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Myths about Men's Sexuality

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When we got married we were pretty naïve about sex. No one at home, school, or church had given us any instruction. Yet, we went off on the honeymoon expecting everything to just “work out.” Little did we know that we had lots of mistaken notions about sex many of which had been modeled to us both consciously and unconsciously. Mark, for his part, was hoping that now that he could have “regular” sex, all of his struggles with lust and sexual temptations would be over. Since we had waited until marriage to be sexual, that was a logical assumption.

Over the years of our marriage we have found that sex is so much better today than ever, but along the way we have had to confront a number of sexual myths that were inside us. In this article, we'd like to share what some of those myths were about male sexuality. Some of you may still find inside your head so see if any of them sound familiar to you. As you read, ask yourself if these myths are not, in fact, beliefs you may have learned from the people and culture around you but aren't really true.

1. Men want sex and women want to talk. One author has said that sex is “his” main need and talking is “her” her main need. To believe this reduces men to only being sexual and women to only being talkative. This myth, along with the others, will result in men and women feeling they are in separate camps, enemies if you will, with competing needs. Is it really true that men don't like to talk and that women don't like sex.

The truth is that both men and women like sex and that intimate communication is a fundamental part of being “ready” and able to have sex.

2. Men always have higher sex drives than women. This is related to the first myth. Sex drive in both men and women really varies and is related to so many factors. There is cultural learning that we have received. Some of us were sexually abused in some way as children or adolescents. Medically, both men and women have testosterone in their bodies and the level of that can really vary based on our genetics. It can also vary particularly as we get older. In our experience and according to some research, some men have lower sex drive for one of these reasons and their wives have a higher one. Given the myth, the men who have a low sex drive and the women who have a high sex drive may think they are really strange. Feeling that leads to sexual shame.

It is true that sex drives in men and women vary. Couples need to work together to arrive at a level of sexuality that is comfortable for them.

3. If men don't have an orgasm every 48-72 hours, they won't be able to stay sexually pure. One popular series of books about "everyman's" battle with sex advocates that women should realize how much men struggle with sex and that it is their obligation to help them by being regularly sexually available. We know this one too as Mark had learned this popular cultural belief and used the argument frequently in our early days.

It is not true, however, and is based on faulty scientific thinking. A man's brain always adjusts to whatever is put into it. The brain chemistry that is created by sex can create a "tolerance" effect. The more sex a man (or woman) has the more the brain will adjust to it. A man who comes to expect sex at a certain frequency will always want more eventually.

It is not true either that a woman has control over her husband's sexual purity. That is way too much responsibility for any other person. Yes, there are incredible sexual temptations in the world. Today, through accountability, there are many ways that any man can learn to withstand those and lead the life that God calls him to lead. Being that man should be based on emotional and spiritual health. We find that men who demand sex are really hurt and angry about a variety of issues all of which can be dealt with in healthy ways.

It is true is that a man and woman's brain expects sex, according to the original settings put there by God, one to two times a month. What is also true is that when a man doesn't get sex they can go indefinite periods of time without it. Some urologists would argue that regular sex is an important function of prostate health. While this is true to a certain degree, the body has many ways to compensate for not being sexual. No man has ever "exploded" because they haven't had enough sex.

4. If men can't get enough sex from their wives, they will have no choice but to seek it elsewhere. This belief can be very dangerous and lead some men to very sinful extremes such as pornography and even affairs. We have found that some Christian men even use this belief to justify a habit of masturbating believing that "everybody does it" so it is the norm and nothing is wrong with it. It is true that most men, and even women these days, experiment with masturbation. While that is "normal" it is not normal to get involved in an ongoing pattern of doing it. Even those who justify it saying that they only think of their wife are misguided.¹

It is true is that there is no reason to justify any kind of sexual acting out by a man. Husbands who blame their wife and use their lack of sexual passion as an excuse to do so are very misguided. God calls all men to be pure. There are spiritual disciplines that everyman can use to depend on God and not on sex.

¹ Mark has written an article about masturbation and why it is not normal, even sinful on our web site, www.faithfulandtrueministries.com.

When a man uses scripture to demand that his wife “serve” him in sexual ways, he is guilty of a very angry form of spiritual abuse.

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5. A man’s sense of self-esteem is directly tied to whether his wife will take care of his sexual needs. Even when a wife doesn’t feel like being sexual, she should submit so as to build her husband’s positive feeling about himself. A husband doesn’t really care that she isn’t fully present, as long as he gets his sexual needs met.

Is that really what men want, to have their self-esteem tied into their sexual activity? We find that women who are truly only submitting and not enjoying sex, are really building up resentment that will have a very negative effect on the whole marital relationship.

It is true that men can have self-esteem and that this should be based on his relationship to God and to others.

6. Emotional and spiritual intimacy will develop if a wife submits to sex. This last belief has adopted the standard of the world. Sex is the main thing. If couples have enough of it, their relationship will be much healthier. We even saw a news story recently of a pastor who asked the married couples in his congregation to have sex every day for a month. This pastor said that doing so would increase intimacy and decrease the divorce rate.

How wrong can the order be? What is true is that God calls couples to be emotionally intimate first, best friends. In marriage, he calls them to be soul mates, a one flesh union. Then sex becomes an expression of it. That is the right order.

When we get the order of intimacy right certain passages of Scripture like Paul’s teaching in I Corinthians 7 and Romans 5 make more sense. We are called to marriage for many reasons one of which is to withstand the sexual temptations of the world. The way to do so is not to have lots of sex, but to be companions in the journey of intimate marriage. Being sexual in a marriage is always a matter of serving and being sacrificial, but as Paul also says in I Corinthians 13, we should never be demanding or seek our own way.

Finally, we do know that many couples struggle with sexual health and experience problems with dysfunctions and desires. Today, through there are many

Christian counseling resources to help with those. The greatest enemy of sexual health in marriage is silence. If you are struggling as a couple, do what we did, speak up and be of enough courage to talk to someone and find help.