

Is That All He Thinks About?

Marla Taviano



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A FRESH PERSPECTIVE



Chapter 1

The “Conditions for Sex” List

At one point last year, my husband and I were struggling in the bedroom. I was less than thrilled about making love. He wanted to know why I wasn't in the mood.

“What can I do to make you want sex more?” he asked.

Ahh...the very question I'd been waiting for. Just the encouragement I needed to pull The List out of my pocket, unfold it, and begin to read.

“It's a proven fact that, for women, sex doesn't start in the bedroom. I need to feel loved and cherished all day long. You can't just go about your business, neglect my needs and desires, and then expect me to make passionate love to you. You want me to want you? Here's what you need to do.”

I ignored the blank look in his eyes—he had already begun to tune me out—and kept going.

“First of all, you can get up bright and early (before the sun) and spend time with God in His Word and prayer. I'm sure you realize you haven't exactly been a spiritual leader lately.

“Then you can wake me up with a nice little back scratch and help the girls with their breakfast while I linger in bed for an extra 20 minutes or so.

“Since you’re working from home now, I’d like to see you putting in a lot of hours—even overtime—so I can have a little extra cash to spend frivolously.

“If I need you to help me out with the kids during the day (and I will), I want you to do it willingly and happily. It’d be even better if you could anticipate my needs without me having to verbalize them. When the girls are fighting upstairs and I’m busy at my computer, that would be a good time for you to step in (hint, hint). I’m sure whatever you’re doing at the time can wait.

“Little love notes on the mirror, a bouquet of roses delivered to the door every now and again (once a week is plenty), sweet kisses—offers to do the dishes, vacuum the living room, make dinner—all of those would help get me in the mood. Did I leave anything out?

“Basically, Gabe, you need to understand that if you want sex, you’ve got to meet my emotional needs first. Any questions?”



Okay, so maybe I’m exaggerating a little, but we had different versions of this discussion about five or six times over the course of a few months. I’ll bet you’re curious about Gabe’s reaction.

Well, it varied. One time he felt defeated and hopeless. Once he got really angry. One time he just threw up his hands and threw in the towel. Once he accused me of being selfish.

“*Me? Selfish?*” I was appalled. “You’re the one who wants me to make mad love to you every other night of the week while you just sit there and contribute *nothing* to our emotional relationship during the day! And you think *I’m* selfish?”

Well, I never! Since Gabe obviously didn’t give two hoots about my womanly needs, I decided to take them to God in prayer. (Now that’s a concept.)

“God,” I said, “we have a problem. Correction. *Gabe* has a problem.

He wants sex—lots of sex—with no strings attached. He wants what he wants, and he’s not willing to meet my needs first. And then, get this—he has the nerve to call *me* selfish!”

I asked God nicely to please bring about some positive (and much-needed) changes in my husband. And quickly.

Guess what He did instead. The unthinkable and illogical. Not only did He not take my side against Gabe, but He knocked me upside the head with conviction. He told me in that no-nonsense way of His that I was way off base when I expected Gabe to hold up his end of “the bargain” (as *I* defined it) before I would meet his sexual needs.

I slowly began to realize I was holding Gabe hostage to a million-and-one “if-then” statements. “*If* you do this, *then* I’ll do that.” This was conditional love at its worst. I was guilty of loving with a thousand strings attached.

Is That What You *Really* Want?

I once had a woman say to me, “I didn’t get married just to spend my days making some guy happy.” After talking with her for awhile, it became apparent that what she had in mind was more along the lines of marrying a guy whose goal was to spend *his* days making *her* happy.

So many women get married dreaming of nothing more than themselves and their own selfish desires. I was one of those women, thinking about all I could *get*, not what I could *give*.

We put so little emphasis on giving, in fact, that we sabotage our marriages. Whatever happened to “do nothing out of selfish ambition” or “look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others”—phrases we find in Philippians 2?

Regardless of how marvelous it might sound, we don’t *really* want a relationship that is all take and no give. A selfish relationship can never truly fulfill us. God has created us in such a way that we only find true, lasting joy when we give of ourselves to others.

And besides, where are you going to find a guy who would actually be willing to devote his entire life to satisfying your every whim? Even if you found the most godly, unselfish guy on the planet, he’s probably

looking for a gal a little more like himself. A fellow giver, not a self-centered moocher like you or me.

Attitude Check

My friend Mary Ann jokes that her husband Dan's all-time favorite Bible verse is 1 Corinthians 7:4—"The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband." It sure isn't politically correct, I'll give it that. But then again, PC isn't exactly the apostle Paul's middle name (or his initials).

The Message paraphrase puts a neat little twist on it.

The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out.

According to Paul, sex is more than something you do or don't do as you feel like it. It's an explicit command from our Creator.

You may wonder what credibility a single guy like Paul has when it comes to marital sex. Well, at least we know he wasn't writing this stuff just to guilt-trip his wife into bed with him. And he's as credible as they come, because Paul's "book contracts" came straight from God Himself.

If God commands me to have sex with my husband and I don't want to, does that mean I have a rebellious—a sinful—attitude? I'm not fond of that idea.

If I have low sexual desire, I'd rather just blame it on my personality or my femininity or something. "You know, that's just the way God made me."

Or better yet, I could blame it on my husband. "He certainly doesn't help matters. If he'd actually make an effort at showing he cares about me, I might want to have sex more often."

Okay, girls, I'm going to get right to the heart of the matter, cut straight to the gut of this book. I have a proposition. Are you sitting down?

Here it goes: *I propose that you and I take a great big step and commit to no more blame-shifting. No more excuses. No more pointing fingers. It's high time we took responsibility for something that has been entrusted to us by God. Making love to our husbands. Often. With a good attitude. Are you up to the challenge? And ready for some fun?*

I am a woman just like you. I don't *need* sex all that often. And because of that, I have a hard time understanding how my husband's requests for sex stem from a deep physical and emotional need, not just a selfish desire.

According to God, whether we want to or not is not the issue. Sex isn't optional. It's not debatable. It's not an elective. It's a required course.

“The frequency of sex depends on the other person's need, not ours alone,” Stormie Omartian says in *The Power of a Praying Wife*. “If your attitude about having sex comes down to only what you need or what you don't want, then you don't have God's perspective.”

Oh, there are plenty of “good” reasons. I'm too busy. My children are a full-time job. I'm overwhelmed by life. My husband has hurt me emotionally. He has a terrible habit he just won't give up. I've lost that lovin' feelin'...

Lots of reasons why we don't want to have sex, but the Bible says that spending time in prayer is the only valid reason for abstinence.* And I don't know about you, but my extensive prayer life isn't usually on my list of excuses.

You're His Only Hope

“Why should I have to have sex when I don't feel like it?” asks my friend Claire. “If I'm not in the mood, I think it's selfish of him to ask.”

The problem for Claire's husband is that Claire is *never* in the mood. And Claire is not abnormal, as I'm sure many of you would attest to. “I think I need to take some kind of pill or something,” she told me, “because I just don't care if I ever have sex.”

But it's not all about “What can I do to want sex more?” That's only part of it. The bigger issue is this—feelings or no, do it with a good attitude. God will let the desire follow. Maybe not right away, but it will come.

* See 1 Corinthians 7:5.

God says, “Obey me when you don’t feel like it—when you can’t see the final outcome—and I’ll make it worth your while.”

My friend Arin recently shared that she was completely uninterested in sex.

“So, what do you love?” I asked her. “And be honest. You don’t have to tell me you love reading your Bible and being a mom.”

“Scrapbooking, shopping, and eating at nice restaurants,” she said without hesitation.

“What if you could only do those things if Jeff were willing to do them with you?” I asked her.

A Question of Neglect

Stormie Omartian shares some great wisdom. She explains that sex is pure need for men, and when this crucial part of him is neglected, it’s hard for him to even see what you need.

“Wives sometimes have it backward,” Stormie says. “We can have sex after we get these other issues settled. But actually there is a far greater chance of settling the other issues if sex comes first...Whether all conditions are perfect or whether you feel like it or not isn’t the point.”

I know I’ve had it backward many a time. I thought Gabe was selfish for not meeting my needs first. Yet how is that any different from me not meeting his first?

Radio talk-show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger takes the selfish idea a bit further. She boldly asserts (and I agree) that refusing sex with your husband is the “moral equivalent of infidelity.” A shocking statement maybe, but it makes sense.

“Intentionally depriving a spouse of his legitimate needs,” she says, “stems from being unfaithful to the intent of the vows.”

No, you probably didn’t say, “I promise to have sex with you at least three times a week as long as we both shall live” in front of the church on your wedding day. But you did vow to love, honor, and cherish your husband—and sex is a huge part of that.

“That’s stupid,” she told me without batting an eye.

“Go with me here, girl. I have a point.”

“Okay,” she said, playing along. “I’d never get to scrapbook, I’d hardly ever shop, and we’d eat out once or twice a month. But we’d never go to my favorite two restaurants, because he insists he doesn’t like them.”

“So, let me ask you this—since your husband doesn’t enjoy scrapbooking, shopping, or eating out at nice restaurants on a frequent basis, do you go without these things?”

“Of course not. That’s what my girlfriends are for.”

“Hmm...okay. Let me get this straight. You like scrapbooking, but not sex. He likes sex, but not scrapbooking. Correct?”

“Uh, yes.”

“When you refuse to have sex with him, who does he call to satisfy that craving?”

“He better not be calling anybody!”

“Why not? You do.”

“Not for sex!”

“Right, but sex is not *your* deepest need. So, while you’re getting your deepest needs and desires met, your husband is going without. It’s perfectly acceptable for other people to meet these needs for you, but you are the only person on the face of this earth he is allowed to go to for sex.”

“You can’t tell me that sex is a *need*. I don’t need it.”

“Oh, boy—if I had a ‘wrong answer’ buzzer, you’d so be getting buzzed right now, girl. But I don’t. So let’s not even discuss whether sex is a real need for a man or not. Let’s talk about scrapbooking. Need or want?”

“Okay, so it’s not a need, but I think the real solution here is for my husband to find a hobby he can do without me. Maybe that would take his mind off sex.”

“Is that how you visualize your ideal marriage—you going off and doing your thing, him going off and doing his? Two separate people going in two separate directions? Why even bother getting married? We can’t use our differences as an excuse to avoid doing something our husbands want to do. And besides, sex is not just a *hobby* for your husband. Taking his *mind* off it isn’t the answer.”

Our conversation continued...round and round, going absolutely

nowhere. My powers of persuasion seemed to have no effect. So I did the wise thing. I stopped talking and asked God to help her see the light. (The verdict is still out.)

Your husband agreed to marry you with his sex drive intact, fully aware he would be entirely dependent on you to meet all his sexual needs. If, for some reason, you were unable or unwilling to meet those needs, he understood they would go unmet. Saying “I do” to you included placing his sexual needs and identity out on the table—naked and vulnerable—for you to do with as you please.

According to God, I am the only one allowed to meet my husband’s sexual desires. An awesome responsibility, yes, but what a privilege.

Making Time for Making Love

I’m a list-maker, a go-getter, a type A, a Martha, a busybody. Call me what you will. So much to do, so little time.

Sure, sex is on my to-do list. Somewhere, I think. It’s just not close enough to the top to make it into my day most of the time.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we’ll admit we can always make time for the things we really want to do. It’s all about choices. What do I choose to do with the 24 hours I’m given each day?

Picture this: On my desk I have two piles. One is a stack of bills to pay and papers to file. The other “pile” has just one item in it—the latest Christian chick-lit novel by my favorite author.

I have one hour available. If I pick up the book and say, “I just don’t have time to pay the bills today,” am I being truthful?

And when I say, “I’d love to have sex more often, but I’m just too busy,” am I being truthful? Making time for sex doesn’t depend so much on my schedule and circumstances as it does on my attitude.

Now, of course you don’t *have* the time (especially if you have kids), and you probably won’t *find* the time to do it either. You have to *make* time for sex.

What things are robbing you of time that could be spent with your husband? Television? Novels and magazines? Your cell phone? The computer? Your writing career? (Ahem.) When these choices interfere with intimacy with our spouse, we’re being selfish and foolish, plain and simple.

I have come to realize something amazing. So amazing, in fact, that there’s not a chance you’ll believe me until you try it. Sex takes time, yes, but when I’m having it regularly, I actually get more done. Life runs more smoothly. I have a calming sense of peace and happiness. Honestly and truly—I am not making this up.

That’s not an accident. It’s the way God works.

It’s like the object lesson with the Mason jar, the golf balls and the gravel. If I put the gravel in first, the golf balls won’t fit. But if I put the golf balls in the jar first, then the gravel fits nicely all around it. Same with sex. When I make time to make love like God commands me to do, He’ll take care of all the other stuff. He really will. I just have to trust Him enough to put everything aside and have sex.

The bottom line is, we can always make time for the things (and people) that are most important to us. Make it your goal to show your husband you love him by giving him nice-sized chunks of your valuable time.

Coming into Your Own—God’s Way

We’re starting to understand what we need to do. But it’s much easier said than done. Changing our attitudes is not a simple, clear-cut process. In fact, it can get downright messy.

But God promises that when we seek Him *first*, everything else will be given to us as well. When we pray, “Change *my* heart—don’t worry about *him*,” everything else will fall into place.

Instead of asking, “What will bring me happiness and fulfillment?” ask, “How can I satisfy and complete my husband?”

Instead of looking at sex through the lens of our own perceptions, let’s try to look at sex through our husbands’ eyes.

And even beyond that, we need to look at sex from *God’s* perspective. Instead of demanding our own way, saying, “I deserve to be loved the way I want to be loved,” realize that sex is a gift. One that we sinful humans don’t deserve to receive from a holy God.

At this point we could ask, “Who’s going to look out for me if *I* don’t? I don’t want to lose my identity by constantly serving someone else. I am my own person, after all.”

Well, Paul seems to think that we can’t truly come into our own until

we die to ourselves and find our identity somewhere else—namely in Christ. Galatians 2 makes this crystal-clear.

It's inexplicable, but who we are becomes even more individual, real, and beautiful when we deny our own desires and serve others. The world has it backward—putting someone else's needs before your own means you're *strong*, not weak.

We can't do this on our own, however. As Paul says in Romans 7, "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." You'll hear me chanting this refrain throughout the pages of this book. We desperately need God's help.

Surrender to Him and let His Spirit work in your heart. Ask Him to give you the strength, energy, determination, and desire to begin meeting your husband's physical needs more often and more willingly.

Sometimes our feelings will get hurt, and our sex drive will shut down. We won't want sex until everything is right. When things aren't perfect, though, we desperately need God yet again. He promises He'll be there to help us.



If you're anything like me, there have been plenty of times when you prayed halfheartedly for something, not believing that God would actually come through for you or even bother listening to your prayer.

We're told in James chapter 1 that we will face trials. But if we ask in faith—if we believe and not doubt—God will give us wisdom generously. (I'm sure the trials James speaks of include those of marriage.) But when we ask for something and don't really believe God can accomplish it, we're like "a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."

Praying for a renewed sexual relationship with your husband will always be in line with God's wisdom and His perfect will for your life. And when you pray in complete faith, He promises to answer, as Jesus indicates in Matthew 21.

Ask your God for a complete sexual relationship makeover. He will give you sexual desire even when it seems like an impossible request. But you have to ask. And believe with all your heart—even if you can't see or understand how it will all play out—that the results will be amazing.