’s in the verse. If I refuse my spouse the sexual fulfillment that she needs, I am a part of increasing her susceptibility to sexual temptation. If she sins, it is her choice, but this passage states that I helped her become vulnerable to that choice.

In our culture, men don't have to find lovers or go to prostitutes if they seek sexual fulfillment outside their homes. With the advent of the Internet, porn is readily available and can be viewed in relative secrecy. I have heard from many men and many women that they feel justified in their usage of porn because there is little to no sexual fulfillment in their marriages and "porn keeps me from doing something bad with a real person." If a wife is not actively involved in sexually fulfilling her husband, or if he is not actively involved in sexually fulfilling her, then yielding to the temptation of porn becomes easier for the unfulfilled spouse. It doesn't make it right but it can make a person more susceptible. Of course, nothing justifies sin, but perhaps there is a way to "de-porn" at least some, if not many, of those who have yielded to this temptation. How? By obeying [1 Corinthians 7:3-5](#)

This does not mean that a wife becoming a sexual tigress will automatically eliminate her husband's addiction if he is addicted to porn. Addictions require special help to overcome and no matter how sexually intriguing she becomes, he will return to his addiction until he receives the proper help to heal. She is not the cause of his addiction nor is she the one to heal it. (Change gender in the above sentences if the wife is the addict which can be the case.)

However, it does mean that if a husband or wife is using porn as an occasional outlet for pent up sexual drive or frustration, his or her porn usage may well be precluded by a fulfilling sex life in their marriage.

So, how does a couple do that? What does a Christian wife do to be what her husband needs sexually? What does a Christian husband do to be what his wife needs sexually?

This is the succinct answer: Make lovemaking fun, warm, and regular. You can do anything that both of you wish to do that doesn't involve another person in reality or fantasy, doesn't involve bestiality, and doesn't harm the other. That sums up the Biblical prohibitions. What makes sex right is having it within the confines of the right relationship, marriage as God intended. What makes it wrong is having it with someone outside the confines of that right relationship. But we must realize that a sex deficient marriage is something that will harm our relationship with our spouse and act to keep our spouse fulfilled as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

Does Bible Say I Have to Stay In Sexless Marriage?

QUESTION: Where does it say in scripture that I am required to stay in a marriage *without* sex. If my spouse is not physically disabled, not extremely obese, not cheating on me but just *not* interested in having sex and *refuses* to go to counseling unless I agree to breast augmentation. What are my choices? Where does God command a wife or a husband for that matter to stay in an actual sexless marriage? Not sex one time a month or 4 times a year, which is sexless nonetheless, but **NEVER**. Please give me a straight honest answer. Thank you.

ANSWER: Rather than go through all the passages in the Bible that speak to marriage, I believe we can answer your question by looking at just one. It's found in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5.

“Because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. 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.” (New Living Translation)

Quite simply, your husband is sinning. Though he apparently attempts to, he cannot rightfully justify his sin by blaming it on you because you do not have breast implants. Paul gives no criteria that one mate has to meet in order for the other mate to be obligated to fulfill him or her sexually. That means your husband cannot require you to have breast implants before fulfilling you sexually.

My understanding of the word adultery is a violation of the marriage contract. By withholding sexual interaction with you he is committing adultery of a sexual nature. The church would not tolerate his committing adultery by having sex with someone other than you. Why should it tolerate his adultery of refusing to have sex with you? Yes, it's that serious. Notice that in the passage Paul says that we are not to deprive each other. The renowned theologian Gordon Fee writes about that word: “The use of the verb ‘deprive’ is especially striking. This is the same verb used in [chapter 6] for the man who had defrauded another. It is a pejorative word for taking away what rightfully belongs to another...” (1)

Your husband is taking away what rightfully belongs to you.

I like what Bob Deffinbaugh wrote about the 1 Corinthians 7 passage on Bible.org. “Paul does not stress the submission of the wife to her husband here, as though it is his role to get pleasure from his wife, and her role to give pleasure to her husband. There is mutual submission here, so that both the husband and the wife are to subordinate their interest (pleasure in sex) to the interest of their mate. Consider the guiding principles for what we might call ‘Spirit-filled marital sex.’

“The norm is that Christians will marry and that as a Christian couple, the husband and wife will enjoy regular sexual relations...

“A healthy sex life is a preventative for immorality...

“Both husband and wife should eagerly engage in the sexual act as their duty, both to God and to their mate...

“Both husband and wife should not only give themselves for sex, but each should seek to produce the ultimate pleasure for their partner. Reaching the ultimate pleasure in the sexual union is what best insures against immorality...

“Neither the husband nor the wife has the authority to deprive their mate sexually...

“Those Christians who have been forcibly making a celibate of their mate by withholding sex are commanded to stop sinning in this fashion...

“Sexual abstinence is to be a rare and temporary exception to the norm of regular sexual union.”

Therefore, in answer to your question, I know of no passage in scripture that says you are to stay in a marriage in which one mate refuses to have sex with the other. In fact, my understanding of the 1 Corinthians 7 passage is that you spouse is violating the marriage covenant and if he refuses to recommit and fulfill that obligation, you have no obligation to stay with him.

(1) Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary, F. F. Bruce, General Editor, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987 [reprint, 1993]), p. 281

Can We Use Porn Together?

It's quite common for couples to ask my opinion on whether or not they are Biblically free to use pornography to help them get ready for sex or to enhance their lovemaking.

I have three thoughts to share concerning this issue:

One The average female porn star retires by the age of 28 and the average male porn star retires by the age of 32. The reason for this is that the porn industry sees the human body as being at its physical peak between the ages of 18 and 28 for females; 21-32 for males. Her breasts are firmer and other areas of both the male and female bodies are without age spots or wrinkles. The person in a pornography video will never grow a day older or lose that "perfection," yet your wife or husband naturally will.

Here's the warning: If you choose to use pornography as a means to sexually arouse yourself, you are forfeiting the ability to become aroused by your spouse. Over time, it will become more and more difficult to be sexually aroused by your lifemate because he or she will age while the porn star forever remains youthful in pictures and videos. Losing the ability to be sexually aroused by your spouse is a very bad thing! Not only are you putting yourself at risk for the temptation of an affair, but you are killing what should be a beautiful experience shared by you and your spouse.

Furthermore, which is really the better body? Is the better body the one whose breasts nursed your children and held you close when you were scared or sad? The body that sleeps by your side at night? The world might see the young porn star's body as being the best, but which is really the best? Why would you want to give up the ability to be aroused by the best?

Two The use of pornography will inevitably destroy the self esteem of your spouse. Porn stars are selected because they are not normal. The females they select are usually far above average in breast size and in the appearance of other features. The males are usually far above average in terms of penis size and in the appearance of other features.

As your spouse is constantly exposed to the "perfection" of the people having sex in the video, he or she usually begins to feel ugly, inadequate and unwanted. In time it becomes painfully obvious to your spouse that a substitute is required to sexually excite you. Can you see how that would destroy self esteem? And trust me, it doesn't get better with time--it only gets worse as each of you experience the normal aging process while at the same time watching porn stars who are permanently young.

Three If you are using another person--even a picture of another person--to sexually excite and arouse yourself, you are committing adultery according to Jesus. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

I certainly don't want to judge another person. Nor do I want to involve myself in another's sex life. Each person is obviously free to make independent choices, yet I feel that it is important for you to have all the facts and viewpoints at your access so that you can make an informed decision.

This question has been asked so often by couples around the world that we felt it necessary to provide an answer as a resource for individuals who want to please God in every area of their lives and to act in the best interest of their marriage and spouse. Check out our [program for marriages in crisis](#).