

Scripture: Song of Solomon 7:1-13

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 7:6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

I hope that you are paying attention to how much they compliment each other. We don't do this enough, especially before, during, and after making love. Compliments aren't easy. Sometimes we don't know what to say, it can feel awkward, and sometimes they can sound like clichés. Even Solomon struggled a little: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes"??? It sounds like he is saying, "Your feet are ugly! Put some shoes on and cover them up." When your spouse is complimenting you, give them a break. Accept it as a compliment and don't read into it or get upset if they didn't word it exactly right.

Fellows, please notice that Solomon does not just focus on her breasts or her vagina. Your wife has many other beautiful and sexy body parts. She wants to know that she is more than just a pair of walking breasts to you. Solomon compliments her feet, thighs, navel (can also be translated vagina), belly, neck, nose, head, hair, and her overall beauty. Make sure you look at the whole picture and that she knows you think she is absolutely beautiful in every way.

Ladies, most men are fascinated with your breasts. It started when we were born and we never got over it! The bride gets that. She even alludes to it in chapter 8:1 "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised." Solomon works really hard at seeing his wife as a complete person, but he does talk about her breasts in three of the eight verses here. We love to look at them, touch them, fondle them, and feel them pressing against us! Don't get mad. Embrace it, or at least let us embrace them. Let him look. Teach him how to touch and not just grope. Enjoy his attention and use it to your advantage.

This time, when he wakes her up with a kiss (7:9) she responds and invites him to come into her garden. She likes the fact that he desires her and wants to have her. She understands the power that she has and uses it wisely. Embrace your husband's desire for you sexually. Accept it as a compliment and let it feed your passion for him.

In verse 12 she invites him to come and see if the "grapes" (her breasts) are as good as they look. Pomegranates were a symbol of love in the days of Solomon. Their many seeds represented fertility as the man planted his seed into her garden. She ends verse 12 by telling him "You don't have to take my love, I am giving it to you!"

Meditation: Think about how God made us to desire one another and why we are attracted to certain parts of each other's bodies. Why did God make us that way? Did he intend for us to enjoy it? Does he want us to use it to give pleasure to our spouse?

Assignment: Talk about what you like about each other's bodies. Ask her if she feels that you focus too much on just one or two areas. Discuss how she wants you to touch and talk about her sexual organs and how to maintain a good balance. Ask him how you can respond better to him and give him more pleasure with your responses to him.

Just for Fun: Come up with a list of different terms and phrases that you can use to describe her breasts and vagina and his penis.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 8:1-14

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

In this final chapter of Song of Solomon the bride begins to have some doubts. Some of the people from her home village and even her own brothers question whether she is worthy of being Solomon's wife. She struggles with her own body image and wonders if she is good enough.

I am amazed at how many women have a negative body image. Even many of the glamour queens of Hollywood and the fashion world struggle with this area. No woman can compete against the ideal that the world has promulgated, especially the average wife. What you see on TV and in the movies is a fantasy world and puts on unfair stress upon all women.

"My breasts are too small, my stomach is too fat, my skin isn't smooth and clear, my nose or my chin or my ears stick out too much, my hair is too straight or too curly, etc. etc. etc." The reality is that none of us is perfect, it is just that women are often held to a higher standard by themselves as well as by others. If you ask men about their body image, they will tell you they look better than they do. If you ask a woman, she'll tell you she looks worse.

In verses 6 & 7 she asks Solomon to reassure her of his love for her. Never mind all of those beautiful things he has said about her throughout the last seven chapters. Forget the fact that he has affirmed his love for her over and over again. She wants to hear it from him once more. Our wife's needs assurance of our love for her and our commitment to our relationship. She needs to hear it from you again and again and again.

Husbands sometimes get frustrated. No matter how many times we tell our wife how beautiful she is or how perfect her body is for us, they still talk about themselves in negative ways. God built them a little insecure and the world has magnified it. This is your job men. God made her to need you, so make yourself useful her. Compliment her every chance you get. Reassure her of your love and commitment to her. Do not be critical of her, especially things that she cannot change.

Never let her doubt herself because of something you did or said. Be the magic mirror that she can see herself as the most beautiful woman in your world. Make sure that she has your "seal of approval" and knows that you would not trade her in for any other woman in the world. Tell her how much you love her and reassure her always!

Meditation: Meditate on how God created each of you uniquely for each other and how He intends for you to satisfy one another.

Assignment: Talk about her body. Ask her what she struggles with and why. Discuss ways you can work together to improve any negative body image problems. Reassure her of your love for her and commitment to your relationship.

Just for Fun: Make up your own "Seal of Approval" for her. It may be a certificate or get a rubber stamp made up or some other way to show your unconditional love and approval of her.

Scripture: I Corinthians 7:1-5

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

I am praying for your marriage, are you? As you begin the New Year, begin a habit of praying for each other and your relationship. Make praying for your spouse and your marriage a part of every day, both individually and together as a couple. It would be sad if I prayed for your marriage more than you pray for your marriage.

Your prayers don't have to be long and drawn out. You can pray separately, together or both. One day you can pray for him and the next day he can pray for her and then the next day for your marriage. You can pray for your finances, your sex life, your family or anything else that you are burdened for or struggling with. Make a specific list of things that you want to pray for and divide the list up between different days. Here is one example:

- Monday – Pray for the week ahead. For your work schedules and specific challenges you will face.
- Tuesday – Pray for your sex life. Ask God to help you to be intimate and meet each other's needs.
- Wednesday – Pray each others spiritual walk. Ask God to help your spouse to love Him and do right.
- Thursday – Pray for besetting sins and weaknesses of the flesh. Ask God to give your spouse victory.
- Friday – Ask God to bless your spouse. Ask Him to use you to be a special blessing to them.
- Saturday – Thank God for your spouse. Be specific in your gratitude.
- Sunday – Pray for your spiritual walk together in the Lord.

The key is to pace yourself. Start with simple, direct prayers. Don't overdo it. Short focused prayers that continue are better than long drawn out prayers that don't last. This is especially important if you pray together. Don't try to "outpray" your spouse. Build your spiritual muscles as you develop a habit of praying together as a couple.

Make it a habit to pray at specific times or activities together. Most couples pray for their meal together. That is a good place to start. Make it more than "Bless this food", but not so long that you have to reheat the food in the microwave. Pray when you wake up or before you go to sleep. Pray together when you get home from work. Pray before or after you have sex. God wants us to pray everywhere and for everything.

Meditation: How would your married life change if you prayed for your spouse every day and you prayed with your spouse about everything?

Assignment: Make a simple prayer list of what to pray for each other and then implement a plan on how to do it.

Just for Fun: Lay a hand on your spouse and pray for God's blessings on them. Use Numbers 6:23-27 as a guide.

Scripture: Matthew 5:27-30

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

I realize that there are some women who struggle with pornography, but the truth is that this is primarily a man's battle. Women are more often the victims of pornography. Certainly, the girls being used to produce pornography are being exploited and used by men. Young women are being deceived by the Hollywood message that sexual freedom empowers and frees them when the opposite is true. Exposure to sexual images from a young age convinces many women that pornography is normal and acceptable when it is not. Some wives have been convinced by their husbands that pornography will somehow enhance their sexual relationship when it is actually destroying it. Women who are caught up into pornography have given themselves "up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature." Romans 1:26

Women need to understand how pornography affects all men, even their husbands. There is not a man alive who does not struggle to some extent with the temptation to look. That does not mean that they are looking at or even desire to look, but he is still susceptible to the temptation to look. God created man with a stronger sex drive, to be more visually oriented, and a deeper sense of curiosity. All of these have been corrupted by the sin nature and draw him to look at pornography.

There is not any one reason why men are tempted to look at pornography. The temptation to look is not the sin; it is only a sin when he allows himself to indulge in that sin physically, mentally, or emotionally. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:14-15) Don't be mad at your husband for being a man, help him to be the man of God he can be. Help him to win this battle!

The first step to victory is understanding why men look at pornography. The obvious reason is because men are visually attracted to a woman's naked body. Looking at porn releases a chemical in a man's brain that creates the same high that drugs do. It feels good to look at porn. That is why another cause for looking is depression. The problem is that it is only a temporary relief and he will need more each time to create the same feelings. This chemical high can become an addiction just like drugs or alcohol.

Pornography is also about control. He is in full control when he looks at porn. He can have it when he wants it, how he wants it, with who he wants it. No one is going to tell him no. Boredom and curiosity both play a role in this area. They go online because they are curious about how different women may look or whether they are missing out on something sexually. Articles that promote something different or unique like "21 New Positions" or "How to drive her wild in bed" draw them in.

The final reason is anger. Porn can become a weapon of abuse. It is a way to hurt women in general and their wife specifically. This is a result of psychological issues based upon abuse suffered earlier in life or deep problems in their marriage. In tomorrow's devotion, we will talk about how to deal with these areas of temptation together as a couple.

Meditation: Read Job 31:1,7. How can you bring your thought life under control in this area?

Assignment: Talk about the reasons men are tempted to look at pornography. Openly and honestly discuss which are the biggest problem for you and why. Wives must work hard to be nonjudgmental and understanding with their husband if he is to be transparent with her.

Just for Fun: There is nothing fun about pornography, but God did intend for sex to be fun and enjoyable for a married couple. Have fun!

Scripture: Proverbs 5:14-23

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Proverbs 5:19 *Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.*

Often, when a wife discovers that her husband is looking at pornography she blames herself: “If I were prettier, or more sexy, or had bigger breasts, or were better in bed he wouldn’t need to look at the porn.” Rarely, if ever is that the cause for a man looking at porn. Even if it were, it is not an excuse! A good sex life with a loving wife makes resisting temptation easier, but there is never an excuse for sin. It is not the wife’s fault. The man must take the full responsibility of victory over this sin in his life. Ultimately, he is the only one who can decide whether he is going to look or not.

Although it is not the wife’s fault or responsibility to keep her husband from this sin, she is still his partner in life and should do all that she can to help him to have the victory. It is easier to resist temptation when your needs are being satisfied. Proverbs 27:7 reminds us that “The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” A man that is satisfied with his sex life is less likely to be tempted to look elsewhere. Give your husband his fill of you both visually and physically.

As I pointed out yesterday, pornography is also about control. Many men feel like they have little or no control over their sex life: when, where, what or why. I Corinthians 7:1-5 clearly teaches that the wife is to give the control over her body to her husband and the husband to his wife. I am not saying that a woman should allow her husband to abuse and misuse her sexually or that she needs to submit to doing things she is not comfortable doing. A loving wife will always be available to her husband and willing to explore their sexuality together with him. You should be the one that satisfies his curiosity.

If there are underlining anger issues in your marriage they must be resolved. Be willing to talk through problems and to resolve the hurts of the past. If there has been abuse or long-term sexual problems counseling may be the only solution. Allowing the anger to continue and trying to appease him will not fix the issue. Take a loving but firm stand in this area.

Work together to remove or mitigate sources of temptation for your husband. Give him the liberty to talk with you about his struggles without being judged. Remove or place controls on sources of temptation such as the TV, Internet, and other media. This may include removing some cable services, adding content controls on your computers and phones, and limits on when or where access for these items should happen. You don’t want to be his policeman but you can be his partner in achieving victory. Ask him what you can do to make it easier for him to resist temptation and say no to porn.

Meditation: Why did God make men to have such a high sex drive and to be visually oriented? Is it wrong? What makes it wrong? How can you as a couple fulfill God’s original purpose in this area?

Assignment: Discuss what you can practically do together to either help your husband overcome this temptation or to keep it from becoming a problem in his life.

Just for Fun: Enjoy the wonder of exploring each other’s bodies anew.

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:1-8

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Evangelist Rich Tozour taught us a fun children's chorus one year. It goes like this:

I have this tongue, lah, lah, lah, lah I can't control, lah, lah, lah, lah
It's a fight I cannot win.
I have this tongue, lah, lah, lah, lah I can't control, lah, lah, lah, lah
And it gets me into sin.

So I give it to you O, Lord.
Help me work, and love, and pray.
May I never, never, ever,
Use it against another,
It's my gift to You today.

I Corinthians 13 reminds us that love is not just saying all of the right things. You can talk a good talk and not walk a good walk! Don't get me wrong – Talk is important, especially if your spouse's love language is words of affirmation! We need to say the right things, but you can say all of the right words without doing the right things. Your spouse needs to see action!

Your words can do irreparable damage to your marriage. You should never swear at your spouse, call them names, or say mean and hurtful words. Once a word is spoken, you cannot take it back. You can apologize, ask forgiveness, say a dozen nice things but those words are still out there and they never go away. They now have breath and take on a life of their own. Don't give them life! Don't speak words you will regret!

One author put it this way: "On my own, my tongue exposes the evil in my heart. In just a few words, my tongue tears down all the good I've worked so hard to build up. My venomous tongue reduces my sweet wife to tears — the poison of my words injects them with searing pain. **Nothing I can say, no apology I might muster, can assuage the damage done by the tongue.**"

Nice words can do as much damage to a marriage. When you say one thing and do another or don't follow through with action, your spouse stops believing you. No matter how eloquent you are the words will soon start falling on deaf ears. The words hurt because your spouse has learned that is all that they are, just words. is just words. Back up what you say by the way you act. Show your spouse your love.

I like the brass and the cymbals in an orchestra, but when the brass is tuning up it is just grating noise. Cymbals can provide a great crescendo but if someone walks up behind and slaps them together – that is not good! Learn to make beautiful music together as a couple. Find harmony in your words and actions.

Meditation: Think about what and how you speak to your spouse. What are some things that you can say to be a blessing? Do you put action to your words?

Assignment: Make a list of ten words you will no longer use and ten words that are encouraging to your spouse. Make it a game to see how often you can catch your spouse using one of the encouraging words. Give him/her a kiss for each use. If either of you use one of the negative words, you have to put a dollar in a jar. You can use the money for a date out or flowers or candy for your spouse.

Just for Fun: There are a lot of fun things to do with your tongue! Try some!

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:1-8

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I Corinthians 1:2 And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

I wish I were a prophet! I would love to be able to tell the future. It would especially be helpful when working with couple to know ahead of time which couples were going to make it in their marriage and which ones weren't. It is frustrating to work with a couple, trying to help them save their marriage when they don't do the assignments, listen to the lessons, or try changing anything. As a prophet I would know where and with whom I should focus my time and energy.

I would also know which couples are having problems so I could help them before things got to bad. Most of the time, when a couple comes to talk to me, their marriage is already a mess and right on the verge of divorce. It is almost too late to save it because they are both tired, hurt, and ready to give up.

I am not a prophet, but I can tell you this with certainty: You are going to have problems in your marriage! We all do! If you are not struggling with issues now, you will. Your spouse is going to hurt you, neglect you, or fail to meet your needs or expectations. The key is what you going to do when that happens.

We need to realize how little we know and understand what marriage is all about and how to make it work. The mystery is that about the time you think you have it all figured out everything changes. You don't know what is going to happen tomorrow and the only way to be ready to deal with it is to strengthen your love for each other today.

Take time to understand. That is why these lessons are so important. You have learned a lot, but there is still a lot to learn. Keep studying, listening, learning and reading. Love never stops learning. Be a student of your spouse. Learn what makes them tick, what they like and don't like, how they feel and think, what their love language, which personality they are? This list is never ending and their needs, likes, and desires will change at different stages of life.

All of the knowledge in the world won't make any difference unless it is applied. Some of you have gone through this entire series. You have gained knowledge, but nothing is changing in you or your marriage. Love applies what it is learning and grows in faith and grace. What have you learned and how are you using it in growing in love together?

Meditation: Think about the things that you have learned in this series. What has been most helpful? Most convicting? Most interesting? How are you using these in your marriage? If my marriage isn't changing is it because I'm focusing on my spouse changing instead of myself?

Assignment: Ask your spouse to tell you four things that she or he has observed you learn and apply to your marriage. Talk about what you still need to learn and how you are going to learn it.

Just for Fun: One of you plan a Mystery Date. Keep your spouse guessing what is going to happen next!

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:1-8

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Profit has become a bad word in our society today. Profit is not a bad thing. Knowing that I will profit from something gives me the incentive to do it whether it is a business, diet, exercise or a change in the way I behave. I am a “for-profit husband”. The more I see what is in it for me, the more likely I am to do it.

Don’t get me wrong, it is good and important to be selfless and sacrificial especially when it comes to your spouse and your family. I need to be willing to give of myself, to sacrifice my wants and needs for my spouse, and to do it for their profit. This applies to both husbands and wives, but especially for the husband, as we are to be like Christ who sacrificed everything for us. Be willing to give of yourself for your spouse.

The reality of human nature is that we want to know “What’s in it for me?” “What will I get if I do this?” Personally I want to know how I am going to profit from my sacrifice. My profit can be the good feeling that comes from knowing that I did something good for my wife. It is also the pleasure that I see in her response to what I did. Sometimes the benefit is that I have a better wife. She is happier and more responsive because of my actions.

I bought my wife a t-shirt on year for Mother’s Day. It said “If mom ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy!” She got offended by it because she thought I meant that she makes everyone in the house unhappy. That wasn’t the message I was trying to convey. I wanted my kids to understand that they better act in a way that makes mom happy, because if she wasn’t happy, then I wasn’t going to be happy and if I wasn’t happy I was going to make sure they weren’t happy so the best way for them to be happy was to make their mom happy!

If I want to be happy, the best thing I can do is figure out ways to make my wife happy. I will be the one who reaps the benefits of a happy household – Happy wife, happy husband and vice-versa. It is good for the spouse to keep in mind the profit principle. If your husband or wife does something that makes you happy, reward them! You profit from their behavior, they should profit from your response. The profit can be a warm smile, a heartfelt thank you, a big kiss or extra bonus in the bedroom or an in-kind payment (You rub my back, I’ll rub yours). We should do what we do because it is right and doing good should be it’s own reward however, human nature is such that we do better when we profit.

Meditation: Meditate on how you can selflessly give yourself to and for your spouse. What are ways that you can sacrifice for your spouse?

Assignment: Talk about what makes you happy. Discuss ways that you can reward each other for good behavior. Rewards are unexpected benefits that are freely given. Be generous!

Just for Fun: Why not reward your spouse right now for being who they are and loving you!

I am going to interrupt my devotions to share with you an article I read by Marko Petkovic. I don't agree with everything he writes, but I did think this was an excellent article.

When my wife and I were in our deepest trouble, one of the "themes" was our relentless focus on the things that didn't work.

I know all too well how horrible it feels when your life mate starts to see only things they don't like. Things you screwed up (again). Sometimes it seems they are on a mission to prove that they are right (and you are wrong).

Sometimes it feels like your spouse is deliberately overlooking the overwhelming number of things that *do* work. The scary part is that **even the most loving couples can get hung up on negative beliefs about each other pretty easily, without even noticing.**

If you're not careful, it's easy to get caught in a vicious dance where both of you are focused on the wrong things about each other. Indeed, couples who are in trouble frequently can't remember many positive things about their life mate. Instead, they usually do things like this:

- They **only see things that are "wrong,"** of course, not with them, but with their partner.
- They give **little to no credit or signs of appreciation** for each other.
- One or both have the **"it's all on me" syndrome.**

We Have No Scar to Show For Happiness

If I came into your living room, and painted a giant picture of your evil spouse on your biggest wall, would you want to live there? Surely not!

So why do you allow yourself to have one in your head?

Admittedly, some of us are **quick to remember the bad and even quicker to forget the good.** I surely was like that until just a few years ago. It almost didn't end well. It's so hard to forget pain, but it's even harder to remember sweetness. We have no scar to show for happiness.

Tweet Quote

Therefore, if you want a healthy marriage, it's extremely important to remind yourself frequently of things that *do* work. Things you are grateful for.

How to Start Picking the Flowers

If you can feel a growing sense of negativity in your marriage right now (and even if you don't), here's some good news for you. No matter what you think of your spouse now, you can start turning things around today. You just have to start with your thoughts.

Your thoughts about your spouse directly affect your feelings towards them. It is your feelings that determine how you're going to behave.

- Will you "attack" them, or give them the benefit of a doubt?
- Will you approach them mindfully or start criticizing them (again)?

If you have read my post *The Silent Killer of Most Relationships*, then you already know this.

How couples think and what they believe to be true about each other affects their relationship much more than lack of communication.

Part two in tomorrow's devotion

Now part two of the article.

"Bad thoughts will make you feel bad, and you cannot be pleasant to your partner when you feel bad." **Seeking a solution to a problem, while vilifying your partner in your head, is therefore impossible.**

You can choose to focus your thoughts on things that don't work and end up miserable. On the other hand, you can choose to focus on and celebrate things that do work (while working on the things that don't).

The difference is huge.

Focus on What's Working and Let the Rest Go

Here's what you can do:

- Each day, find something **about your spouse that you like** or you're grateful for. Make a habit of that.
- **Be specific.** For example, use the time at dinner to extend a loving thought. "I really liked how you...", "I love when you...", "I admire how you handled...", "I liked your dress today..." It may seem too simple, but **it will make their day.**
- Set time aside to **talk about your relationship.** Reflect on the things in your relationship that you are grateful for. Do so while taking a walk or even when you're cooking together.
- **Reminisce about the good times together,** like when you met, went on vacation, had good times with the kids. Talk about challenges you managed to overcome.
- **Create a hall of fame.** Find the photos of your most magical moments together, frame them nicely and hang them where you frequently pass by or put them as a screen-saver on your computer or TV. After a week or so, your conscious mind won't notice them anymore. But your subconscious will. It will be reminded of exciting and happy times you had and have together. Each and every day your subconscious will get a message from the wall that says, "Life is good. We are having a great time together!" Change the pictures every year to keep them fresh.
- **Write down successes.** Start a weekly journal. Doing so, you'll become aware of the little things in life that brought you joy and happiness. Things you would otherwise forget. By keeping track of things you are grateful for, you'll become happier and more optimistic. Think of it like **mental candy.** As time passes, your journal will be a nice memory of your path toward the intimate marriage and relationship you desire and deserve.

The Benefit of a Doubt

Lastly, things will not always go your way. As your first response, **give your spouse the benefit of a doubt.** If you are following at least some of the practices of happy couples, this shouldn't be too hard. If you've been investing in regularly creating positive experiences together, it will not be difficult to put negative things behind you and focus on the good stuff.

Your Turn

Now, I want you to think for a second and be honest.

Are you focusing on what doesn't work, rather than on what works? If so, you are leaving the most precious aspects of your relationship completely out of your mental picture. If you're doing so right now, use the tips above and start turning things around. It's never too late.