



Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know

C.J. Mahaney, Carolyn Mahaney (Contribution by)

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"Scripture illuminates the path of marital intimacy. The Song of Solomon shines brightly, showing us the way to the best sex we can possibly experience."

"As practical as it is profound, Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God may well be the best book on marriage I've ever read. I was motivated to love my wife more and broadened in my understanding of how loving my wife brings glory to God . . . this book is truly a treasure."

Gary Thomas, author of *Sacred Marriage and Sacred Parenting*

"Men, if you are looking for a book that will give you a few easy tips for spicing up your sex life, look somewhere else. This book invites you instead to completely revolutionize your romantic relationship with your wife. It calls all of us to a more profound and deeply satisfying kind of countercultural sex than most of us have ever experienced."

Bob Lepine, co-host of FamilyLife Today, author of *The Christian Husband*

"There's not a husband I know that won't benefit from this book. This is more than a book for the bedroom. It will train you to romance your wife and set you on a lifelong pursuit of winning her heart. Wives, do yourselves a favor and buy this book for your husbands!"

Joshua Harris, author of *Boy Meets Girl*

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Date : Published June 17th 2004 by Crossway Books

ISBN : 9781581346244

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Format : Hardcover 128 pages

Genre : Marriage, Christian, Religion, Theology, Christian Living, Family, Relationships



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From Reader Review Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know for online ebook

Mark Donald says

Short, helpful book reflecting on Song of Solomon.

Lincoln Forlong says

Mahaney does an excellent job of portraying various practical and romantic components for marriage. Not only does he apply Scripture well, he also has realisti suggestions which can inspire the physical relationship. While there are a few minor areas that I feel are culturally based, I strongly suggest this as a profitable read for any marriage.

Bob Hayton says

Books on sex and romance, written by godly pastors are rare. C.J. Mahaney is no sexpert, and this is no sex manual. But this may be the best book on sex you'll ever read.

Sex, Romance and the Glory of God presents a theology of marriage that serves as just the right backdrop to look at how Solomon, in his famous Song, deals with sex. The book sets sex in the proper context for which God intended it. And it calls men—Christian men—to love and romance their wife.

Mahaney explains that marriage then is intended to be a picture of how Christ relates to his Church. Let me quote Mahaney at this point, since his words are much more adequate than mine:

Please don't think of this as merely a helpful illustration or an interesting perspective. It's much more than that. This is the essence of marriage. This is the divine purpose for *your* marriage....

...there is a purpose in marriage that goes beyond personal fulfillment. Something of the selfless love, care, and sacrifice that Jesus shows toward the Church is supposed to be evident in you as you relate to your wife. Something of the respect, submission, and devotion that the Church shows toward Jesus is supposed to be evident in your wife as she relates to you. That's the purpose for your marriage. That is why God has given her to you, and you to her. [pg. 23-25:]

Particularly helpful and challenging is Mahaney's call for men to romance their wives. Mahaney encourages us to plan and work at delighting our wife in any number of small yet meaningful ways. He provides practical pointers and suggestions and strongly encourages a weekly date of some kind.

The truth he wants us to remember, if nothing else from this book is this: "*In order for romance to deepen, you must touch the heart and mind of your wife before you touch her body.*" [emphasis his, page 28:]

An example of Mahaney's practical yet unsettling wisdom is his must-ask question: "Do you feel more like a mother or a wife?" [pg. 29:]

Concerning this point he continues:

There can be a selfish, sinful tendency among husbands to view their wives as a goal that, once achieved, is then taken for granted. That is how a wife with children comes to feel primarily like a mother. And that is why the very idea of asking a question like this can cause many husbands to swallow hard and consider going off to watch a little TV. But please don't—I want this to be an encouragement to you.

...A variety of legitimate activities may consume huge quantities of your wife's time....But whatever your situation, if you make it a priority to love and care for your wife as Christ does the Church...God will touch her heart so that, even when surrounded by diapers, dishes, and diseases, she can answer that question with joy: "I feel more like a wife."

...Motherhood is exceptionally important. It calls for immense sacrifices and deserves great honor. But I can say with full conviction that according to Scripture, motherhood is never to be a wife's primary role. In fact, I think the most effective mothers are wives who are being continually, biblically romanced by their husbands. [pg. 30:]

The book is helped by several personal stories that Mahaney shares. The following story was a challenge and encouragement for me to remember that I am to love and serve my wife and family as Christ serves and loves the Church.

When our first two children were still quite young, I realized that my commute home in the evening was functioning as little more than a review of my day. As far as I was concerned, by the time I got in that car, my responsibilities were pretty much over until the next morning. I saw my home as a refuge, a place where the emphasis, for me, was on being served rather than on leading and serving with Christlike love.

In God's mercy, he showed me the selfish motivation I was bringing home each evening. I saw that my commute could be best utilized as a time of transition, so that I might be prepared to finish the day by loving and serving my family well.

So I made a practice of pulling the car over a few blocks from my home so I could take a couple of minutes to make an effective transition in my soul. There on the side of the road, I meditated on Ephesians 5 as well as on some other passages. I confessed to God my sinful tendency to be selfish and sought to prepare my heart to serve my wife and children when I arrived home. In this way I learned to see my home as the context where I have my greatest privilege and opportunity to serve.... [pp. 50-51:]

I found Mahaney's chapter on "The Language of Romance" to be very interesting. I was challenged to be more intentional in how I communicate with my wife, and to stop neglecting poetry as a means of arousing her love. Listen to Mahaney on this point:

...[Song of Solomon shows us:] a category of communication set apart from the stuff of daily life....It is highly intentional, creative, provocative, erotic language. It's purpose is to arouse

romantic passion—to inflame slowly and intentionally, all the while honoring and delighting one's spouse....Long before they begin to enjoy one another's bodies, they excite one another's minds with tender, creative speech. They model for us what it means to feel sexual passion and to articulate that passion. The language is highly poetic, romantically expressed, and exceptionally creative and imaginative. It is also unmistakably sexual.

The best sex begins with romance, and the best romance begins with the kind of speech we read in the Song of Solomon. It begins with carefully composed words....

Far from scorning carefully composed words, I should accept the lesson of Solomon's Song and learn how to use them. Poetic language is a gift from God that can help me promote godly romance with my wife!

...How many times in the past week or month have you spoken to your wife in ways that she found to be romantically and perhaps erotically arousing? [pg. 60, 69-70:]

When Mahaney gets to the sex part in the book, he doesn't disappoint. He stresses that the sexual aspect of marriage should not be considered "a fundamentally spiritual activity". He even goes so far as to say:

Is there a case to be made from Scripture that lovemaking is any less important to a marriage than praying together, studying the Bible together, or even attending church together? I don't think so....

...let's not see sex as merely a *permissible* part of marriage or something to be tolerated. Sex in marriage is *mandatory* and something to be celebrated! (See 1 Corinthians 7:35; Ephesians 5:31) Sex was created for marriage, and marriage was created in part for the enjoyment of sex. [pg. 74-75:]

Mahaney pointed out something about Song of Solomon that I had never considered. He stressed that Song of Solomon, while highly erotic, is a book about marital love. And he draws some important conclusions from that seemingly inconsequential point.

It's remarkable how Solomon's language, while obvious in its intent, is never biologically specific in a way that could be considered vulgar or clinical....that fact is itself full of meaning. Although sexual intercourse is certainly an ultimate expression of a married couple's erotic encounter, it is not the outstanding central feature of this book. What is dominant in the Song is not any particular physical act. The book is not *about* sexual intercourse. Rather, it is about the remarkable nature of the couple's overall relationship—in all its romance, yearning, desire, sensuality, passion, and eroticism....they do not desire to be together *simply so they can experience sexual gratification*. They want to be together because they are in love, albeit a powerful one.... [pg. 88-89:]

A valuable inclusion is the great "word to wives" section written by C.J.'s wife Carolyn. It is for the most part a reproduction of chapter 7 in her book *Feminine Appeal*. I read that section, too, and was impressed by Carolyn Mahaney's wisdom. Like the entire book, this section was not so much a manual on how to make love, as it is an encouragement to have a deep and lasting joyful relationship with your mate which includes a proper valuing and enjoyment of sex.

In Mahaney's eagerness to use Song of Solomon as a Biblical description and instruction of marital intimacy, however, he falls prey to what I consider to be a wrong approach to interpreting that book. He pits an allegorical interpretation, which sees Christ and his Church as the key players in that song, against a "literal" interpretation, which sees Solomon talking about the joys of marital love. I am aware that there have been extreme allegorical interpretations that go so far as to negate any application of what the song teaches about marital love. But in Mahaney's approach, which is very typical and widespread today, the error is made to the opposite extreme. He denies any typographical use of the book.

I see an alternative approach which can both affirm that the book clearly praises the joys of marital love yet also recognize that Solomon's Song is written within the framework of a redemptive history that the Bible records for us. And just as other Biblical stories foreshadow and describe the redemption Christ accomplished for His people, thereby enhancing our understanding of and appreciation of the Gospel, so too the Song of Solomon may rightly be seen to describe the anti-type of which marriage is only a picture. Indeed all marriages are a picture of the abiding covenant love and joyful relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church (Eph. 5:31-32); and hence it would be proper to see Christ and His Church as ultimately referred to in this beautiful love poem.

My quibble over interpreting Song of Solomon aside, you need to get this book. And if you're a husband, you especially need to read it, and even more so if you have already been married for some time. I recommend it highly.

John says

An Orthodox monk once said that for those who are called in to be in the world that it is a good thing to be married and to have a job.

This book covers the excellence and beauty of marriage from a biblical perspective.

Mahaney also covers the very practical suggestions and guidelines. It wonderfully makes sure to stop short of being a "How to manual" because he acknowledges that all people are unique, but that married people must seek to become lifelong students of their spouses.

The book also contains a section written to women by Mahaney's wife.

Overall, an excellent book.

Mike E. says

In this little book Mahaney challenges husbands to love their wives in practical ways--words of blessing, flowers, date nights, poetry, et. al.

He says, "The key to effectively and erotically touching her body is first to touch her heart and mind."

The book includes a short chapter for wives written by Mahaney's wife, Carol.

Scott says

I picked this up off a friend's shelf during a recent trip while I was away from home for an extended period, and it was exactly what I needed to be reminded of in terms of relating to my wife when we got back together. Mahaney's main point to us men/husbands is, "before you touch her body be sure to touch her mind and heart". Great sex begins with relating well and cherishing our wives, which is an area I know I can also improve. It's also a bonus in that this book is a very easy read but most profound. You gotta love these authors that say a lot with a few words.

Brian Watson says

Very good little book. Mahaney tells husbands, "If you want to touch her body, first touch her heart and mind." (Paraphrase of something repeated throughout the book.) He uses the Song of Songs as a model for biblical romance, but he offers up a lot of practical advice that is helpful. In particular, I learned to study my wife and what pleases her. Mahaney's wife has a chapter at the end of the book for wives.

Alexis Neal says

Solid, if unremarkable. C.J. Mahaney hammers home the needs to romance your wife *outside* the bedroom before trying to get any action *in* the bedroom.

The section for wives was, unsurprisingly, much more helpful for me--Carolyn Mahaney has very clear opinions about the importance of sex in the marriage relationship. She straightforwardly tells wives that one of the best ways to encourage their husbands is: sex. Even to those submerged in the chaos of rearing young children, Mahaney does not mince words: "Honey, [...] fix your husband a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for dinner and give him great sex after dinner, and he will feel prized by you." While Carolyn Mahaney does acknowledge the common problem of the disinterested or exhausted spouse, she does not seem to portray sexual apathy as an unavoidable result of marriage. As a result, her chapter was more encouraging than the similar passage in *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace*.

All in all, a perfectly fine little book. It's hard to imagine that it would be a life-altering, paradigm-shifting book for anyone, but perhaps there are others for whom this stuff is revolutionary.

Denzil Roy says

I found the book well proportioned in content. To my surprise, the book had more of romancing one's wife

than about actual physical intimacy. The book takes a lot of cues from Song of Solomon. Aimed at husbands, the central theme of the book is how he must touch the heart and mind of his wife before he touches her body. I liked the last chapter which emphasized on covenant love in marriage. Many waters cannot quench that love, neither can floods drown it. Its a quick read of less than 130 pages, but will have a lasting impact on one's love life.

Sean says

A very nice, practical, and sometimes candid approach to a subject that I feel many churches and Christians have trouble discussing. People spend so much time beating abstinence only into young people's heads and they have no real answers when they get asked real questions. Not everything is perfect and you might not agree with everything that is said, but no one has a perfect solution that works for everyone, especially in the world of Christian living.

Christopher says

A great Biblical view of what sex is and how it can fully be enjoyed between husband and wife.

Kevin Lara says

Good little book for husbands concerning sex. He speaks of the importance of touching our wife's heart and mind before touching her body, the importance of words, and the importance of covenant love. At the end there's a very valuable section for wives written by his wife, Carolyn.

Helpful.

Peter Krol says

Nice and short, with a great main idea: Touch her heart and mind before you touch her body.

Adam says

This short little book is packed with Scripturally soaked wisdom, and although it was exhausting just reading Mahaney's practical advice, it was, on the whole, excellent. In short, this is a great primer on sex, love, and marriage and their gospel foundation.

Gabriel Davis says

One of the best books on the subject I've read. This book says in a few words what others have tried to say in volumes. Immensely practical without compromising Biblical truth. Definitely worth the 2 hours or so it will take you to read it!
