



DANCE OF MAHANAIM

Part 7 of The Peasant Princess

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Song of Songs 6:11-7:10 | November 09, 2008

You're listening to the Peasant Princess Sermon Series, where Pastor Mark Driscoll takes us through the poetic book, Song of Songs. For more audio and video content, please visit marshillchurch.org.

Howdy, Mars Hill, here we go again. It's going to be a good one. If you have your children in service, take them to the nursery immediately. Otherwise, they will know how they got here and, as of next week, things cool down a little book in the book. We've got three weeks left after this week, and this week we hit the most erotic, exotic, exciting section of all of Song of Songs and, arguably, in all of Scripture: the most likely text that would cause me to have to fire myself. So we will pray and get right into, and glad to have you all with us. As always, feel free to text message any questions. My sweetie-pie Gracie will be out later and we'll do our best to answer those for you. Let's get to work.

Father God, thank you so much for Scripture. We love your Word. We accept that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. We thank you on this evening for those parts that make us most uncomfortable, because they challenge our assumptions and our thinking. God, we confess that we come from a people who are committed to sex as a religion and, God, we want to know and love and serve Jesus in all of our life, including our sexuality. So we ask that as we study your Word that you would send us the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, to regenerate us, to cause those who don't believe in Jesus to come to know him, and for those of us who do know Jesus, to have lives that reflect his will according to the Scriptures, and so, God, please give me the grace to serve my friends well. I ask this in Jesus' good name. Amen.

By way of preface, as we get going into this very important section of Scripture, Song of Songs, Chapter 6, if you want to find your place, I'll start by giving you some background regarding men. Men are visual. It's no secret, but what happens is, it's not widely understood what is meant by that great truth claim that men are visual. There is a woman named — I'll get this right — Shaunti Feldhahn. She wrote a book called *For Women Only*. It's a good book. She's a Christian gal; wrote a book for Christian women to understand better their husbands. Men and women — I don't know if you've noticed this: they're different, and sometimes men don't really understand women, or ever, and sometimes women don't really understand men, or ever.

And these books are continually written where women are trying to explain men to other women, and likewise, men explaining women to other men. This is one of those books whether a Christian woman is trying to explain men, husbands, to married Christian women. She does a good job. There's some good things in the book. Chapter 6 is titled, "The Keeper of the Visual Rolodex." Most of you have no idea what a rolodex is. Think more like an iPod. It's the keeper of the one who has all of the different files that are kept for safekeeping, and she makes some great points about the visual nature of men. The first thing that she says is that virtually all men are visual, and I would say all men are visual, with the exception of dead men. Other than that, all men are visual, and roughly 25 percent of women are visual.

So if you are married and you are a visual women, you are in the minority among women, but you will have an easier time understanding your husband — a typical women will have to work harder to understand the visual aspect of his masculinity. Now in saying that, all men are visual to varying degrees. Some men are highly visual. Some are moderately, and others minimally visual, and she makes some interesting points, but here's what this means. And I'll share these with you by way of preference. First of all, Number 1: a man cannot help but notice a beautiful woman but it does not mean that he prefers her to his wife. Men simply observe beautiful women. They can't help it. It's the way it is, all right. There's a green truck. There's a beautiful woman. A guy just sees it and calls it like it is. These are just facts. Okay?

Now in this, this doesn't mean that if he sees a beautiful woman, he prefers her to his wife. It doesn't mean that at all. It does, however, mean that men note and make note of attractive woman. So a man could be in a restaurant with his wife, if another beautiful woman walks in, all the men in the restaurant know she's there, and some of the women are aware that she's there, but all the men are. Number 2: men's minds involuntarily file snapshots of beautiful women and their file is filled with images that stretch all the way back to boyhood, and show up without warning. Every time a guy sees a beautiful woman, it's a snapshot. Click. Click. Click. Click. Click. It starts when he's a little boy, continues throughout his whole life. It's involuntary. It's the way the man is made. The result is he has an ever-growing repository of pictures of beautiful women.

He just does, and they show up, right, random shuffle, involuntarily without his even being prepared or aware of it. So this explains — and most women won't understand this. If you're married, on the way home, ask your husband. He'll confirm it. He could be sitting in traffic, driving home from work, and all of a sudden, boop, there's the gal who sat next to him in junior high; hasn't seen her in a long time, but she's back. That file just came up. Now what he does with that file will determine whether or not he is acting in a sinful way. Men have continual visual files that they add to. I give you an analogy. When I was in Sydney, Australia, with my family this summer, I loved it. We were driving on the freeway, and I thought it was great, because I never saw any police officers. This is a great country, drive as fast as you want.

And then one of the locals said, “No, they don’t have police officers because the highways are filled with cameras.” And if, at any point, you pass the speed limit, they take a photo of your car and then send you a bill in the mail, and the photo goes into a hard-drive data base. It is saved forever, and that’s it. Men are like that, all right, beautiful woman. Boop! Boop! Just snapshots, always; filed away into the data base for safe — safekeeping forever. That’s the way men are. Number 3: our world assaults men with images of beautiful women. A guy doesn’t have to work hard to collect these images. He goes to the store. There’s the rack of magazines. Driving down the road, there’s the billboards. Just walking on the street, there’s the immodestly dressed woman. Logs onto the internet, trouble. Watches TV, “Hey, football’s on.”

Hey, there’s cheerleaders. Oh, that’s okay. I’ll watch cage fighting. There’s the ring girl: constant, constant, constant bombardment of inappropriate images or images that could be archived and then catalogued and then lustfully visited later. Number 4: men derive some degree of physical pleasure from just observing a beautiful woman. There is a certain degree of just pleasure that comes, hormonally, physically to a man by virtue of seeing a beautiful woman, and, Number 5: temptation and sin are different. I’ll explain this, and men who love Jesus and their wife are in a fight every moment of every day. Okay. There’s a difference between temptation and sin. Temptation is an opportunity to sin. How you respond to it dictates whether or not you’re in sin.

Many women don’t understand this, but your husbands, if you’re married, are in a war every moment of every day, as images come to them or old images are archived for them, and they have to decide what to do with them. Now the Bible says, in Hebrews 4, that “Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.” So temptation came to the Lord Jesus. He was tempted. Luke 4, Matthew 4, record occasions where Jesus was tempted. Yet the Bible says he never gave in to temptation. Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ resisted every sinful temptation. So men receive temptation and they are to respond, by the power of the Holy Spirit, like Jesus did, rejecting that sinful temptation. Is it a sin for a man to notice that a woman is beautiful? No. Again, he can’t help it. It’s a fact.

The Bible, for example, that though she was quite elderly, Sarah was what? Beautiful. There’s a difference between acknowledging beauty and lusting. So where does it become lust? Well, when a guy’s driving down the road, sees a beautiful woman, looks, looks, looks, checks the rearview mirror: sin. He’s lusting; turns around: sin. He’s at the store, going down an aisle, sees a beautiful woman in another aisle, thinks, “I’m going to go down that aisle, get a closer look.” Sin, sin. There’s a beautiful woman in his office. He makes it a point to go by her a certain number of times a day to see what she’s wearing, because he is attracted to her: sin. It’s not a sin for a man to see that a woman is beautiful. It is a sin for him to lust after her. It’s a sin for him to feed those lustful, sinful desires after her. Okay? So what can a wife do?

This woman who writes this book, she gives a few suggestion. I’ll add to them. The first thing I will say is this, “Ladies, don’t judge men for being men. Don’t judge your husband for being a dude.” What can happen is, women think, “He’s different than me. There must be something wrong with him.” Which is the assumption that men and women are the same, okay? It says that God made us male and female and that was very good. Men and women are equal, but they’re different. Your husband is different than you. Not worse; different. He was made first, but that doesn’t mean he was the Beta Version of a human being — 1.0 — and that the woman was the fully matured humanity, all right? He’s different. He may be highly visual. You may not be visual. What can happen then, you think, “There’s something wrong with him.”

No, don’t judge him for being male. Now let me explain this. You live in a culture that encourages you, all of us, to sort of assume that women are superior to men. They’re not. Men and women are equal, and the culture pressure men to understand women, to sympathize with women; to empathize with women; to get into her head; to be verbal; to understand the feminine; to connect with the feminine; to relate to the feminine, and I say that’s all well and good, providing it works both ways. It’s good for a man to understand his wife; to love her; to seek to see her perspective; to sympathize and empathize with her; and to understand the feminine.

It’s also helpful for the wife to understand the masculine: the visual nature of men; the sexual nature of men; the aggressive nature of men; the way that men are men, and to not be afraid of that, but to be a good student of that, so that she can understand her husband better. Number 2: learn about your husband’s maleness or his dudeness by being humble and asking questions respectfully. Don’t go mom on him. Mark said you’re a pervert. How? What have you been looking at, sicko? Don’t go there. Humbly, respectfully, ask him questions. Why do you do that? Why do you think like that? Why do all the things you watch on TV involve someone getting beat up or dying? Why is that? Why — how come your tires are so big on your vehicle? You can ask honest questions. You can ask; humbly, graciously, respectfully ask questions, if you don’t understand.

My sweetie-pie, Grace — we have three sons, all right, and she grew up with no brothers. So between me and the boys, it’s this steep learning curve for my very effeminate wife, and she has learned to humbly, respectfully, frequently, ask questions. Like, “Is it okay if they pee in the yard?” “Yeah, totally, totally, yeah.” I would, if I didn’t end up on CNN, you know, I would. Just ask questions. The other day, my son, Gideon, spent the whole day with his shirt off wearing a cowboy hat. Huge — got my huge, 10-gallon black cowboy — just walking around, no shirt on. She said, “What is he doing?” I said, “He’s a Driscoll boy. I’m proud of him. He looks good. It’s the way we are.” So, peeing in the yard, wearing cowboy hats. Number 3: be sympathetic to his temptations and talk openly to encourage and support him.

Assume — you’re being tempted, right? You’re struggling. This is a fight for you. How is it going? How are we doing? Did you struggle today? If a guy has a business trip, you’re calling, “How are you doing, honey? How’s it going? You know, anything I could pray for you about. Anything we need to talk about?” Opening those lines of communication. Number 4: be a visually generous wife so that he sees you as an ally on his team. Let me explain this. Men see the world in terms of combat and sport. There’s that team, and my team. There is my allies, and there are my enemies, and I want to crush my enemies. And I want to win. That’s guy. That’s guy talk. All right? And so the wife needs to rearticulate to her husband frequently, “I’m on your team.” If there is a line, I’m not on the other team.” My wife will tell me this all the time.

“I’m on your team.” “Good, all right, let’s go win.” All right, that’s — now let me tell you one of the ways you can clearly articulate to your husband that you’re on his team. You’re his ally. Be visually generous. Lights on or off? On, right? Lot of guys: “On.” Even guys who flunked out of school are going to pass this test, all right? This means, right, that when the wife goes to change, she doesn’t go in the other room, shut the door. This means when she bathes, she doesn’t go in the other room and lock the door. This means that a husband, he’s very visual. A wife is visually generous. Number 5: instead of fighting with him, fight for him, and give him lots of redeem images. Guys want to see. Let him see. He’s your husband. Let him see, and then snapshot, snapshot, snapshot.

He will be archiving all of these glorious, amazing, satisfying, exciting images of you as his wife. So he’ll be thinking about you. He’ll be meditating on your beauty and your glory. Help him by giving him lots of redeem images. That leads to the text of Scripture, Song of Songs, Chapter 6, Verse 11: the most erotic, passionate, free section in all of Scripture; an occasion where the wife, in this love story, is exceedingly visually generous to her husband. Chapter 6, Verse 11, you ready? Doesn’t matter, we’re going to do it anyways. Chapter 6, Verse 11. She speaks to him. She says, “I went down to the nut orchard to look at the blossoms in the valley, to see whether the vines had budded, whether the pomegranates,” — an ancient aphrodisiac — “Were in bloom. Before I was aware, my desire set me among the chariots of kinsmen, a prince.”

What she says was, “I was about the course of my normal daily affairs, and this desire awakened in me, this desire erupted in me. I had this crazy idea what I wanted to do with my husband.” It’s good to have passion. It’s good to be a woman who’s in touch with her desires, and if you’re married, it’s good to act upon them. Now the problem is, she had already promised her girlfriends that she would spend the day with them. Sometimes, when you get married, guys, you got to tell your buddies, “Sorry, I know we had tickets to the game. I can’t go tonight. My wife’s my priority. Something’s come up.” Ladies, sometimes just looking at your gal friends, on this occasion they’re single, and she tells them, “Look, I know we were going to spend the day together, but I got this crazy idea, I got to go home, and I got to be with my husband.”

She says that in Verse 13, and her friends respond, “Return, oh, return, oh Shulamite,” — that’s where the gal comes from — “Return, return that we may look upon you.” “Hey, we want to be with you today.” “No, you don’t. Not where this is going.” Chapter 7, why — he then speaks, the husband speaks to his wife. You’ll see that she is visually generous. He is verbally generous. She lets him see everything, and he talks to her with constant encouragement to overcome her insecurities. “Why should you look upon the Shulamite as upon a dance before two armies,” — the footnote in the English Standard Version is the Dance of Mahanaim, the preponderance of translations will call this the Dance of Mahanaim. The Dance of Mahanaim, so you know, is an ancient striptease. She is going to dance for her husband, okay?

Now before we get into the details, this is a Bible, okay? And what I’m reading is in the Bible, and II Timothy 3:16 says that “All Scripture is God-breathed.” We believe that. We believe that the Bible, unlike anything else, is divinely inspired by God the Holy Spirit, through human authors, that 3,000 years ago God decided that this would be written down. That God knew we needed to learn this, and, as we read it, some of you will say, “I don’t like it.” Don’t judge the Scriptures by your prejudices. Allow the Scriptures to judge your prejudices. “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, including,” — and I’ve had some people say, “Well, you should preach the books of the Bible, but not that one.” Really? If it’s one we’re uncomfortable with, it may be exceedingly important.

Here is a sacred moment where a wife is visually generous. A husband is verbally generous. She is going to dance for her husband. It is in your Bible. He begins with her feet, and proceeds upward. “How beautiful are your feet in sandals, oh noble daughter.” First thing he says is, “I love your feet,” and he notices your shoes. I don’t know why, but this is huge, huge. Okay. I have no reasoning. I’m just the mailman. Shoes count. You have amazing cute, little feet, and I love those shoes. He then proceeds north. “You’re rounded thigh are like jewels, the work of a master’s hand.” He says, “I love the curve of your legs.” You will notice he is verbally generous, as she is visually generous, and, I will reiterate, they are married. Okay? Verse 2: the most debated in all of Song of Songs. “Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.”

Now if this is what he is speaking of, then she has a large, round, red moist belly button, which would indicate to me some sort of massive traumatic injury, like farm machinery broke, and, at this point, the commentators are like, “We can’t say that. We can’t say that. That’s a woman’s place, and we have no — we can’t say that.” And my argument would be this. If the Bible says something, then we should let the Bible say what it said, because that’s God speaking. I don’t think it is the navel. What you will note that I do throughout the course of this series, is when we hit a very controversial, very sexual portion, I quote other people. Okay. It’s called blame-shifting. So then, if you are offended, you can send them an e-mail. Call them nasty and things, and I was just reading what they said. So I will do that for you now.

The New Century Bible Commentary on the Song of Songs says this. “If the order of bodily parts, from bottom to top, is followed consistently, the navel is in the wrong position between thighs and belly. It comes above those. The part of the girl’s body mentioned here is therefore more likely to be the vagina or the vulva than the navel.” Also, there’s a man named Joseph Dillow wrote the greatest commentary on the Song of Songs. He and his wife also wrote a book called Intimacy Ignited. It’s a commentary and workbook and Bible study for married couples, through the Song of Songs. It is unprecedented in how it handles the Song of Songs. It does an extraordinary job. He says this. “It is generally translated as vulva. The description ‘never lacks mixed wine,’ speaks of it as a source of sexual pleasure and moistness.”

Is it okay for a man to see parts of his wife’s body? Yes. Is it okay for him to enjoy them? Yes. Is it okay for him to comment upon them in appropriate, beautiful, encouraging, verbally generous way? Absolutely. When was this written? 3,000 years ago. When the Bible says that God made up male and female to be married and naked without shame, this is what it was talking about. This is what God intends. It’s not gross. It’s not disgusting. It’s not inappropriate. It’s not vulgar. It’s Christian marriage, Christian marriage. Proceeding forward, he says, “Your belly is heap of wheat encircled with lilies. At harvest time, they bundle the wheat,” — so this is recognizing her shape is like this. The next one is interesting. “Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.” He said this, as well, in Chapter 4, Verse 5. You may recall it.

If you were not here, this sounds very unusual. This woman is unclothed, dancing for her husband, and he says, "Oh, your breasts are like small, furry woodland animals." That — most women are not like — say it again. You know, it's not — that's a very unusual statement. We dealt with it in Chapter 4, Verse 5. Here's what he is talking about. If — let's say, for example, it is springtime. You go to the zoo. There are two fawns, twins of a gazelle, baby deer. They're perky. They're frolicking. They're fun. They're playful. Where do you tend to see them in the zoo? What portion of the zoo will they be found? The petting zoo. That's exactly what he's saying. "I love your feet. I love your legs. Wow, that's amazing: the petting zoo is now open." "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable," and all the men said? Amen. Okay.

Verse 4: "Your neck is like an ivory tower." Apparently she has a long neck, and, I don't know, maybe her hair is up, because he could see her long neck. "Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath Rabbim." Those pools were spring-fed, fresh-water small oasis pools that were a lovely blue, and you could see your reflection in them. He says, "Your eyes are like that." Beautiful, amazingly clean, pure eyes and I love to look into them. He is verbally generous as she is visually generous. "Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus." She has a huge nose, huge. Right, she has dark skin. The cultural preference is light skin. She has a long neck and a huge nose.

She does not meet the cultural standard of beauty, but, again, if you are a one-woman man, and your wife is your standard of beauty, then you are smitten and attracted to her, desirous of her, and some of you ladies may say, "I don't like this part of my body, it's unusual." That may be the distinguishing feature that your husband finds altogether interesting, and it may be one of the reasons why he finds you so compelling, and she is being told by him, "I know you don't look like all of the gals on the covers of the magazines, but I love you, and I love looking at you, and I love all of you." This is a man who's verbally generous. Verse 5: "Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple, a king is held captive in the tresses." She has long hair.

Now, it's not a sin, ladies, to have short hair, but it's good to talk to your husband about your hairstyle. Lots of men like long hair. I do. My wife always had long hair. One day we had kids, she went to get her hair cut. She came home: short hair. She walks in, says, "What do you think?" This is a terrible dilemma. I think I plead the fifth. I love my wife. I'm attracted to my wife. I really like her with long hair. She didn't ask me about it. She just went and cut it off. Since then she's grown it out and she understands. I said, "Honey, I love you with long hair." And what I'm talking about here is being mutually attractive with your spouse, and that is considering your spouse. He tells her, "Thank you for having such long hair. I love your long hair." Okay? Now some of you ladies may say, "Well, I like my hair short. My husband likes my hair short." Great, fine.

All I'm saying is talk about it, all right? Groom yourself in such a way that you're attractive to your spouse, and this is true for men and women. So I'll give you some examples from the Driscoll household. I recently changed my hairstyle. I used to just cut it short, but my wife didn't like it short. She said she likes it longer, I think, in part, because I have a huge head, and if I just cut my hair off, I look like a lollipop on a stick. So I got my hair a little different, which is great. Hey, Grace has got to look at my head. I'm not looking at it all day. That's fair. Whatever works for you, works for me. She has longer hair, because that's what I like. Also she likes me with facial hair. If I clean shave, I look like I'm about 13, because I got a total baby face; true story, and she doesn't like that, but if I let it grow too long, it gets really scruffy.

I'm like a Wookiee, and I look like the Unabomber. I do. I totally look like the Unabomber, and so I can't grow it out too long, so I have a certain facial-hair length thing going on, and if I shave, in about 15 minutes it's about that long, that's how it works. And also, too, we dress each other. So Grace goes shopping. She — "Hey, you want to come with me?" "Sure." And I help her pick out clothes because I have actually — I'm exceedingly visual, and I am pretty good at interior design and décor and clothes and all of that. I like our — I know, you're thinking, "I thought he was heterosexual." I'm telling you I'm really visual. So I like color and lighting and I like our house to be set up a certain way and I have an eye for things, and order and symmetry. I've got an arty side, and a jock side.

So don't mock me, or I will ground and pound you and then mock your wardrobe. So now some of you guys need to know that, you know, just — it's not okay to just look slovenly and call it dudeness, right? Get a little counsel from our wife. All right, so for my wife, I'll get dressed and I'll say, "Honey, does this work?" She'll ask me, "Does this work?" "Yes." Do we look attractive to each other? Yes; good; praise God. We want to be speaking into one another's appearance. That's all I'm encouraging, and in this he tells her, "You've got amazing, beautiful, glorious long hair." And he thanks her for it. Additionally he then speaks in Verse 6, "How beautiful and pleasant you are, oh loved one, with all your delights. Your statue is like a palm tree and your breasts are like its clusters." Her body is visibly ripe for intimacy.

"I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh, may your breasts be like the clusters of the vine," — right, ripened and firm and ready — "And the scent of your breath like apples." Her breath smells nice. Write that down. "And your mouth like the best wine." What he's saying is this, "You are incredible. What a gift you have given to me. You love me," — this is in private. This is in marriage — "You're free. You're visually generous. I get to see everything. This is unbelievable, and I can't wait any longer." He's telling her, "Okay, now I'm going to proceed forward." And he does, and they are intimate together maritally, as couples should be. What do you think of this? Is your first reaction this is inappropriate? Well, it's in the Bible. First reaction: isn't this what non-Christians do in clubs where guys pay money?

Yeah, but we're not talking about that. Satan has sinful ways of corrupting everything that God made. Doesn't mean that they're bad; means that they're being used in a bad way and they need to be redeemed. This is an example of marital freedom. Now some of you at this point will say, "Yes, but I been studying, took a few women's studies classes in college, sounds like, Pastor Mark, you're encouraging women to be objectified." I'm not. I'm not. To objectify a woman is what pornography does. It turns women into parts and pieces, not image bearers of God. Not saying that at all. Proverbs 5 uses another line. It says that "A husband should be captivated by his wife." That's what we're talking about. That the proverbial camera of his heart is fixed to his wife and his snapshots are of her. That he gets to see her. He gets to delight in her.

He is captivated. He is captured by her. We're not talking about objectifying women like pornography does. We're talking about husbands being

captivated by their wife, and she doesn't see this in any abusive way. She speaks last. She says this. "It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth. I am my beloved's and his desire is for me." What she says is this, "I love being with my husband, having and giving pleasure. To hear how excited he is makes me feel glad." She rejoices in his pleasure and her pleasure and her ability to satisfy her husband, and here is the key. A lot of you guys are going to hear this. A lot of guys are going to hear this and say, "I want a wife like that." The key, she says, is, "I have given myself, wholly, completely, thoroughly, entirely, to my husband because his desire is for me."

At this point he's still walking with God, faithful to his wife. He is what Paul calls a one-woman man. His desires, his interests, his curiosities, his passion, is all for this one woman, his wife. She says, "Because he is only interested in me, I can give myself entirely to him." So for you men, you can't just look at your wife and say, "You're supposed to be that free," because, as the head of the home, you are to be that devoted. You are to love and serve and bless and care. You are to be faithful. You are to be so devoted; so encouraging of; so patient with; so concerned about your wife, that she knows he is 100 percent, exclusively devoted to me, so I can give myself 100 percent, passionately devoted to him, because he is safe. She is free. Were he not safe, she could not be free.

So, gentlemen, as we read this, it is a good word for us that once your wife knows that your desire is solely for her, she will see that she is able to be her beloved's and to give herself entirely. I'll say this. Here's what I'm arguing for: visually generous servant lover. This is for husbands and wives, but today, since this text deals particularly with the wife, we'll apply it to the ladies: visually generous servant lover, and, again, if I pull the theme of generous and servant out of the Bible, all Bible-believing Christians would say, "Yeah, God is a servant. He comes as Jesus Christ. He serves us through his death, burial, resurrection. He's generous. He gives us forgiveness of sin, eternal life, power of the Holy Spirit, new identity. God is a servant. Jesus is generous. Absolutely." And Christians should be as well. Let's apply this to our marriage relationship.

Visually generous, visually generous servant lover; ladies, your body's a great gift. Your husbands really want you to understand this. They're hoping that this sticks. They may be shy, embarrassed. They may be ashamed because they're guys, and you don't understand and they want you to. Your husband is very visual, and if you are visually generous, that is a tremendous gift, and if both people come into the marriage wanting to be servant lovers, take that great Biblical concept of servant, and apply it to marital intimacy, visually generous, servant lovers. That's amazing. That's what she is. That's what she is. Now Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, they write some great books for women. Intimate Issues: great book for married women. Intimacy Ignited, they write with their husbands.

These are older women in their 50's and 60's. I think at least one is a grandmother. They say it this way. "Nothing is as sexy as a woman who gives in to her sensuousness and who enjoys sex and lets her husband know she loves to give and receive pleasure." Couple things I need to say about this. First, this is a descriptive, not a prescriptive, text of Scripture. Let me explain the difference. Prescriptive texts tell us what we should and should not do. Descriptive texts tell us simply what happened. This is not a "Thou shalt dance for thine husband sayeth the Lord." It's not a command. It's a description. So in this, ladies, you're not in sin if you don't do this, and you guys can't go home and say, "It's in the Bible. Now's a good time." Okay? Can't do that. It's a description of marital freedom, of nakedness without shame. Okay.

So this is an example of the kind of freedom that a Christian married couple can and should enjoy within the privacy of their covenant marriage. Number 2: this is a goal, and not a rule. If it was a rule, we would just say, "Do this." A goal is something that you set out in hopes of achieving. Your marriage may not be at the point where this is going to happen in the near future. You may have other marital issues to deal with. We'll speak of those in a moment. You may need to work through those issues, but this is the kind of thing you set out as a goal. We're not that free. We don't have that kind of conversation. I'm not that open yet. Okay, then let's set a prayerful, Biblical goal of maturing in that direction, so that one day we have that kind of freedom, and let me put a lot of the onus for this on the husband.

She continually throughout the book refers to her life and her body as a garden. That being the case, he's the gardener. I Corinthians 11 says it this way, that "The wife is in many ways the reflection of the husband." So, men, you can't just yell at the garden. You need to love, serve; tend to your wife; be patient with her; pray with her; confess sin to her; forgive her when she confesses sin to you. This is cultivating, Biblically loving, serving, like Christ the church, your wife. It's tending to the garden that God has entrusted to your care. Now in saying this, as well, there are many reasons why this kind of freedom, passion, pleasure, this kind of visually generous and servant lover activity is not common.

I'll deal with some that I've witnessed in my pastoral counseling over the decade — or actually 12 years — dozen years, that I've been the pastor here, and I'll speak to the men first and then the women. Here are some ways to inhibit and prohibit this kind of marital freedom and pleasure. For the guys, the first one is porn. If you are the porn guy, you're killing the marriage. You're killing your wife. Some guys are so twisted, they want their wife to watch porn with them, and then tell her to do what the actresses do. That's marital suicide. There's nothing clean and shameless and beautiful about that.

It's lust and it's sin and it's perverted, and if your wife knows that you're the porn guy, the last thing she's going to want to do is what you ask her to do, because she will rightly ascertain, "You watch other women, lust after them, tell me to do what they're doing so you can pretend you're with them. No." That kind of freedom is sinful use of freedom. That would be a wife enabling a sinful activity. So it may be kill the porn; get in a redemption group; get with a Biblical counselor; get some help; and, down the road, work toward the goal of the kind of marital freedom that God wants you to have, but not in a pornographic way. Number 2: some guys are just discouraging, right? We've seen repeatedly with his husband, throughout the course of the book, he is verbally generous. He encourages her all the time. The vast majority of his comments are positive.

He's seeking to build, on the evidences of God's grace in her life and nurture her and build her up. Here guys, always critical, her faults, her failures, her flaws. She can't be free because she knows if she makes an effort, doesn't do it right, you're going to criticize her and discourage her. Number 3: some guys are way too serious, particularly when it comes to sex. Some of you guys don't understand that your wife is your friend. She says it repeatedly. It says throughout the book, "This is my lover and my friend." Your spouse, your wife, gentlemen, is your lover and your friend, and you

know what you do with your friends? You have fun. All right, if you're always acting like it's the Olympics, you're trying to get a nine from the French judge, like, you're way too serious.

If you're going to be married 50, 60 years, if you're going to try some new things, take a risk, some of it's not going to work, just so you know. I been married a long time. It doesn't all work. Some of you are like, that didn't work. No, it didn't. Never do that again. Never, ever, ever do that again. I know one woman, she read this. This was years ago, and she went to dance for her husband, tripped, and busted the coffee table. Yeah, it's funny unless you're her. She's like, okay? Now, a smart husband says, "I'm sorry I bought a cheap coffee table, my fault." He owns it, and makes a joke, and moves on, right? If you're too serious, your wife won't be able to have a little fun and take a little risk. Number 4: some guys are indiscrete. They don't get privacy.

I was talking to one couple. I'll never forget this meeting; had some interesting meetings through the course of this series. The husband says, "I wish my wife was more free. I wish we could have the light on. I wish she'd be more exciting and more verbal." And she said, "Well, then put a lock on the door. We got a bunch of kids." And he wants the light on and, you know, lot of activity, and the kids always walk in. I look at him, I said, "You don't have a lock on your door?" He said, "No. Why does it matter?" I said, "It matters to her and the kids and their therapist. It's totally mattering." "Put a lock on the door." She said, "Well, I would love to, you know, do things differently, but he's too lazy to put a locking doorknob on the bedroom."

I said, "Dude, this is self-inflicted injury. This is on you. You go to Home Depot, you know." Other guys, their wife will do something, take a risk, and then they tell all their buddies. "Well, you'll never guess what my wife did." Then Community Group is really weird that week. If you're that guy who can't, you know, let your private life be your private life, you and your wife are, you know, having a little fun, and trying a little adventure, you'd better be discreet. Number 5: some guys are impatient. I was talking with a recently married guy. He said, "How long until we get to that place?" Had that wild look in his eye. "How long until we get to that place where it's like the Song of Songs?" I said, "About a decade." And he laughed. Thought I was telling another joke.

I was like, "No, that one's serious. Give it about a decade. Work through your sin. Have some kids. Forgive one another. Actually reveal to one another who you really are. Get through the first decade, then you'll know, love, trust one another to actually have the kind of freedom." We live in a world that lives by minutes, and marriages are built by decades; patience. Number 6: performance. One wife told me, "I tried to do things and take some risks and be exciting, but my husband's got some physical issues, and then it's discouraging to him because he can't do anything, and what do I do?" And I said, "That guy needs to humble himself, go to a doctor, figure out what the problem is," because his wife, she feels in an awkward position. I'll give you six from the ladies as well — six things that inhibit and prohibit freedom, ladies.

The first is abuse. If you've been abused, sexually abused, or in an emotionally or verbally or physically abusive dating relationship or previous marriage — let me just tell you this, men. If you marry a woman who's an abuse victim, put another decade on the clock, because you've got to undo past damage, rebuild trust. Put another decade on the clock. "That's a long time." If you love her, like Christ loves the church, then you praise God that he's given you such an important ministry to such a wonderful woman, but, ladies, if you've been abused, and not gotten help, it will greatly inhibit your freedom. You'll be free in a sinful way, or uninhibited in a sinful way, but you won't be free in a sinless way.

Number 2: shame. Some women just think, "Oh, I was too free in my dating years. I was too free outside of the marriage. I'm ashamed. I've seen and done things I shouldn't have." You need to know that Jesus died for sin. He takes away our shame. He forgives us, makes us new creations in Christ. We get a brand-new life with Jesus, and because he died, so did your sin, and through his resurrection you get to move forward and live a new life. Number 3: sometimes it's just selfishness. I talked to one wife recently. Her husband said, "I wish we could try this." And she said, "Well, that sounds like a lot of work." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, I won't do anything unless I like it."

I said, you know, "This is not servant lover. This is selfish. Your husband wants to serve you. You won't serve him. You're selfish. You won't do anything to take care of him. You're selfish." Number 4: some women are unkempt, right? Disheveled. Be very careful with this, but I have had this conversation with more than a few wives who say, "I don't like the way that I look, so I don't let him see me." My answer is, first of all, "Don't be comparing yourself to the cultural standard of beauty, that may not be reasonable. Secondly, is there anything you can do about it? Do you need to change diet? Do you need to exercise? Do you need to get a new wardrobe, new hair style?" Right? "Is there anything you could do to feel a little more comfortable in your own skin and be a little more visually generous?"

One guy — I wish you could see their faces. I was meeting with a husband and a wife, and he was grieved. He said, "My wife, she doesn't bathe. She wears her pajamas all day, or sweats. She doesn't put any makeup on. She doesn't put any deodorant on for days, but, then, if she's got a meeting or to go out for business or Bible study, she takes a shower, gets all cleaned up, does her makeup, changes her clothes, looks amazing, walks out the door, she looks great, but at home, where she's at most of the time, no effort at all." And I asked her, I said, "Why is that?" She said, "Well, I don't care when I'm at home, because nobody sees me." If you could see the look on this guy's face. He was like, "I do, and I should matter the most." Number 5: fear. Some women are just scared. All right, like, "I don't know what I'm doing." Tell him that. Tell your husband.

"I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm going to try." In faith, step out, take a risk, and Number 6: some women are overly modest, oftentimes raised in highly religious homes. Your body is to be totally covered at all times. The Bible does say, ladies, to dress modestly, but it's not talking about in your marriage, at your house, in your bedroom, all right. It's talking about in the world don't dress in such a way that all of the guys are absolutely taking their mental snapshots of you. Some men are sick, and no matter what you wear, they're going to take their snapshots. That's not your fault, but you don't want to do anything to encourage that. Some women are overly modest: lights off; get your pajamas on in the closet with the door shut; bathe in the room with the door locked and the husband's always frustrated; overly modest.

All right, this would be the wife who goes into the other room, gets her jammies on, walks in, flannel up to here, down to here, down to here. The husband's wondering, "Are we sledding tonight?" That's a lot of flannel. That's a lot of flannel. Think Biblically about your body. I'll close with these questions and bring out my sweetie-pie. For the husbands, ask your wife this dangerous question: "What can I do to encourage your freedom?" Okay? Assume, men, that you're doing something — this was my wife and I's lunch conversation — assume you're doing something that is in the way. Ask her what that is. Don't argue. Receive it; repent, love, serve, change.

Ladies, dangerous question; ask your husband, "What are your favorite snapshots of me? What are the pictures in your mind? The files that you bring up most frequently? The ones that you recall most fondly? The ones that you are most grateful for?" And, men, tell the truth. Tell the truth, and then, ladies, ask why. Why those? Why those? Why are those so significant? And then, ladies, the next question is: what could I do to be more visually generous? What could I do to be more visually generous? Gentlemen, lovingly, graciously, respectfully, kindly, tenderly answer those questions. You may not be there today, but set before yourself a goal of going in that direction and arriving at that destination. Okay, that being said, I'll bring out Gracie and we'll answer some of your questions. Hey, baby. It's not awkward at all today, is it? No, not at all, no.

Doing great. Why don't you guys throw up the first one, if you would, from the booth? Downtown: "What if my spouse cannot compare physically to the visual temptations of the world?" Well — you want to take it or you want me to?

Grace Driscoll: We can both do it.

Okay, you want to go first?

Grace Driscoll: Sure.

Okay.

Grace Driscoll: We're not supposed to compare ourselves to the world. The only person, as a wife, that I need to please and be visually generous for is my husband, and so I need to ask him what that is for him. And if I wake up in the morning, and I'm getting ready, and I'm thinking about who I might see or who I might want to impress, or — that's not where my thoughts needs to be. My thoughts need to be on: how can I be pleasing to my husband? So that is a trap and a lie that wives — women can easily fall into because the culture is constantly bombarding us with images as women of who we're supposed to look like, but that's not us, and we're not called to that. We are who we are, and we just need to be pleasing to our husbands.

Mark Driscoll: And I'd say, as well, if you say that there's a cultural standard of beauty and then you measure your spouse by that, you're in sinful lust by definition. I said this early on, in Genesis, that it says that "'Though sin was not in the world, it's not good for the man to be alone,' God said, 'So God brought the woman.'" What he didn't bring was a line of women, and then let the man choose his favorite. He brought one woman, and that woman was the man's standard of beauty. Wasn't a type, it was a wife, and so I always tell guys: God doesn't give you a type, he gives you a wife, and your wife is your standard of beauty. So if what you're saying is, "I have a standard of beauty, and my spouse doesn't match up to it," I have real interesting news: neither do you.

I hear this all the time from guys, like, "My wife doesn't look like the girls in the magazine." And you don't look like the guys in the other magazines. They have six-packs. You have a cooler. You don't look, you know, like — you don't look the same either, and so — but, you know, you got to understand, as well, like, if you're looking at someone with an eating disorder who's had massive surgery and then was airbrushed, that's not realistic, and it's not healthy and it's not holy and it's not helpful. And if all you look at is someone who's 20 or 25 years of age, if you're going to grow old together, as we are, and going to be 70 or 80 together, well, that's not realistic either. So, again, if your spouse is your standard of beauty, you will not be dissatisfied.

If anyone or anything else is your standard of beauty, you are setting up expectations that are unreasonable and unbiblical.

Grace Driscoll: Well, and standard of beauty is not just outer beauty. It's inner beauty, too.

Mark Driscoll: It's attraction of the whole person.

Grace Driscoll: A woman can be gorgeous culturally standard-wise, and be empty and ugly inside, and that's not what a husband should desire for his wife either. So it's a full package. It's not just — it's wanting to keep yourself so that you can please your husband and honor the Lord in that, and keep your inner beauty, your love of the Lord, and your character Godly so that that is beautiful too, as in Proverbs 31, as a — as it speaks about beauty being fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. So it's every — it's an all-inclusive thing, and that's how a husband can see beauty in his wife as a full package.

Mark Driscoll: Cool. Next one, guys. "What resources are available for men with low sex drive?" This is hard on both spouses. I would say — it depends on age. Sometimes guys hit a certain age and testosterone levels drop and there's just physical issues with aging, and this is where you get a good doctor, maybe a good naturopath, to do full blood work, and get a full checkup and say, you know, do you need supplements? Is it vitamins? Is there something going on hormonally, chemically? The same could be true for wives: pregnancy or menopause. There's adjustments of life, and oftentimes this is just a physical, biological, medical issue that needs to get addressed. If it's not that you're — you know, you don't have a good marriage. You do love your spouse.

You do love the Lord. The two of you do want to be close, and you're just not compelled as you should be, then I would say get a good doctor — I'd recommend a good naturopath — and see what's going on physically. There might be something there. Next one; Bellevue: "Would it be sinful to

videotape my wife and I being intimate?" You want to take this one or do you want me to?

Grace Driscoll: We have the same answer?

Mark Driscoll: That's cute. She said, "We have the same answer, right?" _____. That's cute. I Corinthians 6:12, all right — I gave you the three categories. Is it legal? Okay, so the first thing is: don't put it on the internet. Don't show it to other people. The second thing is: is it helpful? Is it profitable? If you've got a spouse who has major pornographic addiction in the past, this may not be helpful because they — it may be the gateway back into pornography. That may not be good. Is it Biblical? Is it helpful; and is it enslaving? Those are the three categories in I Corinthians 6:12. The enslaving is will this become something that you have to have to be attracted, to have normal relations? Will it be the kind of thing that the husband would rather watch and take care of himself than be intimate with his wife and serve her? Those are the questions I would ask.

Biblically, it's not a sin, and so it falls in the area of Christian liberty and freedom, but I would say, no one else is allowed to see it, and if it causes either of you to have shame or guilt or one of you doesn't have a clear conscience, then it is not to be done, because it's not then permissible, even though it is lawful, because your conscience is violated, and, thirdly, yeah, if it's feeding a past pornographic addiction or if it is in the way of normal intimacy, then I think it's being used in a sinful way, but, by definition, it's not a sin. It's not a sin. It's a freedom, but it's one to be cautious with, you know. Is that our answer?

Grace Driscoll: That's our answer.

Okay.

Grace Driscoll: And keep it locked up, if you do choose to have that freedom, so that the kids or no one else has access to it. We have known this to go bad for some people.

Mark Driscoll: I know a youth pastor it went bad for when the youth group found it.

Grace Driscoll: On the camera. Yeah.

Mark Driscoll: Oh! That's a fail, all right. Next one; Ballard: "Should spouses confess to each other every time they sin visually sexually?" That would be a lot. I would say it's good to check in. "How are you doing? How is your day? How are things?" I don't think that you ignore sin. If you're tempted, that's a win if you don't give in to it, okay? If you give in to it and you sin, I think it's good to say that. To say, "I was tempted today, and I had thoughts I shouldn't have had, and I'm struggling. I need you to pray for me and hold me, you know, in an accountable relationship." I think, ultimately, for guys, it's good to have a good male accountability partner. Your wife, sometimes, isn't the best place to think through all that. She needs to be aware of any sin.

She needs to be aware of any inappropriate activity, but she'll rest assured if you've got a Godly brother who's an accountability partner to speak through the details with you as a guy.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, because most women don't understand the visual frequency that men have to deal with, oftentimes if they're sharing it constantly, it just makes the woman insecure. I agree that having a guy that can help hold you accountable in the area is very important, and certainly share those struggles and the wife should, like you talked about, ask and have those conversations. You know, "Have you had any struggles today that I can be praying for you about?" Certainly be open about that, but if you're sharing it constantly, it can really — it can almost cause division.

Mark Driscoll: Yeah, but if a guy crosses a line: he looks at porn; sees an attractive woman; walks up to engage her in conversations; if he's crossing those kinds of lines, the wife needs to know. If it's a normal guy with ongoing sort of battle, you know, I've got a — I've got to keep my eyes devoted to my wife, Job 31:1, got to "Make a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a woman lustfully. If he's in that fight, and the temptation's coming, but he is resisting, then it's okay for him to tell his wife, "You know, I had some struggles today, but, honey, I'm walking with Jesus and I didn't do anything." And it's good to have male accountability then to follow up on that, but if a guy cross a line or a gal crosses a line, it's equal both ways, then the spouse needs to know.

Otherwise you start to develop a secret, shameful, sinful part of your life that your spouse is unaware of, and that's dangerous. Cool. We'll hand it over to the campus pastors at this point. Why don't you close us in prayer, sweet?

Grace Driscoll: Thank you, Lord, for your Word. Thank you that we do have freedom. I pray that our goal would be to be free in you, whatever that looks like for each of us, and that we would not want to live in fear of what the culture bombards us with, that we would not give in to those temptations and that we would seek your Word and accountability from Godly friends, so that we can walk purely and righteously in our marriages and in our relationships. Thank you, in Jesus' name.